Authenticity in Materials Development for Language Learning

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Edited by

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CONTENTS

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PREFACE

BRIAN TOMLINSON

This book is a development from the MATSDA/University of Liverpool Conference on Authenticity and L2 Materials Development held at the University of Liverpool on June 18th-19th, 2016. MATSDA (www.matsda.org) is an international materials development association which I founded in 1993 to bring together researchers, teachers, materials developers and publishers in a joint effort to improve the effectiveness of language learning materials. We publish a journal, *Folio*, we run materials development workshops and we organise international conferences on specific themes related to significant themes and issues in the field of materials development.

The 2016 Conference focused on issues related to authenticity in materials development and attracted presenters from twenty eight countries around the world. Some of the papers focused on defining what authenticity means and involves, some on questions about the value of authenticity in facilitating language acquisition and competence, some on ways of resourcing and utilising authentic texts, some on ways of developing authentic tasks and some on achieving cultural authenticity, contextual authenticity and learner authenticity. These topics are reflected in the papers in this volume, with each one focusing on a different aspect of authenticity and many of them introducing the reader to previously unexplored facets of authenticity. They are sequenced so that the book moves from general discussion about the value of authenticity to reports of evaluations of authenticity to reports of the exploitation of authenticity in specific learning contexts. Many questions are raised, a lot of revealing data is reported and many suggestions are made.

The chapters in this book have been written so that they are of potential value to teachers, to materials developers and to researchers. They are written to be academically rigorous but at the same time to be accessible to newcomers to the field and to experienced experts alike.

Introduction

Brian Tomlinson

Authenticity has been a frequent and hotly debated topic ever since materials development became a focus of research attention. If you google 'authenticity in language learning', you will find page after page of articles, chapters, quotations and blogs about authenticity stretching back, for example to Rivers and Temperley (1978) and Littlewood (1981). You will also find reference to two substantial volumes which are devoted to the investigation of authenticity in materials for language learning, Mishan (2005) and Gilmore (2007b). Mishan (2005) gives a detailed account of the history of the debate about authenticity and offers a thorough and principled rationale for the use of authentic materials. The debate has very much focused on the characteristics and the potential value (or otherwise) of authenticity with most attention being given to authentic texts and authentic tasks. However in recent years the debate has widened into a consideration of other aspects of authenticity such as curriculum authenticity and learner authenticity. All these new perspectives are reflected in the chapters in this volume in ways which make it both a comprehensive review of current research and theory related to the role of authenticity in materials development for language learning and a collection of research reports and position statements from both newcomers to and experts in the field.

Text Authenticity

If we consider a text to be a spoken or written representation of a language in use we will see that most coursebooks (and digital materials) from the very early days until now feature texts which cannot be said to be authentic because the language is not being primarily used for communication (the stock definition of authenticity of text). Instead the language is being deliberately contrived to help the learner to learn the language. The justification often given for this is that such simplification and contrivance enables the learner to focus on a specific and repeated target feature thus enhancing their opportunities for learning it. However,

as Tomlinson and Masuhara (2017, p. 31) say, "this contradicts what is known about how languages are acquired and … does not prepare them for the reality of language use outside the classroom". They refer to such researchers as Little et al. (1994), Bacon and Finneman (1990), Kuo (1993), McGarry (1995), Wong, Kwok and Choi (1995), Nuttall (1996), Mishan (2005), Gilmore (2007a, 2007b), Rilling and Dantas-Whitney (2009) and Tomlinson (2013a, 2013b, 2016) who argue that authentic texts "can provide the rich and meaningful exposure to language in use which is a pre-requisite for language acquisition" (Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2017, p. 31). Some of these researchers and others also claim that such exposure can (but does not always) motivate learners, that it can contribute to the learners developing a range of communicative competencies and that it can help to develop positive attitudes towards the learning of the language used in the texts. For example, Wong, Kwok and Choi (1995) claim that "authentic materials can help us to achieve the aims of enriching students' experiences in the learning and use of English, sensitizing them to the use of English in the real world …" (1995, p. 318). I would add though that the potential value of authentic texts is only likely to be realised if the texts are relevant and engaging for the learners and if the learners' exposure is to a wide range of genres and text types.

A number of researchers have compared data from sources of authentic language use with data from coursebooks and have been critical of the lack of authentic texts in the coursebooks, for example, Cullen and Kuo (2007), Lam (2010) and Timmis (2010). Tomlinson (2010b) compares data indicating how people typically get others to help them do something (e.g. by using "If you can …") with data showing how textbooks usually teach learners to do this (e.g. by using the imperative) and Cohen and Ishihara (2013) report numerous studies which indicate how unreliable intuition based materials can be.

Not all researchers advocate the use of authentic materials. For example, Widdowson (1984, 2000), Yano, Long and Ross (1994); Day and Bamford (1998), Ellis (1999), Guariento and Morley (2001), Day (2003) and Brown and Menasche (2006) point out that authentic materials can be difficult to understand for learners (especially those at lower levels) and they advocate sometimes constructing texts which simplify and focus understanding and learning. Widdowson (1984, p. 218) asserts that "pedagogic presentation of language … necessarily involves methodological contrivance which isolates features from their natural surroundings", Ellis (1999, p. 68) argues for "enriched input" which has been deliberately flooded with examples of a target structure for use in a meaning focused activity, Day (2003, p. 2) opposes the 'Cult of

Authenticity' and Brown and Menasche (2006) advocate gradually increasing the degree of text authenticity as learners progress. Moore (2014) suggests preparing students to read EAP texts in the real world by first helping them by, for example, introducing the content of a long authentic text through short key sentences, by abridging long texts and by removing complex examples. I think you can actually find and develop authentic texts which are both comprehensible and engaging for lower level learners but I do sometimes introduce demanding written texts by reporting them orally and focusing on impact before inviting learners to read them.

A number of researchers have presented data investigating the similarities between language used in films, tv soaps and tv sitcoms with that used in 'natural' data. For example, Tatsuki (2006) presented data from numerous sources showing many similarities in use between the pragmatic use of language in films and language in 'natural' data and Jones in Chapter 9 of this volume presents data justifying the use of soap operas as models of authentic conversations. Other chapters in this volume focusing on authentic texts are Martinho in Chapter 8 (conversational texts), Ngoepe in Chapter 10 (EAP texts), Yong in Chapter 12 (Gone with the Wind as an authentic text) and McCullagh in Chapter 14 (videos of authentic doctor/patient interviews).

Task Authenticity

An authentic task is usually considered to be one in which the learners perform a real life task which is meaning focussed, has a communicative purpose and aims to achieve intended effects. So persuading someone to donate money to a charity, designing and advertising a C6 vehicle which is cheap, easy to maintain and safe, and making a telephone booking for a hotel room are authentic tasks. Using a given set of adjectives to describe a picture, changing direct to reported speech in a story and using the passive to report an accident are not. An authentic task needs a context, addressees, a reason for communicating and a purpose for communicating. However it has been argued that no task can really be authentic in the classroom because of the artificiality of it being located in an environment created primarily for the purposes of learning. I would say that there are three kinds of authentic tasks. One is the task which meets the conditions for authenticity specified above and which is carried out outside the classroom without any teacher contribution (e.g. actually buying a ticket from a real booking office), another is the task which replicates in the classroom a real life task (e.g. developing a tv advert for a specified

product) and the third is a pedagogic task which requires the use of 'real life' skills or strategies to achieve a purpose unlikely to be aimed at outside the classroom (e.g. a group reproduction of the drawing of a building seen and reported only by one member of the group). All three types can be useful in preparing learners for the reality of communication outside and after their course. Whether such inauthentic tasks as using a given set of adjectives to describe a picture provides such preparation is debatable.

Chapter 11 in this volume by Junia Ngoepe, Chapter 12 by Vo Thi Hong Le and Chapter 14 by Marie McCullagh focus in particular on the use of authentic tasks in the classroom in preparation for the real life tasks which their students will need to perform when they have completed their course.

Curriculum Authenticity

One unfortunate consequence of many attempts at innovation in materials development has been a glaring mismatch between the materials and the curriculum which teachers are expected to follow. This often leads to inauthentic adaptation of the materials in order to achieve curriculum authenticity (see, for example, Thomas and Reinders, 2015). On a coursebook project I was involved with in Namibia (Tomlinson, 1995) we achieved curriculum authenticity by following a text-driven approach which made use of authentic texts from many genres and text types and authentic tasks which emerged organically from the texts. I told the 30 writers to ignore the Curriculum but every night I ticked off the curriculum items we had covered and after six days we had written a new national textbook which achieved text and task authenticity whilst achieving over 90% curriculum authenticity too. On the last day I consulted a Ministry official and we agreed that some of the curriculum items which we had not covered were trivial and should be deleted from the Curriculum and that others should be included in the units as 'authentically' as possible.

Chapter 2 in this volume by Bazma Bouziri explores the issue of curriculum authenticity.

Learner and Teacher Authenticity

Materials which seem authentic to the developer and to the teacher might not achieve authenticity with the learners because they do not enjoy them, understand them, consider them relevant or consider them useful. It could be said therefore that it is not the text or the task which is authentic but the

learner's interaction with it Breen (1985, p. 61) focuses on "the authenticity of the learner's own interpretation" and Lee says, "learner authenticity" is only possible if learners feel positive about the materials and react to them as was pedagogically intended (Lee, 1995, p. 323, cited in Tatsuki, 2006). The same can be said for teachers. If they feel that the so called authentic materials they are required to use are not relevant, interesting or useful then they are unlikely to be able to provide the conviction and energy needed to achieve classroom authenticity when using them. This is an issue investigated by Amir Hossein Sarkeshikian in Chapter 5.

Prodromou (1992) and Trabelsi (2010) explore the issue of authenticity of materials in connection with the learners' culture. What might be perceived as authentic in the UK or the USA might not be perceived as authentic, for example, in Prodromous' Greece or Trabelsi's Tunisia. Also what is authentic for one learner in a particular context might be perceived as inauthentic by a different learner in the same context.

Context Authenticity

The situation in many classrooms around the world is that a coursebook is being used which has not been developed to meet the needs and wants of the learners in that classroom. It might achieve authenticity in its target classrooms but in the other classrooms which it is used in it might be perceived as culturally alien, as pedagogically unsuitable and as irrelevant to the learning and examination objectives of the learners. This lack of context authenticity was reported by many of the teachers whose use of coursebooks I surveyed in Tomlinson (2010a) and it is the main factor that many of the writers in a survey of the implementation of task-based materials by Thomas and Reinders (2015) blamed for the weakening of task-based materials by teachers in Asian classrooms.

Trabelsi (2010) is one of many researchers who make a case for context authenticity when he advocates providing university students in Tunisia with materials which are authentic because they "are tailored to the learners' profile and are suitable to the stakeholders' … expectations and demands" (116).

Theoretical Authenticity

Another type of authenticity to receive attention these days is theoretical authenticity. This reflects a concern with the materials achieving consistent adherence with a principled and evidence-driven theory.

Whenever I develop materials or guide others to do so I make use of a flexible text-driven framework which is informed by second language acquisition principles of rich exposure, affective engagement, cognitive engagement, opportunities for noticing and discovery and opportunities for communicative use (Tomlinson, 2013c). Chapter 7 in this volume by Sasan Baleghizadeh and Zahra Javidanmehr advocates achieving theoretical authenticity through using a philosophy-based approach.

Conclusion

I hope that this introduction has whetted your appetite for the chapters which follow. In addition to the ones mentioned already there are chapters exploring the issues raised by the concept of authenticity (e.g. Chapter 1 by Freda Mishan and Chapter 3 by Asma Aftab), chapters considering the evaluation of authenticity in materials (e.g. Chapter 6 by Tony Waterman and Chapter 7 by Sasan Baleghizadeh and Zahra Javidanmehr) and a chapter exploring the relationship between the concept of global English and the concept of authenticity (Chapter 4 by Claudia Saraceni). All the chapters ask important questions about authenticity in materials development for language learning and they all make recommendations which are well worth considering. I would like to end this Introduction though by making a point which is not made in any of the chapters.

What is considered authentic in design because it is seen as representative of how the target language is typically used and because it meets the conditions for authenticity specified above might not be perceived as authentic in action or in reflection. It could be that when learners are responding to an authentic text or are carrying out an authentic task (i.e. authenticity in action) they do not understand the text, they focus on micro-processing the text by decoding it word by word, they are not engaged by the text, they perform the task in their L1 or they do not perceive the relevance or value of the materials. In such cases materials which were apparently authentic in design are not authentic in action. It could also be that when learners reflect on authentic materials they have used they cannot remember much about them, they consider them to have been irrelevant or not engaging or they do not think they have gained anything from them. In such cases materials which were considered to be authentic in design are not authentic in reflection. "The ideal is therefore for the designers to try to ensure that their materials achieve authenticity in design, in use and in reflection." (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2017, p. 33).

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CHAPTER ONE

'AUTHENTICITY 2.0':
RECONCEPTUALISING 'AUTHENTICITY'
IN THE DIGITAL ERA

FREDA MISHAN

Introduction

As language use today moves increasingly into digital fora - social media, social networking and so on, accompanied by an internationalization of English, the language most associated with the Internet, the concept of 'authenticity' becomes ever more evasive. In this chapter, it will be suggested that one route for achieving authenticity in today's language learning environment can be found, ironically perhaps, in the work of pre-digital theorists such as Van Lier (e.g. 1996). Van Lier maintained that authenticity was not intrinsic to learning materials themselves but was a factor of the learners' engagement with them and of the tasks enacted with them. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that this conception of authenticity is a perfect fit for the digital era, where more and more of the language use is in *interaction* on a plethora of different media and applications. I will argue therefore that it is to *interaction* – and its pedagogical realization 'task' - that we should turn, for our 'authenticity 2.0'.

Defining Authenticity

In order to understand how this evolution has occurred, it is useful first of all to look briefly at the historical development of the elusive concept of 'authenticity' and its significance for language pedagogy. Authenticity is not, and never has been, an absolute concept. It is even less so today, due to how entangled our lives are with the media, be these traditional; radio and television, or the newer social media. In general discourse, 'the gap between

the *genuine* and the *convincing representation*' is commonly elided because 'so much of our knowledge and interaction with our social surroundings is mediated by television or by the virtual reality of computer-based communication' (Seargeant, 2005, p. 330). In fact, as Seargeant argues, the use of the term 'authentic' in today's parlance most often means 'the *appearance* of genuineness' (as in product descriptions like 'authentic home-cooked taste' 'authentic Thai cuisine'). It is useful to bear this in mind as we refine the concept through the prism of the technologies that mediate so much of today's language learning.

Even in a pre-digital age, of course, theorists grappled with the 'illusion' of authenticity; 'authenticity is a term which creates confusion because of a basic ambiguity', Widdowson argued (1983, p. 30). Even Widdowson could never have predicted how 'confusing' and 'ambiguous' the term was to become. Such proclamations as Widdowson's heralded the so-called 'authenticity debate' enacted over the course of the following three decades in works such as Breen (1985), Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Bachman (1990), Lee (1995), Widdowson himself (e.g. 1996, 1998) and Mishan (2005). The vacillations of the debate notwithstanding, Widdowson's famous early distinction between 'genuineness'; a characteristic of the text and its provenance, and 'authenticity'; 'the relationship between the [text] and the reader … which has to do with appropriate response' (Widdowson, 1979, p. 80) have remained useful touchstones. However, the parameters of each - that is, genuineness referring to 'text' and authenticity referring to activity – have expanded, as I now plan to demonstrate, due to the affordances of the online media in which language learners – and we as a society as a whole - operate.

This shift in parameters is most evident with regard to the notion of text 'genuineness', in terms of this referring to 'attested instances of language use' (Widdowson, 1983, p. 30). Even before the internet became society's default information resource, the advent of corpora (in the 1990s), (electronic databases of language comprising hundreds of millions of 'attested' language use fed from newspapers, novels, transcripts of spoken dialogues and the like), precipitated stormy debate that hinged on *context* as a factor of authenticity. It was argued by some (notably, Widdowson, 2000, 2001, Cook, 1998), that massing language that had come from thousands of different sources and contexts into a single interface defiles authenticity 'this is decontextualized language, which is why it is only partially real' (Widdowson, 2000, p. 7). The same can be argued, a hundredfold, about the internet – a uniform interface containing millions of 'texts' ranging from ancient works, to the literary 'canon', to recorded casual interactions, to photographs and images, newspapers archives and news reports. It is a

truism that access to this environment has 'desensitised' us to a degree. This could be interpreted as the interface itself and the capacity for repeated viewing and replaying, 'de-authenticating' the material. It is to resolve this quandary that I move away from defining authenticity in terms of 'genuineness', or context of production (Cook's criterion, 1998), opting for 'authenticity' as the Widdowson and Van Lier notion of *response* and *interaction*, and this will be developed in the main part of this chapter. First though, the internet as an international playground for its language speakers is discussed below, using another seminal definition of authenticity as a starting point.

Refining Authenticity

Morrow's early description of authenticity, like Widdowson's, reveals the ambiguous nature of the concept: 'An authentic text is a *stretch of real language*, produced by a *real speaker or writer* for a *real audience* and *designed to convey a real message'* (Morrow, 1977, p.13). While acknowledging that the term 'real' is, in lay terms, open to the same abuse as 'authentic' (as Carter points out with examples from advertising such as 'Real ale' 'Coca Cola – the real thing' (1998, p. 43)), in pedagogy it seems to have achieved greater credibility. For instance, terms like 'real world tasks' are acceptably used to contrast with 'pedagogic tasks' (for example by Nunan, 1989 etc.). This accepted, Morrow's description can be seen as remarkably prescient in its scope in that all four criteria (indicated by my italics in the quotation above) can be applied 40 years on, albeit with some realigning (see below), to online materials produced by and for members of the global online community.

First of all, how to characterise a 'real speaker or writer' today? It is significant that Morrow's definition does not use '*native* speaker/writer' production as a criterion for authenticity, although other early definitions do: 'Authenticity can … refer to actually attested language produced by native speakers' (Widdowson, 1983, p. 30). However, the notion of what it means to be a 'speaker' of a language - and notably, of the English language - have expanded over the past forty years or so. The works of early theorists such as Kachru (1985) illustrated the gradations and complexities involved in 'native speakerness' in the context of World Englishes, leading to the recognition of 'a diverse set of equally valid Englishes' (Pinner, 2016, p. 34). This was followed by increasing acknowledgement of the contemporary reality of the global use of English as an international language (EIL) and a lingua franca (ELF). These have problematised the criterion 'native speaker production' in contemporary definitions of authenticity to the extent,

arguably, of its exclusion from them (see discussion on this in Pinner, 2016, Chapter 3).

This is particularly important as we consider the interactions among millions of language users interacting online in English, at varying proficiency levels and degrees of 'nativeness'. These interactions certainly constitute 'real' messages (to revert to one of Morrow's criteria) in the sense that there is genuine communicative intent. Looking back at Widdowson's early definition of authenticity as being a factor of 'the relationship between the [text] and the reader' and being dependent on 'appropriate response' (1979, p. 80), we can see how these types of online interactions fit this characterisation of authenticity as 'responsive' – and indeed, this will be the focus of the main part of the chapter. Once more, Widdowson's definition can be seen to coincide with Van Lier's concept of authenticity as something that is not only 'responsive' but dynamic, in that it involves perception and engagement; 'authenticity is the result of acts of authentication' among the users of the language (Van Lier, 1996, p. 128).

Interpreted from a pedagogical slant, authenticity is therefore not a factor of the input itself, but of the *task*; what we do with the input, the activity performed and the learner's involvement with it. The notion that 'task authenticity' supersedes 'text authenticity' for pedagogical expediency derives from this theoretical perspective (see, for example, Guariento and Morley, 2001) and will be the subject of the main part of this chapter. This conceptualization of authenticity is, furthermore, a perfect fit with some of the factors we know to be most essential to language acquisition, and makes for its significance in language teaching.

It includes, first of all, *engagement* 'authentication is … a personal process of engagement' (Van Lier, 1996, p. 128) which we know to be a crucial affective factor in language learning (see, for example, Tomlinson 2016, Masuhara 2016). We can see that there is a symbiosis between the *task* and the *degree of engagement* with it, the degree of engagement authenticating the task. Authenticity has also been characterized in terms of motivation: 'authenticity relates to processes of … *intrinsic motivation'* (Van Lier, 1996, p. 125) with motivation largely accepted as the most fundamental factor for (language) learning (as Dornyei and Ushioda say of their 2013 book; 'cultivating motivation is crucial to a language learner's success'). It is, however, the association of authenticity with *response* (see the Widdowson quote above, 1979, p. 80), that most resonates with contemporary language use in the online environment. The significance of response, of course, is that it is a crucial factor for language learning, in the sense that it externalises affect (see, for example Arnold, 1999).

Digital Behaviour

In order to see how 'response' has emerged as a key signifier for twenty-first century language learners, it is necessary to characterise both the learners and the online environment in which they mingle. Can we claim, first of all, that cyberspace is the 'natural habitat' of this generation of learners (see discussion on 'digital natives below)? While economic differences between first and third worlds materially influence the digital devices and networks which people have access to, it is clear that the internet is nonetheless a worldwide presence. According to 2016 statistics (from Internet World Stats 2016), the continent with lowest internet usage, Africa, with only 10% of world users of the Internet, still has 126 million users of the most popular social networking site, Facebook, within its population of over a billion. If we look at another continent with high proportions of English language users and learners, namely Asia (India, China, Korea, Japan, Pakistan etc.), we see 44% internet penetration within its four billion inhabitants, with just under a third of internet users accessing Facebook. The statistics for Europe are predictably higher, with just under 75% internet penetration and just over 33% of the population on Facebook. North America, at the top end of the scale, has extremely high internet penetration, nearly 90% of its population, with 66% of networked users on Facebook.

A 2015 report on international youth and technology has proved invaluable for focusing on the online behaviour of the younger generation. The 2015 OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) report is based on data from 42 countries collected via the PISA programme of 2012. PISA (The Programme for International Student Assessment) evaluated educational systems by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-olds internationally. PISA revealed these young people to have almost universal access to at least one computer in all the OECD countries. The OECD average for children's daily computer use outside of school was 104 minutes on weekdays and 138 minutes at weekends, and technology was clearly found to be pervasive in the daily lives of the respondents.

The term 'digital native', signifying 'a generation comfortable with technology', was coined by Prensky (2001) to describe the current generation growing up in the digital era. This useful term has become somewhat controversial in the research partly because it is taken to imply a sophisticated knowledge and ability for critical use of the digital/online environment, which many digital natives do not have. It has been said that they are not 'tech-savvy' so much as 'tech-comfy' and indeed, the OECD report findings suggest that there is not a strong correlation between

familiarity with digital interfacing and competent evaluation skills. The term is nevertheless useful shorthand to describe the digital generation so I therefore use it 'critically' in this chapter.

The internet has undoubtedly transformed the way, and the language, in which we interact. One of these changes has to do with pragmatics, *the connection between language and the message it conveys*. So much of what we see, hear and read in both the traditional media and digital media today, boils down to the exchange of audio and/or visual 'sound bites'. These are presented on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat as 'memes' (photographs with captions), 'vines' (six-second amateur videos) etc., the communicative purpose of which are to prompt reaction and response. The semiotics of response, in the online media, has developed correspondingly; there are thousands of 'emoticons' (known colloquially as emojis) expressing feelings from the original 'like' (thumbs up symbol or smiley face) to sadness, embarrassment, flirtatiousness, anger and so on. With these digital realisations of response, along with the 'comments' facility of social media, response has become a key signifier for the digital media and in effect, the 'common parlance' of this generation of learners.

To see how response emerges as almost a default mode in their behaviour, let us briefly characterise the behaviour of this generation of 'digital natives'. Connectivity is the driving force for the digital native. Attachment to shared digital communities is essential, which accounts for the popularity of Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. Social networking sites had 2.2 billion users worldwide in 2016 (Internet World Stats 2016). Within these environments, digital natives show themselves to be multimodal manipulators, producers and creators of media/messages as well as receivers and responders ; we see them authoring, processing and publishing pictures, sounds and videos via the various media. The shift from 'tell' to 'show' – from language to semiotics - is evident, epitomized, perhaps, by the ubiquitous 'selfie'.

Towards Task Authenticity 2.0

If digital native interaction is characterised by, and is conducted via, messages whose chief 'communicative purpose' is to stimulate response, then response can be said to be an *authenticating act* for digital natives. The giving and receiving of response acts consolidates belonging within this environment. For digital natives, then, this dynamic mass of collaborative, user-generated material represents *their* authentic materials,

defined as *that which is learner-authenticated* (see reference to Van Lier, 1996 above).

It is important at this point to relate the above to what we know about conditions for learning in order to see its striking potential. The affordance of knowledge-transferability on Web 2.0 can be seen as a 'concretisation' of the education philosophy of social constructivism (e.g. Vygotsky, 1978), and the idea of 'collective learning', knowledge as being socially constructed; 'Web 2.0 is fuelled by collective intelligence' (Kárpáti, 2009, p. 144). A second aspect is the affordance for creativity; creativity being the ultimate high-level thinking skill in terms of learning, according to Bloom's Taxonomy (revised version, Anderson, Krathwohl & Bloom, 2001).

The corollary of all this is that if response is an authenticating act for digital natives, it is all the more essential to design response into learning tasks in order for them to be perceived as 'authentic' in the digital native learners' terms. The importance of 'task authenticity' as a learning concept, therefore, re-emerges ever more strongly in the digital era. 'Re-emerges' because of course the notion of task authenticity has strong antecedents. The crucial effect that task can have on learning was most clearly acknowledged in the teaching methodology termed task- based language teaching (TBLT), originally known as TBL, task-based learning (Willis, 1996). In TBLT, the key learning factor was the purposeful nature of the learning task, the fact that it was goal-based; in other words, it was presented to, and intended to be perceived by the learners as 'authentic'. This shift of authenticity as an attribute from text to task, had been initiated by Widdowson is his early genuineness – authenticity distinction (1979) referred to above, and was pursued in works such as Guariento and Morley (2001), who saw the necessity of ceding 'genuineness' to the achievement of authentic response via the task. Building on this evolution, in my own previous recommendations for 'task authenticity' (Mishan, 2005), in a book published on the cusp of Web 2.0 (which dates from 2004), the proposed principles of task authenticity already had response at their core: 'In order for tasks to be authentic, they should be designed to … elicit response to/engagement with the text on which they are based' (Mishan, 2005, p. 75) (see Figure 1). The need to 'approximate real-life tasks' (my original principle 4, ibid.) loops back to response, which, as I have argued above, has become the norm in contemporary online interactions.

In order for tasks to be authentic, they should be designed to

1. Reflect the original communicative purpose of the text on which they are based.
2. Be appropriate to the text on which they are based.
3. Elicit response to/engagement with the text on which they are based.
4. Approximate real-life tasks.
5. Activate learners' existing knowledge of the target language and culture.
6. Involve purposeful communication between learners.

Figure 1: Task authenticity principles, Mishan, 2005, p. 75.

These original principles took 'task' as being enacted in relation to a 'text', with factors of task authenticity including 'reflection of the original communicative purpose of the text on which they are based' (principle 1, ibid), but I maintain that with some slight shifting of focus they can relate as well to *interactions* in the online environment. Today, the notion of 'text' embraces the likes of memes, vines, YouTube videos and comments on them, as well as extracts from mainstream media such as a newspaper posted on social media. The chief 'communicative purpose' of such 'texts', as I have argued above, is to promote reaction and response. They stimulate communication and interaction, once more emphasising response as a central, driving mechanism for today's digital generation.

It is clear from the above that the notion of task authenticity is relative to historical as well as geographical context. One of the earliest enactments of task was working with railway timetables in India (reported in Prabhu's seminal book on task-based learning, 1987), which would not be perceived as relevant or authentic to many of today's learners or learners in contexts in which rail travel is little used. This highlights the principle that familiarity with an environment is also a factor of perceived authenticity – and for many of today's learners, their default comfort zone is online.

A final criterion for task authenticity emerging from the above has to do with authorship. This is pointed out by Kramsch, Ness and Lam (2000) who note that *authorship* – users generating their own contributions to the digital community – is another authenticating factor within this environment. (Interestingly, Kramsch et al. were already writing in 2000 in a pre-Web 2.0 era about the 'World Wide Web'). Kramsch et al. emphasise that authorship endows learners with the authenticating potency of 'agency'– the power to take meaningful actions and see the results of these decisions (Murray 1997, p. 126 cited in Kramsch et al. 2000). There is a mutual relationship between authorship and response: authorship is in a way the 'flip-side' of response, and is thus an aspect we need to build into our contemporary notion of task authenticity, our 'task authenticity 2.0'.

This revised version of my original concept of task authenticity is given in Figure 2:

In order for tasks to be authentic, they should be designed to:

1. Reflect the original communicative purpose of the text or interaction on which they are based.
2. Be appropriate to the text or interaction on which they are based.
3. Elicit response to/engagement with the text or interaction on which they are based.
4. Approximate real-life tasks.
5. Involve authorship.
6. Activate learners' existing knowledge of the target language and culture.
7. Involve purposeful communication.

Figure 2: 'Task authenticity 2.0'

'Task authenticity 2.0', my shorthand for 'task authenticity for the digital age', thus embraces previous elements of task authenticity while also extending beyond them. It offers parameters for the design of tasks based on the reciprocal relationship between texts, interactions and users, and which exploit and stimulate the dynamic nature of authenticity in such a way as to be perceived by learners as authentic and thus authenticated by them; thereby upholding the conception of authenticity proposed by Van Lier and put forward at the start of this chapter. It should be clear from this that the concept of 'task authenticity 2.0', while obviously echoing 'Web 2.0', is intended to coincide with contemporary learner mind-sets and is not intended to limit tasks to using material from the Web or to require learners to use digital devices.

Task Authenticity 2.0: From Theory to Practice

Applying theory to practice, some samples from my own teaching are given here to illustrate these redefined task authenticity principles.

Task 1. Cyberbullying

A multi-cultural group of University students at CEFR B2 level studying at a university in Ireland had been working within the theme of teenage behaviour. For this task, the group was shown a short but affecting video on cyberbullying that was available on YouTube. The video had been made by

a secondary school pupil within the local community and was thus in itself 'genuine' to use the Widdowson distinction. In order to garner response, and as the class was not in a PC lab and students could not simply click their reactions, I presented the universal 'happy' and 'sad' emojis on screen and asked learners to turn to their neighbour and share these reactions. (I observed that this multi-cultural group were thoroughly familiar with these symbols as members of the global digital community). Building quickly from this response, the learners were asked to participate in a role-play in which they were either a youngster being cyberbullied or a teacher to whom the youngster turns for advice. The final step in the task requires learners to develop various sets of guidelines about cyberbullying suitable for parents, for pupils and for teachers. They were encouraged to create mnemonic devices as in the original video they had viewed, which had used 'Stop, Block, Tell'. Using response as its starting point, therefore, and building in authorship, purposeful interaction and fulfilment of a real-world task, this activity can be successfully matched against the conditions for 'task authenticity' in Figure 2 above.

Task 2. Getting to know you

This simple 'getting to know you' activity is considered to be authentic for today's learners partly in its use of that most ubiquitous digital native tool, the mobile device. Another authentic aspect is that it coincides with the characterisation of the digital generation (see above) as favouring graphics over text. In this activity, it can be seen that media accessed on the mobile device, in this case photographs, substitute printed photographs that might have been used in an earlier era.

This familiarisation activity is intended for one of the first classes of a language course. Students are asked to take out their mobile devices and find partners and are given the following prompt:

Show your partner a picture of:
- A friend
- A member of your family
- Your pet
- A place
- A social event
- Someone doing something funny

(This activity is based on Hockly 2013, IATEFL conference)

(The prompts can be adjusted to suit the profile of the learner group: these prompts were designed for university students level B1 and above).

The enactment of this task is interesting. The rubric 'show your partner a picture of…' strategically avoids prompts such as 'talk about', 'discuss with your partner', as conversation naturally ensues when people show each other 'personal' pictures of people and activities in their lives. The conversation is, likewise, intrinsically 'communicative' in line with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles, in the sense that it is meaningful and purposeful. This corresponds to principle number 7 of the task authenticity principles above (Figure 2), with the other principles, notably reflecting a real-life task (number 4) and number 3, eliciting response, likewise fulfilled.
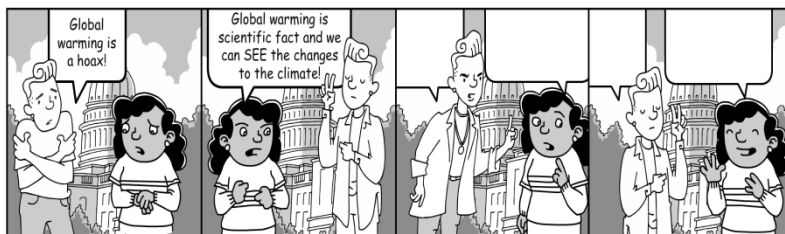
Activity 3. Meme

This version of the previous 'getting to know you activity' builds on developing relationships within the class so is recommended once the class rapport has been established. As with the previous activity, students use their mobile devices as a tool or resource: they are asked to work in pairs to create a 'meme'. As described earlier, memes are effectively photographs with humorous captions. These can be generated using Apps which can be easily downloaded to mobile devices, such as the iTunes 'Meme Producer' (available on Apple devices such as iPads and iPhones). A basic theme can be set, such as 'pets', 'holidays', 'leisure time', 'eating out', or depending on the students' age and how well they know each other, more stimulating rubrics such as 'get me out of here!', 'What you don't know about me/us…'. The stated task aim given to the learners is to create a meme, i.e. write a humorous or poignant caption for a photograph and submit the meme for ranking by the class. (This can be done by submitting the meme to a class web-page or social media site or, in tertiary institutions, to the class site on an institution's virtual learning environment (Blackboard, Moodle etc)). The procedure is therefore to find a suitable photograph in the archives on their devices, or take a photograph specifically for the purpose and add the meme caption. Figure 3 shows a sample meme produced on iTunes' Meme Producer for the theme 'pets' in a Spanish language learning class. This task complies with task authenticity principles on the same grounds as the previous one, and, with a well-designed rubric, it can be both intellectually and linguistically challenging.

Figure 3: Meme: 'When you buy wine for your cat … and he plays with the box'

Activity 4. Debate

Like the ones above, this task also has graphics at its core, this time a cartoon. The cartoon for this activity was generated from the website Makebeliefscomix.com. Makebeliefscomix, as its name suggests, allows the user to author comic strips. It offers a short comic strip (of two to four panels) which can be populated by a wide cast of characters with speech/thought balloons, and a choice of backgrounds, background colours and objects. The potential of this genre for instigating debate/discussion is illustrated in this sample by that perennial topic, the environment, but of course any issue of the teacher or students' choosing can be used.

Figure 4: Cartoon used to introduce debate or discussion: 'the environment'

The characters are used here to introduce the topic for discussion/debate and two panels are left blank for the participants to continue it. The cartoon can also be used to spark a more extensive discussion. Alternatively, the teacher might opt for a formal debate style, with one of the two characters' utterances being the motion e.g. 'Global warming is a hoax'. Students then take or are allocated sides and are given time to research and prepare their arguments for presenting in the debate forum. As in the previous tasks, this activity plays to this generation's preference for, and disposition to respond to, image rather than text. The use of cartoons and images for serious political and social satire is highly prevalent on social and other media (and is of course rooted in a strong historical tradition), and is thus very familiar to today's learners. Other authenticating aspects of the task (see Figure 2 task authenticity principles) include the way it stimulates response, engagement and authorship and activates learners' own world knowledge and social awareness. The task constitutes a 'real-life' spoken genre, a debate or discussion. Its communicative aspect enhanced by the strong element of competitiveness.

Conclusion

In this chapter, starting with a snapshot of 'where we are today' in refining the concept of authenticity, I have suggested that authenticity has of necessity shaken off its association with the 'text or material' - Widdowson's 'genuineness'. This is due to the now indefinable shades of 'native speakerness' of origin and the translocation of so much 'text' or 'material' onto the insubstantial interface that is the internet. I have endeavoured to characterise the present generation of learners within the digital environment which permeates society, and I have emphasised how response and authorship are central to their interactions within this. This led us to revisit the notion of task authenticity and to rework it as a concept that can be said to have 'come of age' in the digital era in the re-invigorated form of 'task authenticity 2.0'.

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