



USE OF AUTHENTIC TEXTBOOKS TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND CULTURAL EMPOWERMENT IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM FOR THE HIGHER SECONDARY CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

In a typical teaching-learning situation, the textbook is an important element after the student and teacher. They are an important source to conduct language classes more effectively, especially in the Indian context. Consequently, they should be prepared with utmost care. Their preparation should, primarily, take into account the learners' need and should be useful enough to attain the learners' goals. For the attainment of the aims the textbook should contain carefully selected material. As it is well-known, one of the purposes of language teaching is to help the learner gain proficiency in the language, i.e., proficiency in the four skills—listening, speaking, reading and writing. While most textbooks aim to achieve this goal, they fail, very often, to achieve the purpose of culturally empowering the learner. One of the things that plays an important part in enhancing communication is the role of textbooks and other additional materials that are used in English classes. The importance of textbooks stands in the fact that their authenticity should meet the needs of our students. Present research paper focuses on how to use textbook and authentic materials to develop students' communicative competence and culturally empower the learners. Its aim is to address the above issues with special reference for the Higher Secondary Classes.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as a Second Language (ESL), Course books or Textbooks, Authentic texts, Communicative Competence.

1 INTRODUCTION

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Presently, English is considered as a global language. It is also called a world language or common language or international language. In India, as in the case of many countries, the English language is a legacy of the British Empire. In the 21st century English has occupied a prominent place in various fields. With the arrival of multinational companies and because of the boom in the IT, corporate and financial sectors in India, people, especially the youth, are increasingly becoming aware of the importance of the language in the country. Companies and firms look for young men who are proficient in English. Very often they complain about the dearth of such youth. It is now commonly accepted that students who have had their education in urban centers of learning, who can use English effectively, get into such places more easily than their rural counterparts. Rather than allowing the latter group to sink in despair, they should be enabled to empower themselves linguistically and culturally by providing the right kinds of materials through the medium of textbooks and other materials. According to Sheldon, “Course books (textbooks) are perceived by many to be the route map of any ELT programmer.” (1988:238) They are an important source to conduct language classes more effectively.

2. Literary Review:

2.1 Criteria for Selecting Textbooks and Limitations of English Classes:

A teacher should choose a text books because it is the teacher that knows the needs of his/her students. Nowadays there are offered different textbooks and the possibility of choosing but this has its own advantages and disadvantages. Harding (2007:10) emphasizing “ the use of authentic materials provides some guidelines for ESP teachers for the approach they need to take and some does and don’ts as follows: Think about what is needed, Understand the nature of your students’ subject area or vocation., Spend time working out their language needs in relation to the subject., Use contexts, texts, and situations from the students’ subject area., exploit authentic materials that the students use in their specialism or vocation, Make the tasks authentic as wells as the texts , Motivate the students with variety, relevance, and fun. , Try to take the classroom into the real world that the students inhabit, and bring their real world into the classroom.”

2.2 Authenticity and Authentic Textbooks Material in the Language Classroom:

The term authentic materials have been defined in different ways throughout the literature. According to McDonough and Shaw (1993:43), authenticity can be described as, “a term which loosely implies as close an approximation as possible to the world outside the classroom, in the selection both of language material and of the activities and methods used for practice in the classroom.” In the words of Gellet, “Authenticity means that nothing

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of the original text is changed and also that its presentation and layout are retained” (Grellet, 1981:8). According to Breen, “The authentic role of the classroom is the provision of those conditions in which the participants can publicly share the problems, achievements and overall process of learning a language together as socially motivated and socially situated activity.” (1985:68)

Authentic texts are around us in real life. They provide various opportunity to language learners to use communicative language and develop communicative competence in their lives. Some examples of authentic materials are newspaper, magazine, railway timetable, telephone, literature, radio news, internet, directions, videos and various practical group activities etc. To achieve the maximum of success while applying communicative language teaching a great importance should be given to the use of authentic materials.

2.3 The Impact of Authentic Materials on Second Language Teaching:

Authentic Materials and sample communicative activities, which can supplement the analyzed school textbooks. The materials will have an authenticity that allows language and communicative applications. The sample activities will enable students to use multiple language skills while developing their communicative competence. In our classrooms we use a variety of materials to teach English as a foreign language, but one of the most important materials that is the basic one and we use it for instruction are textbooks.

2.4 Textbook Analysis:

Textbook analysis could show whether an English class provides authentic materials and communicative activities. Textbook analysis is an important because textbook analysis also allow teachers to check the usefulness of chosen materials. “Evaluating ELT Textbooks and Materials” by L. Sheldon is an article that provides insights into identifying learners’ needs and producing authentic materials appropriate to the culture of learners. It focuses on classroom observation and activities, common theoretical and practical problems, previous evaluative proposals and suggests textbook evaluation criteria in a systematic way.

2.5 Students Needs Analysis and Aware Students to Use Authentic Textbooks:

Learners that are learning through self-discovery need plenty of authentic data to shape awareness about language. Authentic text may fulfill these requirements as it enables learners to become part of the learning process by formulating their own assertions about vocabulary and lexical relationships. In the textbook authors provide preparation tips, how to listen and understand text material, difficulty words meaning and vocabulary and comprehensions skills

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exercise in beginning and end. It motivates learners to understand language effectively. Weak students might feel uncomfortable with authentic material. Teacher should take interest to design materials, adapt textbooks and other authentic material to fulfill learners need to learn second language in a classroom. Harmer and Lamie (2001) “suggest teachers should focus on above things,

- 1) Add activities to those already suggested (in textbook or Course book)
- 2) Leave out activities that do not meet yours learners’ needs
- 3) Replace or adapt activities or adapt activities or materials with:
 - Supplementary materials from other commercial texts
 - Authentic materials from other commercial texts
 - Teacher-created supplementary materials
- 4) Change the organizational structure of the activities, for example, pairs, small group, or whole class activities”

It is teachers’ role to understand students’ needs to motivate and involve them in second language learning. As Berardo (2006) mentions “authentic materials can be used to promote motivation and give learners a “sense of achievement” and encourage them for further reading. Authentic textbooks are beneficial learner to get autonomy in language learning and develop Communicative competence to face real world.

3. Authentic Materials and Communicative Competence:

Communicative competence refers to a learner’s ability to use language to communicate successfully. According to Norm Chomsky in his very influential books *Aspects of Theory of Syntax* drew what has been today viewed as a classic distinction between competence (the monolingual speakers –listener’s knowledge of language) and performance (the actual use of language in real situations). The aims of communicative language teaching and communicative approach is to develop learners’ communicative competence. Canale and Swain (1980) defined, “it as composing competence in four areas: first Words and rules, second Appropriacy, third Cohesion (grammatical link) and Coherence (appropriate combination of communication functions) and fourth Use of communication strategies.” Authentic text provide various opportunity to arrange various practical activity in classroom. Teacher should arrange various practical activity eg. Interviews, role play activity, letters for writing, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, summarizing and note making activity with authentic material. It will be beneficial to students to develop their competency level and abilities to perform well in real life world.



4. Authentic Materials and Cultural Empowerment:

Textbooks and authentic materials motivate learners to understand language effectively. If students fail to understand language with authentic material then they will negotiate another material. Teachers should expose sentence, contextual and vocabulary meaning to develop students' cultural empowerment. As Frantz Fanon rightly argues, "A man who has a language consequently process the world expressed and implied by that language ... to speak a language is to take on a world, cultural." (2001: 1). This is true of one's mother tongue or First language. The question is: should the learning of a second language like English in India focus only on gaining linguistic proficiency or should it aim at culturally empowering the learner? Always we must have clear objectives in mind when using authentic materials". All kinds of materials such as magazines, extracurricular books, brochures, pamphlets adapted to the age and language level of students should be used whenever possible to perform different tasks." (Goodman, 1982). It will be beneficial to enhance students' communicative competence and cultural empowerment in real life context.

5. Guideline to Designing Effective Materials:

Textbooks, Authentic materials and modified effective materials assist teachers in creating a learning environment to motivate students. Teachers should spend some time to select, evaluate, adapt and in the creation of material to use in the language classroom. Teachers should arrange English language authentic material to fulfill learners' needs. Teachers should understand the curriculum and the context to prepare well the materials for the language classroom. Teachers should use simple language and vocabulary to prepare English language material because it will help learners to understand language effectively. It should be contextualized. They should use appropriate instruction and flexible language. It should develop language skills and provide opportunity to integrate language skills. It should be focused on to develop students' confidence and communicative competence in the language classroom.

6. Scope and Limitation:

It is hoped that the present study will enable the researcher to make a critical evaluation of the textbooks taken up for the assessment. It will throw light on the imbalance that exists in the current textbooks which is a consequence of the undue importance given to the language aspects. The study may prove helpful to syllabus designers in the future, once the weaknesses of the existing books are analyzed. Because it attempts to suggest ways of treating materials and exercises for cultural empowerment, the study might prove useful to learners and teachers alike. However, the present study focuses only on the English textbooks of Classes XI and XII. Since the materials in textbooks are graded to spread over different standards, i.e., from



Classes I to XII. The study of textbooks up to Class X is not a part of the present research work. That indeed is a limitation.

7. Conclusion:

Textbooks and Authentic materials have been many times discussed as beneficial in teaching English for different skills. However, for settings other than general English, these materials may also work as a motivating feature and as a link between students' general knowledge of language and their professional language needs. Thus, Use of Authentic Textbooks material helps to Develop Communicative Competence and Cultural Empowerment in the Language Classroom

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