REVIEWING DEFINITIONAL AMBIGUITIES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF TEXT AUTHENTICITY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The premise of this paper is to define and address the ambiguities surrounding the concept of text *authenticity* in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT).

Methodology: It represents a critical review of a series of research studies aimed at defining the concept of text *authenticity* and investigating the effect of text *authenticity* on ESL/EFL learners' individual differences, namely ESL/EFL learner motivation and communicative competence. However, wherever possible, for the purpose of maintaining criticality, data associated with pedagogic/contrived materials are also discussed.

Main Findings: The aspects of text *authenticity* may be situated in the text itself, the participants, social or cultural situations and purposes of the communicative act, or some combination of these elements. In addition, deficiency in learners' overall communicative competence in the English language can be attributed to teachers' exclusive reliance on contrived text materials presented in the form of textbooks.

Applications of this study: It is strongly recommended that teacher training courses aim to develop classroom teachers' practical knowledge and skills necessary for designing and evaluating TESOL materials. Reaching a consensus among researchers on the issue of the effects of authentic materials on ESL/EFL students' motivation and overall communicative competence can have fundamental implications not only for developing language curricula but also for promoting learner autonomy.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study addressed the ambiguities surrounding the concept of text *authenticity* by proposing a typology encompassing eight possible inter-related definitions of text *authenticity* emerging in the ELT literature. More importantly, the paper structured a triangulation framework for introducing authentic materials into language classrooms:1) careful implementation of learner need-analysis, 2) criteria-based selection of authentic texts in the light of learner need-analysis, 3) utilization of task-based learning approach stressing the importance of activating learner schemata, awareness-raising activities, and task differentiation. This triangulation methodology is likely to reduce the difficulty of text *authenticity* and realize comprehensible input.

Keywords: Text Authenticity, Ambiguities, Teaching, Competence, Motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Definitions of Authentic Materials

Although the call for a more learner-centered pedagogy has long existed in English language teaching, viewpoints are still very controversial on what type of materials should be used in language classrooms. Nunan (1991, p. 208) provides a comprehensive, yet practical, definition for the term *materials*: "the tangible and visible aspect of the curriculum". Subjected to scrutiny, defining materials in this way emphasizes text materials that encompass "textbooks, worksheets, computer software, authentic materials, teacher-written materials, and learner-generated materials" (McGrath, 2002, p.7). The breadth of materials specified by this definition is only one of the many variables of the curriculum; including learner needs analysis and assessment (McDonough & Shaw, 2000). To correct this misconception, the role of materials in language classrooms is only that of contributing to realizing course goals and intended learning outcomes; they should not be viewed as goals in themselves. There is no controversy concerning the role of materials as a crucial element of language curriculum development. However, disagreements remain about whether materials used in language classrooms should be authentic.

The issue of text *authenticity* emerged in the 1960s in the activity of ELT in virtue of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach that took precedence over traditional learning theories. The concept of *authenticity* is complex and intricate due to its embracing research from various fields, including discourse analysis, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, cognitive and social psychology, learner motivation, and materials development (Gilmore, 2007, p. 97). By surveying sources aimed at defining what the concept of *authentic materials* means, eight possible inter-related meanings emerged in ELT literature. Subjected to analysis, they appear so familiar in many features that it is possible to summarize them into a typology of three categories.

The first category encompasses four definitions focusing mainly on the participants: "Authenticity relates to the language produced by native/real speakers/writers for native speakers in a particular language community for conveying a real message rather than teaching purposes" (Morrow, 1977, p. 13; see also: Nunan, 1988, p. 102; Little & Singleton,

1991, p. 124; Benson &Voller, 1997, p. 76). In this vein, Gardner &Miller (1999, p. 103) identified eleven kinds of authentic materials: newspapers, magazines, user manuals, leaflets and brochures, foreign mission information, material from international companies and airlines, letters, faxes, and e-mails; TV and radio broadcasts, lectures, videos, and songs.

This definition is operational and best suited to empirical studies because it specifies four objective criteria (real language, a real speaker/writer, a real audience, and a real message), which need to be met by a text for it to be called authentic. Moreover, it has some validity by focusing specifically on native speakers being expected to be capable of identifying authentic texts with little hesitation and considerable accuracy (Porter &Roberts, 1981, p. 37). On the other hand, this definition demonstrates this in relation to the terms 'native' or 'real' speaker'. This could be treated as ambiguous because English as an international language has diversified into a multitude of varieties, varying in pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary, and grammar. This diversity necessarily expands to include differences in socio-cultural aspects. Further, a large number of non-native-speaking countries are now adopting English as a second language to express their identities, values, and business affairs (House, 2004).

The second category comprises three commonly attested definitions stressing the importance of classroom communication: "Authenticity means the interaction and engagement between students and teachers when performing an authentic task in a social situation" (Van Lier, 1996, p. 126; see also Guariento & Morley, 2001, p. 347 and Rost, 2002,p. 154). Arguably, learners cannot make classroom language authentic because of the inability to provide the contextual conditions required for this. Thus, Widdowson (2003) recognizes that "simplified texts that gradually approximate authentic texts are more pedagogically appropriate". On the other hand, many researchers criticize Widdowson's view and state that all levels of students can learn authentic materials if texts are carefully chosen (Gilmore, 2007, p. 108). Swan (1985, as cited in Gilmore, 2007) compromises these two extremes and states: "in order not to lose sight of the principles involved, it is desirable to use both scripted and authentic materials at different points in a language course".

The last category views authenticity from a cultural perspective: "Authenticity relates to culture and the ability to behave or think like a target language group to be recognized and validated by them" (Gilmore, 2007). This meaning should be cautiously interpreted because it refers to second language literacy from a social perspective. Gee (1991) defines literacy as "a socio-culturally distinctive and integrated way of thinking, acting, interacting, talking, and valuing social identity" (Gee, 1991, p. 330). This definition infers cultural assimilation (McKay, 1993, p. 23). It brings with it a highly controversial issue in the ELT literature: what is the appropriate type of culture to be presented in language input, the learners' culture, the target culture, or a variety of international cultures? There is no definite answer to this issue in the literature because each type has several potential advantages and disadvantages. For example, teaching based upon the learners' culture may reinforce national identity (Widdowson, 2003) and allows students to depend on top-down processing due to learning being supported by familiar content (Richards, 1990). On the other hand, teaching based upon the learners' culture may also impede learners of their natural curiosity in relation to different cultures (Byram, 1991). This could result in a lack of learner's motivation to learn a foreign language. Decisions over which type of culture that should be introduced in ELT materials vary from place to place because it may be viewed as an ideological issue related to historical and cultural factors. For instance, Greek students have been found to prefer British English to the American model due to historical tensions between Greece and the USA (Prodromou, 1992).

To avoid the negative influence of ideologies on language pedagogy, ELT materials need to incorporate a wide variety of international cultures. Consequently, McVeigh (2002) claims, "materials presenting only the target culture in international contexts are doomed to unsuccessful because they may disenfranchise students, who then retreat into their inner world to defend their own integrity". To develop learners' intercultural communicative competence, teaching should be based on the principle of negotiating meaning (Long & Ross, 1996). In other words, the teacher introduces students to target culture and then moves to their native culture. This raises a significant question: should second language literacy be viewed as an individual skill or as a social practice? No view of literacy is neutral, and hence there cannot be a disinterested, objective, or value-free answer. Literacy is always ideological (Auerback, 1991, p. 71). However, it can be argued that the contemporary world demands that people be capable of creating new knowledge and novel ways of thinking (Christie, 1990, p. 21).

Since literacy uses a symbolic system, language, to mediate between the self and society, enables us to read, think, and write about the world around us, second language literacy needs to be viewed as a tool, a method to learn about the world and a means to participate more fully in the global society. Taking this into consideration, the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association have emphasized the necessity for teaching six areas of literacy: listening, reading, and viewing as receptive skills besides speaking, writing, and presenting visual information as expressive ones (NCTE, 2007). However, for avoiding definitional ambiguity, the concept of authenticity should be limited to objective criteria rather than subjective notions such as learner, situation, and task authenticity, because these references make any discourse authentic and this appears to be meaningless and misleading.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study is to define and address the ambiguities surrounding the concept of text *authenticity* in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). Thus, this study represents a critical review of a series of research studies aimed at defining the concept of text *authenticity* and investigating the effect of text *authenticity* on ESL/EFL learners' individual differences, namely ESL/EFL learner motivation and communicative competence. However, wherever possible, for the purpose of maintaining criticality, data associated with pedagogic/contrived materials were also discussed.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Authentic Materials: Advantages and Disadvantages

A substantial body of the literature emphasizes the significance of the use of authentic materials in ELT activity owing to their being a source of true, natural and contextualized discourse; the materials are interesting, motivational for learners and relevant to their needs; presenting an opportunity for intercultural learning environment; representing a means for a teacher to achieve professional development, and last, but not least they are rich in cohesive devices that are essential for the promotion of understanding and input processing. The proponents of these claims include King (1990), Crandall (1995), Nutall (1996), Peacock (1997), Richards (2001), Cook (2004), Larsen-Freeman (2002), McGrath (2002), Graesser et al. (2003) and Pinter (2006).

At the other end of the spectrum, a considerable number of writers, including Prodromou (1996), Shook (1997), Young (1999), Richards (2001) and Widdowson (2003) criticize and discourage teachers from using this type of materials for their linguistic complexity, precisely their lexical and grammatical difficulty. Therefore, Widdowson (2003, p. 107) maintains, "Pedagogic presentation of language necessarily involves methodological contrivance, and this does not impede the learner's development of communicative competence". Conversely, Tomlinson (2001, p. 67) criticizes Widdowson's views, stating that "pedagogic materials are definitely superficial in their coverage of language points, and too limited language experience to meet the diverse needs of all users". Before making such conclusions, empirical evidence is needed.

Authentic Materials and Learner Communicative Competence

A considerable number of empirical studies have attributed deficiency in learners' overall communicative competence to the entire reliance on contrived text materials presented in the form of textbooks (see McCarthy, 1991, Leow, 1999, Kasper, 2001, Bardovi-Harlig, 2001, Wong, 2002, and Gilmore, (2007). McCarthy (1991) surveyed four popular ESL coursebooks, concluding that "the more common modal lexical items are often under-represented" and attributed the learners' poor linguistic competence to textbooks lacking presentation of authentic language models. McCarthy & Carter (1994, p. 91) support this conclusion and necessitate the use of discourse grammar approach presenting learners with long stretches of authentic texts.

In addition, Kasper (2001, p. 17) examined ten EFL coursebooks for the pragmatic aspects affecting appropriate language in a target situation, finding that 67% of exchanges in the books imply high social distance. This was due to the explicit and textually coded language functioning in situations. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) surveyed thirty ESL business textbooks, comparing the language employed for dialogues in authentic workplace situations with the language taught in these coursebooks, concluding that "there was almost no correspondence between the two, with only 5.2% of the 135 exponents presented in the classroom materials actually happening in the genuine meetings". She criticizes material writers for the partial focus on lexicogrammatical knowledge rather than pragmatic and sociopragmatic norms.

Gilmore (2004) made comparisons between service encounters as represented in seven textbooks and their equivalent authentic interactions, noticing a wide range of discrepancies relating to discourse features, such as lexical density, pausing, repetition, and hesitation devices. He concluded that "in an authentic service encounters, learners may have considerably more interactional demands placed on them than they are given to expect by classroom models" Gilmore (2004, p. 201). Gilmore (2007) also carried out a quasi-experimental study for a year and investigated the influence of both types of authentic and pedagogic texts on Japanese university students' overall communicative competence, concluding that statistically, the experimental group that received authentic input accomplished higher academic level over their peers taking part in the control group on the tests used to measure various kinds of competence. He attributed this outcome to authentic texts that enabled students to concentrate on a considerable number of features. So far, all studies discussed have necessitated learners' exposure and experience of authentic interactions in the language classroom.

Although these studies appear to be significant, their findings could be perceived as weak because there is no account given in any of them over whether or not these studies have examined the linguistic properties distinguishing authentic from contrived texts. Crossley et al. (2007) plugged this gap. They carried out an exploratory analysis of linguistic aspects included in edited and authentic materials through the computational tool, COH-METRIX (Graesser et al., 2004). Crossley et al. (2007) analyzed a 105-text corpus extracted from seven novice L2 textbooks. Unfortunately, their study was not successful due to the small volume and inadequacy of specificity relating to the corpus used.

Crossley &McNamara (2008) replicated the study with a larger and more specific corpus and considered various student types, genres, levels, and language skills being taught. They investigated whether or not discrepancies between authentic and simplified materials advocate assumptions that L2 pedagogic authors assume concerning the effect of such two types of material on the learner's communicative competence. The study was based upon 224 texts in eleven EFL coursebooks at an intermediate level. Of the eleven chosen coursebooks, only four were demonstrated to include authentic materials (see Pimsleur, 1995, Sokolik, 1999, Fellag, 2000 and Ryall, 2000). However, the others comprised simplified texts (see Pickett, 1991, Zukowski, 2002, Collins, 2005, Malarcher, 2004 and Smith & Mare, 2004). The researchers concluded that although no noticeable differences between the two patterns of materials were reported, authentic texts revealed a greater diversity of word types than their non-authentic ones.

In summary, there are several problems inherent in research studies aimed at establishing a correlation between authenticity and communicative competence. The first problem is the definitional ambiguities of the concept of authenticity in the ELT field. None of the previously referenced studies indicates in its report which definition of authenticity was used, and this unquestionably is a threat to the internal validity of any findings. Both researchers and readers are expected to be sure they mean the same thing when discussing the term authenticity. Some researchers may consider a text with a real communicative intent as authentic that could encompass what is developed for ESL/EFL students. Thus, it is necessary to be cautious in this way when findings from studies are compared with one another.

The second difficulty is that the failure of contrived material to develop communicative competence of a group of students relies heavily on how suitable such materials are for those learners in a context; how the materials are utilized in the form of their associated activities and how successfully the tutor mediates between the materials and the students, amongst other learners, teacher, and contextual variables. Rarely have these important variables been discussed in previous studies. Nevertheless, this does not mean researchers stop trying, but it means meaningful findings need to be based on carefully conceived research designs accounting for all variables fore-outlined. Reaching a consensus among researchers on the issue of the effect of authentic materials on the learner's communicative competence may have fundamental implications not only for material designers but also for classroom teachers.

Authentic Materials and Learner Motivation

Discussing learner individual differences in ELT raises a repeated question: whether there is a relationship between English Language Teaching (ELT) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Ellis (2008) and Cook (2004) hold controversial views regarding this point. Cook (2004, p. 12) maintains that SLA study and language teaching are independent, and he states, "instead of researching teaching methods it is more logical to inquire how people learn languages". Paradoxically, Ellis claims that the study of SLA provides a body of valuable knowledge for teachers to draw upon when evaluating their pedagogic practices (Ellis, 2008). Although Cook's view reflects a more logical approach because the study of learning itself is followed by the study of how teaching relates to learning, Ellis's claim is more insightful because making an informed decision about teaching methods, for instance, requires a deep understanding of how learners learn. This concurs with Pienemann's (1989) "teachability hypothesis", emphasizing the correlation between second language learning and teaching.

Reviewing individual learner differences in the SLA literature, it has become clear that there are twelve individual relatively consistent variables that can be divided into three main categories: physical factor (age), psychological factors (attitude, affective state, motivation, risk-taking, and personality), and cognitive factors (intelligence, language aptitude, learner styles, anxiety, learner autonomy, and learner strategies) (see Skehan, 1997, Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, Ellis, 2008, Ur, 1996 and Littlewood, 1996). Arguably, these variables are highly interrelated. To illustrate, learner autonomy necessitates learning strategies and motivation is a prerequisite for both (Oxford & Nyikos, 1997, p. 440; Ellis, 2008, p. 688). Verbal intelligence is claimed to be a significant factor contributing to language aptitudes (Ellis, 2008, p. 495). Anxiety should be viewed as a fixed personality characteristic that is likely to give rise to negative language attitudes (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993, p. 5). Applying learner strategies may lead to learner motivation and, equally, the desire for communication. Oxford (2001, p. 166) exemplifies well this interrelationship.

More importantly, researchers aiming to investigate any of these variables should bear in mind these variables have much to do with research internal validity. For example, a researcher may conclude that authentic texts increased a group of learners' motivation. However, such a result could be attributed to other influencing factors such as harmony between materials used and participants' learning styles or between the teaching method and the tasks. Thus, it is strongly recommended before embarking upon research studies aimed at exploring such learner variables, participants need to be administered a number of individual difference questionnaires in a form of learner needs-analysis. Also, it would be useful and exciting to direct research to explore the correlation between learner and teacher individual differences. Gardner & MacIntyre (1993, p. 215); Brown (1994, p. 140); Hedge (2002, p. 17); and Yule (2006, p. 163) advocate this research angle.

Learner motivation is such an influential cognitive individual difference that it is responsible for various learning outcomes (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p. 25). Thus, learner motivation is ranked on the summit of the charts in the SLA research, superior to more known individual learner variables like intelligence or age (Ellis, 2008, p. 644). Not only has this learner variable been studied from the angles of social-psychology and socio-educational, but also it has been

subjected to deconstruction: integrative-instrumental, intrinsic-extrinsic, language level, learning situation and learner level (Gardner & MacIntyer, 1993; Yule, 2006; Ellis, 2008).

Amid many alternative definitions, Crooks & Schmidt (1991, p. 498) define *motivation* as "interest in and enthusiasm for the materials used in class; persistent with the learning task, as indicated by levels of attention or action for an extended duration; and levels of concentration and enjoyment". This definition is very beneficial for empirical research aimed at measuring the effect of materials on learner motivation. Defining learner motivation in this way identifies not only two conditions or criteria (*interested in materials*, *persistent with the task*) but also four measurement tools (attentive, focused, endured, and amused). This definition is consistent with Ur's (1996), Gardner & MacIntyre's (1993) and Keller's (1983) references to 'interest' as the main element of motivation. Further, it coincides with Dörnyei's (2001) model of motivation, more specifically the 'actional stage', which is concerned with the learner's willingness and effort to realize task goals. On the other hand, this definition is criticized for limiting the causes of learner motivation to materials and tasks and ignoring other influential factors such as teaching methods, techniques, and strategies.

Many writers claim that authentic materials can promote the motivation of language learners (see King, 1990; Bacon & Finneman, 1990; Gonzalez, 1990; Little & Singleton, 1991; McGarry, 1995; Peacock, 1997; Richards, 2001; Cook, 2004 and Mishan, 2005). The fundamental justification posited to support this claim is that "authentic materials are inherently more interesting than contrived ones owing to their real intent to communicate a message rather than highlight target language" (Harmer, 2007). For this claim to be convincing, it needs to be supported by empirical research. Few empirical studies in ELT literature have investigated the relationship between authentic materials and learner motivation.

Keinbaum et al. (1986) hypothesized that "a communicative methodology in conjunction with authentic materials could elevate twenty-nine American university students' motivation for learning German, French, and Spanish for thirty weeks". Nevertheless, Keinbaum et al. (1986) concluded that the qualitative data demonstrated the students' motivation increased due to the use of authentic materials. This study can be criticized for two reasons. First, the researchers did not explain whether students' motivation resulted from the texts or the teaching method employed in the intervention. Second, out of twenty-three items on the questionnaire used to quantify the discrepancies in motivation between the two groups, only three items focused on the method and the materials exploited in the trial. Therefore, the findings should be seen far from convincing.

Gonzalez (1990) investigated the effect of authentic supplements on the motivation of forty-three American university students learning Spanish for ten weeks, and contended that "some of the qualitative data from the students' feedback and the teachers' logs demonstrated the students' positive reaction towards authentic materials". Yet, no statistically significant differences in the participants' motivation were found (Gonzalez, 1990, p. 106). Peacock (1997) can be perceived as presenting the most persuasive argument so far, reporting convincing and positive findings on the effect of authentic materials on the motivation of the EFL learner. Two beginner-level classes, an aggregate of thirty-one students at a South Korean university EFL institute, were taught with pedagogic and authentic materials alternately for twenty days (Peacock, 1997, p. 146). A significant increase was recorded in overall class motivation because of the use of authentic materials. This study is recommended due to being anchored on Crooks & Schmidt's (1991) sophisticated model of motivation that states two concrete and observable factors for recording learning motivation: interest in or enthusiasm for the materials experimented, and persistence with learning tasks noticed by the learner's level of attention or action on the activity for a long time, the level of focus and enjoying the task.

Since no single definition of authentic materials is agreed upon in these studies, it is confusing to compare their findings. Besides, no account is given of the informants' individual variables, and this makes the findings questionable. In other words, an increase in learners' motivation might be attributed to other learners' individual differences, in particular learning goals. The literature reports that learning goals make a difference in learner motivation, integrative, or instrumental (Dörnyei, 1998; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Either type can affect the student's attitude towards the materials used in the experiment. According to various authors, learners who have the integrative motivation, typically SL students, prefer authentic materials than their EFL peers with instrumental motivation (Dörnyei, 1998; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Mishan, 2005). However, little empirical support for this assumption currently exists. Central to the current study objectives, it is crucial to elaborate on opponents' claims about the negative effect of authentic materials on learner motivation.

A considerable body in the literature questioned the assumption that authentic materials can increase the motivation of language learners because of their high lexical and syntactical density, low-frequency vocabulary, idiomatic language, and opaque cultural references (Prodromou, 1996, p. 164; Widdowson, 2003, p. 187). It could be argued that rating text difficulty on lexical, idiomatic, cultural or grammatical criteria may not account for learning discouragement because this matter depends on how common these items are in the target community, the student's linguistic competence and knowledge of the topic, similarity between the L1 and L2 systems and the methodology used with texts. Further, careful implementation of learner need-analysis, selection of targeted texts in the light of the learner need-analysis, utilization of task-based learning approach stressing the importance of activating schemata and awareness-raising activities, and most importantly task differentiation are likely to reduce the difficulty of the text (Prabhu, 1987; Brown, 1994; Duff & Maley, 1990; McRae, 1996; Willis, 1996; Devitt 1997; Guariento & Morley, 2001; Widdowson, 2002).

From an SLA perspective, Nation (2001, p. 232) states that incidental learning of lexis by guessing from contextual cues is an effective method of vocabulary acquisition. It could be argued that it is true in the event that learners know 95% to 98% of running words in a text. However, if this optimal ratio is not met, is text modification suggested? No answer is given in the literature to this enquiry because this essentially relates to various learning variables where the text is used, such as the student proficiency level, the type of modification, and so forth. Even in a case where the authentic text is not explicit, there seems to be no need for its modification, because the teacher can mediate between the text and learners by drawing upon clarification, rehearsal, negotiation of meaning and most importantly, task differentiation (see Long & Ross, 1996; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005, and Derwing 2006). Willis & Willis (1996) accord with Nation's (2001) insight and point out that "text simplification may make the task more difficult due to decreasing the number of linguistic and extralinguistic cues", consequently inhibiting students from comprehending implicit meanings or acquiring the potential to understand representational and equally referential language (McRae, 1996). However, research is needed to validate these claims before making conclusions.

A large number of empirical studies provide persuasive evidence against text modification. Leow (1999) questioned results reported by Young (1999) that students cope well with authentic texts, and text modification is not effective. Leow (1999) hypothesized that simplifying the content of authentic input could make learning more successful, and in turn, enable learners to focus and acquire targeted forms that are not in their current interlanguage system (Krashen, 1982). Leow (1999) replicated the earlier study by Young (1999), and concluded that "the study provides empirical support for proponents of unedited authentic materials in the classroom….it can strongly be argued that the use of authentic texts provides a more practical alternative to simplified texts" (Leow, 1999, p. 344). He attributed the finding to the learners' internal language system. Leow's result is important because it concurs not only with the underlying assumption of constructivist theories, 'learning is an active process of data selection' (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 21) but also with Nunan's (1999) metaphor, describing language learning as growing a garden where things are learnt imperfectly in a more organic process.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Drawing upon discussions and critiques made in this paper, some implications can be arrived at. Researchers should be aware that instructional materials either in an authentic or pedagogic form are not the only variable to be investigated when researching the correlation between *authenticity* and learner's overall communicative competence. More importantly, they need to study how appropriate materials and tasks are to the learner. In short, meaningful findings need to depend on carefully conceived research designs and account for all variables embedded in a study. Nevertheless, the link between discourse competence and text *authenticity* is particular, because, in order for students to be fluent and proficient in the target language, they need to be exposed to proficient models of native speakers and writers.

In the final analysis, this paper mainly addressed six issues most relevant to the context of ESL/EFL English language teaching: 1) definitions of materials in general and authentic materials in particular; 2) advantages and disadvantages of authentic materials in theory; 3) chronological presentation of empirical studies supporting the use of authentic materials for their potential to develop the learner's overall communicative competence; 4) learner individual differences and learner motivation in particular; 5) arguments for and against the possibility of authentic materials to motivate language learners in theory; 6) chronological presentation of critical empirical studies arguing for authentic materials as a motivating source for students. However, wherever possible, and for the purpose of criticality, data associated with pedagogic/contrived materials were also discussed.

LIMITATIONS AND STUDY FORWARD

In spite of the important findings reported by the present study, there are some potential limitations that deserve mention. First, the linguistic properties distinguishing authentic from contrived texts were not thoroughly discussed. Therefore, results reported by studies in this paper must be interpreted with caution. This necessitates researchers to further investigate text *authenticity* and its effects on ESL/EFL learners from different viable perspectives, namely discourse analysis. The second limitation concerns the relationship between learner variables (age, attitude, affective state, risk-taking, personality, intelligence, language aptitude, learner styles, anxiety, learner autonomy, and learner strategies), and text *authenticity* was superficially examined. In fact, these elements have been paid scant attention in the ELT literature. Hence, future research needs to be dedicated to investigating these elements. Also, it would be useful and exciting to direct future research to explore the correlation between the learner and teacher individual differences when basing teaching on authentic materials. Third, the variable *learner motivation* has been studied from the angle of social psychology. Yet, it should have been explored from other angles such as socio-educational, integrative-instrumental, intrinsic-extrinsic, language level, learning situation, and learner level.

This suggests further studies be focused on this important learner variable and materials design. Interestingly enough classroom-based research needs to validate the assumptions that: 1) learners who have the integrative motivation, typically ESL students, prefer authentic materials than their EFL peers with instrumental motivation; 2) text simplification may make learning tasks more difficult due to decreasing the number of linguistic and extralinguistic cues, and consequently inhibits students from comprehending implicit meanings. Fourth, although the link between discourse competence and text *authenticity* appears certain because, in order for students to be fluent and proficient in the target

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language, they need to be exposed to proficient models of native speakers and writers, connections between other types of competencies and text *authenticity* have been paid less attention in theory and practice.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Ahmad carried out primary research and initial reading; he drafted the article and created its fundamental structure. Millar carried out further reading and provided feedback and input during the article's composition. He helped to shape the article in its final form.

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