

ENGLISH ROUNDTABLE: USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

November 12, 2008

06: 00 GMT

Webchat Moderator (Mark): Welcome to today's webchat! We'll get started shortly.

Damon Anderson: Hi everyone. It is so good to see you all today. Welcome to another great web chat.

Damon Anderson: As you can see, our topic is about using authentic materials.

Damon Anderson: There are several issues concerning authentic materials. The first is the definition. What are authentic materials?

Damon Anderson: According to Dr. Patricia Dunkel, anything that has been taken out of context or out of the reason for the communication is no longer authentic, but is authentic like. What do you think?

Kun Herrini: First, congratulations to Damon and Ping for having a new office...

Damon Anderson: Thanks, Kun.

Kun Herrini: They are materials that are used in the real life, like newspaper, magazines, brochures, and the others, right? Materials that are not adapted yet into the classroom use?

Damon Anderson: Yes, Kun. Newspapers and magazines and books and brochures are all examples of materials that would be authentic.

Damon Anderson: What about things like radio broadcasts, tv sitcoms, and movies?

Damon Anderson: I think that even using Dr. Dunkel's definition these are still authentic materials and not just authentic-like.

Damon Anderson: These are great resources for using in the classroom to get the sounds of English and help with listening comprehension.

Kun Herrini: What about transcript of a radio broadcast? Also TV?

Damon Anderson: This would be authentic-like because you are not using it in its original form. But the scripts are excellent resources for students.

Ping: Hello Everyone. For some reason I couldn't log on properly. It's so good to see you again, Kun and Nina.

Webchat Moderator (Mark): HI Ping, let me know if you experience further difficulty entering the chat room.

Damon Anderson: I had a teacher once ask me in a workshop if realia is considered authentic material. How would you reply to that?

Phanisara: Or the students especially EFL students can use authentic materials that are only unique in their culture and describe those materials in English.

Damon Anderson: That is an excellent thought, Nina.

Lisa Harshbarger: Hi, Damon--thanks for letting me lurk. I'm at home with a broken ankle, so I thought this would be a good use of time..

Damon Anderson: Authentic material does not have to be just from native speakers, does it?

Phanisara: I would consider realia to be authentic materials.

Phanisara: The idea, I believe, is to have something real to practice their English skills in class.

Damon Anderson: Lisa, please feel free to chime in your thoughts on this. Lisa is a RELO.

Ping: Authentic communication seems to me the real communication with a real purpose. So I think non-native speakers in ESL setting talk in English outside their class is also authentic communication.

Lisa Harshbarger: Hi, everyone. I agree with Ping--non-native speaker talk is excellent authentic material to work with. The most important thing, of course, is to let your speakers know that you're recording them!

Damon Anderson: Damon Anderson (Submitted question): I agree with Ping. So, we are talking about two things, but are combining them into one item: authentic materials and authentic communication. Should we combine them or separate them?

Damon Anderson: To follow up on what Lisa just said, teachers can go out and make some of their own recordings of authentic communication. But you do need to get permission to use it and to let people know you are recording them for an educational exercise.

Lisa Harshbarger: I think it depends on what the purpose behind your use of these materials is. Are you using them for vocabulary practice? Or speaking practice? Or reading practice?

Kun Herrini: I think combining is Ok. Hi Lisa, it's nice to have you in the chat, but I am sorry to hear about your ankle....

Phanisara: I would combine them. We can even use authentic communication as a form of authentic teaching and learning materials.

Ping: I agree with Lisa. Non-native speaker talk makes good authentic material--which is our focus for this chat.

Lisa Harshbarger: Thanks, Kun--the cast is supposed to come off sometime next week, so soon I'll be running around again.

Damon Anderson: With the advent of the Internet, the pool of resources for authentic materials is almost limitless. But you need to choose the materials wisely, and make sure you have the rights to use them in your classes.

Damon Anderson: For those who are working with high school and older students, the IIP electronic journal website listed in the abstract is a great online resource.

Kun Herrini: I absolutely agree with Damon. However, in Indonesia, it is a big thing.

Phanisara: Students just need to be exposed to variety of English usage in the world of communication.

Ping: one of the problems for our teachers here in China is that they feel they have limited access to authentic materials to be incorporated into their classroom. On the other hand, many of them would rely on using VOA materials in the class. What about your teachers there?

Webchat Moderator (Mark): If you are just joining us, welcome!

Damon Anderson: VOA is a great resource. They have lots of good teaching ideas as well.

Lisa Harshbarger: Teachers in Ukraine, where I used to work, enjoyed using VOA materials. There's even an English Language Specialist who does workshops on using these materials. The one problem with VOA materials is that they aren't really authentic, in my opinion, because someone in VOA writes them up and they're read at a fairly slow speed. But for beginners, they might be really useful, and more authentic than the textbook.

Webchat Moderator (Mark): Link to VOA English resources:
http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/other_resources.cfm

Damon Anderson: There are several major publishers that have great teaching packages to go with their print materials such as Newsweek and Time.

Damon Anderson: Mark, thank you for putting up the VOA link!

Kun Herrini: Back to Realia: I once used wayang in the effort of promoting local culture and English teaching. With the topic of 'Describing People' I asked the students to pick up any wayang character of their choice and explain the specific

and special description of the wayang, creating a situation like they are explaining to an international guests who did not know anything about wayang.

Phanisara: In Thailand, teachers just don't know how to appropriately integrate authentic materials into their classrooms. If using video, then teachers just let students sit and watch. If internet, then just students browsing--without much of teacher intervention.

Ping: I personally like the online 24 hour stream radio of NPR, too.

Damon Anderson: Nina, perhaps this would be a great workshop to do at the next Thai TESOL and Asia TESOL conference: using authentic materials.

Lisa Harshbarger: Teachers need training in using snippets of authentic materials in class and weaving that input into their regular lessons.

Kun Herrini: I just started to encourage teachers here to access VOA. I myself am trying to figure out a small workshop at our RTD about the USA. SO, if you have any ideas or and examples, please let me know.

Damon Anderson: I agree with Lisa, that many teachers need to learn how to use these authentic materials effectively in their classes.

Phanisara: Good idea. We can come up with something really interesting.

Webchat Moderator (Mark): I see the link in the abstract to the left is giving a "404" error for some reason. Here is a link to the IIP eJournalUSA site:

<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0807.html>

Damon Anderson: maybe Kun, Nina and Ping can do the presentation at Thai TESOL then repeat it in other places in the region, if there is a budget to do this and all the RELOs agree.

Damon Anderson: Thank you for the correction, Mark!!

Phanisara: Sorry we have to go. We have another meeting to attend. Thank you. And very nice to meet all of you.

Kun Herrini: Here in Indonesia, KangGuru from IALF (Australian Language Foundation) has been around for 20 years, a radio English program, very popular. Especially because they distributed materials for free, accompanied by free workshop fro teachers. The materials are connected to the National Curriculum.

Lisa Harshbarger: Kevin McCaughey, the ELSpec I worked with in Ukraine, has workshops using VOA and other materials in classrooms. I think you can Google his website for ideas in terms of resources. But designing lesson plans around these materials is probably the real issue here.

Lisa Harshbarger: Ah, a budget...

Kun Herrini: A good idea, Damon. I can coordinate with Ping and Nina. Could be a good chance for us to work together.

Kun Herrini: What do you think, Ping?

Webchat Moderator (Mark): Quick heads up...I will move the abstract offscreen in just a moment.

Ping: I'd be more than happy to work with you and Nina on this :)

Damon Anderson: Alice, please don't be shy. Just submit your question or comment.

Ping: Alice is our Access teacher here. She's also with us now.

Damon Anderson: Teachers in the big cities don't have too many problems finding authentic materials. It is the teachers in the outer areas that don't seem to be able to access things so easily. Even with the Internet, if the bandwidth is small, or the connection is slow, they may not be able to access things so easily.

Alice Yan Xu 2: Hello, all. This is Alice from BN vocational school, a charity school for migrant children. I just logged in. My question is how to use material efficient

Webchat Moderator (Mark): Hello Alice, welcome!

Damon Anderson: Alice, that is a good question. First it depends on your goals for the class and the reason for choosing the materials.

Ibrahim: Hello from Tajikistan!

Damon Anderson: Welcome, Ibrahim.

Webchat Moderator (Mark): Hi Ibrahim, welcome to the chat!

Lisa Harshbarger: I think that in order to use authentic materials effectively, you have to decide what your teaching objective is and then only use a portion of these materials that meets your objective. So if you want to use a video or an article from Time magazine in class, you first have to decide exactly when, where and how to use it in your lesson. A lot of teachers need training in this decision-making process, however.

Ibrahim: I just want to tell you that I learned English through listening VOA Special English and always recommend it to students.

Damon Anderson: That is good Ibrahim. What do you tell your students to do in order to be able to learn from VOA?

Lisa Harshbarger: Glad to hear that!

Lisa Harshbarger: Hi, Ibrahim! I had a great time in Dushanbe the last time I was there.

Kun Herrini: Hi Alice, welcome. That is the problem with most teachers here in Indonesia, too. Combined with what Damon wrote that it is indeed challenging for teachers in small cities to find authentic materials, here at the RELO Center we collect any outdated magazines and newspapers, and when I happen to have the chance of traveling or giving workshop outside the city, I bring lots of those stuff with me. They are happy receiving, I am happy cleaning the office.

Kun Herrini: Hi, Ibrahim, welcome. Hi from Jakarta, Indonesia

Ibrahim: a teacher from Khujand town had a technical problem to join today's roundtable and submitted this question: **Gulchehra Hamidova** from Khujand GCE ILC: Should we use translation? Should we teach our students to translate?

Damon Anderson: This is a good question from your friend. Whether or not to translate the material really depends on what you are trying to do with it and what you hope the students will get out of the interaction with the materials.

Lisa Harshbarger: I think I told Gulchehra the last time I was in Khujand that I thought translation was useful in terms of learning the meaning of words, but it's not a good method for promoting authentic use of the language...it slows you down too much and keeps you from actually using English in English classes.

Ibrahim: Personally I listen to VOA through my world band short wave radio. These days we use Special English American Stories to read and have discussions at <http://www.connect-tajikistan.org/forum/index.php?board=10.0>

Damon Anderson: I would use other materials to get students up to the level of being able to understand what I wanted them to understand in the authentic materials so that they have a better sense of engagement with authentic language. What do the rest of you think?

Damon Anderson: Rather than translating, I would try to teach the students how to use various skills such as prediction to understand the authentic interchange/communication.

Kun Herrini: Damon, do you think it is like the pre-reading/listening activities? We use picture to elicit/introduce words, etc?

Ibrahim: Students read stories and write their own story endings. We encourage them to read and have discussions. Or come up with their own ending. VOA American Stories also allows teachers and students to use audio and simultaneously listen to the text read.

Ping: Some of our teachers think that the level of the materials should be appropriate for the learners, esp. not to be challenging otherwise the learners will feel overwhelmed. What do you think?

Alice Yan Xu: Damon, will you please offer more details, like concrete lesson plan

Damon Anderson: Ping, I think that it is ok to challenge the students (i+1).

Damon Anderson: Alice, I would be happy to provide you with some ideas for lesson plans. We can discuss this later here in Beijing.

Lisa Harshbarger: I agree with these teachers in the sense that if classroom materials are too difficult, students will give up, but I agree with Damon--you need a combination of easy and challenging materials on the topic at hand in class.

Ibrahim: We have teachers who use blogs to engage students in blogging. For example, reading listening current events and blog

Alice Yan Xu: thank you!

Lisa Harshbarger: Ibrahim, that's a great idea.

Ibrahim: It would be good if teachers could assign students to write about local events in English and effectively utilize blogging tools.

Damon Anderson: Teaching students how to learn from engaging authentic communication outside the classroom really helps students to learn faster and to become more engaged with the language, seeing it more as a real life tool, rather than just a classroom exercise.

Kun Herrini: Great, Ibrahim. I did that too, for Academic Writing. I was involved in 3 classes and did a research for my graduate thesis 3 years ago.

Ping: I agree with both Damon and Lisa on the difficulty of the materials. But I meant the input shouldn't be too overwhelming. As language learners, we all have the experience if what I'm hearing is too hard, we may just quit. But I think in terms of learning, well designed exercises accompanying the materials will also facilitate learning.

Lisa Harshbarger: Good point, Ping

Damon Anderson: Yes, Ping, excellent.

Ping: Thanks, Lisa and Damon.

Kun Herrini: Great note, Ping.

Alice Yan Xu: an idea on how to use authentic material :Some of my classmates in this summer's access pro workshop for teachers suggest exchange emails among our students and let them email each other, Chinese students email some students from middle east.

Ping: Which brings us back to the question, how to make the best use of the materials and how to create the appropriate exercises and activities to go with them.

Alice Yan Xu: Sorry, I may have trouble to send message and questions.

Ibrahim: It is up to teachers how to use tools and not only limit using blogs, there are also wikis and I think all of these nice ICT tools will definitely help teachers teaching authentically. What do you think about online collaboration and the role of social networking in ELT?

Damon Anderson: Everyone, we are approaching the end of our hour. This has blossomed into a great discussion. Do you have any topic you would like us to consider for our next roundtable in December?

Ping: Alice, I can see your question no problem. Good idea of using emails.

Ibrahim: ghamidova: What about making videos of ESL classes and providing Tajik teachers with them? ghamidova: Ibrahim, say thank you on my behalf. Unfortunately I couldn't join the roundtable myself. Will be this chat posted somewhere?

Lisa Harshbarger: In answer to Ping's question, I think some teachers put together resource banks of authentic materials on various topics, grammar points, etc., and then incorporate them into their lessons at appropriate points, more as support for the topic in the course book and to introduce new language in class.

Alice Yan Xu: the students in our school are using the bookflix donated by Damon. It turns out great, though we have trouble with the internet speed.

Webchat Moderator (Mark): I post transcripts of all of the English Roundtables here:

http://www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html#english_roundtable_2008

Damon Anderson: Most teachers are using authentic materials as support, reference, extra practice and beyond the text practice for the students.

Damon Anderson: Thank you Mark.

Kun Herrini: December : Incorporating Holidays with English Teaching?

Ping: That'll make great supplement to the textbook, Lisa. If teachers all contribute to building the database, they'll be even more motivated to using the resources and expanding it.

Ibrahim: It would be nice to dedicate a topic about "Using ICT in ELT" and invite Mark Warschauer

Damon Anderson: That's an interesting idea, Ibrahim. But I am not sure if the timing would be good for him (time zone differences).

Lisa Harshbarger: Good idea, Ibrahim!

Alice Yan Xu: ICT, what is it?

Ibrahim: or any other Webheads from TESOL EVO

Ping: Thanks Mark. I will also put the scripts on our RELO webpage at: <http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/relo.html> although i'd admit lately i'm late in updating it :(

Ibrahim: ICT Information and Communication Technology

Kun Herrini: Mark, thank you for technically moderating this chat.

Kun Herrini: Damon and Ping, always, thanks a lot.

Webchat Moderator (Mark): My pleasure! Let me also mention our new online global forum. If you could tell President-elect Obama your concerns for the future, what would you say? Join us on November 13, 2008, at 13:00 GMT and come talk about issues that matter to you with others around the globe. This webchat will take place at <http://statedept.connectsolutions.com/conx>.

Webchat Moderator (Mark): We'll feature new topics to discuss each week...it's an open discussion.

Ibrahim: Thank you

Damon Anderson: Please share the information Mark just posted with your friends and colleagues.

Ping: Thanks to every one for sharing your thoughts and ideas. Lisa, I hope your leg will be getting better soon. Kun, let's discuss our projects later.

Damon Anderson: Lis, thank you for joining us today!! You added much!!

Lisa Harshbarger: Thanks, Mark, Damon and Ping. I'm glad I decided to lurk.

Webchat Moderator (Mark): Thanks everyone good day / night!

Damon Anderson: Everyone, thank you for participating today. it was a good discussion. Please tell you friends and colleagues about the next one on December 9th.

Damon Anderson: Thank you, Mark, for being our great moderator!!!

Ping: Alice, thank you for all the input. I can see how dedicated you're to your work.

Ibrahim: Thank you Lisa and everyone. This time was very comfortable

Ibrahim: due to technical problems some teachers could not join us

Damon Anderson: We hope they will be able to join us next time. Thank you all!!!

Webchat Moderator (Mark): Ibrahim, can you tell me what type of problems the teachers had? I want to be sure it's not something with our chat software.

Ibrahim: ghamidova: I cannot join the roundtable. I'm trying to do that. Lot of installation needed

Ping: Mark, the first couple of times when I logged in, I could only see the abstract Damon put in full screen. I couldn't see anything else and I couldn't type either.

Ibrahim: She might needed to install Flash Player plug in

Webchat Moderator (Mark): Thanks Ping and Ibrahim. Flash is required..on the abstract, I will investigate why it was doing the full-screen.

Ping: It looked like the screen was frozen. Then I tried relogging in a couple of more times until it got functional.

Damon Anderson: I am signing off now. Good evening/afternoon/morning everyone.

Webchat Moderator (Mark): Signing off too. Best everyone and thanks for the tech feedback.