

EXPLOITING AUTHENTIC VIDEO MATERIALS IN BUSINESS ENGLISH TEACHING

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Abstract

This paper aims at looking into the ways in which teachers of foreign languages can incorporate authentic video materials in their lessons. Emphasis is placed on Business English teaching, although the approaches and techniques described are relevant to the EFL context in general. First, the article provides a brief overview of how authenticity is defined by other authors, what factors determine the authentic nature of materials and the possible advantages and disadvantages in relation to learners’ needs and capacities. Some differences between authentic and graded textbook materials are outlined. Then it goes on to examine some approaches and techniques for teachers to design their own task-based activities and provides the rationale behind them. Authenticity of materials as a tool for raising cultural awareness is discussed in the context of global business and communications. The paper includes several examples from the author’s own practice, as well as suggestions for follow-up activities which include the use of realia, web-based researches etc.

Key words: authentic materials, competence, skills, target language, learner needs, learner motivation, cultural awareness

Authentic materials have long been an integral part of mainstream foreign language teaching for a number of reasons. They contribute to the exposure of students to the real language used in natural, not pre-designed contexts, thus facilitating the development of their communicative competences, strategic skills and cultural knowledge. Although being only supplementary to the main syllabus, their usage is generally considered beneficial since being outside mainstream textbooks, they present an extra challenge to learners and bring about a sense of ‘realness’ to the learning process.

One reason for teachers to include authentic materials in their courses lies in the nature of designed textbook materials. There are several features which outline the difference between the two types. In ready-to-use materials the language is changed in a controlled way, to adapt to the level of learners. Texts include carefully chosen vocabulary, structures are simplified or limited, length is also considered. This is generally beneficial to the learning process because learners get the sense of achievement and fulfillment. On the other hand, they are not fully exposed to the diverse features a language has, such as colloquialisms, slang, professional or age jargons, regional dialects etc. Video and audio materials are also graded – speech and pronunciation features of utterances are controlled, a lot of repetition is involved in order to help comprehension and acquisition of particular language points, especially at the lower levels. Conversations are often devoid of additional noises or they are included unobtrusively. Inaccuracies of language, which occur in normal, everyday speech, are

avoided. These are by no means drawbacks since language acquisition is a gradual, ongoing process and the different stages require different levels of ‘realness’ of the target language. However, graded textbook input alone does not prepare learners adequately for successful and satisfactory communication or other use of the target language in ‘live’ contexts. They sometimes report that when reading a newspaper, fiction or other non-graded sources they feel their knowledge is often insufficient. This is because learners face those features discussed above – slang, jargon, specialized vocabulary, lengthy texts etc. When watching video materials such as films or other programmes, the first feeling is often almost complete incomprehension. If they have to participate in real-life spoken intercourse, the experience may be daunting because their ear is not tuned in to the various accents and pronunciation patterns. Authentic materials are perceived by both teachers and learners as an essential supplement to textbooks, which compensates for the partial lack of the above mentioned linguistic and non-linguistic features in graded materials.

Linguists, teachers and materials designers have focused their attention on a number of issues when considering how and how much to integrate authentic materials into the classroom. Such issues include:

- The difficulty and appropriateness of using authentic materials with low-level students;
- Whether materials and tasks should be modified in order to preserve their beneficial effect and prevent students from being put off by unfamiliar and less comprehensible structures, vocabulary, accents and other linguistic or non-linguistic features (Rogers & Medley 1988);
- How enthusiastic students are to interact with authentic materials and whether they perceive them as being helpful in relation to their perceived difficulty.

Chavez (1994) draws on issues related to a) the perceived difficulty of authentic texts, b) authentic texts’ contribution to language learning, c) learners’ reluctance or eagerness to interact with authentic texts and d) the factors determining authenticity. It is important to make one point clear, though: nowadays, with the availability of IT technology and mobile communications, authentic materials are of numerous types and in this article I will focus mainly on audio and video materials used in the Business English classroom.

A number of authors have given different definitions of authentic materials which, however, have one feature in common: these are materials not designed for the purpose of learning a foreign language. The standard definition of authentic as “produced by native speakers for native speakers” may be supplemented by Peacock’s view (1997) which states that these are materials that have been produced to fulfill some social purpose in the language community. Even if they are not used with the same purpose in the language classroom they contribute to the students’ exposure to the real language and the way it is used in the target community. Moreover, they create the sense of naturalness in terms of meaningful communication as opposed to the artificial contexts in which students often find themselves when doing drills, exercises and other textbook-based tasks. This has a positive effect on learner and teacher motivation as it presupposes a more creative approach both to learning and teaching. Another advantage of incorporating authentic materials in the language curriculum is the way they provide a meaningful context for raising awareness of cultural issues. Teaching culture through language proves essential since students’ intellectual

curiosity is provoked both towards the target community and its language. In a broader sense, in the global world this issue is often perceived not only as learning about the culture of the native speakers' community, but also about other cultures in which communication in the target language is going to take place. Shifting the focus onto Business English studies, knowing and understanding cultural peculiarities may prove vital.

In summary, a number of advantages and disadvantages of integrating authentic materials in foreign language learning could be presented.

ADVANTAGES

- Students are exposed to real language in natural contexts.
- Authentic materials are interdisciplinary in nature; they inform or present facts and developments in other areas of life, science etc. through the means of the target language.
- Learner motivation is enhanced; students often feel they are learning in a natural and more relevant to their needs way. The immediate relevance of what they study and what they are going to need in the future becomes clearly evident.
- The traditional teacher-student model is often reversed; students may initiate the idea of using a particular source and provide their own material. This boosts their sense of achievement.
- Authentic materials promote a more creative approach to teaching.
- They encourage learner autonomy by stimulating further reading or watching target language sources.
- Language is a changing system and authentic materials reflect the new developments.
- Specialized reading texts provide context for better understanding and consolidation of specialized terminology.
- Video materials contain various pronunciation patterns, accents, speech speed, spoken variations and inaccuracies, which are more or less controlled in standard teaching materials. On the one hand, students are exposed to the target language in the same way as they would be provided they find themselves in similar situations. On the other, they are able to *observe* speakers demonstrating different skills and strategies such as dealing with questions, negotiating, presenting, suggesting, refusing, accepting, demonstrating politeness, repair strategies etc. They can also take into account some extra linguistic features and how they affect discourse, for example, nervousness, confidence, aggressiveness, assertiveness, etc. When we teach Business English, it is essential to equip students with those skills, together with the relevant linguistic means.
- Authentic materials provide a variety of discourse styles. Teachers may exploit this variety to the full or limit it according to the specific students needs.

DISADVANTAGES

- The difficulty factor

The disadvantages of using authentic materials in the classroom lie mainly in their perceived difficulty in relation to the students' level of language command. In my view, however, there

are two factors which account for why difficulty can lead to less beneficial outcomes. One reason could be the inappropriate choice of material and time to introduce it on the part of the teacher. With low-level students, for example, a lengthy video material with too many tasks could turn out to be daunting and achieve the opposite effect. The same goes for texts overloaded with new vocabulary or complex structures. However, well-chosen songs, simple menus, cinema or theatre timetables, photographs with captions, even parts of TV programmes or shows where people introduce themselves could work in the same way as for more advanced students. What is more, even with a more challenging piece of material, tasks can be graded to match the level of learners, for example, basic students can practice mini-skills such as scanning a text for specific information (amounts, figures etc.) or listening to identify the names of countries, famous people etc. (Martinez, February, 2002). Secondly, individual learners' attitudes and abilities are crucial to the success or failure of such an approach. Students with low motivation or having a particular difficulty, for example, understanding audio discourse, will be less enthusiastic and will benefit the least.

Difficulty may also be perceived from another perspective – authentic materials may be too culturally biased, therefore hard to grasp outside the respective culture.

In general, providing authentic materials are properly exploited in terms of level of difficulty and appropriateness of context, the assumed disadvantages can be easily turned into advantages.

- The time factor

Nowadays, there are vast amounts of authentic video or printed materials on sites freely available for use on the Internet. However, it is a time consuming job to search for and find the most suitable ones. Also, designing tasks and preparing lesson plans can take hours or even days. On the other hand, once the job has been done, teachers have a ready-to-use material at their disposal.

- The immediacy factor

A major disadvantage of authentic materials is the fact that in a fast-developing world, they become outdated very quickly. So teachers must be on the constant hunt for the most topical issues, especially when it comes to reading news articles or watching topical programmes.

SPECIFICS OF THE BUSINESS ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Business English learners, both in-service and pre-service, are assumed to have at least some level of command of English, so they are not basic learners. In-service learners are already experienced in a given area of business and are often familiar with some of the specific terminology. Apart from learning vocabulary and structures, they usually need to become more confident with using these in real contexts. They need to understand spoken discourse in real situations and to become equipped with the skills and strategies to cope in various business transactions contexts. Pre-service learners, although lacking experience, usually do or have done studies in the relevant areas, so the least they have is some theoretical business knowledge and are likewise minded.

What is taught in the Business English classroom falls into three main areas: a) Business English content, b) skills and c) raising cultural awareness. Authentic materials may prove beneficial to mastering the three aspects.

In terms of content, learners can see the specialized language ‘in action’, the way it is used in real business contexts. When reading newspaper articles, interviews, company correspondence or documentation, pre-experienced learners gain deeper understanding of terms which they have previously studied only in the restricted contexts of coursebook content. Through video materials they can master correct pronunciations of vocabulary which is not commonly used in everyday speech. Learners get more exposure to various accents, which is essential when doing business in the global world.

Apart from mastering certain specialized vocabulary, Business English learners need to develop the appropriate skills and strategies to carry out successful communication. Clifton (2005) talks about consciousness raising activities to help learners to develop strategies in business interaction such as politeness strategies in business meetings, giving criticism, repair strategies (modifying utterances), presentation skills etc. He suggests that authentic transcripts of business interactions can be used with students where they are asked to analyse them and identify the language to perform those functions. Learners, he argues, become more aware of how English works in those situations and therefore, more receptive to their acquisition. In addition, video materials provide learners with visual and audio cues so they are tuned in to the finer features of communication such as intonation, pitch of the voice, body language, speed of delivery, emotional state etc.

The cultural content has gained a special significance when teaching and learning business English. Brown (2007, p. 380), defines culture as “the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a given group of people in a given period of time.” Acquiring cultural knowledge is inseparable from learning a foreign language, since language reflects the culture of the target community. Reversely, the cultural content can be a powerful tool both for learner motivation and better acquisition. The question of how much culture and which culture or cultures should we focus on in order to optimize the learning process is another issue worth considering. Kilickaya (2004) emphasizes the importance of introducing various cultures, including learner’s own culture in order to create a deeper perspective and wider acceptance and tolerance. She mentions the metaphorical representation of this cultural integration as the ‘colour purple’ where one’s own cultural lens (blue) overlaps with the cultural lens of people from other cultures (red). This comes as the outcome of projecting learners’ own culture against the background of other cultures and results in creating respect for what is different. This is particularly relevant to business English students who do not simply need to gain certain knowledge of the target language community’s culture, but need to acquire a good level of intercultural competence, what Tomalin (2008) calls cultural sensitivity and intercultural skills. Developing cultural awareness is the way to deal efficiently with other cultures. This, in business, is a vital skill as English is the medium of interaction and failure to display this sensitivity and tolerance may lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations or even be a barrier to successful business transactions. Business English textbooks try to introduce the cultural element into their contents but it often takes second place to content and skills. When it happens, it is very often introduced through transcripts and photos from films, excerpts from books, newspaper article etc. Also, teachers often do not have experience with a lot of cultures, or if they do, it is sometimes purely theoretical. This raises the topic of how the cultural issue should be approached in order to make it dynamic and significant rather than just a section of the lesson. Authentic materials provide both

examples and relevant contexts to demonstrate how cultural differences may affect business communication. Those examples vary from appropriateness and inappropriateness of behaviour, body language, mode of communication and reach to the deeply rooted mindset which determines matters such as levels of subtlety of disagreement, attitudes to work and risk, hierarchical or democratic relations etc. Teachers need to approach this from various perspectives. As Cullen (2000) states, a given culture must be revealed through various features – not only through the most attractive ones. Or as he put it “we need to ‘sell’ different views of the culture to our students”. He calls these selling points, the features that sell a ‘product’ most successfully. Especially relevant here are video materials where learners may either witness interactions between cultures or justify the speaker’s choice of language or behaviour by looking at the cultural reasons underlying them.

Two things should be emphasized once again when considering using authentic materials. Firstly, learners’ curiosity and interest is better provoked when they feel they are tapping into the ‘real thing’. Secondly, the difficulty of a given piece of material should be carefully assessed before learners are subjected to it.

SOURCES OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

Nowadays, with the advance of technology, the sources of authentic materials are practically limitless. All areas of human activity result in products which can somehow be involved in the learning of a foreign language. Various authors have grouped and listed them. Typically, they fall in the following groups as described by Oura:

- Listening and viewing materials – Examples of materials appropriate for teaching Business English include TV and radio commercials, interviews, the news, reality or other shows, films, documentaries, video clips, presentations, lectures etc. This diversity and accessibility allows learners to find and bring their own materials they feel most relevant to their needs.
- Reading/Printed materials – newspapers and magazines, specialized literature, newspaper ads, reports, photos, menus, brand logos, various reports, brochures, company documents and correspondence, transcripts of meetings, financial reports, agreements, invoices, press releases etc.
- Realia – all kinds of real-world and cultural objects fall into this group. They are generally used to illustrate some points made during the task-based activities and thus make them more memorable.

EXPLOITING AUTHENTIC VIDEO MATERIALS IN THE BUSINESS ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Video materials are increasingly very popular because they successfully provoke learner interest. This is largely due to the fact that they influence learners through various cues – visual, audio, kinesthetic – thus providing a more complete perception of the target language. Also, in the mind of the learner the concept of enjoyment is essential and watching activities relate directly to it. Learners become more willing to participate actively in the learning process since they see the practical implications of what they are doing and, to some extent, perceive it as an entertaining activity. Using video materials, however, should not be for the sake of watching alone. In order to make the best of these advantages, the use of such

materials should be based on carefully designed tasks with a clear rationale underlying them. Here is a possible procedure for teachers to design a set of tasks for students to do when working with authentic video materials.

The choice of the specific material can be and usually is topic-oriented – to teach business vocabulary in a given content area (trading, finance, branding, entrepreneurship etc.) or to introduce and exemplify a particular business skill, for example dealing with questions, presenting and so on. Whatever the case is, the teacher needs to follow several steps in the preparation stage.

Firstly, having selected the piece of video material, teachers need to make a full transcript of it in order to exploit the vocabulary to the fullest later in the lesson. This may also come useful if they decide to give it to the students either as a helping tool during the lesson or as a further reading after it.

Having the transcript in front of them, teachers can now start to choose which language points they want their students to practice and what types of activities to focus on. They can decide to introduce or consolidate terminology, functional exponents, metaphorical language, pronunciation of particular recurrent spellings, grammar, spot cultural peculiarities etc. Accordingly, each task should be designed with a clear objective. Longer transcripts can be divided into chapters and each chapter can be given a separate title. Such chunking of the material will allow the teacher to use certain parts relatively independently of each other or to make a sequel of authentic video lessons.

When building a lesson on authentic video materials at least two stages should be considered – a lead-in stage and the main task-based stage. The lead-in introduces the topic of the video and warms students up for the following tasks. In this stage the teacher must supply enough activities to a) familiarize learners with the topic, b) input/ elicit some of the vocabulary to ensure that learners comprehend and do the following tasks successfully and c) give some background to what they are going to watch, including historical, economic, personal, cultural or any other information. These three things are especially important with pre-experienced learners or people who have little or no knowledge related to the video content. This stage can last for longer than typical lead-ins and may include other authentic or non-authentic materials such as newspaper articles, printed profiles of people or organisations, pictures, cut-up vocabulary exercises etc. Comprehensive pre-teaching is essential because even students with good command of general English may be hindered by too much specialized terminology.

A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

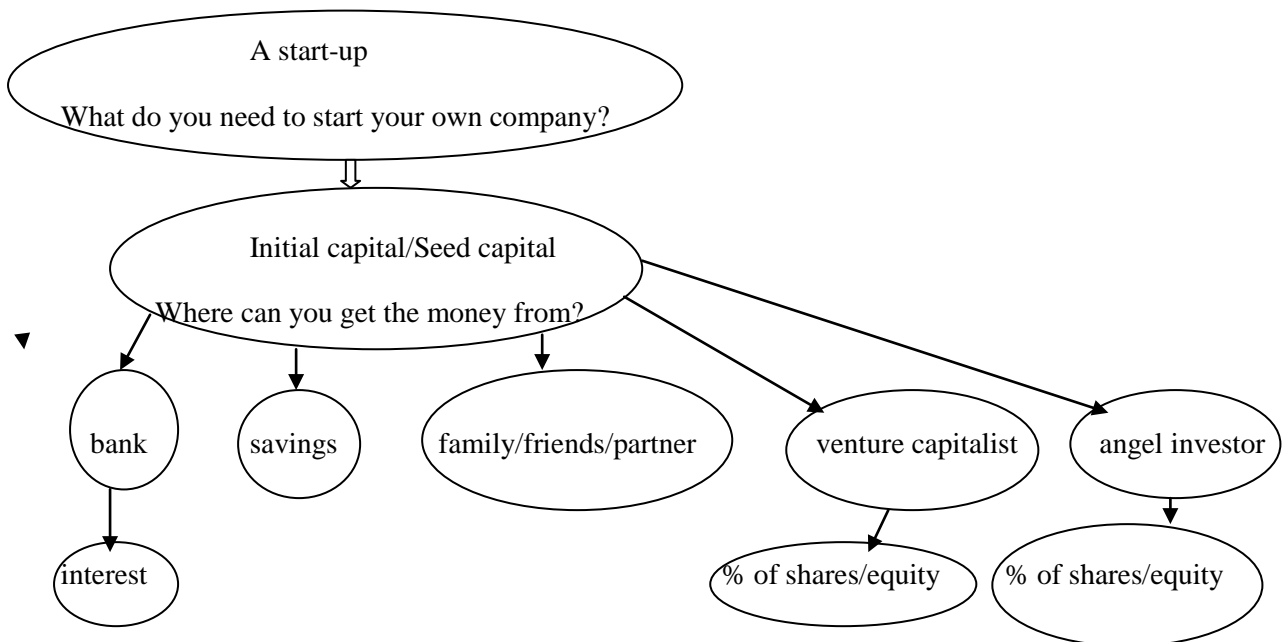
Students watch an episode of a reality show in which young entrepreneurs pitch a business plan to a board of five wealthy and influential investors. In return for their investment the entrepreneurs offer a certain percentage of equity stake in their company. The pitch is only successful if one or more of the investors agree to invest the money asked for at the beginning. The language points targeted are: a) vocabulary to do with entrepreneurship – starting a company, presenting a business plan b) functional language to present, handle questions, accept, refuse, c) idiomatic expressions used in a business context, d) dealing with figures

Possible lead-in activities:

1. Through a series of questions the teacher elicits/teaches some of the vocabulary which students will encounter in the video. The teacher draws a diagram on the board or writes the new vocabulary explaining it in the meantime.

Example questions and answers:

- How do you call a company which has been just set up?
- If you want to start a company what do you need?
- Where does the seed capital usually come from? Where do you go if you need seed capital?
- What do you give the bank/venture capitalist/angel investor in return?



2. The teacher can extend this activity by handing out, in cut-up pieces of paper, the new terms and their respective definitions. Students work in groups to match them. After they have finished, the teacher can hand out worksheets with the terms matched up to the definitions and further clarify or emphasize some points if necessary. The rationale behind this is to allow more opportunities for learners to become confident with the new vocabulary. Here is an example of part of the worksheet:

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| equity | the value of a company's shares |
| venture capitalist | a person who invests in a business venture, providing capital for start-up or expansion |
| return on investment - ROI | the profit that you make from capital you have invested |

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| rate of return - ROR | |
| a pitch | the things someone says to persuade people to buy something |

3. With this particular video, it may be useful for learners to become familiar with the background of the investors. With bigger groups this could be done by dividing learners into small groups, 4 – 6 students, and with smaller groups, as a whole class activity. The teacher hands out the profiles of the investors. Each student reads a profile and shares the information with the other students in the group. Besides providing information, this activity allows speaking time and requires the use of the target language to fulfill a particular task – supplying information.

Learners are now well-prepared and feel relatively confident about what they are about to watch. Practice shows that they are also interested enough to anticipate the watching stage.

4. Other lead-in activities may involve using printed authentic materials such as newspaper or magazine articles, photos, cartoons etc. which introduce the topic of the video material. Learners may be asked to discuss certain aspects of the printed material, express opinion, look for surprising facts and share them with a partner. They can guess or anticipate information before it is supplied, rearrange words to come up with company slogans etc. The list is practically limitless as it will vary with the raw material and the individual objectives. The rationale is to back learners up with the necessary tools for the following tasks and to lead them smoothly into it.

The main task-based stage can be tailored to suit the needs of each learner or group of learners. This could include the whole range of activities employed in the classroom, as long as they are based on the watching material. As a video can be divided into chapters, what follows are some possible activities for each chapter:

1. Vocabulary-focused activities – These could focus on the different content areas of Business English – the language of marketing, branding, advertising, competition, management etc, depending on the material used. One or more exercises to fill in missing words may be included. Each one can focus on different aspects of vocabulary, in the case of the above given example, the terms pre-taught in the lead-in stage, other terms which students have previously learned and can now revise, adjectives, prepositions and prepositional phrases etc. Apart from the focus on particular linguistic items, general comprehension is always the underlying goal. Here are several ideas:

- Students watch the introduction to the programme once. They can tick on their worksheets the words from the warm-up they have heard. Then they are given another worksheet with gapped parts of the transcript. They watch the introduction for a second time and fill in the gaps. Parts of the transcript can be summarized for the same purpose. Depending on the learners and on the procedure, the teacher may decide to supply the missing words in a jumbled order or not. The rationale is

that students have ample practice of specialized vocabulary and feel confident to use it when a real-life situation arises.

Each activity from the watching stage is accompanied by a printed text, so the teacher explains any other unknown vocabulary where necessary. Also, the teacher may decide to stop and rewind the video for as many times as he or she considers appropriate in order to focus on particular items. This is where students start to activate the vocabulary they have been input during the lead-in.

- Other vocabulary activities may include dictations or transcription activities to focus on particular themes from the video. These are especially applicable with documentaries where a lot of aspects of a given business are included.
 - Question-and-answer activities are a straightforward way to a) check comprehension of specific information, b) focus on particular lexis, e.g. chunks, abbreviations or c) express opinions. Examples of the three types are listed below:
 - a) *The next sequence is filmed in France and Switzerland at the HQ of two leading multinationals. Who are they?*
 - b) *In globally competitive markets, companies need USPs. What does the abbreviation USP stand for?*
 - c) *In the programme, WATER is described as the ‘ultimate commodity’, ‘liquid gold’ as well as ‘the perfect product to illustrate how the best capital markets work’. Discuss your understanding of these three descriptions with your partner.*
2. A focus on figures – Any time a video material includes such data, Business English learners will benefit from a focus on figures. Firstly because getting the figures right is vital in business and secondly, because a lot of learners often struggle with large numbers. Percentages and calculations need to be done quickly and they are an inseparable part in a lot of business areas – from creating and presenting a business plan to negotiating business deals. Such an activity involves gap filling but this time only the figures are taken out. When designing the task, the teacher may decide to copy part of the transcript word for word or summarize this section where figures are involved. The second approach will make the task more difficult as learners will need to relate sections of the actual dialogue/speech to the right part of the summary. Again, it is up to the teacher to decide how many clues to offer learners in order to facilitate their performance. Here is an example of such a summary without additional clues:

So far, it has cost Kirsty £ _____ to set the business up and she has sold _____ units. She projects she is going to sell _____ units in the first year. All her products contain _____ fat. (Answers: 20,000; 250,000; 300,000; less than 3%)

3. Idiomatic English – Surprisingly for many learners a lot of idiomatic expressions are used in Business English. One way to focus on them is to design another gap fill activity in which learners listen for missing metaphorical expressions. The number of the words can be pointed out by including the respective number of gaps for each phrase. After students have got the idioms right, they can try to provide an explanation of their meaning by looking at the context of the sentence they appear in. If the teacher

wants to make this easier, he or she can give the explanations in a jumbled order and ask students to match them. Example:

“I’m gonna give you £100,000, because that’s what I believe will be required to _____ and have the best chance of being successful.” **Answer:** *get this business off the ground*

4. Awareness raising activities – These are productive activities which often require extensive knowledge of a topic as well as good command of the target language in the given area. At this stage active usage of the target language takes place. Some examples include:
 - a) Discussions on topical or global issues such as environmental or social issues as part of the corporate social responsibility policy of a company, the impact branding and advertising images have on consumers, competition, ethical and cultural issues and so on. The discussion topics will vary according to the material used.
 - b) Problem-solving activities – These can be role-plays in which learners act out various situations related to the video material they have watched. For example drawing up the basics of a business plan, participating in a meeting to solve a particular problem, taking part in negotiations to conclude a deal, giving interviews or press releases on company issues such as critical incidents, controversial advertising campaigns etc.
 - c) Describing visual cues – This is a pair work activity in which learners sit with their backs to each other. One of them is shown a picture/photo and they have to describe it to their partner including the feelings it provokes. This is particularly useful when learners focus on topics such as advertising, branding, environment, CSR, culture. It could be extended into discussions in larger groups. The skills practiced here are expressing opinion, asking for opinion, agreeing, disagreeing.
 - d) Research-based individual tasks – Learners may be given individual tasks such as web-searches to discover more information about a given aspect of the material they have done in class. They may be asked to produce a poster, prepare a short presentation, write a report or a blog entry, prepare an ad or an advertising campaign, conduct a SWOT analysis etc. Again, the type of task assigned will vary according to the underlying topic and class activity.

In an ideal learning setting, provided there is sufficient space and appropriate classroom arrangement, a lesson based on authentic materials can be made even more authentic by using realia or other means in the classroom. For example, if learners are to role play a meeting of a company’s executives, the teacher might try to rearrange the classroom so that it looks more like a boardroom. Learners may sit round a table, they can put in front of them paper name tags with their respective positions, bottles of water can be put on the table. If learners are role playing a socializing or networking event, there could be a subtle music as a background. After watching a video about a given product or a range of products, provided they are available, the teacher may bring those to the classroom. One particularly enjoyable activity is

blind tasting of two or more rival food or drink products. Some products will not be available but if they are, the real ‘touch’ of them brings a little aspect of the respective country’s culture and contributes to all the impact-making factors in language learning mentioned earlier – learners motivation, learner reluctance or eagerness, relevance to learners’ needs, learner autonomy and initiative, enjoyment.

In summary, several conclusions can be drawn. First, authentic materials will always present certain difficulty for learners as they are not graded and therefore, exhibit all natural features of the target language. This should not necessarily be perceived as a drawback. If they are carefully and smoothly ‘served’ to learners, they can bring great sense of enjoyment and achievement. Individual approach, however, must always be applied as different learners react differently to the ways of teaching and learning. If learners manage to see difficulty as a challenge to their potential, then they will feel more positive towards facing difficult tasks. Secondly, it is important that not material should be graded but the tasks which we design to exploit it. Careful selection according to the target group is the first step to successful results. The next one is grading the tasks for our learners from easier to more challenging ones, from receptive to productive. And thirdly, it is of paramount importance to assist learners to ‘elbow’ their way through the daunting experience of the ‘real’ language by giving them enough cues, so that the sense of achievement outstrips the sense of failure.

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