

FOCUS ON AUTHENTICITY

The authors



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Authenticity

A classroom text is authentic if it was originally written for a non-classroom audience. The notion of authenticity was originally introduced to distinguish between artificially simplified texts and unmodified 'real' texts.

However there has been a backlash against the authenticity movement. The fact that classroom interactions are artificial (by the standards of non-classroom contexts) may actually be based on good sense. Learning a language requires that the content of instruction should be modified in ways that make it more accessible to learners.

Scott Thornbury, An A-Z of ELT

This talk

Authentic material

Choosing engaging content.

Adapting texts so that they are accessible and useful as language input.

Authentic interaction

Speaking activities that increase students' confidence and encourage them to use natural language in meaningful contexts.

Speaking activities that encourage students to talk about things they are likely to talk about outside the classroom.

Engaging content

“The truth of the matter is that about ___% of teaching is making the students feel interested in the material. Then the other ___% has to do with your methods.”

Noam Chomsky

Engaging content

*“The truth of the matter is that about **99%** of teaching is making the students feel interested in the material. Then the other **1%** has to do with your methods.”*

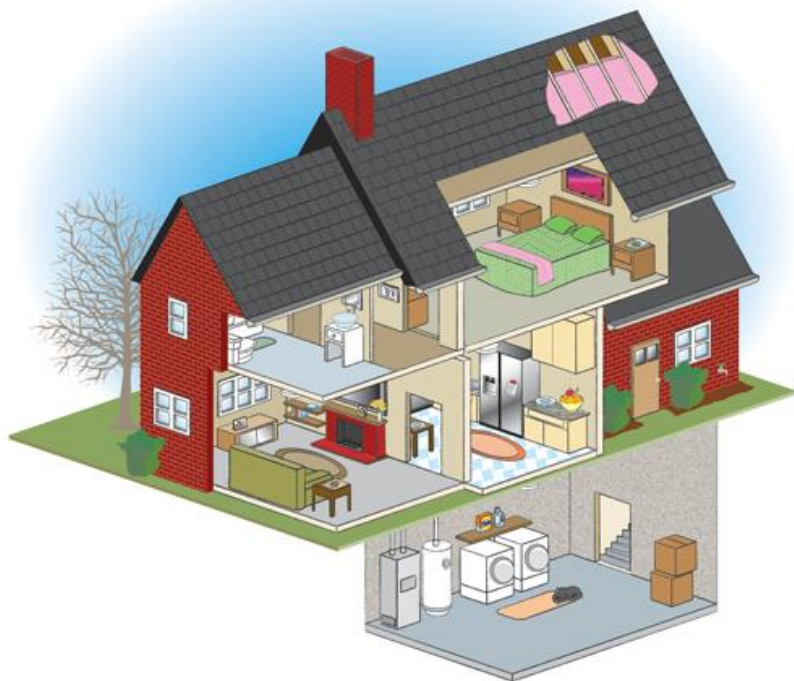
Noam Chomsky

Engaging content

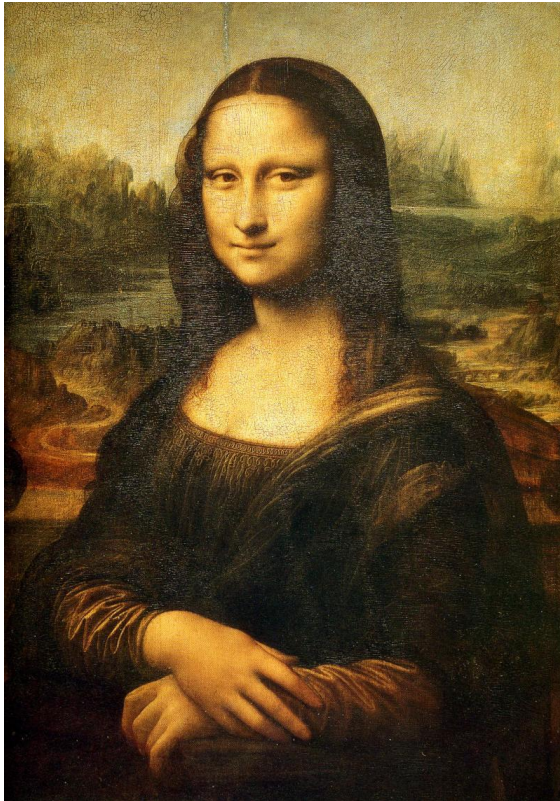


ELTpics

Motivating topics – Houses



Motivating topics – Culture/The Arts





Real people doing real things in real places.



FUSSY EATERS



Engaging content

- Striking images
- The 'wow' factor
- Universal topics everyone can relate to
- Angles people can identify with
- New angles and fresh twists on topics
- Recognisable stereotypes
- Aspirational / inspirational people
- Humour / jokes
- Real people doing real things in real places

Motivating topics

“If the interest of students is not engaged, the learning process is unlikely to get off the ground at all.”

Henry Widdowson



ELT pics

Authentic texts



What are authentic texts?

According to #ELTchat

- Anything written for any purpose other than language instruction
- Not designed for linguistic purposes (no input flood/specific language point)
- Anything from the real world
- Can be audio or visual
- Need to contain some text (either written or spoken)
- Provided by the students (? – perhaps more real/relevant to them)
- Could be material for other school subjects, e.g. history.

‘Authenticity is in the eye of the beholder’, Scott Thornbury

Why authentic texts?

Interest-raising.

Motivating.

Show language as it is really used in all its richness and complexity.

Prepare students for the real world.

Increases the chances of eliciting genuine responses.

Choosing a text

Is it interesting?

Is there anything in this text that my students can relate to their own lives?

Can they learn something about the language?

Authentic texts



Authentic texts

7.2 Grammar

Reported Speech • statements

I can report what other people said

- 1 Look at the painting. Is it possible for a child to paint like this? Read the text to find out.



Marla Olmstead

They said she was a genius

When Marla was three years old, a woman saw one of her paintings in a coffee shop and asked how much it cost. Marla's mother wanted to keep the painting so she **told** her that it cost \$250. The woman bought it!

After that a gallery owner started showing Marla's paintings. He told her parents

that their daughter was a genius. Her paintings began to sell for thousands of dollars.

But not all of the attention was positive. Art critics **pointed out** that a child could not produce those paintings. One critic **suggested** that her father had painted them.

A TV channel contacted Marla's parents and told them

that they wanted to film their daughter the following week.

They **explained** that they wanted to prove that Marla was not a fake. Marla's parents **said** that their daughter would be uncomfortable in front of the cameras, but the TV director told them not to worry. He **added** that he was going to use a hidden camera.

Over the next few days, Marla did a painting, but it was not as good as her other paintings. Her critics **claimed** that this proved someone else finished her paintings. The customers **replied** that they didn't care who had done them – they liked them anyway.

Authentic texts

AND HERE IS THE GOOD NEWS ...

The news is often full of tragedy and disaster. But here are two true stories that will warm your heart and put a smile on your face. They may suddenly inspire you to be kind to someone, even a stranger. Go on, commit a random act of kindness and make someone's day!

HONEST, HONORABLE, AND NO LONGER HOMELESS

A] Homeless Billy Ray Harris was begging on the streets of Kansas City. Sarah Darling walked past and dropped some coins into his collection cup.

¹ The next day she realized that her diamond **engagement** ring had dropped into the cup with the coins. She went back to find Harris, not feeling very **hopeful**. But she was surprised when he remembered ² her and returned the ring. A jeweler had offered Harris \$4,000 for the ring. But he was an **honorable** man and he kept the ring in case the woman returned. To show their **appreciation**, Sarah Darling and ³ her husband collected money for Harris. The story went viral online and **donations** ⁴ arrived from all over the world. The final total was \$185,000. Harris doesn't sleep



⁵ rough now and is no longer jobless. He has part-time **employment**, has been reunited with his family, and has a new **friendship** with the Darlings.

BUYING BOOTS FOR A BAREFOOT BEGGAR



B] Officer DePrimo was working in the West Village area of New York when he saw some people laughing at a homeless man because he had no shoes on. The officer was shocked by the people's **cruelty** and **stupidity**. It was freezing cold that night, and the officer decided to help the man out. He asked him for his shoe size and went into a store where ¹ he bought a pair of boots and ² some socks, and then gave the man a hand to put them on. Another police officer was in the **neighborhood** that night and she was impressed by the officer's **kindness** and **helpfulness**. She took a photo of the officer doing a good deed and sent it to the New York City ³ Police Department. They put it on their Facebook page to show that police officers can be **sensitive** and **sympathetic**. The photo went viral and attracted ⁴ 500,000 likes and 200,000 shares.

CRIMINALS COMMIT CRAZY CRIMES

A suspect was **arrested** for robbing a jewellery store on Saturday afternoon. The suspect told police that he was **innocent**. He said that he couldn't be **guilty** of robbing the jewellery store because on Saturday afternoon he was breaking into a school and he had a witness to prove it. The police immediately arrested him for robbing the school. The **case** goes to court next month.

A thirty-year-old man was arrested for **vandalising a campsite**. In **court**, the judge heard how the police caught the criminal. 'It was easy,' the police officer said. 'There was no victim. We didn't have to interview any witnesses or collect any **evidence**. The man wrote his name on a wall!' The man was **sentenced** to three months in **prison**.

Adapting an authentic text

The teacher should ask, 'How does today's teaching make tomorrow's text easier?'

(Paul Nation, *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing*, 2008)

Motivating topics – Houses



The HOBBIT HOUSE

Original text

Fed up with huge mortgage payments, Simon Dale decided to take matters into his own hands – literally. Armed with only a chisel, a chainsaw and a hammer, the 32-year-old moved his family to a hillside in Wales and started digging.

The result is a wooden eco-home – constructed in four months with the help of his father-in-law, a builder, and costing just £3,000 – which would look perfectly at ease alongside the Hobbit houses in The Lord Of The Rings.

He said: ‘Being your own have-a-go architect is a lot of fun and allows you to create and enjoy something which is part of yourself and the land rather than, at worst, a mass-produced box designed for maximum profit and the convenience of the construction industry. As well as being made from sustainable material the Hobbit house, as it is dubbed by locals, has lime plaster on its walls instead of cement.

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124 WORDS

Simon Dale didn’t want to live in a ‘**mass-produced** box’ on a housing estate. So he **made a brave decision**. He decided to build his own home in the **countryside**. He moved to rural Wales with his family and built a wooden **eco-house**. With the help of his **father-in-law**, a builder, he moved into a **cosy** new home after only four months. It only cost £3000 to build. The Hobbit House, as local people **call** it, **is made of natural materials.**

69 WORDS

Motivating texts

- Topics with an angle, an edge or a back-story.
- Based on authentic sources.
- Simplified/adapted to be useful and accessible:

Shorten sentences.

Simplify grammar and syntax.

Replace low-frequency words with high-frequency synonyms.

Maximise common words and strong collocations.

Eliminate obscure cultural references.

Meaning – Meaningful practice



FOCUS puts students in situations where they practise saying things they are likely to say in real life.

Authentic interaction

A-Z of ELT, Scott Thornbury

Finally, the term authentic has been used to characterize a quality of classroom interaction – one which reflects the structures of real talk as opposed to traditional classroom talk. Advocates of this kind of authenticity reject conventional exchanges of the type :

Teacher Have I a nose on my face?

Student Yes you have.

Teacher Good.

Exercise 1 – *make & do*

Complete the questions with the correct form of *make* or *do*.

- 1) How much money does a waitress _____?
- 2) Could you _____ the washing today?
- 3) Did Tom's new business _____ a profit last year?
- 4) Has Dick _____ the washing up?
- 5) Were you _____ your homework when I called?
- 6) Why did Harry _____ a complaint?

Meaningless

Exercise 2 – *make & do*

Complete the questions with the correct form of *make* or *do*.

Then, in pairs ask and answer the questions.

- 1) Did you _____ your bed this morning?
- 2) Do your neighbours ever _____ a noise?
- 3) Do you like _____ the washing up?
- 4) Who _____ the cooking in your house?
- 5) Have you ever _____ dinner for somebody?
- 6) Where does your family usually _____ the shopping?

Meaningful

Verb + -ing or verb + to infinitive

Complete the sentences with *wear* or *wearing*. Then tick the sentences that are true for you.

- 1) I can't stand _____ formal clothes like suits.
- 2) I don't mind _____ sweatpants at home.
- 3) I refuse _____ skinny jeans. They're too uncomfortable.
- 4) I hate _____ heavy, winter coats.
- 5) I can't afford _____ designer clothes. They're too expensive.
- 6) I avoid _____ anything pink or yellow.

COMPARE WITH

Complete the sentences. Use the infinitive or -ing form of the verbs below.

- 1) He promised _____ me a text as soon as his plane arrived.
- 2) If you suffer from 'claustrophobia', you can't stand _____ in small spaces.
- 3) Sam is very talkative. She carries on _____ even when no one is listening to her
ETC.

Meaningful practice - true for you

WORD STORE 4A

Describing houses

Type of house

a bungalow, a cottage, a detached house,
a semi-detached house, a terraced house,
a flat, ¹ an eco-house

Location

in the city centre, in the suburbs, in a village,
near the sea, ² _____, ³ _____

Building materials

brick, concrete, ⁴ _____, ⁵ _____,
⁶ _____

Description

modern, traditional, spacious, ⁷ _____,
⁸ _____, ⁹ _____

6 Replace the underlined phrases with words or phrases with similar meanings from WORD STORE 4A.

Tick the sentences that are true for you.

I live in a ...

- 1 detached house with only one floor. *bungalow*
- 2 house which is joined to my neighbour's house.
- 3 house on the edge of the city.
- 4 small, traditional house in a village.
- 5 modern house in an area with other similar houses.
- 6 flat that is very warm and comfortable.

Meaningful practice – Ask and answer

9 Read the questions and cross out the injury that is impossible or very unlikely.

Have you ever:

- 1 broken your *leg / chest / toe*?
- 2 burnt your *tongue / fingers / ribs*?
- 3 cut your *teeth / lip / heel*?
- 4 dislocated your *shoulder / eyebrows / thumb*?
- 5 scratched your *knees / neck / hair*?
- 6 sprained your *lips / ankle / wrist*?



Meaningful practice – Replace names

11 Replace the underlined adjective with a synonym from WORD STORE 1C.

- 1 Hannah is very hard-working. She's always in the library.
- 2 Dan has a logical way of thinking. He likes problem-solving.
- 3 Jim is a sociable person. He loves a good party.
- 4 Eva is very determined. She never gives up.
- 5 Tom likes to discover new things. He's always interested.
- 6 Rosa is really intelligent. She gets everything right.



12 Replace the names in Exercise 11 to describe students in your school. Does your partner agree with you?

Meaningful practice – Agree or disagree



6 Complete the sentences with the words in the box.

[aware law peaceful stand strong underlying]

- 1 **Breaking** the _____ is always wrong.
 - 2 It's a bad idea to **make** people _____ **of** your political views.
 - 3 Teenagers have no idea what they _____ **for**.
 - 4 Street art can be an effective form of _____ **protest**.
 - 5 Only experts understand the _____ **messages** in modern art.
 - 6 Nobody has _____ **beliefs** about anything any more.
- 7 In pairs, discuss whether you agree or disagree with the statements in Exercise 6.

Meaningful language practice

I believe that meaning should be central to all practice activities however controlled or free, and at whatever level.

Students learn more effectively when engaged in activities on a personal level.

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