A REDEFINITION OF AUTHENTIC MATERIAL AND ITS USE IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on two important aspects of language teaching after the appearance of the communicative approach in the 1970's: the importance of using authentic material and the question of whether this material should be adapted to suit the needs of our students. As regards the first aspect, an attempt is made at redefining what authentic material represents in the teaching of English, while we offer several examples of different methods to be used when adapting authentic material (deleting, adding, modifying and simplifying) as well as discuss the main reasons to do so.

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, the communicative approach has clearly susbtituted more traditional methods in the teaching of English, namely the so-called Grammar-Translation method. The advocates of this approach favour the use of real English in real situations and expect the learners of any L2 to be able to use the target language in real situations. This emphasis on the *real* factor influences the choice of material to be used in the classroom or in coursebooks. Some of the latter focus on the importance of learning the principal functions that the speaker will be faced with when using his/her second language. In such a short period as ten years, if we are to compare it with the centuries of language teaching in Europe, writers have altered the whole structuring of their coursebooks to reflect this new approach. If we have a quick look at the content list of *Kernel Lessons*, published in 1971, the author clearly bases his lessons on grammar principles. Thus, unit 1 covers the present simple and position of time adverbs, unit 2 the present continuous and so on (O'Neill, Kingsbury and Yeadon 1971:v). Conversely, *Progress to First Certificate*, first published in 1983, offers the learners a quite different approach: unit 1 is entitled “Shopping”, unit 2 “Leisure Activities” and so on (Jones 1983: iii). This course also uses a good number of what can be described as authentic material, rather than material especially designed for the purpose of language teaching.

The second starting-point for our article is a comment made by a teacher of English at a Conference on Methodology held in the University of Murcia in 1994, where we discussed the importance of using dictations in the teaching of English. One of the lecturers was rather surprised to learn that we still use dictations as a teaching exercise (due, perhaps, to a certain misconception that believes that we are to avoid dictations if we follow a strict communicative approach to language teaching. However modern and dynamic exercises based on the traditional dictation have been developed by Davis and Rinvolucri 1988). He was even more surprised when he was told that, not only do we use dictations, but we also adapt original texts to suit the needs of our students. Apparently it is a must in modern methodology to use authentic material, and we are to understand by that, material designed by native speakers of the language for native speakers of the language and, consequently, we will be dealing with material which we might rush to describe as authentic, in the sense that it has not been especially prepared to suit the needs of students of English as a foreign language, but the needs and interests of native speakers of the language. Most of the material that we will mention or quote in this article, papers, magazines, radio programmes, television series, films (although the use of films presents a series of difficulties: see Van Els et al. 1984: 289-90), etcetera, have been devised for an English-speaking public.

These two reflections, the shift from grammar-based to situation-based coursebooks and the question of adapting authentic material to be used in the classroom, have led us to consider and redefine the now traditional definition of authentic material. We have not come to provide a description of the traditional view on authentic material yet, so before we start arguing in favour or against adapting it, we must make an attempt at defining it. As we might expect, there is no agreement on what authentic material really is. We have already mentioned one possible definition: material by native speakers for native speakers. This is certainly the view taken by Jeremy Harmer, as he writes:

> A first distinction must be drawn between *authentic* and *non-authentic* material. Authentic texts (either written or spoken) are those which are designed for native speakers: they are texts designed not for language students but for the speakers of the language in question. Any English newspaper is composed of what we call authentic English, and so is an English radio programme. An English advertisement is an example of authentic English, so is a chapter from a book on teaching methodology written for English-speaking readers.
> A non-authentic text, in language teaching terms, is one that has been written especially for language students, but here again there is a distinction to be made between texts written to illustrate particular language points for presentation and those written to appear authentic. (1983: 146)

Quite obviously Harmer would claim that a text which has been designed for English speakers and turned it into a text for learners of English, is a case of non-authentic material. In the revision of his own book, Harmer includes some hilarious and extreme examples of non-authentic material or material especially designed for learners of English (1991: 185). And then he proceeds to deal with what he describes as simulated authentic material, that is material specially prepared for students of English, but which attempts to reproduce authentic written or spoken English.

Rivers and Temperley also share this view in their *Practical Guide to the Teaching of English*, particularly in the case of the spoken word. Thus, when dealing when listening comprenhension exercises, they argue that listening to authentic tapes enables students to have real contact with the life and thought of English-speaking people and also makes them familiar with the accents of the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand or other English-speaking areas: "Through these tapes, learners of English encounter the normal and the natural, even the trivial, much more than in the reading of newspapers, magazines, novels, plays, and short stories, all of which tend to choose as subjects the exceptional, the sensational or the eccentric in order to arouse and maintain interest." (1978: 68). This had already been mentioned by Rivers in a previous work (1968: 175 ff.).

Their view clearly broadens the field open by Harmer, since they praise the extralinguistic value of real English in the classroom and include material which has not even been designed for native speakers (and it is clearly linked to some education policies which emphasied the value of extra-linguistic features in the teaching of foreign languages). However, we feel that two aspects should be taken into account when using this type of authentic material, or which we would rather call "spontaneous" material. First of all, the recording of an everyday conversation in a foreign language can present two problems: uninteresting chats and too rapid speech. We have recorded real conversations in English-speaking countries in the hope that we could later use them in our classrooms. But from our experience, the exercise becomes far too difficult for our students, even for the advanced ones, since the native interlocutors being recorded were in normal everyday situations, where they would not be aware of the fact that certain features of their speech would not be understood by speakers of the language from other regions or countries, let alone students of English as L2.

REDEFINING AUTHENTIC MATERIAL

In our tapes we have authentic conversations from real life, that is, a spontaneous chat between friends or acquaintances. They include some of the features praised by Rivers and Temperley, that is conversation fillers and other "noises" which provide it with its authentic feeling: "yeah," "aha," and all the laugh that goes with it. The second danger with this type of casual conversations is that they tend to be pathetically boring. Teachers might use them so that their students have this feeling of real conversation, but we can hardly expect to stir up enthusiasm in a class with a conversation like this:

> 'What did you have for lunch today?
> 'Oh! I had a very healthy lunch…baked potato and sweet corn.
> 'That sounds good…
> 'Yeaaa, pretty disgusting…(laugh)'

And the dialogue goes on like this for most of the tape. Therefore, the topics mentioned are the ones that students might encounter at the beginning of other tapes or in everyday life, so we should not be surprised if they do not feel interested in them. After all, who cares if one of the girls has has a baked potato with sweet corn for lunch and finds it pretty disgusting?

The fact is that spontaneous conversation tends to be boring and should normally be restricted, in short takes, to fill the last minutes of a class. As Brown and Yule write in *Teaching the Spoken Language*: "Whereas many scripted conversations are interesting, most naturally occurring conversations are extremely boring unless you happen to be an active engaged participant in one. It is quite rare that it is actually interesting to overhear a conversation unless it is about oneself as gossip. The study of "authentic" conversations which are to be used as conversational models should not, therefore, be extended for very long at a time" (1983: 33).

The other important aspect of this type of material which is worth mentioning is accent. Another instance of authentic material that teachers of English can easily resort to is one of the many documentaries the BBC produces, which usually deal with interesting subjects and have a great appeal to the public. We have used several programmes of the series *Language File* in our classes since they show different general views on language, focusing primarily on English. One of these programmes studies the problems of social and regional accents in the UK. The speakers, both on the recording of spontaneous chat and in the documentary, were British but they did not have a standard accent, quite the opposite: we hear Glasgow accents on the audiotape and Liverpool accents on the videotape. They would be difficult to understand even for the most advanced students, if they were not familiar with the accents, and even for other native speakers of the language.

The use of either of these two examples with students who have not been exposed to easier accents and more interesting topics would surely have discouraging effects. Hubbard's view that "students get real satisfaction from having made some sense out of real-life language at the early stages. If teachers can show students how easy it is to understand something from authentic material rather than how difficult it is to understand everything, then students are more likely to want to understand more" (1983: 89) is definitely too idealistic. Students need to build up their self-confidence on understanding and they usually want to understand as much as possible, as we can gather from our own experience. If we provide them with this sort of materials, frustration is likely to arise and they are bound to feel disappointed and give up.

Some communicative coursebooks have tended to simulate authentic material or even reproduce it so that learners become familiar with real English from the early stages of the learning process. To achieve their goal they have even added other non-linguistic features of real life in their taped conversations. We have a plentiful supply of examples of this in Swan and Walter's *Cambridge Course*, which became a classic course book for adult learners, from beginners to pre-advanced, for a whole decade. The authors include a number of authentic or simulated conversations which take place in airports, at railway stations, in the streets, etc. Both teachers and students have been critical of all the noise going on in the background, which sometimes prevents the learners from hearing anything but a mumbling from the speakers. In some other cases, students are supposed to understand only part of the conversation, only a few key-words since the authors acknowledge that the tape is difficult and, therefore, the aim is to expose learners to real English. The problems arising from a coursebook like this, where both types of simulation are combined, might be solved by a cunning teacher, but this should not really be our objective: to create difficult conditions for the learner only to excuse ourselves for using such material and explain to them that understanding will eventually come, through hard work and the passing of time. The communicative approach emphasizes the role of teachers as guides (Larsen-Freeman 1986: 123-28) in the learning process, while students should participate actively in the classes: mistakes should be regarded as normal and accepted as parts of the process; it seems to us that students might be reluctant to participate or to say a word if they fail to see the point of a listening exercise (or reading for the matter) which they find extremely difficult, if not incomprenhensible.

This is one of the reasons why we, as teachers, must make our own selection from coursebooks. Writers and publishers of coursebooks would argue that the material in their books has been especially prepared for learners of English by specialists and, therefore, it is the best material to be found. We should realize that this is not necessarily so. Courses are usually carefully designed to suit the needs of a wide international market. Even those writers who are familiar with the difficulties of foreign students and try to use this knowledge when designing their course are bound to pay too much attention to certain aspects, which both teachers and students from a certain country will find irrelevant, e.g. too much emphasis on Latin-rooted vocabulary is unnecessary for Spanish learners of English, but it will be compulsory for German speakers (one of our students was surprised to find some "easy" exercises in an advanced course, such as the distinction between "adverse" and "converse" until we mention that Arabic or Chinese natives will find them very useful indeed). Even within the same countries, certain speakers of one region might find some aspects or chapters necessary, while, for others, they would be a waste of time (e.g., people from Central Spain will find it easier to use a Present Perfect, while Northerners will require more extensive practice). Let us also quote another typical example, Michael Swan's *Practical English Usage*, an excellent reference book which includes many common mistakes made by students of English from various parts of the world, but is there any Spanish learner who would say "I am born in 1957"? (1980: 113).

Therefore, when those who use a coursebook select certain exercises, leave others out or would like to get away from class routine, they might want to use authentic material. Again some writers and publishers try to disuade us from it. The arguments against authentic material are various: courses are now communicative and use authentic or simulated material, extracts from newspapers, short radio advertisements or inteviews, etc. Besides one tends to use photocopies, and they also argue that this can become a nuisance. Students lose those copied worksheets or, even worse, they only collect them in their folders and never look back at them. And, of course, the classical argument against authentic material is that to photocopy copyright material is an offence and one can be prosecuted, although they wisely forget to mention that there is a large amount of real material which their authors allow to use for the purpose of teaching English (including a number of newspapers and magazines).

But before we consider what kind of material we can use in the classroom, let us summarize some of the points we have made so far:

a. Teachers might follow a coursebook, but, at the same time, will feel like introducing certain novelties.

b. They are in the right position to select the material they are going to use in their classrooms, since they know their students: their level of proficiency, their needs, their weaknesses and their strong points

c. We first made a distinction between authentic material and non-authentic material, as in the examples provided by Harmer. At a later point, we suggested the possibility of speaking of authentic material, simulated material and spontaneous material.

d. If the teacher selects the appropriate text or programme, students might begin to feel interested in reading, listening and watching since English texts and programmes can be regarded as a source of information, not merely as a tool to learn a language (as mentioned by Doff 1988: 170).

Now we are prepared to make a new classification which will be more convenient for our purposes:

1. *Spontaneous material*, that is, as produced by native speakers in everyday life. The main problems arising from using this type of material is that the topics could be far too boring and that the accents could be a serious problem for clear understanding, even for other native speakers.
2. *Authentic material*, that is, as spoken by native speakers, designed either for them or for learners of the language.
3. And finally, what we could describe as *artificial material*, that is, written or spoken language used specifically for the purpose of teaching, but which would not be written or uttered by native speakers. This is not to be rejected since it can help students with specific problems, but its use should be restricted in the class.

Therefore, our new definition of authentic material is not merely based on who designed the material and to whom is addressed, but on whether the language used sounds authentic in part or in its entirety, and on whether students are likely to hear or read it in real situations. For these reasons we should not define authentic material on the basis that it has been designed for native speakers. To make our point we shall take an interview with British actor Michael Caine for *Speak Up* magazine. As we know, this monthly magazine aims at the self-teaching student of English and includes interviews with English-speaking people. Michael Caine featured in their October 1992 issue (no. 86) and spoke about his roles, his films and other interesting issues. He is a Cockney actor, but his accent can be easily understood. On the tape of the same issue there is a report on the Welsh miners where students can listen to the miners' impressions on their own life. Both Michael Caine and the Welsh miners speak with non-standard but intelligible accents, the topics are appealing and their English is authentic in the sense that, although not designed for native speakers, it could have been.

A similar pattern has been used in the tapes of the coursebook *Headway*, where the teacher is faced with a number of listening comprehension exercises which have been specially prepared for learners of English, although they sound authentic. They are not spontaneous and the student is not likely to encounter those conversations in real life in their entirety, but parts of them can be heard in normal everyday conversation. Let us consider an example from *Headway Pre-Intermediate* (Soars: 1991:35):

> Jenny: How are you getting to Bristol?
> Chris: I have a bit of a problem, actually. My car isn't working at the moment.
> I'm thinking of getting a taxi to the station and then getting a train.
> Jenny: I can give you a lift to the station. Don't worry about the taxi.
> Chris: Really?
> Jenny: Mmm.
> Chris: OK. (…)

This short chat between two friends includes conversation fillers, colloquial English, normal questions and answers that we might hear in everyday life: Really?, Mmmm, OK, etc. It belongs to a good course-book which attempts to reproduce real English, although it is obviously designed for students of English. However, we would not ascertain that the English used in that dialogue is artificial ("How are you getting to Bristol? I don't know how I'm getting to Bristol…"). It might be argued that both Chris and Jenny sound rather restrained and that an authentic conversation would definitely be longer. Still, the English chosen by the authors is real English, used in an authentic situation.

Therefore, what these examples, and many more, show is that there is not such a thing as a special type of material that we should use when teaching English. Authentic material is not just the material produced for native speakers, but the material which native speakers would identify as natural speech or natural written language. No matter whether we are speaking about simulated authentic material or material designed mainly for speakers of the language. Consequently we should really speak of the three types of material above-mentioned instead of attempting to impress the learners with the label "authentic", when all material which is not artificial should be referred to as authentic.

ADAPTING AUTHENTIC MATERIAL

Once we have redefined the term "authentic" as used in the teaching of L2, let us consider one possible authentic text, which deals with the well-publicized Michael Jackson scandal:

> Last week's round of trouble began with a second lawsuit, this one levelled against Jackson by five former bodyguards in Los Angeles. The security team, dismissed by Jackson last February, claims that its services were terminated because the guards had come to know too much about the star's fondness for closed-door evenings with young boys. The suit alleges that Jackson hid male children in the guards' shack at his family's estate, summoning them to his suite after his parents had gone to sleep. (*Time*, December 6, 1993).

The text does not offer too many difficulties, but at first sight it would be a better option for more advanced students. The vocabulary might make it difficult for intermediate students to understand, thus turning an interesting story into an absolute bore. Nevertheless we, as teachers, might find it an appealing text: everybody has heard about it, we are all acquainted with some of the facts, and, therefore, it might be excellent material for a lively class. The question that might arise now is whether we can solve the vocabulary problems so that most students understand the message and, at the same time, might be able to give their comments rather than ask questions about the text itself. We certainly need to introduce some changes:

> Last week's round of trouble came from Jackson's ex-bodyguards. Five of them, who formed the security team who was dismissed by Jackson last February, say that their services were terminated because the guards had come to know too much about the star's interest in closed-door evenings with young boys. They also say that Jackson hid male children in the guards' hut at his family's property, calling them to his bedroom after his parents had gone to sleep.

The changes are quite noticeable, but the main idea remains unchanged. The process might be carried out depending on the needs of each individual class. Some teachers might feel that they do not need so many alterations for their class, others that these are not enough. The result, in all cases, is that our text will be better understood by the learners, and we might focus on different aspects of the text: the message, its grammar (this one would be useful to revise Saxon genitives and their use with people and periods of time) or its vocabulary.

Now that we have tried to establish a new classification of the material used in the teaching of English, or any other languages for the matter, let us focus on authentic material and the various processes that it can undergo to be adapted to suit the needs of our students. I will follow the guidelines of an excellent book on materials, which has been recently published: *Materials and Methods in ELT*, by Jo McDonough and Christopher Shaw, although introducing certain changes. I had mentioned at the beginning of my talk the case of a lecturer who did not see any reason to adapt materials. From that view we might infer that materials should be taken as they come or rejected altogether, which sounds an extreme view if we consider that a few alterations to a given text, audio or videotape could render it affordable and even enjoyable. Some authors have been trapped by the communicative trend and rejected any alteration whatsoever to the authentic material, without considering that the priorities of teachers and students might vary and change "over time and within the same context" (McDonough and Shaw 1993: 85). There are relevant reasons why we might decide to adapt some material before using it in the classroom. The following list is based on McDonough and Shaw's but has been implemented with the suggestions of teachers and learners alike:

1. Grammar points included in the material are not clear enough or do not correspond to the level of our class. Thus it is necessary to clarify the points so that the material, normally a text, can be followed.
2. The text includes a number of examples of structures which have been studied in class, but we might find it helpful to substantiate the original text with further examples.
3. We might decide to avoid certain grammatical points altogether if we are more interested in the material as a starting point for a debate or to introduce new vocabulary.
4. Too much emphasis on the communicative aspect of the material, hindering the students to understand the message. We might start by presenting some grammatical structures.

5. The vocabulary included is too complex or there are too many unknown words. It requires susbstitution or deletion to make it easier to follow.

6. The text, radio or televisión programme might be appealing, but they are too easy. We need to use supplementary material to introduce new language points.

7. The text, radio or television programme is too difficult. We might delete certain parts, although we must make sure that the main ideas remain and the students can follow it easily.

8. Some radio or television programmes might sound too artificial because the readers or presenters sound as if they are reading a text. In some other cases, they might be too long to be used in a fifty-minute class. However, we can delete those parts which we do not consider essential.

9. Other radio or television programmes offer the students examples of regional or national accents other than RP. We might start by provinding our students with an explanation of the main differences between the accent they are going to listen to and the standard (or any other) accent they are used to.

10. In some cases we can use authentic material especially prepared for learners of L2. The material might be useful, but the questions or exercises are too easy. We need to design new exercises.

11. Some dialogues are too formal and the students are not likely to hear them or use them. We have to delete them.

12. The material that we are going to use might be regarded as monotonous or biased. We might play a programme on a specific subject or issue (e.g., a programme on the effects of smoking) and use a text which provides the students with a different view, thus giving rise to a possible discussion on the subject.

13. If the material is to be used as part of an exam, we should adapt it to suit the level the students have reached when they sit the exam, not the level we had expected them to reach.

14. A last question to consider when using authentic material is whether the text or programme might offend our students. It might seem an irrelevant point to make, especially in the case of our university adult students. Nevertheless, certain scenes, words or issues might be shocking for some of our students. A good example of this is the Desmond Morris's television documentary series *The Human Animal*. Some of its episodes feature scenes which some students might dislike or take offence, even though the episodes are extremely interesting and will be helpful to practice specific or even specialised language (not jargon) on some appealing topics. We might delete the controversial scenes if we feared our main objective, to teach a foreign language, would be hampered.

In other cases, especially in the lower levels, we might avoid taboo subjects or words, although we will not be that reluctant to refer to them or discuss them in advanced levels.

We might summarize all the points included in the list by saying that adaptation of given material responds to the need of individualizing it to focus on one or various aspects of the language. A clear example is the listening comprehension paper that we used for a fourth year examination in our department. The text dealt with wine-producing techniques and compared the methods used by Old World and New World producers. The Old World was represented by the French, while the New World was represented by what was described in the text as Antipodeans. The word was repeated throughout the text, and, although it should not have been too difficult for the students to recognize, it could have interfered with their understanding of the text under exam conditions. Therefore we decided to find a substitute, which was, of course, Australian. The change was minimal and had neither qualitative nor quantitative effects on the text.

However, adapting authentic material can have both qualitative and quantitative effects, that is, it can affect its methodological nature or the amount of information provided by the text. The possibility of adapting material for its use in the classroom has not been widely discussed by linguists. As we mentioned in our introduction, few writers dedicate a chapter, section or sub-section to authentic material. Thus the various ways to adapt this material to suit the needs of one particular class have not even been mentioned. Only Shaw and McDonough have recently worked on the subject and they suggest five main techniques, divided and sub-divided as follows:

> Adding, including expanding and extending.
> Deleting, including subtracting and abridging.
> Modifying, including re-writing and re-structuring.
> Simplifying.
> Re-ordering.

We shall concentrate on the first four, without considering the subdivisions included in this list. We might argue that re-ordering a text is a variety of the third type, modifying a text or programme. As a matter of fact, they connect this last technique to coursebooks in that the order in which exercises appeared might be altered when the teacher feels that a related activity in a later unit can be used to practice certain grammatical points, structures, or vocabulary. However, it is also true that it can also give way to several exercises with both written and audiovisual material. Altering the order of a text, the scenes in a video or an audiotape can be a way of forcing the students to pay special attention to the material we have prepared for them.

Let us now consider some examples of the four main types of adapting a text:

Adding. If we feel that a certain text is useful to practice reading, with a good number of minimal pairs (bit/bet, hat/hate, ship/chip), but not enough examples of the difficulties for learners of a particular L1. For example, we might want our students to practice the difference b/v, but Japanese teachers will prefer to practice l/r and Arabic teachers p/b. Or we can be interested in practising certain grammatical points. In the text that we included at the very beginning of this article we added some Saxon genitives to practice their use with expressions of time, people, etc.

Deleting. This technique can be applied to a particular text, audio or videotape or can be applied to a textbook. As we have said early on, textbooks are prepared for an international public with various needs. We must not feel guilty if we have to omit two or three exercises in one unit, if we feel that they are not relevant, or even the whole unit, if our students will not learn anything from it. As regards authentic material, we might be interested in using only part of a report or a television programme, for whatever reasons: the vocabulary is too difficult, difficult accents, irrelevant information or even cultural reasons. Two good examples of this type of alteration are the videotape we have already mentioned, *Language File*. This programme was extremely interesting and, for the most part, could be used with advanced students.

Some interviews with very heavy regional accents could be deleted and the programme would not lose its interest.

The second example comes from the BBC series already mentioned: Desmond Morris's *The Human Animal*. The series is controversial and could give rise to discussion in the class. However, each programme lasts 50 minutes, which is too long if we want to play it twice for full understanding. Besides, it includes irrelevant scenes, which some of our students might find shocking or embarrassing. One episode includes a rather disgusting scene of Australian aborigenes cooking and eating worms, while a second episode shows an orgasm from inside a woman. Here we can act as censors since our role is to teach English, not to shock or embarrass students.

Modifying. There are two main techniques to modify a text: rewrite it or restructure it. Sometimes we might feel that a certain reading passage from a book, a magazine or a newspaper could make an appealing listening comprehension exercise, but, of course, we do not have a tape of it. Then we might decide to read it ourselves. But reading and listening are different activities and, consequently, we will need to adapt it if we are to read it, as we did in the case aforementioned: Antipodians and Australians.

On the other hand, we can also adapt a text for the students to read aloud or for us to dictate to the students, if we want them to practice certain features.

This is an example:

> In the warm, translucent waters off the Florida coast, something stirred. Leaving bubbles in its wake, the intruder moved noiselessly past the fish and the coral reefs. BOB –the Breathing Observation Bubble– is the ultimate seaside toy and is about to take the US by storm. It has been invented by former Rover car worker, Andrew Sneath. "It's so quiet that you can hear the fish around you," he said yesterday. (*Daily Mail*, August 1994).

We can adapt this text so that we can make our students practise their b/v pair as well as the various pronunciations of the "ea" combination:

> In the warm, *clear* waters off the Florida coast, something *moved*. *Leaving bubbles behind*, the intruder *drove* noiselessly past *heaps* of fish and coral reefs. BOB –the *Breathing Observation Bubble*– is the ultimate *seaside* toy and is about to *reach the heart* of the Americans. It has been *created* by former Rover car worker, Andrew *Head*. "It's so quiet that you can *hear* the fish around you," he said yesterday.

In other cases, we might want to modify the presentation of a text. We have mentioned the magazine *Speak Up*, which usually includes interesting reports together with a glossary of the terms which the readers might not be familiar with. If we use one of these reports in the class, we might find it more useful to omit the glossary and instruct the students to figure out the meaning of those words and expressions from the context. This will encourage talking and prevent the class from becoming too lazy and dependent on a glossary or the teacher.

Simplifying. This technique is also useful, but can lead to a distortion of natural speech or written English if we are not especially careful when we simplify grammar or certain features of speech. In many cases it would be worthwhile keeping those grammatical points which will certainly require further practice rather than simplification. For instance, if we have a conversation in which the characters say:

> -She didn't come, after all. She said she couldn't.
> -She couldn't or she wouldn't?

Some teachers will be tempted to simplify the grammar of such a short exchange to avoid further explanation of grammatical points. Thus they will be tempted to rephrase the interrogative and to avoid the use of the conditional, using "didn't want to." This will certainly lead to artificial language. Interrogative sentences follow a strict order in formal English, but this is not true of colloquial English where we are more likely to find the same order with a different intonation. Besides if the students are already familiar with the conditional, there is no point in avoiding this special and very common use of the conditional and they will tend to use "didn't want" in the cases where they should use "wouldn't".

Simplification can be mainly applied to texts rather than audiovisual material and affects the sentence structure (for example omitting relatives and using shorter sentences instead), the lexical content (so that we adapt the vocabulary by reference to what the students already know) and the grammatical structures (changing from reported into direct speech, for intermediate students for example). But as we mentioned before everyone of these processes must be carried out very carefully so that we do not turn authentic material into artificial language.

Thus, as a conclusion to our survey on the importance of using authentic material, we can summarize the main points made in this article:

1. Authentic material should be used in the teaching of English so that our students get accustomed to real English.
2. Teachers must be extremely careful when selecting this material since students might feel disappointed if the text or programme is too dificult to understand. We must bear in mind that students will expect to understand as much as possible, no matter how strongly we insist on the fact that this is not necessary.
3. Therefore, we might need to adapt this material to suit the needs of our students, which can be of various types, as indicated before.
4. Adapting material does not mean to falsify its contents or structure. It means to use it to the advantage of our students and to focus on certain features of the language.

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