

**Bringing real life English into foreign language classrooms:
Language learners' views on the use of authentic and artificial materials in the
English language learning classrooms**

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Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää vieraan kielen oppilaiden mielipiteitä ja ajatuksia erilaisten oppimateriaalien, lähinnä autenttisen materiaalin, käytöstä kielten opetuksessa. Aikaisemmat tutkimukset ovat selkeästi tuoneet esiin autenttisen oppimateriaalin positiiviset puolet ja sen tarpeellisuuden vieraan kielen opetuksessa. Nämä tutkimukset ovat keskittyneet lähinnä määrittelemään, mitä autenttisuus vieraan kielen opetuksessa on ja minkä katsotaan olevan autenttista materiaalia. Aikaisemmat tutkimukset ovat pohtineet tarkoin myös autenttisen oppimateriaalin ongelmakohtia. Tutkielma perustui kyselylomakkeeseen, jossa tiedusteltiin kahden eri luokka-asteen oppilaiden mielipiteitä siitä, miten he kokivat oppivansa vieraan kielen opetuksessa käytettävistä eri oppimismateriaaleista ja -menetelmistä. Tämän lisäksi pyrittiin selvittämään, kuinka paljon oppijat kokivat käyttävänsä autenttista materiaalia oppitunneilla. Tulokset osoittivat, että oppilaat kokivat autenttisen oppimateriaalin olevan hyödyllistä vieraan kielen opetuksessa ja sitä olevan tarpeeksi tarjolla oppitunneilla. Oppilaat eivät kuitenkaan kokeneet, että ainoastaan autenttisen oppimateriaalin käyttö edistäisi oppimista vaan lähes poikkeuksetta oppilaat kokivat keinotekoisien oppimateriaalien olevan hyödyllistä opetuksessa. Näin ollen tutkimus näyttää toteen erilaisten oppimateriaalien käytön merkityksellisyyden vieraan kielen opetuksessa.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The focus in learning a foreign language is to learn a language and be able to use it in the outside world. Therefore, it is worth considering if it is enough to learn from the textbook and its specially created tasks or whether more authentic materials are needed to complement the learning process. There are a number of studies done about authenticity and about using authentic material in foreign language learning classrooms. However, these studies do not compare traditional learning material to authentic material as such but mostly concentrate on introducing authentic materials and how these work in practice. Furthermore, earlier studies do not consider learners' views and thus lack the most essential opinion when making conclusions on the learning materials.

One of the most important and essential tools in foreign language teaching and learning are the materials used during the lessons. The materials can have a significant effect on the language learners' motivation, learning process and desire to learn more. For this reason, the materials should be created from the learners' point of view since they are the ones who benefit the most from the materials. However, it must be pointed out that it is impossible to create materials that are considered to be the best possible by every language learner since the students are all different. Due to this fact, a variety of different material needs to be used in foreign language teaching. However, some materials are considered to be more helpful than others and the present study aims to examine whether learners feel that authentic material is needed in learning a foreign language.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the possible benefits that authentic material might have on learning a foreign language from language learners' point of view. Moreover, the present study intends to look into the current position on the use of authentic materials versus artificial materials in today's English language classrooms. The intention is not to exclude either type of material, authentic or artificial, but rather the aim is to present the opinions and thoughts of language learners.

2 AUTHENTICITY AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

One of the most important tools in foreign language teaching and learning is teaching material. Nowadays, there is a wide range of materials available for teachers to use in their foreign language teaching. In the end, it is up to the teacher to choose the most useful material. In addition to ordinary and simulated textbooks, there are more real-world language materials, which can just as well be used for teaching purposes. This real-world language material or authentic language material has many definitions. Nunan (1985:38) defines the concept of authenticity as follows:

‘Authentic’ materials are usually defined as those which have been produced for purposes other than to teach language. They can be culled from many different sources: video clips, recordings of authentic interactions, extracts from television, radio and newspapers, signs, maps and charts, photographs and pictures, timetables and schedules. These are just a few of the sources which have been tapped.

Widdowson (1990:45) defines authenticity as natural language behaviour. Lee (1995:324) states that, “the text is usually regarded as textually authentic if it is not written for teaching purposes, but for real-life communicative purpose”. Essentially, authenticity can be described with words such as genuineness, realness, undisputed credibility, unedited and validity. According to van Lier (1996:125), authenticity in the classroom relates to processes of self-actualization, intrinsic motivation, respect and moral integrity in interpersonal relations. The focus in learning a foreign language is to learn a language and be able to use it in the outside world. To be able to communicate naturally, learners should be involved in natural communicative language use in the classroom whereupon the classroom has to be authentic (Widdowson 1990:44). These kinds of observations refer to a communicative approach in foreign language teaching.

2.1 Communicative language teaching

Learning a foreign language is more than just learning linguistic structures. However, as Kaikkonen (1998:12) states, learning a foreign language is often defined as learning the

competence of language, the viewpoint being only on the linguistic structures of language. This traditional linguistic-centered approach shifted to a more communicational approach in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Widdowson 1990). As Kaikkonen (1998:12) points out, the actual use of language became the fundamental goal to foreign language learning.

In addition to learning a language and its systems, it is important to include the individual's need and ability to learn the language in foreign language teaching. Thereby, the learners are able to communicate with the language (Kaikkonen 1998:12). Being able to communicate with a foreign language requires communicative competence (Hymes 1971) or ability to know what to say and how to say it correctly in appropriate situations. The communicative approach to language teaching focuses on language as a medium of communication (Devitt et al. 1988:18) and its fundamental goal of language teaching is communicative competence—to be able to communicate in the target language (Larsen-Freeman 2000:121). Thus, authentic language is used whenever possible in the classroom. As Devitt et al. (1988:19) point out, the communicative approach supports learning not just for but through communication. This type of learning enables learners to transfer what they learn in the classroom to the outside world.

According to Larsen-Freeman (2000:129), one of the characteristics of the communicative language teaching is the use of authentic materials. It is necessary to give language learners opportunities to learn the language the way it is actually used in the real world. However, as Nunan (1988:99) points out, there has been a lot of debate about the concept of authenticity since it first was introduced. On one hand, there are many advantages of authentic materials, but on the other hand, there are also plenty of disadvantages.

2.2 Advantages and disadvantages of authentic material

There are many reasons for selecting authentic material as a means of teaching foreign language. By using authentic materials the teacher exposes learners to real language and encourages learners to process real texts. The examples and texts in textbooks are invented and thus, syntax and lexis are modified to meet the learner's current level in foreign language learning. This undoubtedly alters the nature of the genre. In addition, artificially created texts lack natural

coherence and cohesion and, due to this, learners will not be able to see formation of the text structure.

Authentic materials also provide learners with the model of target-like language use, which will help learners to be able to use language in real life. As Hyland (2003:94) points out, learners will become acquainted with the target language when authentic material is used in foreign language teaching. National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2004:139) thus states that students will get to know the culture of the target language and learn to communicate with representatives of the target language culture in everyday situations, in a manner natural to that culture.

One of the most important advantages of the use of authentic materials is the emotional factor. It is clear that there are many important factors that influence foreign language learning. Motivation is one of the factors and it is mainly motivation which determines the quality of learning (Whitaker 1995:160). According to Hyland (2003:94), authenticity in a foreign language classroom will increase learner motivation and thus, improve the learning results. In addition, Melvin and Stout (1987:55) state that learners who work with authentic materials have an interest in the language that is based on what they know it can do for them in the future. Moreover, learners realize the benefits of further language learning. However, there are still debates on whether there is a correlation between attitude/motivation and foreign language learning success. Devitt et al (1988:15) state that research tends to confirm the widespread intuition that a favorable attitude and a high level of motivation go hand in hand with second language learning success. Therefore, authentic materials with real-world language and contact with culture of the target language can, at its best, make learning enjoyable and motivating.

On the other hand, authentic materials have disadvantages that should be kept in mind. Language in the authentic texts might be too difficult for learners and this could lead to decreased learner motivation and poor learning results. In addition, it is very time consuming for teachers to find right kinds of authentic materials and develop effective activities to meet the pedagogic purposes. Finally, according to Hyland (2003:94), it might be difficult to fulfill the original communicative purpose as materials are still used in a classroom environment.

2.3 Underlying problems of authenticity in education

As was stated above, using authentic materials in foreign language education can be very advantageous for language learners. There are, however, some problems concerning the authenticity in foreign language education, which need to be discussed. As van Lier (1996:126) points out, it is easy to bring authenticity into the classroom by finding genuine material but to create authentic tasks and opportunities to use language in a classroom environment is a more problematic matter. Once the authentic material is introduced into the language lesson, the language learners can be asked to do either authentic or inauthentic tasks with the material. He continues that it is relatively easy to create inauthentic tasks, such as learning the material by heart, but the authentic tasks might be harder to create.

One of the problematic matters behind the issue of authenticity is the fact that there are various ways to understand the term authentic. In other words, two different language learners might see the same task as either authentic or inauthentic. This is due to the fact that as people in general, language learners are all their own kind, in other words, different. Because of this realization, van Lier (1996:128) comes up with the notion of authentication since it is basically a personal process of engagement, and it is not certain if every language learner involved in the same authentic setting experiences it in the same way. He also points out that the teacher's own desire to make the learning more authentic might stimulate authenticity in the students as well.

As van Lier (1996:144) points out, the concept of authenticity is by no means a simple issue: authenticating language lessons is hard work for both the teacher and the students. As Sartre (1957:246) says "like individuality, such authenticity is not given, it has to be earned."

3 THE STUDY

3.1 The research question

The purpose of the present study was to compare traditional teaching material and authentic material in English language learning from learners' perspective. There are a number of studies done about authenticity and about using authentic material in foreign language learning classrooms. However, none of these studies are done from the aspect of learners but primarily from the aspect of introducing authenticity and authentic teaching material and how they work in practise. Students are the ones learning the foreign language and therefore they should have a word to say when deciding what is appropriate teaching material and what is not. The focus of the study is merely on how learners view the authentic materials in today's English language learning classrooms and whether the authentic material is considered to be more useful in learning a foreign language when comparing it to the purposely developed teaching material. Furthermore, the study proposes to show the opinions of learners, the ones whose opinions should be supremely important when planning the methods and materials of future foreign language education.

3.2 The data and methods of analysis

In order to find out what the role of authenticity in the English language learning classroom is, I carried out a qualitative study. A questionnaire (see Appendix) was handed to 22 seventh-grade pupils and 13 ninth-grade pupils in two different comprehensive schools. The questionnaire was given to pupils in two different grade levels in order to get an overview of the whole primary school stage. The seventh graders had just started in primary school while the ninth graders are almost finishing their basic education. By means of the questionnaire I was able to ask the pupils about their opinions and thoughts concerning different tasks used in learning English language in classroom situations.

The data was collected during the fall 2008. I personally visited these two schools and the same instructions were given to all the pupils; there was no time limit set and all the answers were given anonymously. There are ten questions in the questionnaire (see the appendix). The first three questions deal with the pupils' background: gender, grade level and the last grade given on English. The other questions ask about the pupils' opinions and thoughts about the tasks done in the English language classroom. The last two questions are open questions where the respondents were able to list freely their favorite tasks and the tasks they disliked.

The data was analyzed by first giving every participant a number which enabled the researcher to sum up all the answers. These statistics were calculated into percents and put into graphs. With the help of the graphs it was possible to draw conclusions from the questionnaires. The calculations and graphs enabled the comparison between the opinions of the seventh grade pupils and the ninth grade pupils. In addition, it was possible to compare the answers between the boys and girls in general.

4 PUPILS' VIEWS ON DIFFERENT TASKS USED IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING CLASSROOM

In teaching a foreign language the materials used in the learning process have a strong effect on the outcome of teaching. There has been considerable discussion about the artificiality of the material created for foreign language learning and demand for authentic material is getting stronger. It is clear that learning a foreign language in the classroom environment cannot be completely authentic but teachers are encouraged to increase the use of authentic material and decrease the use of artificial materials. Since the whole idea of teaching material is to serve as a device for students to make the learning easier, they should be able to participate in planning the materials. When planning the materials for learning a foreign language, the opinions and thoughts of the students should naturally be taken into account since they know what the best way to learn is. The students are the ones who use the materials on a daily basis and know what works and what does not. The present study wants to introduce the views of the students on the tasks used and not used in the Finnish comprehensive school. As a result the study expects to show that the

variety in teaching materials is essential in order to teach many different learners. In addition, the study aims to point out that sometimes the traditional teaching methods are the most essential ones in learning a foreign language.

4.1 Learning in two languages

In today's foreign language education, it is widely recommended that the target language is used as a primary language in the classroom teaching. Even though it is not totally authentic since the majority of teachers speak the target language as their second language and not as their mother tongue, it is almost the only source of spoken language that the learners will get in the traditional classroom environment. In this study it can be noticed that the pupils in both grade levels were quite content with the frequent use of English in the classroom situation.

In the questions 4 and 5 (see the questionnaire in Appendix) the participants were asked to answer the questions about the variation between the target language and their mother tongue. The results show that 68.18% out the total of 22 seventh-grade respondents thought that the teacher used an appropriate amount of the target language during the lessons. At the same time, 18.2% of the pupils answered that the use of the English language was too little and 13.6% replied that the English language was used too much during the lessons. The ninth graders were even more satisfied with the use of English during the lesson since all of them answered that there was an appropriate amount of English used in teaching. However there was one respondent who replied that there was variation between too little use of English and an appropriate amount of English used during the lesson.

When the respondents were asked about the use of their mother tongue during the lessons, the answers were relatively similar to the previous results. A total of 77.3% of seventh-grade participants thought that an appropriate amount of their mother tongue was used while 9.1% said it was used too little and 13.6% indicated that the mother tongue was used too much. Similarly, most of the ninth-grade pupils (84.6%) responded that their mother tongue was used an

appropriate amount during the lesson while 7.69% out the total of 13 ninth-grade respondents said that their mother tongue was used too much or too little.

The collected data suggests that English language learners are quite satisfied with the variation between the target language and their mother tongue. In addition, the results indicate that the use of learners' mother tongue is required in order to learn a foreign language in the classroom environment. However, the small but significant variation shows the demand for the great use of the target language during the lessons and thus should not be underestimated.

4.2 Artificially made learning material versus authentic material

A vital tool for learning a language is the teaching material. In the questions 6 and 7 (see the questionnaire in Appendix) the material is divided into authentic material and artificial material, such as textbooks, in order to get an overview of the materials used in foreign language learning classrooms.

Most of the seventh-grade pupils felt that a textbook is used an appropriate amount during the lesson (81.8%). Likewise, 84.62% out the total of 13 ninth-grade respondents agreed that textbooks are used an appropriate amount in the classroom learning situation. However, a small but noticeable number of seventh-grade pupils (18.2%) answered that textbooks are used too much during the lesson. Almost equally, 15.4% of the ninth graders felt that the textbook is used too much in the English language learning classroom.

The collected data indicates that most of the pupils felt that authentic materials are used sufficiently during the lessons. The results of the question about the use of authentic materials during the lessons showed less coherence than the results introduced above. Almost 70% (68.2%) of the seventh graders said that a fair amount of authentic materials are used during the lessons while the percentage is 53.8% for the ninth-grade pupils. Moreover, 27.27% out the total of 22 seventh graders and almost 40% (38.5%) of ninth graders felt that authentic materials are not

used enough in English language teaching. Less than 8% (4.5% of seventh graders and 7.7% of ninth graders) said that authentic material is used too much during the English language lesson.

The results show that while there is a demand for more authentic material to be used during the foreign language lessons, the use of the artificially made textbook is seen as beneficial and necessary. Next the study goes further in investigating the thoughts of the students on authentic and artificial learning materials.

4.3 Differences between two grade levels

In today's foreign language teacher education, the future teachers are encouraged to make the teaching materials more authentic and, thus, the demand for more authentic materials to be available for foreign language learners is getting stronger. It is consequently necessary to examine the opinions of the students about the materials used in foreign language classrooms. Thus, it is possible to examine if the artificially created teaching materials are a total waste of time and paper and the so-called old fashioned ways to teach are still valid and seen as helpful by the language learners. In the questionnaire the participants were asked to evaluate the aid that different tasks give in learning a foreign language. These questions included tasks which are seen as authentic exercises and tasks which are artificially made for teaching purposes in order to examine which material is seen as more helpful in learning a foreign language.

In Q8 (see the questionnaire in Appendix) the participants were asked to show their opinion about the given claims about different tasks which are possibly used in English language learning. The choices were from 1-5, 1 meaning strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. In addition, there was a choice number 3 meaning neither agree nor disagree. The purpose was to find out the opinions of the language learners about how they felt about the helpfulness of certain learning tasks. Figure 1 below is based on the answers given by the seventh- and the ninth-grade pupils on the different tasks that are likely to be used during the English language learning lesson.

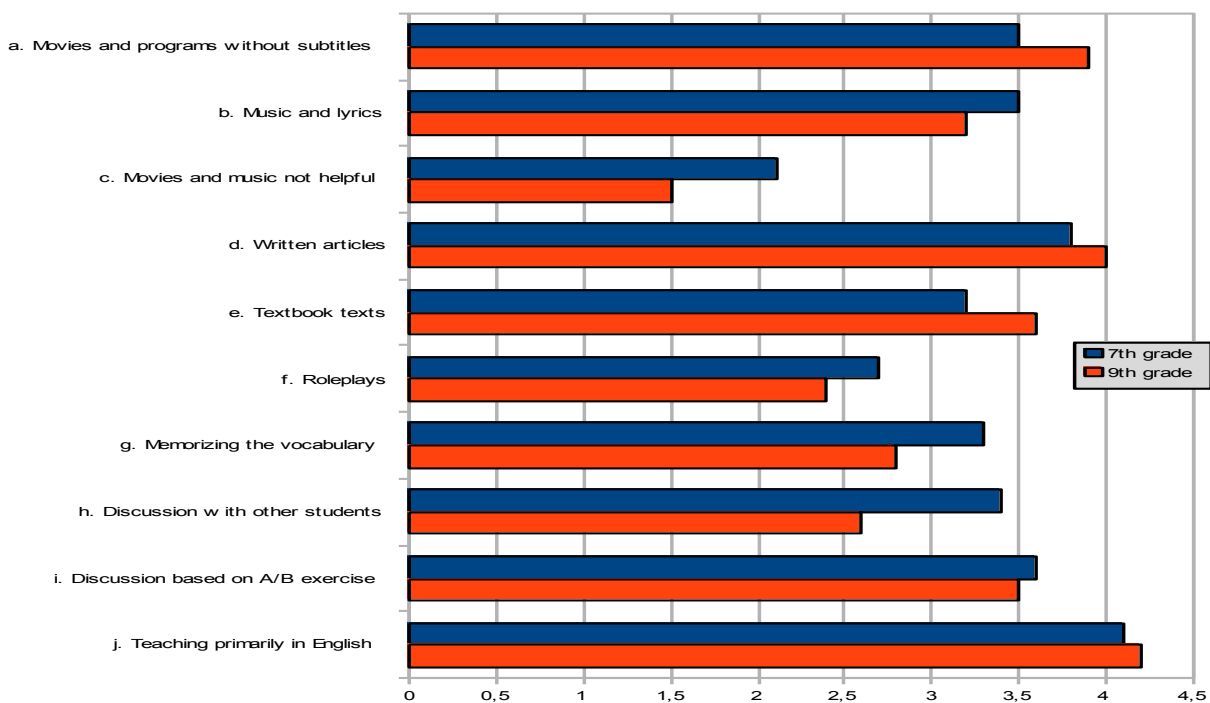


Figure 1. The distribution of the answers by the grade level

The results show a slight difference between the seventh graders and the ninth graders. Respondents from both grade levels agreed that the most advantageous tasks to help the progress of learning are the use of authentic written articles, such as articles from newspapers and magazines, in teaching the English language (7th grade 3.8 and 9th grade 4). In addition, both of the grade levels have similar views on the task where learners are given written lines to help in the conversation, so called A/B exercise. The seventh grade participants agreed even more that the task in question enhances their learning by evaluating it to be the second most advantageous task in learning a foreign language with the average value of 3.6. The ninth graders have a similar percentage of 3.5 but it is evaluated as the fourth advantageous task. They felt that watching movies and television programs without subtitles is more helpful in learning a foreign language (3.9) as well as the artificial texts in school textbooks (3.6). Seventh graders, on the other hand, thought that movies and television programs without subtitles is the third most advantageous task (3.5) and evaluated it to be as helpful in learning as music and lyrics (3.5). Furthermore, it needs to be noted that both grade levels disagreed with the claim that movies and music are not helpful in learning at all with the average of 2.1 (7th grade) and 1.5 (9th grade).

Seventh grade respondents are somewhat unsure of the learning they experience while using the textbook during the lessons since most of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the given claim (3.2). Moreover, the seventh grade pupils are even more uncertain with the knowledge of their own learning since they neither agreed nor disagreed with the claims made about the tasks such as free discussion with the other learners in English (3.4), memorizing the vocabulary (3.3) and learning through role-plays (2.7). According to the results, the ninth graders show some uncertainty in evaluating the advantage to be gained from pure memorizing of the vocabulary (2.8), having a free discussion with the other learners (2.6) and listening to music and using lyrics as a learning device (3.2), since they seem to neither agree nor disagree with the claims. However, they showed a little disagreement with the claim that role-plays are a good way of learning a foreign language (2.4). It is not surprising to notice that both of the grade levels agreed that teaching primarily in English develops their ability to use the target language (7th grade 4.09 and 9th grade 4.2) because of the lack of present and somewhat authentic example of a target language speaker.

The results show that the four tasks that seventh graders most agreed with are authentic written articles (3.8), discussion based on the A/B exercise (3.6), which is more or less an artificial task, watching authentic movies/television programs without subtitles (3.5) and finally using authentic music and lyrics in teaching a foreign language (3.5). The other tasks were evaluated as neither agree nor disagree. These results suggest that the seventh grade pupils feel that authentic material enhances the learning process and should be used more in teaching a foreign language. However, according to the results, the artificial material should not be completely misplaced since the A/B task is rated as the second most useful task in learning. The ninth grade pupils felt even more strongly that authentic material is helpful in learning the English language. The authentic written articles (4.0) and watching movies/television programs without subtitles (3.9) were rated as the most helpful tasks. On the other hand, it was interesting to notice that the respondents also agreed with the claims that textbook texts and discussion based on the A/B exercise enhance their learning. Again the same conclusion can be drawn that authentic material as well as the artificially made exercises are beneficial.

The results indicate that the differences between these two grade levels are mostly due to the fact that there is a small but significant age difference along with the understandable difference in the ability in the English language. In addition, the difference in understanding various learning strategies and efficiently using them may be different between these grade levels. The results suggest that the ninth graders are better aware of the concept of authenticity and what its positive effects in learning a foreign language are.

4.4 Differences between the genders

In addition to the division made above between the seventh grade pupils and the ninth grade pupils, it is necessary to explore the differences between the boys and the girls, since they can be substantially different learners when their motivation and learning strategies are considered. Below Figure 2 demonstrates the results of the differences between the genders when evaluating the different tasks possibly used in the English language classroom.

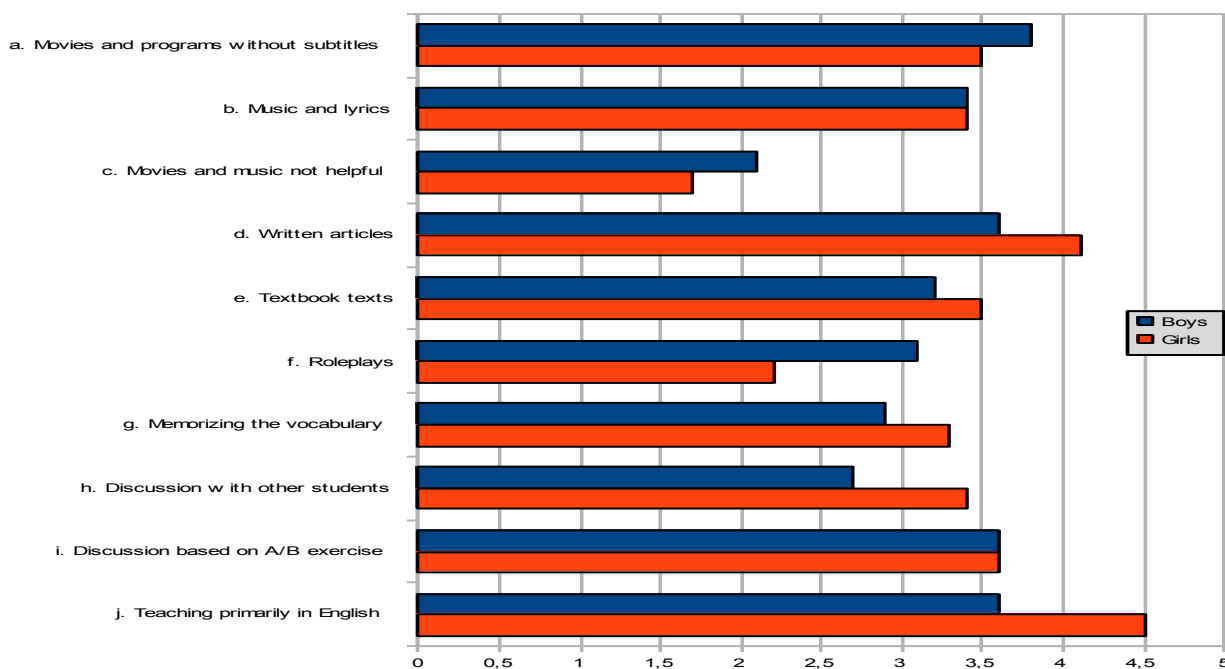


Figure 2. The distribution of the answers between the two genders

The results indicate that the girls thought the authentic written articles to be more helpful in learning a language (4.1) than the boys (3.6). Likewise the girls saw written textbook texts to be

advantageous in enhancing the learning experience (3.5) while the boys neither agreed nor disagreed with the claim (3.2). Both genders agreed with the claim that A/B exercise is useful in learning a foreign language with the average of 3.6. However, both genders neither agreed nor disagreed with the claim that free discussion with other learners is a useful way to learn (the girls 3.4 and the boys 2.7). This suggests that discussion is either not so common during the English language lessons and pupils are unable to draw any certain conclusion about the claim or pupils do not feel that they are learning when having a discussion in the target language. The boys felt that movies and television programs have a slightly stronger effect on learning (3.8) than the girls (3.5). Both the girls and the boys were doubtful of the effect that music and lyrics have on learning a language with the average of 3.4. Also the claim that memorizing the vocabulary is important was looked at with uncertainty because both genders answered with the average of 3.3 (the girls) and 2.9 (the boys). Some difference of opinion is seen on the usefulness of the role-plays in learning since the boys neither agreed or disagreed (3.1.) and the girls disagreed (2.2) with the claim. The girls more or less strongly disagreed (1.7) with the claim that music and lyrics are not helpful at all in the learning process while the boys followed their opinion less passionately (2.1). The girls strongly agreed on the claim that learning is more likely when the teaching is primarily in the target language (4.5). The boys agree with the previous claim but with a little more doubtfully (3.6).

Both genders agreed that the three most beneficial tasks in learning a foreign language are written articles, discussion based on the A/B exercise, watching movies/television programs without subtitles and in addition, the girls felt that textbook texts are helpful. The only difference between the genders is that they evaluated the tasks slightly differently. The girls felt that written articles such as newspaper articles are the most useful learning material while the boys thought that watching movies/television programs without subtitles helps them to learn. Again authentic tasks are seen as the most helpful in learning. Nevertheless, the more artificial tasks are seen as worthwhile in learning.

According to the results, the girls have a much stronger opinion about the claims made in question 8. The girls agreed with four claims whereas the boys agreed with three. Additionally, the girls were more capable of making decisions since only three claims got the average of three

while the boys answered neither agree nor disagree to five claims. These results suggest that the girls are more aware of the strategies which help to enhance their learning. Moreover, the girls are able to see the help that variety in teaching can offer and are perhaps more open minded towards different learning tasks. However, the results from the boys might suggest that the boys reacted more truthfully on the claims and most of the tasks presented in question 8 are not used in the English language learning classroom and thus are unknown to the participants. In addition, this conclusion would explain the average answer of neither agree nor disagree.

5 DISCUSSION

The results of the present study show that language learners consider authentic material to be helpful in learning a foreign language. However, the learners feel that the help of the artificially created material is needed in order to learn a language in the classroom environment. It is interesting to notice that the respondents considered authentic materials to be sufficiently offered in the Finnish comprehensive school. The study was necessary in order to adduce the opinions and thoughts of foreign language learners about the type of materials which are the most effective in learning a foreign language. The study as it stands has its limitations which can be ruled out with a further and more throughout research.

According to the results, both grade levels agreed that authentic materials are helpful in learning the English language. The seventh grade respondents agreed even more on the matter since they evaluated three authentic tasks to be helpful in learning while the ninth grade respondents agreed with two authentic tasks. These results might suggest that ninth graders have either better understanding on the concept of authenticity or have either more or less experience in learning with authentic material. Furthermore, it is possible that the seventh graders agreed with the claims about authentic materials because those are considered to be more fun and not actually studying per se. The fact that both grade levels agreed with the claims that artificially created tasks in question are helpful in learning a foreign language shows that authentic materials alone are not enough in learning a foreign language. However, the participants agreed less with the claims about the helpfulness of the artificial materials. This result argues that the pupils feel that the authentic material is even more helpful in the foreign language learning than the artificially

created material. This might be due to the fact that the authentic material is more motivating with the cultural aspect of the target language. When the differences between the genders are examined, the results are quite similar to the results shown above. Both genders feel that authentic material is essential in learning a foreign language but also agree with the claim that artificial material is useful. The girls seem to be more knowledgeable in the matter since they express more opinions than the boys. The same conclusions can be drawn from these results as stated above.

The results from Q7 show that the respondents are relatively happy with the amount of authentic materials/tasks used in the English language classrooms. This is a very interesting conclusion since the assumption was that not enough authentic materials are used in the foreign language education. This suggests that either the perception that there are not enough resources and time to offer authentic material for learners is misleading or the respondents do not have a clear and correct understanding of the concept of authenticity.

The study is valuable since it gives more information about the use of different materials in foreign language teaching. Furthermore, it presents the thoughts and opinions of learners which are important since they are the ones learning. The present study gives important information about the needs of learners for foreign language teachers who try to offer the best materials for their students.

The restrictions of the present study are the small number of respondents, the inadequacy of the questionnaire and the possible lack of the respondents' knowledge about the concept of authenticity. In order to get a more generalized view of the position of authenticity in foreign language education in Finland, a study with a larger scale must be done. The number of the respondents should be much larger, in other words the study should be quantitative instead of qualitative. The questionnaire used in the present study lacked some crucial points which would take the question of authenticity in foreign language education even further. For example, in the present study the opinion of the learners on the helpfulness of certain tasks was inquired but for future research it would be interesting to see what tasks are actually used during the lessons and how often. In addition, the inadequacy of the questionnaire caused difficulties in analyzing the

results and making more generalized conclusions. A notable defect in the questionnaire was the use of the alternatives “no opinion” and “an appropriate amount” in the multiple choice questions since these two options do not really give any remarkable results. These options give the respondent an opportunity to not make any strong decisions on the matter. In the present study many respondents used these options and the results raise many new questions. Lastly, a significant drawback in the present study is the fact that the respondents’ understanding of the term authenticity is slightly indistinct. It is somewhat questionable if the participants actually understand the concept of authentic material. This limitation could be ruled out with giving more information about the study and the term authenticity for respondents before giving out the questionnaires. In addition, the instructions should be very precise in order to get reliable results.

In a future study all the problems and defects mentioned above should be taken into account. In addition, an idea for further research is to study the opinions and thoughts of foreign language teachers about the use of the authentic material in teaching. A study where both viewpoints, the learners’ and the teachers’, are taken into account would give more reliable conclusions on the matter of authenticity in the foreign language classrooms.

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APPENDIX

Hyvä oppilas,

Olen englanninkielen opiskelija Jyväskylän yliopistossa. Teen opinnäytetyötä autenttisen oppimateriaalin käytöstä kielten opetuksessa Jyväskylän yliopiston kielten laitokselle. Työni onnistumiselle on tärkeää, että pyrkisit vastaamaan kaikkiin kysymyksiin mahdollisimman huolellisesti. Vastaa kysymyksiin ympäröimällä oikeaksi katsomasi vaihtoehto tai kirjoittamalla vastaus sille varatulle viivalle. Kysymyksiin ei ole oikeita tai väriä vastauksia vaan olen kiinnostunut Sinun mielipiteistäsi. Tiedot käsitellään luottamuksellisesti ja tulevat vain minun käyttöni. Kiitos osallistumisestasi!

Katri Pietilä

1. Sukupuoli 1. tyttö
 2. poika

2. Luokka-aste _____

3. Viimeisimmän todistuksen englanninkielen arvosana _____

4. Koetko, että oppitunneilla käytetään englantia

1. liikaa
2. liian vähän
3. sopivasti

5. Käytetäänkö oppitunneilla omaa äidinkieltäsi

1. liikaa
2. liian vähän
3. sopivasti

6. Käytetäänkö oppitunneilla oppikirjaa

1. liikaa
2. liian vähän
3. sopivasti

7. Onko mielestäsi oppitunneilla aitoja, oikeaan elämään sijoitettavia (autenttisia) tehtäviä

1. liikaa
2. liian vähän
3. sopivasti

8. Seuraavaksi esitän luokkatyöskentelyä koskevia väitteitä. Ilmoita ympyröimällä sopivin vaihtoehto: 1 = eri mieltä, 2 = jokseenkin eri mieltä, 3 = en osaa sanoa, 4 = jokseenkin samaa mieltä, 5 = samaa mieltä

- a) Mielestäni opin hyvin kun katsomme oppitunnilla englanninkielistä elokuvaa/ohjelmaa ilman tekstityksiä.

1 2 3 4 5

- b) Koen oppivani englanninkieltä kun opetuksessa käytetään musiikkia/laulujen sanoja.

1 2 3 4 5

- c) Laulujen sanat ja elokuvien/ohjelmien katselu eivät auta minua oppimaan englanninkieltä.

1 2 3 4 5

- d) Opin hyvin kun luen opettajan tuomia artikkeleita, jotka ovat lähellä omia kiinnostuksen kohteitani.

1 2 3 4 5

- e) Pidän oppikirjan teksteistä ja mielestäni teksteistä oppii hyvin.

1 2 3 4 5

- f) Mielestäni roolileikit tunneilla ovat tylsiä enkä koe oppivani niistä mitään.

1 2 3 4 5

- g) Opin parhaiten lukemalla sanaston ulkoa.

1 2 3 4 5

- h) Keskustelen mielelläni englanniksi oppitunneilla luokkatoverien kanssa.

1 2 3 4 5

- i) Pidän ja koen oppivani puheharjoituksista, joissa on annettu valmiit vuorosanat.

1 2 3 4 5

- j) Oppimisen kannalta on hyvä, että opettaja puhuu mahdollisimman paljon englantia.

1 2 3 4 5

9. Minkälaiset tehtävät koet mielekkäiksi oppitunneilla?

10. Minkälaiset tehtävät koet vähemmän mielekkäiksi oppitunneilla?
