Exploiting Authentic Materials for Developing Writing Skills at Secondary Level

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Abstract
Writing is an extremely complex process; there are various ways, means and techniques involved in teaching writing. The present study intends to scrutinize the efficacy of authentic materials for enhancing writing skills of the second language assimilators at secondary level in Pakistan. Authentic materials are very interesting, absorbing and motivating. Change and variety is something very important for human development and upbringing. Authentic materials can serve this purpose very well.

Moreover, authentic materials are diverse in nature and have a variety of things to offer. They have been popular for last decade or so and are a very impressive technique. There is a great variety of materials available in newspapers, broadcasts, magazines etc in the form of advertisements, cartoons, bulletins, horoscopes, weather reports etc. Exploited appropriately, they can be of great help to improve students writing skills. Authentic materials can even more be useful to those learners who intend to go to a foreign country for higher education. Such materials will acquaint them not only with the language but also with the culture and value system of the country concerned.

Authentic materials, of course, hold great promise for those who are in the process of learning and improving writing skills. The use of authentic materials creates a lot of interest in the learners and they do not feel bored and tired. There comes a big part of charming and attractive outside world into the classroom. Authentic materials reduce the dullness of specially contrived text material. It makes significant contributions toward meeting the learning objective of a programme. Authentic materials are varied and very flexible in nature, which allow free play to the students and never restrict them at a place.
Key words: Authentic materials, writing skills, second language

1. Introduction

1.1 Entire Eminence of English Language

All animals communicate, some by sight some by sounds. But only humans have language. Language is the highest achievement of human mind and has the powerful unifying effects. It is the basis of all thought and the highest intellectual activity we practice. Different languages like Greek, Latin, Persian and Arabic, dominated the world's stage at different periods of history. Today English is reigning supreme at this planet of ours. Hasman (2000) highlights the use of English throughout the world today, as "The global spread of English over the last 40 years is remarkable. It is unprecedented in several ways: by the increasing number of users of the language; by its depth of penetration into societies; by its range of functions. English is used for more purposes than ever before. Vocabularies, grammatical forms and ways of speaking and writing have emerged influenced by technological and scientific developments, economics and management, literature and entertainment genres. What began some 1500 years ago as a reed language, originally spoken by obscure Germanic tribes who invaded English, now encompasses the globe" (p.3).

Never before in the history of the world has a language been as dominant as English is now. In every corner of the world, people realized that their chances to play on the big stage, to make money, have choices, travel, all depend on learning English. In fact English is a gateway to the world of knowledge and learning. It is a universally spoken language and the biggest source of communication among the people from different countries, castes and creeds. It is being used as an international language of industry, commerce, science, technology, medicine, aviation, diplomacy and many other fields. This is the glory and enhancement of English in today's world.

1.2 Position of English Language in Pakistan

Language is the potent force in the promotion of nationalism and national cohesion. It is the most important aspect of culture and a force, which determine nationality and ethnicity. It differentiates the people from others and binds them together. We the Pakistanis are a bit unfortunate in terms of national language. We liberated ourselves from the British but not from their language and culture. After the 1857 uprising, when the British got total control over India and peace was enforced in the country, the government introduced a number of reforms. The most important and equally controversial were the changes in the educational system. All others readily accepted them and benefited from them but the Muslims opposed the educational reforms tooth and nail. Decrees were issued declaring the learning of English as un-Islamic. Lord Macaulay insisted on the adoption of English

and the closure of Arabic and Sanskrit colleges to divert the students to English schools.

As a result of the rejection of the new educational system by the Muslims, they found all avenues of public life closed to them. This worried Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and he was quick to realize that unless the Muslims changed their attitude and accepted the reforms wholeheartedly, the Muslims and Islam were both doomed to perish from India. He founded the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in 1877 at Aligarh and from here the Muslims of India started to learn English, which is still very strongly going with us even after independence. It is very strongly placed in Pakistan and is the official language of this fantastic piece of land. Urdu, although is the national language of Pakistan but its status is much less than that of English because it is a powerless language and is nowhere to be found in the domains of power.

1.3 The Language Skills an Overview

Language learning is divided into four skill areas i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. All the four skills are of great importance in the world of applied linguistics. We use listening and speaking in oral communication, reading and writing in written communication. One who transmits a message uses the spoken or written form in order to communicate his ideas. The receiver of the message utilizes the listening or reading skills to decipher the message. Hence, we can classify these four skills in two categories for better identification and understanding:

(a)   Speaking

         Writing are active or productive skills.

(b)   Reading

         Listening are passive or receptive skills

All the four skills are well integrated and can never exist in isolation. In order to achieve spoken or written fluency, all four skills should be given an equal importance. However writing skills should be given particular consideration because it is a highly complex activity and regarded as the most difficult language skill to acquire. It is the most used skill in Pakistan. Most of the communication in Pakistan is in written from. Moreover the development of communicative competence in writing is a slow and arduous process. Langan (2001) investigated that, "For almost everyone, competent writing comes from plain hard work – from determination, sweat, and head-on battle" (p.13).

1.4 The Writing Skills

Language exists in two forms i.e. spoken and written. Spoken although is old in years - as old as the man is - but is not permanent and long lasting. Writing is young in days but is permanent, more reliable and a more carefully carved process.

Waseem (1999) says, " written communication is a more permanent record of our language use, the writer is usually more careful about his choice of words and structures then he would be when speaking" (p. 10-11).

In Pakistan English is an official language and is almost limited to written work in offices and educational institutions. The researcher found most of the written stuff i.e. the answer scripts, the general official correspondence etc badly written and found most of the people blank and confused before a clean white paper. "It is frightening to sit down before a blank sheet of paper and know that an hour later; nothing on it may be worth keeping. It is frustrating to discover how much of a challenge it is to transfer thoughts and feelings from one's head onto a sheet of paper" (Langan, 2001, p-13).

1.5 Syllabus of English in Pakistan

Syllabus of English in Pakistan though mostly consists of reading and writing activities. But even then these skills are very weak. It is because in a traditional language class teacher is the sole speaker. Students are just at the listening end. There is very little teacher student interaction and nil among the students. Most of the learning is just a parrot work and the creativity on the part of the students is almost zero. They just reproduce the things put forth by the teacher. They do not feel the need to use their own minds. They take teacher's comments as something sacred and never tamper with them.

Moreover, the traditional manner of teaching is quite dull and never changing and varying. Lack of variety in the lessons discourages the students involvement .No conscious attempt is made by the teacher to cheer up the class, neither by generating tasks nor by preparing visuals or other teaching aids. The teaching method for every aspect of a text is the same lecture or grammar translation method without taking into account the manner of teaching and the fact that whether it is a piece of poetry, prose, drama, novel, essay or a short story. The teacher does not attempt to create an interest by now and than questions.

The teachers who teach courses are not good at English themselves. Their means of communication with students is either in Urdu or other regional languages and they use no rules or regulations when they teach a language. In this regard the government should take some concrete measures to improve English language teaching. The obsolete and thoroughly out of date content of the teaching course should be changed and newer, more interesting, material should be included on the English syllabus, especially for class VI to X. Students can also be assigned weekly topics to write on and deliver presentations once week.

1.6 Statement of the problem

Academic abilities in the educational system of Pakistan are closely linked with proficiency in writing. If a student is good at writing he will make good grades otherwise he will stay low in the order of merit. And

unfortunately most of the students are not very proficient to communicate ably in writing. Their writings are ill conceived and lack logic, clear and disciplined thinking. Textbooks are dull and boring just filled with contrived and emotionless language with no visual at all. They fail to attract student attention and arouse their curiosity. Majority of the texts are meant to enable the students to master some grammar rules with no communicative objective. Slobodina (1995) sums up the situation aptly, "Most students entering our institute after high school are false beginners with no motivation to learn English. There is no way to inspire them to use the traditional, dry-as-dust textbooks filled with her Majesty's grammar" (p.40). The interaction between the teacher and the students is almost absent. This very fact provoked the researcher to introduce authentic materials, which are interesting, lively and inspiring. Authentic materials will arouse the curiosity in the students and will activate their minds. There will be a lot of inspiration and motivation for them to try and hone their writing skills.

1.7 Hypothesis
Authentic materials if exploited sensibly will bring about smart, witty, clean and tidy writing skills at secondary level.

1.8 Objectives of the Research
The objectives of the research are: -

(a)   To improve the writing skills.

(b)   To arouse the element of curiosity.

(c)   To make them more motivated to learn the language skills.

(d)   To bring something of the everyday world into the classroom and to remove the monotony of the contrived texts.

(e)   To make them feel as the users of the language rather than a mere learners.

(f)   To give them awareness about the usefulness of authentic materials e.g. newspaper articles, weather reports, horoscope etc.

(g)   To bring the native culture and traditions in the classroom.

1.9 Delimitation of the study
The study will be delimited to a Secondary School in Islamabad, Pakistan. Four classes, two of grade nine and two of grade ten will be observed. Questionnaire will be got filled from the teachers of the school. One group of mixed ability students from class X will be taught two lessons from the textbook. One test will be given before and one after the teaching of each lesson. Results will be compared and conclusions will be drawn.

2. Literature Review
    "True ease in writing comes from art not chance,
     As those move easiest who have learned to dance".
                         (Pope)

The ability to write is not something innate. Rather it can be learned and practiced. It does not come naturally as does walking. It is a cantankerous and dicey linguistic code. It needs a lot of hard work on the part of the learner. Writing is a highly complex process, it is recursive rather than linear in nature, it needs some pre-writing activities, than drafting, redrafting and revision. It is as difficult for the natives as for the nonnative. Because writers must balance multiple issues like content, purpose, audience, organization, spelling, vocabulary, mechanics and punctuation.

2.1 What is writing?
Writing in the strict sense of the word is derived from speech, and is, in fact, an imperfect visual representation of it, for such purpose as communication at a distance and the keeping of records. Writing is the only conventional device for recording sounds. Writing can be fun, students or learners should not worry about the perfection of the sentences and the logical development of ideas. In fact, there is a place for both programmed and spontaneous writing. In this way both the teachers and the students will find the writing classes more enjoyable rather than dull and boring. The students will be more motivated to learn and the teachers will enjoy their teaching. The students will wait for the teacher to come in the class instead of waiting him to go out.

Writing is something, which has an aim, purpose and meaning to convey. It is not just a grammatical exercise and a sequence of sentences. There are different approaches involve in the teaching of writing. There was the traditional product-oriented approach that remained in command of the situation for decades. It laid emphasis on the product i.e. the written texts." The belief was that if we identified model texts written by accomplished/competent writers and gave these to students to read, they would, by osmosis, imbibe all the qualities of good writing and become good writers themselves. Unfortunately this approach did not work for many students and they continued to write poorly" (Oluwadiya, 1992, p.12).

In this approach the teacher remains attentive to form instead of content. Here syntax, grammar, mechanics and organization are more important. The process-oriented one replaced the traditional product-oriented approach. In it, whole the process of writing was to be explored and exploited. This approach was meant to find out how the skilled writers write, what is their thought process before picking pen in their fingers. Smith, quoted in

Oluwadiya (1992), states that "for the competent writers writing is a nonlinear, recursive, and generative process that involves several steps or stages, which are pre-writing, composing/writing, and re-writing-steps or stages that compete with each other for the writers attention" (p.12).

This is true for both the natives and the non-natives. A native student writer goes through the same ordeal, as does a non-native. He will have to go pass all the steps and stages, writing, revising and rewriting to give birth to a well shaped and ordered products. Then comes the modern approach, the chemistry of both, the product and the process. It stresses three things: -

1.   People write to communicate with readers.
2.   People write to accomplish specific purpose.
3.   Writing is a complex process.

2.2 History of Writing

History, in the life of a nation is, as if a brain and the nation, who forgets her history, deprived herself of her very brain. History in fact is the mother of all sciences. Everything in the world, from the speck of dust to the mountains has a history of its own. How it came into being? How it developed? What is the cause of its creation and what is the reason of its existence in this world of colour and fragrance? Same is true in case of writing. It has the history of its own. Why it was felt necessary to write the things down and keep records? Spoken form of language was already in existence then why it becomes mandatory to write. It is a painful act and need a lot of time, money and energy to execute it. Why not speak a few words, in few seconds, consuming few calories to make the message or aim clear to others? But with the growth of man it does become necessary to write.

People invented writing when they first felt the need to communicate ideas in more permanent form than in speech. Few people question the value of writing. Indeed effective writing leads to effective learning. It is interesting and enjoyable. A Greek historian Herodotus remarked' "We are all less convinced by what we hear than by what we see". The dawn of writing can probably have its causes rooted into any such reasons for sure. Writing did not strictly start with words but rather it started as disfigured or altered pictures. The pictures made on grounds, rocks, metals and woods, by pre-historic man, show an initiative into the formation of writing.

The Chinese devised a script – the pictograms - compound symbols standing for ideas. There are also phonograms, which represent sounds. Before the invention of the alphabets, the ancient system of writing was the hierographic in Egypt, cunciform in Sumeria, Babylonia, Syna and Persia. These systems are similar to the signs, which are pictographic, ideographic and phonographic.

2.3 Purpose of Writing

"Writing is goal directed-we do not write without a purpose. However, writing is also exploratory, as we do not always know exactly what it is that we want to say" says White quoted by Saxenian (1998, p.30). Everything written carries a purpose and aim in it. Even exploration itself is a purpose. There are so many other purposes for which people write. It may be entertainment, information, persuasion, education or simply exploration of one's own mind and heart.

Aim and purpose is a must before putting pen on paper. However it is not always easy to determine the purpose. Teachers should come up and help student find the purpose of writing through questioning consulting and correcting and should enable the students work out the purpose for themselves. If they write with a clear purpose in mind it will be much easier for them. They will be able to explore their thought process in particular directions. They will be more committed and will expand their mental horizons.

There may be several kinds, reasons and purposes for a writing assignment. An ELT teacher must be conscious of the purpose of training he is imparting to his students. He must be wary and cautious of the fact why will his students ever write any thing in English? The students should also know the purpose of writing. Are they going to write a job application? Are they setting their pen to write a letter of appreciation to someone? Is it a letter of information or an application for a visa or admission to some university? In this way the students will be more willing to write. They will exert more energy and mind power in it and consider their work as something important in itself.

2.4 What involves in the writing process?

"In many ways, writing a composition is similar to shaping a clay pot. We do not start by putting the glaze on a lump of clay and fining it; rather, we start with a somewhat foggy notion of what we wish to create and continuously reassess our initial vision in terms of what turns out. Sometimes we may destroy what we have started and begin anew, but it is not until we have a shape with which we are happy that we glaze and fire it. So, too, with composition. We should not work on the finishing editorial touches until we have form that says what we mean and holds the contents we desire" (Dixon, 1986, p.3).

Everything goes through an evolutionary phase before coming into final shape. There is a great deal of thinking and hard work behind every creation. First, there is a search for an idea, then thinking and working on it, then comes shaping and reshaping it and in the end comes the final product. So goes to writing, there is a great deal of intense and active thinking and labour work behind a finished piece of writing. Langan (2001) says, "It is frustrating to discover how much of a challenge it is to transfer thoughts and feelings from one's head into a sheet of paper" (p.13). It is in fact the hard work put behind a piece of work, which attracts readers. There must

be a clear thinking behind a piece of writing. In the words of Langan (2001), "If you don't think clearly, you won't write clearly" (p.3).

There are some recent advances and paradigm shifts in the writing pedagogy, which has totally changed the concept of writing composition. Connor (1987) aptly sums up the matter, "The past decade has witnessed a major paradigm shift in composition theory and research. The emphasis moved from the product to the process of writing. Accordingly, to Hairton (1982), "the product-centered, traditional paradigm stressed expository writing, made style the most important element in writing, and maintained that the writing process is linear, determined by the writers before they start to write.

The process-centered paradigm, on the other hand, focuses on writing processes; teaches strategies for invention and discovery; considers audience, purpose, and context of writing; emphasizes recursiveness in the writing process; and distinguishes between aims and modes of discourse (e.g. expressive, expository, persuasive, and description, narration, evaluation, classification"(p.677). Langan (2001), splited the writing process into a series of four logical, easily followed steps and claimed that together with practical advice about prewriting and revision, will give a cutting edge to writing. The steps are as under:

"1.   Discover a clearly stated point, or thesis.
2.   Provide logical, detailed support for your thesis.
3.   Organize and connect your supporting material.
4.   Revise and edit so that your sentences are effective and error-free" (p.4).

Writing process is journey through a forest, which does not go straight. One has to make his way through bushes and thorns. That will, for sure, not on a straight line or course but will turn sharply left and then right repeatedly. It is a process of discovery. Langan (2001) describes the process, "In addition to believing that writing is a natural gift, many people falsely believe that writing should flow in a simple, straight line from the writers head onto the written page. But writing is seldom an easy, one-step journey in which a finished paper comes out in a first draft. The truth is that writing is a process of discovery involving a series of steps, and those steps are very often a zigzag journey. Look at the following illustrations of the writing process:

Seldom the case
Starting point   ————————————————▶   Finished paper
Usually the case

Starting point   〰〰〰————————▶   Finished paper" (p.13).
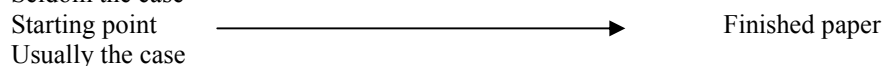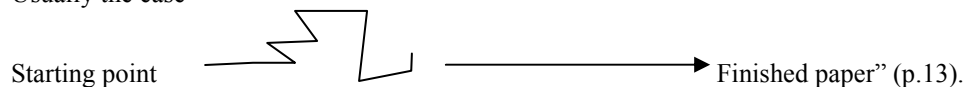
2.5 Problems in the writing process

Writing is an involved and zigzag journey with so many problems in the process. Different approaches and methods have been applied to cater these problems but even then they persist. Model or product-centered approach had been in practice for decades. Then there was a paradigm shift to process-centered approach, and then modern and modern is now replaced by interactional approach but the process problems still exist, perhaps owing to the complex and unbearably difficult nature of writing. "The writing classroom can be source of frustration to both language learners and their teachers. Required by the convention of written English to express themselves at a far more precise level of grammatical accuracy and rhetorical organization in their written expression than in their spoken language, many students become confused, distressed, or even bored with the demands of their writing assignments. Confronted with a variety of instructional methods, teachers must decide which will work best for their students. They must also decide on the kinds of feedback that will have a positive impact on students writing development and motivate them towards written communication" (Pica, 1986, p.6).

The two famous and much talked about approaches for the development of writing skills, a model approach and a process approach, are in fact based on their author's creeds and experiences with writing instructions, instead of any practical and in the field evidence of success with language learners. Some of the flaws, observed by scholarly Pica (1986) are:

"The learner engages in processes of creative construction (Dulay and Burt, 1974) and hypothesis testing (Corder 1976) in developing a second language. As a result, "errors" are an inevitable outcome of the language-learning process.

- Target- (second-or foreign) language input must be made comprehensible to the learner in order for the development process to occur (Krashen 1981, 1982).
- Feedback in the target language plays an important role in language learning (Krashen and Seliger 1975, Vigil and Oller 1976)" (p.6).

Pica (1986) in fact calls for an eclectic and interactional approach to language writing. As all the approaches experimented so far in the field of writing pedagogy contain flaws and errors along with the qualities and merits of their own. A learner of writing should quench his thirst by drinking deep from all the fountains available, rather than restricting himself with any one of these.

"Despite their deficiencies, however, both models and process approaches do have merits. It is clear to anyone who has ever worked with language learners that the goal of models approach – in producing target rhetorical structures, grammar, and lexicon -- is essential to effective writing. In following a process approach, teachers

give their students opportunities to review, clarify, and reorganize what they have written on their own, away from their teacher's well-meaning but often intrusive intervention"(Pica, 1986, p.7).

In models approach, despite being open to model sentences, paragraphs and essays of capable writer, it is not possible for the learners to learn all at once.

"A models approach overlooks the fact that students of writing in a second language are also language learners, and that therefore skills for manipulating grammatical markers, organizing, paragraphs, and combining are not learned all at once, through imitating written models. Rather, these skills must be discovered slowly, through the learner's active testing of hypothesis about how the rules and patterns in the new language function to communicate meaning" (Pica, 1986, p.7).

In the process-oriented approach learners do have a chance to review, resee, rethink and reorganize what they have written on their own and bring about some improvement. But even then it lacks a valuable feedback from the teachers as Pica (1986) tells, "A process approach, in placing the task of revision on the students themselves, does not meet their needs for feedback from more informed sources and focuses instead on the writer's potential for self-correction as a means of achieving success in writing" (p.7).

In the same way Zamel (1987) points out, "Recent survey of writing instruction, however, seem to indicate that process research is not informing and transforming pedagogy" (p. 699).

It is generally observed that findings and results of the studies of writing instructions are not being practically applied in the field and that there is general lack of awareness about these studies. For instance, it has come to the notice of all concerned that most instruction follows a very traditional model, consisting of models and drills, with just examples when students are exposed to practical writing. Applebee (1984) quoted in Zamel (1987) explains the process, "who examined in depth the writing development of high school students, four of whom were ESL students, found that curricula were based upon a mechanistic philosophy of teaching and learning, that the most frequent types of writing assigned were low-level tasks, and that the primary role played by the teacher was that of examiner" (p.700).

Anyhow if the research and study of looking into writing related problems remained in progress these problems will come to the minimum. The writing techniques will develop for sure, as the time goes by. This investigation as to what the students do and what the teachers do, and how the two interact, will finally come to the fore.

2.6 Strategies for improving writing skills

"We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master" (Hemingway, cited in Borstein, 1989, p. 60). It is generally believed that writing in a foreign language is a very difficult and a very slower process than learning other language skills. The main reason for this is that the writer is away from the readers in terms of time and space, and so has to work out effective communication with his readers only in his imagination. This requires a big chunk of physical and mental energy on the part of the writer. How the writing skills can be improved? This is the problem and a vital question. There are several techniques and strategies to do this. These may be pictures, reading authentic texts, using other language skills, practical writing, control writing, organization of ideas, Radio and TV programmes.

"All ESL writing teachers can find a valuable resource in pictures: drawings, photographs, posters, slides, cartoons, magazine advertisements, diagrams, graphs, tables, charts and maps. Pictures bring the outside world into the classroom in a vividly concrete way. So a picture is a valuable resource as it provides:
1.   a shared experience in the classrooms;
2.   a need for common language forms to use in the classroom;
3.   a variety of tasks;
4.   a focus of interest for students" (Raimes, 1999, p.495-496).

Reading is another useful writing aid. Raimes (1999) points out, "A short story, a newspaper column, an advertisement, a letter, a magazine article, a poem, or a piece of students writing can work the same way as a picture to provide shared content in the classroom. However, readings can do far more in the teaching of writing than simply provide subject matter for discussion and for composition topics. When our students read, they engage actively with the new language and culture. The more our students read, the more they become familiar with the vocabulary, idioms, sentence patterns, organizational flaw, and cultural assumptions of native speakers of the language" (p.518).

The other three-language skills i.e. speaking, reading and listening can also be used to improve writing skills. The students can speak with their teacher and with each other. In this way they will be able to listen to each other. They can write down whatever they listen from each other and can also read each other's writings and further improve and modify their written works.

Raimes (1999) explains the same phenomenon, "If we want our language learning classes to come as close as possible to real-life communicative situations, then we have to organize activities that let students use all the language skills. In order to do these students should speak (not just repeat) and speak not only to the teacher but also to each other. This means, then, that students will also listen to each other-really listen-once the classroom talk is not restricted to patterns like, "Is she running? Yes she is." With listening comes comprehending what the speaker is saying. The listener can then react by writing down for reader his version of the information he has

just heard. So we can get chains of language activity in the classroom.
Such as this one:

- Student 1 speaks while student 2 listens.
- Student 2 writes
- Student 3 reads what student 2 wrote and responds.
- Student 1 checks that 2 and 3 understand" (p.536).

Writing can also be improved by doing practical writing like form filling, letter writing, invitations and instruction etc. Raimes (1999) puts it in the words, "This practical writing has both a clear purpose and a specific audience. Much of this everyday writing is, "writing to get things done." Upon arrival in the country, we might soon find it necessary to write a letter: reply to an invitation, an apology, an inquiry, a complaint, a letter of thanks, congratulations, or sympathy. If our students experiments with these practical writing tasks in the classroom they will be not only practicing writing in the new language but also learning about the conventions of the new culture" (p.550).

And the most effective way of improving writing skills is authentic materials, like newspaper editorials, columns, advertisements, films, cartoons, TV and Radio programmes. These energize the students, arouse their sense of curiosity and set their minds thinking. Alexandrescu (1995) very aptly put forth the matter, "It is generally accepted that the text books we use in Romanian high schools can't possibly energize all students. Even worse, they can't inspire real motivation to learn a foreign language in spite of the new curriculum. But now that satellite TV programs have invaded Eastern Europe, both teachers and learners can come to grips with English. After several years of experimentation, we see video as a middle way to fill the gap between passive classroom learning and live communication. Children can work in small groups recreating scenes they viewed at home. The students are given simple narrating techniques, specific and general questions like: "what would you do if you were-------?" "How do you imagine the end of the film without----?" Can you comment on the title?" Cartoons can be of a great place to start" (p.44).

2.7 Importance of Authentic Materials
There are various ways, means and techniques involved in teaching writing. Authentic materials are one of those but are very interesting, absorbing and motivating. It is diverse in nature and has a variety of things to offer. It has become popular for last decade or so and is a very impressive technique. Demitrescu (2000) puts, "In the course of last ten years, the use of authentic materials has become increasingly popular in learning situations that range from traditional intensive ESL to language training for professionals. Authentic materials, when appropriately selected and implemented, can be used to develop tasks that depart from formulaic language learning and provide a bridge between the linguistic skills of learners and their professional knowledge goals. Such materials, in their various formats, can provide a wealth of linguistic and conceptual content to learners who are focused on specific applications for their linguistic skills" (p.2).

Change and variety is something very important for human development and upbringing. This universe of ours is the best example of it. God has created it in plenty. No two things are exactly alike in form, shape or quality. There are thousands of leaves on a single tree but all are different in form or shape. So variety is something loved by God. Same is true for our classroom teaching situations there must be a variety of material and techniques for teaching. As Gerber (1990) says, "Most ambitious English teachers try to vary this approach in order to sustain the people's attention and to make the text come alive" (p.49).

Authentic materials can serve this purpose very well. There is a great variety of materials available in newspapers, broadcasts, magazines etc in the form of advertisements, cartoons, bulletins, horoscopes, weather reports etc. If these are exploited appropriately these can be of great help to improve students writing skills. Authentic materials can be even more useful to those learners who intend to go to a foreign country for higher education. Such materials will acquaint them not only with the language but also with the culture and value system of the country concerned.

Advertisement in newspapers and magazines are the most read and exciting materials. These have variety and diversity and are very attractive to readers from any field of life. Wierus (1990) says, "Advertisements in illustrated magazines—so popular with readers throughout the worlds—provide much fun and may arouse a great deal of interest and excitement amongst learners of English" (p.48).

Same is true in the case of cartoons, crossword puzzles, horoscope and weather reports etc.

It depends upon the teachers how they adapt authentic materials for use in different classroom situations, depending upon the student's age and language proficiency. Source and purpose of the material is least important. What is important is the adaptation of the materials as per semantics, lexical, syntactic and discourse elements of the original texts.

2.8 Authentic Materials in an EFL Classroom
"The use of authentic materials in the language classroom presents instructors with several challenges. One such challenge is development of effective research skills required to manage the vast amount of information available in written, spoken, or multimedia format. An additional challenge is the selection of the material most appropriate to the objectives of curriculum, a course, or even a single task. A third challenge is the

implementation of materials and the subsequent demands of flexibility and adaptation of instruction that may not be confined to a traditional classroom setting" (Dumitrescu, 2001, p.1).

Anyhow authentic materials are really very interesting and stimulating. Raise a sense of curiosity in the students and bring in the lively outer landscape into the learning situation. These materials are taken from the real life, as oppose to the material specially designed and constructed for the sake of language teaching. In day to day life we come across both written and spoken forms of language very often. It is available in the newspapers, TV and Radio. It is also available in so many other forms and shapes like songs, advertisements, road signs and banners. Furthermore now it is also available on the Internet. It can be used to best advantage in the EFL classroom. Merino and Massi (1998) explain this phenomenon in words, "The use of the news processing in the classroom is just one aspect of the changes in technology that is presently taking place. Undoubtedly, TV news and press, together with the impact of   e-mail communication and internet availability influence both teachers and learners in deep and profound ways" (p.16).

In fact exploiting authentic materials entails great art and skill on the part of teacher. It needs an extraordinary effort to coordinate it with text material." Adapting original materials for language teaching is an incredibly subtle process-half art, half science. Clearly, the kind and degree of adapting depends on the age and language level of the students. In an effort to simplify text, it is easy to slip into the error of talking down to the reader" (Darain, 2001, p.2).

Authentic materials, although difficult to adapt, make the learning enjoyable, meaningful and relevant. Students will also get the knowledge of the culture, values and traditions of the country where the target language is spoken. "A wide range of studies has shown that using content familiar to students, rather than unfamiliar content, can influence student comprehension of second language" (Post and Rathet, 1996, p.12).

Newspapers are full of an enormous amount of information and text materials. These are indeed the universities in print. The teacher with the help of his experience, skill and ability will have to choose from it the most appropriate material in accordance with the student's knowledge of the target language.

Having looked into the problems or hurdles of using authentic materials for the cause of teaching. Despite all this, the teacher should be able to handle and overcome these difficulties and should bring the outside world into EFL classroom. Plenty of authentic written language is available. He can explore and exploit the vast treasury of newspapers, magazines, books, letters, forms, bills, internet, CNN, BBC and so on. The vast repertoire of newspapers and magazines, if explored prudently can offer a great deal. There is a long list to offer: -

Cartoons	book reviews
Feature articles	news reports
Letters	editorial comments
Recipes	advertisements
Horoscopes	TV and Radio programmes
Weather reports	news reports
Sports news	problem pages
and many other.	

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The study in attendance will be focusing on improving writing skills by making use of authentic materials. The chapter at hand will come up with the description of the design of research study, the methodology employed and the strategy use for the collection of data during the course of the study.

Keeping in view the main research question, the researcher would be working within the bounds of qualitative research. Qualitative research has been described by Gay (2000) in the words "Qualitative research involved intensives data collection that is collection of extensive data on many variables over an extended period of time, in a naturalistic setting" (p.208).

3.2 Context of study

The study will be conducted in Federal Government Boys Model School F-8/3 Islamabad. The impulse behind the selection of this school for the purpose of this research is that it's close to where I live. Moreover, it has students from a range of cultures and backgrounds. Besides, it will be easy to seek consent from the authorities concerned for experimental teaching, as one of my friends is serving in Federal Directorate of Education as an Assistant Director. Above and beyond the environment there is very friendly, relax and conducive.

3.3 Sampling

"Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group from which they are selected. The individuals selected comprise a sample and the larger group is referred to as a population. The purpose of sampling is to gain information about a population; rarely is a study conducted that includes the total population of interest as subjects" (Gay, 2003 p.111). The group or individuals out of which sample is selected is called population. It is defined by Gay (2001) as, "The population is the group of interest of the researcher, the group to which she or he would like the results of the

study to be generalizable" (p.112).

Ten students from grade 10 will be selected through the method of random sampling keeping in view "Mixed ability" criterion to ascertain true results of research.

3.4 Conducting the Research

On the first visit to the school the researcher will call on the principal of the school in his office. He will introduce himself, his work and his plans to the head of the institution.

Then the researcher will start with the few class observations to watch the practical teaching situations. Then he will teach two textbook lessons with the help of authentic materials to a group of ten students of 10th class. Questionnaires will be got filled from the teachers. The time period to do all this will be one month.

3.5 Strategies for data collection

The researcher will employ various data collection techniques during the course of the study. As the research will be based on experimental research design and observations methodology involving qualitative method. The researcher had to gather information regarding his research problem not only from what people said but also from actions, reactions and behaviour. He had to become an attentive observer, emphatic listener and a neutral analyst to come up to the requirements of the study. While in the field, the researcher collected data through class observations, practical teaching to a group of students and through a teacher's questionnaire.

3.6 MODEL LESSON PLAN NO 1

Topic   :   Humour
Objective   :   Supporting textbook with authentic materials for developing writing skills.
Time Period   :   One week
Teaching Aids: Cuttings of jokes, cartoons, articles, Markers, and the Whiteboard.

Pre-reading
Estimated Time: 5 Minutes
  (a) Students previous knowledge about humour was checked and general interest was aroused.
  (b) Motivated students by giving them some credible reasons for reading it.
  (c) For language preparation some jokes were shared.

  While-Reading
  Estimated Time : 20 Minutes
  (a) Cuttings of jokes, cartoons, and articles were distributed in the class. Students were allowed to do some group work on them. Then some students read the jokes and articles one by one, the teacher corrected pronunciation mistakes. Jokes and articles were interesting and amusing and there were some laughter and amusement in the class.
  (b) Then there was text reading aimed to help the readers to:-
              (i) Clarify the context of the text e.g. difficult words and literary terms like, sarcasm, exaggeration, anecdote etc.
              (ii) Understand the structure of the text.
              (iii) Know about the writing process. Tips on the writing process were given in detail.
              (iv) Get the writer's aim

Follow-Up
Estimated Time : 10 Minutes
Writing Activities

Activity -1
Write some of your favourite jokes.
Activity-2
Write a short amusing story.
Activity-3
Write a short note on cartoons.

3.7 MODEL LESSON PLAN NO 2

Topic   :   Newspaper
Objective   :   Supporting textbook with authentic materials for developing writing skills.
Time Period   :   One week
Teaching Aids: Two English Newspapers i.e. Dawn and The News, cuttings of different parts of Newspapers, Markers and Whiteboard.

Pre-reading
Estimated Time: 5 Minutes
  (a) Students knowledge held previously about Newspapers was checked and their interest was aroused.
  (b) Informed students about the good things a Newspaper can offer them.
  (c) For language preparation some headlines from a Newspaper were read and discussed.
  While-Reading
  Estimated Time : 20 Minutes

(a)   Cuttings of front-page headlines, city page headlines, some business news excerpts, a letter to the editor, an editorial and some sports news were offered for the group work.

(b)   The teacher help the students understand the language of different news items. The students asked some questions and the teacher answered them.

(c)   Then there was the general reading of the text aimed to help the students to; -

       (i)   Understand the writer's purpose.

       (ii)   Understand the structure of the text.

       (iii)   Clarify the contents of the text e.g. difficult words, Newspaper terms, and particular Newspaper language.

Follow-Up
Estimated Time: 10 Minutes
Writing Activities

Activity -1
Write a thirty-word note on the main parts of a Newspaper.

Activity-2
Write a short note on editorial page.

Activity-3
Offer your comments on sports page of your favourite Newspaper.

4. Data Analysis

During the course of his research the researcher will carry out an experimental study at Federal Government Boys Model School F-8/3 Islamabad for the period of one month at secondary level. The data collected will be meticulously analyzed. The overall results will be described through statistical diagrams. A group of ten students of mixed ability will be picked from class X with the help of class teacher. Two lessons will taught with the help of authentic materials. One lesson i.e. 'HUMOUR' with its relevant authentic materials and the other lesson was 'NEWSPAPER' with its concerned authentic materials will be taught. An entrance test will be taken before the start of each lesson and the scores will be recorded. There will be an exit at the end of each lesson and the scores will be recorded. And then the scores of entrance and exit tests will be analyzed with the help of statistical diagrams.

4.1 Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire

While at school, during the course of research, the researcher will get a questionnaire filled from the teachers of English. The questions asked will be about the language and writing skills in general and authentic materials in particular. The analysis of the questionnaire will be submitted in the form tables.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is anticipated that it is going to be a motivating and imaginative experience. The researcher look forward to take pleasure in the process and all the students and the teachers taking a lot of interest, as it will something new for them. Most of them will be wonder struck as it's a rare phenomenon in Pakistani context. They are expected to come up with a lot of questions and the utility of authentic materials and its effects in the classroom. It will arouse a great deal of interest in them and will stir their creative faculties. There is going to be a flood of information in every piece of material used i.e. cartoons, advertisements, weather reports, horoscopes etc. They will find it easy to write after having a deep and keen look at these pieces/excerpts of authentic materials. All these things will set their minds working and planning on a variety of topics. It will be easy for them to choose the topic of their interest. They will get rid of dull and dry textbook material. The classroom will become a happy place to them. They will not be restricted to write in a particular direction. Authentic materials will be full of meanings and everyone will draw their own connotations from it as per their frame of mind.

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