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Authenticity and ideology: Creating a culture of authenticity through reflecting on purposes for learning and teaching

Richard Pinner, Sophia University, Japan*

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses some of the troubling issues which surround the nature of authenticity in language teaching and learning, such as identity, the legitimacy of L2 teachers of English, and the disempowerment of L2 voices. This paper presents an examination uncovering how the English language is marketed to learners, and traces the effect this has on our teaching approach and sense of efficacy as language teachers. Rather than simply 'real language' or 'newspapers', I propose that authenticity should be taken to mean that learning is both personally meaningful and socially relevant to each individual in context. Fundamentally, this paper argues that as teachers we must find our own authentic reasons for working with students, in order to create a culture of authenticity in the language classroom.
Keywords: authenticity; ideology; culture; purpose; motivation; power.

RESUMEN

El presente artículo examina algunas de las cuestiones que rodean la naturaleza de la autenticidad en la enseñanza y aprendizaje de otra lengua, tales como la identidad, la legitimidad de los docentes de inglés como segunda lengua, y el desempoderamiento de las voces en segundas lenguas. El artículo analiza cómo la lengua inglesa es mercantilizada a los estudiantes, y traza los efectos que esto tiene sobre nuestro enfoque didáctico y nuestro sentido de eficacia como profesores de inglés. En lugar de tomar la autenticidad solamente referida a diarios y lengua real, propongo que la autenticidad sea tomada como el aprendizaje relevante personal y socialmente de cada individuo en su contexto. Fundamentalmente, este artículo discute que como docentes debemos encontrar nuestras propias razones auténticas para trabajar con los estudiantes con el fin de crear una cultura de la autenticidad en la clase de lengua.
Palabras clave: autenticidad; ideología; cultura; propósito; motivación; poder.

* Corresponding author, e-mail: rpinner@sophia.ac.jp

THE CONCEPT OF AUTHENTICITY is familiar in applied linguistics and language teaching. It is often seen as an important aspect of both classroom materials and the interactions between speakers, and is commonly associated with motivation and meaning-making. Authenticity is a loaded term, having strong positive associations and related negative implications for anything labelled inauthentic. However, there are many difficulties with the construct of authenticity, and scholars have put forward various arguments and definitions over a long history of theoretical debate. Although often criticised for being overly complicated, this paper examines the "authenticity debate" and searches for a unifying practical approach to authenticity that can bring together a more holistic understanding of what authenticity means for language teaching and learning. It begins by looking at the meaning of authenticity, and the difficulties inherent in defining it for language teaching. I examine the way our understanding of authenticity shifts and evades definition as it is constantly repurposed for ideological and political reasons, and I look at power relations that are implicit in the discussion of authenticity. Finally, I make suggestions about how this abstract and transient concept can become a practical reality or meaningful goal in the language classroom, by focusing on contextualisation, individuals in society and personal meaning-making.

The Paradox of Authenticity: Reality and Purpose

Jorge Luis Borges once said that 'Reality is not always probable, or likely. But if you're writing a story, you have to make it as plausible as you can, because if not, the reader's imagination will reject it"[1]. Borges was talking about story writing, but of course this also has relevance for language teaching and learning too, especially in relation to materials. When we talk about authenticity, we often talk about what is real, and indeed this is often the most pervasive definition found throughout the literature, and yet this construction of authenticity is riddled with paradoxes. For instance, Breen compares a poem by the Czech writer Miroslav Holub, and a character named Arthur from a well-known textbook. Whereas Holub's intention behind the writing was possibly to amuse, share an experience or 'awaken a new way of perceiving things', Arthur was invented merely to "illustrate and exemplify the workings of language", the whole point here being language for "*meta*-communicative purposes" (Breen, 1985, p. 61). Which of these texts is really *real* in this case? Acknowledging the relative nature of authenticity (what is authentic and to whom?), Breen proposes that we strive for tasks which are authentic to the *purpose* of learning a language.

Following on from this, as teachers and language educators, we must of course ask ourselves the purpose of both teaching and learning a foreign language. We cannot assume that our learners will come into our classrooms with a pre-loaded understanding of why they are there in the grand-scheme of things. Rather, many of our learners are in the classroom because they simply have to be as part of the curriculum. This is a common place and

recurrent issue for foreign (and perhaps especially English) language education; from Argentina to Japan, countries where English is a foreign language often require young students to undertake compulsory lessons in English. Despite the global pressure to learn English for socioeconomic reasons, which are doubtlessly visible to our learners, in EFL contexts for many young people in formal education the English language is just another compulsory school subject. Aside from being the world's second language (L2), English is also the world's most *taught* language (Crystal, 2003). It is also important to bear in mind that the majority of English language teachers have themselves learned the language or speak it as an L2. Both Canagarajah (2005) and Braine (2010) place the number of L2 teachers of English at 80 per cent of the total; a logical figure when one considers that the number of L2 speakers of English far outweigh those for whom it is an L1.

Although the relative importance of the subject is often very clear to students, the exact nature of English is rather abstract. Does Global English really mean global, or does it mainly refer to North America and Britain? Do students need to be fluent speakers who sound like "natives", or will they be able to get by with intermediate skills? If learners need to use English to communicate with the international community, what type of English should they learn? As teachers, we may ask ourselves what materials should we use to present relevant models? We may even wonder if we can provide a good model to our students ourselves, especially if we still consider ourselves as learners or imperfect speakers of the language. Fundamentally, in asking these questions we are wondering what is "real" English? In other words, what is "authentic" English?

The Authenticity Debate

Despite having a rich and complex historical tapestry, as Mishan (2005) rightly points out, the modern preoccupation with authenticity in language learning arose in the 1970s, and was symbiotic with the rise of communicative approaches. Of course, communicative approaches are not new and they are not simply a product of the 1970s, but this is where the terms as we appreciate them today arose from.

Despite the presence of so many strong arguments claiming that authenticity is relative and a process of interaction, what remains dominant in both materials and the rhetoric of language teaching is the belief that authenticity can in fact be ascribed to materials as a 'property' or absolute trait inherent within a text or sample of language. In this section I will attempt to trace a short course through the literature on authenticity in language learning and teaching, and explain the damaging effect of this pervasive version of authenticity, which I pejoratively label the "classic" definition.

There are several overviews of authenticity which deal with the various claims that have surfaced as part of the "authenticity debate". Gilmore's (2007) paper provides an overview of the issue of authenticity, formulating eight inter-related definitions from a summary of the literature. Although this is a useful summary, these definitions also prove

somewhat divisive, as a study by Pinner (2016a) showed by turning the different definitions into a questionnaire which was then administered to English teachers and students in Japan. The findings revealed a general lack of consensus, showing that authenticity was understood differently by different people in different ways (see also Trabelsi, 2010 whose study revealed that Tunisian students found the definition of authenticity ellusive).

Taking a somewhat different approach to the summary of the literature, Trabelsi (2014) splits authenticity into four trends; authenticity as a native speaker property, authenticity as real communication for social purposes, authenticity as interaction with language, and finally authenticity as a practical concern involving the purpose of learning. This final trend follows closely from other contributions on authenticity, primarily ones connected with the rise of communicative language teaching (CLT), which have developed the idea that the learning itself should be purposeful (Breen, 1985; Morrow, 1977; Widdowson, 1990). This is also mirrored in the general literature on education more widely, (Bonnett & Cuypers, 2003; Petraglia, 1998). These issues are themselves traceable back to the work of John Dewey, who insisted on the value of the actual experience of learning and making connections between formal education and social and community life (1938). Thus, the purpose of learning and the experiences that take place in the classroom can be seen as central in our understanding of authenticity from a practitioner perspective.

I will revisit the issue of purpose later in this paper, but at present for my own contribution to the synthesis of arguments, I would like to suggest that the authenticity debate is actually even simpler than either the eight definitions or the four trends, and argue that the central issue can basically be split into two perspectives on the nature of authenticity in the language classroom. These perspectives, or strands, are basically the two sides of the argument at the heart of the authenticity debate; one focusing on the practical concerns for authenticity in language teaching, which tends to focus on the actual language to present in class and often hinges on materials; the second focuses more on what could be viewed as the existential nature of authenticity as a broader concept, and what this means for learners who are trying to acquire the target language, therefore primarily being focused on interaction. Ironically, both of these perspectives generally argue in some way for authenticity in the language classroom, and so the interplay of this debate might best be visualised as a single arrow pulling in two different directions (see Figure 1).

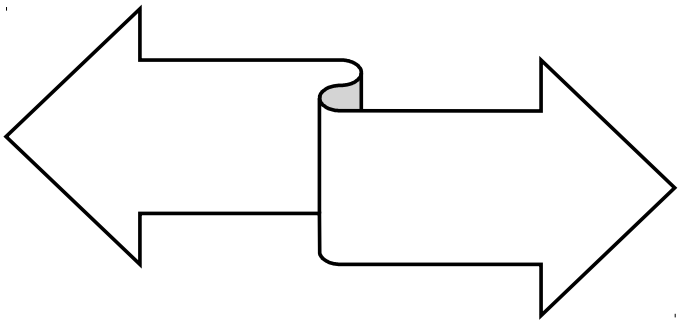

Figure 1. The two strands of the authenticity debate.

Although I admit this may be oversimplifying some of the more nuanced arguments, I believe this representation balances practicality with accuracy for our purposes as teachers and language educators. Viewed in this way, the debate seems to go nowhere as it pushes and pulls against itself, even though both arguments of the authenticity debate seem to advocate authenticity in our classrooms. This can be explained by the political and ideological associations of authenticity, which I will examine shortly. The reason for this fundamental inertia amidst such heated and extended debate is likely to be related to teachers' beliefs in the purpose of education and the way in which learning and teaching should be carried out. This is because, at its heart, the word authenticity when applied to human activity is essentially about a feeling of congruence between one's beliefs and one's actions. In this way, to understand authenticity we must not only ask our students about their motivations for learning, we must also examine our own motivations for teaching. Thus, I would argue that authenticity in the classroom is coupled with the interaction between teacher and student motivation. This link between authenticity and motivation is very often acknowledged although rarely empirically tested (although see Pinner, 2018).

Authenticity and Motivation

The feeling teachers attain when learners are engaged has been shown to be one of the main contributors to teaching satisfaction, making the work intrinsically rewarding. Thus, in certain cases, the feeling of congruence in one's teaching approach may potentially lead to a sense of authentic belonging, sometimes known as Eudaimonia, which helps maintain the hard work of the endeavour by connecting a feeling of self-congruence with the activity of teaching (Bullough, 2009; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2009). Because teaching is often intrinsically motivated, it is therefore a deeply personal calling, and as an academic vocation, teaching well and liking it requires 'extremely high energy, focus, and *total* commitment' (Bess, 1997, p. xi). This is dependent on the development of one's own 'philosophy of teaching', which must then be aligned with the actual practices of the classroom if the teacher is to feel truly authentic in him or herself (Kreber, 2013).

Although this may sound on paper like a simple process, of course it is not always easy to remember why we are engaged in a particular classroom activity at any given moment. We, as teachers, may also find ourselves doing things which we have to do in the classroom, which we do not always believe in. For example, those of us working under the constraints of a national curriculum may find we have limited choice in terms of the materials and texts that we can bring into the classroom, on top of which time constraints and national uniform standards mean that we have little autonomy over our actual day-to-day teaching practice. Autonomy and authenticity are etymologically cousins and conceptually close; authenticity is what we do when we have the autonomy to do it. In the case of Argentina, with each province having its own ministry of education and the complex web of autonomous and semi-autonomous systems, it is clear that teachers will vary widely

in terms of what they can and should do in the classroom (Porto, Montemayor-Borsinger, & López-Barrios, 2016). This of course creates a tension between the seemingly 'global' nature of English and the decidedly local and heavily contextualised realities of each classroom in each school. It is at this level that teachers must work in order to create a culture of authenticity in their classrooms, if they are to find long-term intrinsic rewards from their work.

However, authenticity at this localised and contextualised level can easily become problematic again if we are to ignore the wider ideological and political issues that are inherent in a discussion of authenticity.

Authenticity and Ideology

In the above summary, I have presented only a small part of the "authenticity debate", but in doing so I believe I have already established the rather dualistic nature of the argument. Some proponents believe that X is authentic, whereas others believe X cannot possibly be authentic because of the very nature of Y. In language teaching, this might be an argument over a textbook being 'authentic' whereas others would argue that a text written for pedagogical purposes could not be authentic. Another example might be Widdowson's (1978) distinction between *authentic* materials and *genuine* materials. Here, being genuine is an absolute property of the text because it comes from the target language community, whereas authenticity is relative to how the reader engages with the material and their relationship to it. In this way, the authenticity debate in EFL is very similar to the authenticity debates which are being argued in other fields. The fact is that authenticity is a political concept, not merely a word which we can attach to make our lessons sound more appealing. Umbach and Humphrey (2017) provide a cultural history of authenticity as a political concept, claiming that it is constantly redefined by opposing sides of ideological arguments and repurposed for political ends. In other words, authenticity is an extremely powerful word and can be used to describe our underpinning beliefs about society, which in turn help us find our place in society and choose sides on political ideological issues. In this way, authenticity (linked with its etymological cousin, authority) conjures up the image "of a single authority who imposes a master narrative of meaning" (Cobb, 2014, p. 1). This implicates authenticity as being at the centre of our socially constructed identities. It goes without saying that language is one of the main tools which we utilise in constructing these social identities, and negotiating social relationships as we move through life. Thus, as well as being a master narrative that constructs how we view the world, authenticity is also a 'master motive' for social interactions (Weigert, 2009).

As such, authenticity is the nucleus of identity construction when we speak in a foreign language. Struggling to express ourselves and assert our rightful position in society when using another language is a fundamentally challenging undertaking. The frustrations of being unable to use language as a tool to construct our social identities may even feel akin to

some form of disability such as a speech impairment, coupled with the "locked-in syndrome" of possibly knowing exactly what we want to say in our first language or another language in which we are more proficient. Conversely, those who do become proficient in another language may struggle to gain recognition and social capital on account of their L2 status, creating further tensions and incongruences between self-image and social position. In this way, authenticity judgements about a speaker and their relationship to language are at the nexus of power asymmetries.

Authenticity and Power

As I have established, authenticity is an issue that bridges local and contextualised realities at one end, and over-reaching ideologies and political interactions at the other. Authenticity is a word which describes the ever fluctuating nexus where we strive for congruence between our individual beliefs and our actions in the face of societal constraints and pressures.

As mentioned earlier, authenticity is a political issue and ideologies are often framed through discourses of authenticity. Within English language teaching, there are numerous ideological issues which are perpetuated through the act of teaching a foreign language; an insidious consequence perhaps of the strong connection between language and culture. This is evidenced by the literature on linguistic imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992), appropriate methodology (Holliday, 1994) and the cultural politics of ELT (Chun, 2015; Pennycook, 1994). Authenticity is not always mentioned directly in such discussions, but it is implied by their nature because these arguments implore us to question the validity of our actions as teachers of English, to look at the ideologies that we bring into the classroom with us, and to reflect on our practice within the context of such socio-political and sociolinguistic frames of understanding. Canagarajah (1999) refers to this as the "hidden curriculum"; a set of beliefs, ideologies, values and ways of thinking that shape our students' identities in relation to the target language and their local communities.

There are several ways in which these broader issues of authenticity can manifest themselves in the language learning classroom. One of them concerns the type of model we use for English, which thus implicitly suggests the type of speaker our learners are to emulate and try to become. Textbooks generally employ speakers for whom the language is an L1 to provide models and examples, as well as featuring the norms of the centre varieties of English – in other words Kachru's "norm-providing" centre (Kachru & Thumboo, 2001). This is despite the majority of English speakers using it as their L2, as established in the beginning of this paper. Although within the literature on applied linguistics (and subsequently discussions of authenticity within language teaching) the term "native-speaker" is now used with caution, the native speaker definition of authenticity is very much alive and well in the ELT industry as a whole, which creates numerous problems for L2 teachers as they strive for legitimacy, and ultimately authenticity, in their work as language educators

(Lowe & Pinner, 2016). The aforementioned "classic" definition of authenticity presupposes that native-speaker "norms" and "standard English" exist in reality outside of the textbook, and that they are to be emulated by learners as closely as possible, hence they are provided as samples of and models for learning. I would argue that the idea of a standard variety of English is much more problematic than arguments about whether or not to use "contrived" texts, especially when working in diverse contexts at localised levels of interaction. In a rural village in China, how is it possible to "authenticate" a textbook in which people with British or American accents discuss which night-club to visit? This is something Canagarajah (1993) expertly examined in his class with Sri Lankan students. Similarly, Ramos, Forte, and Bacci (2017) looked at the specific needs, motivations and context of their Engineering students at the National University of La Pampa. By inviting speakers to the university to give motivational talks and reflect on their experience of using English, they were able to provide truly authentic models of speakers whose lives and career paths had direct relevance for their current learners.

In this way, although many international textbooks (perhaps unwittingly) perpetuate a native-speaker-centric version of ELT, we can still show our learners how to authenticate the English language by finding our own models, which are more appropriate to our contexts. Of course, L2 teachers, it could be argued, may already provide more authentic models for their learners in this way, if they too have learned the language and become successful speakers in their own right. Studies conducted in Japan have shown that for some L2 English teachers, there is a gnawing self-doubt and lack of self-efficacy when it comes to speaking the language (Pinner, 2014a, 2015). This is exacerbated by the strong permeation of native-speakerism, particularly in the far-east, which ascribes an unwarranted significance to L1 speakers of English and their teaching methods. A nation-wide example of this in Japan is the Japan English Teachers (JET) program, in which speakers from outside the country are brought from English-speaking nations to act as models and do communicative work with students, while the Japanese teachers of English are side-lined from such work and generally expected to focus on grammar-based instruction and test preparation. The issue of "native" vs "non-native" speaker teacher is widespread across the world of ELT, and was the inspiration for Silvana Richardson's plenary speech at IATEFL in 2016, in which she noted that ELT is one of the few industries that prejudices against the majority. The issue of authenticity has been a feature of several discussions around native-speakerism, especially in terms of authentic model speakers (Edge, 1988; Goto Butler, 2007; Seargeant, 2005), the marginal presence of international speakers in textbooks (Canagarajah, 1993; Matsuda, 2002; Siegel, 2014), the ownership of English (Matsuda, 2003; Widdowson, 1994), and wider sociological issues relating to identity and legitimacy (Creese, Blackledge, & Takhi, 2014; Kramsch, 2012; Myhill, 2003; Widdowson, 1996). These issues make the "classic" definition of authenticity extremely contentious, often directly linking it with prejudicial practices (see Lowe & Pinner, 2016 for an in-depth review). Clearly, any definition of

authenticity which potentially excludes L2 speakers of English from being recognised as "authentic" could have a very demotivating, depersonalising and disenfranchising effect for both teachers and learners of English.

A further issue, related to L2 teacher efficacy, is the issue of power in language. Naturally, a person who speaks the language as an L1 is generally seen as the authority on the language, the one whose variety is "correct" or standard. This is of course a myth, but nevertheless a pervasive one. Specifically, there is an asymmetrical relationship of power between speakers who can identify as either L1 or L2, which thus leads to different forms of discrimination, not just in the ELT industry but also in the target use domain more generally.

An example of the kind of discrimination that L2 speakers of English may come up against was widely reported in both Canadian and British news, when in early 2017 a postcard was sent from Buenos Aires to Toronto between two Argentine friends. The author of the card, an elderly man in his 60s, wrote a short note that seems to have contained a few grammatical errors. By the time the card reached its recipient, Mirella Zisko who had emigrated from Argentina to Canada many years before, someone (presumably a postal worker) had corrected the English with a red pen and written an unkind note that said 'PS LEARN ENGLISH!!' (see Figure 2). The implication from the news reports was that a third-party who was proficient in the English language had become enraged by the incorrect use of English, so much so that they had edited the postcard which was a private correspondence between two friends (Kassam, 2017). Of course, we cannot be sure that the correction was made by an L1 speaker, as it might just have easily have been made in Argentina before being sent on to Canada, and even if the corrections were made in Canada, it does not necessarily mean that the corrections were not made by an L2 speaker. In truth, linguistic discrimination comes from both L1 speakers to L2 speakers, and also between L2 speakers between each other. There is an assumption that L2 speakers are more likely to empathise with learners as they have been learners themselves, although upon examination even this assumption can be questioned, as discussed in the paper by Lowe and Kiczkowiak (2016).

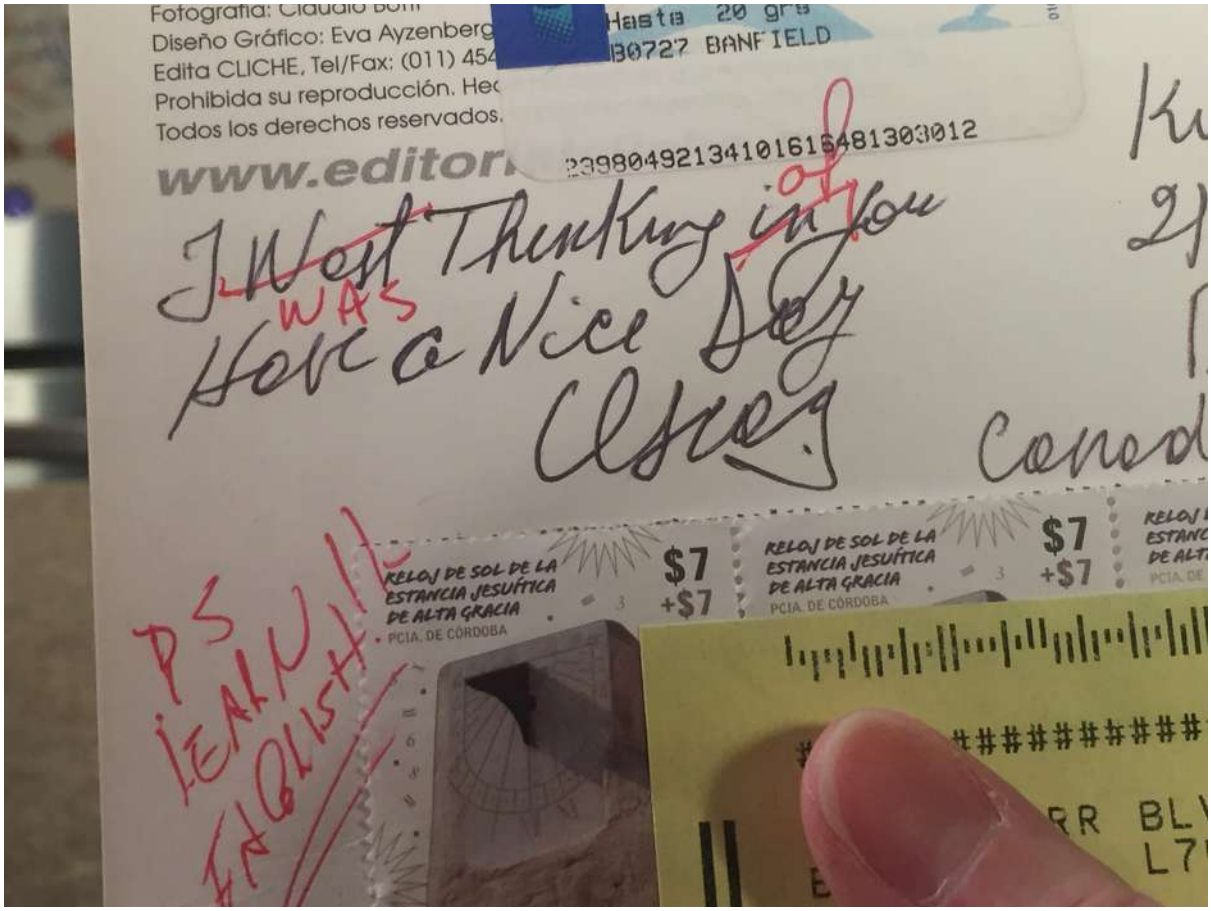

Figure 2. A stranger corrects a postcard from Buenos Aires to Canada

However, the existence of sites such as engrish.com, which collect examples of incorrect or humorous English from a variety of sources, displays that in general there is an asymmetry in power between those who speak English well enough not to make "mistakes" or deviations considered non-standard, and those for whom self-expression in English is marred with self-doubt about being laughed at. Entire nations are made the focus of such jokes, with words like "Chinglish" to describe English with Chinese influences being generally used as pejorative terms, rather than recognised varieties of World English. Even Singlish (Singaporean English) suffers from common derogatory connotations even by the Singaporean government, despite being a bona fide variety of English (Wong, 2014). English has official status as one of the four official languages in Singapore, although "Singlish" is often denigrated and labelled as "incorrect", which creates a certain diglossia in Singapore, once again showing the asymmetry of English varieties.

Such asymmetries are not only evident within fields where English is a second or foreign language. For instance, Black English Vernacular has regularly needed defending by linguists within the United States of America, and the Patois translation of the Gospel of Luke similarly came under fire in some media for being "bad English". Creole varieties of languages are often seen as 'lower' forms of the lexifier language, despite being accepted as separate languages (Mufwene, 2007). Thus, the struggle for legitimacy in language is not

isolated or specific to ELT, but these political aspects are all part of the authenticity debate and form the backdrop for our students as they encounter English in the classroom. Of course, the nature of this backdrop may be very abstract or even completely unknown to our learners at different levels of education and in different local contexts, and thus I would posit that raising our students' awareness of these political issues would be an important step in helping them to authenticate the process of learning, so that they can situate themselves on this stage and begin crafting a genuine vision of their own personal realities of English use.

The Paradox Revisited: Materials for the EFL Classroom

As I stated before, authenticity is a paradox. It is much easier to label something as inauthentic than it is to recognise authenticity. In order to proclaim something as authentic, we ourselves must have the authority and expertise to make the proclamation. Thus, power and inequality, ideologies and politics, as well as personal identity and place in society, are all aspects of building a true understanding of authenticity. As I have stated previously, for our purpose as language teachers, the take-home message that I would like to convey is that authenticity is about striving for congruence between our actions and performances as teachers in the classroom, and our beliefs about the value and purpose of those actions. And, as I have stated, that congruence is not always easy when external forces are factored in. Not only do our students cause us to question our place in the classroom by resisting our efforts to engage them in the endeavour of learning, but also within the industry of ELT, many L2 teachers (the majority) may find themselves at the receiving end of discriminatory practices.

To reiterate the common predicament in ELT, generally, those who view authenticity in terms of interaction are likely to reject the notion of authenticity as something that can be applied to materials directly, as authenticity entails a "personal process of engagement" (van Lier, 1996, p. 128). For Breen (1985) and Widdowson (1978, 1996, 1998), authenticity is an interaction between learners and texts, but it is also an interaction between agents in the classroom. However, such an assertion is often misunderstood or misrepresented by materials writers and publishers, for the simple reason that authenticity is an important part of the sales rhetoric for English as a Foreign Language (Lowe & Pinner, 2016). Indeed, the construct of authenticity is also central in other industries such as tourism, food, art, and more generally in the field of sales and marketing. When selling textbooks, publishers tend to insist that their materials and content are authentic, and that their tasks will facilitate authentic interactions in the classroom. Ironically, it is textbooks that are often the first to come under attack for lacking authenticity, primarily as they are designed with profits in mind rather than pedagogy (Gilmore, 2004; Siegel, 2014).

Similarly, a noticeable trend amongst practitioning language teachers is to essentialise authenticity to apply to texts which were 'not originally developed for pedagogical purposes' (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 43). Historically, this definition is very pervasive in the literature, with famous definitions such as the one provided by Wallace, that authentic texts

are “real-life texts, not written for pedagogic purposes” (1996, p. 145). This quote is reproduced in a vast number of articles on teaching, and is still cited in academic journals (for example, Clavel-Arroitia, & Fuster-Márquez, 2014, p. 125 cite this definition in their paper for the ELTJ). This definition is interesting, as it actually comes from the glossary at the end of Wallace’s excellent book on reading. Another very common definition for authenticity is provided in an early text from Nunan (1989).

> What do we mean by authenticity? A rule-of-thumb definition for 'authentic' here is any material which has not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching. (Nunan, 1989, p. 54)

This is an extremely pervasive definition, very much linked to Morrow’s earlier definition which distinguishes between contrived materials and real (i.e. authentic) ones (1977). Despite the vintage of these definitions, and the fact that taken out of context they often lose the necessary disclaimers which the authors generally provide after having discussed the complex nature of authenticity, this “classic” definition of authenticity remains in play today, and is also reflected in the general literature on materials. Although the “classic” definition does not always explicitly mention native speakers, they are nonetheless heavily implied, and as a result the notion of authenticity tends to gravitate towards the native speaker (Pinner, 2014b, 2016b). In doing so, authentic materials tend to be defined as such things as newspapers, literature, television broadcasts and other such media.

Briefly touching on the paradoxical nature of authenticity, Harmer (2008, p. 274) notes in his definition of authenticity that:

> A stage play written for native speakers is a playwright’s representation of spontaneous speech rather than the real thing, so it is, in a sense, both authentic and inauthentic.

In this way, Shakespeare might be presented as an authentic example of English literature, but it is not an authentic model of English for our learners. Likewise, we may show episodes of US sitcoms to our learners as “authentic” input, but this is neither authentic in the sense that it is “real” communication (the scripts the actors read are contrivances), nor is it to be taken for granted that our learners will engage in the process of authenticating such content just because it hails from an L1 speech context. Such a blind application of the word “authenticity” here causes problems for any serious discussion of authenticity in language learning, as it applies the aforementioned static definition without considering the context in which the materials will be used.

Previously I have criticised “classic” notions of authenticity, and at the surface level, we may assume this criticism applies to all cultural products from L1 communities. This is not so. Mishan (2005) refers to certain materials for language learning as “cultural products”, which she explains should factor in the local context of the learning situation. In

this way, we can select materials from all over the world, and attempt to present them to our classroom culture in a way which allows us to assimilate them at both personal and social levels. A good example is provided by Ansaldo (2014), who brought Japanese culture to Elementary learners in order 'to expose students to certain elements of traditional Japanese culture and the art of Kamishibai [traditional Japanese paper drama] in order to provide them with a meaningful experience' (27).

Although I myself work for the English Literature department of a university in an EFL context, I have been wary of using "authentic cultural products", especially in light of the ideological issues briefly covered earlier in this paper. However, just because we are exposing students to such products, it does not necessarily mean we are also exposing them to their underlying ideologies. Just as authenticity is contextually created, so too are the ideological interpretations associated with the original. This is clearly illustrated by Porto and Rosas (2017), whose literature course with future teachers and translators looked at fundamental human rights issues and intercultural citizenship. Using the narrative technique of restorying, they encouraged their participants to use empathy and an understanding of otherness in order to facilitate both political engagement as well as a more personal affective interpretations of the texts. Based on a qualitative analysis, the authors revealed that students had successfully engaged in the task in order to develop a 'critical imaginative understanding' (Porto & Rosas, 2017, p. 72) and exhibit deep levels of empathy and awareness for the realities described in the literature to which they were exposed. Although this is mere speculation, I believe a further contributing factor would likely be the teacher/researchers' own engagement with the task and their passion and belief in the validity of what they were doing. Here we come back to the issue of congruence in authenticity, and the way our actions must match our core beliefs in order for us to be authentic as professionals.

The Culture of Authenticity at FAAPI (and other localised EFL settings)

As a final word, I would like to reflect on my recent experience of visiting Argentina for the FAAPI conference, which was themed around the issue of authenticity. Living, as I do, in Japan and coming to Argentina meant that I travelled over 20,000 kilometres to attend the conference, and as it was my first time to visit Argentina (or, for that matter, Latin America), I was expecting to experience a certain amount of culture shock. After a long journey, I arrived at the conference and was immediately struck by the authenticity of the culture around language teaching that I found there. People were not merely attending the conference because they had to (in fact, many teachers had paid their own way and would not be reimbursed by their institutions). People were not presenting in order to add a new line to their curriculum vitae, or because there is a "publish or perish" culture. In fact, the culture of publishing research is something which the editors of this journal regularly try to encourage (Banegas & Lothringer, 2013), as it seems sadly few teachers are provided with

ample support or incentives to do so within. Instead, teachers are encouraged to publish and share their research findings because doing research and disseminating findings is a form of professional development and can lead to improved practice (Banegas, 2017; Banegas, Pavese, Velázquez, & Vélez, 2013). This was instantly clear at the FAAPI conference, I felt. The sense of shared passion and commitment was what brought people together for this event. This was a real community of practice, and teachers came from all over the world in order to re-connect with their teaching beliefs, in order to gain a deeper understanding of their own practice, and to get inspiration so that they could return to their classes feeling energised and ready to begin the demanding work of forging new cultures of authenticity with a new cohort of learners. It would be very hard to deny this atmosphere of mutual respect and validity, and I would describe the overall influence of such a gathering as Eudaimonia, a word I introduced earlier to describe an authentic sense of self-congruence. I noticed also that once the conference was underway many people refrained from speaking in Spanish to one another. Many teachers came to FAAPI to brush up their own English, one participant told me. I saw this first-hand and I noticed that this too, is evidence of a culture of authenticity. When people authenticate a social situation as a group, the dynamic is astounding and builds motivation and self-congruence. This is what van Lier was perhaps describing when he stated that:

> [T]he people in the setting, each and every one individually for himself or herself, as well as in negotiation with one another, authenticate the setting and the actions in it. When such authentication occurs en masse, spontaneously or in an orchestrated fashion (socially constructed authentication, so to speak), we may well have the most authentic setting possible (van Lier, 1996, p. 128).

Of course, such cultures of authenticity can sprout to life anywhere, at any time, in any context. Conferences are good examples, but there is no reason why classrooms cannot also be the site of such congruence, mutual validation and social authentication. Striving for a classroom culture in which each learner can be themselves, speak as themselves (Ushioda, 2009, 2011) and where the teacher can also perform their beliefs in education, making connections between the individuals and the wider social context, this is how we work towards authenticity in the language classroom. Our job as educators is to provide all the scaffolding and metacognitive awareness that students need to be able to be themselves in another language. Although this is not always possible, I believe this is our ultimate aim when striving for authenticity in language learning.

Notes

1. This quote comes from a discussion published in the Columbia Forum in 1971 on page 2, in which Borges was actually referring to a statement by Boileau, making it seem as if it is purely Borges' statement. The quote is accessible from

http://wist.info/borges-jorge-luis/22456/

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