



Selection of Authentic Internet Materials for English Language Instruction in Some Higher Institutions of North-Western Nigeria

Sani Ahmed SAMBO, Abdullahi Kadage Tukur
Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology
Faculty of Education and Extension Services
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

Abstract

This study investigates and explores the criteria used by English lecturers in Nigerian higher institutions in the selection of authentic internet material for English language instruction. It also seeks to find out if the criteria used by the lecturers are in line with the student's preference. Accordingly, three research questions and one hypothesis were formulated to guide the research. Therefore, a total of 232 respondents which comprised of the 116 lecturers of English and 116 students from 9 higher institutions in Sokoto and Zamfara states, North-Western Nigeria were randomly selected through a multi-stage sampling technique to participate in the study. Thus, using an explanatory sequential mixed method design, quantitative data were collected through a Likert scale questionnaire while qualitative data was obtained through a one-to-one interview. Similarly, descriptive statistical analysis - frequency mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the responses reflecting the major research questions, while a non-parametric inferential statistics – **Mann Whitney U test** was used to test the hypotheses of the study. Also, transcription, organization, coding, and thematic content analysis were applied in the qualitative data analysis. Findings of the research revealed that as part of their criteria, the lecturers consider learners interest, English language level, and topic objectives as the criteria which guide their selection of authentic internet material for English language instruction. Inferential analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between the lecturers' criteria and their students' preferred criteria for selecting authentic internet material for English Language instruction. Therefore, the study recommends that lecturers should implement learner-centred strategies that will allow learners to engage in active use of the internet and search for websites and certain internet links for materials that can promote both their learning of English and digital-based study skills.

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INTRODUCTION

The evolution of internet and its vast resources is one of the greatest innovations of technology which the present generation has witnessed in recent time. The internet technology in particular, provides unique opportunity for English language teachers to select diverse authentic materials for teaching and learning. This development therefore, propels the agitation for the use of authentic material in the teaching and learning of English language, in view of the availability of different kinds of visually stimulating and interactive authentic materials that are continuously

updated. (Lingzhu and Yuanyuan, 2010). As a well-known practice, teachers of English have in the past decades relied on textbooks as sources of material for developing their course content and instructional activities. However, these English course books especially in primary and secondary schools, are typically produced centrally by a group of "specialist" for the teachers to use in the classroom. As such, the teachers' power and control over what to select as teaching material is highly limited since these pre-published course books are almost imposed on the teachers by the Ministries of Education where they are designed and sent to



schools for implementation (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994).

This overdependence on text books greatly hampers classroom interaction, which in an ideal situation should be in form of multi-way and multi-media exchanges in the conduct of classroom teaching. Consequently, learning activities are significantly absent in the Nigerian context of teaching English (Obanya, 2002). In fact, he concludes that what obtains in the classroom during English language teaching is simply a frontal teaching characterized by a heavy reliance on the textbooks as the exclusive materials for teaching learning. Another instructional set back associated with the use of textbooks in teaching English is evident in the fact that such textbooks may contain inauthentic language, may distort content and above all may not even meet students' needs and interest coupled with the fact that they can deskill teachers and pre-empt their freedom of exploration and creativity (Yusuf, 2005).

It can therefore be argued that text books tend to predetermine the content of what must be taught and at the same time dictate the procedure which the learner must employ in learning. Above all, they have another consequential effect which restricts the teaching and learning of English on books alone, thereby denying both the teachers and the students the opportunity to engage in authentic use of vast resources that have the potentials to guarantee strategies that reflect real life learning experience.

However, what seems to significantly change the above trend is certainly the emergence of internet as one of the technological innovations of the 21st century which has changed the pattern and strategies of teaching and learning language (Bently, 2010). Specifically, using the vast internet resources is one area where technology integration in English language teaching seems to engage the attention of lecturers in higher institutions in recent time. (Ndidi and Ifeoma 2010),

English language plays a vital role in Nigeria. It is both a second language to many and an official language used in government transaction and all formal correspondences (Akinwamide, 2012) Corroborating this view, Adewumi & Owoyemi (2012) reveal that English language is currently a common

language used in commerce, law, mass media, administration, medium of instruction in schools. Therefore, in practice, the use of English programme has been emphasized in Nigerian higher institutions with a view to improving the status of the language in the country as an official and second language in Nigeria. However, the poor performance of Nigerian students in external English examinations and their use of English has continued to be a source of a great concern to parents, educational stakeholders and the government of the Nigeria. This problem seems to be responsible for the inability of many Nigerian students to have an uninterrupted transition to higher education (Tom-Lawyer, 2014). The success of teaching any aspect of English language Skills depends largely on what kind of material are presented to the learners and most importantly, how the materials are selected, organized, adapted and presented to learners as content of the learning experience. In this regard, Wisniewska (2014) reported that the recent years have witnessed renewed interest in the role of language teaching materials in facilitating the teaching and learning of English, partly due to an unprecedented integration of ICT in language education.

Accordingly, many researches (Agbatogun, 2012, Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Iyamu, 2005) were conducted to explore the attitudes of Nigerian teachers on the use of Technology in language teaching. What has not come to light however is adequate research on the strategies used by the Nigerian English lecturers in teaching English using authentic materials provided by internet technology? Since internet can be used in different modes of learning, more studies are needed to be carried out so that evidence could be obtained in determining the best mode of teaching given the numerous advantages provided by technology (Martins et al., 2004; Chen, 2008).

It is in this regard therefore, that this research focused more primarily on investigating the criteria used by English lecturers in Nigerian higher institutions in selecting authentic internet based materials and resources for English language instruction with a view to suggesting the most appropriate criteria and methods of selection. This will go a long way in exploring the relevant insights on how best to maximize the benefit of this era of



internet technology in English language instruction. Authentic material in this study means texts or other audio-visual recorded materials which involve the use English language naturally occurring as a real life communication either in native speaker context, or in other contexts where Standard English is the norm (Kilickaya, 2014).

CONCEPT OF AUTHENTIC MATERIAL

The concept of authentic material derives from "authenticity" which refers to anything that is known to be genuine and not a copy (Oxford Learners English Dictionaries, 2014) Though this definition gives a clue on the concept, its simplistic and broad meaning is more applicable in general language usage. It must therefore be quickly pointed out that, as it relates to material or strategies for teaching and learning English, the concept of **authentic material** seems to take a slightly different connotation in literature. From the onset, it should therefore be noted that "Authentic" and "Inauthentic" in this sense, are not synonymous with "good" and "bad" respectively as maybe simply construed in an ordinary discussion (Sambo, 2015).

These occasional misconceptions, therefore, makes it necessary to review some more technical definitions from various literature. Thus, in the view of Gilmore (2007) Authentic material refer to "real-life texts, not written for pedagogic purposes" These materials are prepared for native speakers' consumption and thus supposedly contain "real" language. In most instances, they are materials that have been produced to fulfil some social functions in the community where the language remains a native language. While this definition provides some basic insights into the concept of authentic material, its weaknesses are, however, that of limiting the scope of authentic material to the written texts and thus neglecting the other authentic multimedia material like video, television program and or any sources of language that have the potentials to promote and stimulate language use and learning (Lansford, 2014). With the emergence of new technologies, especially the internet, authentic materials are now diverse, depending on what aspects of language skills need to be taught with the material.

Tomlinson (2001) posits that when texts are produced ordinarily without a specific

purpose of teaching language such texts are said to be authentic. For instance, Lingzhu and Zhang Yuanyuan (2010b) sees authentic material from the perspectives of oral language skills. They thus, refer to them as "unscripted, natural and spontaneous spoken language materials, such as interviews, lectures, dialogues, discussions, and conversations etc." This definition has captured the nature of the materials being discussed and sees language as fundamentally speech but has a limitation by not taking cognizance of the fact that written form of language also exists which by extension makes written authentic material as much a reality as the Another definition which gives a broader scope and seems to capture most of the elements in the above views is that of Kilickaya (2014) who defines authentic material as "material which involves the use of language naturally occurring as communication in a native speaker context or rather those selected contexts where Standard English is the norm. These materials are said to be authentic because they represent a sample that is in its natural form and reflects a cultural and situational context as could be found in the native speakers written and spoken language. (Erbaaggio et al., 2014) It is quite observable that, though given from different perspectives and scope, the various definitions above, have some common central elements like naturalness, spontaneity, and real-life communication carried out to perform certain social and communicative purposes rather than serving as material that is specifically designed for the sole purpose of teaching a language especially in a second language learning situation such as Nigeria.

Based on the above clarifications, this paper has therefore continued to refer to authentic material as those written or spoken communication in real language produced or designed without the second language learner in mind. They are thus originally not for teaching purposes. In this regard, therefore, it can be argued that there are quite a variety of authentic materials within and around us like a magazine, newspaper articles, daily conversations, meetings, documents, speech, and films. TV and radio broadcast and many more as discussed in the next subheading.



Types of Authentic Internet Material

Huang et al. (2011) suggest that for authentic materials in language teaching to be successfully introduced there is the need to classify them first because some of them are suitable for the teaching of reading while others are more effective only when dealing with other language skills like listening speaking and writing.

In this regard, Genhard (1996) classified authentic materials into three categories: authentic printed materials, authentic listening-viewing, and materials authentic visual materials. Hussein (2012) adds another category of authentic material which he terms Relia. These are real objects like puppets, utensils rings, scissors, balls, toys, keys, animals, balloons, stones, sticks, umbrellas, and combs wallets, dolls etc.

The Internet as a Source of Authentic Materials for Language Instruction

There are indeed numerous sources of authentic material. These include books, newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, videos course books, audiocassettes CDs, and Libraries. In our modern world, the internet has become the cheapest and easiest source for unlimited access to much assorted authentic material. (Berardo, 2006) Both teachers and students benefit from this material at a relatively lower cost or no cost at all, apart from the time that is needed to search for that material. All other sources mentioned above are readily available on the internet in form of video, visual, audio or textual documents. Kelly et al (2014) argue that the Internet has proven to be the richest source of authentic material through which English Language teachers can search for different sites that focus on specific topics and concepts.

SELECTION OF AUTHENTIC MATERIAL

Selection of material refers to systematic procedure and process of choosing, from the available resources, those materials considered to be the best, most appropriate and most suitable for the particular learning activity, and rejecting what is inferior, inappropriate, unsuitable or unacceptable. (The State of South Australia, Department of Education and Children's Services, 2004) from this view, the words: inferior, unacceptable unsuitable and

inappropriate may be seen as trying to underpin the relevance of being carefully systematic in the selection of material so that those chosen will take into account the types of learners the learning condition and environment.

Factors to Consider when Selecting Authentic Listening Materials

There are certain criteria which supposed to guide language teachers in the process of selecting appropriate relevant and suitable authentic material. McGrath (2002) identifies eight of such criteria which include: Relevance of the materials and learners' needs, learners' interest in the topics discussed, cultural fitness, logistical considerations, cognitive demands, linguistic demands, quality and exploitability. Nuttal (1996) also outlines three main criteria that should be used to select and access materials for language teaching and learning. These include suitability of the content, exploitability and readability. According to this school of thought, of all the criteria, Suitability is paramount, because the materials must arouse the learners' interest, meet their needs and motivate them.

In a survey, Huang et al (2011) sought to investigate the authentic activities and materials being utilized in adult English as a second language (ESL) classrooms in federally funded adult education programs in the United States in the year 2010. The findings revealed that teachers of adult ESL programme employ a wide variety of types of authentic materials and activities which provide opportunities for students to take ownership of their language use and express their voice by making an adequate investment in the learning process. The findings further indicate that authentic material and activities provide an avenue for teachers to motivate and empower students to pursue their own goals, both inside and outside the language learning classroom.

Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated:

- I. What are the criteria used by lecturers of English in Nigerian Higher Institutions in selecting authentic internet material for English Language instruction?
- II. What is the perception of students on the criteria used by lecturers of



- English in selecting authentic internet material for English Language instruction in Nigerian Higher Institutions?
- III. Is there any significant difference between the criteria used by the lecturers and the preference of their learners in the selection of authentic internet materials for English language instruction?

Hypotheses

In line with the above research question 3, the following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

Ho: There is no significant difference between the criteria used by the lecturers and the preference of their learners in the selection of authentic internet materials for English language instruction?

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a sample survey design which applied an explanatory sequential mixed method design in which quantitative data was collected in the first phase of the research, while qualitative data was also collected in the second phase to elaborate the quantitative result. (Creswell, 2014) This is to bring the problem being investigated in a clearer perspective. (Ary, et al 2010; Creswell, 2014). The population of the study is the totality of all the lecturers of English and all students of English in tertiary institutions in Sokoto and Zamfara states of North-western Nigeria. Accordingly, a total of 232 respondents comprised of the 116 lecturers of English and 116 students from 9 higher institutions across the two selected states. This was achieved using a multi-stage -sampling technique whereby the schools were selected using a stratified random sampling technique while the

respondents were selected using purposive sampling. Considering the adoption of a mixed-method approach, two instruments for data collection were used. The first one for the quantitative data is a structured questionnaire while the second instrument was an interview protocol that guided the collection of qualitative data. Both instruments were carefully structured to generate responses that were used to answer the research questions and explain the problem. The rationale behind the choice of a questionnaire for this study was based on its numerous advantages over other instruments. For instance, the questionnaire is found to be cost-effective, it generates a high response and provides opportunities for the researcher's presence. (Ary et al. 2010). Interview protocol, on the other hand, was selected to enable the researcher to focus on the research problem during the interview. Following a pilot study at Federal College of Education Technical Gusau, alpha values of 0.866 and 0.724 were obtained for lecturers' and students' questionnaires respectively and this indicates a good level of internal consistency.

Descriptive statistical analysis- frequency, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the responses reflecting the major research questions 1, while a non-parametric inferential statistics - **Mann Whitney U test** was used to test the single hypotheses of the study. On the other hand, transcription, organization, coding, and thematic content analysis were applied in the qualitative data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

This section presents the findings of the study based on the data collected and the hypothesis tested which are under their respective research questions.

Table 1. Criteria used by lecturers in the selection of authentic internet material

S/N	ITEMS	SD	D	MA	A	SA	M	SD	Remark
1	I select authentic internet material based on the objectives or syllabus of the English language course.	1	12	10	54	39	4.02	.960	Agreed
2	I chose authentic internet material that are within the English language level of my students	3	10	8	63	32	3.96	.964	Agreed

Corresponding author: Sambo, S. A. ✉ saniahmedsambo@gmail.com ✉ Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology, Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto. © 2021. Faculty of Tech. Education, ATBU Bauchi. All rights reserved



S/N	ITEMS	SD	D	MA	A	SA	M	SD	Remark
3	I select authentic internet material with vocabularies familiar to my students	1	14	13	43	19	3.56	.935	Agreed
4	I select authentic internet material with vocabulary slightly beyond the level of my students	18	32	26	29	11	2.85	1.232	Disagreed
5	I consider learners' interest in selecting any authentic internet material for English language instruction.	1	11	10	54	40	4.04	.945	Agreed
6	I consider the cultural fitness of authentic internet material before using them for language instruction.	2	9	20	53	32	3.90	.954	Agreed
7	I consider learners' need in selecting any authentic internet material for English class	2	6	16	52	40	4.05	.897	Agreed
8	I chose authentic internet material that can be adapted easily for the English language in Nigeria	1	5	22	46	42	4.06	.897	Agreed
9	I simply select authentic internet material that matches my interest.	68	39	7	1	1	1.52	.728	Disagreed
10	Overall						3.55	0.945	Agreed

Table 1 above shows findings associated with research question one which sought to examine the criteria used by the lecturers in selecting authentic internet material for English Language instruction. Therefore, with a mean value of 4.02, the respondents confirmed that they select authentic internet material based on the objectives or syllabus of their English language course. With the mean value of 3.96, they also reported that they chose authentic internet materials that are within the English language level of their students. Equally, with the mean value of 3.56, the respondents revealed that they select authentic internet material with vocabularies familiar to their students. However, having the mean value of 2.85 the respondents are not in agreement with the statement that they select authentic internet material with vocabularies familiar to

their students. While with the mean value of 4.04 the respondents affirmed that they select authentic internet material with vocabulary slightly beyond the level of their students.

In addition, a mean value of 3.90 shows that the respondents consider learners' interest in selecting any authentic internet material for English language instruction. Also with a mean value of 4.06, the respondents confirmed they chose authentic internet material that can be adapted easily for teaching the English language. However, with the mean value of 1.52, the respondents reject the statement that they simply select authentic internet materials that match their interests. The overall mean for the entire items under this construct stands at 3.55 representing the agreement level.



Table 2 Students preferred criteria for the selection of Authentic internet material

S/N	ITEM	SD	D	MA	A	SA	M	SD	Remark
1	The authentic internet material should be selected based on the objectives or syllabus of the English language course.	6	8	14	47	40	3.93	1.160	Agreed
2	I learn better when the authentic internet material used is within the level of my English language proficiency	3	7	15	52	39	4.01	.974	Agreed
3	Authentic Internet material should be full of familiar vocabularies	10	14	25	37	30	3.54	1.240	Agreed
4	I prefer the use of authentic internet material with vocabulary that is slightly beyond my level.	58	45	9	3	1	1.66	.083	Disagreed
5	I learn better when the authentic internet materials used to match my interest	9	6	15	50	35	3.83	1.154	Agreed
6	Authentic internet material used for my English class should be relevant to my cultural environment	10	21	23	40	21	3.36	1.223	Agreed
7	I learn the English language better when authentic internet material use reflects my need.	7	9	24	45	31	3.72	1.124	Agreed
8	I prefer to learn the English language with authentic internet material that can be adapted easily.	7	9	13	41	46	3.94	1.171	Agreed
9	I learn better with any internet material whether I have an interest in it or not	29	26	23	23	15	2.73	1.373	Disagreed
10	Overall						3.41	1.132	Agreed

Table 2 above presents findings, which sought to determine the perception of students on the preferred criteria which their lecturers should consider in selecting authentic internet materials for English language instruction. Therefore, with a mean value of 3.93, the students suggest that the authentic internet material should be selected based on the objectives or syllabus of the English language course. With the mean value of 4.01, the students also confirmed that they learn better when the authentic internet material used

is within the level of their English language proficiency. Equally, having the mean value of 3.54 they suggest that authentic internet material should be full of familiar vocabulary. However, with the mean value of 1.66, the students reject the use of authentic internet material with vocabulary that is slightly beyond their level. On the other hand, a mean value of 3.83 shows the students believe that they learn better when the authentic internet materials used to match their interests. Furthermore, with a mean value of 3.36, the students agreed that



authentic internet material used for their English language class should be relevant to their cultural environment. Accordingly, the mean value of 3.72 indicates the perception of the students that they learn the English language better when authentic internet material use reflect their need. With a mean value of 3.95, the students prefer to learn the English language with authentic internet material that can be adapted easily. However, with the mean value of 2.73, the students reject the statement that they learn better with any internet material whether they have an interest in it or not. The overall mean for the entire items under this

construct stands at 3.41 representing agreement level

Research of research question 3 (Hypothesis testing)

To compare the lecturers' criteria with the students' preferred criteria as measured by their perception of the selection of authentic internet material for English language instruction, a **Mann Whitney U test** inferential statistics was employed to test the following hypothesis at 95% level of confidence and 0.05 alpha level.

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the lecturers' criteria and the student's preferred criteria on the selection of authentic internet material for English Language instruction.

Table 2: Lecturers' selection criteria Vs students' preferred criteria

	Lecturers selection criteria's students preferred criteria
Mann-Whitney U	5393.500
Wilcoxon W	12184.500
	-2.610
Asymp. Sig (2 tailed)	.009

Table 2 shows the result of the comparison between lecturers' criteria and the student's preferred criteria for the selection of authentic internet material for English Language instruction. A Mann Whitney U test inferential statistics were employed to make this comparison. The results for this test indicate that there is a difference between the lecturers' criteria and the student's preferred criteria for the selection of authentic internet material for English Language instruction ($U=32398.500$ $P = .009 < 0.05$) Thus, the significant P value of **.009** is less than the alpha value 0.05. Against this background, therefore, we reject the null hypothesis which states that: There is no significant difference between the lecturers' criteria and the student's preferred criteria on the selection of authentic internet material for English Language instruction and then conclude that lecturers' criteria are different from students' preferred criteria in the selection of authentic internet material for English Language instruction.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this research, it is clear that eight criteria guide the lecturers in the selection of authentic internet material which include: special consideration on the objectives or syllabus of the English language course, English language level of the

students, vocabularies familiar to the students, their interest in the material, cultural fitness of the material, learners' need and most importantly the adaptability of the authentic material. The qualitative data obtained through interviews also supports the above findings as evidenced in certain expressions from the lecturers like: ***I consider one, the interest... my learners – I consider the objectives for my lecture or my lesson... I also consider the topic am handling.*** This, therefore, shows that the lecturers of English in Nigerian higher institutions recognize the importance of the learners as the main target for any teaching and learning activity. Thus, right at the point of selecting the materials to be used in teaching the content of the subject matter of English, the lecturers seem to have their students in mind as they adopt a learners-centred approach in which the interest of the learner and other needs are considered paramount for a successful learning experience. This finding agrees with McGrath (2002) who suggested certain selection criteria which include the relevance of the materials, learners' needs, and learners' interest in the topics discussed, cultural fitness. He goes further to include logistical considerations, cognitive demands, linguistic demands, quality and exploitability of the authentic material that should guide the



selection of material for English language instruction.

The findings on lecturers' criteria for selections is also supported by Nuttal (1996) who identified three main criteria that should be used to select and access materials for language teaching and learning. These include suitability of the content, exploitability and readability. According to this school of thought, of all the criteria, suitability is paramount, because it means that materials must arouse the learners' interest, meet their needs and motivate them to learn.

On research question 3, the hypothesis tested revealed that there is indeed a statistically significant difference between lecturers' criteria and their students preferred criteria for the selection of authentic internet material for English language instruction. In other words even though in most cases the students support the criteria used by their lecturers, statistical analysis revealed that such support is not significant enough to conclude that what the lecturers practise is exactly what the students prefer in terms of selecting materials for language instruction. This therefore implies that some aspects of the lecturer's criteria are at variance with the students' perception.

CONCLUSION

Based on the outcome of this study, the researcher can safely conclude that lecturers of English language have embraced the use of authentic internet material in the teaching and learning of English. They have equally believed in considering the need, interest, level, environment and other necessary elements associated with the learner as part of the criteria that guide their selection of instructional content via the internet. They can therefore be said to be embracing student-centred approach which is a practice that is currently encouraged based on the popular views and advocacy for the use of constructivist approach whereby the learners are accorded a great deal of freedom and pedagogical support to construct their own knowledge through active collaboration and interaction among themselves. Thus, the use of authentic internet material is a concrete step that can enhance exploration and utilization of the internet resources thereby reducing over dependence on textbooks by both lecturers and students. Most importantly, it is a sure alternative that will

promote the teaching and learning of English language in Nigerian higher institution based on the current fact that both teachers and students support this approach as a very essential pedagogical option that improves students reading culture, stimulates imaginations and sustains attention and interest in the learning of English Language

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study and the above conclusion, the researcher therefore makes the following recommendations:

1. Lecturers should implement learner-centered strategies that will allow learners engage in active use of the internet and searching for websites and certain internet links for materials that can promote both their learning of English and internet-based study skills.
2. The curriculum planners should accord a prioritised attention to the internet technology as a cheaper and richer source of material for English language teaching and learning and therefore make provision of some curriculum components that will maximise utilization of internet by both lecturers and students rather than limiting their scope and activities to few selected and graded textbooks
3. Managements of universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and indeed all institutions of higher learning in Nigeria should strive make a budgetary provision and to appropriate certain funds for a sustained internet facilities to allow both lecturers and students derive the maximum benefit of internet in accessing different varieties of authentic material
4. Federal ministry of education and other extra ministerial departments in charge of education should accord top priority to continuous staff training, development and capacity building workshops especially on new trends in English Language teaching with ICT.
5. Students should develop interest and devote time for personal self-determined learning effort through the internet and should continuously monitor their progress on this.



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