A Study of Authentic Material Developed for an English Training Program in a Workplace Context

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Abstract

Addressing authentic material development on learners' learning process for the workplace context is a beneficial resource for adult learners. This study examined the developing of authentic material for an English training program designed for a workplace context. The participants were a group of engineers from different departments, 20 participants joined in Phase I and 7 participants joined in Phase II. The workplace is an international manufacturer of scroll compressors for air conditioning and refrigeration systems in Rayong, Thailand. As this is a training and development research, the researcher took the role of a program, material designer as well as a trainer. The ADDIE model was used as a training program development framework in two phases to seek confirmation and reliability of the program. Developing different types of authentic training material to address the needs and the contextualization was extracted as the core study in this research article. The study used a meticulous process for selecting articles, work topics, YouTube clips or TED Talks that represented authentic audio-visual material applicable to the work content and target skills which were favorable material enhancing the learners' learning process cognitively and affectively.

Key Words: authentic material, contextualization, global communication, global English, work topics

Introduction

English is widely used in global business and as a major language of international business, sciences and professions (Kitao, 1996). Both forms of verbal and written English communication are used as a global language between different professions from different entities. Global language is a language that truly develops a special role that is recognized in every country. Global language plays that role when people of any countries needs it for a working language that can be used as a medium of communication, and English plays that role (Crystal, 1997). For instance, the engineering specifications are written in English shared textual data among Thai, Chinese, American, and European colleagues who work on the same engineering data. Hence,

such workplace context and engineering profession demands are inevitably stimulating engineers to be well qualified with English language and communication skills that promote using English as a global context for global communication.

Various methods are used for in-house training programs such as training manuals, online training courses and CDs/DVDs produced for long-term use, these are the least costly methods because they do not need an instructor or classroom setting (Werner & Desimone, 2009). Yet, those methods might not work well in delivering English training programs that address learners' needs because of their work responsibilities. Therefore, it is suggested, to use an instructional setting for small-groups to conduct a remedial course in the areas of deficit. English training; therefore, is deemed to be initiated differently by using authentic material that meets the contextual needs. The development of authentic material for the work context has significance to the learning process because such training is contextualized to learners and work context which can be acquired and practiced in the workplace and for work context; hence, this develops learners' functional proficiency and ultimately meets everyone's goals.

English skill deficits in engineers

Many organizations have been facing with the impediment of having current engineering staff with 'a workable English skill' or pushing hard to get the work done. As in one larger survey study, the World Bank conducted an enterprise survey with 1,043 manufacturing firms in Thailand in 2006 and found that 64 percent of professional workers in the surveyed firms were rated poor or very poor in their English language proficiency (World Bank, 2006 cited in Nguyen, 2014, p. 9-10). This conclusion had left the employers in a crucial position to support English language training because it is a tool to drive off challenges in the workplace. The target workplace and target engineer participants in this study, nowadays are no difference. The engineers have been striving to be better in the global engineering community. Thus, the training and development function of any company has the responsibility to facilitate and improve employee's language ability for the advantages of the organization and the employee themselves.

Most multinational companies use English language as the common corporate language for communication in daily work and activities (Neeley, 2012). In the work context, reading machine instruction manual or writing email or corporate instant messaging to communicate with colleagues in the US, China, The Philippines and even with other Thai counterparts, are required for engineering functions. Attending teleconference calls with corporate office is necessary, yet these engineers could partly understand what their colleagues are trying to say because of the accent and speed of dialogues. The engineers feel that they have often wasted several days to get answers from their US colleagues because they cannot write clear messages that their US colleagues can respond to overnight. Some engineer's job functions are to write up a budgetary request for machinery investment, yet they cannot write sufficient justification information to get approval from the corporate office due to poor writing skills. These are some observable English

skill deficits in the work context. These engineers may be 'workable but not productive' compare to company expectation (Charatwattananich, 2019, p. 5). Accordingly, this is an implication of the critical needs for engineers' English skill improvement in their jobs and in a global communication context. The need induces a developing and implementing of an English training program, specifically for the context. In this present study, the researcher puts a focus on the study on developing authentic material for a training program. The developing and implementing of the authentic materials were part of the design and development process in the researcher's doctoral research on the developing of an English training program for engineering staff. Thus, the guided research question and objective in this study aims to study and develop authentic materials for an English training program for a workplace context.

Review of Literature

Developing an English training program

The developing of a training program process framework used in this English training program considered the systematic and reflective process of translating the principles of learning and instruction into plans for instructional material, activities, information resources and evaluation (Smith & Ragan, 2005), especially with the purpose as to contextualize for a group of engineers in a workplace environment and context. The ADDIE model is best suited as flexible guidelines for developing the training program and performance support tools (InstructionalDesign.org, n.d.). ADDIE is an acronym for **A**nalysis, **D**esign, **D**evelopment, **I**mplement and **E**valuate (Kurt, 2017). ADDIE serves the most contextualized instructional design in the scope that it advances high reliability between learning environments and real work settings. High fidelity of learning and work environments is achieved by instructional design through guided learning in which the reflection of the reality the learners are expected to perform is critical (Branch, 2010). ADDIE is also responsive because it accepts whatever goals are established as its orientation. In a similar study Nichols & Greer (2016) studied the use of ADDIE for developing an E-learning course for the online Information Literacy Course to strengthen student engagement and develop cross-disciplinary conversations about students' information literacy learning. The ADDIE model and its processes are elaborated in detail as followed:

　　1. The Analysis is a step to identify the problem areas and needs by using the appropriate tools.

　　2. The Design is a step to interpret the problem area or need information data into a training design.

　　3. The Development is a process of creating the instructional plan and material development per the training design.

　　4. The Implement is a delivering of the instructional plan with material developed.

　　5. The Evaluation is an assessing process of the value of the learning experience; cognitively and affectively.

　　These steps are conducted in linear sequence and in a rigorous process which induced a careful consideration of proper material development.

Developing an instructional material

The instructional material is an essential element in language training (McGrath, 2013). The needs analysis data leads the program designer or material designer to interpret such data into learning objectives and instructional plan which are parallel with the material development. The principles for developing material require that the material should be aligned with the goals and objectives of the overarching program. Hence, the context in which the training and learning occurs will impact the decision about the design and development of material training as well. The work context was carefully overseen and carried out based on an understanding of the circumstances and the participants' barriers or deficits. The time spent on careful selection of the topic or task, adapting exercises, and integrating classroom tasks into real work tasks specified as instructional material used in a one-hour class were the wish the program designer would want the most of its contextualization (Howard & Major, 2004). Additionally, Howard & Major (2004) studied effective material development, they suggested ten guidelines for designing effective English teaching materials. Among the ten guidelines, two principles are to be applied as principles for developing material for the work context. Guideline 1: English language teaching materials should be contextualized, to the experiences, realities and first languages of the learners, to topics and themes that provide meaningful, purposeful uses for the target language….and Guideline 6: English language teaching materials should be authentic, in terms of the texts and in terms of the tasks (Howard & Major, 2004, pp 104-106). Further, Al Azri & Al-Rashdi (2014) contained that authentic texts bring the learners closer to the target language culture, and therefore this will result in making the overall learning process an even more enjoyable and thus, motivating. So, in this present study, these two guidelines were used as the principle of developing authentic material for contextualization that addressed the learners' need and motivation.

Enhancing the learning process with contextualization and authentic material

The workplace context is complex due to industrial and market demands, yet the developing of contextualized material to enhance learning could ease the learners' learning process as it is assessible and achievable. Further, making the material contextualized could be simply delineated as putting language in a meaningful and real context and making it more attractive (Bax, 2003). According to Nunan (1988), the contextualizing of language instruction is suggested to 1) have the corporation of background knowledge and context and 2) have the connection of language instruction to application to the life goals. It is also considered that making good material should be related and meaningful to help learners develop their skill with confidence (Tomlinson, 2011). The contextualization plays its role in guiding the material designer to critically interpret the learners' function in their work context either L1 or L2, either text or oral form into an applicable content or topic to be developed or selected as a piece of authentic material for classroom learning process. Widdowson (1996, p. 67) stated that teaching "*real English as it functions in contextually appropriate ways, needs to refer to... how people*

who have the language as an L1 actually put it, to communicative use.". It is also considered that workers are not merely developing English communication skills for their own sake, but as a way to communicate in the context of business. The opportunities to develop English skills should be relevant and contextual: beyond providing exercises for core skill improvement they should focus on real-life business situations, reference common communication vehicles such as email, and include tools to support employees' ongoing communication needs during the work day (GlobalEnglish, 2011, p. 5).

Types of authentic material

Nunan (1988) defined authentic material as spoken or written materials which are not intended for use in teaching. Herrington & Oliver (2000) suggested a new pedagogical term, called "authentic learning". This term is directly related to the learners' real life and prepares them to face and deal with real world situations. Herod (2012) maintained that authentic learning materials and activities are designed to imitate the real-world situations. In this present study, the researcher gave the definition of authentic material as the material or agency designed and developed to imitate the contextualization of the work topic or theme the learners have experienced difficulties with, and the material are for classroom practice. The definition given was incorporated with the statement reminded in Tomlinson (2001, p 68), as he asked if the contrived material or authentic material to be used for a classroom. Hence, in this context, the contrived material such as a traditional textbook which is of high-quality material, offer varied teaching contents, yet have often presented learners with a limited, and frequently not real, and have failed to meet many of the learners' communicative needs (Schiffrin, 1996). The adult learners might not see the advantage of learning from a textbook, because they are only motivated to learn when they see things can be used in their real work life. In the researcher's view, using the textbook needs continuous timing to complete the unit and that might not suit the time limitation of workplace context. This was the reason for a careful plan for developing authentic material for this English training program.

Gebhard (2006) suggested three types of authentic material use for serving the teaching and learning purpose: 1) Listening materials, such as radio news and songs, 2) Visual materials, such as street signs, magazines and newspapers pictures, post cards; and 3) Printed materials, such as sports reports, newspapers, restaurant menus, and train tickets. These authentic materials are available to be collected and applied in the classroom teaching, yet it may be an individual way of doing it. However, in the decade of advanced technologies these three types of authentic materials are integrated and it is now called multimedia. Multimedia is an integration of text, graphics, audio, video, etc. For example, a presentation involving audio and video clips would be considered a 'multimedia presentation' (Christensson, 2006). With the advancement of computer speeds, the multimedia is even more commonly stored and can be easily accessed from the internet. Hence, the material developer or training program designer needs a discreet selection of such multimedia or printed authentic texts that relate to the needs.

Sources of authentic material

The 'enriched input' (Ellis, 1999) provides learners with input which has been flooded with exemplars of the target structure in the context of meaning focused activities. Rogers and Medley (1988) suggested a natural form of cultural and situational context presented in the visual/audio material helps learners experience the language as it is used for real communication by native-speakers. With a similar concept, Thanajaro (2000) studied with recordings of lectures to a native-speaker class as authentic listening material for an adult learner class. She concluded that to better prepare learners and enable them to react accurately to the spoken language outside the classroom, it is necessary that teachers provide their students with broad opportunities to listen to samples of natural or real language in the classroom. It is claimed that the authentic material comes with certain level of difficulties that not all learners can accept, yet Guariento & Morley (2001) suggested that *materials do not have to be given an artificial 'genuine-look' in order to be accepted by the learner, yet what matters is that they should be well-executed.*

In the last decade the internet has become easily accessible, this is when the use of multimedia such as YouTube clips or movies began to be used by the native-speaker for enhancing content learning (Alwehaibi, 2015), improving vocabulary knowledge and global communication (Tanasavate & Chinwonno, 2013) or raising awareness of the varieties of English spoken in this globe (Jalaluddin, 2016). Another source of authentic material is the printed ones in which the relevancy is a critical view to choose. A careful selection of related content, vocabulary, and reading passages for a learning process results in a significant outcome. Some scholars study the use of contrived material; textbook or coursebook versus the use of authentic material, in which the authentic material is suggested as it narrowed the gap between the classroom and the real world (Shabani & Heidar, 2016). Xie (2016) emphasized that more authentic activities should be provided in business English textbooks to narrow the gap between the classroom and the workplace. Another authentic source turns to the trainer's ability to bridge these gaps of difficulties to the context that learners are still motivated to learn.

Methodology

The participants were engineers from different work functions, with 20 participants in Phase I and 7 participants in Phase II due to resignations and scheduling conflict. This training and development research embedded with two research methodologies: 1) training development using the ADDIE model framework and 2) interpretation procedures for authentic material development. A qualitative approach was applied in the ADDIE model. The ADDIE model commenced from **A**nalysis step, the instrument was the in-depth interview using protocol questions to explore participants' needs together with a document review, then qualitative data analysis and interpretation were applied for gathering the needs data. The researcher interpreted the needs data into the **D**esign of a program description and **D**evelopment of an instructional plan and material development. The process was carried on to the **I**mplementing or delivering of the

training and the **E**valuation step used both formative and summative assessment. The formative is an ongoing assessment with learners and learning throughout the entire program while the summative is the end results.

The interpretation procedures for material development were the researcher's interpretation idea as a combination of Howard and Major's (2004) guidelines: Guideline 1 - contextualization and Guideline 6 - authentic texts and tasks together with the instructional and material development suggested in the ADDIE model. This includes the selection or development of media (Branch, 2010) for creating deliverable print-based materials, power point slides, audio/video, interaction courseware or mission scenario (Holden, 2015). So, the researcher interpreted these guidelines into four procedures that constitute contextualization and authenticity. The procedures were 1) learner's needs, 2) meaningful topics/tasks, 3) various materials/activities, and 4) trainer's relevant experience. To address the guided research question in this study which aims to develop authentic materials for the English training program for the workplace context, the needs data interpretation and authentic material development were conducted in two phases. In Phase I; as the research phase, the formative and summative evaluation were analyzed by both qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain a set of needs data and to be interpreted into the modification and improvement of instructional content and authentic material development in Phase II which is a development phase.

Findings

In Phase I, the findings from the need analysis led the program design to a learner-centered design. The program covered a total of 18 hours, one-hour daily, on Monday to Friday after lunch. The needs data were interpreted and developed into authentic material based on guidelines and procedures as follows:

     1. Learner's needs included listening skill, speaking practice in work context, writing correct sentence structure, and vocabulary knowledge and retention.

     2. Meaningful topics/tasks are contextualized and authentic around work-related topics such as quality issues, cost saving project, popular sports in the workplace community and problem areas of work-documents that learners currently use.

     3. Variety of materials/activities are contextualized as work-related, accessible and achievable to the learner's experiences while motivating them to learn. Audio-visual or YouTube clips address writing structure and basic pronunciation knowledge, work-related article for reading practice. The authentic activities were adapted to use work-related topics for role playing, pair-work problem solving and group discussion.

     4. Trainer's relevant experiences with English language teaching and other work experience in the engineering and industrial fields influenced learner's learning process and motivation. The trainer puts proper questions around the work topic in combination with meaningful language communication practices to bridge the gap between classroom practice to the real-world of work situation. The interpretation and authentic material development are specified in the Table I as shown below.

Table: 1

Phase I-Instructional plan and authentic material

Hour	Content/ Training description	Authentic material
H-1	Action verbs for work vocabulary	List of action verbs specified in engineer job description
H-2	Action verbs for work vocabulary	Speaking practice using action verb
H-3	Vocabulary expansion	Prefix-Suffix sheets / Online Thesaurus
H-4	Sports Vocabularies	Soccer, Cycling, Running YouTube clips
H-5	Sports Vocabularies	Role play /Speaking practice on Sport Vocabularies
H-6	Vocabulary retention-recognition	Bingo game-Vocabularies learned from previous hours
H-7	Writing/Speaking-Synthesizing	Pair work on work topic of recent work /quality issues
H-8	Speaking/Critical thinking from text	Group discussion: Smart City and Social Networking article
H-9	Consonant-vowel-minimal pair	YouTube Phonemic instruction chart
H-10	Intonation-stressing	YouTube clip [Intonation/ falling and rising sound]
H-11	Pronunciation-Reading Practice	Work-related content: Scroll compressor and Hermetic
H-12	Simple sentence writing	Explicit instruction-YouTube [simple sentence structure]
H-13	Compound sentence writing	Explicit instruction-YouTube [compound sentence]
H-14	Present and Past Simple tenses	Listen to YouTube Clip/ practice
H-15	Discourse/ Presentation	Learner selected topic for presentation practice
H-16	Listening skill-Thai-English	TEDx-Jon Jandai 'Life is easy, why we make it

Hour	Content/ Training description	Authentic material
	accent	so hard?'
H-17	Listening+ Speaking	Storytelling-Learner selected topic from TEDx
H-18	Basic Tense use for work	Scroll compressor and Hermetic motor article (work topic)
H-19	Test/Quiz and Evaluation process	

Table I identifies the instructional content and the authentic material developed for each hour. The authentic listening, visual and printed materials were developed for Phase I. For instance, in H-1 and H-2, the action verbs identified in engineer job description and engineering related action verbs such as test, examine, develop, draft, approve, manage, control and so on, were listed out with other additional action verbs and used as key vocabulary content for learning and deployed into both writing and speaking skills, because these verbs are used in daily tasks. In H-4 and H-5, the authentic life activity of popular sports in the workplace community: soccer, cycling and running YouTube clips that learners are familiar with, were used to promote vocabulary learning from authentic events in their daily life. The pair work design for H-7, the use of authentic situations of 'latest work problem" for discussion and problem-solving, was the best topic that aimed for learner's learning process and application to the problem solving. To help learners understand more of their work culture and product knowledge, the use of product information background; scroll compressor and hermetic motor, for reading and pronunciation practice as an authentic text material in H-11, were selected to boost the learner's awareness of their work details and product knowledge. To enhance the awareness of global English speaking and various accents, as in H-16, a TEDx clip was used showing a Thai man giving a public speech with a Thai-English accent. With the comprehensible speed and familiar accent, this video was aimed at encouraging learners to use English with no fear of errors.

Upon completion of Phase I, the summative and formative evaluation data were analyzed and interpreted into Phase II instructional content and authentic material development. Key findings were found and interpreted as Phase II learner's needs were speaking skill in the work context, learners preferred more speaking practice rather than listening to the explicit instruction. Learner felt demotivated when they listen to a long YouTube clip but YouTube clips are good material for learning practice. Importantly, learner asked for only three hours per week of training due to work responsibilities. Hence, the training improvement and authentic material development for Phase II was developed. The instructional content and authentic material development are identified in Table II as show below.

Table: 2

Phase II-Instructional plan and authentic material

Hour/WK	Content/ Training description	Authentic material
H-1-2-3 /Wk1 and H-4/ Wk1	Simple and compound sentence, Simple present and past tense

Project Management | Pair work on Selected exercise sheets from internet and various sources and latest news

Group work on current Engineering projects |
| H-5-6-7/ Wk2 | Listening Sub-skill (GIST/Specific info/ Inferring+ detail) | YouTube: 1) Native speaker 2) Non-native speaker. Pair work on exercise drills. |
| H-8-9-10/ Wk3 | Pair work -English function and phrases knowledge-writing / speaking | YouTube cartoon on various English function phrases

Printed sheet of common function phrases |
| H-11-12-13/Wk4 H-14/ Wk5 | Presentation basic rules/preparation Presentation practicing

Discourse/Presentation practicing (cont'd) | Pair work- power point writing

Pair work- duo presenting |
| H-15/ Wk 5 H-16 H-17/Wk6 | Storytelling 'who is the busiest man'

Storytelling 'find solutions to the busiest topic'

Storytelling 'tell the solutions' the best solution will be rewarded | Individual tells a story to peers

Pairing who tells the same 'busiest story' used 4Ms criteria and pair work for solutions

Each pair tells a solution, the judge rewards the best idea |
| H-18/Wk 6 | Storytelling to group 'New Year's bucket list' | Individual tells the group on the New Year's bucket list; trainer stimulates group discussion |
| H-19 : Test/Quiz and Evaluation process | | |

Table II illustrates Phase II instructional content and authentic material developed and work topic selection for classroom activities. With positive association of the smaller class size of seven consistent participants, the plan and authentic material focused more on the work topics for group or pair work. The focus of authentic activities prompted the practice of speaking skills and learning process. For instance, in Wk1, the use of the latest piece of news and selective exercises for simple tense training were used as authentic text material and pair work collaboratively learned. The careful selection of YouTube clips presented by native and non-native speakers on the daily life topic 'a mobile phone', motivated listening sub-skill practice because it represents a different speed, intonation, variety of accent and the content. While playing the video clip, the trainer needed to use the simple technique of play-pause-explain-play during the fast speed YouTube clips. In Phase II, the reflection of the best learning outcomes was in Wk5 when the learners were prompted to do storytelling on their authentic 'work responsibilities'. This type of authentic impromptu speech or storytelling stimulates critical thinking and speaking practice that learners could bridge their real work into classroom practice and vice versa. However, the important authentic material used in Phase II was the work topic in which the trainer understands the context and bridge into the authentic material or activities that learners have such experiences and are able to articulate in classroom speaking practice. The final evaluation after Phase II showed that participants affectively recognized their ability to speak about their work context due to the chance to speak about the work. Importantly, they gained more confidence in using English in classroom compared from day one to the last class.

Conclusion

This study reveals different types of authentic material developed for an English training program for the work context. The work topics or work-related article can be an authentic activity, text facilitated pair work or group discussion and reading practice. YouTube clips related to daily life objects or activities are 'rich input' authentic listening material. Meanwhile, TED Talks prompts critical thinking and enhances communicative skill in work and life context. Lastly, the impromptu speech related to work situation promotes speaking practice and confidence with learners. Authentic material brings along both positive cognitive and affective learning process because the learners need opportunities to practice using language in class to apply with everyday situations outside class. The meticulous process in developing authentic material results are incorporated with previous studies on the review of the beneficial of authentic training material. The contextualization of instructional content influences authentic material development and meaningful work or life goals, while the incorporation of background knowledge and context are the heart of material development in this study. According to the study, well-balanced, explicit instruction associated with selective exercise drills and concrete YouTube clips for teaching specific content is also recommended. The proper combination could produce a conducive learning process and transfer of learning. This finding is also supported by the idea of Alghamdi, Alghamdi & Alsolami (2019), they concluded that the variety of topics targeted for the learners or the learners' selected topics could represent real-world situations and could enhance the transfer of language they learn in class to real work life.

Suggestions and Recommendations

This study recommends that organizations with a unique work context and diversity of English proficiency levels, consider developing an inhouse English training program using contextualization and authentic material from work context which may bring in a satisfactory training results as well as employee motivation. The program or material designer who understands the target participant's background and work context could better bridge the gap between the classroom to the real work life and be the most effective language trainer in the work context. From the study, promoting global English awareness in the work context is a fruitful thought. Being in a global communication where co-workers are from different parts of the world, using global English could help them communicating across cultures freely and confidently.

Acknowledgement

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DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0706.12