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Authenticity in English Language Teaching

An analysis of academic discourse

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Preface

I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Friederike Klippel, to whom I am most deeply indebted. To learn from her has meant to develop judgment in areas that extend far beyond ELT. I would also like to thank all members of *DocNet Language Education*, an international cooperation of critical friends founded by Friederike Klippel, Christiane Lütge, and Sarah Mercer.

Munich, 04/01/2018   Leo Will

Contents

1 Introduction

Much has been written about authenticity in EFL (English as a Foreign Language). The word has different meanings and many authors see a need to provide a definition before using the term in their writings. Definitions vary in length and rigor. Some of the more elaborate definitions span entire publications and are more appropriately referred to as conceptualizations. In this study, all such definitions and conceptualizations are subsumed under what I call *explicit negotiation of authenticity* (cf. chapter 4.4.3). These instances of explicit negotiation are so common in the literature that they can be considered to constitute a discursive formation (Foucault 1969: 91). Although authors have offered insightful synopses of the different meanings of authenticity, a systematic and extensive discourse analysis has not yet been conducted. With the study at hand I endeavor to fill this void. This work scrutinizes and categorizes the precise concepts that are referred to as authentic in the academic EFL discourse. I am interested in the discursive dynamics that determine which concepts of authenticity are widely accepted and which ones remain marginal. Discourse analytical tools help reveal patterns that tend to stay beneath the surface in common literature reviews.

1.1 Problem statement

The terms *authentic* and *authenticity* are frequently used in the EFL discourse. However, they denote numerous different concepts, which is problematic because, in academic discourses, terminological precision is important. Even for experts, it has become increasingly difficult to identify and keep apart all the different notions conjured up by the term *authentic/authenticity*: "The notion of 'authenticity' is commonly invoked in language learning, yet the field's understanding of its meaning is to a large extent purely intuitive" (Johnston 1999: 60).

   The vagueness of the term is not the only problem. A potentially distortive factor is the term's connotation: "When we try to define 'authenticity', however, we notice that it is one of those words like 'real' (as in 'He's really real') that sounds good but leaves us wondering exactly what it means" (Bachman 1991: 689). Badger/MacDonald conclude that "the discourse related to authenticity is problematic. [...] [T]he concept of authenticity is used to justify more than it should" (Badger/MacDonald 2010: 578-579). Indeed, the highly positive connotation that the term carries may exert an impact on the EFL discourse, potentially leading to an ideology according to Waters:

> [D]iscourse promotes or proscribes language teaching ideas on the basis of ideological belief rather than pedagogical value. The debate about 'authenticity' vs. 'artificiality' in language teaching is a representative example of this tendency. (Waters 2009: 138)

The risk of ideology influencing the EFL discourse is a prime motive for this study.

Whereas the connotation of authenticity appears to be consistently positive, the denotation of the term is extremely volatile. Even the seemingly straightforward concept of textual authenticity, as in authentic texts and materials, is defined differently by different authors. Richards et al. describe authenticity as "the degree to which language teaching materials have the qualities of natural speech or writing" (Richards/Platt/Weber 1985: 22). This allows for contrived text to be called *authentic* provided that "qualities of natural speech or writing" (ibid.) are identified. The following definition contradicts Richards et al. (1985): "Authentic texts (either written or spoken) are those which are designed for native speakers: they are real texts designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language in question" (Harmer 1983: 146). For Harmer, authentic texts must have a communicative origin as opposed to an origin that prioritizes language learning. The following statement by Grellet narrows the definition even further:

> Authenticity means that nothing of the original text is changed and also that its presentation and layout are retained. A newspaper article, for instance, should be presented as it first appeared in the paper; with the same typeface, the same space devoted to the headlines, the same accompanying picture. (Grellet 1981: 8)

These discrepancies of definition apply only to one concept of authenticity. The denotational diversity is far greater if other concepts are taken into account. After all, the term *authentic/authenticity* is not only used to describe certain kinds of written and spoken text. Authors apply the term to tasks, to individual behavior, to instances of interaction, and to topics discussed in the classroom, to name but a few aspects.

The conceptual diversification of authenticity has grown over the decades. In conjunction with the consistently positive connotation of *authentic/authenticity*, there exists a constant threat of ideology emanating from whatever concept is invoked by the term. The phenomenon has been referred to as the "cult of authenticity" (Day/Bamford 1998: 233).

1.2 Current state of research

Authenticity remains a hot topic in EFL. In 2016, Richard Pinner publishes a 200-page monograph titled "Reconceptualising authenticity for English as a global language". Reinterpretations of authenticity are thus ongoing, begging a diachronic analysis of the term and its concepts.

In the literature, some publications display an awareness of how authenticity has developed as a term in academic EFL. Authenticity is increasingly perceived as an EFL topic by the authors in the discourse, and a certain self-consciousness – or meta-discursiveness (cf. chapter 5.2.4) – is identifiable. I present a short selection of publication titles. The respective phrasings suggest that authenticity is treated as the main subject:

– *Some points about 'authenticity'* (Lee 1983)
– *Authenticity in the language classroom* (Breen 1985)
– *Authentizität als fremdsprachendidaktischer Begriff* (Beile 1986)

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- *Authenticity revisited: How real is real?* (Arnold 1991)
- *Inauthentic authenticity or authentic inauthenticity?* (Taylor 1994)
- *What is authenticity?* (Tatsuki 2006)
- *Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning* (Gilmore 2007)
- *Authenticity in CALL: three domains of 'realness'* (Buendgens-Kosten 2013)

Most of such publications feature insightful literature reviews of the discourse. I conceive of a literature review as an approximation to discourse analysis in that a number of contributions to a single topic are invoked. However, literature reviews are more selective than a discourse analysis and they rarely feature explanations as to why some sources are cited while others are not. What is more, they seldom give insight into diachronic developments and relations within the discourse. The brevity of a journal article hardly allows for a systematic and rigorous scrutiny of discourse. Arguably, Gilmore's article (2007) offers the most differentiated representation of conceptual authenticity, drawing on an impressive body of sources. His publication includes a categorization of concepts which serves as a starting point for my study. In the opening passages, Gilmore states:

> There is a considerable range of meanings associated with authenticity, and therefore it is little surprise if the term remains ambiguous in most teachers' minds. What is more, it is impossible to engage in a meaningful debate over the pros and cons of authenticity until we agree on what we are talking about. (Gilmore 2007: 98)

With these words, Gilmore introduces his categorization that is part of his investigation of authenticity, but he also announces a "debate over the pros and cons of authenticity" (ibid.). This reflects a typical structure of the publications in the discourse: A descriptive review of the literature is followed by more conceptual thoughts on what kind of authenticity is most conducive to language learning and teaching. The descriptive part of Gilmore's article (2007) may be considered a meta-study of authenticity but, as is customary in literature reviews, it does not describe the methodology pursued in selecting the sources nor does it discuss structural patterns found in the discourse.

More recent descriptions of the discourse are provided by Joy (2011), and Buendgens-Kosten (2014). The former observes that

> […] the attempts made to define authenticity, on the one hand, have deepened its complexity, and have widened its scope, on the other. The complexity has deepened due to the plethora of attempts made to define authenticity from various perspectives. Interestingly, this variety has led to different types of authenticity. (Joy 2011: 10)

Buendgens-Kosten (2014) equally emphasizes the complexity mentioned by Joy (2011). She actually refers to the categorization by Gilmore (2007):

> In its widest sense, 'authenticity' is related to notions of 'realness' or 'trueness to origin'. As a technical term in the field of ELT, authenticity has been used to characterize texts (both written and spoken), learning material, tasks, cultural artefacts, multimedia products, forms of assessment, and even types of teacher and audience. Unsurprisingly, a variety of definitions co-exist, and Gilmore (2007) outlines a total of eight different meanings […]. (Buendgens-Kosten 2014: 457)

Gilmore (2007), Joy (2011), and Buendgens-Kosten (2014) can be considered discourse analytical approximations. Especially Gilmore (2007), with his categorization, provides connectivity for the upcoming analysis of the academic EFL discourse on authenticity. Unlike Gilmore (2007), Joy (2011), and Buendgens-Kosten (2014), I investigate the discourse taking into account aspects of authorial stance, authorial style, author status, and bibliometrics. My interest lies not only in the question of what is considered authentic, but also how those concepts have come about and how they have prevailed over other concepts that may have been labeled authentic by single authors but may not have resonated in the discourse.

1.3   Outline

In the first part of this study, a systematic – as opposed to chronological – overview of the different meanings is given (chapter 2). This overview leads to a conceptual taxonomy (chapter 3) that differs from other categorizations – e.g. Breen (1985), Decke-Cornill (2004), and Gilmore (2007) – in that it classifies authenticity solely based on the different concepts attached to the term by different authors. Gilmore (2007), for example, bases his list at least partially on collocations, meaning that two authors speaking of *authentic tasks* fall in the same category even if their understandings are at odds. A particularly differentiated analysis is conducted for textual authenticity (chapter 2.2) which is the most commonly invoked concept of authenticity in the discourse. Because authors put forth divergent definitions of authentic texts and materials, a very close look is taken to identify areas of conceptual consensus and areas of disagreement. The analysis concludes in an extrapolation of the defining criteria and in a concrete application of these, thus yielding specific text genres that are considered authentic by a vast majority in the discourse (chapter 2.2.3).

Chapters 2 and 3 precede the methodological chapters because the latter apply primarily to the discourse analytical part of this study (chapter 5). Thus, the systematic overview provides important preliminary knowledge of the concepts, with the conceptual taxonomy serving as a means of structure to draw upon in the later proceedings.

Chapter 4 lays out in detail the research methods used. The assets of a discourse analysis over a basic literature review are described in relation to the research interest of this study. This interest lies in finding out what is (and what has been) considered authentic in EFL (English as a Foreign Language). Equally important are the underlying dynamics that appear to shape the discourse. I explain the notion of discourse as such, drawing on the groundwork performed by Michel Foucault (chapter 4.1). Then, I demarcate the discourse under scrutiny from other discourses, highlighting its specificities (chapter 4.4). One particularity of my approach is the integration of a bibliometric analysis to complement the discourse analytical method (chapter 4.5.3). The use of this method is made possible by previously compiling a document selection that essentially constitutes the academic EFL discourse on authenticity.

What follows in chapter 5 is the core element of this study, namely the chronological analysis of the discourse. Conceptual developments are presented decade by decade, taking into account various discourse analytical aspects. The conceptual taxonomy serves as a backdrop to the analysis.

Finally, chapter 6 traces different concepts of authenticity in the history of EFL. This approach is taken to counteract a potential fallacy, namely that concepts are new or innovative simply because they carry a new label that is *authenticity*.

2 Authenticity in EFL – a systematic overview

This opening chapter provides a systematic synopsis of the different concepts of authenticity that are prevalent in the field of English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL) today. Although this chapter is not centrally concerned with the historical geneses of these concepts, it is necessary to sketch certain developments at least roughly instead of merely presenting a catalogue of concepts. A more detailed and rigorous diachronic analysis is undertaken in chapter 5. The methodological tools leading to the following overview are explained in chapter 4.

In the 1970s the adjective *authentic* along with the noun *authenticity* became prolific in the field of foreign language teaching and learning (Decke-Cornill 2004: 17; Gilmore 2007: 97). Precisely what these words meant at the time and how frequently they were used is not yet of concern at this point. Henry G. Widdowson was the first to devote a publication to authenticity in 1976 – *The authenticity of language data*. The opening lines of Widdowson's article refer to a development in the preceding years which has brought authenticity to the fore:

> Over recent years we have witnessed an increasing concern on the part of the linguist with the communicative functioning of language. There is a feeling abroad that for a linguistic description to be adequate it must not reduce natural language to an algebraic system but should attempt to account for 'authentic' data, the language user's own experience of language in contexts of use. This movement towards an approximation to authenticity has its dangers: it can lead to a linguistics of anecdote, ad hoc observation, and a neglect of methodological principles upon which any systematic account must depend. (Widdowson 1976: 261)

Widdowson's critique of the "movement towards an approximation to authenticity" (ibid.) marks the beginning of an interesting discourse. Since the two words *authentic* and *authenticity* are members of the same word family and since a functional differentiation between the two is not yet necessary, I will refer to them often as *authentic/authenticity*, or simply as *the term*. This includes the noun *authentication* and the adverb *authentically*, which are considerably less frequent.

The emergence of the term in scholarly literature coincided with the emergence of what is today known as the communicative turn – a movement in language pedagogy that sees language primarily as a means of communication and consequently prioritizes materials that have been created to this very end, and not with the purpose of teaching the English language to speakers of other languages (Wilkins 1976: 79; Morrow 1977: 13; Harmer 1983: 146).[1] Until the late 1970s it was scarcely used to describe anything other than such materials. This denotation is still prolific today.

It is important to mention at this point that the idea of using authentic texts and materials for language teaching was by no means new. For example Offelen's *A double grammar for Germans […]* (1687), one of the earliest English textbooks, contains numerous

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1   This is merely a preliminary definition of authentic materials. Two of the three authors state that authentic materials should also be created by native speakers and/or be directed at native speakers. Such details are discussed in chapter 2.2.

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literary and scholarly texts by English writers. Much later than that – but still well ahead of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) – language learning theorists made statements about the assets of authentic texts:

> The great advantage of natural, idiomatic texts over artificial 'methods' or 'series' is that they do justice to every feature of the language ... The artificial systems, on the other hand, tend to cause incessant repetition of certain grammatical constructions, certain elements of the vocabulary, certain combinations of words to the almost total exclusion of others which are equally, or perhaps even more, essential. (Sweet 1899: 177)

Offelen and Sweet shall serve as very brief examples. What can be seen is that authentic text was used to facilitate English language learning long before the communicative turn. It was used not only for lack of other materials but for diverse motives, of which Sweet illustrates just one. A more elaborate description of the historical developments is given in chapter 6.

Note that Sweet does not speak of texts in terms of *authentic*. Before the communicative approach became gradually prevalent in the 1970s, language learning approaches such as the New Method and the Audiolingual Method had relied heavily on the use of contrived[2] materials (Gilmore 2007: 97; Schröder 1985: 51-52). The communicative turn, therefore, can be seen as the partial rediscovery of authentic text for language learning purposes, if under new prevailing circumstances. The new terminology of *authentic/authenticity* is a reflection of a zeitgeist which had promoted the term in other academic fields and helped it make its way into colloquial usage (Noetzel 1999: 19-40; Rosenbloom 2011: 1).

What becomes clear is that one needs to distinguish between *authentic/authenticity* as a term and authenticity as a concept. I look at the term and at the various concepts attached to it bearing in mind that there can be different words for the same concept and *vice versa*. This chapter is specifically confined to accounts of *authentic/authenticity* as a technical term within EFL and does not include instances of its use that are rather colloquial, even if they occur in academic writing. Apart from the finding that the concept of authentic text existed long before the corresponding term, as mentioned above, this chapter will also omit all accounts of authenticity as a potential concept when the term *authentic/authenticity* is not applied.

Authentic materials played a pivotal role in CLT as of the 1970s (Wilkins 1983: 24; Porter 1983: 38-39; Little/Devitt/Singleton 1988: foreword; Lewkowicz 2000: 43; Wesche/Skehan 2002: 208; Larsen-Freeman/Anderson 2011: 126).[3] Some authors felt that "[a]uthentic language should be used in instruction wherever possible" (Omaggio Hadley 1993: 80). Deploying authentic materials in the language classroom was seen as an essential means to foster communicative competence through the learner's exposure

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2   The term *contrived* as the opposite of *authentic materials* is only one among a couple of adjectives used by English-speaking authors to denote what in German is more uniformly called *didaktische Materialien*.

3   The connection between CLT and authentic materials is undeniable to some extent. Yet, the intricacies of this connection must be scrutinized more closely. Chapter 4.5.5.2 provides important insights in this regard.

to idiomatic and naturally occurring language. This naturalness of language was purportedly accompanied by a cultural value of the materials and a concomitant upside in terms of learner motivation:

> Precisely because [authentic texts] come complete with all the savour, stench and rough edges of life beyond the school walls, they are likely to be markedly more successful in provoking pupil reaction and interaction than the somewhat anaemic texts that one so often finds between the covers of textbooks. For similar reasons, authentic texts, even when used in a non-social mode – as private reading matter or as a basis for individual language practice – are likely to give rise to a greater depth of psychological processing, and thus more learning, than specially written or simplified texts. (Little/Devitt/Singleton 1988: 6-7)

Henry G. Widdowson's seminal article *The authenticity of language data* (1976) calls into question the seemingly inherent positive qualities of authentic texts. Widdowson does not really dispel the newly gained enthusiasm with authentic texts but introduces a completely new way of thinking when stating the following:

> I am not suce [sic] that it is meaningful to talk about authentic language as such at all. I think it is probably better to consider authenticity not as a quality residing in instances of language but as a quality which is bestowed upon them, created by the response of the receiver. Authenticity in this view is a function of the interaction between the reader/hearer and the discourse as incorporating the intentions of the writer/speaker. (Widdowson 1976: 263)

Widdowson is not very specific in his early writings about how to achieve authenticity in the language classroom but he asserts that authenticity should be about the reader's "appropriate response" (Widdowson 1976: 263) to a text. It would for example be inappropriate to have learners underline all the adjectives in a newspaper article, since the author of the article did not have any such activity in mind when creating the text. Widdowson goes so far as to disengage the term *authentic/authenticity* from materials calling the latter "genuine" (1978: 80) if certain textual features apply. It appears, however, that genuine text, for Widdowson, remains a pre-condition of authenticity. Genuineness (i.e. authentic text) is necessary but not sufficient for authenticity to occur. This, at least, was Widdowson's proposition in 1976. In later publications he modified this formula.

Widdowson's (1976) statement was ground-breaking in that it sparked a lengthy debate about what would conclusively qualify as authentic. The debate is part of the scholarly discourse. As such it is depicted and closely analyzed in the discourse analytical chapters. This debate yielded a diversification of concepts attached to the term *authentic/authenticity*. The distinction between *genuineness* and *authenticity* allowed scholars to apply the term *authentic/authenticity* to other entities, for it was no longer tied to texts and materials.

An overview of the different concepts of authenticity is best provided in the form of categorizations. The following chapter presents three categorizations coming from three different authors. Such pithy approaches are rare in the literature. The three typologies which follow are in fact the only ones my research has quarried. They are unique in that they are put forth either in the clear-cut form of a list (Breen 1985; Gilmore 2007) or in the form of chapter titles (Decke-Cornill 2004).

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2.1 A comparison of three categorizations: Breen (1985), Decke-Cornill (2004), Gilmore (2007)

Helene Decke-Cornill (2004) and Alex Gilmore (2007) are among the more contemporary authors to give synoptic accounts of the different concepts. Gilmore lists as many as eight categories of authenticity in EFL (Gilmore 2007: 98):

> At least eight possible inter-related meanings emerge from the literature. Authenticity relates to:
>
> (i) the language produced by native speakers for native speakers in a particular language community (Porter & Roberts 1981; Little, Devitt & Singleton 1989[4]);
>
> (ii) the language produced by a real speaker/writer for a real audience, conveying a real message (Morrow 1977; Porter & Roberts 1981; Swaffar 1985; Nunan 1988/9; Benson & Voller 1997);
>
> (iii) the qualities bestowed on a text by the receiver, in that it is not seen as something inherent in a text itself, but is imparted on it by the reader/listener (Widdowson 1978/9; Breen 1985);
>
> (iv) the interaction between students and teachers and is a 'personal process of engagement' (van Lier 1996: 128);
>
> (v) the types of task chosen (Breen 1985; Bachman 1991; van Lier 1996; Benson & Voller 1997; Lewkowicz 2000; Guariento & Morley 2001);
>
> (vi) the social situation of the classroom (Breen 1985; Arnold 1991; Lee 1995; Guariento & Morley 2001; Rost 2002);
>
> (vii) assessment (Bachman 1991; Bachman & Palmer 1996; Lewkowicz 2000);
>
> (viii) culture, and the ability to behave or think like a target language group in order to be recognized and validated by them (Kramsch 1998)

Gilmore's list serves as a good starting point for a categorization. It is a descriptive overview as opposed to being conceptual, or even normative, contribution to the discourse. The list does not provide a differentiation in terms of impact within the discourse. By listing as many as eight items its coverage of conceptual authenticity is almost exhaustive. However, the list may suggest equal status of its elements. The order of the components listed hints at a certain prioritization that is not explained by Gilmore. What might be insightful for the more knowledgeable reader are the references given in parentheses. Point (iii), for example, references Widdowson and Breen, who are among the most influential authors in the discourse.

Before taking a closer look at the single concepts a graphic lineup of Gilmore's list (2007) and Decke-Cornill's categorization (2004) is given. The latter categorization consists of only three concepts. The third column is a representation of Breen's "four types

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4   This title is a reprint of the book *Authentic texts in foreign language teaching* (Little/Devitt/Singleton 1988).

of authenticity" (Breen 1985: 61). Figure 1 shows which of the respective categories correspond to each other – at least roughly.[5]

In the remainder of this chapter, I explain what insights are to be derived from the graphic overview beginning with the most apparent points. To avoid pitfalls, it is important to provide information about the nature and the context of the three categorizations at hand, since they are published in different articles with potentially different aims and foci, and at different points in time. Explanations of the individual categories are subsequently put forward in the respective subchapters.

What meets the eye is that authentic assessment is neither covered by Decke-Cornill's categories nor by Breen's.[6] It is indeed a rather ancillary category which could be seen as a subcategory of *authentic task*. Another straightforward feature of this table is the fact that *authentic language/text* appears in all three categorizations. This is not surprising since it used to be, and is to date, the dominant meaning of the term.

Whether Gilmore's first or second category is more compatible with Decke-Cornill's and Breen's notions of authentic text remains to be examined. These two points, authentic text and authentic assessment, suggest that the order of Gilmore's categorization is not arbitrary. However, there is at least one feature which seems to contradict the assumption of prioritization: One would not expect Gilmore's last category to be echoed by Decke-Cornill or Breen after the one before, authentic assessment, was not. Gilmore appears to rank authentic assessment as slightly more important than cultural authenticity. In this case the superficial look at the table is deceiving. The category of cultural authenticity is neither championed by Decke-Cornill nor by Kramsch (1993), who Gilmore refers to. Unlike, say, category three, which is clearly defined by Widdowson (1976; 1978), cultural authenticity is mentioned by Kramsch (Kramsch 1993: 178) as a probationary concept she eventually dismisses. She specifically does not make a case for cultural authenticity as a relevant concept but concludes to "leave aside questions of 'authenticity'" (Kramsch 1993: 184) in her writing which centers around cultural aspects of language learning. Decke-Cornill is even more forthright about her category of cultural authenticity, eventually denying it the label *authenticity* and calling it the "simulation of authenticity" ("Authentizität simulierendes Handeln im Unterricht"). An example given by Decke-Cornill is the activity of baking scones in an EFL classroom to foster intercultural competence. Such practices are harshly critiqued for being folkloristic (Decke-Cornill 2004: 20).

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5   The table does not include Widdowson (or any other author of the discourse) because he does not provide a synopsis of existing concepts but pursues a specific understanding of authenticity. Widdowson's views are of course represented within the three categorizations in the table.

6   Whenever Breen, Decke-Cornill, and Gilmore are mentioned with reference to figure 1, the publications in question are Breen (1985), Decke-Cornill (2004), Gilmore (2007).

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Concept of authenticity[7]	Gilmore (2007)	Decke-Cornill (2004)	Breen (1985)
Text	Language produced by native speakers for native speakers in a particular language community Language produced by a real speaker/writer for a real audience, conveying a real message	Authentic texts and materials ("Authentische Texte und Materialien")	Authenticity of the texts which we may use as input data for our learners
Text reception	Qualities bestowed on a text by the receiver, in that it is not seen as something inherent in a text itself, but is imparted on it by the reader/listener		Authenticity of the learners' own interpretations of texts
Individual behavior	Personal process of engagement	Learners acting authentically as themselves ("Authentizität als selbst-identisches Schülerhandeln")	
Task	Types of task chosen		Authenticity of tasks conducive to language learning
Social situation	Social situation of the classroom		Authenticity of the actual social situation of the language classroom
Assessment	Assessment		
Culture	Culture, and the ability to behave or think like a target language group in order to be recognized and validated by them	Simulation of authenticity ("Authentizität simulierendes Handeln im Unterricht")	

Figure 1: Comparison of three categorizations

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7   In this column I give a short label to every category. Concepts grouped under one label are identical or at least very similar. This should already be evident by the wording, except for Decke-Cornill's *simulation of authenticity* being labeled *culture*. The category is explained on the following pages.

This closer look at cultural authenticity supports the assumption that Gilmore's sequential order is not arbitrary. The comparison of Gilmore's list with the more restricted categorizations of Decke-Cornill and Breen shows that authentic text is a central category and that authentic assessment is rather marginal. Cultural authenticity as a concept appears to be particularly controversial. The three authors do not only give synopses of conceptual and terminological authenticity but are eager to comment on them incorporating practical implications and expressions of approval or disapproval regarding single concepts of authenticity. Interestingly, such comments can amount to a dismissal of certain concepts with the consequence of not granting them the label *authentic*, as seen with Decke-Cornill ("simulation of authenticity"). Such a denial is rooted in a terminological idiosyncrasy of authenticity: The term possesses a strongly positive connotation, which furthers its use in benevolent contexts and hinders it in critical ones (Gilmore 2007: 98; Waters 2009: 139).

A number of differences exist between the three categorizations. These pertain to context as well as authorial style. Some commonalities are presented before elaborating on these differences. All three categorizations, respectively, are embedded in a short publication format. Breen's article is published in the journal *Applied Linguistics*, Gilmore's article in *Language Teaching*. Decke-Cornill's categorization is extrapolated from an article that is a contribution to a collected volume. The three articles have the term *authentic/authenticity* featuring prominently in their titles, which suggests a certain focus on the topic at hand:

– *Authenticity in the language classroom* (Breen 1985)
– *Die Kategorie der Authentizität im mediendidaktischen Diskurs (The category of authenticity in the CALL[8] discourse* – Decke-Cornill 2004)
– *Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning* (Gilmore 2007)

With respect to the categorizations, their main common feature naturally lies in the approach itself, namely to discuss authenticity in terms of different categories. What is more, corresponding elements are easily identified. Not only do all three typologies contain authentic text, but all three list this category first. Such a consensus does not exist for cultural authenticity which is listed last by Gilmore but not by Decke-Cornill so the latter's list had to be rearranged to suit the table above.

As for the differences between the categorizations, a disparity of author status exists between Breen, Decke-Cornill, and Gilmore, which impinges on their exposure in the scholarly discourse on authenticity.[9] Breen is by far the most influential author in the field out of the three. While this aspect has discourse analytical implications, what is of interest here is not the impact of the publication itself but the way in which the concepts are presented. The second difference is the year of publication. This aspect has strong implications. While Decke-Cornill (2004) and Gilmore (2007) are not too far apart, Breen's

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8   Computer-assisted language learning
9   The implications of author status are explained in chapter 4.2.2.

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article is published as early as in 1985. Obviously, the authors are only able to describe concepts labeled authentic by the time they put forth their writings.

Authentic assessment is not yet a common concept or term in 1985 but receives growing attention during the 1990s (Bachman 1990; Bachman/Palmer 1996; O'Malley/Pierce 1996; Lewkowicz 2000). It is a truism that the later a synopsis is given the more concepts may have accumulated over time. What is surprising, then, is that Decke-Cornill only names three concepts. This, however, is owed to another important discrepancy between the three publications: the authorial approach. This is where the table is potentially deceptive. It may create the impression that all three authors are equally concerned with giving an exhaustive and descriptive depiction of concepts tied to authenticity. Thus, it is important to remark that Gilmore takes a significantly more descriptive approach to providing a catalogue than Breen and Decke-Cornill do. Gilmore presents his list speaking of "eight possible inter-related meanings [which] emerge from the literature" (Gilmore 2007: 98). He is anxious to cover all the concepts "[a]uthenticity relates to" (ibid.) – note how vaguely he formulates the linkage to authenticity. He is also aware of the term's connotation:

> Authenticity doesn't necessarily mean 'good', just as contrivance doesn't necessarily mean 'bad' [...] [T]erms such as 'authentic', 'genuine', 'real' or 'natural' and their opposites 'fake', 'unreal' or 'contrived' are emotionally loaded and indicate approval or disapproval whilst remaining ill-defined. (Gilmore 2007: 98)

Gilmore's text features many references and the author himself remains largely non-committal to any of the schools of thought he portrays. His list of sources is impressive (approx. 250 works cited).

As mentioned, the reason for Decke-Cornill listing only three concepts as opposed to eight (Gilmore) lies in the difference of authorial approach. First of all, she does not present a list. She does claim to reflect in her categories the main concepts of authenticity in chronological order, but only a few references are used to trace the development:

> In the EFL discourse the term was first used for texts and materials [...]. The term then saw an expansion and a shift toward classroom activities. [...] Another expansion led to the term's application to persons and the actions of learners. These three levels are dealt with in the following elaborations. (Decke-Cornill 2004: 17-18)[10]

Instead, Decke-Cornill weighs the pros and cons of the different concepts from a pedagogical perspective. She is at times quite candid in her commitment to certain ideas and her dismissal of others. It is possible that additional concepts are purposely omitted due to focus or due to perceived irrelevance. I have shown how the author is critical of cultural

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10   Original: "In der fremdsprachendidaktischen Diskussion ist der Begriff zunächst auf Texte und Materialien angewendet und auf deren Herkunft aus zielkulturellen Kontexten bezogen worden. In diesem Zusammenhang spielt das Konstrukt des 'native speaker' eine besondere Rolle. Der Begriff der Authentizität hat dann eine Ausdehnung und Verschiebung erfahren, bei der das Unterrichtsgeschehen ins Zentrum der Aufmerksamkeit geriet. In einer dritten Erweiterung wird auch er in Bezug auf die Personen und das Handeln von Schülerinnen und Schülern verwendet. Mit diesen drei Ebenen beschäftigen sich die folgenden Ausführungen." (Decke-Cornill 2004: 17–18)

authenticity. She still devotes a chapter to the concept because she acknowledges its role in the discourse. Gilmore remains largely non-committal and avoids a personal stance.

One parenthetical aspect which sets Decke-Cornill apart is obviously the fact that she writes in German. This matters in terms of how influential the publication is but not so much with regard to the different concepts presented. Her article (2004) appears at a time when the English-speaking discourse and the German-speaking discourse have largely coalesced, as is depicted in chapter 5.3.2.3. This means that the meanings of the words *authenticity* and *Authentizität* are virtually identical.

Decke-Cornill's style can be seen as located somewhere between Gilmore's and Breen's on a continuum from descriptive to conceptual, the latter of which includes personal positioning and pedagogic reasoning (cf. chapter 4.3.1). Breen (1985), whose text appears almost two decades before Decke-Cornill's (2004), makes strong statements and uses very little referencing. In fact, his bibliography consists of only nine sources, two of which are by himself, two are by Widdowson, one is a poem.[11] Breen's list of concepts is introduced with the words:

> In the daily life of the classroom, the teacher is continually concerned with four types of authenticity. These may be summarized as follows (Breen 1985: 60-61):
>
> 1 Authenticity of the texts which we may use as input data for our learners.
> 2 Authenticity of the learners' own interpretations of such texts.
> 3 Authenticity of tasks conducive to language learning.
> 4 Authenticity of the actual social situation of the language classroom.

At the time, Breen does not have such a vast body of literature to draw on. The term has not become as pervasive as it is today. Concepts 3 and 4 of the list are actually his own inventions. Gilmore picks up on these and references Breen when listing them. In the light of historical context, Breen's list is actually quite long considering how early it appears. It works towards a diversification of concepts. While a more elaborate description of the stylistic continuum (descriptive vs. conceptual) is deferred to the methodological chapters of this study, what is roughly meant by *conceptual* can be explained using Breen's approach as an example. Unlike the descriptive and analytical approach taken by Gilmore, Breen's self-assigned role appears to be that of a commentator guided by pedagogical deliberations. He takes the liberties to make bold statements and create new concepts. Decke-Cornill, if more moderately, takes a similar approach. She, however, uses these liberties to omit certain concepts instead of expanding the catalogue. She is also not quite as outspoken as Breen, who states:

> Learning is the main psychological and social function of a classroom. […] [G]iven the actual social potential of a classroom, the contrivance of 'other worlds' within it may not only be inauthentic but also quite unnecessary. (Breen 1985: 67)
>
> [I]t may be quite unnecessary to adapt texts in any way or to devise 'pedagogic' texts at all! (Breen 1985: 69)

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11   Breen's bibliography is scrutinized more closely in chapter 5.2.2.

Breen's list, despite its innovations, is relevant because two of its concepts draw on preexisting literature and the other two continue to evolve in the discourse and are taken up by authors like Gilmore. If Breen's creation of new concepts was not echoed in the discourse, the relevance of his list could be called into question.

In conclusion, the three categorizations are worth comparing because they pursue the same general approach of creating a typology while featuring interesting discrepancies, e.g. time of publication and authorial style. Furthermore, they are not overly connected to one another. Gilmore, for example, cites Breen but does not appear to engage with his categorization. Gilmore does not cite Decke-Cornill, and Decke-Cornill does not cite Breen.

The following chapters elaborate on the different concepts of authenticity as represented in the far left column of figure 1. Knowing all the concepts and their implications is instrumental in understanding the discourse that is under scrutiny in the later course of this study. Once the concepts are roughly explained it is possible to trace them historically. Many of the concepts played a role in language teaching before they were referred to as *authentic*. The ensuing categories are synthetically derived from the three lists by Breen (1985), Decke-Cornill (2004), and Gilmore (2007). They correspond to the left column of figure 1.

2.2   Text

The most common concept of authenticity in EFL, undoubtedly, is textual authenticity as in authentic materials. I differentiate between text and materials. My distinction is in accord with Klippel/Doff (2006: 146) who refer to materials as physical written textual documents. Text encompasses all kinds of produced language – oral or written. Materials are not to be confused with media. The word *media* will be used to denote all channels transporting text such as overhead projection, websites, films, audio recordings etc. The distinction becomes difficult where these channels are physical of nature such as a book or a white board. The white board itself is a medium. Written on it is text. The combination of the whiteboard and the text written on it can be seen as material (physical written textual document) just like a book which, by definition, combines text and medium.

How prevalent the concept of textual authenticity is and has been can be gleaned from the following statement by Joachim Appel:

> Authenticity has for a long time been a buzzword in language teaching. It usually means using written or spoken texts not specifically designed for language teaching. Such material can be very stimulating. At the same time it should not be forgotten that there is another aspect of authenticity: the realness of the teacher. (Appel 1995: 52)

The aspect of teacher realness is not important at this point. What is notable about Appel's words is that the reader has to be reminded to think beyond texts and materials when thinking of authenticity. In the following chapters, authenticity is discussed relating to text. An important terminological distinction is drawn between authenticity and genuineness before various definitions are presented.

2.2.1 The issue of authenticity versus genuineness

The quote above (Appel 1995: 52) is indicative of how Widdowson's term *genuineness* (cf. chapter 2) has failed to catch on in the EFL discourse:

> Genuineness is a characteristic of the passage itself and is an absolute quality. Authenticity is a characteristic of the relationship between the passage and the reader and it has to do with appropriate response. One of the difficulties about extracts, then, is that although they are genuine, the fact that they are presented 'as' extracts imposed on the learner for language learning purposes necessarily reduces their authenticity. (Widdowson 1978: 80)

Rather few instances can be found where *genuine* is used to denote text of non-pedagogic origin. These instances typically occur with authors who have delved deeply into the subject of authenticity such as the following:

> We [...] need to specify in some detail [...] how the traditional view of authenticity as the use of **genuine materials** is compatible with a more expanded and process-oriented view of authentication. (van Lier 1996: 133)

> The teacher's task is not necessarily to provide '**genuineness**' but to be concerned, among many other things, with classroom authenticity, with authenticity of social setting, interaction, purpose and interpretation. (Amor 2002: 74) (emphases added by L.W.)

Stuart Amor, like van Lier, discusses authenticity in his publication. He strongly engages with Widdowson's ideas. Amor's use of the term *genuineness* is taken directly from Widdowson (1978). Other authors, however, avoid using the term in this sense and must be assumed to intentionally do so. Breen (1985), for example, quotes the same passage from Widdowson (genuine vs. authentic – Widdowson 1978: 80). Yet, he prefers to speak of *authentic texts* (at least 12 times in his 11-page paper) despite Widdowson's assertion that "[t]here is no such thing as authentic language data" (Widdowson 1976: 270). What is more, Breen uses *genuine* in collocations with *communication* at least five times, which is contrary to Widdowson's idea.

Similarly to Breen, Gilmore (2007) seems to be fully aware of Widdowson's case for a distinction. He actually quotes Widdowson (1978) (cf. category (iii) of his list – chapter 2.1). Yet, he also does not use the term *genuine/genuineness*. He employs the term *authentic/authenticity* as many as 147 times on 23 pages, for a large part denoting texts, materials, and language. Only four instances of *genuine* can be found, one of which relating to text – an inadvertence or a stylistic variation, it seems.

Almost all other publications that deal explicitly with the subject of authenticity in foreign language learning display very similar proportions of the two distinctive terms (e.g. Arnold 1991; Lee 1995; Long 1996; Day/Bamford 2009; Mishan 2010; Joy 2011; Buendgens-Kosten 2013; Buendgens-Kosten 2014). These texts are chosen randomly. How the term is used in these publications is discussed in the chronological discourse analysis (chapter 5).

Not surprisingly, the term *authentic/authenticity* prevails in writings where the very word appears in the title. However, these publications appear to be familiar with the dichotomy of *authenticity* and *genuineness*, some of them even mention it (e.g. Breen). What is more, *genuine/genuineness* appears not to figure in the title of any publication in

EFL. In my research, using it as a search word has not yielded any results. The term is equally absent in all EFL dictionaries (chapter 4.5.4) I have had access to.

One final note on this issue is that in the German body of literature, the adjective *authentisch* in combination with *Texte* or *Materialien* is omnipresent as opposed to German *genuin*. This is so, to a large extent, because German *genuin* is a rarely used word in general. In conclusion, Widdowson's (Widdowson 1978: 80) terminological proposition appears not to have materialized in the EFL discourse.

2.2.2 Definitions and underlying criteria of authentic text

In this chapter, the term *genuine/genuineness* is avoided, even though Widdowson would apply this term to all the concepts about to be presented. What is outlined is the muddled field of authenticity as a more or less inherent characteristic of text. Ironically, it covers all the concepts that Widdowson refuses to call *authentic* (e.g. Widdowson 1976: 270). On the preceding pages I have shown how some of the most prolific commentators on authenticity attach the term to text and materials instead of seeing it as a matter of appropriate response to a given passage, as Widdowson (1976; 1978) does. Textual authenticity is also the most wide-spread concept of authenticity in publications that do not explicitly focus on the subject of authenticity. The term is then used in a seemingly consolidated manner mostly in collocations with *texts* and/or *materials*. When used in such a way, the term is often not introduced with a definition. Authors speak of *authentic text*, *authentic materials* or *authentic language* without explaining the term.[12] At first glance, the concept of authentic text is neat and distinct unlike Widdowson's (1976; 1978) rather abstract notion of authenticity as the result of appropriate response. However, a closer look reveals strong conceptual variations. In this chapter authentic text is approached in a purely descriptive manner. No statements are made about the implications of single definitions for classroom practice.

Many writers have tried to pinpoint what is meant by *authentic text* so that more or less clear definitions can be found, many of which are presented in the course of this chapter. Curiously, these definitions tend to differ greatly – at times to the extent of being mutually exclusive. Looking at figure 1, Gilmore's (2007) list is the only one to distinguish two kinds of concepts for textual authenticity. His first category describes authentic text as language produced by a native-speaker to communicate within a native-speaker community. His second category describes authentic text as language produced to convey a real message. Gilmore's first category is thus included in category two because communicating within a native-speaker community usually implies the conveyance of a real message. The first definition is narrower because it stipulates the language production of a native-speaker.

Taylor (1994) compiles definitions of authentic teaching materials that are underpinned by the same variance that leads to Gilmore's (2007) distinction:

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12   In chapter 4.4.3, I explain the difference between implicit and explicit negotiation of the term. Here, I discuss definitions or partial definitions of authentic text.