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Authenticity in CALL: three domains of 'realness'

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Abstract

This paper discusses the role of authenticity and authenticity claims in computer assisted language learning (CALL). It considers authenticity as the result of a social negotiation process rather than an innate feature of a text, object, person, or activity. From this basis, it argues that authenticity claims play an important role in both second language acquisition (SLA) and CALL, being utilized to support the legitimacy of an approach or discipline more generally, as well as in defending a specific didactic design, especially with regard to transfer and motivation. The paper distinguishes between three domains of authenticity claims essential to CALL contexts: authenticity through language (linguistic authenticity), authenticity through origin (cultural authenticity), and authenticity through daily life experiences (functional authenticity). It points out problematic aspects of engaging in authenticity claims and argues that a reflexive stance might be useful in questioning the role of authenticity claims in CALL theory and practice.

Keywords: CALL, SLA, authenticity, reflexivity, transfer, motivation

1 Introduction

The popularity of the notion of authenticity in the context of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) borders on that of a 'buzzword'.

This paper discusses the strong appeal of this notion for CALL researchers and practitioners, as well as what makes it problematic. It attempts to clarify the meaning of authenticity and authenticity claims within CALL and SLA more generally, and outlines different domains of authenticity claims and how these relate to different aspects of computer-assisted language learning.

The paper will focus on the academic discussion of CALL, rather than on the communication of authenticity claims directly to learners. This is reflected in the data basis discussed in this paper, which are publications for a scientific audience and/or a practitioner audience, rather than for an audience of language learners. Resources in both English and German have been included. Since authenticity is socially negotiated, authenticity attributions will differ between groups. Using resources from two languages, as done here, might emphasize this effect, but it would

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have been just as likely to be present if resources from only one language, but from different research traditions, teaching methodology backgrounds, or geographical areas, had been used.

While the notions discussed here can be applied to a number of different CALL contexts, for ease of reading, most examples have been chosen from the context of CALL within classroom settings.

1.1 Use of authenticity *in contemporary research literature*

To demonstrate how far the notion has become omnipresent in CALL research, a corpus of research articles on CALL was assembled. A total of 69 English language papers (research articles, commentaries, book reviews, software reviews) published in 2010 in three peer-reviewed journals with a CALL focus (*ReCALL, CALL, Language Learning & Technology*) were included. For each paper the text proper, including quotes and footnotes/endnotes, was considered, but not author notes or references. Thirty-six papers, or 52% of articles, did make authenticity claims or discussed the lack of authenticity, as defined by using terms such as *authentic*, *inauthentic*, *authenticity*, or *authentically*. While the amount of text dedicated to this topic was often very small—usually no more than a passing remark—the notion was nonetheless regularly evoked.

1.2 Notion of authenticity

When we say that an object, text, person, or activity is authentic, we can mean two different things. On the one hand, it can be interpreted as a description of the object, text, person, or activity itself. In that sense, an object can be authentic as it can be red, or made of wood, or weigh a pound. On the other hand, we can view authenticity not as a feature of an object, text, person, or activity but as the end result of a social negotiation process. In that sense, an object is authentic in a similar way as it would be beautiful or valuable. Use of the term *authentic* in the literature varies, and the distinction is often not being made explicit. While quoting from texts that use this notion in any of the two senses, the paper itself is based on the assumption that authenticity is not an objective feature of an object, text, person, or activity, but that authenticity reflects the way people frame this object, text, person, or activity. In this sense, *authenticity* and *authenticity claim* are used interchangeably.

This use of the term *authentic* does not deny that objects, texts, people, and activities have objective features and that these features play an important role in whether or not they are judged to be authentic in a specific context and by a specific group. Rather, it assumes that the distinction between these (objective) features and the social construct of authenticity is a relevant one to be made. These features do not create authenticity—the social process creates authenticity.

This approach to the notion of authenticity stems from its use in ethnology. Historically, ethnology has been concerned with finding 'authentic' activities or objects, or with identifying the 'real' behind the 'staged.' Today, ethnology views the process of authentication not as a methodological problem, but rather as a cultural phenomenon suitable as the object of research itself (Welz, 2001; Bendix, 1997): "The crucial questions to be answered are not 'what is authenticity?' but 'who needs

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authenticity and why?' and 'how has authenticity been used?"' (Bendix, 1997:21). In that sense, we will focus on how authenticity is negotiated in CALL contexts, and why authenticity is considered relevant for language learning.

1.2 Function of authenticity claims

The frequency of authenticity claims in the literature suggests that these authenticity claims serve an important function in the CALL community. One of these functions certainly is as a defense of a specific didactic design. If a didactic design is authentic, the assumption goes, it is good. That authenticity supports language learning is often considered a given (but also cf. Schlickau, 2009; Widdowson, 1998).

Authenticity claims play a role beyond the discussion of individual didactic designs, though. A useful notion in this context is legitimacy. Bendix argues that authenticity claims served as an argument supporting the legitimacy of the discipline of folk studies. It could be argued that for CALL, as a relatively young subfield of language learning pedagogy, the perceived need to strengthen legitimacy may be a contributing factor in the frequent allusions to authenticity.

It is necessary in this context to look in more detail at some ways in which authenticity is considered to support learning, specifically its relationship to transfer and motivation. The focus of this discussion lies on the value attributed to authenticity and on *assumed* effects of authenticity within the CALL community, not on a discussion of the *actual* effect of the results of the social negotiation of authenticity.

Kramsch and Thorne (2002) consider authenticity to be one of the "tenets of communicative language teaching: Authenticity and authorship have been the two poles between which the teaching of reading and writing in a foreign language has oscillated in the last 20 years. Since the 1980s, communicative pedagogies have stressed the importance of teaching authentic texts used by native speakers in culturally authentic contexts of use, rather than pedagogically doctored texts." (*op.cit.*:78)[1].

In this context, authenticity is viewed as important because of its assumed support of transfer. Authenticity is equated with practical applicability, which in turn is equated with increased transfer (Haß. Kieweg, Kuty, Müller-Hartmann & Weisshaar, 2006:138).

The wish to maintain student motivation and thereby foster learning might provide another justification for using material and activities perceived as authentic. In the case of instrumental motivation, which is "characterized by a desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages through knowledge of a foreign language" (Gardner & Lambert, 1972:14), material that is authentic may be perceived—along the lines of the transfer argument—to best support specific goals and thereby be motivating. In the case of integrative motivation, which reflects "a willingness or a desire to be like representative members of the 'other' language community, and to become associated, at least vicariously, with that other community" (*op. cit.*: 14),

[1] Cf. Mishan (2005) for a further discussion of the role of authenticity in communicative language teaching, as well as a historical outline of authenticity in language learning more generally.

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material that promises contact with that culture (through cultural tokens, telecollaboration, etc.) may be perceived as authentic.[2]

Authenticity is a notion that plays an important role in many domains, not only in didactic settings. Concerning learning and language learning, discussions of authenticity are not limited to CALL alone. Much of what was stated above applies to CALL and non-CALL language learning alike, without clearly delineating how authenticity claims and their functions differ between these two. Authenticity in CALL is worth a distinct study, though, because of the peculiarities of mediated communication. Welz (2001), for example, argues that direct contact is perceived as more authentic than anything mediated by film or other media. So, why is this notion so prevalent in CALL contexts, where much contact with other language users is mediated via text, video, or audio? One might assume that the interest in authenticity in CALL contexts was of a remedial nature, that is, focusing on how to avoid the disadvantages of the mediation process. Surprisingly, this is not the case. Instead, CALL is often presented as providing many advantages in supporting authentic language learning. One may argue that one reason for this is the perceived authenticity deficits of the traditional language-learning classroom. In many secondary school language classrooms, for example, the combination of didacticized textbook work guided by a non-native teacher is the dominant form of learning—a form that is often judged as low in authenticity. This, then, would constitute the benchmark to which CALL is compared. In this context, a YouTube video of an event may be perceived as more authentic than the picture of this event in a textbook, and a non-didacticized text published on the Internet as more authentic than the textbook text. And the Internet provides simple access to a wide range of textbook alternatives: "One of the main reasons for the rapid uptake of Web-based language learning was the unprecedented availability of authentic materials. Web 2.0 has yet again extended this resource with 'live' sites." (Alm, 2006:33)

Another explanation might be an ongoing change in the perception of 'realness' in media. A video showing a specific event will be perceived as less authentic than the event itself, be it on VHS tape or on YouTube. On the other hand, 'internet-socialized' individuals may perceive many online activities as being 'authentically online', not as a mediated replacement of a non-mediated reality, but as 'the real thing' itself (cf. Näser, 2008).

1.3 Didacticization and classroom culture

It is impossible to discuss the role of authenticity in the language classroom without taking up the notion of didacticization or didactic manipulation. In the literature, lack of didacticization is often offered as evidence for authenticity claims. Yet, in a sense, the use of undidacticized material in the classroom is fiction. There is no undidacticized material in formal language learning, since even selection of material is already a step

[2] Compare also Phillipson's (1992) observation: "The native speaker fallacy dates from a time when language teaching was indistinguishable from culture teaching, and when all learners of English were assumed to be familiarizing themselves with the culture that English originates from and for contact with that culture." (*op. cit.*:195)

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towards didacticization (cf. Edelhoff, 1985:24). Rather, *undidacticized* is used to denote material that has originally been created for a non-classroom context, or for a non-language-learning context, so that didacticization takes place only at a later stage.

This argument may be taken even further. That the classroom situation influences the perception of all material used in it is uncontroversial. The degree to which this influences the perception of authenticity differs, though. Breen (1985), for example, takes a radical stance in this matter: "Regardless of whatever genuine communicative purposes the writer may have had, the learner may perceive the text in metacommunicative or metalinguistic terms. (…) Indeed, if we are aware of the learners' frames of reference, then considerations of a text's authenticity become a relatively misty matter." (*op. cit.*:62). An object, text or activity, by being in the classroom or associated with the classroom, will be 'tainted' with didacticization, whatever the intent of the teacher. At the same time, it may be possible to utilize the "potential authenticity of the classroom as a classroom" (*op. cit.*:68): "The authenticity of the classroom is that it is a rather special social event and environment wherein people share a primary communicative purpose: learning." (*op. cit.*:67ff.). Edelhoff argues along a similar line, suggesting that, since learners are able to identify themselves as learners in the classroom, the educational setting of the language classroom creates authentic situations, that is, authentic for participants in a classroom learning context, allowing learners to identify with themselves as learners (Edelhoff 1985:28). Widdowson develops this argument even further:

> I would (…) argue against using authentic language in the classroom, on the fairly reasonable grounds that it is actually impossible to do so. The language cannot be authentic because the classroom cannot provide the contextual conditions for it to be authenticated by the learners. The authenticity or reality of language use in its normal pragmatic functioning depends on its being localised within a particular discourse community. Listeners can only authenticate it as discourse if they are insiders. But learners are outsiders, by definition, not members of user communities. So the language that is authentic for native speaker users cannot possibly be authentic for learners. (Widdowson, 1998:711)

The statements above make an interesting point: Authenticity is not independent from the context in which a text, object, or activity is to be used, and the characteristics of the learner group can strongly influence perceptions of authenticity by students and teachers alike. Still, as will be outlined below, many authenticity claims in the literature are supported by looking outside the classroom as a limited social event, and often also outside the group of learners, for the origin of the authenticity. In practice, authenticity claims are often made without explicit reference to learners. Instead, the author argues, there are a number of other domains that are used to justify authenticity claims.

2 Three domains of authenticity

As suggested above, a number of domains can provide support for authenticity claims within CALL literature. Three especially relevant domains may be subsumed under the labels of *cultural authenticity*, *functional authenticity*, and *linguistic authenticity*. *Authenticity* entails a claim of realness: This is the real thing, not a fake.

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This is the original, not a copy. This is real life, not a textbook. Teaching material and activities can be culturally authentic, functionally authentic, or linguistically authentic, depending on the realm or domain this claim of realness originates from, that is based on the objective features that are considered to lie at the basis of the negotiation of authenticity. Of course, authenticity claims will in practice often be based on a combination of these domains, and they may not always be limited to only these three domains.

While this paper does not claim that authenticity/authenticity claims in CALL only derive from these three domains, a closer look at them is warranted, since they demonstrate some of the problems that an uncritical use of the notion of authenticity may cause. Again, the focus will not lie on the objective features themselves, but on how these serve the negotiation of authenticity.

2.1 Linguistic authenticity

Linguistic authenticity may be the most obvious type of CALL- or SLA-related authenticity claim domain. One may say that the more a language sample resembles 'normal' language use (this usually presupposes language use by a native speaker in an everyday situation), the more authentic it is considered to be. If one was to describe a continuum of linguistic authenticity, 'Dick and Jane' style textbooks written specifically for language learners ("The book is on the desk.") and bearing little resemblance to language use as, for example, attested through corpora of naturally occurring speech or (non-textbook) text collections, would be at one extreme of the continuum. At the other extreme would be language exactly as used in 'natural' situations: Material that is considered to be fully linguistically authentic has often been produced for a non-language learning context (brochures, spam emails, and Wikipedia entries are linguistically authentic in this sense), or resembles material that has not been produced for language learning contexts. The 'claim to realness' here is a reference to the target language: linguistically authentic material is assumed to represent language and language use.[3]

Claims of linguistic authenticity are often limited, since this kind of authenticity claim cannot always be maintained in the classroom, at least not in its more extreme forms (cf. e.g., Edelhoff 1985:24). Especially with beginning learners, when the amount of comprehensible material available 'naturally' is restricted, specifically adapted material can dramatically increase the choices teachers and learners have (textbooks, graded readers, websites aiming at language learners, language podcasts for beginners, etc.). At the same time, adapted material is considered to be less linguistically authentic than non-adapted material. The problem of using non-simplified, unadapted linguistically authentic material in the classroom is reflected by

[3] Please note the closeness between the notion of linguistic authenticity and that of linguistic correctness. While linguistic correctness is often conceptualized as the adherence to the prescribed, abstract norms of "The Language" (Niedzielski & Preston, 2003:22), in this context, linguistic correctness is seen more often as correspondence to actual language use, even if this language use violates standards of prescriptive grammar books or style guides. Material is perceived as linguistically authentic when it corresponds to expectations for actual language use.

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some definitions of authenticity, for example, the following one by Spanhel (2007:6): "der Situation des tatsächlichen Sprachgebrauchs in Alltagssituationen strukturähnlich" ["structurally similar to actual language use in everyday situations"]. Here, the claim is not that a text is identical to actual language use, but structurally similar. A 'good' textbook can be authentic in this sense.

Further distinctions within linguistic authenticity may be made. Schlickau (2009) differentiates between two types of authenticity that he considers suitable for language learning contexts: range related authenticity and comprehensive authenticity. Range related authenticity is exhibited by material that combines a complex linguistic pattern with an authentic but not idiosyncratic surface structure (*op. cit.*:41)—parallel to Spanhel's "structurally similar," but with an emphasis on material that is not merely similar, but 'typical' to a certain degree. "Comprehensive authenticity" consists of socially embedded linguistic actions (Schlickau, 2009:45); that is, the social and institutional context that is known by members of the target culture and that needs to be understood in order to understand the message is made explicit. Both types, range-related authenticity and comprehensive authenticity, are examples of linguistic authenticity, where some didacticization in the form of adaptation or selection has been applied in order to create material that is both intelligible and usable for learners. Interestingly for a CALL context, Schlickau considers the Internet both as a resource for material that lends itself to being selected or adapted and as a source of information on the context from which that material stems, which can serve as the basis for some of this adaptation (*op. cit.*:45).

In the discussion above, the context of language use was stressed. Some authenticity claims, though, are based on language out of context, for example, when working with corpora. Here, the language analyzed electronically serves as a basis for authenticity claims. Even though the material is used separated from its context, and the focus is moved from texts to individual sentences or even words, the data basis of such analyses is considered to be linguistically authentic. Even though the material is used in an atypical way, in the eyes of many CALL practitioners, the material itself retains its ties to actual language use.

To summarize, linguistic authenticity is a domain for authenticity claims that focuses on the 'realness' of the language used in teaching material or during lessons. Computers and the Internet allow for a wider range of material, both in context and out of context, to be used.

2.2 Cultural authenticity

This kind of authenticity domain could also be called 'authenticity through origin'. Teaching material or activities are considered culturally authentic when they 'belong' to the target culture. What 'belongs' or does not belong to a target culture is, of course, socially negotiated. Also, what counts as target culture might be debatable. Traditionally, EFL textbooks would make their claim for authenticity by including references to elements of British or American life, with other "inner circle" countries (Kachru 1985) playing only minor roles or none at all, not to mention countries associated with the outer circle or the expanding circle. In some instances, cultural tidbits (which the Internet has made more accessible than they have ever been before)

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might be examples of linguistic and cultural authenticity at the same time, for example, when students 'read' a London subway map, which both 'belongs' culturally to the target culture and is an undidacticized language artifact. But these two categories do not need to coincide. Including a Robin Hood narration specifically written for language learners can be seen as an example of cultural authenticity without linguistic authenticity. It makes the textbook 'more British.'

Multimedia elements are very effective in evoking cultural authenticity. Images, videos, and audio clips can do more than deliver language samples or serve as 'sparks' for in-class discussion: They can permit glimpses into different cultures. In this context, one may also consider the practice of using realia in teaching. Doing exercises on numbers using British or American coins, for example, is a way to incorporate objects from the target culture(s) into teaching, even if these objects are not in themselves rich in text.

Medgyes (1999) discusses how far non-native teachers should or should not take over cultural elements from the target culture (e.g., copy the way British teachers interact with their students, wear British fashion and accessories, etc.). Such behavior can also be interpreted as a claim for cultural authenticity, albeit 'incorporated' into the non-native speaker. It is not clear, though, how effective these claims are in giving cultural authenticity to the teacher, that is, whether students perceive these teachers as 'more real' because of the additional British or American cultural markers and if they associate them with better language or teaching skills.

The idea of cultural authenticity being connected to a person does not need to be limited to non-native speakers. Sometimes, material is considered authentic by its native speaker origin. The 'mystical native speaker'[4] serves as a cultural token. This is not necessarily an example of linguistic authenticity: The (mystical) native speaker does not become a native speaker by a specific level of linguistic competence (otherwise, the distinction between native and native-like would be void), but by belonging, in a cultural sense, to the target language community as a social group. In a sense, claims for authenticity can be made for any content produced by a native speaker. Native speakers as teachers (unless their ethnicity 'de-nativizes' them) carry with them a token of cultural authenticity: Even a grammar drill conducted by them is 'the real thing' in that specific regard.

This strong association between native-speakerhood and authenticity is not entirely uncontested, though. In Tatsumi's (2001) review, for example, it is the *diversity* of speakers in the reviewed language-learning product that is considered to be a token of authenticity: "Because one of the goals of the program is to familiarize learners with authentic speech heard outside of the classroom, each lesson is organized around video clips of on-the-street interviews conducted in countries where English is a dominant language. Consistent with this emphasis on authenticity, interviewees speak with a variety of native and non-native English accents and make no obvious effort to tailor their speech to non-native listeners." (*op. cit.*:38).

[4] Not every native speaker is a 'mystical native speaker': Being a speaker of a new English, speaking English with a regional or ethnic dialect considered 'nonstandard' or simply belonging to an ethnic minority can 'de-nativize' a speaker. Anecdotes on this topic abound (cf. Canagarajah, 1999, Kramsch, 1997).

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The recommendations to use highly didacticized material produced, for example, for use in elementary schooling (drills on basic vocabulary, numbers, letters, etc.) are another example of cultural authenticity. As artifacts of a culture, they document to language learners how, for example, school life looks for children in the target culture(s), while serving as language learning material at the same time. Here, the language learning activities on their own might not be considered to be highly authentic. Rather, their original context of use is what serves as the basis of authenticity claims here.

2.3 Functional authenticity

This domain of authenticity mirrors Brown, Collins and Duguid's (1989) definition of authentic activities:

> The activities of a domain are framed by its culture. Their meaning and purpose are socially constructed through negotiations among present and past members. Activities thus cohere in a way that is, in theory, if not always in practice, accessible to members who move within the social framework. These coherent, meaningful, and purposeful activities are authentic, according to the definition of the term we use here. Authentic activities then, are most simply defined as the ordinary practices of the culture. (*op. cit.*:34)

Functional authenticity claims come from the domain of "coherent, meaningful, and purposeful activities" and "ordinary practices of the culture" (*ibid.*). Even if 'authentic' texts—in the sense of linguistic authenticity—are used in the classroom, they may be used in a way that differs dramatically from the customary use of such texts. A weather forecast forecasts the weather; it is customarily used to decide what clothes to wear on a specific day, to plan weekend activities, or to provide topics for small talk—in "coherent, meaningful, and purposeful activities" (*ibid.*). In a classroom, on the other hand, it may be used to collect words related to the topic "weather" or to discuss the grammatical realization of predictions. So, a weather forecast might be perfectly linguistically authentic (e.g., a recording or a copy of a typical weather forecast), and it may bring with it tokens of cultural authenticity (such as weather forecasters matching stereotypes, the BBC emblem, etc.), but if it is treated merely as a linguistic resource, students' perception of authenticity may be reduced (cf. Haß, Kieweg, Kuty, Müller-Hartmann & Weisshaar, 2006:190)[5].

2.3.1 Functional authenticity as relevance to students' ordinary lives. When we talk about "ordinary practices of the culture" (Brown *et al.,* 1989:34), we need to state which culture we mean. Do we mean middle class, urban, white, English culture, or another target (sub)culture, or do we refer to the culture learners belong to? In the section above, the focus lay on the target language culture(s). Very frequently, though, the life of the learner is at the center of claims for functional authenticity.

[5] It would be interesting to see how students perceive corpus linguistic work, where linguistically authentic texts are isolated from their cultural and linguistic context and used in a way that does not correspond to customary use of texts, such as reading them for enjoyment or information, discussing them, etc.

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In these cases, 'authentic' might be translated as 'being relevant to the learners' lives': "Entscheidend ist stets, ob die Lernsituation – ausgelöst vom Text – authentisch ist, d.h. Möglichkeiten für die Lernenden bestehen, als sie selbst kommunikativ zu handeln." ["It's decisive whether the learning situation sparked by the text is authentic, that is, if there is the opportunity for learners to communicate as themselves."] (Edelhoff 1985:27).[6]

A certain claim for functional authenticity can be made when students are role-playing, that is, using a weather forecast for London to plan a fictitious picnic in Hyde Park. Here, they use a weather forecast in a way that weather forecasts are customarily used, but they do not "communicate as themselves." Instead, they may pretend to be a member of the target culture. A stronger claim for functional authenticity may be made when students plan a real picnic in their immediate environment—or a real picnic in Hyde Park for an upcoming class trip.

The notion of authenticity within the classroom as social event discussed above might also tie in here, in the sense that studying for exams, doing homework, etc., are aspects of the ordinary life of students. But functional authenticity may and usually does take a broader choice of aspects of ordinary life into consideration, focusing on students' activities and interests outside the classroom.

To summarize, there are three functionally authentic ways to use, for example, a weather forecast in the language-learning classroom. Using it for grammar analysis or vocabulary work might be perceived as functionally authentic if one were to focus entirely on the logic of the classroom situation and its practices as discussed in section 1.3. Using it in imitation of ordinary use ('playacting') would probably be perceived as more functionally authentic, though, while using it in actual ordinary practices ("doing something with it") may be assumed to score highest.

2.3.2 Functional authenticity in CALL: The example of telecollaboration. When we discuss meaningful language use, we can refer to activities that happen entirely in the classroom (e.g., students collaborating on producing something meaningful to them, the production of which requires the use of the target language), but can also refer to those based on communication and collaboration with individuals from outside the classroom. While communication and collaboration with individuals outside the classroom has long been possible through means such as personal visits and letter exchanges, the Internet, and with it the increasingly easy access to tools for synchronous (e.g., Skype, Connect, and other forms of online conferencing) and asynchronous (e.g., forums, email) communication and a wide range of collaboration tools (e.g., wikis, collaborative real-time editors) has broadened the range of potential collaborators and made communication and collaboration itself increasingly easy.

Many examples of meaningful work being done through language within the limits of the classroom can be found in the literature on autonomous language classrooms, such as Dam (1995),[7] as well as in the literature on content and language integrated

[6] This is reminiscent of Widdowson's arguments discussed above.

[7] Even though a lot of literature in this field does not focus on CALL specifically, many ideas may be adapted—and may profit from—the use of online tools, especially from the many options for micropublishing online, for example, through blogs or wikis.

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learning, while the literature on telecollaboration for language learning provides a number of good examples for the second type (cf. e.g., Guth & Helm, 2010; O'Dowd, 2007). Here, you use language to achieve a certain goal, for example, to exchange information with a target language speaker in order to advance a collaborative project. Sometimes, telecollaboration suffers from the lack of a real need to communicate, that is, if this exchange does not lead to the creation of something meaningful to students. Students consider it to be 'cool' to be talking with native speakers, but the activity may feel awkward or forced. Here, cultural authenticity may be achieved, but functional authenticity is not, since a successful claim for functional authenticity generally requires that learners perceive the activity to be meaningful beyond just being a means of language learning.

It is important to keep in mind here that functional authenticity must not be translated as 'communicating with native speakers'. Communicating with people using a language as lingua franca can be as functionally authentic as, or even more functionally authentic than, communicating with native speakers, especially if there is a true reason for the communication, a motivation that goes beyond 'talking exercises'. Native speaker status is relevant to cultural authenticity, not to functional authenticity.

2.3.3 Functional authenticity as arising from choice of texts. Up to now, the focus lay on activities that are perceived to be functionally authentic. Can texts be functionally authentic in a similar way? One may argue that bridging activities (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008), which focus on genres that play an important role in the daily life of learners, may be a way to bring functionally authentic documents into the classroom. They aim at advanced learners, incorporating and analyzing student-selected texts within the language classroom. Bridging activities follow a 3-phase cycle of activities: First, observation and collection, then guided exploration and analysis, followed by creation and participation. Note here that while these texts are highly relevant to students' daily lives, the way they are used in the classroom differs from their customary use. The texts carry functional authenticity in the sense that they are relevant to their students' lives, not through the activities in which they are used, with the exception of, potentially, creation and participation phases.

Of course, choosing texts and genres on the basis of their assumed relevance for students can be tricky. Assumptions about the "net generation" (Tapscott, 1998) or the "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001), for example, may be misleading. Not every teenager is happily blogging away (Kennedy, Judd, Churchward, Gray & Krause, 2008; Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest, 2010; Busemann & Gscheidle, 2010). Bridging activities can only serve as a bridge if they take up genres their students encounter, not those that they are expected to encounter.

3 Conclusion

As outlined above, a number of domains are invoked when making authenticity claims. These may be domains situated outside the classroom, or it may be the classroom and its specific social setting itself. This way, authenticity claims in CALL can differ dramatically, both in what is considered to be authentic, and in why it is considered authentic.

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All kinds of authenticity claims share one problem, though. Bendix (1997) states, "The notion of authenticity implies the existence of its opposite, the fake, and this dichotomous construct is at the heart of what makes authenticity problematic. (…) (i)[I]dentifying some cultural expressions or artifacts as authentic, genuine, trustworthy, or legitimate simultaneously implies that other manifestations are fake, spurious, and even illegitimate." (*op. cit.*: 9) The very act of claiming authenticity for one kind of text, activity, or person is meaningful only when other texts, activities, or people are considered as inauthentic. What does this mean in practice? If the native speaker is perceived as more authentic, we may lean towards ignoring global English; if the highest degree of nativeness is allotted to members of a subpart of the inner circle countries, and within these, only to members of a specific ethnicity and/or social class, we may disregard the full spectrum of language and language use, as well as limit our focus on some aspects of culture. Our quest to identify authentic situations for language use may lead us astray as well, focusing on what we as teachers assume is of functional importance to our learners, ignoring other contexts for language use and text production. By using authenticity claims to support our didactic designs, we might embrace tacit assumptions tied in with these, to which, in isolation, we might not subscribe. Ideally, these assumptions, which may otherwise 'sneak in' with authenticity claims, should be made explicit and subjected to scrutiny. They should then be accepted or rejected on their own merit, instead of 'piggy-backing' on authenticity claims.

This does not imply that we as a discipline should—or actually could—abolish authenticity. Authenticity is not only part of the disciplinary discourse; it is likewise part of the folk understanding of language and language learning. Students perceive some activities, texts, and people as being more authentic than others, and their notions must not necessarily resemble those held by their teachers. Still, for our learners, perceptions of authenticity may influence motivation and thereby facilitate learning so that understanding them and taking them into account when feasible may be useful. Even when perceptions of authenticity or inauthenticity are not beneficial, they may be a given, something that can only be modified slowly and incrementally, if at all.

What this paper suggests instead is a more careful use of the notion of authenticity. Researchers and practitioners in CALL as well as SLA more generally should realize that they are actively engaged in negotiating authenticity claims. Taking a reflexive stance that acknowledges the role of the researcher within the research process, as well as the role of researcher and practitioner in negotiating authenticity, may be promising since,

> Once we have overcome the dichotomy, "authenticity vs inauthenticity" can become an object of study itself. We can study the negotiation of authenticity once we have ceased to be a negotiating party, or once we admit of our participation in the negotiating process. This stance allows us to examine the meanings and the history of "authenticity" from a distance both within and beyond disciplinary discourse. (Bendix, 1997:23)

That way, reflexivity may become "a first step toward newly conceptualizing inquiry unhampered by concepts that are burdened by the very mode in which they are conceived." (*op. cit.*: 22).

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