

## The Use of Google Maps As an Authentic Material in Japanese Classroom to Foster Learner Autonomy

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### Abstract

*Foreign language classrooms usually use textbooks as a main resource to learn. Textbooks are written in units or chapters, arranged gradually from the easiest unit to the more complicated ones. Other than textbook, teacher also gives students authentic materials. Tomlinson (2013) defines an authentic text as 'one which is produced in order to communicate rather than to teach' and an authentic task as 'one which involves the learners in communicating to achieve an outcome, rather than to practice the language'. According to him all texts and tasks should be authentic in these ways or else learners will not be prepared for the realities of language use. According to Scrivener (2011) when a teacher has empathy and authenticity, a language classroom becomes stronger, deeper, and educational climate becomes more positive, forward-looking and supportive enabling gradual learner autonomy. In this paper, writer discuss the use of Google Maps as an authentic material in Japanese Classroom to foster learner autonomy. Objects of this paper are nine students in level four Basic Japanese in Lembaga Bahasa Asing, University of Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** Google Maps, Authentic Material, Learner Autonomy

### Introduction

Foreign language classrooms usually use textbooks as a main resource to learn. Textbooks are written in units or chapters, arranged gradually from the easiest unit to the more complicated ones. A good textbook has structural scaffolding that ensures certain desirable outcomes. Thus provide predictable learning outcomes in the average teaching-learning situation. A learner can predict what form of exercise comes next. In a way, it can be good as students can become more independent in finishing the tasks from the book.

What if a student was faced with real tasks, in a real situation? Cook (2011) mentioned that they must strike a non-native speaker or a student with horror. None of them remotely resembles the language found in the classroom. Then why should you use them and 'how can they fit into your classroom? Let us first look at some of the reasons for using them. Perhaps the most important is the students' motivation and interest. One of the powerful reasons for learning a new language is to get closer to its speakers, to understand them better and take part in their lives, in other words the integrative motivation. Authentic materials utilise this motivation very strongly by their ordinariness and flavour of everyday life; they seem exotic and exciting, the very stuff of strange foreign life. For students who have this motivation, authentic materials are a highly effective way of bringing the target culture closer; this is as near to participation as they will get without actually living in the country. The content of the materials may not matter very much; it may not even worry them whether they understand it or not, provided it keeps their interest in the foreign culture alive.

Cook (1981) mentioned that using authentic materials simply means using examples of language produced by native speakers for some real purpose of their own rather than using language produced and designed solely for the classroom. Anybody who takes into the classroom a newspaper article, an advertisement, a pop song, a strip cartoon, or even a bus ticket, is using authentic materials. Teachers have always introduced such realia into their classrooms, and always will.

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achieve an outcome, rather than to practice the language'. According to him all texts and tasks should be authentic in these ways or else learners will not be prepared for the realities of language use.

According to Scrivener (2011) when a teacher has the three core characteristics such as respect, empathy and authenticity, a language classroom becomes stronger, deeper, and educational climate becomes more positive, forward-looking and supportive enabling gradual learner autonomy. Language exposure may come through texts that are specially prepared and simplified for students or are unadapted, authentic texts from non-specialists sources.

In accordance with Scrivener thoughts, writer highlights the authenticity with learner autonomy. The term autonomy has sparked considerable controversy. In the language teaching, teachers scaffold students towards independence using variety strategies in order to help students develop autonomy. Being autonomous is to take some charges on the part of students. The capacity of taking charges of one's own learning is not innate but it must be taught. So students would need much for guidance.

Writer use Google Maps as an authentic material for students to refer to make two conversations in a Japanese classroom. Students were free to choose one area in Japan and one in Indonesia as the object of their conversation. The language functions were asking and giving directions. The authentic material is supplementary to textbook Minna No Nihongo chapter 21.

## Literature Review

### **A. Authentic Materials**

Materials play a fundamental role in the language classroom since they are the means used by the teacher to facilitate learning that occurs both inside and outside the classroom. Authentic materials, that is, materials which have not been designed for teaching purposes, are potential learning tools due to the authenticity of the language and their intimate relation with the communicative language teaching approach (Hall, 1995; Tomlinson, 1998).

According to Scrivener (2011) when a teacher has the three core characteristics such as respect, empathy and authenticity, a language classroom becomes stronger, deeper, and educational climate becomes more positive, forward-looking and supportive enabling gradual learner autonomy. Language exposure may come through texts that are specially prepared and simplified for students or are unadapted, authentic texts from non-specialists sources. Authentic exposure to language occurs when it is used in a natural way while learners are:

- Reading magazines, books, articles, product labels, etc.
- Listening to small talk and listening to recordings, radio, etc.
- Watching English films or television channels.
- Living in a place where the language is used.
- Hearing the incidental language used in class.
- Reading pieces of language on notices, posters, etc. around the classroom.

### **Authentic Materials in Japanese Teaching**

「レリア・生教材」を授業に取り入れることで、それらに含まれている文化やその国の事情などをあわせて学習することができます。また、ロールプレイなどで用いる場合は、より臨場感りんじょうかんを持たせることができ、いきいきとした授業にすることができるようでしょう。さらに、「レリア・生教材」を使った授業により、その国の文化、人、物、ことばへの興味をより一層いっそう引き出すこともでき、学習の動機どうき付けにもつながります。(Japan Foundation)

“Authentic materials” is the real society where the words are used. By incorporating realia and authentic materials into the class, you can learn about the culture contained in them and the circumstances of the country. Also, if you use it in role play etc., you will be able to give a more realistic

feeling, and you will be able to make it a lively class. Furthermore, classes using authentic materials can bring out more interest in the culture, people, things, and languages of the country, and also lead to motivation for learning.” (Japan foundation)

In recent years, in the field of Japanese language education, emphasis has been placed on acquiring the necessary comprehension and expressiveness to communicate, rather than the accuracy of grammar and sentence pattern. For that purpose, teachers' desire to incorporate things used in the real world into classes is increasing.

### **B. Learner Autonomy**

The term “learner autonomy” was first coined by Henri Holec. His definition, “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec, 1981) [3], provided the theoretical framework for the future research in this field. Later on, many definitions have been given to the term, depending on the writer, the context, and the level of debate to which educators have risen. Among these various definitions it has been considered as a personal human trait, or as a political or an educational activity.

Attempts to theorise the process of 'autonomisation' (e.g., [Little 1999](#), [2000a](#), [2000b](#)) have been strongly influenced by neo-Vygotskian psychology, which sees learning as a matter of supported performance and emphasises the interdependence of the cognitive and social-interactive dimensions of the learning process. According to this model, the teacher's role is to create and maintain a learning environment in which learners can be autonomous in order to become more autonomous. The development of their learning skills is never entirely separable from the content of their learning, since learning how to learn a second or foreign language is in some important respects different from learning how to learn maths or history or biology.

There is nevertheless a broad agreement that autonomous learners understand the purpose of their learning programme, explicitly accept responsibility for their learning, share in the setting of learning goals, take initiatives in planning and executing learning activities, and regularly review their learning and evaluate its effectiveness (cf. [Holec 1981](#), [Little 1991](#)). In other words, there is a consensus that the practice of learner autonomy requires insight, a positive attitude, a capacity for reflection, and a readiness to be proactive in self-management and in interaction with others. This working definition captures the challenge of learner autonomy: a holistic view of the learner that requires us to engage with the cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social dimensions of language learning and to worry about how they interact with one another.

As Omaggio (1978) states there seem to be seven main attributes characterizing autonomous learners:

1. Autonomous learners have insights into their learning styles and strategies;
2. take an active approach to the learning task at hand;
3. are willing to take risks, i.e., to communicate in the target language at all costs;
4. are good guessers;
5. attend to form as well as to content, that is, place importance on accuracy as well as appropriacy;
6. develop the target language into a separate reference system and are willing to revise and reject hypotheses and rules that do not apply; and
7. have a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language. (cited in Thansoulas, 2000)

### **Previous Study**

The study of learner autonomy in Japanese Classroom has been done by Magdalena Ciubăncan in Bucharest Rumania in 2018. In the study, the writer found that the reality of the Romanian education system is, rather different, as many university students are highly dependent on the input coming from the teacher. This is even more obvious in the case of Asian languages, since there the students often face learning content and strategies that they did not encounter when learning European languages. The relation of dependence on the teacher is generally stronger than in the case of other languages. The teachers themselves have been mainly exposed to rather traditional ways of teaching and learning, being influenced by the Asian strict hierarchical system, and thus less open to accepting the challenges of a student-centered approach.

In the paper the writer the issue of the development of learner autonomy reflected in a series of Japanese classes held at “Dimitrie Cantemir” Christian University in Bucharest. After examining several theories regarding the concept, we present some concrete examples of activities carried out during Japanese practical courses. Their findings reveal the influence of learner autonomy on the learning process and the importance of the teacher role during the process.

### **Procedure**

The study uses classroom observation and interview in a Basic Japanese Classroom Level 4 in *Lembaga Bahasa Internasional*, University of Indonesia. This class consists of nine adults in their twenties-thirties. These students came from different backgrounds. They enrolled themselves driven by their interest of Japanese culture and language. Syllabus in this level uses *Minna No Nihongo* chapter 23-29.

*Minna No Nihongo* written in units or chapters, arranged gradually from the easiest unit to the more complicated ones. It is a good textbook because it has structural scaffolding that ensures certain desirable outcomes. Thus provide predictable learning outcomes in the regular class situation. The students can predict what form of exercise comes next. On the other hand, this book provides less authentic materials, so teacher tried to use an authentic material as a supplement for this book activity.

One of the structure students learn in chapter 23 is the use of particle と to give directions. After learning the concept and doing exercises from the book, teacher gave the students a task to make two conversations in pairs. The first conversation was about a destination in Japan. Students can choose a place they want to visit if they were given a chance to go to Japan. Students opened Google Maps application on their smart phone and typed the name of the place they want to go to. On the application they can spot the nearest train station from the destination. Based on the map, they have to make a conversation about asking and giving directions from the nearest train/ bus station to the destination. After that, students take turn presenting their conversations in front of their friends.

The next conversation was about a place in Indonesia. Teacher asked students to imagine, if they had a Japanese friend visiting Indonesia, where would they take him/her to? Similar to activity 1, students had to make a conversation based on the map about asking and giving directions from the nearest train/ bus station to the destination and present their conversations.

After the presentation, students were asked reflect on their task. What went well and what could be done better. They were also asked gave feedback to their peer, which part of the conversation they liked and what could be fixed. Students were also asked to compare the situations in Japan and Indonesia based on their knowledge. What are the differences and similarities in the transportation system, the road, and how people deal with the situations?

During the activity, teacher monitored and gave guidance to students on how the situation like in stations in Japan. Usually big stations have more than one exit gate and they need to find the nearest gate to the destination. Teacher also gave perspectives about some places student want to visit. Some of them are too big and students need to narrow them, one of them has relocated to different place so students needed to change the destination.

At the end of the activity students were asked to give feedback to each other. What went well and what could have gone better. Students also discussed strategies in real situations students might deal with. They might be given a chance to explore a place in Japan, or they might encounter a Japanese tourist trying to find a way in Indonesia. In that situation, students might rely on their knowledge or the internet to give information, but they need to check whether the information is valid or not. Teacher also elicit strategies from students if they forgot on how to produce a correct sentence.

### **Findings**

They are some interesting findings before, during, and after the activity. Some of them related on the internet connection, some about student's knowledge of places in Japan and how they share the knowledge.

Before the activity, writer found out that majority of the students could not connect their smartphones to Wi-Fi in University of Indonesia. They could sign in as a guest but the connection was very slow. Eventually, the activity relied on student's internet provider, but not all providers have a strong connection. Due to situation, writer had to pair up students with weak internet connection with the ones who have strong internet connection. Luckily, the number of the students was not big so it was easy to handle the situation.

At the beginning, students seemed to be reluctant to open their cellphones, because they normally did not use the device during Japanese lesson. Writer found that the students were not exposed with internet based language learning during Japanese lesson.

After a while, during the searching activity, writer found out that there were many places in Japan that students have known, especially places that popular with tourists. Some of the students only know the names and some of them knows the details and updates about the place. For example, one student wanted to go to Tsukji Fish Market but another student commented that the market consists of outer market and inner market. The outer market stays in business and the inner market which was famous for its tuna auctions has been relocated to Toyosu Market.

Another place student want to visit was Harajuku in Tokyo. As Harajuku has some main streets and attractions to visit, teacher suggested the student choose one so it would be easier for her to ask directions. She could find the information about Harajuku on the internet.

In this situation, writer found out that the students have the autonomy to decide a place and the source of information. They can look on the internet, ask a friend or the teacher. The teacher monitored and encouraged the students to carefully select the information.

After the presentation, students discussed and gave feedback to their peer of what went well and what could be done better. Through this discussion session, the teacher encouraged students to seek feedback not only from the teacher. They have the autonomy to find feedback from the mMore Knowledgeable Other –MKO (Vygotsky:1987) MKO refers to someone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process, or concept.

After the activity, teacher interviewed the students and all of them were excited and engaged because the Google Maps pictured the authentic information of road in Japan and Indonesia. The online map also provides wider range of information than a piece of paper based map. It was more complicated and yet challenging for students. The level of difficulty was appropriate for the students in this level.

### **Conclusions**

Both students and teacher acted positively toward this activity. Teacher could found out some information about students, two of nine students have been to Japan. In Japanese learning situations, they can be the more-knowledgeable-peer for their friends to refer to. Teacher also found out that all of the students access the internet to find out about interesting things in Japan. Some of them are interested in songs, anime, manga, or drama. They incorporated their interest in Japanese pop culture to what they study in the classroom. Writer concluded that the students are autonomous learner outside the class. The teacher brought the autonomous learning inside the classroom and gave guidance on how students find the information carefully and seek a feedback, not only from the teacher, but also from the

more-knowledgeable-peer. Through this activity, teacher has fostered learner autonomy, using an authentic material.

This activity or other activities using authentic materials is necessary to complement Minna No Nihongo text book. Students need a different approach to do language activities which are more engaged and interesting. Students in Lembaga Bahasa Internasional University of Indonesia enrolled them selves in this class to be able to communicate in Japanese instead learning theories, so they need a more communicative and real task not only structural practices from this book.

This activity can be used in different class. The result of the activity might vary based on the internet connection, number of students, and student's age.

Google Maps as the authentic material is internet based application and need to be accessed online for a maximum result. There for, this activity can only applied in the classroom with strong internet connection. Each student also needs to be equipped with a device connected to the internet (i.e. smart phones, laptops). Google Maps can also be used offline and a number of students may share a device, but the form of activity might need adjustment.

The number of students in this sample is relatively small so it was easy for the teacher to move around, guide, and give feed back. It is feasible for a big class to apply this activity, but the students might need to be divided into sub groups. Extra teacher or mentor might also be needed.

This activity was applied on the class room consists of nine students in their twenties-thirties. The students uses internet on a daily basis and familiar with Google Maps. If this activity was to be applied on children and elderly students, the teacher might need to give more guidance on the internet use.

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