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The authenticity of resources for the teaching of foreign languages and cultures in France: variable geometry notion

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Abstract

In France, in the 1970s, a new methodology for the teaching of foreign languages and cultures emerged called “communicative”, generating an evolution of textbooks and classroom practices. The notion of the authentic document, from a French perspective, asserted itself during this time as pivotal in these developments. It would, thereafter, play an important role in the discourse of didacticians and practitioners.

An examination of the history of the notion of authentic document for the teaching/ learning of foreign languages and cultures leads to the finding of a redefinition of practitioners' and students' activities, hinged on these evolving methodologies. What is more, discussions around the notion of authenticity invite the consideration of parallels with concepts whose uses extend to the educational sciences, namely those of artifact and instrument.

Keywords: foreign languages, didactics, authentic, adapted, resources, materials,

1. Introduction

Issues

The expression “authentic document”, as used by the French community of didacticians, led to internal debates in the field of teaching foreign languages and cultures from the 1970s when it began to play a key role in speeches, thus influencing the activities of teachers. It is also discussed in the educational sciences, leading to a common question: how can a resource retain its authenticity once inserted into a teaching and learning situation? In both cases, these fields of research invite us to rethink the nature of authenticity and to study its design through the methodological changes.

Indeed, this concept raises various kinds of difficulties, the first of which, for practitioners, being how to obtain genuine material. While it may now seem easier to access a wide variety of materials due to the development of the Internet and media, this does not guarantee relevant and rich exploitation for learning purposes.

The issue of exploitation in the classroom establishes a second order of difficulty, which jeopardises exchanges between the didacticians of languages and researchers in the educational sciences: the first generally continue to use the expression authentic document, while the latter tend to favour the opposition between manufactured and non-manufactured documents which need to be adapted for the classroom. Adaptation refers to the inevitable modification of resources for intended use in a classroom. Introduced in a pedagogical syllabus, exploited by the teacher, the authentic document is diverted from its first use to implement the learning objectives that have been assigned.

The analysis of the available literature on authentic documents in the teaching of foreign languages and cultures will allow us to clarify the different issues related to this notion, which we already see affect not only teachers and their students but also the interdisciplinary dialogue. The extension of these reflections beyond considerations of only “authentic documents” was inspired by a recent study (Puren, 2013): variations in the designation of resources for the teaching of foreign languages and cultures can indeed be determined by different documentary rationales connected to methodological evolutions. These documentary rationales shed new light on the training needs of teachers and learners, pointing at the same time to research avenues to pursue.

Methodology

For our research, we initially performed a literature review on the notion of resources in France between 1970 and 2015. This term was chosen because it seems to encompass the various media and documents for education, whatever

the discipline. 1970 marks the starting point with the appearance of the term “authentic document”, to which we will return henceforth.

Resources thus designated were, however, present in the classroom before 1970, so we have also considered official guidelines and a few texts from before that period to determine the evolution of the notion's use over the twentieth century. However, we did not conduct a systematic survey of all the books and articles available: we favoured those that specifically addressed the issue of resources or which offered relevant information on this subject.

Keywords were selected during the first round of data collection: resource, document, material, documentation, authentic, adapted, foreign languages and cultures. The motivation for choosing these words was that they are the most widely used for this issue in France. Literature from other countries or unidentifiable sources were excluded. The chosen literature, therefore, presented theoretical and/ or descriptive elements on the teaching and learning of foreign languages and cultures in France.

With the aim of producing a synthesis of the results from this literature, we conducted a thematic content analysis (Bardin, 2007) of selected texts. Each study was read to identify the elements (key words, phrases, references) related to teaching resources. Then, from the established list of words and key phrases, groupings were made to identify new interpretations. Significant themes were thus identified and categorised to highlight the constant or, conversely, the contradictory elements in the conceptualisation of authentic documents.

We began by describing the historical development of the notion of authentic document. The analysis then led us to consider multiple conceptions of the notion, particularly through discussions of the adaptation process of authentic documents. The clarification of these plural conceptions prompted the proposal of a parallel between the notion of authentic document and the concept of artifact as developed by Rabardel (1995). This parallel is all the more relevant when one considers that the documentation activities of teachers and students increase with the uses of information technology and communication (ICT). These activities of documentation even seem to be able to characterise the current approach recommended for teaching/ learning languages, namely those backed by the action-oriented approach.

2. Historical evolution of the notion of authentic document

Origins of the notion: ancient roots

The use of the term “authentic” has been attested in everyday language for describing a text since the twelfth century. This designation indicates that the

document conforms to the original. Similarly, in the twelfth century, the word “document” referred to that which served as proof of something. The expression “authentic document”, still used by practitioners and in didactic works for foreign languages in France, retains this double meaning as testament to the target language speakers' actual use and to the document being true to the original, unmodified (Cuq & Gruca, 2002; Robert, 2002; Robert Rosen & Reinhardt, 2011).

Taking this minimal definition as a basis, we note that use of the expression “authentic document” in the teaching/ learning of foreign languages, in the modern sense, is identified in traditional methodology from the nineteenth century (Puren 1988: 31, 39; Gilmore, 2007: 97; Riquois, 2010: 131). This methodology places the grammatical system at the centre of teaching: it is based, essentially, on the understanding of grammatical rules and their application.

From the 1902 official guidelines, the cultural aspect of the unmanufactured document is highlighted and appears to become increasingly important in the concerns of educational bodies. Puren (1988: 171, translation) states that, in 1908, with the so-called “direct methodology”, manufactured texts and literary texts are associated with “non-literary civilisation documents” and are used for level 2 learners (current B1-B2) and level 3 (current C1-C2). If it is to be noted that the direct method focusses on speaking, we note that, in practice, teachers will favour literary texts out of habit and because they are “the only ones that can be used at the same time as linguistic, literary and cultural documents” (ibid.: 172, translation).

Literary texts and civilisation documents are combined today under one title and a single goal: the use of the notion of authenticity extends, in effect, from the 1920s with the implementation of the “active methodology” which, as its name suggests, re-focusses attention on the activity of the learner.

In the 1970s, the notion of authenticity continued its diffusion during the last period of the audio-visual methodology, which was notably based on projecting images to increase the realism of the notions worked on in class. At that time, however, the use of authentic documents was considered disruptive: audio-visual methods, in effect, depart from the principle that level 1 is based on a measured increase which does not allow the intrusion of material which cannot be controlled in all aspects (Riquois, 2010: 130). Coste (1970: 88) therefore advocated their progressive introduction:

At level 2 the student will, more often, be placed in contact with discourse that was not initially intended for him but belongs to the broad set of written and oral messages produced by Francophones for Francophones. [Translation]

The author states that “the term used is a last resort and we can only define it negatively” (1970: 88, translation). He appealed for us, equally, not to get caught up in the temptation of “the authentic”, not to replace the literary model with an “authentic” model which would be just as damaging as the previous one.

Today we find this warning again, for example, in Lherete (2010) who sees in this concept “an 'orthodoxy' that has been imposed in modern language teaching for over 40 years” (2010 : 1, translation). We will see precisely, in the rest of the article, that the advent of communicative approaches from the 1970s to the present day (Puren 1988: 255; Gilmore, 2007: 97; Adami, 2009: 163) enshrine the concept, somehow constituting its heyday.

Formalisation and diffusion of the notion in the 1970s

It was in 1970 that the official name “authentic document” would take its place in the field of language teaching in France (Germain, 1993; Boulton & Tyne, 2014): it is notably attested in Coste's article entitled “Texts and authentic documents at level 2” (1970). In theoretical works with a communicative approach, the concept allows an open opposition between manufactured documents and their authentic counterparts to develop (Berard, 1991; Widdowson, 1981; Suso Lopez, 2006; Martinez, 1996). The desire for change following the audio-visual methodologies which imposed a fixed course of teaching activities (Besse, 1995; Gilmore, 2007; Besse & Porquier, 1984) led teachers to seek different resources (Galisson, 1995).

The first identified consensus around the interest of the notion of authentic documents concerns then, logically enough, the limitations of resources specifically designed for this domain (Debaisieux, 2009: 41-42; Navartchi, 2009: 67). Notably mentioned is “the feeling that 'manufactured' documents of this or that method showed little natural language and that they were too far removed from genuine communication between the French” (Boyer, Butzbach & Pendanx, 1990: 27, translation). In the same vein, other authors identify the difficulties learners have transferring knowledge acquired in the classroom from manufactured documents (Adami, 2009: 63; Debaisieux, 2009: 42).

Authentic documents therefore seem particularly relevant in the development of learners' transferable skills to real communication situations since they favour “contact times or discovery of the target language” (Boulton & Tyne, 2014: 23; Holec, 1990: 67, translation). They are seen as effective ways to “place the whirlwind of reality in the classroom” (Zarate, 1986: 76, translation) and to motivate students by providing them with a fictitious but direct relationship with the foreign culture (Zarate, 1986; Cuq & Gruca, 2005; Boulton & Tyne, 2009).

The appeal of authentic documents created many opportunities for the teacher. The authenticity of materials leads to a presentation of cultural facts and highlights the veracity and credibility of that material (Porcher, 1995: 76). The teacher is then a mediator: they allow learners to access the target culture by choosing genuine materials that are representative of cultural facts that they wish to present (Narcy-Combes, 2005: 58; Courtillon, 2003: 19; Julié & Perrot, 2008: 36; Robert Rosen & Reinhardt, 2011: 40). In this configuration, the learner is faced with similar cultural content to that received by a native speaker and the language is then associated with the learning of a common culture (Zarate, 1986; Boyer, Butzbach & Pendax 1990; Bérard, 1991).

Navartchi (2009: 64) described, in the same sense, other authenticities than those of the documents used: those of the language and the practice of the language in the classroom. She concludes by saying:

In essence, the authenticity of language use is closely related to two other authenticities in this realm: the authenticity of the content (the use of authentic documents in teaching), and the authenticity of their educational use. (ibid.: 78, translation)

Hence we see that the notion of authenticity is quite considerably extended. The conservative limitations identified at the beginning of the communicative approach did not last long: didacticians now encourage the use of authentic documents at all levels (Arévalo Benito, 2003; Adami, 2009; Carette, 2009; Debaisieux 2009).

Technical developments have also played their part in this movement, “the appearance of this kind is due in effect to technologies (photocopier, tape recorder, video...) for the input, storage and reproduction of these samples captured in the homoglot environment (near or far) of the class” (Bouchard, 2008: 1, translation). From the terms used (input, storage, reproduction), we touch lightly on the issue of the teachers' instrumentalisation of resources, which we will look at more closely later in the paper.

From the combination of all the facts noted above, authentic documents achieve the rank of major resources, at least in didactic texts (Germain 1993: 207; Cuq & Gruca, 2005: 267; Martinez, 1996: 79; Bérard 1991: 51). They have a high presence in the second generation of textbooks of the 1990s (Riquois, 2010: 139). The communicative approach to teaching foreign languages and cultures therefore placed the authentic document at the centre of learning (Dalgalian, Lieutaud & Weiss 1981: 55).

The 2000s to the present day

Since the 2000s, the emergence of the action-oriented approach has updated the notion of authentic documents. Based in part on the proposals of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001), this approach renews the methodological orientations for teaching and learning languages, considering the learner as a user of language in determined social contexts: more than communicative tasks, teaching and learning practices are extended to real social tasks that learners will have to perform in their professional, public, educational and personal lives. The transition to a pedagogy project and learning tasks requires rethinking wider resources and learning materials (Dervin, 2009; Coste, 2009; Julié & Perrot, 2008; Bourguignon, 2010; Puren, 2013). In the CEFR, we observe that priority is given to documents designated as “not doctored” (ibid.: 112): the choice of this term may indicate a rather negative bias regarding that which is not authentic in the classroom (Robert & Rosen, 2010: 23).

We note, however, that it is a question of exposing the learner to these “texts” (in the broad sense of oral or written documents) in the context of language activities, which are achieved by the treatment of these texts (Lallement & Pierret, 2007; Bourguignon, 2010). Developing strategies is critical to processing documents, which is placed in the foreground regarding the tasks that the student must achieve in the classroom (Tagliante, 2006: 136; Beacco, 2007: 103; Lallement & Pierret, 2007: 124; GFEN, 2010: 46), these tasks themselves including language activities: reading, speaking and writing continuously, oral and written interaction, mediation. The tasks constitute one of the major changes introduced by the CEFR, although this is not an educational novelty (GFEN, 2010: 26; Coste, 2009: 29). Pedagogical tasks have been addressed before, most notably by Bruner (1983), and now occupy a central place in language teaching, assisted by Vygotsky's theory of socioconstructivism (1985).

The CEFR thus indicates that the tasks should be based on “texts”, which may correspond to authentic documents such as we have seen previously. However, no details are given on these texts: the focus is shifted from the resource to the task which justifies its use. The absence of articles on the supports, resources or documents in a synthetic work on the action-oriented approach like that of Lions-Olivieri and Liria (2003) tends to support the finding of a shift in focus from resources to tasks. This reveals, with the gradual introduction of the action-oriented approach, a repositioning or a weakening of interest in the use of authentic documents in classroom practices and didactic speech.

This history of the concept highlights the links between methodological developments and the consideration or the place of authentic documents in the

teaching of foreign languages and cultures. We will now further study the evolution of the notion of authenticity by bringing together the frequent reformulations and redefinitions that the notion underwent during the debates in the teaching of foreign languages and cultures.

3. A notion of variable geometry?

For a redefinition of authentic documents

In the dictionary of teaching French as a foreign or second language, Cuq defines authentic as “any message developed for native French speakers for the purpose of genuine communication: [it] therefore means anything that is not designed for the classroom” (2003: 29, translation). In the current discourse of didactics and language teachers, authentic document therefore refers to material that comes from places outside the school setting and comes in its original form (Bailly, 1998b; Cuq, 2003; Gilmore, 2007; Adami, 2009; Morlat, 2009).

The notion applies to various media, including oral, written, iconic, visual, electronic, etc. They are frequently used to work language structures (Bailly, 1998b: 72; Rézeau 2001: 202), even though the original purpose of their design served other functions (Coste, 1970: 90; CEFR 2001: 72).

Chambers (2009: 17) shows that this definition has been questioned, although it “remains accepted in the context of language learning” (translation). Consider, in this regard, the work conducted by Detey, Lyche, Tchobanov, Durand and Laks (2009: 224), which is based on the principle that the true quality of teaching/ learning materials is not supposed to be questioned as such, the authors stating that “the need to make linguistic data available that are useful for the realisation of educational work and teaching/ learning needs not be debated” (translation).

If, for Bouchard (2008), the adjective ‘authentic’ must not be taken literally (because his interest is to distinguish between authentic documents and those specifically manufactured for teaching), then the diversity of resources in this category must be questioned. We see, for example, in Navartchi (2009: 65): “the adjective authentic [...] describes, in teaching, a diverse set of communication situations and written, verbal, iconic and audiovisual messages, covering the entire range of everyday output: administrative, media, cultural, professional, etc.”. Chambers (2009: 16) even asks the research question: “Are the corpora authentic documents?”

We have already seen that, since the 1970s, the notion of the authentic document has been widely used in researchers' discourse and the practices of teachers. However, the study of this term's uses reveals many variations: linking these

discourses will, initially, enhance the plurality and richness of the conceptions surrounding the notion of authentic document.

A hyper-category calling for refinements

Today, the authors of educational materials which are intended specifically for beginners tend to create texts resembling authentic documents (Bento, 2007; Bailly, 1998b: 72; Rézeau 2001: 202). In this case, the term “realistic document” is used (Robert, 2002: 14, translation). This distinction is also noted in Debaisieux (2009: 36) in which the semi-authentic or realistic documents correspond to:

real interactions that are recorded “in the field” which are then re-recorded in a laboratory by us, for technical reasons relating to the sound quality of the recording or for ethical reasons connected to the recorded person's rights [or] recordings “improvised by Anglophones who have been given a briefing of the situation” (Abe et al., 1978: 5, translation).

Beyond editorial productions, there are many authors who make distinctions between notions related to that of the authentic document. Adami (2009: 168) describes, for example, a continuum between authentic and manufactured documents, articulating six categories: raw materials, those which are reformed, those which are pastiches, realistic ones, those which are manufactured, and artificial ones. Similarly, Rézeau (2001: 203) defines adapted documents as an intermediate position between the authentic and the fabricated.

For authentic written texts, Arévalo Benito (2003: 612-613) lists, in turn, the classification of text types developed by Cicurel (1991) distinguishing media texts, those from the everyday environment, dialogues, professional writing and literary writing. Bailly (1998b: 70-72) and Rézeau (2001: 200) discern for their part:

- *authentic* or *raw material* developed by native speakers for native speakers “with a purpose and a direct pragmatic functionality”,
- *adapted documents*, which are authentic documents that have been modified,
- *didactic documents*, which are texts produced by the teacher or the textbook author, most of the time for beginners.

From this point, these distinctions invite us to make a connection between the notion of authentic document and the concepts of artifact and instrument. The artifact, in effect, refers to “anything that has undergone a transformation, however small, of human origin [...] for a specific use, developed to be part of finalised activities” (Rabardel 1995: 49, translation): this term allows a “neutral designation which does not specify a particular type of relationship with the

object” (ibid., translation). Thus the artifact is outside any context of use, much like the authentic document that exists, as a didactic category, outside any context of use. In the context of the classroom, because of adaptations or changes, the documents, whether real or manufactured, are clearly instrumentalised.

The instrumental theory developed by Rabardel (1995) is based on an anthropological conception of human-object interactions. It helps to understand the continuum between the artifact and the instrument: the first provides the user *constituent* functions which are not necessarily identified or mobilised by him in the action; this difference reifies the singular instrument and its functions, so-called *constituted*. In this view, the instrumentalisation process refers to the allocation of functions by the user to the artifact; the process of instrumentation signals that the artifact properties are involved in the activity: "the gradual discovery of the properties (intrinsic) of the artifact engages the accommodation of subjects' schemes, but also changes of the instrument significance resulting from the combination of the artifact to new schemes "(Translation of Rabardel, 1995: 116). The effect of the artifact on the user thus consists in transforming schemes or assimilation of schemes to new artifacts.

The variations on the notion of authentic documents just described do, nevertheless, identify various perspectives which are always related to their frequent use in language teaching. This notion is modular depending on the educational needs connected to the different language skills and (inter-) cultural fields, and on the types of resources that support them in their diversity. The variable geometry of this notion also calls for us to take into account the measure of spending and conceptual savings. The following section highlights precisely those two aspects via the study of consensus and discussions around the notion of authenticity that were conducted on the teaching of foreign languages and cultures.

From consensus to discussions of the notion

Didacticians generally agree that an authentic text allows the learner to access communicative competence more easily and quickly, including not only the language but also the culture (Bérard, 1991; Gilmore, 2007; Debaisieux, 2009; Detey et al. 2009; Morlat, 2009). For oral skills in particular, the use of the authentic document helps to overcome an idea that views “the spoken language as a place of 'deviance'” (Debaisieux, 2009: 43, translation), and, instead, helps bring awareness of oral specificities and variations (Bento, 2007; Chambers, 2009).

As noted in the evolution of the concept, it is still considered that these texts, precisely because of their authentic nature, encourage the engagement of learners in the learning process (Arévalo Benito, 2003: 615; Navartchi, 2009: 67). Although the richness of these documents can be difficult for learners, particularly beginners, the role of the teacher is always to mediate (Carette, 2009) by selecting specific examples, often partial, to help them to identify the target language (Navartchi, 2009).

The complexity of authentic documents is one problematic aspect of their use, nonetheless, and publications identified through our research also brought to light a number of discussions related to the complexity of authentic documents.

Several authors highlight that authentic documents are mainly written materials, even for songs or television programmes, that correspond to written speech (Adami, 2009: 166-167). Detey et al. (2009: 225), like Navartchi (2009: 71), describe the problems of accessing authentic oral documents and Chambers (2009: 28) shows that even when specific platforms are designed to exploit recordings of native speakers in the target language, being able to control the software is difficult for learners, making it a constraint for the successful use of this material in learning activities. In turn, Debaisieux (2009: 36) describes the limited use of authentic documents for working on oral expression, which, for teachers, is linked to their complexity.

What is more, it appears that authentic documents generally age quickly and “lapse” when referring to the news (Porcher, 1988; Morlat, 2009):

this rapid expiration can easily lead to false representations of the cultural practices they are designed to represent. They reflect a temporary condition, a moment, but their duration of validity is so short that they do not permit any reliable conclusion. (Porcher 1988: 97, translation)

Due to these arguments highlighting authentic documents' limitations, a more important discussion point arises on the authenticity of authentic documents, thus querying the category itself.

Therefore, educationalists have pointed to the loss of authenticity when the material is decontextualised for communication purposes or deferred use (Adami, 2009: 166; Chambers, 2009: 18-20). This criticism implies then that the original text becomes modified (Bourdet, 1988; Saud, 1997; Bailly, 1998b; Bouchard, 2008; Morlat, 2009). Zarate emphasises the artificial aspect of adapting a text for the classroom. She insists, like Coste (1970), Debyser (1979) or Berard (1991), on the need for “staging the authentic document”: “the notion of authentic as well as that of natural is an artifice” (1986: 76, translation). Authenticity then appears

to be a convention, especially in manuals where documents appear with an educational paratext which deprives them of many of their initial characteristics. Bourdet (1988: 146) asks the following question:

does the authenticity of advertisements, newspapers, radio messages, intended to be read in some streets, heard on some radios, remain when, thousands of miles from their place of issue they are denied their code of understanding, from their only appointed context?
[Translation]

If the fiction of a direct relationship with the foreign culture (Zarate, 1986) is motivating, the question of the gap between a text's original reception and its reception in a classroom cannot be omitted. Séoud suggests speaking of “inauthentic authenticity, to account for the difficulties in transferring any authentic document to the classroom” (1997: 120, translation).

Adami (1990: 170), like Boulton and Tyne (2009: 276), also report difficulties in the understanding of these materials: with regards the meaning of the interpretation, students may not be competent enough to face these texts. In the case of interpretation, the phenomenon of “interpretive unevenness” (Cortes, 1987; Abdallah-Preteille & Porcher, 2001, translation) is particularly sensitive and will give rise to misinterpretation of the material, which can also be at the hands of the teacher: “It is sometimes difficult for one teacher, with difficult working conditions, to organise and select material; this problem cannot be solved individually” (Bérard, 1991: 52, translation). To counter this, it is recommended that the teacher should “collect a corpus of representations” (Abdallah-Preteille, 1986: 85, translation) or to favour written texts, which are easier to collect than audio texts (Moirand, 1982: 157).

These questions are essentially related to modifying documents for teaching and learning activities. Before being presented to the learners, teachers adapt the chosen media by subjecting them to a “technological process” (Bouchard, 2008, translation). In the following section we will, therefore, focus on analyses of modifications to authentic documents, which generally refer to, as part of the teaching of foreign languages and cultures, the inevitable step of adaptation.

The process of adaptation

For Navartchi (2009), “adaptation is the process of transforming or exploiting raw language materials into teaching resources” (translation). This process usually involves a pre-teaching analysis of the language focus to identify what is useful to teach. The author distinguishes three parts in the adaptation of materials: the choice of the material in connection with the teacher's plan; the planning and preparation of the text based on its size and content; and finally, the

implementation. For Cuq and Gruca (2001), this adaptation requires the establishment of appropriate teaching strategies.

Rézeau (2001: 200) places particular emphasis on the first phase of adaptation which consists of indicating why the selected document is interesting for learning purposes. Bailly (1998b: 70) believes, in this sense, that the very act of carrying material into the classroom modifies it: low adaptation then corresponds to the formatting of the authentic document while high adaptation involves modification, rewriting or using special educational apparatuses with explanations, or including questions about the text.

We can, here, also see links to the instrumentalisation process described by Rabardel (1995), but less discerned is what concerns the teacher's instrumentation process, except in Navartchi (2009) who makes the link between the choice of materials and the teacher's personality. However, the instrumentation is inescapable: like the duality of signifier/ signified, instrumentalisation and instrumentation are two sides of the same coin, that of instrumental genesis. A research avenue in line with the remarks would be: How do materials participate in teachers' instrumentation?

Regarding the adaptation process, including the instrumentalisation of materials by the teacher, several authors note that the time of collection and preparation of authentic documents has limited the development of their uses in educational practices and learning (Adami, 2009: 169; Bento, 2015; Detey et al., 2009: 232; Navartchi, 2009: 71). Like Bérard (1991: 52), Adami (2009: 165-166) also shows that some uses of fairly widespread authentic documents may prove inadequate:

In writing, for example, there is an unavoidable exercise [...]: to fill in a form where learners must write their surname, first name, address, sometimes birth date or telephone number. [...] What is striking is that, very often, this type of form that can be found anywhere, in abundance and in all forms in reality, is reproduced for educational purposes.
[Translation]

Rather than inadequate adaptation, it is interesting to see here the signs of limited instrumentation of the teacher by the materials, in the sense determined by Rabardel (1995). We can therefore assert, especially here, the relevance of an instrumental approach regarding the adaptation of resources for the teaching of foreign languages and cultures. But in the publications selected as part of our research, only one explicitly draws on the instrumental approach developed by Rabardel: Rézeau (2001) considers, in effect, that adaptation leads teachers to add to real-world materials a conception guided by the objective of developing learners' skills.

Because of the historical role played by the notion of authentic documents in educational discussions and in practice, it seems difficult not to use them, despite the emergence of the action-oriented approach initiating a repositioning or a weakening of the concept. We are therefore interested, ultimately, in the perspectives on the notion of authentic documents.

The study of the publications selected for this research have shown that the overlapping between the notions of materials, resources and media seem to be confirmed or amplified by the use of information and communication technologies. We have also crossed the observation of these discoveries with the documentary rationales described by Puren (2013): one, associated with the action-oriented approach, called “documentation rationale”, is reminiscent of informational skills in the twenty first century needed for teachers and learners. It simultaneously rekindles the relevance of the instrumental approach developed by Rabardel in the field of language teaching.

1. From resources to documentary rationales

Overlapping terminology: documents, materials, resources

The analysis of the selected studies has brought to light some overlap between the concepts of documents, materials, and resources in most of the corpus texts. For example, Bailly (1998b: 205) uses the term document to refer to all the resources that constitute pedagogical instruments used for language and/ or culture learning. In another work, Bailly classes them according to their nature and their function (1998a: 171-200, translation):

- perceptual and semiotic nature (audio, visual, audiovisual documents, icono-textual, computer media);
- methodological nature (authentic, manufactured and adapted documents);
- discursive and pragmatic nature.

Cuq defines document, for his part, as “any medium selected for teaching and serving educational activity” (2003: 75, translation).

In Ip, Morrison and Currie (2001), the notion of resources refers in particular to the educational content of materials used for teaching/ learning. Pothier (2004) identifies the resources that we can describe as generic (text, audio, visual), as well as materials, contacts, and informatics resources that are available to teachers.

Rézeau (2001: 198-199) prefers to use the term “educational/ teaching materials” (translation) rather than “learning resources” (translation). The author states that they act as a set of instruments in the same sense as elaborated by Rabardel

(1995): this conception leads us to consider the dialectic between the constituent functions and those constituted functions that determine the potential interactivity with users and, therefore, the process that may be undertaken in the teaching / learning activities.

To define the term resource in the digital field, Demaizière (2004: 81) follows the dictionary definition: “means (...) which are or may be available to a community” (translation). She states that resources can equally be a “handout posted on an e-learning platform, a tutorial, a game, an edutainment product, a reference tool (e.g. dictionary or grammar book) or the inexhaustible Web documents”, that is to say any learning objects.

Tomé (2006: 115) shows that Internet resources call for a significant lexical set, separate from the existing one for the “traditional” resources. With this in mind, the author proposes a typology distinguishing those with or without accompaniment, including accrued subcategories, among other media (e.g. web pages, e-mails, etc.) and devices (e.g. self-training devices, hybrid formation, etc.) (ibid.: 166).

Demaizière (1986) and Rézeau (2001) distinguish, among informatics materials, those that allow computer-assisted language learning (CALL) where the computer takes the role of a tutor and those which gather multimedia composite electronic documents (audio, audiovisual, textual or pictorial) leading the learner to use different media (see also Bailly 1998b). The notion of materials may here refer to hardware (material aspects of computer resources) which differs from software (symbolic aspects of computer resources).

Baron and Dané (2007) also invite us to create distance with the concept of “digital resource” since, as we have seen, it covers items with very different granularity. To help achieve this goal, they distinguish between two components to resources called digital: a “content” component and a “process” component, the latter “giving the system the ability to respond to users' initiatives or to guide them” (translation).

If it appears that information and communication technologies have contributed to the development of the use of the authentic document in the language classroom (Detey et al., 2009; Debaisieux, 2009; Navartchi, 2009), Mangenot (1998) highlights the value of the resources available on the Internet in that they foster a certain “authenticity” in classroom practices: the learner can be prompted to browse or interact online using mainstream sites, as they would outside the classroom. We may note here that discussions similar to those conducted on non-computer resources could be reproduced for those which are computerised.

These electronic resources actually play an important role in the environment of the teaching/ learning of foreign languages and cultures (Demaizière, 2001; Rézeau, 2001). Lemeunier-Quéré (2011) proposes, for their classification, the term “e-materials”. She notes that they require that the teacher develops specific strategies for identifying, selecting and operating these materials. The illusion of a more immediate access to documents via networks or software probably leaves the teacher in a situation of potential confusion when confronted with the mass of available resources (Lherete, 2010: 3; GFEN, 2010: 22). On this point, the documentary rationales described by Puren (2013) that underlie the methodological evolutions seem to us rich in terms of research avenues, indeed, fresh research perspectives.

Documentary rationales

Variations in the names of resources for teaching/ learning foreign languages and cultures may return on a more general level, to different documentary rationales. They are connected, by Puren (2013), to three methodological periods which correlate, in a certain manner, with the use of the notion of authentic documents.

In the first period from the 1920s to the 1960s, active methodologies recommended using materials selected by the teacher or presented in a course book. This is what Puren calls a “document rationale” (2013: 1, translation). These materials are meant to be representative of the target language and are the subject of comprehension or information seeking activities. The material, therefore, comes first: the activities are intended to explain its contents, or extract the information that the learner will remember.

The years 1960-1980 saw the development of audio-visual methods and, with them, a “support rationale” (ibid.: 2, translation). This rationale also formed part of the communicative approach (1980-1990). The document disappears in favour the support, chosen according to the target language activity. It serves to practice the language, which is done mostly by isolating the different language activities. Thus, the support is used for either reading, writing or other activities, but rarely to combine language activities.

Finally, since the early 2000s, a third logic emerges: it is called “documentation rationale” by Puren (ibid.: 3, translation). It has been developed in accordance with the action-oriented approach and refers to the analyses of documents which learners collect themselves. The support, in turn, no longer occupies the central place. Although the term documentation does not yet appear in academic literature, we are able to give it a generic definition: research, selection and exploitation activities around a set of materials in order to carry out an action.

For Puren, the documentation rationale is that which corresponds best to the formation of a social actor as defined by the CEFR (2001) because it allows the learner to actually interact with documents, select, and search for information, such as people do in their daily lives. The material is then considered in a documentation file that the learner has to analyse, a design that is found in Coste (2009: 32) and Dervin (2009: 112). This documentation rationale, backed by the task-based learning approach, requires materials to be received in a situation close to that which was originally intended, returning to the principles set in the early days of using authentic documents in the classroom, as described by Coste (1970).

With the latter rationale in mind, the notion of authentic document no longer seems problematic in itself, since it is in service of the task: it is part of a set of resources, material and symbolic, made available to be assembled by the learner (Lallement & Pierret, 2007; GFEN 2010). However, in the reality of the teacher's practice, the notion of the authentic document always has the same requirements: a minimum regarding its choice, a maximum regarding its educational use – if teachers want to respect the original situation of reception and develop ambitious strategies that will make learners independent in their communication activities.

1. Discussion and perspectives

The analyses carried out as part of our research are to be considered as elements of answers to the questions posed in the introduction. They allowed us to identify some original perspectives with regard to current discussions in the teaching of foreign languages and cultures or with researchers in educational sciences.

While the notion of authentic document has evolved in parallel with methodologies that have followed, it has covered, since its establishment, complementary realities in accordance with the diversity of disciplines. With regards variable geometry, the notion of authentic document refers to a hyper-category consisting of various resources that are articulated in semi-authentic, manufactured or realistic resources, for use by teachers and learners in the classroom.

Addressing the notion of authentic documents in these different dimensions reveals their complexity and the need to train teachers to use them, especially with the explosion of the Internet and online resources. The task of adaptation causes loss of authenticity: in a formative perspective, it seems relevant to associate adaptation with the process of instrumentation and instrumentalisation whenever the teacher transforms resources to put them in the context of learning.

Finally, analysis of the overlap between the concepts of documents, materials and resources signals the need for a step back in relation to such variations. Considering different documentary rationales underlying methodological recommendations then almost appears beneficial. The uses of ICT increases access to a huge set of resources that could be used in educational activities: facing this reality, documentation rationale, as determined by Puren (2013) for language teaching, shows the needs to link computer literacy as well as media education to the training of teachers and learners. As these issues are still emerging in the field of teaching foreign languages and cultures, we are still far from the “trivialisation” of the uses of authentic documents.

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