Communicative language teaching (CLT) has been advocated for several decades based on an understanding of language learners as both cognitive and social beings, each with different and changing needs, interests, and motivations. In recent years, authenticity has taken a central role in discussions of what it means to teach and learn language. In the early days of CLT, the focus of discussion was authentic texts, which were seen as autonomous objects produced by native speakers to be studied in language classes and emulated. More recent notions of authenticity are framed in broader terms to include learner cognition, engagement, collaboration, problem solving, critical analysis, and the development of language for specific and often localized communication purposes.

In the introduction to TESOL’s *New Ways in Using Authentic Materials in the Language Classroom*, Larimer and Schleicher (1999) define authentic materials in the language classroom as “oral and writing texts that occur naturally in the target language environment and that have not been created or edited expressly for language learners” (p. v). The contributors to the *New Ways* volume demonstrate how teachers employ creativity in incorporating meaningful texts to reach realistic and real-world goals, rather than merely using texts as input or model. However, we still must ask: Whose texts and whose language standards should be used? Who sets the goals for language learning? What is the role of authentic cognitive and social processes, such as completing tasks or collaborating on projects? Can we empower students to gain a sense of ownership—both of input and output—in the language classroom? In other words, how can we avoid relegating authenticity to that “catchphrase currency whose value is taken for granted without further enquiry” (Widdowson, 1998, p. 705)?

In a useful history of authenticity, Lindholm (2008) writes that the concept emerged during the Enlightenment as a mechanism for humankind to come
closer to the divine through authentic experience. It was not until the early 20th century that authenticity became commodified and the search for authenticity became a search for ownership of authentic materials. More recently, however, and especially in applied linguistics and language teaching, the concept of authenticity has subsumed experience and materialism, both defined locally.

Bringing experience to classroom instruction is not always an easy task, and unfortunately, as far too many of us know from personal experience, “school learning is often about disembodied minds learning outside any context of decisions and actions” (Gee, 2005, p. 39). In such classrooms, learning too often is rendered rote, disengaging, and inauthentic. Gee argues that learning is not meaningful unless we can connect language, activity, and purpose through talk, action, and text. Simulations have the potential for integrating talk, action, and text, but as Sargeant (2005) demonstrates, this does not always occur. Sargeant explored English language vacation theme parks for Japanese tourists in Japan, which offer “authentic” interactions with native speakers in a simulated foreign travel experience. Although this simulation engages language learners in tourist activities, the author questions how authentic these interactions really are and whether any real-world purpose is involved. Does the native speaker employee of the park—as the sole embodiment of English—really meet an authentic purpose, or are stereotypes only reinforced and English sold as a commodity but not incorporated into the world outside the park? Perhaps this can only be answered by the theme park guests themselves as they venture into the wider world where English may well serve as a better medium of communication than Japanese in international travel.

Although simulations have the potential to bring talk, action, and text together, other classroom techniques connect language, activity, and purpose, such as tasks with real-world applications (Guariento & Morley, 2001; Ur, 1998). Rather than focus on material authenticity, Widdowson (1998) argues that even teacher prepared or modified material can serve an authentic purpose: “Contrived language has to be such that learners will learn from it and develop the capacity for authentication that they can exploit when they encounter actually occurring language in the real world” (p. 715). The goal of using and creating language for real-world purposes within language instruction is to bring authenticity to the learning experience, not to the texts themselves. Pedagogical tasks have the potential to provide learners with a framework and tools for approaching real-world tasks as we “engage learners in the kinds of cognitive processes that arise in communication outside the classroom” (Ellis, 2003, p. 336). As Widdowson (2003) reminds us, classrooms are not context-neutral spaces: “The original communicative context that constituted [learners’] ‘guide and support’ is no longer in evidence, so it has to be reconstituted in some way” (p. 105). Rather than material authenticity, situational and interactional authenticity may play a greater role in language teaching (Ellis, 2003). When learners authenticate classroom experi-
ences and texts, they are more likely to incorporate language and communication strategies to meet real-world purposes outside the classroom.

Through tasks, teachers can connect language, activity, and purpose by drawing learners’ attention to successful strategies for processing instructional materials and interacting meaningfully with peers, teachers, and others to meet real-world goals, in both social and academic contexts. Strategy training helps learners develop autonomy in language learning and use as they apply what they are learning to their lives beyond the classroom. Authenticity within language teaching practice encompasses learners interacting with classmates, teachers, and others to negotiate meaningful solutions to tasks (potentially even extensive simulations) through problem solving by using available English language resources both in and outside the classroom. Teachers engage learners in integrating talk, text, and action to solve real problems and reach real-world goals.

As we move from second- to third-millennium language teaching practices, we must address the “needs and interests of students; engaging them in authentic, real-life tasks; allowing them ownership of the curriculum” (Felix, 2005, p. 88). When teachers meet learners’ needs and interests through their curricular choices, and when we engage learners in setting their own learning objectives to meet career and academic goals, our classrooms, whether real or virtual, become places where authentic purposes are achieved, as many of the chapters in this volume demonstrate.

The digital age brings new possibilities for engaging learners with authentic materials and experiences, interactions, and publication opportunities. Multimodal communications are increasing both inter- and intra-nationally (Warschauer, 2000), and technology has the potential to “expand students’ literacy practices beyond linear text-based reading and writing” (Cummins, 2006, p. 53), perhaps engaging learners’ multilingual abilities. As with any new technology, learning digital literacy first and foremost requires access, along with instruction and consistent practice. Without an authentic purpose, audience, and goal, the use of technology in the classroom is ineffective. Engagement with various technological literacy projects and tasks is a common theme of many of the chapters in this volume, demonstrating how 21st century language learners are authenticating multimodal spaces for themselves.

Around the globe, and even within English speaking countries, there is a shift in focus from Anglo- and Western-centric standards and norms of English to localized usage and literacy practices, including multilingual ones. English is an international language of communication, and as such, it has a range of norms and forms around the world based on localized and world varieties of English (Jenkins, 2006). Allowing learners to draw on local language use and literacy practices builds authenticity into instruction as learners validate English within their own social and professional networks and begin addressing their own goals for using English in real, meaningful, and individualized ways. When learners can
connect real language use with actual life goals, they begin to build an identity in which English plays an integral and authentic role (Norton & Toohey, 2002).

As Widdowson (2003) reminds us: “Standard English is not simply a means of communication but the symbolic possession of a particular community, expressive of its identity, its conventions, and values” (p. 39). Language instruction can assist learners in understanding and meeting the needs of an imagined audience, for example, as they produce language with formal or informal forms; include multilingual use (Dray, 2003); select discipline-specific lexicon or structures to vary language for specific purposes (Hyland, 2000); or include graphic or multimedia elements. When learners can draw on individual and group resources through cooperation, collaboration, and negotiation, they develop expertise and language skills to meet real-world goals.

Language use, whether written or oral, engages us with social networks and communities. “The notion of authenticity can be understood not so much as an individualist obsession with the self but rather as a dialogical engagement with community” (Pennycook, 2007, p. 3), and “community” is a malleable concept, especially within international contexts.

Whether in foreign or second language learning, we are asking our learners to envision themselves as users of English. Currently, nonnative speakers outnumber native speakers of English (Jenkins, 2007), thus changing our metaphor of “target” language and culture as teachers reposition themselves within student-centered instruction. Learners build identities as target users of English and develop their own purposes and goals for language learning. Teachers can model goal setting, and collaborations between teachers and students can lead to meaningful instruction in moving learners toward individualized goals. Instruction draws on appropriate notions of target culture, not necessarily only Anglo-centric ones. As Sargeant (2005) demonstrates with the tourist theme parks in Japan, language teachers cannot provide all of the meaningful contexts that are necessary to practice all potential language forms. TESOL’s position statement on non-native English speaking (NNES) teachers demonstrates the value our profession places on language teachers, regardless of first language:

The distinction between native and nonnative speakers of English presents an oversimplified, either/or classification system that does not actually describe the range of possibilities in a world where English has become a global language. . . . All English language educators should be proficient in English regardless of their native languages, but English language proficiency should be viewed as only one criterion in evaluating a teacher’s professionalism. Teaching skills, teaching experience, and professional preparation should be given as much weight as language proficiency. (TESOL, 2006)

Adult language learners in particular have specific learning goals that reflect their life goals within a global society, and, as Miller (2007) points out, adults also negotiate multiple and changing identities throughout their personal, academic,
and professional lives. Language teachers have the ability to transform language instruction from a mechanical learning experience to a dynamic interaction to assist learners in reaching real-world goals. Rather than focus only on native-speaker norms of language production, English language instruction can provide adult learners with opportunities to create and act on their own texts, engage with meaningful audiences, and develop interactions that mirror their purpose for learning. The chapters in this volume demonstrate how language teaching practices engage learners in authentic experiences, using and producing texts to meet international and localized communication needs.

This volume, *Authenticity in the Language Classroom and Beyond: Adult Learners*, is divided into four sections. The introductory section, “Authentic Design: Tasks, Materials, and Curricula,” focuses on how various practitioners design their curricula to meet specific localized learner needs. Jan Edwards Dormer, in “Where Can I Get My Shoe Fixed? Authentic Tasks for Students in EFL Settings,” focuses on a curriculum that employs a theme- and task-based approach to engage students in Indonesia and Brazil in language learning. A major component of each level of Dormer’s curriculum includes a project serving local needs and involving students in authentic communications and negotiations. In “Sharing Our Culture With Visitors: English for Tour Guides,” Janet M. D. Higgins demonstrates how learners apply the concept of the “guided walk” in developing language skills useful in the tourist industry, their area of academic study. Higgins’ students practice describing guided walks using online, print, and local sources. Laura Ramm’s adult education students in the United States (“Oh, the Places You’ll Go: Creating a Class City Guide”) develop local city guides useful for other second language speakers in the community. Practice leading to the development of guides includes a scavenger hunt, map and direction activities, and field experience. Hoang Thi Ngoc Diem’s curriculum has students developing magazines collaboratively (“Magazine as Project-Based Learning”). She discusses the steps in project development and presents sample rubrics used in assessment. Peggy Allen Heidish presents the support curriculum for graduate students, including those who are international teaching assistants, at her university in the United States (“Language Training á la Carte”). Workshops and credit courses are offered ranging from assisting students with specific skills (e.g., writing to incorporate source texts, pronunciation) to strategies (e.g., reading strategies, job interviewing).

The second section of the book, “Authentic Language: Skills, Content, and Culture,” presents four chapters exploring various approaches to language teaching for authenticity. Lori Fredricks describes a curriculum employing reading resources based on local culture, history, and literature (“Using Authentic Texts to Facilitate Culturally Relevant Extensive Reading Programs in Tajikistan”). She details the process of selecting readings and building extracurricular or community-based programs using reading resource rooms and reading clubs. In “The English of Math—It’s Not Just Numbers!” Kathy Ewing and Bill Huguelet
break the myth that the language of math is universal. They report that students face similar difficulties talking about and understanding math concepts in the vastly different contexts of universities in the United States and Oman, and they share activities that successfully engage students with the language of mathematics. Gary Carkin, Sarah Dodson-Knight, Alexis Gerard Finger, Silvia Rodriguez Spence, Nigel A. Caplin, and Judy Trupin present an active and imaginative way to get students to develop confidence and skill in speaking through drama practices (“Readers’ Theater: Turbo-Charged Language Acquisition”). Using a Vygotskyan framework, the authors show how a range of text types, from poems and short stories to plays and textbook readings, can provide rehearsal and performance opportunities to learners in a variety of instructional contexts. Marvin D. Hoffland and Oswald Jochum, in “Inexpensive, Effective ESP Material Development for the EFL Classroom,” present easily accessible authentic materials from local industry that teachers use in business and scientific English lessons at two institutions in Austria. Creativity in designing lesson materials to accompany real business documents and collaborations with community partners provide students with examples of how English is used to promote business and industry both internationally and locally, bringing English to life for these students.

The third section of the book, “Authentic Connections: Community Partnerships,” focuses on practical teaching ideas to connect learners with their local communities to develop specific language skills and increase cultural understanding. In “Exploring the Global Landscape Through Language and Service Learning,” Beth Kozbial Ernst and Megan Allen engage their second language learners with community service through local nonprofit agencies. This service provides students with opportunities to explore local resources and connect with community members. Gilda Rubio-Festa and Rebeca Fernández (“Creating a Technical Career ESL Program Through Community Partnerships”) demonstrate how their career-oriented educational programs team with local employers to create practical training opportunities for the large influx of immigrants their community has experienced in recent years. Pathways are created to assist students in succeeding in technical career programs, and community connections assist students in working toward realistic career goals. Marianne Stipe and Lora Yasen’s chapter (“Climate Change and Other Hot Topics on Campus: Project-Based Learning”) describes student involvement in a regional conference on climate change and sustainability. Through a variety of contacts with a local high school and their affiliate university, students researched sustainability and prepared poster presentations for the conference, building community connections, knowledge, and language and presentation skills. Finally, Christopher Miles and Bill Powell present ideas for making resources on disaster preparation and survival accessible to second language speakers in communities devastated by natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina (“This Class Is a Disaster: Public Information, Natural Disasters, and the ESL Classroom in the United States”). Through various community-based language activities, these authors heighten student awareness of
disaster preparation and survival, and they suggest locally available resources that teachers in other areas might employ.

The fourth and final section of the book, “Authentic Purpose, Authentic Medium: Technology in Language Learning,” focuses on various accessible media for language learning. The first three chapters highlight the use of video in the language classroom. Alex Gilmore connects film and television use in the classroom to the types of communicative competence students can develop (“The Times They Are A-Changin’: Strategies for Exploiting Authentic Materials in the Language Classroom”). Gilmore explores various definitions of authenticity to show that film and television programs can be used productively for sociopragmatic learning. In “Lights, Camera, Action: Scripts for Language Learning,” Gregory Strong describes multiple activities focused on film and television scripts. He provides an overview of the types of scripts available and presents practical ideas on how students can make their own scripts to engage in authentic language practice. Christopher Stillwell, in “Authentic Video as Passport to Cultural Participation and Understanding,” presents a series of questions for teachers to ask when selecting video materials and tasks for learners. He suggests various activities to engage students in repeated viewings using subtitles and other textual supports, and he presents resources for using video in class.

The final five chapters in this section focus on computer media in language teaching. Timothy R. Healy’s students went to local restaurants and wrote authentic reviews in a blog (“Sharing the Food and Fun Through Restaurant-Review Blogs: An Integrated-Skills Project Approach”). Stages in the writing process as well as electronic literacies are practiced as students write for an authentic purpose: sharing their ideas on local restaurants. In an interactive learning project between students in Canada and the United Arab Emirates, Geoffrey P. J. Lawrence, Terry Compton, Clayton Young, and Hazel Owen describe a wiki they used for collaborative writing projects focusing on research of a famous person (“Using Wikis for Collaborative Writing and Intercultural Learning”). The authors provide step-by-step suggestions for such online collaborations. In “Developing Specialized Discourse Resources for International Teaching Assistants Using a Multimedia Wiki,” Barbara Gourlay, David Kanig, Joan Lusk, and Stewart Mader present materials and activities they have devised for graduate students (international teaching assistants) to improve their pronunciation of discipline-specific vocabulary. They describe a series of activities chemistry students can use in developing their comprehensibility. Kathleen Snyder-Parampil and Joel Hensley have their students create virtual portfolios on YouTube (“I Tube . . . Do YouTube? Virtual Portfolios for Reflective Learning and Peer Review”). They show how this Internet resource can be used as a private class forum where students can post video assignments online and critique and comment on each others’ work. Finally, Susan Olmstead-Wang uses Webcasts of medical professionals at conferences to assist faculty at her university in Taiwan to develop professional presentation skills (“Medical Doctors Using Authentic
Webcast Lectures to Learn Lexical Phrases”). By focusing on lexical phrases that mark discourse structures, these medical professionals can improve their professional conference presentation skills.

All the chapters in this volume demonstrate that authenticity is more than just the materials we use. Authenticity also means using language for real purposes. It means engaging students in collaborative learning, involving discussions, negotiations, and decision-making. Authenticity is creating real uses for English, not just holding native-speaker language and culture as the sole model. With English increasingly being used as a lingua franca to connect second language speakers, authenticity takes on new meanings as we seek to develop learners who can face the challenge of communicating effectively in an increasingly globalized world.

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