

Real Things Shake Really: A Historical Review of Bad Communication/Rhetoric in *ELT Journal*

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While hailed around the field of English language teaching as a key term in the late twentieth century, *communication* has at the same time been a target of criticisms; it has been used in so sloppy a way as to lose any clear meaning. Only recently has this chaos started to be scrutinised, due to the development of corpus-linguistic tools. The present paper sheds light on how ‘communication’ has been described in connection with three reality-related adjectives: *real*, *authentic* and *genuine*. An analysis of a self-compiled electronic corpus comprising all available issues of *ELT Journal* suggests that the realness rhetoric and the communication rhetoric first met with each other in the late 1960s, took root together in the field in the late 1970s, strengthened their connection in the booming 1980s, attracted both sceptics’ and supporters’ attention in the late 1990s, and gradually dissolved their relationship in the 2000s.

20 世紀末の英語教育言説を華々しく彩った「コミュニケーション (communication)」という鍵語は、その用法の乱れゆえに数多の論者からの批判を受けてきた言葉でもあるが、その乱れぶりを詳細かつ精緻に論じた研究が登場してきたのは、コーパス言語学の手法が広く普及し、様々な言説の批判的分析にも応用され始めた 21 世紀になってからのことである。本稿はこのような潮流に呼応する形で、「コミュニケーション」という用語との結びつきの強さが指摘されている「本物らしさ」に関連した三つの形容詞 (real/authentic/genuine) に焦点を当て、イギリスの英語教育関連雑誌 *ELT Journal* を素材とした自作の電子コーパスを分析・通読することにより、「コミュニケーション」の言説と「本物らしさ」の言説が 1960 年代から 2000 年代の英語教育をめぐる議論のなかでどのように関係を強め (あるいは弱め) ていったのかを通時的に捉えようとする試みである。

1. Introduction

Granted that a rhetorical analogy could at best capture a partial similarity between two different things,¹ the following equation still seems to be a promising way to characterise the discursive field of English language teaching from the 1970s onwards:

¹ The present author is not arguing here against the cognitive linguistic view that ‘[o]ur ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3).

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communication is a superstar. A possible strength of this analogy is that it can illuminate both its positive and negative aspects; a superstar has a deserved number of fans as well as antis. While hailed around the field as a key term in the late twentieth century, *communication* (and its related term *communicative*) has at the same time been the target of criticisms since the earliest days of its prime: Widdowson voices a concern about the movement which proclaims ‘the primacy of communication in language,’ to the extent that ‘[t]here are signs . . . of distortion and excess in the understanding of ideas and their application to practical pedagogy’ (Widdowson, 1980, p. 234); Richards and Skelton mention the view of their contemporaries who refuse to use the term *communicative* since ‘it has come to mean little more than “good”’ (Richards & Skelton, 1989, p. 232); Harmer even goes so far as to say ‘[e]verything is “communicative” these days’ (Harmer, 1982, p. 164). In short, *communication* and *communicative* have been in chaos from the beginning.

What complicates the matter is that this terminological confusion may result not solely from a fuss made by fanatics; although the 21st-century field of English language teaching has witnessed an emergence of several critical attempts to reconsider the pedagogical concept of communication with a view to advancing a post-communicative way (e.g. Bax, 2003; Hu, 2005), the critics have therewith represented different ‘communicative’ and communication-related ideas and practices to be ‘packaged up as a kind of “standard CLT [Communicative Language Teaching]”,’ thus putting them into the ‘dustbin of history’ (Hunter & Smith, 2012, p. 430). The problem is not confined to the matters of *communication* and *communicative*; as some reviewers of the history have pointed out (e.g. Castagnaro, 2006; Cook, 2010; Scheffler, 2012), this dustbin approach has long been a common maneuver to sweep away such ‘old’ ideas as audiolingual method, translation and focus on forms, even though the newer, more favoured ones sometimes have no better justification than the advocates’ faith in unvalidated theoretical orthodoxies (Swan, 2005, p. 397).

It is only recently that the chaotic past in the communicative dustbin has started to be unpackaged, due to the development of corpus-linguistic tools. A pioneering study in this line of research is Hunter and Smith (2012), who gave both quantitative and qualitative analyses of a self-compiled corpus comprising of all articles from *ELT Journal* during a period from 1958 to 1986, in order to trace the historical process of how the discourse concerning CLT was formed. Their computer-based keywords analysis using WordSmith Tools and subsequent intensive reading of the articles met with findings which might subvert ‘the assumption that there was ever a wholly distinct, unitary, or “classical” CLT to be lightly superseded’ (Hunter & Smith, 2012, p. 430): while some supposedly ‘communicative’ ideas such as learner-centredness and task-orientedness showed historical continuity in the discourse independently of the 1980s’ upsurge in the use of *communicative*, there was also discursive discontinuity as regards other elements including, for instance, notional-functional principles of linguistic description.

Inspired by this attempt of Hunter and Smith is a piece of research reported by Kita (2015); regarding the 1980s as the apex of *communication* and *communicative* in the

discourse of English language teaching, Kita carried out a corpus-linguistic investigation into the issues of *ELT Journal* and *Applied Linguistics* published in that particular decade. Through a comparative analysis of the two journals with a specific focus on how communication-related words collocated with others, the study found on the one hand that the term *communication* was accompanied with an idiosyncratic frequency by such adjectives as *real*, *authentic* and *genuine*, but at the same time that almost all examples of these realness-related terms were used without any clear definition, thus ironically revealing that the eighties' discourse concerning communication in English language teaching was in chaos in a 'real' sense.

The study described in this paper is an extension of Kita's study mentioned just above, designed to probe into the dynamics of when, how and why the communication rhetoric and the realness rhetoric joined with (and possibly parted from) each other in the discourse of English language teaching, with attention paid to the days not only during but also before and after the eighties.

2. Methods

The present study is based on a corpus self-compiled with all electronically accessible articles of *ELT Journal* during a period from 1946 to 2014 (the following volumes, not found at NII-REO (<http://reo.nii.ac.jp>), are unavailable to the present author (year/issue.volume): 1953/8.2, 1959/13.3-13.4, 1960/14.3-14.4, 1967/22.1, 1968/22.2-22.3, 1970/25.1, 1971/25.2-25.3, 1979/34.1, 1980/34.2-34.4); the whole corpus is divided by publication year into mini-corpora, which can be reviewed either separately or collectively depending on the intended use. *Applied Linguistics*, included in Kita (2015) as another object for investigation, is not used here; first launched in 1980, this journal does not cover the pre-communicative era, the state of which partly constitutes what the present study aims to capture. *ELT Journal*, on the other hand, is one of the longest-lived journals in the field of English language teaching, and as such is more suitable for the present purpose.

The analysis is carried out along both quantitative and qualitative paths with the aid of AntConc (version 3.2.4) (Anthony, 2011). This multi-functional concordancer contains several tools, three of which play a role at each step of the research. Word List Tool counts all the words in a given corpus; by processing individual mini-corpora one by one as input, the tool can count communication-related words and realness-related words found in each year, thus helping grasp a general tendency concerning the two rhetorical strands. Collocates Tool shows a list of words co-occurring with a particular search term, with the association strength of each collocating pair indicated by a mutual information (MI) score; detecting changes and shifts in collocational association may yield a clue for describing how and explaining why the communication rhetoric and the realness rhetoric have come (and possibly ceased) to interact with each other. Concordance Tool shows in a 'KWIC' (KeyWord In Context) format how communication-related words and realness-related words are commonly used in the corpus; the analysis and interpretation of each example is done by the present author's intensive reading, which may support or contradict the quantitative

results gained through the other two tools.

3. Results and analyses

3.1 Changes in frequencies

If Kita (2015) is right in pointing out that the communication rhetoric formed a strong connection with the realness rhetoric in the eighties’ discourse of English language teaching, the problem is whether this is a temporary phenomenon found in that specific decade; the first step towards answering this question is to see the two rhetorical strands in isolation and thus examine how each of them has been created in the course of discursive history.

Some clues are gained from Figures 1 and 2, which show yearly changes of normalised frequencies of two communication-related words (*communication* and *communicative*) and three realness-related words (*real*, *authentic* and *genuine*) in *ELT Journal*. As indicated in Figure 1, after the appearance of a sign in the mid-seventies the biggest turn of the tide comes in the eighties; the averaged normalised frequencies (per million words) of *communication* and *communicative* in the seventies are 441.79 and 144.97, while the figures for the eighties vault to 817.74 and 1184.56 (for comparison, the figures for the academic writing part of British National Corpus (hereafter BNC-aca) are 104.42 and 20.48, suggesting a peculiarly disproportionate emphasis laid on the communication-related terms in the field of English language teaching). Although this boom seems to have been cooled down by the nineties, the frequencies of the communication-related words have generally remained at a higher level than those before the seventies; a possibly interesting move is a temporary drop in the late noughties, even though it is not so dramatic as to imply the ‘end of CLT’ (Bax, 2003, p. 278).

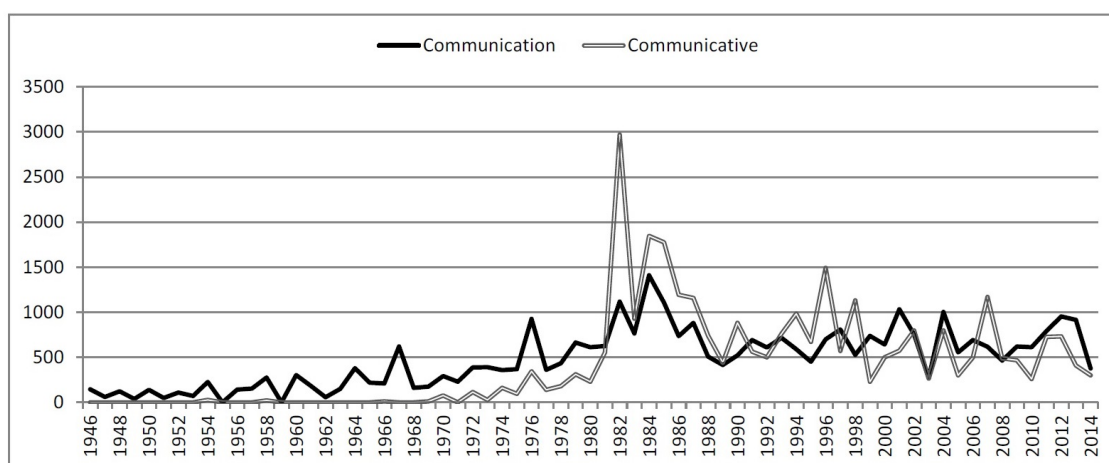


Figure 1. Frequency of *communication* and *communicative* in *ELT Journal*, by PPM.

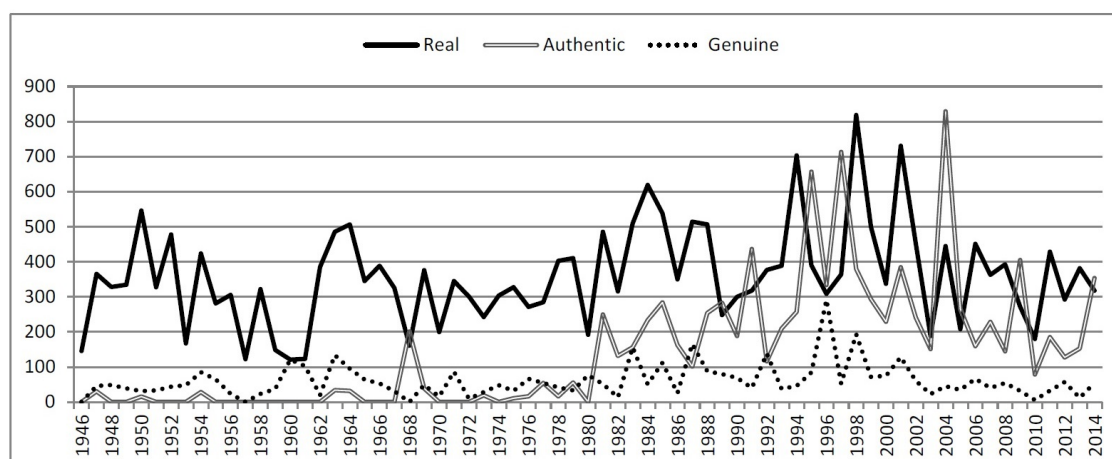


Figure 2. Frequency of *real*, *authentic* and *genuine* in *ELT Journal*, by PPM.

Turning to Figure 2, what is first to be noted is the smaller divisions on the vertical axis; changes and shifts concerning the realness-related words have been occurring at a smaller scale than those concerning the communication-related words. Nevertheless, there are two visible similarities between Figures 1 and 2. One is the generally higher frequencies of the keywords after rather than before 1980: the averaged normalised frequencies of *real*, *authentic* and *genuine* up to the seventies are 311.64, 16.18 and 47.04, each of which rises from the eighties onwards to 405.30, 267.80 and 73.06 respectively (the figures for BNC-aca are 238.40, 10.83 and 43.44, suggesting that especially the increase of *authentic* is peculiar to the field of English language teaching). The other, less prominent similarity is a slight decrease of the keywords in the early nineties and the late noughties; although these specific periods do not attract so much attention as the eighties in any review of the discursive history concerning ‘communication’ in English language teaching, they may also be worth consideration as possible focal points for the present purpose of ascertaining whether there is any interrelation between the communication rhetoric and the realness rhetoric.

However, these impressionistic parallels in the three periods present a different, more sharply-outlined face when the graphs are drawn on the same scale. In Figure 3, which shows combined normalised frequencies of the two communication-related words and of the three realness-related words, the shapes of the two graphs are not as analogous as expected in the eighties and the early nineties; they do not appear to be moving in tandem with each other. On the other hand, the graphs of the late nineties and the noughties draw similar shapes, going in step with one another on jagged peaks and valleys. These observations are also supported by a statistical method: when using year-by-year values of the two graphs as variables, Pearson’s correlation coefficients for the 15-year periods of 1980-94 and 1995-2009 are 0.14 and 0.62 respectively; limiting the scope to 1997-2004, the figure goes further up to 0.85. Regardless of the cause, these figures alone give sufficient reason for closer scrutiny.

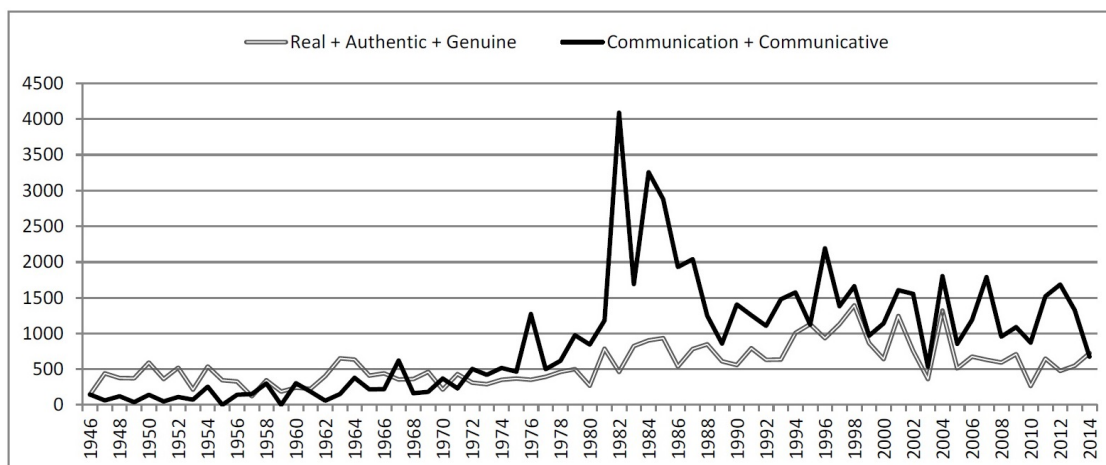


Figure 3. Combined frequencies of *real/authentic/genuine* and *communication/communicative* in *ELT Journal*, by PPM.

3.2 Trends in collocational association

One possible way to gain deeper insight into the relation between the communication rhetoric and the realness rhetoric is to examine how the words related to the two rhetorical strands collocate with each other in the discursive history. In Tables 1 and 2, the left three columns list the words most likely to follow the realness-related adjectives *real*, *authentic* and *genuine*, while the rightmost column lists those most likely to precede the noun *communication*; the appearance of the phrase *real/authentic/genuine communication* can be interpreted as a sign that the two rhetorical strands intersect with one another.

3.2.1 Collocates of realness-related words

The left three columns indicate that each of the three realness-related words tends to play a different role in the discourse of English language teaching. The oldest of all, *real*, has its long-standing friend, *life*, whose association with the partner continues from the earliest issue of *ELT Journal* through to the latest one with remarkable strength; probably the second closest friend is a relatively newer face, *world*, whose link with *real* becomes first prominent in the early eighties. The conspicuous co-occurrence of these two words with *real* may suggest that this keyword has most often been used to refer to the life or world outside classroom, which is in contrast recognised as an ‘unreal’ place.

By comparison, the collocational relation between *real* and *communication* is notable in two senses. First, their bond is neither so enduring nor so powerful: *communication* is included in the frequent collocates of *real* only during the specific period between the early sixties and the late nineties, with two breaks of the early seventies and the early nineties; further, its association with *real* is not so strong as that of *life* or *world*. Secondly, despite the apparent relative weakness of their link, the collocational pair of *real* and *communication* is among those whose association strength is idiosyncratically high inside but not outside the discourse of English

language teaching; considering there is no example of *real communication* found in BNC-aca (as shown in Tables 1 and 2), the interrelation of the communication rhetoric and the realness rhetoric may rightly be regarded as a phenomenon characteristic of the field of English language teaching.

A similar pattern is also found around the collocational relationship between *authentic* and *communication*: suddenly growing in frequency in the eighties' discourse of *ELT Journal*, the term *authentic* has always been closely connected with such words as *text(s)* and *material(s)*, in relation to which *authentic* seems likely to be used in describing the type, source or quality of English given to learners, in the sense of 'native-like,' 'non-artificial' or 'natural'; on this background, the phrase *authentic communication*, again not the most typical pair among others, increases its presence with uniquely great association strength in a limited period between the early nineties and the early noughties. Slightly different, and perhaps more interesting, is the link between *genuine* and *communication*: *genuine* has never been quite a popular word in *ELT Journal*; however, there is a small increase in its frequency in the eighties and nineties, when it co-occurs with *communication* so often as to indicate that *genuine* has no other close friend. The problem here is that, since *genuine* has few prominent collocates except *communication*, for the present it is impossible even to make a guess at what is usually meant by this realness-related adjective.

3.2.2 Collocates of *communication*

All in all, the three realness-related words in *ELT Journal* have each formed a characteristic relationship with *communication*. This same relationship can be captured with a clearer image when reviewed from the standpoint of *communication*.

As shown in the rightmost column of Tables 1 and 2, in the discourse of *ELT Journal* the term *communication* does not seem to have any intimate partner with a predominantly strong bond; for many collocates of this keyword, the MI score for *ELT Journal* is close to or lower than that for BNC-aca, implying that their co-occurrence with *communication* can well be expected from the common usage. It is in this context that the three realness-related adjectives exhibit their distinctive position: they are among those few words whose MI scores for *ELT Journal* are higher than could be predicted from the general tendency of the English language; in other words, the realness-related brothers are friends of *communication* only in the discourse of English language teaching. Further notable is that the eldest of the three brothers, *real*, may be the very first friend of *communication* found in this discursive field (their association becomes visible as early as in the late sixties); whatever its specific role may be, the term *real* is the most representative of the field-specific friends of *communication* until the late eighties.

The situation begins to change in the early nineties, when there is a temporary breakoff between the realness-related adjectives and *communication*; although their connection is to be restored later, *communication* now starts to establish collocational links with several other field-specific friends including *intercultural*, *professional*, *(computer-)mediated* and *engineering*, thus rendering the position of the realness-related adjectives comparatively lower than before. This trend seems to be

Table 1. *Collocates of real, authentic, genuine and communication in ELT Journal, 1946-94*

Real				Authentic				Genuine				Communication							
	freq.	MI	(BNC)		freq.	MI	(BNC)		freq.	MI	(BNC)		freq.	MI	(BNC)				
1946-49				real 78				authentic 2				genuine 10				communication 18			
conversation	14	8.9	-																
life	5	7.1	5.6																
1950-54				real 99				authentic 2				genuine 11				communication 28			
situations	10	8.2	5.0																
life	8	7.4	5.6																
1955-59				real 48				authentic 0				genuine 6				communication 23			
1960-64				real 89				authentic 4				genuine 22				communication 50			
life	17	8.9	5.6																
situations	8	7.5	5.0																
1965-69				real 128				authentic 9				genuine 17				communication 99			
life	12	8.1	5.6									real	5	7.2	-				
communication	5	7.2	-																
1970-74				real 176				authentic 2				genuine 16				communication 174			
life	24	9.3	5.6									wider	5	8.5	-				
sense	5	6.9	4.8									international	9	8.4	9.6				
situations	5	6.5	5.0									oral	5	5.9	6.0				
1975-79				real 267				authentic 17				genuine 26				communication 308			
life	54	9.5	5.6									real	8	6.3	-				
chair	6	9.4	-																
communication	8	6.3	-																
situations	6	5.9	5.0																
1980-84				real 228				authentic 91				genuine 35				communication 433			
life	37	9.0	5.6	texts	8	7.3	-					verbal	8	7.1	7.7				
world	23	8.0	6.7	listening	10	7.2	-					successful	7	6.5	5.8				
content	14	6.3	-	materials	7	6.1	5.8					international	5	6.3	9.6				
communication	14	6.1	-									face	5	6.2	-				
situations	6	6.1	5.0									real	14	6.1	-				
												personal	6	6.1	7.8				
1985-89				real 230				authentic 88				genuine 50				communication 390			
life	38	9.3	5.6	materials	21	7.6	5.8	communication	11	8.3	5.4	nonverbal	10	9.8	10.1				
world	21	8.0	6.7	material	10	7.5	4.5					genuine	11	8.3	5.4				
past	7	6.4	-	texts	9	7.1	-					verbal	15	7.7	7.7				
non-past	9	6.0	-	listening	6	6.5	-					real	8	5.6	-				
communication	8	5.6	-									oral	7	5.5	6.0				
1990-94				real 272				authentic 157				genuine 43				communication 424			
life	34	8.6	5.6	tv	7	9.1	-					intercultural	6	9.5	-				
playing	14	8.2	-	scripted	8	9.0	-					focused	17	8.0	-				
world	34	7.9	6.7	texts	21	7.4	-					oral	8	6.5	6.0				
audience	5	7.2	-	material	8	6.8	4.5					professional	11	6.1	-				
purpose	8	6.2	4.1	materials	13	6.0	5.8					business	6	5.5	3.2				
play	6	5.9	-									successful	5	5.5	5.8				
time	16	5.2	-									international	5	5.4	9.6				
life	5	7.1	5.62									cultural	11	5.2	-				

Table 2. *Collocates of real, authentic, genuine and communication in ELT Journal, 1995-2014*

Real				Authentic				Genuine				Communication							
	freq.	MI	(BNC)		freq.	MI	(BNC)		freq.	MI	(BNC)		freq.	MI	(BNC)				
1995-99				real 310				authentic 310				genuine 88				communication 417			
life	44	9.1	5.6	materials	105	8.0	5.8	communication	20	8.5	5.4	intercultural	7	9.6	-				
world	34	7.7	6.7	texts	21	6.9	-	interaction	7	7.0	-	mediated	6	9.0	-				
reader	14	7.2	-	communication	9	5.5	-	communicative	7	6.6	-	genuine	20	8.5	5.4				
communication	15	6.2	-	speech	5	5.1	5.1					natural	11	6.8	3.8				
spoken	6	5.8	-	data	6	5.0	-					oral	15	6.6	6.0				
time	17	5.5	-	text	8	4.5	-					real	15	6.2	-				
data	6	5.0	-	listening	6	4.4	-					effective	9	5.9	5.4				
												cultural	12	5.9	-				
												international	9	5.8	9.6				
												personal	8	5.5	7.8				
												authentic	9	5.5	-				
2000-04				real 291				authentic 247				genuine 45				communication 501			
world	96	9.1	6.7	interactions	10	8.7	-					mediated	8	9.7	-				
life	43	8.7	5.6	data	18	7.1	-					engineering	8	8.4	-				
lives	7	8.0	-	texts	23	7.0	-					intercultural	11	7.9	-				
thing	5	6.9	5.6	materials	17	6.2	5.8					natural	23	7.8	3.8				
situations	5	6.3	5.0	material	9	6.1	4.5					technical	5	7.4	-				
				communication	11	5.9	-					oral	15	6.3	6.0				
												authentic	11	5.9	-				
												cultural	22	5.7	-				
												international	7	5.1	9.6				
2005-09				real 248				authentic 169				genuine 33				communication 419			
estate	17	10.6	6.5	corpus	7	7.0	-					mediated	6	9.4	-				
life	37	9.1	5.6	input	6	7.0	-					intercultural	26	8.8	-				
world	33	8.0	6.7	texts	13	6.8	-					interactive	8	7.3	-				
time	7	4.5	-	materials	8	6.0	4.5					successful	13	7.2	5.8				
				text	6	5.1	-					international	21	7.1	9.6				
												meaningful	6	6.8	5.6				
												personal	13	6.6	7.8				
												effective	5	5.2	5.4				
2010-14				real 291				authentic 160				genuine 30				communication 676			
life	42	9.1	5.6	texts	21	7.9	-					intercultural	73	9.3	-				
world	53	8.5	6.7	materials	14	6.9	5.8					mediated	12	8.6	-				
texts	14	6.4	-									workplace	5	6.5	-				
time	24	6.1	-									oral	16	6.3	6.0				
non-past	7	5.7	-									business	12	6.0	3.2				
												international	20	5.8	9.6				
												successful	8	5.8	5.8				
												ELF	21	5.7	-				
												effective	13	5.5	5.4				
												life	6	5.1	-				

Note. The list includes only those collocates whose raw frequency is higher than or equal to 5 and whose MI score is higher than or equal to 5.0. The raw frequency of each keyword in each designated period is indicated in the top row of each section. The following are abbreviations and symbols used in Tables 1 and 2: freq. = frequency; MI = mutual information score; (BNC) = mutual information for BNC-aca.

further accelerated after the late noughties, when the realness-related words sever their connection with *communication* again. While the first five years of the present decade see a slight increase in frequency both of the realness-related words and *communication*, nevertheless it does not lead to repairing their relation; rather the noun *communication* associates closely with such words as *intercultural*, *(computer-)mediated*, *workplace*, *business* and *ELF (English as a Lingua Franca)*. If this may imply that the realness rhetoric has no more use for the communication rhetoric, the next question is why, which cannot be answered without giving a minute analysis of each specific example.

3.3 Meanings of real/authentic/genuine communication

With a rough chart drawn by quantitative means, the final step of the study is to qualitatively complement it by reading through each article and thus probing deeper into the dynamics of the realness rhetoric and the communication rhetoric; the results are summarised in Tables 3 and 4. The asterisks in the second column indicate that the author concerned uses *real/authentic/genuine* in connection with *communication*, while the ones in the third column denote what those realness-related adjectives are most likely to mean: Close (1966), for instance, uses *real* in the sense of ‘valid outside classroom’; Ellis (1982) uses *authentic*, though its meaning is unclear.

Kita (2015) reports his finding that, as far as the articles of *ELT Journal* and *Applied Linguistics* published in the eighties are concerned, the three realness-related adjectives can be interpreted to describe *communication* in four different (but sometimes overlapping) senses: *communication* tends to be considered *real/authentic/genuine* when it (a) requires active learner involvement, (b) has some validity outside classrooms, (c) entails dynamic/complex interaction, or (d) has some practical meanings/purposes. The third column of Tables 3 and 4 incorporates this same framework, simply because the present author’s intensive reading and coding has guaranteed that it can well explain most examples found in the corpus used in the present study.

More specifically, the present author read through all concordance lines including the keywords and annotated (or coded) them according to their plausible meanings in context; each of these examples was further reviewed in a larger context by listing them with 50-100 words before and after the keywords, so as to confirm the validity of the first interpretation. A possible weakness in this approach lies in the fact that the analysis was conducted only by one human reader (i.e. the present author); there is some room for subjectivity to come in. Presented below is thus no more or no less than one, arguably plausible, interpretation of the discourse.

The following review divides the discursive history into four periods, each showing a characteristic trend in the light of the relation between the realness rhetoric and the communication rhetoric (all emphases in the sample texts are the present author’s).

Table 3. *Meanings of real, authentic and genuine used in connection with communication in ELT Journal, 1946-1989*

	R A G	Active learner involvement	Validity outside classrooms	Dynamic/complex interaction	Practical meanings/purposes
1965-1969					
Close (1966)	*		*		
Raz (1969a)	*	*		*	
Raz (1969b)	*	*		*	
1970-1974					
Moody (1973)	*				*
Townson (1973)	*		*	*	
1975-1979					
Kharna (1977)	*				*
Sonka (1977)	*		*	*	*
Taylor (1977)	*	*			*
Farid (1978)	*			*	*
Olsen & Gosak (1978)	*	*			
Rixon (1979)	*	*			*
1980-1984					
Adams-Smith (1980)	*	*			
+ Abbott (1981)	*		*		*
Gefen (1981)	*				
Meziani (1981)	*	*			
Salimbene (1981)	*	*		*	*
Scarborough (1981)	*	*		*	*
Whiteson (1981)	*		*	*	
Ellis (1982)		*			
Bolitho et al. (1983)	*	*			
Skeleton & Swales (1983)		*			*
Edge (1984)	*	*		*	*
Li (1984)	*	*	*		*
Sano et al. (1984)	*			*	
1985-1989					
Dinsmore (1985)	*	*	*	*	
Kerr (1985)	*	*		*	*
Simmonds (1985)	*				*
+ Swan (1985)		*		*	*
+ Atkinson (1987)	*	*	*	*	*
Chimombo (1987)	*	*	*		
Gardner (1987)	*			*	*
Morrow & Schocker (1987)	*	*	*	*	
Nunan (1987)		*		*	*
Robinson (1987)	*				*
Charge & Giblin (1988)	*				*

Table 4. *Meanings of real, authentic and genuine used in connection with communication in ELT Journal, 1995-2014*

	R A G	Active learner involvement	Validity outside classrooms	Dynamic/complex interaction	Practical meanings/purposes
1995-1999					
Boxer & Pickering (1995)	*		*	*	
Jones & Evans (1995)	*			*	
Lee (1995)	* *	*			
Seedhouse (1995)	* *	*			
Wong, Kwok & Choi (1995)	* * *		*		
+ Seedhouse (1996)				*	
Thornbury (1996)	*	*		*	*
Clennell (1997)			*		*
+ Cook (1997)	*				*
Lynch (1997)	*			*	*
+ Seedhouse (1997)	* * *				*
Thompson (1997)	*			*	*
+ Cullen (1998)	* *		*	*	
Nunan (1998)			*	*	
Storch (1998)	*				
Bowers & Markee (1999)					*
Sinclair (1999)	*			*	
Skinner & Austin (1999)	*	*			*
2000-2004					
Cotterall (2000)	*				
Spratt & Leung (2000)	*	*			
Tajino & Tajino (2000)	* *	*		*	*
Guariento & Morley (2001)	* * *				*
Littlewood (2004)	*	*		*	*
Tardy & Snyder (2004)	*	*			
2005-2009					
Bourke (2006)					*
Farmer (2006)	*				
+ Hiep (2007)	* *		*		
Nazari (2007)	*				
Masuhara et al. (2008)	*	*			
Saito (2008)	* *	*	*		
2010-2014					
Paran (2012)	*	*	*		*
Evans (2013)	*			*	
Chappell (2014)		*			*
Clavel-Arroitia & Fuster- Márquez (2014)	* *				

Note. The following are abbreviations and symbols used in Tables 3 and 4: R = real; A = authentic; G = genuine; + = sceptical about the concept of 'real/authentic/genuine communication.'

3.3.1 Before the eighties

Although, as mentioned in Section 3.2, the terms *real* and *communication* appear to have started their close association in the late sixties, this is unlikely to have been a movement involving the whole discursive field; of all five examples of *real communication* in the sixties' corpus, four come from the articles by the same author, Hana Raz (1969a; 1969b).

That said, in her uses of the phrase is a sign indicative of how it is later to be handled by others; the word *real* is often linked to *communication* with multiple meanings mixed. The following is an example:

It is not the ingenuity of the teacher in devising visual aids that will count, in the long run, but the way he uses them: the care with which he plans his work and leads his pupils, step by step, from the simple, basic structures to the more complex ones, and from simple repetitive drill to **real communication**, by gradually relaxing his guidance and by allowing the pupils more and more freedom to make their own comments and express their own ideas. (Raz, 1969a, p. 226)

Here Raz on the one hand characterises *real communication* as something with complex structures, and on the other hand associates it with pupils' 'freedom to make their own comments and express their own ideas.' Neither of these two features entails the other (pupils' own ideas could be communicated in simple structures; mechanical, non-spontaneous messages could be communicated in complex structures); there is no logically justifiable reason why they can at once be expressed in a single word *real*.

One more thing to be noted about the passage above is that the two 'real' features implied by Raz are not necessarily those of communication 'outside classroom' (as in the case of *real life* or *real world*); they may better be described as those 'longed for but difficult to achieve in classroom.' In this sense the use of the word *real* may in itself reflect the author's discontent about (and intention to challenge) the status quo of English language teaching.

Judging from the number of authors using *real communication*, it may be the late seventies rather than the late sixties that could better be regarded as the period when the phrase began to take root in the discourse of *ELT Journal*. In either case, before the eighties the term *real* is the only realness-related adjective that had any connection with *communication*, bestowing its collocational partner a praise whose meaning was often unclear.

3.3.2 The eighties

Throughout the eighties there seems to have been little change in the basic relationship between the communication rhetoric and the realness rhetoric; *communication* is the name of something to be desired in English language teaching, and its desirability is justified for the vague reason that it is 'real.' What changed in this specific decade is the popularity of these rhetorical strands; the realness of 'communication' was

commended not only by an increasing number of authors, but also in different ways. In fact, it is the eighties that the other two brothers, *authentic* and *genuine*, joined the realness squad.

It may not be productive to discuss functional differences between the three brothers. As in the following example by Li, the realness-related adjectives were often used interchangeably even in a single article by a single author (incidentally, Li's argument is interestingly tautological; what Li is saying is that 'real' is 'authentic,' 'authentic' is 'real,' and, whatever it may mean, 'communication' is 'real/authentic'):

Making the students learn through use naturally implies that the target language they come into contact with should be **real**, that is, **authentic**, appropriate, and 'global'. Quite a number of teachers seem to take the term '**authentic** language' to mean standard native speaker language. In fact, it means language that is actually used in **real communication** situations, as opposed to language that is artificially made up for purposes other than communication. (Li, 1984, p. 5)

The only, if any, difference that can explain the difference between the three realness-related adjectives is the preference of each individual author. David Nunan, for example, shows a particular liking for *genuine* over the other two options:

. . . **genuine communication** is characterized by the uneven distribution of information, the negotiation of meaning . . . , topic nomination and negotiation by more than one speaker, and the right of interlocutors to decide whether to contribute to an interaction or not. In other words, in **genuine communication**, decisions about who says what to whom and when are up for grabs. (Nunan, 1987, p. 137)

As regards the eighties it is also worth mentioning that there were a few writers who cast a sceptical eye on the cozy relationship between the two rhetorical friends. The following passage of Abbott is one of the earliest criticisms that were hurled at the pedagogical concept of 'real communication':

Most of the world's learners of English are schoolchildren. . . . Most of these schoolchildren are too young or too distant from any **real communication** in English to have any identifiable 'needs' in terms of instrumental or sentimental motivation. Their teachers are engaged in what I have for some years called TENOR: the Teaching of English for No Obvious Reason—no reason obvious to the learner, that is. (Abbott, 1981, p. 228)

The difficulty of such a criticism lies in the fact that it cannot strike a decisive blow to the target as a whole. Even though Abbott is successful in pointing out that validity outside classroom could be invalidity in classroom, this is merely to illuminate one facet of the amorphous and evasive concept; his criticism may even seem beside the point to those who believe, for instance, that the essence of 'real communication' is its complex interactive structure. Thus *communication* expanded its empire, with the

cunning aides-de-camp on its side.

3.3.3 The nineties

After the happy decade the discourse of *ELT Journal* took on a different aspect for the two rhetorical strands; in the early nineties they suddenly cut their visible connection. It may be too simplistic to attribute this change to the decline of the communication rhetoric; although this period saw a relative lessening of the use of the communication-related words, its main factor is the decrease of *communicative*, while the frequency of *communication* stayed at a high level (see Figure 1).

A possible alternative interpretation is that, after the frenetic boom, contributors to *ELT Journal* started to give sober reflection on the meaning of communication. One piece of collateral evidence comes from Tables 1 and 2: as mentioned in Section 3.2, *communication* in the nineties began to establish strong links with such terms as *intercultural*, *cultural*, (*computer-*)*mediated* and *professional*. On the one hand they are similar to the realness-related adjectives in terms of their idiosyncratically high frequency in the particular field of English language teaching; on the other hand those newer field-specific friends have a clearer and more specific meaning than the realness brothers, indicating the more focused eyes of those authors discussing communication.

Another piece of evidence is found in the discourse of the late nineties, when the communication rhetoric and the realness rhetoric appear to have restarted their association: their apparent reunion may be due to the increase of the critics who directly problematised their fishy ties in the eighties. For example, the following passage by Cullen fiercely criticises Nunan's argument, mentioned in the previous section, by quoting his own words (notably, Cullen here uses the phrase *authentic communication*, which is not the favoured choice of Nunan himself; this again proves the interchangeability of the realness-related adjectives):

Would it be true to say . . . that in **genuine communication**, decisions about who says what to whom are 'up for grabs'? It might be generally true of informal gatherings of groups of friends, but certainly not of more formal gatherings, such as staff or board-room meetings. Communication at such events tends to follow a very different pattern, determined by their own rules and conventions, but that does not make it any less '**genuine**' or **authentic**. (Cullen, 1998, p. 181)

Seedhouse also makes pointed reference to Nunan, severely refuting his 'wrong' assumption that '[t]here is such a thing as genuine or natural communication' (Seedhouse, 1996, p. 17).

This is not to say that the nineties' wind was blowing predominantly against the concept of real/authentic/genuine communication; its critics were outnumbered by its supporters in the late nineties (see Table 4), with the sloppy uses of the realness-related adjectives unchanged. Whether for pros or cons, it seems plausible that the phrase *real/authentic/genuine communication* had been widely recognised by the end of the nineties.

3.3.4 From the noughties onwards

Presumably the attack in the late nineties may have been more effective than could be expected from the number of critics; after the turn of the century there was a dramatic decrease in the use of the phrase *real/genuine communication*. Even the final link of the chain between the realness rhetoric and the communication rhetoric, *authentic communication*, did not have an enduring strength; of the total of 11 examples in the early noughties' corpus, six are used in a single article, Tajino and Tajino (2000) (cf. Tables 2 and 4). Indeed the noughties can rightly be regarded as the decade of the gradual decline of the two rhetorical allies; they may have shared the same fate exactly because of their connection (hence the high correlation coefficient mentioned in Section 3.1).

However, this does not mean the death of the two rhetorical strands. In the present decade, the realness brothers are still lurking tenaciously in the discourse of *ELT Journal*. More significantly, the term *communication* has been regaining its footing with the aid of a new adjutant, *intercultural*; maintaining some connection since the early nineties, now it is the representative collocate of *communication* used with an overwhelmingly high frequency (see Table 2). For the present it is not clear how these two keywords have come to associate with each other—a topic worth another study.²

4. Conclusion

A possible conclusion drawn from all the results and analyses of the present study can be summarised as follows: in the discourse of English language teaching, the realness rhetoric and the communication rhetoric first met with each other in the late sixties, took root together in the field in the late seventies, strengthened their connection in the booming eighties, attracted both sceptics' and supporters' attention in the late nineties, and gradually dissolved their relationship in the noughties. The biggest reason for their alliance seems to be their shared vagueness; *communication*, a term vaguely referring to something ideal for English classroom, could most conveniently be decorated by adjectives laden with similarly vague praises for something ideal. In this sense the phrase *real/authentic/genuine communication* may be the product of the discursive frenzy in the eighties; now that the magic spell has already been broken, it is unlikely to work well in any academic or pedagogical discussion.

Since the present study has dealt only with a corpus compiled from one specific journal, the tentative conclusion above may better be considered a hypothesis for further study. Do real things still shake somewhere else? If so, *communication* might be a superstar there.

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² Kita (in press) reports a study in this direction.

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