



IMPACT OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

The provided article explores the role of authentic materials in the process of learning a foreign language. The article examines the advantages of using authentic texts, audio and video materials, such as newspapers, magazines, films, songs and Internet resources, compared with traditional textbooks. The author analyze the impact of authentic materials on the development of language competence, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and communication skills.

The article also examines the problems associated with the use of authentic materials, such as the level of difficulty, cultural differences, adaptation to the level of students and the availability of resources. In conclusion, the authors offer recommendations for the effective use of authentic materials in the process of teaching a foreign language, emphasizing the importance of an integrated approach, individual learning and the creation of a motivating language environment.

INTRODUCTION

The spontaneous use of authentic materials – a fantastic concept. It is about embracing the accidental moments where real-world language pops up in the classroom, turning them into learning opportunities.

The traditional language classroom, with its strict submission to textbooks and pre-planned lessons, can sometimes feel like a sterile, artificial environment. Students, hungry for real-world connections, may find themselves yearning for a taste of the language as it's actually spoken and used. This is where the spontaneous use of authentic materials comes in, injecting a powerful dose of dynamism and relevance into the learning experience. Imagine, for instance, a student bringing in a news article about a recent sporting event. This becomes a springboard for discussing sports vocabulary, analyzing the use of specific tenses, and even encouraging students to write their own summaries of the event. Or perhaps a lively debate erupts in class about a current event, sparking a deep exploration of vocabulary, different perspectives, and research skills. These spontaneous moments create a dynamic learning environment that feels authentic and engaging.

The benefits of this approach are undeniable. Students become more actively involved in the learning process, seeing the practical application of language skills and developing a deeper understanding of its real-world relevance. The classroom becomes a vibrant space for exploration, critical thinking, and collaborative learning.

However, harnessing the power of spontaneous authentic materials requires a shift in mindset and a commitment to flexibility. Teachers must be alert observers, seizing the opportunity to weave real-world language into their lessons, while also considering the level of their students and ensuring appropriate scaffolding. Ultimately, the spontaneous use of authentic materials is a key to creating a dynamic, engaging, and relevant language learning experience. By embracing the unexpected and incorporating real-world language into the classroom, we can empower our students to become confident, capable communicators, ready to navigate the complexities of the world around them.

Richard R. Day, a professor in the Department of Second Language Studies, University of Hawaii, in his book «Teaching the New Basics» clearly defined the practical applications of authentic materials in language teaching. [1.101-103]. He strongly argues that authentic materials provide a more realistic and engaging experience for learners compared to traditional, contrived textbooks. Day goes beyond simply advocating for "authenticity" and delves into the practical aspects of using authentic materials effectively. He emphasizes that materials should be relevant to learners' needs and interests. The materials should be chosen based on the learners' level, background and goals. Learners ought to understand the context in which the materials used to fully grasp the meaning and intention. Day recognizes that using authentic materials effectively requires teachers to have the necessary skills and knowledge. He emphasizes the importance of teacher training and development programs to equip teachers with the expertise to integrate authentic materials into their teaching practices. He admits that teachers should provide support through activities like guided reading, listening comprehension or vocabulary exercises.

Day's "Teaching the New Basics" provides a practical and accessible guide for teachers looking to incorporate authentic materials into their language teaching. The book emphasizes the importance of relevance, context, adaptation, and learner autonomy in using authentic materials effectively.

IMPACT OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

Jeremy Harmer, a prominent figure in the field English language teaching, has made a research extensively about the use of authentic materials in the classroom. Harmer offers a straightforward definition of authentic materials: "Materials that are real, not created for the purposes of language learning." This emphasizes that the materials should be genuine, not specifically designed for language instruction.

He emphasizes that authentic materials bring real-world context into the classroom. Learners are exposed to language used in its natural environment, which helps them understand how language functions in real-life situations. This contrasts with the artificiality of many traditional textbooks. Harmer offers a straightforward definition of authentic materials: "Materials that are real, not created for the purposes of language learning." This emphasizes that the materials should be genuine, not specifically designed for language instruction. Moreover, he inspires teachers to use a wide range of authentic materials, including: news articles and websites, that expose learners to current events and various

perspectives; songs and music, that entertain learners and introduce vocabulary, grammar and different accents of a language; podcasts and radio programs that provide listening practice and expose learners to various speaking styles; real-life documents, that contain letters, emails, menus, advertisements, other documents that show practical site of a language skill. Harmer believes that using authentic materials can empower learners to become more independent language learners. He encourages teachers to guide students to explore authentic materials on their own, fostering a love for language and cultural exploration. Harmer's views on authentic materials are based on practicality and student-centered learning. He advocates for using real-world materials to make language learning more engaging, relevant, and culturally enriching. [2. 56-57].

In addition, another scholar, Michael Long had proved the significance of authentic materials and had shown the relevance of his focus on input and the importance of exposure to natural language in his seminal 1988 paper, titled as «The Role of Linguistic Environment in Second Language Acquisition». Long highlighted the importance of exposing learners to the full range of language features, including colloquialisms, idioms, and slang. He believed that learners should experience the language in its natural form, not a simplified or artificial version. Long argued that relying solely on simplified materials could put limitations to learners' exposure to the full complexity of the target language and hinder slower to the development of authentic communication skills. It's important to note that while Long advocated for authentic materials, he didn't dismiss the role of teachers or the need for pedagogical aid. He believed that teachers should carefully opt for and adapt authentic materials to meet learners' needs and provide necessary scaffolding to ensure comprehension.[3. 112-114]. Likewise to Mr.Long, Morrison had successfully shown the essence of authentic materials by establishing the concept of «authenticity» as a continuum, not a binary. He argued that materials could be more or less authentic based on their purpose, intended audience, degree of manipulation. He put the stress on the role of input in a language acquisition and argued for the importance of authentic input, as opposed to fabricated and simplified materials. [4. 14-17]

CONCLUSION

In the digital age, where information flows freely, authentic materials have become more crucial than ever for language learners. The internet provides a boundless sea of real-world content – news articles, blogs, social media, videos, podcasts – offering a dynamic and engaging way to experience the target language. This shift away from traditional textbooks allows learners to delve into topics that interest them, encounter diverse voices and perspectives, and connect with the language in a meaningful, culturally relevant way. By embracing the opportunities of the digital age, we empower language learners to become confident communicators, equipped to navigate the ever-evolving world of global communication. David Singleton emphasized the importance of context in understanding authenticity. He admits, that materials can only be considered authentic if they are presented in their original contexts, even if they are manipulated for pedagogical purposes. [5.41-42].

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