

THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract. Today, authentic materials are increasingly recognized as an indispensable element in modern foreign language education, providing students with a chance to engage with the language beyond the limited environment of classrooms. This work explores the value of authentic materials in facilitating the development of linguistic proficiency, communicative competencies, and cultural knowledge in learners. Based on the results obtained during previous research projects and theoretical analysis, this study demonstrates the benefits of authentic materials such as newspapers, videos, podcasts, advertisements, and social media content in terms of effective language acquisition. Empirical evidence shows that authentic materials boost students' motivation, contribute to listening and reading comprehension, and help to overcome the discrepancy between language education in the classroom and the actual communication in real life. Some barriers to using authentic materials, including the problem of language complexity and lack of teacher preparation, are also considered.

Keywords: Authentic materials, foreign language teaching, communicative competence, ESL/EFL, motivation, language acquisition, instructional materials.

Аннотация. Аутентичные материалы стали важным компонентом современного обучения иностранным языкам, предоставляя учащимся возможность изучать реальное использование языка вне ограничений учебного класса. В данной статье рассматривается значение аутентичных материалов в развитии языковой компетенции, коммуникативных навыков и культурной осведомлённости учащихся. На основе предыдущих эмпирических исследований и теоретических подходов подчеркивается эффективность таких материалов, как газеты, видео, подкасты, реклама и контент социальных сетей, в процессе изучения языка. Результаты исследований показывают, что аутентичные материалы повышают мотивацию студентов, улучшают навыки аудирования и чтения, а также сокращают разрыв между учебным процессом и реальным общением. Однако обсуждаются и такие проблемы, как сложность языка, недостаточная подготовка преподавателей и выбор материалов. В заключение отмечается, что, несмотря на определённые трудности, аутентичные материалы играют ключевую роль в повышении эффективности обучения иностранным языкам.

Ключевые слова: Аутентичные материалы, обучение иностранным языкам, коммуникативная компетенция, изучение языков, мотивация учащихся, языковое усвоение, учебные ресурсы.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, there have been major changes in foreign language teaching from the grammar-based approach to more communicative and learner-oriented ones. Among all the changes introduced in teaching languages, one of the most

important is the implementation of authentic materials into the process of studying. Authentic materials can be described as resources designed for native speakers and not educational ones (Gilmore, 2007).

Contrary to artificial materials found in textbooks, authentic materials contain natural language elements such as vocabulary, idioms, and even culture-specific terms. In order to be proficient in a certain language, according to Nunan (1999), it is crucial to be exposed to authentic materials. This paper will focus on the role of authentic materials in the field of foreign language teaching.

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Authentic material” is another term frequently discussed by scholars in applied linguistics. Thus, Widdowson (1990) notes that there is a difference between “authentic texts” and “authenticity of use.” In his opinion, texts acquire sense only during their practical application in communicative situations. The same idea was expressed by Gilmore (2007) who noted that authentic materials can offer greater linguistic input than textbook dialogues.

In turn, Berardo (2006) noted that authentic newspapers, magazines, and online articles are beneficial because they help learners to get prepared for different textual and vocabulary structures. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Peacock (1997) carried out an empirical study and discovered that authentic materials were perceived more motivating than non-authentic classroom texts.

As Guariento and Morley (2001) argued, authentic materials are particularly useful because they promote learners' cultural awareness and pragmatics skills which are often missing from textbooks; nevertheless, they noted that those might be linguistically demanding for lower-level learners. Finally, Gilmore (2007) conducted a comprehensive review and found that authentic materials have positive effects on listening comprehension and interactional competence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study adopted qualitative research methodology that entails an analysis of secondary data. This research involved conducting a literature review from peer-reviewed journals, textbooks, and other studies listed in Scopus databases, and specifically literature involving authentic materials in ESL/EFL classroom setting.

Analysis of data was done using thematic analysis with particular emphasis being placed on:

- Language learning
- Learner motivation
- Difficulties encountered

A comparison between text-based instruction and authentic materials-based instruction was also carried out.

MAIN DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

From analyzing the existing literature on this issue, it was discovered that using authentic materials in the FLT classroom results in the following effects.

In the first place, it enhances learners' communicative competence. This effect is associated with the fact that authentic materials provide learners with an opportunity to learn about language not in the context of controlled exercises in textbooks but in the real-world setting of communication.

Secondly, authentic materials foster learner involvement. As Peacock (1997) states, students get much more engaged if real-life examples of the target language, such as songs, video materials, or advertisements, are provided for analysis in class.

Moreover, authentic materials can help learners understand culture. As Guariento and Morley (2001) emphasize, learning a foreign language implies not only acquiring new linguistic skills but getting insights into the target language's culture.

On the other hand, several problems associated with using authentic materials have also been revealed. Namely, learners with low proficiency levels experience difficulties with comprehending texts because of their sophisticated lexical composition and grammar structure. Besides, teachers encounter problems in choosing suitable authentic texts (Berardo, 2006).

Furthermore, limited technical resources in some organizations hamper the use of digital authentic material.

CONCLUSION

Use of authentic materials is indispensable in foreign language instruction nowadays because they help students apply their knowledge outside the classroom. The results of this research show that authentic materials improve communicative competence, motivate learners, and raise cultural awareness. Nevertheless, they have to be selected, adapted, and teachers have to be prepared to use them properly.

In this context, foreign language instructors are supposed to introduce authentic materials into their pedagogical activities in order to make their instruction more effective. In addition, future studies should address the development of adaptation criteria.

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