



IMPORTANCE OF USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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Abstract: This article highlights the importance of using authentic materials in teaching English. Using authentic materials during the lesson makes lessons more interesting and engaging for students. Materials that are taken from the real world and not specially designed for educational purposes are considered authentic materials in teaching. As they create a natural atmosphere, authentic materials facilitate students' understanding of the world and their communicative competence.

Keywords: authentic materials, communicative competence, CLT, teaching, authenticity, listening and reading comprehension, cultural awareness.

Introduction.

Over the last few years learning and teaching foreign languages has become a prevalent topic in most countries. Therefore, finding effective ways and materials to learn language is considered an important task for researchers and educators. On that account, using authentic materials in teaching English is supported by many scientists. Many researchers have conducted their research on this topic and given different ideas about this term. Nuttall states that “authentic texts can be motivating because they are proof that the language is used for the real-life purpose by real people” [8]. As a result, learners can be motivated to study English and achieve their desired goals. Nunan gave this definition for authentic materials, “spoken or written materials, which are not intended for use in teaching” [7].

Literature Review

Using authentic materials is effective for several reasons. This was discussed by many scientists, for instance, Peacock states that when appropriate authentic materials are used in the classroom, it motivates students because these are more interesting and inspiring than artificial materials [10]. Because this kind of material helps them to fill gaps real world and the classroom. Also, using natural materials is



the best tool for improving learners' communicative skills. As Larsen-Freeman states one of the main characteristics of communicative language teaching (CLT) is using authentic materials [4]. Furthermore, Otte revealed that his study using authentic materials developed students listening comprehension skills and their motivation as well [9]. Because authentic materials are not unfamiliar like unnatural materials as they are everyday conversations of people. Apart from this, the effectiveness of authentic materials in reading comprehension is also confirmed by many researchers. In addition, one of the main advantages sides of using authenticity in teaching is increasing the cultural awareness of learners according to Garcia's opinion [2]. Sherman mentioned that the importance of authentic materials resides in the fact that "it is a window into culture" [12]. This is because authentic materials can reflect the real atmosphere of people's lives from other countries without adding other aspects to them.

Methodology

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of using authentic materials during the lesson in teaching English by asking some research questions from students. Also, this study helps to find out learner's attitudes toward using such kind of supplementary materials.

The research was conducted at an 8th school in Fergana city with the help of 10-11th grade students. This study is predicated on qualitative and quantitative research methods. Here are given questions for students:

1. Do you know about the term authentic materials in English?
2. What is your opinion on using authentic materials in teaching foreign languages?
3. Could you learn English easily and fast when your teacher used authentic materials in the lesson?
4. What kind of authentic materials are used in the lessons for enhancing listening and reading comprehension in your school?
5. What do you think using suitable and useful authentic materials require specific knowledge and qualifications from teachers? And do your teachers take your interests, level and needs into consideration when choosing authentic materials for your lessons?

Results and Discussion

These questions are specifically designed for students and they depict student's responses to using authentic materials. The interview consisted of 5 questions and 50 students' answers were collected for this study.



For the first question, 45 students answered that they are aware of authentic materials and also gave different definitions for this term. But only a few students couldn't expose the full meaning of authentic materials.

In the second question, answers showed that most students considered authentic materials as motivating and engaging as Otte and Thanajaro say. They noticed that learners' self-satisfaction and motivation showed enhancement after applying authentic materials in the classroom [9, 13]. What is more, they believed that authenticity helps them avoid the dullness of traditional textbooks. Dr Gareth Popkins' opinion finds its proof in this place: "Language textbooks can be boring and demotivating. They focus too much on dry grammar, impenetrable exercises, and dull texts" [1].

According to the third question, almost all students mentioned that they can learn the topic in English easily when their teachers use authentic materials during the lesson. This is because learners can find the relevance of the material to their own lives and it stimulates them to involve actively in the learning process. As a result, this can cause them to gain efficient outcomes by fostering their understanding. As Hyland states one of the most important advantages of using authentic materials is that it increases learners' motivation and reflects positively on the learning process [3].

Regarding the fourth question, learners gave different opinions about effective authentic sources. They mentioned that to improve their listening skills their teachers use various materials such as Radio and TV broadcasts, videos and movies, songs and lyrics, and podcasts. Learners claimed that as for reading comprehension, newspaper articles, sports reports, restaurant menus, short stories, and advertisements are used by their teachers.

In the fifth question of the student's interview, answers revealed that using appropriate authentic materials requires some qualification and knowledge from teachers. As a result of our survey, we divided them into some factors. First of all, teachers should possess strong language proficiency to evaluate the suitability and usefulness of authentic materials. This factor helps them to select supplementary materials that correspond with the learner's ability and proficiency level. Secondly, teachers have a deep comprehension of cultural context which is important in using authentic materials. Because authentic materials expose different aspects of other cultures like regional variations, social norms, idioms, and cultural references. All of these aspects are vital to deliver useful information to the students. One of the key factor that is demanded from teachers is pedagogical ability. Some authentic



materials could be difficult and some of the tasks may not be appropriate to the student's level and abilities. In such kind of situation, teachers should use their pedagogical creativity in order to make them accessible and easy to comprehend for the learners. Therefore, when selecting authentic materials learner's language level, their needs and interests should be taken into account to achieve desired goals. If teachers uses inappropriate material for the students it may leads to demotivation and discourage from learning target language. Some researchers hold the view of using authentic materials for advanced learners only. However according to Miller and McNeil's opinion, authentic material can be used for all learners even with lower level learners [5; 6].

Conclusion

According to scientists' opinions and based on the results, we can conclude that using authentic materials in the classroom is vital for every teacher as it has many advantageous sides. Data from interview showed that students confirmed the effectiveness of authentic materials rather than using materials which is specially designed for educational purposes. Adding to this, learners believed that they can learn easily and quickly with the help of authentic materials. This is considered such kind of supplementary materials as a useful tool to motivate students and help themselves expose to real language which is essential in the real world. Moreover, authentic materials can be appropriate for all grade levels. But there should be relevance between the content of materials and needs, interests and levels of students. For this reason, foreign language teachers should possess a certain level of proficiency and skills. When teachers could utilize authentic materials in the right place, the lesson can be successful and productive for both students and educators and it will bring enormous positive effect.

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