

TEACHING AUTHENTIC TEXTS OF LINGUOCULTURAL CONTENT AT
THE INITIAL STAGE OF TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**Narbayeva Madinabonu**

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Abstract

Students' ability to engage in independent speaking activities is closely linked to their interest and motivation in learning a foreign language. Studies show that learners, regardless of age, are especially drawn to the cultures and lifestyles of countries where the target language is spoken. This engagement creates significant opportunities to enhance the quality of language education and communication exercises. This article explores the significance of incorporating authentic teaching materials, with a particular focus on their role in reading instruction for foreign language learners

Keywords

Authentic teaching materials, language immersion, reading instruction, speech development, foreign language education.

Introduction

One crucial aspect of foreign language teaching is introducing students to new cultural perspectives, a field known as linguistic studies. This approach proves highly effective when students learn in an immersive environment, such as a country where the language is spoken. However, in secondary education, integrating language learning with cultural studies remains underutilized. Observations in educational settings suggest that students' motivation decreases when foreign language instruction excludes cultural elements. Research shows that students are more engaged when learning about the history, traditions, customs, beliefs, art, and everyday life of native speakers. For instance, when teachers introduce aspects of American and British

lifestyles—such as hobbies, etiquette, gestures, and superstitions—students show increased interest and actively participate in discussions. They compare these cultural aspects with their own, leading to a deeper and more meaningful understanding of both cultures.

Methods and Analysis

An analysis of language education materials reveals that textbooks often fail to reflect the real-life aspects of the country whose language is being studied. These real-world cultural and linguistic elements are essential for cognitive and humanistic learning. A key issue in language education is the need to balance universal and national cultural information while comparing foreign language facts with those of students' native languages and cultures. Authentic teaching materials, such as printed materials from the target-language countries—including theater and bus tickets, hotel guest cards, telegram forms, and theater programs—help engage students by offering real-world exposure.

Reading is not just an objective in itself but also a fundamental method for learning English. One essential goal of foreign language instruction is to equip students with the ability to read effectively in the target language. Successful language learning involves developing communication skills, and reading plays a vital role in this process. The social function of language extends beyond communication; it also serves as a means of personal development, cultural understanding, and economic and social progress.

For English learners, a key reading objective is the ability to quickly and independently comprehend texts such as newspaper or magazine articles. The goal is to enhance students' ability to read original, unfamiliar texts fluently, with appropriate speed and comprehension, depending on the reading purpose. In teaching reading, educators can incorporate partially adapted authentic materials, including newspaper and magazine articles, as well as fiction and nonfiction texts.

Professionals in any field require different reading skills, such as:

Scanning: Finding specific information in a text.

Skimming: Gaining a general idea of the content.

Detailed Reading: Understanding specific details and comprehending the full context of a text.

The communicative and sociocultural growth of students in foreign language learning is significantly enhanced through the proper application of linguistic and regional approaches in the classroom. This method promotes deeper language assimilation by integrating cultural aspects, including historical, literary, architectural, and social elements such as traditions, customs, and everyday life of native speakers.

1. Skimming (Viewing) Reading

This type of reading aims to give students a general idea about the subject matter of a text or book, helping them identify key topics or locate specific information. To achieve this, students can scan headings, individual sentences, or paragraphs. Based on this preliminary reading, they decide whether further engagement with the text is necessary. Successful skimming requires readers to have a good level of language proficiency.

2. Introductory Reading

At this stage, students are expected to grasp at least 70% of the content. They must accurately understand the main ideas while ensuring secondary information is not misinterpreted. This type of reading is commonly applied to authentic texts that mirror real-life situations, cultural characteristics, and everyday practices in the target language community. Through this process, learners develop skills such as identifying the topic, summarizing content based on the title, pinpointing key ideas, distinguishing primary facts from secondary details, and logically sequencing information.

3. In-Depth (Studying) Reading

This reading process requires a thorough comprehension of both primary and secondary information. To fully understand unfamiliar linguistic elements, students may use analytical techniques such as selective translation, consulting dictionaries, and detailed text analysis. Since this is a slower and more meticulous form of reading, it often involves pausing and rereading specific sections. The goal is to achieve 100% comprehension, ensuring a complete and accurate understanding of all information presented. Students refine their skills in processing textual information, assessing its value, forming opinions, and discussing specific details. Additionally, they learn to retell and analyze the content for better retention and application.

The Purpose of Reading in Learning

Reading serves as both a fundamental skill and an independent speech activity, primarily used to extract and understand necessary information. The main objective of teaching reading as an independent language skill is to equip students with techniques that allow them to extract relevant details efficiently, enabling them to solve specific communication challenges.

The Concept of Authenticity in Learning Materials

The term authenticity refers to materials that are commonly used in everyday life within countries where the foreign language is spoken. These materials include newspaper and magazine articles, advertisements, posters, notices, transport schedules, menus, letters, correspondence, and media content such as radio and television news. Other examples include travel-related materials like airline and train tickets, as well as artistic and literary texts. Authentic materials are generally categorized into three types:

1. Pragmatic texts – signs, announcements, menus, transport schedules, etc.
2. Journalistic texts – newspaper and magazine articles.

3. Popular science texts – non-fiction materials covering a range of academic or informative topics.

Selecting Authentic Texts Based on Student Proficiency

The use of authentic materials in foreign language learning depends on students' language competence and communicative skills. The complexity of texts is adjusted according to their proficiency level to ensure effective comprehension and engagement.

Example: Using Authentic Newspaper Texts

Stage 1: Exploring a Newspaper

Students are encouraged to browse through a newspaper edition and complete the following tasks:

Identify the different headings present in the newspaper.

Highlight the sections or articles that catch their attention.

Discuss the findings using structured reference tools.

Stage 2: Introductory Reading

At this stage, students engage with a selected newspaper article based on:

Their personal interest in a specific article.

The teacher's recommendations.

The relevance of the article to the lesson's topic.

This approach helps students develop reading comprehension while gaining insight into real-world language usage.

Exercises:

1. From the illustrations accompanying the article, determine what is being described in it.
2. Read the title and subtitle and say what (com) will be discussed in this article.
3. Read the first paragraph and tell me what information the entire article conveys.
4. Read the last paragraph and say what content may precede it.
5. Read the sentences of the paragraphs and name those issues that will be considered in the text.
6. Find international words and use them to identify the subject of the text.

The task can be offered simultaneously to all students, differentiating them. For example: tasks 1 and 2 for less prepared children, while tasks 3 and 6 for more advanced students. To verify the completion of the assignment, I use reference schemes.

Stage 3: Working with Article Text

Search Reading Tasks:

1. Answer the following questions:

Where did it happen?

When did it happen?

In which country?

Who are the main participants?

2. Identify which paragraph contains the main idea of the text.

Authentic texts serve as supplementary materials that aid in developing reading skills and enhancing both written and oral communication.

Conclusion

The use of authentic texts helps students develop communicative competence, which is the primary goal of foreign language education. This involves multiple components:

Linguistic competence – The subconscious knowledge of language rules that native speakers possess. It differs from linguistic performance, which includes practical usage factors.

Sociolinguistic competence – The ability to communicate appropriately based on context, topic, and relationships. It also includes cultural etiquette, such as expressing politeness and addressing people correctly.

Discursive competence – The ability to structure and interpret texts based on linguistic norms and various discourse genres.

Sociocultural competence – Exposure to authentic materials enriches students' understanding of different cultures, traditions, and lifestyles.

Social competence – The ability to navigate social settings, recognize expected behaviors, interpret others' emotions, and select appropriate social actions in different situations.

Using authentic texts in teaching various types of reading fosters strong communication skills.

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