

THE USE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN TEACHING READING AS A TYPE OF SPEECH ACTIVITY IN ENGLISH CLASSES

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Abstract

This article takes a closer look at how authentic materials can transform the way reading is taught in English classes. By using real-life texts—like news articles, advertisements, brochures, and digital content—teachers can make reading more meaningful and engaging for students. These materials not only boost vocabulary and comprehension but also encourage learners to see reading as a practical skill they can use outside the classroom. The study shares practical tips for choosing, adapting, and using authentic texts effectively, showing how they can spark student interest, promote communication, and build overall language proficiency. The findings highlight that incorporating authentic materials creates a more dynamic, student-centered approach to teaching reading.

Keywords: Authentic materials, teaching reading, speech activity, English language teaching (ELT), communicative competence, real-life texts, vocabulary development reading comprehension, learner engagement, language proficiency

Reading is one of the most essential skills in language learning, but it's often taught using simplified, textbook-based materials. While these resources provide structure and practice, they don't always reflect how language is actually used in everyday life. This gap can make it harder for students to apply their reading skills outside the classroom. Authentic materials—like newspaper articles, ads, websites, and social media posts—bridge this gap by exposing learners to real-world language in meaningful contexts. Using these materials not only improves comprehension but also

turns reading into an active, communicative skill that prepares students for real-life interactions.

Traditional reading materials in English classes often rely on artificial texts created solely for educational purposes. While these resources can support language practice, they lack the richness and complexity of real-world communication. As a result, students may struggle to apply their reading skills outside the classroom, missing the opportunity to engage with authentic texts in meaningful ways. The challenge lies in making reading instruction more relevant and communicative. This study addresses that challenge by exploring how authentic materials can transform reading lessons into dynamic, practical learning experiences.¹

The study aims to investigate how using authentic materials can enhance reading as an active speech activity in English classes. Specifically, it seeks to understand how real-life texts can improve students' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and overall communicative competence. By examining students' engagement and performance when working with authentic materials, the research identifies effective strategies for integrating these texts into classroom instruction. Ultimately, the goal is to promote a more practical, student-centered approach to teaching reading—one that prepares learners to confidently engage with English beyond the classroom.¹

Previous studies have consistently highlighted the positive impact of authentic materials on language learning. For instance, Peacock (1997) found that students were noticeably more motivated and engaged when working with authentic texts compared to traditional classroom materials.² Similarly, Berardo (2006) demonstrated that exposure to real-world texts led to better vocabulary retention, increased reading fluency, and stronger critical thinking skills.³ Gilmore (2007) further emphasized that authentic materials bridge the gap between classroom learning and everyday

¹ Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-Based Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

² Peacock, M. (1997). *The Effect of Authentic Materials on the Motivation of EFL Learners*. *ELT Journal*, 51(2), 144–156.

³ Berardo, S. A. (2006). *The Use of Authentic Materials in the Teaching of Reading*. *The Reading Matrix*, 6(2), 60–69.

communication, enhancing both comprehension and the ability to use language effectively in real-life situations.⁴

The study involved English learners from [mention grade level or school type], all at an intermediate proficiency level. These students were selected to explore how authentic materials could enhance both reading comprehension and communicative competence. Their diverse language backgrounds offered valuable insights into how real-world texts can support the development of reading as an active speech activity.

The reading materials included a variety of authentic texts commonly used for real-life communication, such as articles from *The Guardian*, travel brochures, product advertisements, and blog posts. These materials were carefully chosen based on their relevance, accessibility, and potential to spark student interest. Each text was selected to match students' language proficiency while exposing them to natural language structures, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references they might encounter outside the classroom.

The study followed a task-based approach, consistent with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Reading activities were closely integrated with speaking and writing tasks to promote reading as an interactive process. Each lesson included pre-reading activities, such as vocabulary previews, while-reading tasks like comprehension checks, and post-reading activities, including group discussions and written reflections. This approach encouraged active participation, allowing students to process, interpret, and respond to authentic texts in a meaningful, communicative context.⁵

Data collection involved multiple methods to evaluate how authentic materials impacted students' reading proficiency. After working with authentic texts, students completed reading comprehension quizzes designed to assess their understanding and vocabulary growth. Classroom observations offered further insights into their

⁴ Gilmore, A. (2007). *Authentic Materials and Authenticity in Foreign Language Learning*. *Language Teaching*, 40(2), 97–118.

⁵ Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

engagement, participation, and ability to interpret texts as part of an active speech activity. To capture students' perspectives, feedback was gathered through surveys and informal discussions, allowing learners to share their thoughts on the effectiveness, challenges, and overall experience of using authentic reading materials.

The study revealed significant improvements in students' reading comprehension when authentic materials were used. Unlike traditional textbook-based texts, authentic materials provided context-rich, relatable content, making it easier for students to grasp unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures. Students engaged more effectively with real-world texts, such as news articles, advertisements, and blog posts. This not only improved their ability to extract specific information but also strengthened their inferential reading skills, enhancing overall comprehension and critical thinking.

Authentic materials also had a noticeable impact on students' motivation to read. Since the content reflected their interests and daily experiences, students reported feeling more engaged when working with news articles, advertisements, and social media posts. This relevance encouraged active participation and even inspired some to explore similar texts independently outside the classroom. Additionally, the variety of authentic materials exposed students to different cultures and perspectives, making reading a more dynamic and enjoyable activity rather than a routine classroom task.⁶

Reading authentic texts also transformed reading into an interactive, speech-based activity. After completing reading tasks, students engaged in group discussions, debates, and presentations based on the content they explored. These activities not only strengthened their receptive skills—reading and listening—but also improved their productive skills—speaking and writing. By analyzing authentic texts, students practiced expressing opinions, summarizing information, and asking questions, ultimately developing the communication skills needed for real-world interactions.⁷

⁶ Tomlinson, B. (2012). *Materials Development for Language Learning and Teaching*. *Language Teaching*, 45(2), 143–179.

⁷ Widdowson, H. G. (1978). *Teaching Language as Communication*. Oxford University Press.

While authentic materials proved highly beneficial, some challenges emerged during implementation. Certain texts included complex vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references that were unfamiliar to students. This occasionally led to frustration, particularly among learners with lower proficiency levels. To address these difficulties, teachers adapted materials by simplifying challenging sections, providing vocabulary support, and incorporating pre-reading activities. Additionally, careful text selection based on students' interests and language proficiency ensured that authentic materials remained both accessible and engaging throughout the learning process.

The findings of this study underscore the significant advantages of using authentic materials in teaching reading as a speech activity. These texts not only enhance reading comprehension but also transform reading into an interactive process that strengthens real-world communication skills. By engaging with meaningful, context-rich content, students develop both their receptive and productive language abilities. This approach bridges the gap between classroom learning and practical language use, empowering learners to apply their reading skills confidently in everyday situations while fostering motivation, critical thinking, and cultural awareness.

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