

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' READING SKILLS

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Annotation: In today's ESL classrooms, reading is regarded as a fundamental language skill crucial for both academic success and effective communication. Conventional reading resources, which are typically designed specifically for educational purposes, often struggle to engage students or accurately represent how language is used in everyday situations. As a result, there is a growing trend to use authentic materials—such as narrative stories, poems—sourced from the real world to connect classroom learning with practical language use.

Literature review

The incorporation of authentic materials in foreign language education has been widely discussed in the literature. Nuttall (2005) [1] emphasizes the importance of exposing learners to real language as it is used in everyday contexts, arguing that such exposure fosters better reading strategies and comprehension skills. Authentic texts, in her view, allow students to encounter linguistic forms and vocabulary in more natural settings, helping them bridge the gap between classroom language and real-life communication.

Gilmore (2007) [2] expands on this by highlighting the motivational aspects of authentic materials. He asserts that learners are more engaged when working with real-world texts, as they provide meaningful and culturally rich content. Gilmore also notes that authenticity supports pragmatic development, allowing students to better understand language use in specific social situations.

Berardo (2006) [4] contributes to this discourse by stating that authentic materials promote reading confidence and autonomy. He suggests that although such materials can be challenging due to their complexity, they encourage learners to rely less on translation and more on context-based understanding, thus enhancing critical reading skills.

On the other hand, Rahman, Rofiqoh, and Hastini (2021) [3] conducted a study on the effectiveness of narrative texts in improving reading comprehension among Indonesian students. Their research shows that students exposed to well-structured and relatable stories demonstrated better retention and deeper understanding compared to those who used traditional reading materials. While their focus was primarily on narrative fiction, the implication is clear: engaging content—authentic or not—enhances comprehension outcomes.

Taken together, these studies support the premise that authentic materials can significantly enhance the development of reading skills when used appropriately, despite potential obstacles such as unfamiliar vocabulary or complex syntax. They also point to the importance of teacher support and material selection in ensuring that learners benefit fully from authentic input.

Introduction

This research primarily investigates how to improve students' reading abilities using materials that represent real-life contexts. This study also investigates that how effective using narrative stories when improving students' reading skills. The significance of this study is highlighted by Uzbekistan's educational reform initiatives, which seek to enhance communicative competence and cultural awareness.

According to Nuttall [1], authentic texts expose learners to “real language in use” and help them develop effective reading strategies. Similarly, Gilmore [2] argues that authentic materials increase learner motivation and support the acquisition of pragmatic competence. Furthermore, Rahman, Rofiqoh, and Hastini [3] emphasize the effectiveness of narrative texts in enhancing reading comprehension. Their study found that using narrative stories enhances reading confidence and good comprehension.

Research Methods

The study was conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year at School No. 47 in the Chartak district. A total of 20 students from grade 9 participated, divided into experimental and control groups. The following methods were employed:

Experimental method: The experimental group was taught using authentic materials over two weeks, while the control group followed a traditional textbook-based curriculum.

Testing: Pre-tests and post-tests were used to measure progress in reading comprehension.

For the experiment, a narrative story called “The dog the cockerel and the fox” was used and the post-test was based on that story.

Results

The results indicate that authentic materials have a beneficial effect on students' reading abilities:

- The experimental group's average score on tests rose from 65% (pre-test) to 75% (post-test).
- In contrast, the control group saw only a modest improvement, with scores going from 65% to 68%.
- Instructors reported challenges such as difficult vocabulary, unfamiliar grammatical structures, and cultural references that could obstruct understanding.

These results support Berardo’s [4] claim that authentic texts foster “reading confidence” and promote independent reading among learners. Additionally, they coincide with Rahman et al.'s [3] findings that narrative texts can effectively enhance deeper comprehension, further confirming the advantages of using well-chosen authentic materials featuring engaging storylines.

Conclusion

Utilizing authentic materials greatly improves students' reading skills by making classroom activities more relevant, engaging, and culturally aware. While authentic texts can be challenging for lower-level learners, careful selection and adequate support can help ease these difficulties. Gilmore [2] highlights that, when used effectively, authentic materials enhance students' motivation and pragmatic understanding. This study advocates for additional research and professional training for educators to successfully incorporate authentic materials into the secondary English curriculum.

References

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THE DOG, THE COCK, AND THE FOX

A Dog and a Cock, who were the best of friends, wished very much to see something of the world. So they decided to leave the farmyard and to set out into the world along the road that led to the woods. The two comrades traveled along in the very best of spirits and without meeting any adventure to speak of.

At nightfall the Cock, looking for a place to roost, as was his custom, spied nearby a hollow tree that he thought would do very

nicely for a night's lodging. The Dog could creep inside and the Cock would fly up on one of the branches. So said, so done, and both slept very comfortably.

With the first glimmer of dawn the Cock awoke. For the moment he forgot just where he was. He thought he was still in the farmyard where it had been his duty to arouse the household at day-break. So standing on tip-toes he flapped his wings and crowed lustily. But instead of awakening the farmer, he awakened a Fox not far off in the wood. The Fox immediately had rosy visions of a very delicious breakfast. Hurrying to the tree where the Cock was roosting, he said very politely:

"A hearty welcome to our woods, honored sir. I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you here. I am quite sure we shall become the closest of friends."

"I feel highly flattered, kind sir," replied the Cock slyly. "If you will please go around to the door of my house at the foot of the tree, my porter will let you in."

The hungry but unsuspecting Fox, went around the tree as he was told, and in a twinkling the Dog had seized him.

Those who try to deceive may expect to be paid in their own coin.