



ARTÍCULOS

UTOPIA Y PRAXIS LATINOAMERICANA. AÑO: 25, n° EXTRA 7, 2020, pp. 237-243
REVISTA INTERNACIONAL DE FILOSOFÍA Y TEORÍA SOCIAL
CESA-FCES-UNIVERSIDAD DEL ZULIA. MARACAIBO-VENEZUELA
ISSN 1316-5216 / ISSN-e: 2477-9555

Authentic Mass Media in the English Language Laboratory

Medios de comunicación auténticos en el laboratorio de inglés

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Este trabajo está depositado en Zenodo:
DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4009700>

RESUMEN

Este artículo está dedicado al uso de medios auténticos en el proceso de enseñanza de un idioma extranjero, a saber, artículos de la prensa inglesa en la lección del idioma inglés. Intentamos determinar la importancia y la necesidad de utilizar textos multimedia y su papel en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. Los autores llegaron a la conclusión de que trabajar con textos auténticos ayuda a los estudiantes a desarrollar habilidades de lectura crítica y acciones educativas universales, y también representa material relevante e interesante para el estudio, ya que los introduce al entorno del lenguaje natural.

Palabras clave: Autenticidad, idioma extranjero, medios de comunicación, texto multimedia.

ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the use of authentic media in the process of teaching a foreign language, namely articles of the English press at the lesson of the English language. We attempted to determine the importance and necessity of using media texts and their role in teaching foreign languages. The authors concluded that working with authentic texts helps students develop critical reading skills and universal educational actions, and also represents relevant and interesting material for study, as they introduce them to the natural language environment.

Keywords: Authenticity, foreign language, mass media, media text.

Recibido: 03-08-2020 • Aceptado: 10-09-2020



INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, the knowledge of a foreign language is impossible in isolation from the realities of life and culture of the language speaking country. Modern textbooks do not always provide a sufficient number of authentic texts and exercises that contribute to effective reading instruction. Magazines and newspapers, as the media, are an integral part of this culture. It is through reading media texts that language learners can come to understanding and mastering the features not only of the language but life as well. The theoretical basis of this work was the scientific works of Russian and foreign scientists such as T.G. Dobrosklonskaya (Dobrosklonskaya: 2008), Peng et al. (Peng et al.: 2017, pp. 2372-2385), M. Swan (Swan: 2018), D. Reah (Reah: 2002), A. Farmer (Farmer: 2008) and other honorable linguists, who contributed to the development of studying the language of the mass media. When learning a foreign language, students naturally expect the opportunity to communicate in that language.

Students' communication cannot be limited only to oral communication. Students of any foreign language should be able to listen, write, speak, and read, so the whole lesson of a foreign language should combine all these components. Harmer sees writing and speaking as productive skills, listening, and reading as receptive skills. Consider Harmer's definition of reading: "Reading is an action performed by the eyes and brain. The eyes receive a certain message of information, and the brain then deciphers the meaning of the message. Reading itself depends on the reading speed of the reader". Reading is one of the main language skills both at a foreign language lesson and in the entire learning process as a whole (Swan: 2018).

METHODS

In the course of the research we used the following methods: analysis of scientific and methodological literature on the research problem, scientific observation, a continuous sampling method that allows you to select accurate examples to illustrate linguistic phenomena; descriptive and analytical; analysis of the literature, which highlights issues related to the stylistic characterization of journalistic texts and media education; press analysis of the countries of the language being studied.

RESULTS

Teachers use authentic magazines and newspapers in the process of teaching a foreign language, because the relevance and modernity of information, the ability to use grammatical and lexical resources, as well as linguistic and regional information are integral positive factors for students. Also, the materials of modern periodicals help to get acquainted with the whole variety of genres of a journalistic style. There are two difficulties when choosing to use an authentic article at the lesson: creating a lesson can be very energy-consuming for the teacher; the text is not always interesting to students (Akbari & Razavi: 2016, pp. 105-116).

The use of authentic material in the classroom, even if the situation is not authentic, has several advantages, because the text conveys to students the information about the events in the world, thus, the educational value is realized. On the other hand, textbooks often contain typical standard texts with a small variety of genres, while authentic materials contain a wide range of text genres and encourage reading with pleasure, so topics are of great interest to students. This does not mean at all that at the lesson of a foreign language it is necessary to use only authentic texts, but, if possible, try to use less artificially composed materials. Learning texts should be realistic models of the written or spoken language of the target language.

Authentic media texts are useful helpers to improve students' reading skills and their overall level of knowledge. Currently, the newspaper has become an important way of delivering information (Gafiyatova et al.: 2016). Using articles, you can motivate students, while simultaneously training not only reading skills but also other types of speech activity. There are advantages of using media texts, but there are also several

difficulties that teachers and students themselves may encounter. Also, it is necessary to take into account the fact that there are many magazines and newspapers in English, created specifically for students of a foreign language at a certain level. In this case, it is difficult to talk about the authenticity of these media texts, therefore, sometimes for such texts, the term “simulative” or semi-authentic is used (Reah: 2002). According to Harmer, “we need the texts the general meaning of which will be clear to the students, whether they are authentic or not. But any text – authentic, semi-authentic, or educational – should be a realistic model of a written or spoken language. And if the teacher was able to find an authentic text that students can handle, then the use of such material will be very effective (Harmer: 2007). It is worth mentioning that the use of authentic periodicals (as well as semi-authentic) has its characteristics: 1) availability; 2) variety; 3) theme; 4) complexity; 5) culture and social problems. Let us examine each component separately:

Availability

Today, due to the possibilities of using the Internet, you can easily order a considerable number of both a paper magazine format and buy an electronic version. There are also specially published semi-authentic magazines that are easy to find on the Internet. For example, educational journals in English: ‘Hot English Magazine’, ‘English Learner’s Digest’, ‘English 4 you’, and others. Such magazines are designed specifically for different levels of language proficiency. As a rule, such magazines are already equipped with a set of exercises, which greatly facilitates the preparation for the lesson for the teacher. Moreover, such magazines are often equipped with audio files and additional materials for teachers. Authentic magazines are represented in all the variety of their genres, both local magazines, and international ones.

Variety

English periodicals contain a huge variety of texts, different in types, and diverse in the information. Appropriate texts can be selected by the students’ level of foreign language knowledge.

Theme

This feature of media texts is their advantage, but also a big disadvantage. Magazine texts provide modern reporting and news from around the world in a timely and fast manner. However, at the same time, they cannot remain relevant and fresh for a long time. Using the latest information requires a lot of work on the part of the teacher, as he cannot always use the prepared lesson in further work. The teacher should constantly develop work on the text, constantly coming up with new methods of working with the media texts.

The complexity

Students generally find the texts in authentic magazines difficult to read. Media texts are rich in multi-valued headings, a variety of lexical and grammatical constructions. Also, students usually read and translate texts in parts. Consequently, it is so useful to give students to be read media texts directly at the lesson so that students focus on a common understanding rather than forms (Harmer: 2007). Naturally, the text and exercises should correspond to the level of students. According to Ur, it is better to use simplified texts with the students with a low level of language, since they are more effective for learning the language and increase students’ motivation. Moreover, the use of authentic texts at low levels of language proficiency can lead to students’ disappointment (Ur: 1999).

Culture and social problems

An important component of the use of authentic media texts is their lingo culturological nature. The language is considered by the authors as a socio-historic phenomenon reflecting social events and the structure of the society (Solnyshkina & Gafiyatova: 2014, pp. 220-224). Reading authentic texts, students are faced with the cultural and sociological information of the countries of the language being studied. Thanks to

such an acquaintance with culture and society, students not only learn new information but also learn the language much more successfully.

Motivation is also one of the most important components of teaching foreign languages. According to J. Harmer: "Motivation is a kind of internal energy that encourages someone to take any action" (Harmer: 2007). Motivated students achieve much better results than students who are not interested in learning. The motivation with which students come to the lesson, as well as the teacher himself instills in them, is the largest factor influencing the successful mastery of any foreign language. Naturally, working with a motivated class gives the teacher more pleasure and brings better results (Ur: 1999). F. Grellet adds that motivation is especially important when reading because we read what we want to read and to be motivated to read means finding certain expected answers or information that are of particular interest to us (Grellet: 1986).

DISCUSSION

Several aspects can help increase motivation when reading media texts:

- Interest: authentic magazines and newspapers provide relevant and up-to-date information that interests foreign language learners.
- Personalization: reading the media helps to feel independent in discussing the issues raised in a particular media text. Students like to compare what they read with their own experience on the subject.
- Cultural information: modern media and, in particular, magazines and newspapers represent an excellent way to study the culture of the language being studied.
- Interdisciplinary: students while reading a text in English develop not only linguistic knowledge and skills but also many others.
- Vocabulary: when reading foreign literature, there is a significant increase in the vocabulary of students.
- Reading skills – reading in a foreign language, and native language improves reading skills, speed, and speed of finding the right information (Tierney: 1985).

This implies the following problem for the teacher when planning a lesson – the problem of text selection. With all the variety of media texts, selecting an interesting and useful material seems to be a rather difficult task. Consider the criteria for selecting texts:

- 1) Adequacy. The relevance of the subject matter of the material to the topic that students go through, their level, and age.
- 2) Interest. As has been repeatedly noted above, the topic should motivate students to read the text.
- 3) Text size. The text should not be too large. It must be understood that the larger the text, the less time will be spent on its development and further conversation. The size of the text should be adequate for the level of the students' language (Farmer: 2008).
- 4) The language component. This criterion is characterized by the presence in the article of useful and really necessary lexical words, as well as the set of grammatical constructions that are understandable to students.
- 5) The semantic potential of the text. This is the ability of the text to give rise to the discussion of the problem or situation raised in the text (Daly: 2004, pp. 134-150).

The teacher needs to teach students to work with such texts, to help them with the effective use of these techniques in a foreign language, as some students have difficulty transferring this skill to a foreign language.

CONCLUSION

There are quite a few strategies and techniques for reading media texts at the lessons of a foreign language (Daly: 2004, pp. 134-150). Next, we want to provide a shortlist of them, which can be useful in the process of teaching reading:

- Activation of prior knowledge. The teacher uses this strategy as a pre-text work, which allows students to draw a link between the information they already know and the new information that they learned by reading the media text.
- Detailed discussion. This technique is used during reading when students ask questions, re-read, rephrase, visualize, which helps to understand the text better.
- Context clues. The use of context in dealing with unfamiliar words. It is important to show students that it is not always necessary to use a dictionary or the help of a teacher, but they can use the method of guessing or forecasting.
- Summarizing. This technique is used after reading, students use written or visual clues to find out the details of the text, students complete assignments based on the text they just read.
- Evaluation. The technique is used during and after reading and encourages students to form their own opinions, make their assumptions, and develop their ideas on what they have read. The teacher asks assessment questions that allow students to rate the text critically.
- Conclusion. During the reading, students draw logical conclusions based on facts that help students better understand the meaning of the text.
- Forecasting. This technique is used before and during reading. Pupils make assumptions on the development of the plot of the text, then read and compare with their guesses.
- Re-reading. Rereading the text gives the reader another chance to understand complex text.
- Re-statement. During reading, students shorten and summarize the paragraph they read.
- Setting a purpose. Before reading, a clear goal is set, and the student focuses on reading, setting a specific goal.
- Scanning. One of the most common techniques is quick reading with the search for specific information or a specific answer to the question.
- Skimming. The technique is to quickly read part of the text to identify the main idea.
- Visualization. This technique is used while reading. The teacher reads the text (possibly an audio recording of the media text) while the students close their eyes and imagine the situation, then they write down or sketch their thoughts on what they read.

The use of these techniques at the lessons on the practical course of a foreign language is very effective. The main goal of teaching foreign languages is the ability to carry out verbal communication in various communication situations in compliance with all norms of speech behavior and etiquette, which are generally accepted in the society of the language being studied. Linguistic competence is a systemic quality of personality, integrating personal communicative qualities, knowledge of the language system, mastery of the basic language concepts and means, culture of communication both in social life and in the professional sphere (Shemshurenko et al.: 2019). The use of media texts at the lessons provides an excellent opportunity to draw students' attention to the figures of speech, the expression of argumentation of various points of view, as well as lexical units. Their study is extremely important because students often tend to build phrases and sentences typical of their native language, especially with complex utterances. Thus, in addition to the acquaintance with culture, students develop language competence and communication skills. It should be noted that authentic texts most fully reveal the cross-cultural aspect of a foreign language, and also serve as rich material for studying the culture of another country, its characteristic features, realities, traditions, and culture in general (Zakirova et al.: 2019, pp. 505-508).

Given the topics of authentic magazines and newspapers, as well as their linguistic diversity, which we identified during the study, working with them is advisable at the senior stage of training. The text should be selected with particular care, as periodicals may contain topics that are inappropriate for students. The texts of magazines often contain discussion questions, and in this regard, discussions can be held with students, since the level of students is already sufficient for this.

Thus, due to the specific nature of media texts, there are certain difficulties in reading articles. That is why the teacher must teach students to read such articles. Reading, as a type of speech activity, plays an important role in the modern foreign language, but the specificity of reading lies in the fact that it is not only a goal but also a means of learning. From this we can conclude that when reading media texts, students develop not only reading skills, but also all other types of speech activity: speaking, listening, and writing.

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