

STIMULATING STUDENTS' READING SKILLS THROUGH AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

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Annotation

Since reading is a key language skill, enhancing learners' reading comprehension has become increasingly important. To achieve this, educators are turning to authentic materials, as traditional reading sources are often seen as dull and unengaging for students. Authentic reading sources can be motivating, gives a sense of achievement when understood...(S.A.Berardo, "The use of Authentic materials in Teaching Reading", 2006) and using them in English classes expand vocabulary, fosters cultural awareness and critical thinking...(D.Qadirova, "Stimulating students' reading skills through using authentic materials", Innovative research in science 2(10), 35–37.). This study was intended for the Uzbek EFL teachers who were interested in encouraging their students' reading skills through authentic materials. The research was conducted in 2024-2025 academic year. And various methods were implemented in English classes with 9th and 10th grade pupils at school No#47 in Chartak, Namangan and some teachers working there were asked to answer the survey question. The findings showed that using authentic texts or other materials can improve students' reading comprehension in English. In contrast with traditional reading materials, the usage of authentic materials showed 20 percent higher result in this study. And teachers' opinions, problems were also tested.

Key words: Stimulating reading skills, Authentic materials, Advertisements, Instructions.

Introduction

Reading is a foundational skill that significantly influences academic success and lifelong learning. In English lessons, fostering students' reading skills has become increasingly important due to its role in enhancing critical thinking, expanding vocabulary, and encouraging the use of authentic materials over traditional textbooks.

There are several researchers who has done a study on this topic. Based on the

result of the research(done by Andi Fatur Rahman, Rofiqoh, Hastini) the students' levels of understanding were improved by using authentic materials as the teaching media. They can understand the literal meaning of reading narrative text. However there is a gap in implementing authentic materials, because many researchers have used narrative texts to explore.

This research aims to address this gap by exploring alternative sources, such as instructions and advertisements, to assess their impact on stimulating students' reading skills. The study was conducted by using descriptive and experimental research methodologies at school 47 with teachers and 9th , 10th grade students.

Literature Review

In recent years, using authentic materials in english classes to stimulate students' reading skills has been in the researches of many authors from Uzbekistan and other countries. And they have already found benefits and some challenges of using authentic reading sources. According to the Sacha Anthony Berardo when using authentic materials were that they are highly motivating, giving a sense of achievement when understood and encourage further reading. Anything can be used as authentic material but for developing reading one of the most useful resources is the Internet, with large amounts of varied material being easily accessible. [“The use of authentic materials in teaching reading”, 2006, page 67] Additionally, the article written on the topic “STIMULATING STUDENTS’ READING SKILLS THROUGH USING AUTHENTIC MATERIALS” by Qadirova Dilnoza Baxtiyorovna points that ‘the use of authentic texts provides real-life relevance, expands vocabulary, fosters cultural awareness, nurtures critical thinking skills, improves reading fluency, and boosts motivation and engagement’.

This research indicates that authentic materials have a great impact on stimulating students' reading comprehension. For instance, the study conducted by Andi Fatur Rahman, Rofiqoh, Hastini in 2021 found that students' reading comprehension increased by 4.74% when narrative text was implemented. Similarly, Astried Damayanti (2018) indicates that students' comprehension score in cycle 1 was 65.05 and cycle 2 was 75.87 after the implementation of authentic materials.

Despite the benefits, challenges exist in implementing authentic materials, including varying reading levels among students and the potential for overwhelming complexity (Morrow, 2005). Educators must be equipped with strategies to select appropriate texts and scaffold learning effectively.

Methodology

This study utilized both quasi- experimental research design to investigate the impact of using authentic materials, such as instructions and advertisements, on students' reading skills. The research was conducted at School 47 in Chartak, Namangan and involved teachers as well as 9th- and 10th-grade students. The

methodology is detailed as follows:

The participants included English teachers and students from the 9th and 10th grades at School 47. A total of 60 students were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure a representative sample of varying reading proficiency levels and divided into 2 groups for 3 weeks.

Process steps

At the beginning of the process according to the research design pretest was conducted both from the control and experimental group and the pretest was in a form of narrative text that students should read it and should talk about that text's meaning. The aim of the pretest was checking their background knowledge. After which students' results were compared and they were divided into experimental group and control group. Then instruction and advertisement based exercises implemented in experimental group during 3 weeks in every English lesson. Control group continued studying traditional textbooks.

In week 1, during 3 lessons experimental group students were taught through using authentic instructions:

1. Following a Recipe. Students were asked to read the pancake recipe, identify ingredients, and follow steps. Then they summarized the process in their own words and discussed why each step is important.

2. Understanding Product Instructions Instructions for assembling a bookshelf were given to students' and they were asked to put the steps in order Then, they discussed the challenges of understanding technical language.

3. Problem Solving: A set of poorly written or confusing instructions were given to students' and they were asked to identify errors and rewrite the instructions to make them clearer and more user-friendly.

In week 2, during 3 lessons students read advertisements:

1. Analyzing Ads: A flyer for a sale at a clothing store was read by students and they were asked to find the key details like dates, discounts, and conditions (e.g., "50% off on selected items until January 4"). Then, discussed the target audience and how the ad grabs attention.

2. Comparing Ads: Two advertisements for smartphones were given and students were asked to compare the features, pricing, and tone of the ads and students decided which phone they would buy and why, based on the information provided.

3. Writing Activity: Examples of food delivery service ads were used in order to ask students to create an ad for their favorite food or product, incorporating persuasive language and clear details.

In week 3, I took post-test from both experimental and control groups through using narrative text to check their understanding and improvement after an experiment.

During study, teachers were also tested by giving them questions about authentic materials in order to know their opinions. And then I sorted out and compared the results.

Tools

In the current research study several tools were utilized. Firstly, to check students' background knowledge, narrative story about animals was given to them to understand its meaning. Then, for the experimental group 3 advertisements about clothes, food, smartphones and 3 instructions about pancakes, assembling furniture were given with different tasks. For teachers, in google forms 10 questions asked to be answered. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdpD5nC4KmdklvHIJoT91RJhq99DufDcoVBqJSNLFrWcjGpPQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

Analyzing data

In the study, the data was analysed by comparing test results with the pretest and posttest assessment, and teachers answers were given in the bar, pie chart form.

Results

The findings of the study demonstrate a notable impact of using authentic materials, such as instructions and advertisements, on students' reading skills. The analysis was based on pretest and posttest results, as well as feedback collected from teachers.

The pretest results showed no significant difference between the control and experimental groups in terms of reading proficiency. Both groups had an average score of approximately 65%. However, after the intervention, the posttest results revealed a substantial improvement in the experimental group's performance compared to the control group.

Groups	Pre-test	Post-test	Improvements
Experimental group	65%	85%	+20%
Control group	65%	70%	+5%

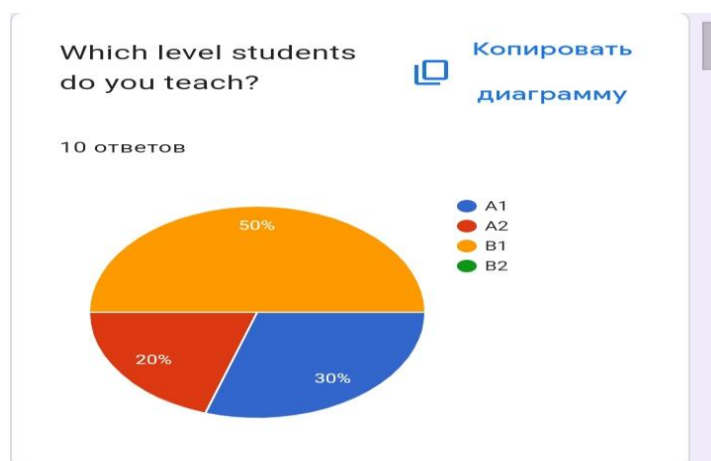
Experimental Group: The experimental group's average posttest score increased to 85%, indicating a 20% improvement. Students demonstrated enhanced ability to comprehend narrative texts, summarize key details, and analyze meanings. Their engagement with authentic materials, such as real-world instructions and advertisements, likely contributed to better contextual understanding and critical thinking skills.

Control Group: The control group's average posttest score only increased to 70%, reflecting a modest 5% improvement. This suggests that traditional textbook-based

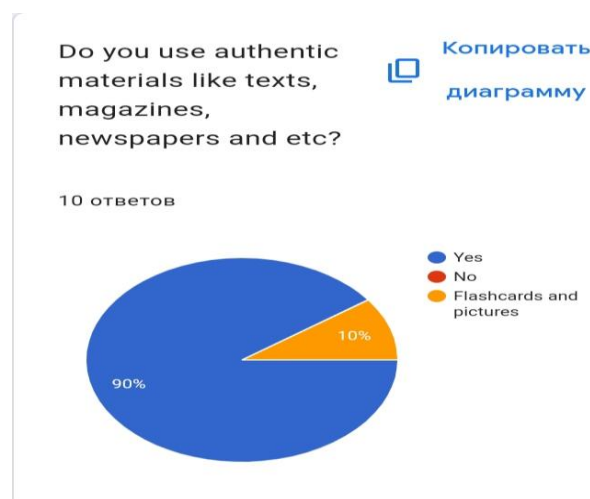
methods were less effective in fostering significant growth in reading skills.



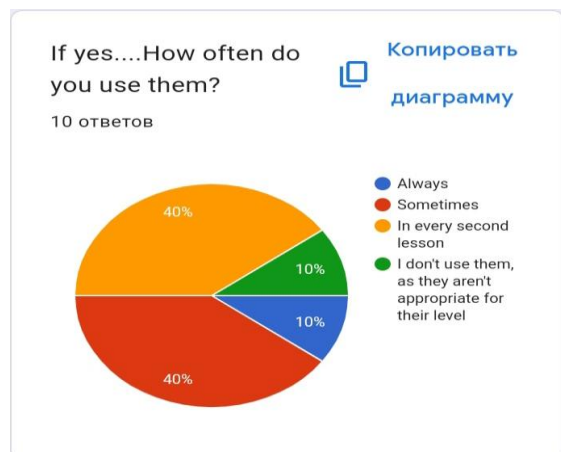
I have collected an analytical survey from colleague teachers, who have from 3 to



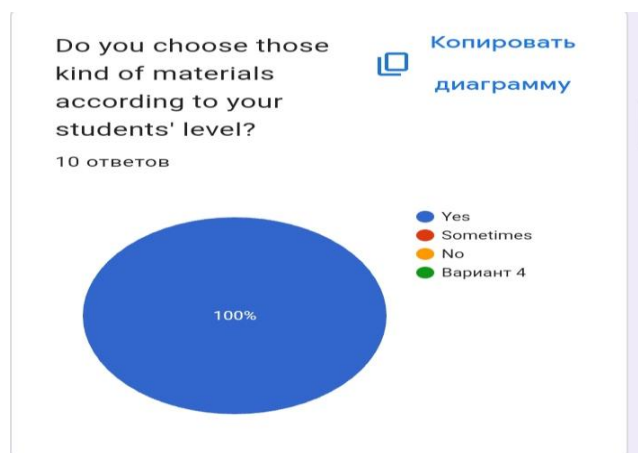
15 work-experience in teaching English as a foreign language, and analysed questions outcomes, in detail.



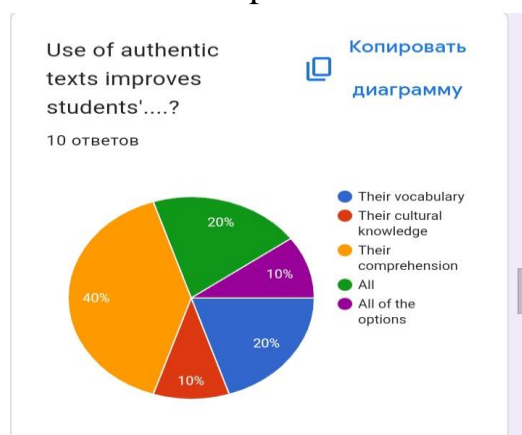
This pie chart aims to analyze the levels of students taught by teachers as part of an experiment on secondary school learners. According to the data, 50% of teachers teach B1-level students, 30% teach A1-level students, and 20% teach A2-level students.



According to the bar chart, teachers primarily focus on improving their students' reading and speaking skills, with both receiving equal attention (60%). Listening skills receive less focus (30%), while writing is not prioritized at all (0%).



As it clear from the pie chart, 90% of teachera use authentic materials like texts, magazines and 10% uses flashcards and pictures.



This pie chart indicates that 40% of teachers use authentic materials sometimes and 40% in every second lesson. Additionally, 10% of teachers always use them, while 10% never use them.

And 100% teachers think that they are useful.

According to the pie chart, 40% of teachers believe that authentic materials improve students' comprehension, while 20% believe they enhance vocabulary. Additionally, 10% of teachers focus on cultural knowledge, and the remaining 20% select all options.

To find out what challenges do the teachers have in implementing authentic materials in their lessons, I have asked about this issue and their answer were as given below:

- Misunderstanding of the words
- Authentic materials are not adapted to the non native learners so there may be sometimes a lot of unknown words that my student have to look up them one by one and it makes them bored
- Some students do not understand the real meaning of a word in the text
- Pronunciation and comprehension problems
- Missunderstanding the texts
- Grammar structures and word usage

Discussion

The results of this study reveal the substantial benefits of using authentic materials in enhancing students' reading skills. The experimental group, which engaged with real-world materials such as instructions and advertisements, showed a significant 20% improvement in their posttest scores, while the control group, using traditional textbook-based methods, only saw a modest 5% increase. This difference suggests that authentic materials provide students with a more engaging and contextually rich learning experience, fostering better comprehension, critical thinking, and analytical skills. The success of the experimental group aligns with the existing literature on the effectiveness of authentic materials in language learning, which emphasizes their ability to improve students' ability to understand and interpret real-world language in varied contexts.

The findings of the survey conducted among teachers further support the positive impact of authentic materials. Most teachers (90%) reported using such materials in their classrooms, with the majority incorporating them at least sometimes, and all teachers recognized their usefulness. This widespread belief in the value of authentic materials can be attributed to their ability to present language in a more natural, relevant

context compared to textbook-based content. Teachers also noted that these materials enhance students' comprehension and vocabulary, with 40% indicating that comprehension is the most significant improvement.

However, despite the apparent benefits, several challenges were highlighted by the teachers, which may hinder the effective use of authentic materials. A recurring issue is the difficulty students face in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary. Since authentic materials are not specifically adapted for language learners, they often contain complex words or phrases that may not be immediately understandable to students, leading to frustration and disengagement. This problem is compounded by issues such as pronunciation difficulties and a lack of familiarity with the cultural or contextual background of the materials. Furthermore, teachers mentioned that grammar structures and word usage in authentic texts could be challenging for non-native learners, potentially affecting their comprehension.

To address these challenges, it would be beneficial for teachers to provide supplementary materials or scaffolding to help students navigate the complexities of authentic texts. For example, pre-teaching vocabulary or providing contextual explanations before engaging with the texts could ease students' understanding. Additionally, using a variety of authentic materials that vary in complexity and structure could help cater to students at different proficiency levels, ensuring that learning remains accessible while still challenging.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the positive impact of authentic materials on improving students' reading skills, but also underscore the need for thoughtful implementation to mitigate potential challenges. As teachers continue to embrace these materials in their classrooms, it is crucial to provide appropriate support to ensure that students can fully benefit from the rich and varied content they offer.

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