

# The use of Authentic Material in Foreign Language Teaching

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of learning a foreign language is to communicate successfully in real life situations in which the four skills of language learning reading, writing, listening, speaking are enhanced to train the language learners to use the target language from the very beginning. For this process “authentic texts” are being used. “*Authentic material provides the learners with many significant advantages and promotes them with high motivation and interest in language learning and lead to improving communicative competence*” (Guariento & Morley, 2001; Wilcox et al., 1999). Typical characteristic for “authentic texts” is that they have a specific intention to inform, for example, what time the train is leaving and from which platform as an audio announcement at the railway station. A person is addressed in reality. A person walking on the road is informed when the performance of a rock concert takes place and its venue. The predetermined format facilitates quick reading and listening. According to Christoff Edelhoff a text can be regarded as “authentic”, if it has a purpose outside the teaching of a foreign language. He also sees that most audiovisual media used in foreign language teaching can be regarded as “authentic”, which can facilitate the competence of understanding, varying on real speaking situations. Learners learn first to comprehend the global-situation (*globales Verstehen*), which then is focused on the given channels of communication to a selective communication, triggering an action after comprehension; for example go to the correct platform to catch the train. The teacher should keep in mind that the vital information is scanned and skimmed selectively and that the learner is not unnecessarily burdened to look for information, not related to the action that follows the comprehension on the text (Edelhoff: 1985, S. 7 – 30).

## **PURPOSE**

This paper attempts to examine how to use authentic text materials in elementary level according to communicative language principles, focusing on both reading and listening skills. Authentic reading text materials which consist of posters, placards, billboards, handbills, notice boards, newspaper advertisements, train time tables, flight schedules, restaurant menus, and TV programs and at a higher levels, receipts for cooking, directions how to use equipment, are used as authentic materials. The aim of this study is to demonstrate how different authentic text materials have been used by us and how the lesson plan changed according to specific authentic material that points to a specific level of learning. Neuner and Storch also underline the use of “Authentic texts” by posing some questions, which information should be scanned, leading to a further set of questions leading to intercultural learning: “what does the information mean to me?”, “what is different in presenting a similar information of Germany as compared in the my country”, “what aspects are culturally specific to Germany. These information gives insight to life styles in Europe (Neuner 1991:27) and (Storch 1999:125).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research is based on classroom observations and lesson plans of the German Studies Unit at the Department of Modern Languages. The selection here introduced to the students film genres of contemporary German films, film directors and film stars. Horror films and detective films unknown today in Sri Lanka too were introduced. Also, types of TV programs including talk shows, news presentations in different formats and discussions on current topics, sports, music, politics and reality shows were integrated.

## **DISCUSSION**

The students learning in the communicative method, being first thrust into the real life situation and then acquire the specific vocabulary and standard sentence structures. They thereby get an insight into the life styles and codes of communication in contemporary Germany. However, Gerd Neuner has warned that not all types of “authentic texts” are suitable for the use in foreign language teaching, because not each text represents world unfamiliar to the learner where the communicative situation is embedded (Neuner 1991:26). As recommended by G. Henrici (1986), D. Köster/U. Barthel (1994), U. Swoboda-Rydz (2000) and S.Grucza (2000), “authentic texts” can be incorporated in a very early stage of language learning, which can be advanced step by step as the competency in listening and reading grows. They also increase the learner’s motivation and help the learner who is confronted in a real-life situation with texts that follow the same format.

## **CONCLUSION**

The use of authentic materials in language teaching the students benefiting from the exposure to real life situations, on the street, airport, railway station can be employed at A1 leading to A2 level. How the student’s motivation can be increased when exposed to the real life situations in Germany will be explained at the presentation. The students are highly motivated when using authentic material.

## **REFERENCES**

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## **KEYWORDS**

Foreign Language Teaching, authentic texts, real life situations, motivation

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