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**AUTHENTIC LITERARY TEXTS IN DEVELOPING LEARNERS'
PERCEPTION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE CULTURE
AT PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL**

Abstract. Developing learners' perception of foreign language culture is very crucial in the context of an intercultural approach to FLT. And one of the issues to assist this process is the use of authentic literary texts. But in the practice of FLT there is no clear understanding of the notion "authentic text", it's role in FLT, moreover, there is no consent toward that when to use authentic text, at what level, and how to use. Thus, the objectives of the paper are to define the features of authentic literary texts and to determine the best solution for implementing them in a foreign language classroom.

Keywords: authentic literary texts, pedagogically prepared texts, cultural awareness, reading strategies.

Аңдатпа. Оқушылардың шет тілі мәдениетін қабылдауын дамыту шет тілін оқытуда мәдениетаралық көзқарас тұрғысынан өте маңызды. Ал шешуді қажет ететін мәселелердің бірі - түпнұсқа көркем мәтіндерді қолдану. Шетел тілін оқыту практикасында «түпнұсқа мәтін» ұғымын нақты түсіну жоқ, оның шет тілін оқытудағы рөлі, сонымен бірге түпнұсқа мәтінді қашан, қандай деңгейде және қалай қолдануға болатындығы туралы келісім жоқ. Сонымен, жұмыстың мақсаты - түпнұсқа көркем мәтіндердің ерекшеліктерін анықтау және оларды шет тілі сабағында жүзеге асырудың оңтайлы шешімін анықтау.

Түйін сөздер: түпнұсқа көркем мәтіндер, педагогикалық тұрғыдан дайындалған мәтіндер, мәдени сана, оқудың стратегиясы.

Аннотация. Развитие у студентов восприятия иноязычной культуры занимает важное место с точки зрения межкультурного подхода в обучении иностранному языку. И один из способов решения данной проблемы - это чтение аутентичных художественных текстов. Однако в практике обучения иностранному языку нет четкого понимания понятия «аутентичный текст», его роли в обучении иностранному языку, более того нет единого мнения о том, когда использовать, на каком языковом уровне и как использовать аутентичные тексты. Таким образом, цель работы -

выявить особенности аутентичных литературных текстов и определить оптимальные методы их использования на уроках иностранного языка.

Ключевые слова: аутентичные художественные тексты, педагогически подготовленные тексты, культурное сознание, стратегии обучения.

Introduction

Researchers have investigated a number of methods and techniques for developing students' cultural awareness. One of the techniques is using authentic literary texts. However, it divided scholars' viewpoints into two groups. First, all scholars have the same perspectives when it comes to the benefits of using authentic texts in a second or foreign language classroom for increasing learners' intercultural communicative competence. Second, some scholars have contradictory assertions of starting to use authentic literary texts in language classrooms. For instance, some of them claim that it is better to suggest reading authentic literary texts only in advanced language level classroom (Lee, 1986; Maxim, 2002) [1, 2]. Similarly, another scholars support to read authentic literary texts after completion of intermediate language level (Knutson, 1997; Shanahan, 1997; Frantzen, 2002) [3, 4, 5]. On the other hand, there are other evidences that show low language level learners are also capable of reading authentic texts by using different types of reading strategies (Ciornei& Dina, 2015; Bernhardt, 2002) [6, 7].

For a better understanding of the issues raised by these arguments, this paper examines different contradictory points of researchers in using authentic literary texts in different level of second or foreign language classrooms. Thus, this paper intends to answer the following questions: (1) What is the difference between authentic texts and pedagogically prepared texts? (2) At what language level should a second or foreign language learner start reading authentic literary texts? (3) What reading strategies and activities will help students of pre-intermediate level comprehend the authentic material?

In order to answer all these questions, we have used the following research methods as literature review, analysis of different views and observation of practice of foreign language teaching.

The findings of research were presented in three parts of the given article. The first part of this paper will make a distinction between authentic texts and pedagogically prepared texts. The perspectives of scholars about the use authentic literary texts in the second language and foreign language classroom will be analyzed in the second section. The use of proper reading strategies of authentic text at pre-intermediate level will be considered in the third part of the article. Finally, conclusions will be drawn.

Literature review

1 The difference between authentic texts and pedagogically prepared texts

There is a clear distinction between authentic texts and pedagogically prepared texts. By the definition of Harmer (2001), authentic texts are “materials which are designed for native speakers; they are real texts designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language” [8] whereas another definition by Jordan (1997) states that authentic texts as “texts that are not written for language teaching purposes” [9]. Thus, they represent the true and real language and culture of its speakers.

In a modern world, the number of language teaching books involving authentic texts is increasing every day. It indicates the importance and efficiency of authentic materials in language teaching systems. In general, using authentic materials in the classroom have a number of advantages (Berardo, 2006) [10]. First and foremost, by providing readers with authentic texts, they are immersed into real language. This is supported by Lee (1995) who puts this idea forward by saying that the use of authentic texts is to enable learners to achieve “real-life communicative purposes” [11]. In fact, doing so helps the learners easily integrate with the speakers of desired language in terms of understanding and reflecting on their speech on a daily basis. Secondly, through authentic texts students obtain a good insight into the culture of the speakers of that language. Ciornei and Dina (2015) claim that teachers have broadly used authentic texts in order to improve learners “communicative and cultural competences”, because in classrooms they will be given cultural information and acquire knowledge through cultural elements such as clothing, food, customs and traditions along with the language that is initially meant to be taught [6]. Furthermore, in many respects authentic texts might come closer to students’ actual needs and this is because newspapers, letters, and books are all written and carried in authentic texts (Gilmore, 2007) [12]. For instance, if language learners’ eventual goals are to use that language in certain areas of occupations such as cuisine, translators (there is a strong need to know some cultural background with the knowledge of the language) or moving the country of where the desired language is declared as official language, they may benefit more from being exposed to authentic texts from the very early point of learning process. Finally, it is widely accepted to teach language learners within some constraints which may hinder the creative approach to teaching. This can be considered as a disadvantage because creativity in the ways of delivering the knowledge might bring remarkable interests into the picture.

As for pedagogically prepared texts, they have been widely used in traditional teaching. To be more precise, these texts are specially written for foreign language learners according to their levels. They help learners to understand given texts with ease and comprehend the grammar which have been learnt in classroom. Shakibaei et al. (2019) indicate the term “authentic” as it has

been used as a reaction against the prefabricated patterns of the textbooks whereas authentic texts are non-pedagogical texts used to help learners improve not only their communicative but also their cultural competences [13].

2 The issue raised regarding the proficiency level of learners

According to Bernhardt (2001), grammar skills and linguistic ability made up 30% of reading performance in foreign language learning [7]. However, many of the scholars (Knutson, 1997; Shanahan, 1997; Frantzen, 2002) reported that for the beginner and intermediate level language learners using advertisements, menu, videos are the best solution to create authentic classrooms, but they do not recommend authentic literary texts [3, 4, 5]. This is an important point in regards with the language learners whose proficiency levels are still low, because these types of learners are highly unlikely to correspond to actual authentic literary texts and it is beyond doubt that they will even struggle to understand them during the teaching process. On the other hand, things such as advertisements, menu and videos carry visualizations with them and might enhance the understanding of the language learners even when they do not fully understand what is meant as a whole. Hence, several scholars (Lee, 1986; Maxim, 2002) suggested using authentic literary texts only for advanced language level students [1, 2]. They claimed that language learners whose level is below are linguistically incapable to understand them with ease and consequently very little benefit can be derived. However, if teachers would force students to read authentic literary texts without any solid background in the language, then this can make lessons tedious and will play a huge role in demotivating them when it comes to language learning. Therefore, these findings contradict with earlier assertions which stated that the beginner level foreign language learners cannot be taught by providing authentic materials or a few literary texts in their amount (Shanahan, 1997; Rice, 1991) [4, 14].

In fact, it is now generally accepted that literary and other authentic texts should not be simplified or modified to pedagogically prepared texts to help students comprehend them (Ciornei& Dina 2015) [6]. In contrast, students should be provided with reading strategies and activities mentioned above prior to reading the selection. In this way, these strategies and activities will help students comprehend the authentic material.

3 Effective reading strategies of authentic text at pre-intermediate level

Introducing students with effective reading strategies are essential when teaching them to read authentic texts and facilitate their reading process. As Barnett (1988) defines the term “reading strategies” as ‘the mental operations involved when readers purposefully approach a text and make sense of what they read’ [15]. According to Oxford and Crookall (1989), reading strategies are learning techniques, behaviors, problem-solving or study skills that make learning more efficient [16].

Nunan (1999, cited in Lopera, 2011) listed a typology of reading strategies which was developed by English language teachers at Chinese

University [17]. It is given in a summarized and modified version. The reading strategies are as follows: having a purpose, previewing, skimming, scanning, predicting, inferring, cohesive devices, guessing word meaning, and background knowledge. In accordance with one of the taxonomies of reading strategies, reading strategies are divided into two categories: cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies (Yukselir, 2014) [18]. Thinking skills which assist readers in becoming aware of their understanding of an early read texts are called metacognitive strategies, while cognitive strategies are employed to connect learners' prior and new knowledge and they help acquiring information to improve learning process (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990) [19]. Research findings indicate that most common reading strategies that applied by learners are the use of background knowledge, the use of inferences based on the context that surrounds the lecture, and the use of visual organizers (Moreno Blanco, 2013) [20].

The study which was conducted by Moreno Blanco in 2013 was entitled as "Improving English Reading Abilities in 9th Graders Through the Use of Authentic Materials and Reading Tasks". In this investigation, the researcher aimed to improve ninth grade Colombian students' (pre-intermediate) reading abilities through the implementation of reading tasks and authentic texts to develop their reading strategies. Prediction, skimming, and scanning are of primary reading strategies. Rereading strategy was also used as an additional strategy. The author explained each strategy in the research. For instance, the term for predicting strategy defined as "trying to guess what a text is about by observing the pictures, the graphics, the title, in short, by activating the background knowledge in order to create association in memory", while the terms of skimming and scanning clarified as "skimming means when learners read the text quickly to get a general idea about it; scanning is reading the text to look for specific information". As a result of this study, the students preferred to use strategies such as the previous knowledge and inference.

Another research that implemented reading strategies such as prediction, prior knowledge, graphic organizers, questions was used to enhance eighth grade Colombian students reading comprehension (Echeverri Acosta & McNulty Ferri, 2010) [21]. The students were divided into three groups: first group which consisted of 10 students with a good level of reading comprehension, second group included students with average level of reading comprehension, and third group included students which have problems in comprehension. Additional reading strategies were also employed such as teacher questions, visual content support, modeling, and creative language use.

Yukselir's research (2014) investigated that pre-intermediate level students generally used reading strategies to comprehend authentic texts. The findings showed that 14 reading strategies were most frequently used by the students; And they include using the title to predict the content, skimming, scanning, trying to understand meaning of every unknown word, link the content

with prior knowledge, using clues from the text to understand a word or phrase, changing reading speed depending on the difficulty of a text [18].

To summarize, the effective reading strategies of authentic texts at pre-intermediate level which were implemented by several researchers can be listed as follows: predicting strategy, prior knowledge, questions, visual content support, skimming, scanning, and rereading.

Conclusion

Authentic literary texts are one of the best techniques in developing foreign language learners' cultural awareness in teaching English as a foreign language. However, students may come across with complex sentences structure and many unknown words and this is difficult for students who have low language level proficiency and they as a result struggle much. Currently, it is accepted that they should not be simplified to assist students comprehend them. On the contrary, reading strategies, explanations, and activities such as pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading activities should be used to facilitate the reading process.

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