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## **Authentic Language Materials at EFL Lessons**

Now, more and more university EFL (English as a Foreign Language) lecturers aspire to make teaching process as close to the real life as possible, creating conditions for students' communication based on authentic topics and using the authentic foreign language. Therefore, characteristics of authentic language materials, which can be used at EFL lessons, should be clearly specified.

J. C. Richards [7] considers teaching materials a key component in most EFL programmes as long as the ones a teacher uses serve as the main source of the language input students receive and the basis for the language practice that takes place at the lesson.

According to J. McDonough and C. Shaw [5, p. 43], authenticity can be defined as, “a term which loosely implies as close an approximation as possible to the world outside the classroom, in the selection both of language material and of the activities and methods used for practice in the classroom.”

Under authentic materials are understood fragments of or full-length videos, texts, audio recordings, and other teaching resources that were not specifically created for pedagogical purposes [7]. These genuine materials may have a positive effect on students' motivation as they are intrinsically more attention-grabbing and interesting than specially-prepared educational materials.

In contrast to older teaching methods, like the Grammar Translation Method, focusing only on teaching rules, memorizing lists of words, and doing written exercises prepared long ago, at the heart of contemporary methods is communication, and more precisely, improvement of students' communicative skills, what allows them to be more

prepared to real-life communication with their future colleagues in professional area and just with ordinary people of other nationalities. This new teaching aim is as valuable as can be while plain knowledge of grammar rules or learned-by-heart vocabulary isolated from any authentic context will never be 100% useful if students do not know how and when to use this or that rule or word. This missing piece in students' professional foreign language competence is the continuous practice of authentic communication and simultaneous discovery and memorizing of correct vocabulary in the suitable context typical of native speakers' communication in the language, which is studied.

An authentic audio- or written text is a great alternative to obsolete specifically-prepared recordings or textbooks (which may not correspond to students' needs), and so, gives learners genuine materials they need to enhance their, for instance, listening or reading comprehension. Authentic language heard on recordings not prepared artificially, i.e. exactly with the aim of teaching students, represented by movie (fragments), TV news or audio recordings like podcasts, radio programmes, etc., provides students with opportunities to subconsciously "feel" the foreign language and comprehend by themselves peculiarities of use of modern English vocabulary and grammar, noticing some colloquial words and phrases often used in a "live" language but never, or almost never, present in specially-prepared teaching materials, which are presented somewhat "refined", or simplified, to language learners.

There are the following criteria for selecting authentic materials for university EFL lessons [4]: 1) percentage of authenticity; 2) content appropriateness; 3) compatibility with objectives of the EFL course; 4) usability.

But for all that, authentic materials must be used in accordance with students' abilities and level of foreign language knowledge [1]. Some researchers [2; 3] state that the materials in question can be employed solely with intermediate and advanced level students, whereas others [6] think that all learners, even with lower levels of English knowledge, are able to work with authentic materials at foreign language university

lessons. So, the choice is up to foreign language teachers, who know the students and their English language proficiency at a particular stage of training.

To sum up, it should be said that correctly selected and used English authentic audio-visual or textual materials is an indispensable element of any EFL teaching at the university. They may be used with technical students and students-linguists, with people having intermediate or advanced levels of foreign language knowledge. But the one thing remains certain – authentic materials at English lessons is a key to the preparation of highly-qualified students, sure in their level of communicative skills and confident in their ability to use suitable vocabulary and grammar in the process of genuine real-life communication with foreigners, including their colleagues from other countries.

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