



THE ROLE OF AUTHENTIC TEXTS IN DEVELOPING READING SKILLS AMONG ACADEMIC LYCEUM LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of authentic texts in developing reading skills among academic lyceum learners. It analyzes their contribution to reading comprehension, strategic reading, critical thinking, academic literacy, and learner autonomy. The article also discusses methodological principles for selecting and using authentic materials in English language classrooms. The analysis demonstrates that authentic texts significantly improve learners' reading competence when they are integrated into systematic, learner-centered instruction.

Reading is no longer regarded as a passive activity of recognizing words and sentences. Instead, it is viewed as an active cognitive process in which learners interpret, analyze, evaluate, and construct meaning from written information. Consequently, academic lyceum students need well-developed reading skills that prepare them for higher education, independent learning, and effective communication. Authentic texts provide valuable opportunities to achieve these objectives because they present language as it is naturally used in real social, academic, and professional contexts rather than in simplified textbook passages.

Recent studies strongly support the educational value of authentic reading materials. Macalister argues that authentic texts expose learners to natural discourse and help them develop strategic reading behaviors that improve overall comprehension [3, 11-24]. Similarly, Renandya and others state that continuous engagement with meaningful authentic texts strengthens reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and learner confidence [5]. Furthermore, Mikulecky and Jeffries emphasize that effective reading instruction should encourage learners to predict, infer, summarize, question, and evaluate information while reading [4]. Anderson also explains that successful reading comprehension develops when learners actively construct meaning instead of translating every word individually [1]. In addition, Day and Bamford and others maintain that authentic reading promotes learner autonomy and prepares students for independent academic study [2, 187-191].

One of the greatest advantages of authentic texts is their ability to develop strategic reading. Many students initially attempt to understand every unfamiliar word, which often slows down comprehension and reduces confidence. However, authentic materials encourage learners to identify key ideas, recognize text organization, use contextual clues, and infer the meaning of unknown vocabulary. As a result, students gradually become more efficient readers who focus on understanding the overall message rather than translating individual lexical items.

Authentic texts also improve inferential comprehension because learners must identify implicit meanings, recognize the author's purpose, establish relationships between ideas, and draw logical conclusions based on textual evidence. Such activities strengthen analytical thinking and encourage students to move beyond literal understanding. At the same time, authentic reading develops metacognitive awareness, as learners monitor their own comprehension, recognize misunderstandings, and apply appropriate strategies such as rereading, predicting, or summarizing to overcome reading difficulties.

Another important contribution of authentic materials is the development of academic literacy. Academic lyceum students are expected to read scientific articles, essays, reports, and other informational texts that require careful analysis and interpretation. Regular exposure to authentic materials familiarizes learners with academic vocabulary, formal writing styles, logical organization, and evidence-based argumentation. Consequently, students become better prepared for university studies and future professional communication.

Moreover, authentic texts contribute significantly to critical thinking. Reading newspaper articles, opinion essays, research reports, and online publications encourages learners to compare different viewpoints, distinguish facts from opinions, evaluate arguments, and identify reliable sources of information. These skills are increasingly important in the digital age, where students encounter large amounts of information from various media platforms and must learn to evaluate its credibility critically.

The successful use of authentic texts depends on appropriate teaching methodology. Teachers should carefully select materials according to learners' language proficiency, interests, and educational goals. Reading instruction should include pre-reading activities that activate background knowledge, while-reading tasks that develop comprehension strategies, and post-reading activities such as discussion, summarizing, presentations, problem solving, and reflective writing. These stages help students interact with texts more effectively and deepen their understanding.

Digital technologies have further expanded opportunities for authentic reading instruction. Online newspapers, educational websites, academic journals, electronic books, and multimedia resources provide learners with access to current and diverse reading materials. The integration of these resources not only improves reading competence but also develops digital literacy and independent learning skills.

Assessment should evaluate more than literal comprehension. Teachers should measure students' ability to interpret, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information through reading portfolios, analytical essays, presentations, reflective journals, and project-based tasks. Such assessment methods provide a more comprehensive picture of learners' reading development than traditional comprehension tests alone.

In conclusion, authentic texts play a vital role in developing reading skills among academic lyceum learners. They enhance reading comprehension, strategic reading, critical thinking, academic literacy, and learner autonomy while preparing students for higher education and lifelong learning. Therefore, the systematic integration of authentic reading materials into English language instruction should be considered an essential component of modern language education in academic lyceums..

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