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4/13/09

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Abstract for: Authentic Text Materials

My hypothesis is that authentic materials will be more accessible to language learners with specifically designed language training materials that I will create, integrating reading skills, grammar topics and cultural knowledge, using modern research and theory in language education. Using the materials that I am proposing, students should be better prepared for language use and experience outside of the classroom as well.

I intend to create language training materials for high-intermediate to advanced students using authentic texts such as short stories, newspaper articles, poems, and famous essay. These texts will be supplemented with notes to assist with the understanding of vocabulary and cultural context. I will be writing original material in the form of explanations and activities that ensure students will focus on cultural and grammatical contexts as well, to help give students a greater understanding both of authentic texts, but also of United States culture, and American English from the past fifteen to twenty years in use.

Authentic texts, such as newspaper articles, novels, or short stories, are often used for ESL/EFL learners in the classroom setting for their depictions of language-in-use. They are widely thought to give students more realistic linguistic examples as compared with traditional, simplified textbook language that is often presented

in language textbooks.   These materials are often adapted for the use of English

learners in various countries, usually by means of simplification, so their language is

closer to the level of the learners, often sounding stilted and inauthentic to native

speakers, in order that the learners can more easily understand them.  They are also

generally somewhat deculturalized to account for the learner's lack of knowledge

cultural context of the original material.  Bacon and Finnemann (1990), however,

found that learners often preferred authentic reading material that related to

current events, and to themselves.

Young (1999) has found, as well, that evidence for the simplification of

authentic texts being helpful for students is inconsistent at best, and that the most

frequent problems encountered by English language learners are lexical in nature. I

will get around the lexical problems Young discusses by providing vocabulary notes

in the margins, with information on the difficulty of vocabulary, and thus the

necessity of explaining it from English learner dictionaries.  In this way, I will be able

to get around lexical and cultural difficulties with reading authentic texts, and create

a cohesive language training materials for students of English.

Works Cited

Bacon, S. M., & Finnemann, M. D. (1990). A study of the attitudes, motives, and
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        instructional practice?. *The Modern Language Journal*, 83(3), 350-366