

# The Importance of Authentic Materials and their Integration in Teaching German as a foreign Language

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**Abstract** – The purpose of every foreign language & second learners is to communicate successfully in everyday 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. Learners of a foreign language encounter many linguistic and cultural differences which they are not familiar with as they are not familiar with the native speakers or their culture and lifestyle. 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. This research is based on lecturer interviews, lesson plans of the German language lecturers. They were asked about their attitudes toward the use of authentic materials in their classes. Student performance analysis and classroom observations were also done in order to gather data during a period of two academic years. The students learning in the communicative method, being first trust in to the real life situation and then acquire the specific vocabulary and standard sentence structures. They thereby get an insight in to the lifestyles and codes of communication in contemporary Germany. The use of authentic materials in language teaching the students benefiting from the exposure to real life situations for instance on the street , airport, railway station can be employed at A1 leading to A2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

**Key words:** authentic materials, German language, culture and lifestyle, language, everyday life situations

## Introduction

The aim of learning a foreign language is to communicate successfully in real life situations. In order to achieve the fluency ,the four skills of language learning reading, writing, listening, speaking should be enhanced where this training makes the language learners to use the target language from the very first step of their learning and achieve the expected fluency. For this process “authentic texts” are being used. There are different definitions for the authentic materials. Authentic texts are that not written for the purpose of language teaching (Jordan 1997, p.113)<sup>1</sup>. Though this definition varies from author to author, this paper focuses on the authentic language that is produced by the native speakers. Non-authentic materials are the materials which are specially designed for language teaching and learning.

William Guariento and John Morley describe authentic text as: “...one ‘created to fulfil some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced’ With the onset of communicative movement a greater awareness of the need to develop students’ skills for the real world has meant that teachers endeavour to simulate this world in the classroom.” (Guariento, W. & Morley, J., 2001, p: 347)<sup>2</sup> Both academics claim that the purpose of using authentic materials is to prepare students for their social lives. In other words, the authentic materials are used in order to close the language gap between classroom knowledge and real life (p: 347)<sup>3</sup>. “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)<sup>4</sup>. Nunan (1988)<sup>5</sup> defines authentic materials as the materials "which have been produced for purposes other than to teach language".Herrington and Oliver (2000)<sup>6</sup> suggested a new pedagogical term, called "authentic learning". This term is directly related to the students' real life and prepares them to face and deal with real world situations.According to Herod (2002)<sup>7</sup> authentic learning 'materials and activities' are designed to imitate the real world situations. Jacobson et al (2003, p. 1)<sup>8</sup> sees authentic materials as printed materials, which are used in classrooms in the same way they would be used in real life.

### **Objective of the research**

This research focuses on the need for exposing students to authentic language materials. The main objective of this research is to analyze the importance of authentic materials and their integration in teaching German as a foreign language and to find various possibilities to use them in elementary level (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages A1-A2 level ) according to communicative language principles, accompanied with both reading and listening skills. The students are first trained to use them in real life situations learning under communicative method, and next acquire the specific vocabulary and standard sentence structures respectively. They thereby receive an insight into the lifestyles and codes of communication in contemporary Germany.

The other objective is to examine the variety of authentic text materials have been used appropriately and how the lesson plan is being changed according to specific authentic material along with the target level of learning.

### **Methods of data collection of the research**

As the data collecting methods classroom observations and lesson plans of the German language lecturers were used. Further Interviews with lectures who teach German as a foreign language have been conducted. They were asked about their attitudes toward the use of authentic materials in their classes. Student performance analysis was also done in order to gather data.

### **Types of authentic Materials**

There are different kinds of authentic materials. Every type of authentic materials are accessible in the Internet and many other sources. They can be divided to main two categories.

1. Print materials,
2. Auditory materials.

Authentic print materials basically consist of posters, placards, billboards, handbills, notice boards, restaurant menus, maps, newspaper advertisements, train timetables, utility bills, packing slip, restaurant menus, newspaper advertisements, handbills, , sales catalogues, travel brochures, maps, blogs, movie posters, food labels, oder forms ,ATM screens, ATM receipts, web sites, street signs, flight schedules, restaurant menus, hand bills including supermarket prices and offers TV programs and at a higher levels, receipts for cooking, directions how to use equipment, are used to meet the required competence of an elementary level. Example for the authentic auditory materials are phone massages, radio broadcast, E books, Movies,TV commercials, films, news items, weather forecasts, airport and station announcement, radio talks, interviews, and debates.

More examples of authentic materials as spoken & written are proposed by (Hedge, 2000; Baird, 2004)<sup>9</sup>

Spoken: TV commercials, films, news items, weather forecasts, airport and station announcement, radio talks, interviews, and debates.

Written: recipes, articles, train timetables, advertisements, brochures, poems, application forms, and instruction for use of equipment.

### **The Advantage and the Purpose of using authentic materials**

The main purpose of using authentic materials is producing Language data for real life communication purposes. They are useful for improving the communicative aspects of the language.

The main advantages of using authentic materials are(Philips and Shettlesworth 1978; Clarke 1989;Peacock 1997, cited in Richards, 2001)<sup>10</sup>:

They have a positive effect on learner motivation, provide authentic cultural information., provide exposure to real language, relate more closely to learners ' needs, support a more creative approach to teaching.

The teaching authentic materials prepare students to encounter real life language outside of the classroom. Authentic instructional materials are such materials which may not have been specifically designed for classroom use, but for use in real-life situations. In addition to the use of authentic instructional materials, the teacher in communicative language teaching classroom has to design tasks and activities that also reflect the actual use of language in real-life situations. For example, such tasks that may involve learners into exchange of ideas through interaction, like group work, and pair work, are desirable in communicative language teaching. Thus, authentic instructional materials boost the teaching strategies and promote learners' active language production.

Authentic materials are significant since they increase students' motivation for learning the target language. When authentic materials are used in a foreign language teaching students are exposed to real discourse.

Positive effect on learner motivation is to provide authentic cultural information, Provide exposure to real language, relate more closely to learner's needs, support more creative approach to teaching, Visually interesting and captures the attention of the learner, It is useful to help the students grasp the cultural differences or learn practical skills and to enable students to learn about the culture of the country where the target language is spoken Students gain confidence when they understand them.

They offer authentic cultural information, offer exposure to natural language, more appropriate to learners' needs, more innovative approach to teaching.

According to Harmer (1994)<sup>11</sup>, the use of authentic materials helps learners as follows:

Authentic materials assist language learners to become better readers and better learners which ultimately lead them to produce good language,Language acquisition process will be better and faster,Students feel satisfied over their achievement in the proficiency of the language because the skills they gain make them feel that they can face the situations in their real life too. Non- authentic materials, in Suman Laudari's (2011)<sup>12</sup> opinion, are the materials which are especially produced for students. Such text sometimes concentrates on the language we wish to teach but not on the students' need.

### **The use of authentic materials as a medium of effective communication**

Communicative language Teaching (CLT) is based on the concept of communicative competence by which learners of a language are expected to possess the ability to understand a foreign language and be able to use that language for purposes of effective communication (Sekiziyivu & Mugimu, 2015)<sup>13</sup>. However, in order for learners to learn to use a language in real-life situations, the classroom learning

environment has to be organized in such a way that it closely reflects, as much as possible, the real-life situation outside the classroom. This can be achieved by utilization of authentic instructional materials.

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Similarly, Marcella (1998, p. 7)<sup>14</sup> gives the following characteristics of authentic instructional materials for a communicative classroom:

1. The materials are learner-centered and cater for the needs and interests of the student.
2. The texts place greater emphasis on the social function of the communication than on grammatical correctness. In other words, the language activities in the texts lead to free communication.
3. The texts provide practice with natural and meaningful communication.
4. The texts enhance real life language practice.
5. The texts allow for a great deal of learners' interaction, for example group work and pair work, role plays, problem solving tasks.
6. The texts are usually accompanied by tapes for 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 further more expresses that most audiovisual media used in a foreign language teaching can be regarded as "authentic", which can facilitate and provide the opportunity for the competence of understanding, varying on real speaking situations. Learners then learn first to comprehend the global-situation (*globalesVerstehen*), 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 in such situations keep in mind that whole information is scanned and skimmed appropriately and the learner should not therefore unnecessarily burdened to look for information, not related to the action that follows the comprehension on the text (Edelhoff: 1985, S. 7 – 30)<sup>15</sup>.

## Conclusion

Authentic materials that are derived from the culture of the target language give positive attitude towards language learning rather than those specially designed for language learning. In teaching German as a foreign language using authentic materials is highly important that the learners are enhanced through the exposure to everyday life situations, Exposure to the everyday use of language will make students feel that they are learning the „natural“ language. on the street, airport, railway station, restaurant, supermarket where it can be used in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages at A1 leading to A2 level. The students are benefiting from the exposure to real life situations deciding which film to see, which train to take, which beverage to order in restaurant, They are also familiarized with type of television programs, type of films targeting different audiences, The evaluation at written & oral exams will also use such authentic materials and the students can orient themselves in restaurant, railway station or airport after the exercises in selective reading

The teacher has to choose the right authentic materials according to the lesson.

The learner will not encounter the artificial language of the classroom but the real world and language how it is really used. According to the interviews of the lectures they claim that learners are being exposed to real language and they feel that they are learning the 'real' language. These are what make them excited and willing to use authentic materials in the classrooms, but while using them, it is inevitable that they face some problems. Further they say that different learner understand authentic materials differently.

The role of the teacher is not to delude the language learner but to prepare him, giving the awareness and necessary skills so as to understand how the language is actually used. Having made a distinction between authentic and non-authentic material and evaluated the use of them in the classroom. Other aspects which proved positive when using authentic materials were that the students are highly motivated.

When exposed the everyday life situations in Germany the students motivation can be increased.

Furthermore authentic materials help learners to acquire a language better than with the use of conventional methods. Use of authentic materials in the classroom reflect the change that taking place in the language and update teachers and students aware of such phenomenon. They help learners to become linguistically equipped and also prepare them to interact and work in the multi- cultural context. Furthermore these materials help language learners to grab the accent and other aspects of native speakers' language.

### **End Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Jordan 1997, p.113)

<sup>2</sup>(Guariento, W. & Morley, J., 2001, p: 347)

<sup>3</sup>(p: 347)

<sup>4</sup>(Guariento & Morley, 2001; Wilcox et al., 1999)

<sup>5</sup>Nunan (1988)

<sup>6</sup>Herrington and Oliver (2000)

<sup>7</sup>Herod (2002)

<sup>8</sup>Jacobson et al (2003, p. 1)

<sup>9</sup>(Hedge, 2000; Baird, 2004)

<sup>10</sup>(Philips and Shettlesworth 1978; Clarke 1989;Peacock 1997, cited in Richards, 2001)

<sup>11</sup>Harmer (1994)

<sup>12</sup>Suman Laudari's (2011)

<sup>13</sup>(Sekiziyivu & Mugimu, 2015)

<sup>14</sup>Marcella (1998, p. 7)

<sup>15</sup>(Edelhoff: 1985, S. 7 – 30).

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