



Motivation to Read Authentic Narrative Texts: A Focus on Pre-University Students in an ESL Class

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ABSTRACT

Second Language (L2) instructors often use authentic text, although it is designed for real-world communication among speakers of a target language. However, it is criticised for being too complex for L2 learners. This study explores the level of acceptance of 85 pre-university students of authentic narrative text in their ESL lessons and the factors that influence their reading motivation. The quantitative data were collected using a 9-item questionnaire. The findings show that the students had a high acceptance of reading authentic narrative texts in the classroom. Their motivation was positively correlated with the length of the text, level of interest, relevance and appropriateness of the storyline. This study supports the use of authentic narrative texts in ESL classrooms.

Keywords: authentic text, narrative text, ESL, reading motivation

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1 INTRODUCTION

Reading exposes students to the second language (L2) features such as vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure, which will ideally be noticed and modelled in their L2 production. Moreover, reading is helpful in introducing exciting topics, which will stimulate discussion and excite fascinating responses in the classroom. Some scholars regard reading as an integral component of language learning and essential for lifelong learning (Pandian, 1997).

English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors are encouraged to use various texts to teach reading skills. It will enrich students with vocabulary and language structure and, simultaneously, train them to apply reading skills for various purposes. It includes authentic texts, texts not explicitly designed for language learners. They were initially created to fulfil a social purpose in a first language community, such as articles from magazines or newspapers, menus, advertisements and websites (Little, 2014). It should be highlighted that authentic texts are not limited to texts written by native speakers of a language. They are texts produced for the native or proficient speakers of a language. Hence, authentic texts offer various styles, genres and formalities (Dewi, 2018). Unlike adapted texts or texts developed particularly for language learning purposes, authentic texts use more advanced linguistic features where unfamiliar words and complex sentences are featured (Harmer, 2014).

Proponents of authentic texts in L2 classrooms argue that authentic texts are more meaningful to learners as they can link the school and the natural world (Seunariningsih, 2010). It is proposed that this increases students' reading motivation as the topics are usually more interesting than the dull and often repetitive topics of inauthentic texts typically found in textbooks. It is suggested that the appealing content increases the eagerness of students to read for learning as well as leisure purposes. However, some scholars argue that authentic texts can be a de-motivator for students unfamiliar with the context or worldview presented in the texts (Nematollahi & Maghsoudi, 2015). Contexts that are too foreign for the students may hinder comprehension, thus decreasing their engagement with the text.

The use of authentic texts in L2 classrooms is also encouraged by its supporters as it provides high exposure to the "real language" (Dewi, 2018). According to Daskalovska (2014), exposing students to only adapted texts reduce their opportunity to expand their lexical repository in the target language. Those texts typically end at around a 3000-word level which is inadequate for effective use of the language in real-life contexts. On the other hand, authentic texts are lexically richer and therefore are regarded as excellent resources for vocabulary acquisition. It increases the tendency of incidental vocabulary learning (Shakibaei et al., 2019). It is suggested that students acquire new vocabulary when exposed to unfamiliar words in contexts when reading an authentic text. It is claimed that this compensates for the impracticality of teaching every word explicitly in the classroom (Shakibaei et al., 2019). It is paralleled with the findings of prior research that showed learners' exposure to English media, such as video games, websites, and TV series is a better predictor of their vocabulary size than formal schooling (Cetinkaya, 2021). It supports the notion that authentic materials are beneficial for second language acquisition.