



AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

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Annotation: In order to demonstrate and to teach a language in the classroom, there are some real objects or materials that teachers can use. This is what teachers call realia. It is a supporting tool to make language acquisition and production possible. What realia does is to provide learners with concrete vocabulary that permits them to have a direct contact through the senses of seeing, hearing, smelling and touching the objects. As Richards and Rodgers say, real-world materials are brought to class by the students in the form of newspapers, signs, handbills, storybooks, and in the case of adults printed materials from their workplace are also another resource. Students also produce their own materials. Besides, realia does not have to be limited to food or drink. Calendars, coupons, magazines, and fashion may all be recycled to help open life into lessons, and help deal interest.

Key words: realia, support, acquisition, seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling, touching, limit.

Most foreign language teachers face many problems related to the lack of tools and materials which would make their work in the classroom an efficient activity, and at the same time, an enjoyable experience for learners.

Thus, considering the topic of this research, it is relevant to begin by defining what realia is.

To explain this word some people can say that realia's meaning is implicit in the same word, and they are right indeed. In English as Foreign Language settings, the word realia refers to the use of real objects as a means to teach English. However, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2007) realia are "objects or activities used to relate classroom teaching to the real life especially of peoples studied" and the dictionary also provides the



origin of the word REALIA which comes from Late Latin, “neuter” plural of “*realis*” which means “real” and can be used in general pedagogy.

In order to demonstrate and to teach a language in the classroom, there are some real objects or materials that teachers can use. This is what teachers call realia. It is a supporting tool to make language acquisition and production possible. What realia does is to provide learners with concrete vocabulary that permits them to have a direct contact through the senses of seeing, hearing, smelling and touching the objects. As Richards and Rodgers (2003, p.111) say, real-world materials are brought to class by the students in the form of newspapers, signs, handbills, storybooks, and in the case of adults printed materials from their workplace are also another resource. Students also produce their own materials. Besides, realia does not have to be limited to food or drink. Calendars, coupons, magazines, and fashion may all be recycled to help open life into lessons, and help deal interest. As we can see there are many objects around us which can be used as material for teaching. Those materials can be brought to the class by the teacher and also by the students but the teacher can use the objects that are already in the classroom. Moreover, during the class the students can make their own supplies.

The uses of realia in language teaching

Some reasons for using real objects in the classroom to illustrate and teach vocabulary are:

The real aids such as realia are helpful tools to attract student's attention because they offer imagination and variety to the class and to the students too.

It is useful to open curiosity and maintain the interest in the real objects the teacher shows (Yilmaz, 2011,p.13).

The usage of realia is only narrowed by your imagination and possibly practicality too. Using realia motivates the mind, and makes vocabulary more unforgettable than an image would. Students can touch, smell, and with a food article, taste it. Realia saves time, as appreciation of an object is often instantaneous, elicitation of vocabulary becomes easier



since it is simply holding up the object and showing it to the students.

As it was explained above, realia is a good aid to make students remember the new vocabulary because they experience vocabulary through the senses. All objects can be used in a foreigner English class. So, it is feasible to employ realia to teach concrete vocabulary.

Moreover, as it involves the senses, it promotes creativity and the acknowledgment of the object as direct (Richards and Rodgers 2003).

Realia can be used as an icebreaker, and it serves as a valuable tool to encourage conversation. It also makes the students' minds concentrate on the object. When teaching English vocabulary to children, realia is a good option. For example, children love toys, so they can be used in a lesson. Realia can be used also to construct a dialogue, to tell a story, and to explain concepts such as traditions; realia is practical in teaching prepositions of place such as: *on, in, under, next to, and in front of over*. The teacher can take an object and put it on a box, in a box, under a box and so on. Finally, some of the ways we can help students to understand the meanings of new languages are illustrated by means of the use of realia (Yilmaz, 2011).

According to Harmer, the following example shows how realia helps to learn vocabulary with beginners.

Example 1: „It's a pen!

“This is perhaps the easiest level at which to explain meaning. The teachers want students to understand the form „pen’ so she holds up a pen and says „pen’. The meaning will be clear. She can do the same with words like „pencil', „table', „chair’ etc. (...) some of the ways of helping students to understand, then - especially when dealing with fairly simple concepts - are: objects, pictures, drawings, gesture and expression” (Harmer, 1998, p 51). Therefore, realia is useful with children because it is a helpful instrument in making the abstract world, concrete.

Realia opens life into new vocabulary, and the opportunities of the students to remember the new words the teacher has taught them. For example, take the word, “sweet”. The



possibility of calling to mind the word develops much higher after feeling the taste, touch and smell of an object.

Taking into account the previous information, realia is a material used in second language acquisition. Richards and Rodgers, (2003) say that realia can be used in different approaches and methods. They explain that some methods require the instructional use of existing materials, found materials, and realia (p.29). So, it explains that most of the methods to teach English as a second language need materials. All those materials help teachers to enhance English learning in the classes.

The materials including realia should accomplish the following features:

Materials will focus on the communicative abilities of interpretation, expression, and negotiation.

Materials will focus on understandable, relevant, and interesting exchange of information, rather than on the presentation of a grammatical form.

Materials will involve different kinds of texts and different media, which the learners can use to develop their competence through a variety of different activities and tasks (Richards and Rodgers, 2003 p.29).

Realia is also considered great material to teach English. It is because realia uses the senses to understand the meaning; this example is explicit in Multiple Intelligences. It explains that since the intelligence can be broken in other intelligences, some of them can help humans in the purpose of language. It means communication. This is attributed to the fact that language has its ties to life through the senses. The senses provide the accompaniment and context for the linguistic messages that give it meaning and purpose. It is necessary to have a multisensory view of language, it means, to build an adequate frame of language as well as effective development of skills for language learning (Richards and Rogers, 2003, p. 117,118).

One approach that considers the use of realia as a good helper to make students understand the meaning of an item is Multiple Intelligences. In this approach it is mentioned that



“Through multisensory experiences- touching, smelling, tasting, seeing and so on - learners can be sensitized to the many-faceted properties of objects and events in the world that surrounds them”. Moreover, “students strengthen and improve the intelligences by volunteering objects and events of their own choosing and defining with others the properties and context of experience of these objects and events” (Richards and Rogers, 2003, p. 117-118).

Christison cited by Richards and Rogers (2003) describes a low-level language lesson dealing with description of physical objects: “The teacher brings many different objects to the class. Students experience feeling things that are soft, rough, cold, smooth, and so on”. Experiences like this help activate and make learners aware of the sensory bases of experiences. (p. 117). This is one way to awake the intelligence.

Another way is to amplify the intelligence. Students are asked to bring objects to class or to use something in their possession. Teams of students describe each object attending to the five physical senses. They complete a worksheet including the information they have observed and discussed (p. 118). It means that when the students bring a personal object to the class, they have a real context to describe. So, it makes the students pay attention to the given and gotten information.

Another method that considers realia as a material to bring in classes is Communicative Language Teaching. It says that there are many proponents who have supported the use of “authentic,” “from-life” materials in the classroom. These materials might include language-based realia, such as signs, magazines, advertisements, and newspapers, or graphic and visual sources around which communicative activities can be built, such as maps, pictures, symbols, graphs, and charts. It means that different kinds of materials can be used as realia to support communicative exercises and to provide a good environment for the learning process (Richards and Rodgers, 2003, p.170).

Additionally, to the coherence in the fundamentals of the research, some considerations about vocabulary need to be made, given that the focal point of this research is the application



of Realia for learning vocabulary.

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