

TEACHER'S CORNER – MAY 2018

TEACHING WITH AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

Many English classes come with a textbook or curriculum for instructors to follow. This can be helpful when designing a course, determining learning outcomes, and assessing students. It also makes it easy for teachers to plan lessons and introduce concepts to students in a logical sequence.

There are many potential benefits to using prescribed curricula or materials to teach. However, these resources are not provided by every institution and even when they are, they often lack an authentic context in which students can practice English. In cases where these resources are not provided for a course, or where instructors wish to expose students to highly engaging opportunities to practice English, using authentic materials is an excellent option.

WHAT ARE AUTHENTIC MATERIALS?

One description of authentic materials says that their purpose is to communicate meaning and information and that they are produced for real communication rather than to teach language (Thomas, 2014). Authentic materials for the English language classroom are often free and very easy to find online or perhaps in certain locations in your communities. Here are some examples:

- TV shows, news segments, documentaries, movie clips and trailers, online videos, and commercials
- Radio broadcasts, songs, and podcasts
- Photographs, artwork, signs, postcards, maps, and advertisements
- Magazines, letters and emails, news articles, brochures, websites, blogs, and social media posts
- Recipes, food labels, bus and train schedules, menus, and price tags and product descriptions

This month in the Teacher's Corner, we will discuss different types of authentic materials and the benefits and challenges of using them. We will also explore teaching strategies to use with these materials in the English language classroom. Activities will focus on activating and building students' background knowledge, increasing vocabulary, supporting comprehension, and including summative tasks. Ideas presented can be adapted to use with any type of authentic material you choose for your students.