Realia and Technology in the Classroom

The purpose of this workshop is to help you increase your materials resources for different age groups and EFL settings through the use of realia which is available in our environment on a daily basis. Both novice and experienced users of technology will be presented with samples of activities combining and exploiting diverse sources of authentic materials for the sake of developing macro, micro and critical thinking skills.

The Presenters

Graciela Martin is a graduate from I.N.S.P. Joaquin V. Gonzalez. She was a high school English teacher at Escuela Superior de Comercio “Carlos Pellegrini”. She has worked as materials designer for elementary and intermediate adult EFL courses at ICANA. At present she is the Head of the Intermediate Department at ICANA, where she is involved in materials design as well as teacher development.

Patricia Veciño is a graduate of I.N.S.P. Joaquin V. Gonzalez. She worked as a high school English teacher. She has worked as materials developer and teacher trainer for ICANA elementary and intermediate adult courses. She was also involved in ESP materials design. She is the Head of the Children Department at ICANA, where she is responsible for materials development as well as teacher training. She is currently teaching Methodology and in charge of the Practicum at ICANA Escuela Superior.
Summary

Our students today interact with a variety of media such as hypertext, multimedia, and CD-ROM, in addition to newspapers, radio, cable TV, and movies. More often than not EFL instruction has developed students’ skills to deal with materials designed for educational purposes, namely textbooks and readers. At present instruction needs to encompass helping students be literate consumers and competent producers in a variety of media. Therefore, a good way to start is to make thoughtful use of that media which is easily available and accessible in the environment.

Materials specially made for language teaching have been planned and produced for a language-learning audience. This means that the language may be graded, and that the presentation of new vocabulary items, structures, or speech exponents will be controlled. The material is likely to have an explicit language-learning goal, expressed in terms of language structures or a level of communicative ability.

Instead, authentic materials, which have not been produced for language-teaching purposes, can be used in the classroom to bring many benefits to language learning. They are communicatively purposeful in themselves and they allow students to explore various themes and fulfill desired objectives in the real world.

The aim of this workshop is to provide a range of practical ideas to explore various sources of realia in the world around us. Participants will also become acquainted with different ways of exploiting authentic materials effectively and creatively in order to practice macro, and micro skills as well as to develop students’ critical thinking. English language materials such as food wrapping, newspapers, magazines, web sites, movies, TV programs, and audio clips are available worldwide on a daily basis. These materials are often cheap and plentiful. This source of topical material written or recorded in authentic English is too useful and important to be omitted from the EFL classroom.

Furthermore, realia provides us with a natural source of many of the varieties of both written and spoken English and an immense range of information. In addition, realia provides content about the outside world, which entails that its use in the classroom bridges the gap between the outside world and the classroom.

Most people talk about what they read in the newspapers, on a Web page, or what they see in a movie or TV program. They make judgements about what they get from the media, and they listen to the judgements their friends have made. Thus reading is integrated with listening and speaking, to a remarkable degree, in an entirely natural way when the stimulus is a piece of authentic material. This suggests that realia could be seen as the stimulus which may trigger off a wide range of communicative, motivating and integrated activities.
Bibliography


