

Authentic documents in the teaching and learning of a foreign language

Abstract:

Today's fast-paced and globalised world has made the learning of a foreign language a pressing need. As a result, many people, already seemingly settled in their occupations are flocking back to college to either learn the basics or master at least one foreign language. However, these attempts do not seem to yield much fruit in terms of applying these 'learned' languages. Many students who have completed foreign language courses are barely capable of sustaining a conversation beyond the standard basic greetings. Learning a foreign language means being able to communicate effectively in everyday situations. Learners of languages tend to be passive in class. They are content with waiting to summarise a whole session's content into a precise mathematical rule. Passivity in class, and the expectation that only the instructor is able to ask questions and consequently supply exact answers to the same questions can be remedied through the use of authentic documents in the course of language teaching and learning. The language class presents to both the instructor and the learners an opportunity to learn and use a language in its various facets. Here, the learners expect to be taught how to use a language appropriately in different situations of communication. However, a language need not be viewed purely as a regimen of linguistic rules that need be learnt by rote. Language learning eventually entails acquisition of cultural and social norms, comprehension and, to some extent, knowledge of indigenous practices.