

The Capitalization of the Authentic Documents in the Educational Activity of the Primary Cycle

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Abstract

Keywords:

authentic documents; valorization;
didactic activity; integration.

Written, audio or audiovisual documents that were not designed to be used for pedagogical purposes, authentic documents are used by teachers in the teaching activity of different subjects, at different moments/stages of the lesson, aiming at the achievement of the proposed operational objectives, the interaction between pupils, the formulation and expression by them of their own points of view, the teaching staff being the mediator of the discussions. The use of this type of documents gives pupils an authentic picture of the subject in question, contributing to the development of a favorable attitude towards it, positively motivating them to search for similar information, helping them to overcome the limits of the textbook, making them become autonomous in learning. At the same time, the presence of authentic documents makes the lessons more dynamic, encouraging horizontal communication, presupposing on the part of the teaching staff the identification and use of the most effective activities in order to make full use of them. In this article we aim to present to what extent authentic documents are integrated into the didactic activity, which are these, how they are exploited in the primary cycle both by primary cycle teachers/teachers and by physical education teachers and sport, information obtained from the answers formulated by them to the questions in the applied questionnaire.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

authentische Dokumente;
Valorisierung; didaktische
Aktivität; Integration.

Schriftliche, Audio- oder audiovisuelle Dokumente, die nicht für pädagogische Zwecke bestimmt sind, authentische Dokumente werden von Lehrern bei der Unterrichtstätigkeit verschiedener Fächer zu unterschiedlichen Zeitpunkten/Stadien des Unterrichts verwendet, um die vorgeschlagenen operativen Ziele zu erreichen. Die Interaktion zwischen Studierenden, die Formulierung und Äußerung eigener Standpunkte durch sie, wobei die Lehrkräfte als Vermittler der Diskussionen fungieren. Die Verwendung dieser Art von Dokumenten vermittelt den Schülern ein authentisches Bild des betreffenden Themas, trägt zur Entwicklung einer positiven Einstellung dazu bei, motiviert sie positiv zur Suche nach ähnlichen Informationen und hilft ihnen, die Grenzen des Lehrbuchs zu überwinden und sie zu verbessern beim Lernen autonom werden. Gleichzeitig macht das Vorhandensein authentischer Dokumente den Unterricht dynamischer, fördert die horizontale Kommunikation und setzt seitens des Lehrpersonals die Identifizierung und Nutzung der effektivsten Aktivitäten voraus, um diese optimal nutzen zu können. In diesem Artikel möchten wir darstellen, inwieweit authentische Dokumente in die didaktische Tätigkeit integriert werden, welche diese sind, wie sie im Primarbereich sowohl von Grundschullehrern/-lehrern als auch von Sport- und Sportlehrern genutzt werden, Informationen aus dem von ihnen formulierte Antworten auf die Fragen im angewandten Fragebogen.

1. Introduction

Strongly supported as effective tools for foreign language education, authentic documents have found their place and purpose in other educational subjects as well, with teachers endeavoring to capitalize on them in order to reach the objectives they set.

In order to convey an effective pedagogical message, authentic documents need to be didactic, and this task rests with the teacher by being involved in the selection and adaptation of the chosen materials for use in the classroom.

One of the key advantages of using authentic documents is the direct connection to culture. Newspapers, magazines, movie ads, comic books,

photographs (whether family or nature), paintings, television commercials, and other printed materials are examples of useful realities (Berwald, 1987).

The authentic document generates a very wide variety of classroom activities (both oral and written). The teacher uses authentic materials to enhance the message, including a variety of exercises other than those provided in the textbooks, such as Multiple Choice Quizzes, word games, filling in the blanks after watching a film or program excerpt, etc. As for the pupils, the authentic document serves to involve them in the teaching-learning-assessment activity and allows the learners to become autonomous in terms of



learning new concepts in the classroom (greelane.com, 2017).

2. Theoretical foundation

The syntagm *didactic material* refers to natural objects, original, authentic documents, as well as to those designed and created specially to substitute real objects and phenomena (Stan, 2016). The members of the teaching staff use the didactic materials according to the specifics of the study subjects and the lessons they intend to teach, connecting to the objectives pursued, the content of the lesson, the methods and procedures used (Albulescu, 2008). Determining the pedagogical and didactic context in which the didactic material will have to be integrated "constitutes a problem of educational style, competence and pedagogical tact" (Bocoş, 2018).

Documents are a means, a tool on the basis of which teachers build learning situations. Over time there have been opinions for and against the authenticity of this type of documents, considering (Besse, 1980) that a document is no longer authentic from the moment it was taken out of context or when it is modified by the teaching staff to be used in a certain pedagogical context. A complete definition of the authentic document is formulated by Couto Silva (2015): "Authentic documents are texts that we find in society and that can be didacticized. When they are modified for a coherent methodology, they lose the context in which they were produced, but acquire pedagogical features".

The following may be authentic documents: a city plan, train timetables, forms of various types (documents of everyday life), as well as weather reports, interviews, films, excerpts from TV shows, comics, songs, photographs, paintings (written media documents, audio, televised or downloaded from the Internet).

Saoussene (2020) lists some of the advantages of using authentic documents, especially in language classes, but they can also be highlighted in other subjects. Thus, the authentic document generates a wide variety of classroom activities (both oral and written). Its use may be implemented through exercises, word games, filling in the blanks after watching a movie or a fragment of a show, etc. They facilitate the process of understanding and learning for pupils, render them more active, enrich the learning environment and transform it (precisely through the presence of texts, images, sounds, video extracts, and other materials) into a more fun, less rigid (Vila, 2011). Authentic documents are an infinite source of

didactic richness in acquiring a foreign culture, increase pupils' motivation towards learning, and allow the pupil to open up to the world and understand the other. It can be analyzed and reanalyzed, whenever needed, and at home. In the choice/selection of authentic documents, the teaching card equally faces a number of disadvantages: for example, if the authentic document is an audio-visual document, there is a risk that the image is of doubtful quality, the sound is weak or unintelligible/jamming, etc.

For school pupils, authentic documents are a challenge when it comes to analyzing them and formulating answers to possible questions asked by the teacher. At the same time, they may be a way of exploiting the creative potential of pupils, by asking them to express their own points of view and opinions and to argue them, which increases their motivation to search for further information in the process. Hence the basic pedagogical function of authentic documents, namely that of facilitating the pupil's access to multiple parameters, their use being one of the foundations of the methodology of understanding and oral and written expression of certain aspects revealed by that document by the pupil (Debaisieux, 2009). Therefore, any authentic document constitutes an open window to an authentic and real communication situation (Couto Silva, 2015).

3. Research methodology

3.1. Participants

In order to highlight the extent to which authentic documents are integrated in the lessons by primary education teachers, we used the questionnaire-based survey method, which enabled us to collect data related to the issue we set out to research (Bocoş, 2020). The questionnaire was applied to a number of 41 teachers who teach primary school pupils (32 primary education teachers and 9 physical education teachers) in educational institutions of Caraş-Severin County.

3.2. Research purpose

Considering the permanent preoccupations of teachers to search, find, and introduce diverse strategies in the teaching approach, this survey aims at identifying to what extent primary education teachers introduce authentic documents in different types of lessons, the subjects where they resort to such documents, the type of authentic documents mainly used. At the same time, the paper intends to highlight the ways of valorizing the authentic documents that the teachers propose to the pupils and the latter's

attitude towards this type of documents, also indicating the effects on the pupils' learning results following the introduction in the didactic approach of authentic documents.

Taking into account the importance of educational materials in general, authentic documents in particular, we formulated the following research questions:

3.2.1. To what extent do teachers in primary school (primary school teachers and physical education and sports teachers) use authentic documents in the instructional-educational process?

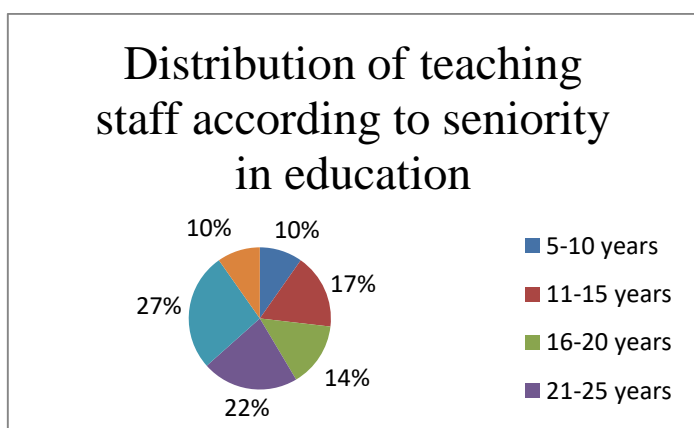
3.2.2. What is the impact of using authentic documents on pupils' involvement in the didactic activity and, implicitly, on pupils' results?

3.2.3. What are the ways in which the authentic documents proposed in the lessons are utilised/exploited?

3.3. Procedure

We have drawn up a questionnaire including eight questions, two identification (gender, seniority in education) and six content ones, some open, others closed, aiming to answer the research questions formulated by analyzing the answers collected from the respondents. The teachers surveyed are 32 primary school teachers and nine physical education and sports teachers who teach primary school pupils, with didactic experience between 5 and 35 years.

Figure 1. Distribution of teaching staff according to seniority in education



4. Results

As per the answers to the first question of the questionnaire, *How often do you use authentic documents in the lessons you propose?* (after the phrase authentic document was explained: "An authentic document is a document that was drawn up to be received as is. Teachers can use it for teaching

purposes."), all teachers surveyed use authentic documents in their teaching activities. Thus, only one teacher indicated that she uses authentic documents daily, six use them once a week, 27 (23 primary education teachers and 4 sports teachers) once a month, and seven (two primary education teachers and five sports teachers) once in a module.

When asked *What authentic documents do you use and for what purpose?* the teachers provided answers that we have systematized as follows:

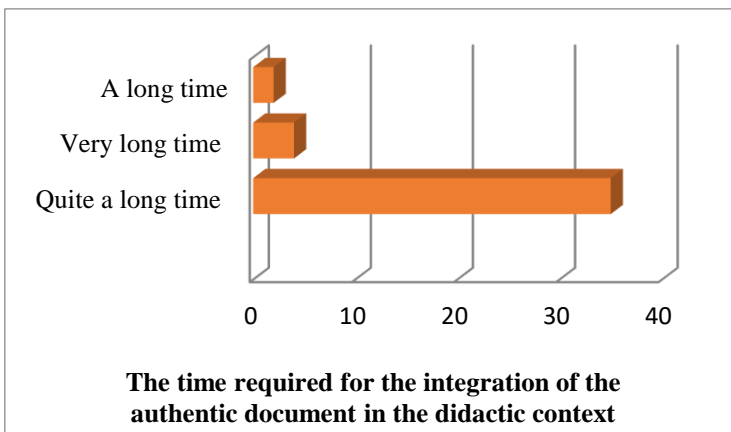
Table 1. Authentic documents and the purpose of their use

Proposed authentic document	Purpose of its use
The documentary/artistic film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● in history lessons, to identify features of rulers, the environment of the royal court, the peasant environment, the clothing of rulers, peasants, soldiers, battle weapons, the place where battles were fought, the attitude of those who fought them, etc.; ● in history lessons, for the discovery of monuments that are part of the UNESCO Heritage; ● in literature lessons, for the world of childhood memories, such as those in <i>Dumbrava minunată /The Enchanted Grove</i>; ● in geography lessons, for landforms, caves from Romania, the Danube, the Danube Delta, the Black Sea, lakes, flora, fauna; ● in music lessons, thus discovering the life and personality of great musicians/composers, etc.
Recordings of sports competitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to follow the attitude of athletes; ● to experience, "live", moments of glory of Romanian and world sports; ● to see and review certain elements of acrobatic gymnastics (tumbles, bridge, split, balance, etc.), from sports games (mini-football, mini-handball, mini-basketball, table tennis, tennis, badminton), motor qualities (speed, coordination abilities/ skill, strength, endurance, mobility), motor skills (walking, running, jumping, climbing, crawling), manipulation skills; ● to raise awareness of the referee's role in competitions in the appropriate sports disciplines (scorer, timekeeper, scorer, starter, etc.) which the pupils will fulfill, in turn; ● to comment on some sports events, especially in the field of sports practiced by pupils.
Articles from newspapers, magazines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● for interviews with writers, great athletes, scientists, actors, painters, musicians, etc. ● for shaping the personality of the great Romanian rulers; ● for details/curiosities regarding personalities from different fields; ● to dive into the atmosphere occasioned by the conquest of some special results by the great athletes of Romania, as it was reproduced by the authors of the articles; ● to discover places that make pupils want to visit them.
Photographs/paintings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to create the family tree; ● to outline the circle of friends; ● to describe the battle scenes, the soldiers, the uniforms, the weapons of the soldiers, the battlefield, as they appear in the proposed document; ● to get to know the faces of personalities from different fields; ● to see the beauty of some places in our country and in other countries;

- to discover one or more aspects of a memorial house;
 - to discover places, monuments, buildings that either no longer exist or have been modernized.
- Video excerpts from TV shows
- writers reading from their own creation;
 - interviews of scientists who brought pride to the county;
 - holding sports competitions (national, European and world championships, Olympic games, etc.)
 - interviews of champion athletes;
 - sports competitions in which pupils of the class or school participated;
 - aspects regarding Romanian culture and the ethnic groups in our country (songs, dances, traditions, folk costumes, gastronomy, etc.);
 - interviews with local personalities, from different fields etc.
- Films from youtube
- Carrying out different experiments;
 - Realization of some objects (especially the practical skills subject), of some geometric bodies;
 - Obtaining the nuances of certain colors, etc.

When it came to the question *How much time do you need to integrate the authentic document into a teaching context?* most of the surveyed teachers (35) consider that they need quite a long time, four consider they need a long time, and two need a very long time to integrate it into a teaching context.

Figure 2. The time required for the integration of the authentic document in the didactic context

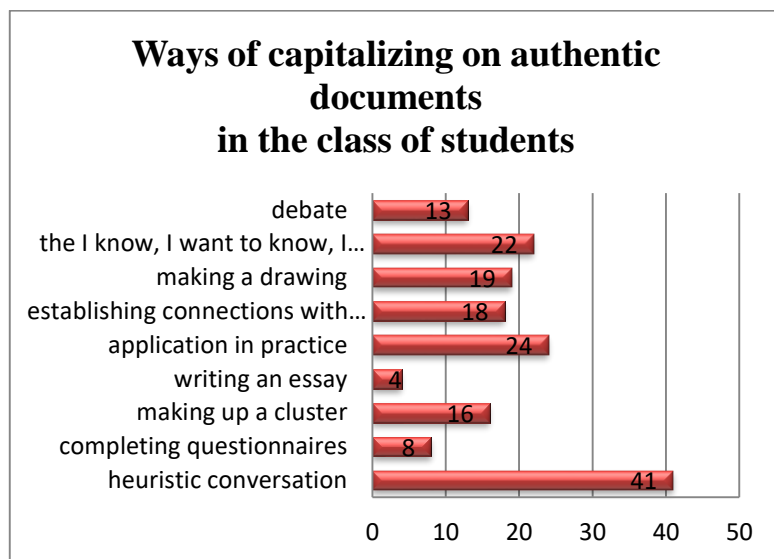


Regarding the pupils' involvement in the learning experiences and the interest shown by them when the teacher introduces an authentic document into the teaching process (questions 4 and 5), 31 respondents (75%) declared that the pupils are much more active than when such documents are not presented to them, the other 10 considering that, indeed, the pupils are more active, all agreeing that in such situations the pupils are much more interested in the entire didactic approach of the sequence in which the authentic document is introduced.

Question no. 6 refers to the ways in which the authentic documents proposed in the didactic activity are capitalized/exploited. All the teachers answered that they use heuristic conversation in order to capitalize on the content of the authentic documents,

eight (20%) ask the pupils to fill in questionnaires based on the information presented in the authentic documents used in the lessons, 16 (39%) make a cluster together with the pupils, four (10%) ask pupils to write an essay, 24 (59%) resort to the practical application of what the authentic documents used in the teaching process provided, 18 (44%) establish connections with previously received information, 19 (46 %) valorize the authentic document through a drawing, and 22 (54%) through the I know, I want to know, I learned method. Finally, 13 teachers (32%) propose to the pupils a debate based on the information from the authentic document considered.

Figure 3. Ways of capitalizing on authentic documents in the class of pupils



5. Discussions

This study was focused on highlighting the manner in which primary school teachers use authentic documents in their teaching. The study was conducted by applying a questionnaire in order to identify the authentic documents used by the teachers in the teaching process, the rhythm with which they introduce them in the lessons, the level of interest in the approach to the authentic documents and the involvement of the pupils in the lessons in which the teacher introduces such documents, as well as the ways of capitalizing on them. The purpose of this study was to highlight the importance of the use and valorization of authentic documents in different educational disciplines. The answers to the questionnaire questions help us to answer the research questions.

Thus, in relation with the first research question, *To what extent do primary school teaching staff members (primary education teachers and physical education and sports teachers) use authentic*

documents in the instructional-educational process? it is gratifying that primary school teachers introduce authentic documents into their teaching approach, thus supporting, through articles, films, photos/paintings, etc. the contents taught/consolidated. From the answers received, we found that the impact of using authentic documents is a beneficial one, the pupils getting involved with more enthusiasm in the activities proposed after their presentation. In this way we were also able to answer the second research question: *What is the impact of using authentic documents on pupils' involvement in the didactic activity and, implicitly, on pupils' results? Finally, to the question What are the ways in which the authentic documents proposed in the lessons are utilised/exploited?* we found that these ways are multiple, giving pupils the opportunity to be active, involved, to express and support their own points of view. It is no less true that school textbooks also include some authentic documents, this once again supports the importance of their presence in the activity of teachers and, implicitly, pupils.

6. Conclusions

In the context of today's education, focused on competences, authentic documents find their place in most subjects of the curriculum grace to teachers who, through their unseen effort, integrate this type of documents into lessons, building unique learning experiences enabling pupils to develop their skills specific to the subjects in which they are integrated, to build their key competences at an elementary level (Prodan, 2022), as well as oral and written communication and intercultural skills.

The authentic document is a source of inspiration for pupils and a working tool that allows the integration of pupils into real communication. That is precisely why its aesthetic aspect (colors, iconographic elements, etc.), the accessible content for the age of the pupils to whom such a document is proposed, the correct language, as well as its clear presentation are very important. It brings before pupils true aspects from different fields (scientific, social, cultural, artistic, sporting), constituting at the same time a means of motivating the pupils, to the extent that the pupil can make connections between the conveyed content and their own experiences. The authentic document has the advantage of facilitating pupils' learning with the help of elements from reality, which enables the teaching staff to give pupils the opportunity to share ideas, clarify and develop their own ideas and those of others, which will lead to the improvement of their results.

The teaching staff member have the task of encouraging the involvement of all pupils in the communicative or practical-applicative approach that they initiate in order to capitalize on the content of these documents, intervening with support questions, correcting, whenever necessary, possible disagreements, errors, requesting the pupils to express their point of view in a reasoned manner.

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