

Aghayeva Javahir Geyis

postgraduate student

Azerbaijan University of Languages

Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan

The role of authentic texts in developing reading fluency among school students

Abstract: *in this work, the focus was placed on how real-world materials help students move beyond artificial textbook language and interact with English as it is used by native speakers. Attention was drawn to the idea that reading fluency develops not only through speed and accuracy, but also through the ability to grasp meaning, interpret context, and respond to content emotionally and intellectually. During the work, authentic texts were viewed as newspapers, online articles, short stories, advertisements, blogs, and other naturally occurring samples of language. In the work, it was highlighted that regular exposure to authentic content increases engagement, encourages curiosity, and motivates students to read more. This creates a space where reading is not a mechanical decoding activity but a living dialogue with language. There was also shown a connection between authentic input and vocabulary growth, as students encounter idioms, discourse markers, and natural phrasing that rarely appear in simplified materials. As a result, learners gradually read faster, recognize patterns more confidently, and approach texts with less fear. The presented material confirms that authentic reading practice forms fluency more deeply than traditional scripted texts and prepares school students for real communication beyond the classroom.*

Keywords: *authentic texts, reading fluency, secondary school students, reading comprehension, EFL/ESL classroom, real-world materials.*

Агаева Джавахир Гейис кызы

аспирант

Азербайджанский университет языков

г. Баку, Азербайджанская Республика

РОЛЬ АУТЕНТИЧНЫХ ТЕКСТОВ

В РАЗВИТИИ БЕГЛОСТИ ЧТЕНИЯ У ШКОЛЬНИКОВ

Аннотация: в работе внимание сосредоточено на том, как материалы из реальной жизни помогают школьникам выходить за рамки искусственного учебного языка и взаимодействовать с английским так, как он используется носителями. Подчёркивается, что беглость чтения формируется не только за счёт скорости и точности, но и через умение улавливать смысл, интерпретировать контекст, а также эмоционально и интеллектуально реагировать на содержание. В статье аутентичные тексты рассматривались как газеты, интернет-статьи, короткие рассказы, рекламные объявления, блоги и другие естественно существующие образцы языка. Представленный материал подтверждает, что практика чтения аутентичных текстов способствует формированию беглости глубже, чем традиционные адаптированные тексты, и готовит школьников к реальному общению за пределами учебного класса.

Ключевые слова: аутентичные тексты, беглость чтения, учащиеся средней школы, понимание прочитанного, EFL/ESL-класс, материалы реального языкового окружения.

The role of authentic texts in developing reading fluency among school students continues to attract attention in modern language education. In many classrooms, English is still taught through controlled dialogues, simplified narrative passages, and vocabulary lists that rarely represent real speech or living context. Although such materials provide structure, they often fail to reflect the dynamic nature of language. Authentic texts, on the contrary, appear in newspapers, online platforms, fiction, social media posts, travel leaflets, and other naturally produced formats. When school learners encounter these texts, they engage with English that breathes, evolves, and carries emotional shades. This creates a learning environment where reading is not just a task, but an experience [1, p. 45].

Reading fluency is formed when comprehension, vocabulary recognition, and reading pace grow simultaneously. The process becomes stronger when students meet unpredictable sentence patterns, figurative expressions, and culturally grounded references. These features challenge learners in a constructive way and stimulate cognitive

processing. Interest grows, attention sharpens, and reading becomes less mechanical. In a secondary school setting, this plays a special role, since adolescence is a stage of curiosity, personal discovery, and strong reaction to real-life content. Materials that reflect news, personal stories, and opinions allow students to read with purpose and emotion rather than by obligation.

In secondary schools, the integration of authentic materials aligns well with communicative and content-based teaching approaches. Lessons built around podcasts, interviews, and short articles encourage discussion, prediction, summarizing, and inference. These activities support fluency because reading turns into a dynamic skill rather than pure decoding [2, p. 60].

The methodology of this work was built around observing how authentic texts contribute to the development of reading fluency among school learners. The process relied on systematic selection of materials, classroom application, and gradual monitoring of students' reading performance.

The work began with identifying suitable learner groups, focusing on secondary school students who already possessed basic reading abilities. Classroom lessons were organized over several weeks, during which learners interacted with authentic texts of increasing complexity. Texts were chosen based on relevance to students' interests and curriculum themes such as culture, science, daily life, technology, and youth issues. Attention was given to length, vocabulary density, sentence structure, and presence of contextual clues. Each text served as both input and stimulus for comprehension tasks. Several techniques supported the use of authentic reading materials. Pre-reading stages involved prediction, brainstorming, discussion of topic-related vocabulary, and visual prompts. While reading, students engaged in scanning, skimming, identifying main ideas, and interpreting unfamiliar expressions through context rather than translation. Post-reading tasks consisted of retelling, summarizing, answering comprehension questions, creating headlines, and short reflective writing. These activities formed a cycle that strengthened fluency step by step [3, p. 112].

The results of the work showed noticeable progress in the development of reading fluency when school learners were regularly exposed to authentic texts. The first significant outcome was the shift in reading behavior. At the beginning, many students approached texts with caution, pausing frequently, relying on dictionaries, and struggling with unfamiliar idioms. With continuous practice, they gradually began to read longer fragments smoothly, recognize recurring vocabulary, and infer meaning without direct translation. This indicated a growing sense of confidence and a reduction of fear toward complex language structures [4, p. 59].

Another clear finding was the increase in reading speed. While fluency is not measured by speed alone, the ability to read faster without losing comprehension marked an important step in automaticity. Students who initially required extended time to complete a text later handled similar material more efficiently. Reading pace improved because authentic exposure expanded vocabulary recognition and familiarized learners with natural sentence rhythm. The presence of real-life expressions trained the eye and mind to process language with less effort.

«Motivational orientation refers to an individual's underlying tendencies, preferences, and goals that drive their behavior and guide their actions in specific situations. It encompasses the motivational factors that influence an individual's choices, efforts, and persistence towards achieving desired outcomes» [5, p. 21].

This shift proved important, since fluency depends not only on accuracy but also on rhythm, pace, and the ability to interpret meaning through context. When students read authentic material, they experience language that reflects real communication and real culture, which leads to more confident handling of unfamiliar expressions [6, p. 23].

Positive progress was observed in several areas. Reading speed increased while understanding remained stable, which indicates the development of automaticity. Vocabulary was also absorbed more effectively when repeated across different texts and situations. Students learned to understand idiomatic phrases, tone, and implied meaning without heavy dictionary use. This improvement helped them read longer segments

and follow main ideas with less hesitation. Motivation became stronger as well. Authentic materials evoked interest, encouraged discussion, and created emotional connection to content.

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