Materials for teaching culture: TV, Internet, pictures

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Abstract

Multimedia used in development of intercultural communicative competences (ICC)Even though the development of intercultural communicative competences is claimed to be one of the key aims of foreign language teaching, it is believed, that most of the teaching time is devoted to the development of the four language skills. Computers and the internet make a lot of materials easily accessible and free of charge. There are various techniques and materials, which could be used for teaching ICC using multimedia.Authentic materials are one of the most attractive sources for teaching culture in foreign language classrooms.

Key words

Multimedia, culture, competences, Internet, individual group, TV programmes, cultural teaching.

Authentic materials connected with multimedia are a rich source of material. The internet is the most accessible source, where authentic videos, recordings, texts, pictures, signs, symbols, etc. are easily attainable. Although there is a great choice of available authentic materials, teachers need to be careful in choosing appropriate materials for foreign language teaching, which include suitable cultural contents. Teachers should set up specific criteria for selecting materials suited to the individual group of learners, which will meet their needs and interests. Teachers should therefore pick out interesting aspects from the target culture and present them in a way that would engage the learners' attention (Cullen 2000). Teachers should encourage their learners to compare the given information with their own culture, as learners tend to think that what they do in their own culture is the same in other cultures (Galloway 1981). The age, language level and background knowledge of the learners should be considered when choosing the difficulty level of cultural materials. The materials have to be comprehensible to the learners, but at the same time should be challenging enough to sustain their motivation. Therefore, selected materials should be at an equal level of difficulty or slightly above the learners' present level. It is not the aim to understand every word, but to challenge the learners to want to learn more about the target country, to encourage learners to pursue their studies of the language and the culture of the respective country and above all to raise intercultural awareness (Cullen 2000). Cultural appropriateness has to be considered, as authentic materials are based on native speakers' culture which may be quite alien or inappropriate to some language learners. Teachers have to consider whether the students have the background knowledge for the topic and if the information included in the materials has any value to the students (Reid, 2009).Authentic materials include "audio materials" (TV programmes, commercials, news, weather reports, films, cartoons, radio programmes including adverts, music, audio materials on the internet, audio-taped stories and novels, announcements at the airports, shops, etc.), "visual materials" (photographs, paintings and drawings, wordless street signs, images on the internet, pictures from magazines, postcards, stamps, coins, wordless picture books, etc.), "printed materials" (newspapers including adverts, magazines, TV guides, books, catalogues, lyrics to songs, restaurant menus, product labels, street signs, tourist information brochures, maps, letters, junk mail, school notices, billboards, bus and train

schedules, application forms, printed materials on the internet, etc.). All the mentioned materials could be found on the internet and used for cultural teaching.

Nuttall (1996) gives three criteria for choosing authentic materials to be used in the classroom: suitability of content, exploitability and comprehensibility. -"suitability" of content can be considered as the most important. Authentic materials should be interesting and relevant to the needs of the learners.-"exploitability" refers to how the authentic materials can be used to develop the students' knowledge and competence. Just being authentic does not mean that it can be useful.-"comprehensibility" refers to grammatical and lexical difficulty, it has to be appropriate to the language level of the learners.Authentic materials provide a rich source of cultural material. The mentioned cultural materials could be used in many different activities and using different techniques, which are mentioned below. If learners are regularly exposed to authentic materials, they could become more familiar with them and in the future be able to partially avoid a cultural shock when visiting the culture in question.For teaching cultural awareness Hughes (2001) recommends the following techniques. These techniques can be used in various contexts, but also by using multimedia. The "comparison method" concentrates on discussing the differences between the native and target cultures. This can be based on watching videos, films, reading online articles, etc. Students are asked to compare items between foreign and their own cultural aspects (headlines, advertisements, sports, comics, weather reports, etc.). By "cultural capsule" learners are presented, for example with a custom that would be different in the two cultures. It would be accompanied by visual aids, or videos to show the differences and a set of questions for class discussions. "Drama" is a technique where learners act out short scenes of misinterpretation and also subsequent clarification of the event that had happened between two different cultures, which was caused by misunderstanding the target culture. This could be done if a form or projects, where students video their drama projects and present them to other students, or hang them on youtube. "TPR" technique is designed to respond to oral commands to act out a cultural experience. TPR is especially popular with small children, or beginners. This can be practiced by watching a video, or listening to a CD.

It is a difficult task to develop intercultural communicative competences in foreign language lessons, as intercultural communication is connected with foreigners and foreign cultures, and the most effective way to develop ICC is to bring reality to the classroom. However in the today's world of information technologies, reality and authenticity are easier to bring to the classroom. Computers and the internet make a lot of materials easily accessible and free of charge. There are various techniques and materials, which could be used for teaching ICC using multimedia. Techniques such as prediction, noticing, comparisons and research are mentioned in three model activities.

Teachers have to consider whether the students have the background knowledge for the topic and if the information included in the materials has any value to the students (Reid, 2009).Authentic materials include "audio materials" (TV programmes, commercials, news, weather reports, films, cartoons, radio programmes including adverts, music, audio materials on the internet, audio-taped stories and novels, announcements at the airports, shops, etc.), "visual materials" (photographs, paintings and drawings, wordless street signs, images on the internet, pictures from magazines, postcards, stamps, coins, wordless picture books, etc.), "printed materials" (newspapers including adverts, magazines, TV guides, books, catalogues, lyrics to songs, restaurant menus, product labels, street signs, tourist information brochures, maps, letters, junk mail, school notices, billboards, bus and train schedules, application

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