

Project Template for “Shaping the Way We Teach English”

Module(s): 8 (Authentic Materials)
Date submitted: October 5, 2006

Project Creator: Anna Fatneva
Project Reviewer: Natalia Tsukanova

Give information for:

- Students' age(s): 14-17
- # of students: 12

- Language level: Upper-intermediate
- Other (optional):

My Class Now (Snapshot)

Provide a description of the item in your classroom that you are targeting for change:

I always use the course book and very rarely bring authentic texts and other authentic materials, which sometimes makes my lessons boring for my Ss.

Technique(s) I use *now*.

- Integrated skills
- Group and pair work

Material(s) I use *now*.

- Course book 'Inside out' Upper intermediate
- Audio tapes 'Inside out' Upper intermediate

My Class in the Future (Vision)

Provide a description of what you expect the item to look like after you've made the change:

I will try to use authentic texts, different kinds of images, and audio or video tapes. I think it will help me to enliven the class and create a more positive attitude towards learning English. Besides, my Ss will get an access to the real language.

Technique(s) from this module that I *will* use.

- Using realia
- Project work
- Task-oriented activities

Material(s) or ideas from this module that I *will* use.

- Authentic texts
- Authentic audio/video tapes
- Different kinds of authentic images

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Additional Explanation from Project Creator

In “My Class in the Future (Vision) you described and predicted a change that you would like to see happen in your class. Provide additional information for the following related items. Write as though you are informing a person who knows nothing at all about your educational setting.

1. The benefits I predict from this change:

My Ss are not active in class. It is really difficult to make them take part in discussions and speaking activities. They always answer with minimal responses and don't seem to be willing to take risks. By introducing authentic materials, I hope to bring the real world in my classroom, and in this way to motivate my Ss to learn the language. Besides, I think authentic materials will help my Ss learn more about the culture of the target language.

2. Challenges I expect:

Though my Ss are in an Upper-intermediate group, their language proficiency is rather low, that's why the materials might be too difficult for the Ss and that's why they can actually de-motivate them. Another problem is that the materials I will choose will be not interesting for the Ss. Finally, it might be difficult to find authentic materials which contain examples of the point of the lesson, illustrating authentic use of the language. Looking for such authentic materials might be time-consuming.

3. How I will address those challenges:

To address the first challenge, I can carefully plan pre-reading and pre-listening stages, provide some visual support. I can also prepare tasks which do not require total understanding. Finally, I can try to adapt the materials to make them easier for the Ss.

To address the second challenge, I will ask my Ss about their interests or I can let them choose the materials themselves.

To make the process of looking for authentic materials, I can collect them and keep them in the Teachers' Room, make a list of useful Internet sites, ask other teachers who work in our school where they find authentic materials,

4. Steps needed in order to complete the change:

First I need to look through the course book and identify the topics and language points we are going to study. Then I need to look for the authentic materials which can be used at those lessons. At the same time I need to look through

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the articles on how authentic materials can be used. The next step is to plan a lesson, teach it, ask the Ss for the feedback, then reflect on the experience and teach another lesson.

5. Timeline for completing the change:

I think it will take quite a long time to become able to use authentic materials effectively in class. That’s why I am going to do it till the end of this level, which is going to be at the end of December.

6. How I will assess the degree of success of the change:

First of all, I can observe my Ss working in class. If they become more active and involved, it will mean that using authentic materials is effective. Another thing I can do is to collect Ss feedback and find out how they feel about the new way of working in class. Finally, I could do a project with my Ss based on using authentic materials. The outcome of this project can be displayed for other Ss in our school. The quality of the project outcome can show the degree of success of the change.

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Project Reviewer Comments

1. Is the proposed change clear (the snapshot of “My Class Now” vs. a vision for “My Class in the Future”)?

Yes, the proposed change is clear and specific.

2. Do the steps and the amount of time allotted for the change seem realistic?

I think the amount of time is quite realistic, I like the steps as well, the only thing I would suggest is to talk to students first, of course the teacher can read the articles and choose the material on her own, but I believe that the students are our main resource and they can help a lot both in generating ideas and finding materials.

3. What do you believe to be the strengths of the proposed change?

I think that the changes that Anna proposes are very worthwhile as using the authentic materials in the classroom reflects real use of language in culturally appropriate context, helps to increase students' motivation, gives the learners a chance to hear/ see how the language is used in a natural context and produce it themselves. Moreover learners can not only get the knowledge using the authentic materials but also produce the authentic materials, that helps to practice language skills, learn research skills and help the teacher to get the materials that he/she can use later with lower level students.

4. Do you perceive any additional challenges and/or have additional advice for meeting challenges related to the proposed change?

I assume that all the challenges that Anna anticipated might really happen, and as one of the solutions she suggests to ask students to choose the materials themselves (that might be a problem as tastes are different, and one group of students may choose one book/film etc., the other another one.), and bring them to class (that might be a problem as well, as some of the authentic materials can't be used with kids or teenagers). Very often native speakers have accents that students have never heard and the very often the accents, especially regional accents are very difficult, and even for native speakers, to pick up. Of course the teacher can teach the learners to understand the accents, but very often students just don't need it, as in real life they would never meet this or that accent.

5. Does the type of assessment match the goals and outcomes of the proposed change?

Yes, I think that the way Anna is going to assess the degree of the change matches the goals and outcomes.