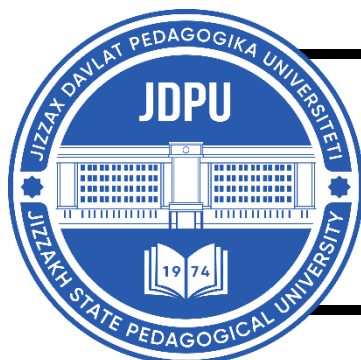


MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC –
METHODOLOGICAL JOURNALMENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC –
METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>USING SHORT AUTHENTIC TEXTS TO IMPROVE
VOCABULARY ACQUISITION: A CASE STUDY OF SECOND GRADE STUDENTS
AT SCHOOL NO. 5 IN TASHKENT CITY**Marjona Ilkhomovna Tursunaliyeva***MA in TESOL, Graduate of Webster University in Tashkent*Email: marjnluna@gmail.com*Tashkent, Uzbekistan*

ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: Authentic materials, vocabulary acquisition, early grade learners, primary education, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), reading motivation, case study, tashkent schools, contextual learning, young learners.**Received:** 10.08.25**Accepted:** 12.08.25**Published:** 14.08.25**Abstract:** This case study explores how reading short, authentic texts influences vocabulary development among second-grade students at School No. 5 in Tashkent City. The study involved 12 students who had recently achieved fluent reading skills. It aims to investigate whether consistent exposure to real-world, context-rich reading materials can effectively help young learners broaden their vocabulary. The findings suggest that incorporating authentic texts into the reading curriculum significantly promotes vocabulary expansion and improves language retention, providing valuable insights into effective teaching strategies for early language education.**Introduction**

Reading books is recognized as a vital activity in children's development of oral language and vocabulary skills (Wasik et al., 2016). Nowadays, English is introduced as a foreign language starting from the first grade in many educational systems. Despite early exposure, numerous learners find it challenging to memorize and effectively use vocabulary. This study explores how short, authentic texts—such as simple stories, dialogues, and informational

pieces drawn from real-life contexts—can enhance vocabulary acquisition and retention among young, early readers. (McGrail et al., 2016).

Although schools in Uzbekistan have been supplied with new, modern books that were carefully tailored to reflect local culture and include the latest technological tools, both students and teachers encounter limited opportunities for real-life language practice. This is partly because not all teachers feel confident in integrating technology into their teaching, which hampers effective language exposure and usage. They are too used to traditional grammar-focused teaching methods (Chang, 2011). The issue in this study is: Can reading short authentic texts significantly boost vocabulary among second-grade students who have just begun proper reading?

The article investigates the effectiveness of short, authentic texts as tools for vocabulary learning. It evaluates students' vocabulary improvement following a four-week intervention. It explores their responses and motivation toward engaging with real-world texts, providing a comprehensive overview of both cognitive and motivational aspects of reading practice.

Materials

Numerous studies emphasize the role of authentic materials in language acquisition (Gilmore, 2007). Authentic texts are those written by and for native speakers (Rings, 1986). Vocabulary growth is most effective when learners encounter words in meaningful contexts (Honeyfield, 1977). Moreover, Krashen's (1989) Input Hypothesis supports the idea that language acquisition occurs when learners understand language that is slightly above their current level($i+1$), especially in context-rich and engaging environments.

In primary education, learners are highly responsive to stories and dialogues that reflect real-life experiences (Gasser et al., 2022). Authentic texts provide this context and may be more engaging than traditional materials (Ciornei & Dina, 2015).

Furthermore, authentic materials expose learners to discourse structures, genre conventions, and pragmatic language use that are rarely represented in artificial texts (Yusupalieva, 2024). They also foster incidental vocabulary learning, as students naturally acquire new words while focusing on understanding the overall meaning (Gass, 1999). However, careful selection is essential: materials should be age-appropriate, culturally relevant, and linguistically accessible to avoid overwhelming learners (Tomlinson, 2012).

When used systematically, authentic materials not only enhance lexical development but also contribute to learners' cultural competence and critical thinking skills, which are integral components of communicative language teaching (Nieto & Booth, 2009)

Methodology

This is a qualitative case study conducted at School No. 5 in Tashkent City.

- Participants: 12 second-grade students (ages 7–8) who recently developed basic reading skills.

- Duration: 4 weeks

- Procedure: Students read one short authentic text every two days (e.g., simple stories, signs, menus, children's letters, jokes). Vocabulary was pre-taught selectively, and comprehension tasks followed each reading.

Data Collection Tools:

- Vocabulary tests (pre- and post-intervention)
- Observation notes
- Student interviews (semi-structured)
- Teacher journals

Results

After four weeks, students showed:

- An average 30% improvement in vocabulary test scores.
- Better word retention compared to textbook-only instruction.
- Increased motivation and enthusiasm for reading tasks.
- More spontaneous use of new words during speaking activities.

Discussion

The results align with previous research indicating that authentic input helps young learners understand how words function in real contexts (McGrail et al., 2016). Classroom observations showed that, for most students, reading short authentic texts became an engaging and accessible way to learn new vocabulary. Learners often displayed curiosity toward unfamiliar words, especially those connected to tangible objects or actions depicted in the texts. Several students began using new vocabulary spontaneously during class discussions and role-play activities, suggesting early signs of transfer from passive recognition to active use.

However, engagement levels varied. A few students expressed reluctance toward the reading component, preferring interactive elements such as group discussions or acting out the

texts. This may indicate differences in learning styles or varying levels of reading confidence at this age.

Most students, however, reported enjoying the reading activities more over time, possibly due to the variety and cultural relevance of the selected texts (Ebe,2010). Texts that reflected familiar situations—such as ordering food in a cafe or sending a letter to a friend—were exceptionally well received. Teacher journals noted increased participation and improved pronunciation accuracy during oral reading by the end of the study. The study demonstrates the potential of integrating short authentic texts into early grade curricula, especially in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) settings like Uzbekistan.

Conclusion

Reading brief, genuine texts can effectively boost vocabulary among early readers. For second graders in Tashkent, this method not only enhanced their word learning but also fostered greater motivation to read, supporting the idea of contextual and meaningful learning. The results show that authentic materials link classroom teaching with real-life language use, making students realize the practical value of what they learn.

By encountering vocabulary in diverse, relatable contexts, learners were able to develop both receptive and productive language skills more naturally than through traditional, decontextualized drills (Wong & Van Patten, 2003). Additionally, incorporating discussion and role-play activities after the readings increased engagement and enabled students to practice using new words in communicative situations, thereby reinforcing retention.

For teachers, regularly incorporating authentic texts offers multiple benefits: it promotes cultural awareness, supports incidental vocabulary learning, and fosters a positive attitude toward reading in a foreign language. In contexts like Uzbekistan, where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited, authentic materials can provide valuable simulated immersion. Future research might explore the long-term impacts of consistent authentic text exposure, compare results across different age groups, or investigate how digital authentic resources (such., children's e-books, websites, and multimedia) could further enhance language learning.

References:

1. Chang, S. (2011). A contrastive study of Grammar Translation Method and Communicative Approach in teaching English Grammar. *English Language Teaching*, 4(2), 13. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v4n2p13>

2. Ciornei, S. I., & Dina, T. A. (2015). Authentic texts in teaching English. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 180, 274–279. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.02.116>
3. Ebe, A. E. (2010). Culturally relevant texts and reading assessment for English language learners. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 50(3), 5.
4. Gass, S. (1999). DISCUSSION. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 21(2), 319–333. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0272263199002090>
5. Gasser, L., Dammert, Y., & Murphy, P. K. (2022). How Do Children Socially Learn from Narrative Fiction: Getting the Lesson, Simulating Social Worlds, or Dialogic Inquiry? *Educational Psychology Review*, 34(3), 1445–1475. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09667-4>
6. Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, 40(2), 97–118. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0261444807004144>
7. Honeyfield, J. (1977). Word frequency and the importance of context in vocabulary learning. *RELC Journal*, 8(2), 35–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003368827700800202>
8. Krashen, S. (1989). We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading: additional evidence for the input hypothesis. *Modern Language Journal*, 73(4), 440. <https://doi.org/10.2307/326879>
9. McGrail, E., McGrail, J. P., & Rieger, A. (2016). Learning Language and Vocabulary in Dialogue with the Real Audience: Exploring Young Writers' Authentic Writing and Language Learning Experiences. In *Literacy research, practice and evaluation* (pp. 117–135). <https://doi.org/10.1108/s2048-045820160000007008>
10. Nieto, C., & Booth, M. Z. (2009). Cultural competence. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 14(4), 406–425. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315309337929>
11. Rings, L. (1986). Authentic language and authentic conversational texts. *Foreign Language Annals*, 19(3), 203–208. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1986.tb02835.x>
12. Tomlinson, B. (2012). Materials development for language learning and teaching. *Language teaching*, 45(2), 143–179.
13. Wasik, B. A., Hindman, A. H., & Snell, E. K. (2016). Book reading and vocabulary development: A systematic review. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 37, 39–57. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.04.003>
14. Wong, W., & Van Patten, B. (2003). The Evidence is IN: Drills are OUT. *Foreign Language Annals*, 36(3), 403–423. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2003.tb02123.x>

15. Yusupalieva, S. (2024). Developing Students Communicative Competence using Authentic Materials with Information Technologies. *International Journal of Industrial Engineering Technology & Operations Management*, 2(2), 59–62. <https://doi.org/10.62157/ijietom.v2i2.62>.