



## **Symposium on Natural and Applied Sciences**

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### **DEVELOPING 10-11 TH GRADE STUDENTS' LIFE SKILLS IN TEACHING ENGLISH VIA AUTHENTIC MATERIALS**

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#### **Abstract**

This article investigates the pedagogical effectiveness of employing authentic materials in teaching to 10-11th grade students, with particular emphasis on the development of core life skills, including communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities. Besides, it highlights authentic materials created for real-life communicative purposes that are examined as a means of fostering meaningful language use and enhancing learners' ability to operate in real-world contexts.

**Keywords:** life skills, authentic materials, English language teaching, secondary education, communicative competence, real-life contexts, collaboration, motivation.

#### **Introduction**

The increasing demands of the 21st century require students not only to master academic knowledge but also to develop core life skills, so in contemporary education, enhancing students' life skills alongside language competence has become a priority. In English language teaching (ELT), this change indicates meaningful communication and real-world application. Traditional textbook-based instruction often fails to fully engage learners or prepare them for real-life



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situations. Therefore, incorporating authentic materials offers a powerful way to bridge this gap. Authentic materials can be used to develop 10-11th grade students' life skills that lead them to prepare for higher education and future careers.

### **The role of life skills in education**

The concept of life skills has gained significant attention in educational discourse, particularly in the context of preparing students for the complexities of modern society. According to the World Health Organization [1], life skills are defined as “abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.” These skills include critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, and emotional regulation. In the framework of 21st-century education, life skills are often integrated with competencies such as creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy. Trilling and Fadel [2] emphasize that education systems must move beyond content knowledge and focus on equipping learners with transferable skills necessary for lifelong learning and workforce readiness. Similarly, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills [3] highlights the “4Cs”- critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity-as essential outcomes of modern education that is aimed to develop life skills effectively.

In secondary education, particularly at the 10-11th grade levels, students are at a developmental stage where they begin to form independent opinions, make career-related decisions, and engage more actively in social interactions. Therefore, integrating life skills into subject areas such as English language teaching becomes crucial. Based on the research of Akhmadalieva [4], language



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learning is inherently connected to real-life communication through authentic materials, making it an ideal platform for life skills development.

### **The influence of authentic materials in developing life skills**

The integration of authentic materials in English language teaching provides a powerful means of fostering life skills development. Because these materials reflect real-world situations, they naturally encourage learners to engage in tasks that require higher-order thinking and social interaction. One of the key ways authentic materials contribute to life skills development is through the promotion of critical thinking. When students analyze news articles, advertisements, or opinion pieces, they are required to evaluate information, identify bias, and form their own perspectives. According to Bloom's Taxonomy [5], such activities involve higher cognitive processes, including analysis, evaluation, and creation. Another basic feature of authentic materials is that they support the development of communication skills. Activities such as discussions, debates, and role-plays based on real-life scenarios enable students to practice expressing their ideas clearly and effectively. This aligns with the principles of communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain [6], which include grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence.

Collaboration is another vital life skill fostered through the use of authentic materials. Group tasks, such as project-based learning or problem-solving activities, require students to work together, negotiate meaning, and share responsibilities. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory supports this approach, emphasizing the importance of social interaction in cognitive development.

In addition, authentic materials help students develop decision-making and problem-solving skills. For example, tasks that involve planning a trip, analyzing job advertisements, or responding to real-world challenges encourage learners to



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apply language skills in practical contexts. These activities simulate real-life situations, preparing students for future academic and professional environments. Besides, implementing authentic materials promotes active learning and real-world engagement. It is apparent that learners are more motivated when exposed to authentic content [8], thus, tasks based on such materials often require learners to analyze, evaluate, and collaborate-key components of life skills development.

### Benefits of authentic materials in enhancing core life skills

- **Enhancing communication skills** - authentic materials provide exposure to natural language, helping students improve speaking and listening skills in real-life contexts.
- **Developing critical thinking**- analyzing news articles, journals, podcasts or videos encourages students to interpret information, identify bias, and form opinions.
- **Improving collaboration**- group activities based on authentic tasks foster teamwork and interpersonal skills.
- **Increasing motivation**- real-world relevance makes learning more engaging and meaningful for students.

### Implementation of authentic materials in teaching process

- ✓ **Using News Articles:** Teachers can use current news stories to initiate discussions and debates, helping students practice argumentation and critical thinking.
- ✓ **Incorporating Videos and Podcasts:** Platforms such as interviews or documentaries allow students to develop listening skills and cultural awareness.
- ✓ **Role-Plays and Simulations:** Students can act out real-life scenarios (e.g., job interviews), enhancing both language and social skills.



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✓ **Project-Based Learning:** Students can create presentations or reports based on authentic sources, promoting research and problem-solving skills.

### Challenges and solution to use authentic materials in teaching process

✓ **Difficulty level:** Authentic materials may be linguistically complex. Teachers should adapt tasks rather than simplify texts.

✓ **Time constraints:** Preparing materials requires effort; however, digital resources can reduce this burden.

✓ **Student readiness:** Teachers should scaffold activities to support lower-level learners.

✓ **Cultural and contextual barriers:** Students may not understand cultural references, humor, or context. Teachers should give **background context** before using the material and encourage **discussion and comparison** with students' own culture, as well as, select materials with universal themes (health, travel, jobs, communication).

✓ **Student motivation and anxiety:** Students may feel overwhelmed or lose confidence so teachers should set **clear, achievable tasks**; use **pair/group work** to reduce pressure; celebrate **effort, not perfection**; choose materials related to students' interests.

### Conclusion

Integrating authentic materials into English language teaching provides a valuable opportunity to develop life skills in 10-11th grade students. By engaging with real-world content, learners not only improve their language proficiency but also acquire essential competencies needed for future success. Teachers are encouraged to adopt flexible and creative approaches to maximize the benefits of authentic materials in the classroom. Furthermore, authentic materials promote



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meaningful learning by situating language within relevant socio-cultural contexts, thereby enhancing learners' motivation and autonomy. However, the effectiveness of this approach depends on teachers' ability to implement adaptive scaffolding, select contextually appropriate resources, and design task-based activities that integrate both linguistic and life skill outcomes. Therefore, a flexible, reflective, and learner-centered pedagogical framework is essential to maximize the educational potential of authentic materials, ensuring that language classrooms serve as dynamic environments for both communicative competence and life skills development.

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