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Linguodidactic Features of Authentic Materials in Agricultural English for Specific Purposes

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Abstract. *This article provides a theoretical and analytical investigation into the linguodidactic features of authentic materials in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) within agricultural education. Authentic resources, such as scientific articles, monographs, technical documents, and interviews, are examined for their potential to enrich professional vocabulary, develop communicative competence, and bridge the gap between classroom-based language learning and real-world professional discourse. The study draws upon key theoretical frameworks, including Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Ellis's Task-Based Learning, and Cummins's distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). It compares international practices from Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States with the realities of agricultural higher education in Uzbekistan, where reliance on artificially constructed teaching texts still prevails. Findings suggest that authentic materials are not supplementary but rather central pedagogical resources in ESP for agriculture. Recommendations are made for curriculum integration, use of global resources from FAO and the World Bank, and the adoption of multimedia authentic resources. The paper emphasizes the importance of aligning agrarian ESP instruction with global academic and professional standards.*

Key words: *Authentic materials; English for Specific Purposes; agriculture; linguodidactics; professional vocabulary; communicative competence; Uzbekistan.*

Introduction

Agriculture in the 21st century represents not only a key economic sector but also a cornerstone of global food security, sustainability, and ecological balance. According to the World Bank (2020), more than 1.3 billion people are employed in agriculture, accounting for nearly 27% of the global workforce. With the global population projected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2019) has stressed that food production must increase by approximately 70% to meet demand. This unprecedented challenge demands a new generation of agricultural specialists equipped with scientific knowledge, technological skills, and proficiency in international communication. English, as the dominant language of science and global trade, has become indispensable in this process.

Within the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), authentic materials play a vital role in bridging the gap between classroom learning and professional practice. Authenticity, defined by Widdowson (1990) as language produced for purposes other than pedagogical instruction, ensures that learners engage with language in its genuine communicative context. For agricultural students, this includes reading peer-reviewed scientific articles, analyzing technical manuals, preparing reports based on laboratory findings, and communicating with farmers and agronomists. However, in Uzbekistan, agricultural higher education still relies heavily on artificially created teaching texts,

limiting students' ability to develop real-world communicative competence. Addressing this gap requires a systematic approach to integrating authentic resources into ESP curricula.

Literature Review / Background

The use of authentic materials in language education has been widely examined in applied linguistics and ESP scholarship. Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input in natural contexts, highlighting that learners acquire language most effectively when exposed to slightly challenging, yet understandable material. Ellis (2003), in his theory of Task-Based Learning, underscores the value of real-world tasks in promoting language acquisition. Cummins (2000) distinguishes between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), noting that academic and professional success depends on mastery of the latter, which is best developed through exposure to authentic academic and professional discourse.

Gilmore (2007) provides an influential argument for authenticity, demonstrating that students exposed to genuine texts develop greater pragmatic competence and discourse awareness. Richards (2001) and Harmer (2007) also highlight authenticity as central to communicative language teaching. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) specifically discuss authenticity in ESP contexts, stressing that learners must acquire both subject-specific lexis and the discourse practices of their discipline. In the field of academic English, Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) emphasize that authentic texts allow learners to engage critically with disciplinary discourse.

In agriculture, authentic materials are varied and include:

- Scientific journals such as the Journal of Agronomy and Crop Science;
- Technical documents such as seed certificates, irrigation manuals, and export regulations;
- Interviews with farmers and agronomists;
- Policy papers from FAO and the World Bank.

Internationally, the University of Hohenheim in Germany integrates trade fair documents into language training. Wageningen University in the Netherlands requires students to analyze EU Commission agricultural policy documents. In the United States, agricultural colleges employ extension programs that connect students with farmers through live interviews, providing opportunities to acquire authentic discourse. These practices highlight the global recognition of authenticity in ESP, yet Uzbekistan's institutions remain limited in their implementation of such approaches.

Methodology

This study employs a theoretical and analytical methodology, focusing on the linguodidactic evaluation of authentic materials in agricultural ESP. As no empirical data collection was conducted, the analysis is grounded in a comparative review of theoretical frameworks, prior research, and the application of authentic resources in international agricultural education systems.

The materials examined fall into four categories: (1) scientific articles, (2) monographs and textbooks, (3) technical documents, and (4) interviews and oral resources. Each category is analyzed through three linguodidactic dimensions:

- Linguistic: the terminological, syntactic, and stylistic features of the material;
- Communicative: the role of the material in developing communicative competence;
- Lexical-semantic: the potential of the material to expand professional vocabulary.

The methodological approach is informed by task-based language teaching principles, which consider authentic materials as resources for meaningful tasks, and by discourse analysis, which examines how language constructs knowledge in agricultural contexts. By combining these perspectives, the study identifies the strengths and limitations of authentic materials in agricultural ESP.

Results and Discussion

The analysis reveals that authentic materials in agriculture provide multidimensional benefits in ESP instruction.

Scientific Articles: These texts expose learners to complex syntactic structures, including passive voice and nominalizations, which are characteristic of academic discourse. They also provide access to cutting-edge research, allowing students to develop critical reading skills. Terms such as 'climate-resilient crops' and 'pesticide residue analysis' are best acquired when embedded in authentic research contexts.

Monographs and Textbooks: While not always authentic in the strict sense, monographs written for professional audiences serve as semi-authentic resources. They provide systematic coverage of specialized topics, enabling learners to acquire discipline-specific lexis.

Technical Documents: Seed certificates, irrigation guidelines, and export regulations are crucial for developing professional literacy. For example, the term 'germination rate' appears in technical contexts that have direct implications for trade and agricultural practice. Such documents familiarize students with the documentary practices of their profession.

Interviews and Oral Materials: Interviews with farmers and agronomists capture the pragmatic dimension of ESP, introducing learners to hedging devices, colloquial expressions, and context-dependent terminology. For instance, 'market demand' in a farmer's narrative carries both economic and social connotations.

International Comparisons: At Hohenheim University, authentic materials from agricultural trade fairs are integrated into ESP courses, enhancing learners' ability to navigate professional communication. Wageningen University emphasizes policy documents from the EU Commission, equipping students with the discourse of policy negotiation. In the U.S., extension programs link students with real-world practitioners, developing both linguistic and cultural competence.

Uzbekistan Context: In contrast, Uzbekistan's agricultural institutions often rely on artificially constructed teaching texts. Although efforts are underway to modernize curricula, authentic materials remain underutilized. This creates a disconnect between students' classroom learning and the professional demands of international agriculture. To align with global practices, Uzbekistan must prioritize the integration of authentic texts, technical documents, and multimedia resources.

Conclusion

Authentic materials in agricultural ESP should be regarded as central, not peripheral, to language instruction. They enrich professional vocabulary, foster communicative competence, and provide access to the discursive practices of the profession. The analysis demonstrates that scientific articles, technical documents, monographs, and interviews each play distinct but complementary roles in ESP education. International practices show the effectiveness of authenticity, while the Uzbek context highlights the consequences of limited integration.

Recommendations include: (1) integrating authentic resources into ESP curricula at agricultural universities, (2) adopting global resources from FAO, the World Bank, and the EU, (3) encouraging task-based learning projects grounded in authentic texts, and (4) employing multimedia authentic resources, such as video interviews and online databases. By embracing authenticity, Uzbekistan's agricultural higher education can equip graduates with the linguistic and professional skills necessary to thrive in the global agricultural community.

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