

Latest developments in Foreign Language teaching:

REAL BOOKS

as part of the curriculum

‘A man ought to read just as inclination leads him, for what he reads as a task will do him little good.’ Dr Samuel Johnson 1709-1784

What are REAL BOOKS?

- **Real Books** differ from course books published for Foreign Language learning in that they are written for children’s enjoyment and enrichment with no specific language teaching aim.
- **Real Books** are part of children’s culture; many of them can be considered to be children’s classics which are read and enjoyed from one generation to the next.
- **Real Books** are produced by authors, illustrators, editors and publishers, who specialise in creating books for children. These specialists rarely have contact with counterparts working in Foreign Language publishing for children, although both could learn from each other.
- **Real Books** consist of :
fiction - stories, picture story books, anthologies of rhymes and poems
non-fiction - information books and dictionaries

Why include

REAL BOOKS?

- **Real Books** provide a different, but essential, component to a foreign language programme which is vital for children’s understanding and all-round developmental needs.
- **Real Books** need to be used differently from course books. If over-used as a teaching tool their magic for the child can be killed.
- **Real Books** cross the curriculum in the natural and holistic way that children see the world.
- **Real Books** can help to lessen the frustrations that children encounter caused by the inability to express their thoughts and feelings in the foreign language.

- Without access to **Real Books** in Foreign Language learning children may find more difficulty in making sense of what they are doing. *‘Literature provides meaning in our lives. Finding of meaning is the greatest need and the most difficult achievement for any human being of any age.’* Bruno Bettelheim.
- Through enjoying **Real Books** together we can often find out more about how children feel and think.
- Through **Real Books** children can encounter in the foreign language multi-layered experiences, which touch their senses and emotions, feed and challenge their thoughts, provide them with information and even spark their humour.

Learning naturally through REAL BOOKS

- Through **Real Books** children can project themselves way beyond their linguistic and reading level in the same way that a 3 months old baby can enjoy picture books in the first language.
- **Real Picture Story Books** can stimulate children and may even help them to perform at a higher level as they find themselves working in a meaningful context where text and picture have been carefully designed to be an experience right for their understanding. **Real Books** are the real reason for reading. *‘Children learn to read with greater enthusiasm if offered something lively and stimulating.’* Penelope Lively.

Finding out about other people and cultures through REAL BOOKS

- **Real Books**, especially Picture Books, can introduce children to other peoples and their cultures both of which interest children. It is important for them to have access to these experiences whilst they are still young and open-minded. *‘What reading can do is allow them to see life through an infinite number of different sets of spectacles - which is what real tolerance is about’.* Janet Daley.

Availability of REAL BOOKS

- **Real Books**, especially **Real Picture Story Books**, are easier to find in English than in some other foreign languages. This is due to the fact that the number published in English each year is greater than in other languages. However this does not prevent children learning other foreign languages from having access to **Real Books**.

Founder and Editor Opal Dunn

Issues 1 to Issue 17 introducing useful picture books to adults working with young children learning English and including a relative Feature Article.

www.realbooks.co.uk