



NEWS PAPER READING – A RESOURCEFUL TEACHING TOOL IN ENGLISH CLASS ROOM

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ABSTRACT



The rapid changes that have been happening in every aspect of human life under the impact of globalization have paved the way for learned centered approach with practical implications on teaching English language in the classroom. In tune with this learning from the real world has magnetic appeal for students. This is the reason why the newspaper is considered one of the perfect teaching tools in the English classroom, in addition to the regular course book. Using a newspaper in the classroom improves LSRW skills, increases general knowledge and encourages a positive attitude toward learning in the students. In addition to this there is a lot of information in newspapers to make them an excellent springboard for lessons. In this paper an attempt has been made how to use newspaper material for the teaching of English. It further focuses on various types of newspaper material that can be exploited to teach vocabulary, grammar, critical and innovative thinking, and group dynamics. At the same time a thought has been given on the use and abuse of newspapers material such that the classroom learning will not create a pandemonium at the cost of social, cultural, religions, regional and linguistic sentiments of people.

Keywords: Globalization, Implications, Newspapers, Vocabulary, Grammar, Innovative Thinking, Pandemonium, Linguistic Sentiments.

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INTRODUCTION

English language teaching has been witnessing phenomenal changes after 1980's under the impact of the information technology revolution and the subsequent globalization. Professionalism in every walk of life has resulted in the acceptance of

English as a common language for communication purpose in most of the nations. In schools and colleges, whether English language is learned as first or second language, it has become imperative to get the right word, expression and usage at the right time. This has forced to develop innovative practices



in the English language classroom. Obviously the interest has shifted from the teacher to the learner for effective language learning.

Accordingly, in the English classroom, learner centered approach has replaced teacher centered approach. In this approach, learners are more important than the teachers, curriculum, methods or evaluation. In fact, curriculum, materials, teaching methods, and evaluation should all be designed by considering the needs of the learners. So, it is the responsibility of the teacher to see whether all the elements of the learning process are working well for learners or to innovate new methods if necessary. To follow this method, the teacher may adapt, supplement, and elaborate new materials to monitor the progress and needs of the students for better learning. As Little John and Windeatt(1989) points out, "Materials have a hidden curriculum that includes attitudes toward knowledge, attitude toward teaching and learning, attitude toward the role and relationship of the teacher and student, and values and attitudes related to gender, society, etc". (69)

Though the textbook is still a major source of learning in the English classroom, to generate interest in the learners, there is an increasing use of audio visual aids and even internet. However, the teachers of English of late have started using the newspaper as a tool in the classroom for effective language teaching. The main reason why the newspaper is considered the perfect teaching tool is learning from the real world has magnetic appeal for the students. In addition, using a newspaper in the classroom improves students' vocabulary skills, increases knowledge and encourages a positive attitude toward learning. According to Clandfield Lindsay and Duncan Foord (1990). "News paper is an excellent springboard for lessons. There are lots of different kinds of texts in newspapers such as narratives, stories, letters, advertisements, reports and so on". (123)

In the present research paper an attempt has been made how to utilize newspaper as a tool for imparting language skills in the students. In reality, news papers expand the curriculum with an unlimited amount of information to use as background for learning activities. The beauty of the

newspaper in the classroom is that it is fresh each day. It is for this reason the newspaper offers a special attraction for both the teachers and learners. It can be used to enhance language skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Critical and creative thinking is the natural outgrowth of using a newspaper in the learning process. Further, it also helps how to find the main idea, how to increase vocabulary, how to form sentences, how to learn grammar, how to write letters and reviews.

2. NEWSPAPERS AS A VEHICLE TO TEACH WRITING

a) **Guided Wiring:** Newspapers contain a variety of information on many aspects. Most of the English newspapers publish magazine sections and special review sections usually on Sunday. One of the interesting features is Cinema Plus sections published by The Hindu every Sunday. It contains reviews on movies released during the previous week. Two or three previous sections may be collected and learners may be asked to observe the style of writing and vocabulary used in these reviews. Based on this the learners may be asked to write a review on their favourite movie.

b) **Free Writing:** A number of articles are published on current issues in the newspapers pertaining to social, political, economical, sports, cultural issues etc. The learners can be asked to report on any issue in which they have an interest. They should be encouraged to express their opinions freely, but with responsibility.

Another variation that can be tried is asking the learners to read only the headlines. From the headlines the learners are allowed to predict the content of an article and later they are asked to develop the article. At the end they are asked to compare the style of writing, vocabulary and construction of sentences.

c) **Picture Description:** Every newspaper contains a number of photographs related to scenery, sports action, celebrities, politicians etc. For developing creative writing, the learners may be shown a photograph of an incident or event and they are asked to write an article based on that photograph. In a similar manner, describing people, monuments, events, scenery, and situation also may be tried with the photographs. In addition to this, describing



cartoons generates great enthusiasm in the learners. The cartoons take a dig at the personality or situation exposing the follies there by creating fun in the readers. So, by analyzing the cartoons the learners not only describe the funny side of it but also the wit or irony underlying the cartoons.

d) **Information Transfer:** The newspaper contains a numerous data in the form of pie-diagrams, bar-charts, tables etc. The learners may be asked to write a paragraph on any pictorial piece of information. It is possible to draw inferences, comparisons and data analysis by transferring pictures into paragraphs.

e) **Letters to the Editor:** One of the most important aspects in developing in developing writing skills at schools and colleges is drafting official letters. Learners are directed to read some of the letters to the editors in the newspaper and they are asked to write their own letter to the editor. The teacher can direct them to bring out the current problem or situation which demands a great public interest and, in a sense can inculcate general awareness in the leaders on a wide range of issues. The learners can automatically develop the skill of official letter writing.

3. NEWSPAPER FOR DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS

Newspapers offer a great scope for developing speaking skill in the learners.

a) **Role play:** An interesting topic or story may be selected from the newspaper and distributed for every pair of learners. Care should be taken such that the piece of writing can be modified into a role play. The learners can add some more information suitable to their needs and understanding. By improving an article or story, one learner plays the role of a journalist and another dons the role of a politician/celebrity/ scientist. The journalist does the interview while the other person answers the questions. This particular activity also helps the learners about how to frame questions.

b) **Group Discussion:** Newspapers can be used as wonderful resource material for conducting group discussion. In the recruitment process, most of the MNC's are using group discussions as a wonderful tool to know the ability of a person to work as a member of team, leadership qualities, communicative skills, strategic thinking, and

proactive behavior. Newspapers contain issues that can be discussed at length in detail and learners are encouraged, in addition to the solutions provided in the articles. As learners work on the current issues their strategic and critical thinking abilities are vastly developed.

c) **Debate:** It is known fact that debate as an activity truly tests the speaking skill of the participants. Newspapers provide wonderful topics for debate to the learners in the classroom. Topics related to social issues, cultural contexts and political agendas can be picked from the newspapers and placed before the learners for debating purposes. This can be done only by providing headlines to the learners and they should be asked to compare the information with the published article. For a change, the teacher can open a debate on

a topic that was published in a newspaper in the past and can input on the same issue in the present scenarios. But it largely depends on the teacher's regularity in going through the newspaper.

d) **Extempore presentation:** (JAM) : The teacher may read an article in a newspaper and learners asked to express their opinion on the topic in a limited time for example in one minute. These are known as JAM (Just a Minute), sessions which help the learner to speak without having much time to think. These sessions not only improve the students' ability to use vocabulary, but also help them in developing creativity.

4. USING NEWSPAPER AS A GATEWAY FOR TEACHING READING AND GRAMMAR

Newspapers contain a lot of writing that uses language to deliver information in a specific way. It is due to this they make for a fantastic real-world resource for learners the reading skills, connecting with discourse analysis as well as analyzing grammar. The best way to use newspaper for this purpose is the learners may be asked to present the main news in the classroom everyday each in turn. Invariably the learner will be forced to read the newspaper at home and prepare notes from it to read out in the classroom. In that activity newspaper sheets are distributed to different group of learners each consisting of three to five. They may be instructed to read and remember as much as possible in a time limit by skimming the newspaper. When the time



limit is up, all the groups may be asked to get together and report to each other they remember. This is a group reading and speaking activity, and the time limit forces the learners to use the reading skills of skimming. In addition to this the teacher can observe the pronunciation of the learners.

Further newspaper also helps the teacher to make the learner learn grammar in an interesting and practical manner. For example, the meaning or definition of 'noun' may be explained in the class. Then they should be asked to select an article from the newspaper and the task of finding nouns should be given to them. They may be instructed to underline the names of the people in red, the places in blue and the things in green. In the same way, they may be asked to analyze the use of tense in heading describing stories, reporting an incident, sports action and even preparing a recipe. Learning punctuation may also be improved by using a newspaper.

Reports from newspapers can be used for correct use of preposition, phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions. The teacher should identify a report and apply erasing fluid on prepositions to block them. Photostat copies should be given to a group of learners and they may be asked to fill in the blanks with missing prepositions. It is generally observed that sports columnists use a variety of phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions for creating special impact on the readers. The learners may be asked to select their favourite sports column and identify phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions by using a highlighter. Later they are instructed to guess or identify the meaning of these expressions by the topic that comes to their mind which finally results in the development of sports glossary.

5) MAKING LISTENING AS AN ACTIVE ACTIVITY

Of all the language skills, listening is the most neglected skill, but it is of paramount importance in developing good communication skills. Newspapers can be considered a wonderful source material for listening skills development. Usually comprehension method is used by the teachers to know whether the learners are listening. However, the students feel flat for such routine activity. Instead the teacher can read out a story or joke published in a newspaper and the learners may be asked to retell

it in their mother tongue or vice-versa. Another effective listening skills development strategy is that the learners may be asked to read out an advertisement caption or description and others are instructed to identify the advertisement. In another strategy, the beginning or ending of a story is revealed to the learners and they are encouraged to fill in the remaining part of the story. Information gap activities and opinion gap activities may be used to improve listening skills. People with trained ears are always successful at the highest level.

Use and Abuse: In the present era, where politicians are guided by populism, people are guided by emotionalism and media guided by sensationalism it is necessary on the part of teachers and learners to take a balanced view in using newspapers as source to take a balanced view in using newspapers as source materials. Global education aims to assist students to recognize bias in written and visual texts, avoid controversial issues, and consider different points of view and helps making judgements on morality basis rather than value basis. Working on improving language skills through newspaper should be used carefully to help the students in learning, intercultural and cross cultural understanding, diversity, behaviours and attitudes and developing critical and creative thinking skills.

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