

Use of Newspapers in Developing Language Skills.

Dr. Sarita Jain

Associate Professor

Department of English

G. D. Govt. College

ALWAR (Raj).

Mobile No 9829015648

Email sjain1256@gmail.com

Dr. Kusum R Yadav,

HOD, R.H. Patel English Medium B. Ed College,

Faculty of Education, Kadi Sarva Vishvavidyalaya,

Gandhi Nagar (Gujarat)

Mobile No 7990590412

E mail drkusumyadav15@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

English has become an international commodity, like oil and the microchip. Without petrol (i.e. gas) and computers, the world will come to a halt. The English language has made the world a 'global village' by giving it a global language for communication. With the advent of new millennium, trends have been changed and consequently new challenges have to be addressed with new language teaching techniques which can conveniently be

used in English language teaching with the most subtle, reliable and homely examples of real life situation. This new spirit has generated a new point of view to adopt whatever is available around us and make use of familiar materials for the English classroom.. Newspapers are one such interesting material which stimulates and motivates the students to learn and develop their language skills with ease and comfort. It comes to you with the latest news and information and, unlike other media, comes beautifully written with lots of detail. Stories unfold as reporters unearth more information to reconstruct what happened. There is truly no better record of the world's happenings than a newspaper.

Newspapers have provided a valuable source for language and learners alike. Over the last three decades, major changes have taken place in the English language teaching methods, especially in second and foreign language learning scenario. This paper aims at analyzing the importance of usage of newspaper and magazines in the classroom and finding the ways on how to use print media.

Key words: English, Language, Teaching, Skills, Newspapers

INTRODUCTION

English has become an international commodity, like oil and the microchip. Without petrol (i.e. gas) and computers, the world will come to a halt. The English language has made the world a 'global village' by giving it a global language for communication. Salman Rushdie, the renowned novelist, says that the 'English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago' and it 'grows from many roots'. It has grown genuinely global and its use is not restricted to one country or continent but is used in all the five continents of the world.

With the advent of new millennium, trends have been changed and consequently new challenges have to be addressed with new language teaching techniques which can conveniently be used in English language teaching with the most subtle, reliable and homely examples of real life situation. This new spirit has generated a new point of view to adopt whatever is available around us and make use of familiar materials for the English classroom whereby the learners have a sigh of relief after having readily involved themselves in the subject with genuine interest and commitment.

Teaching-Learning

English Language Teaching when viewed from the global perspective has acquired elephantine proportions. The needs of the students must be addressed in a better and easier way to make them learn and understand the language. The traditional methods which mostly concentrated on vocabulary structures helped many a generation which strove to learn that way. In order to meet the demands of the learners to their fuller satisfaction and teach the language, one has to adopt the new approaches, strategies, methodologies and techniques and adapt them to learn to the new changed scenario of the need based soft skill. Teaching and learning may be considered as two mutually defining aspects of the same process, for the teacher is not just a giver but also a receiver and the learner is not just a passive recipient of 'made to measure' packages of knowledge but also an active participant. Thus from this point of view, teachers and learners are both participants in an interaction activity which has been traditionally termed as 'teaching learning'.

Teaching and learning takes place all the time, everywhere. Human beings interact with objects, animate and inanimate around them everywhere, all the time. What we find going on in an educational set-up is an attempt to capture, formalize and recycle in capsule forms an ongoing, natural, interactional process. What we call transmitting or pumping information or knowledge from a full vessel into an empty vessel; the human vessels are never full and never empty. So every teacher must in his or her own way create an atmosphere which should help learners 'learn how to

learn'. What is needed is exposure to language by many ways and means. As S.K. Verma rightly puts it language is created anew by each learner by putting together bits and pieces of environment raw material.

Newspapers as Materials

Newspapers are one such interesting material which stimulates and motivates the students to learn and develop their language skills with ease and comfort. News develops every day. The beauty of the newspaper in the classroom is that it is also fresh each day. It comes to you with the latest news and information and, unlike other media, comes beautifully written with lots of detail. Stories unfold as reporters unearth more information to reconstruct what happened. There is truly no better record of the world's happenings than a newspaper.

Newspapers have provided a valuable source for language and learners alike. Over the last three decades, major changes have taken place in the English language teaching methods, especially in second and foreign language learning scenario. This paper aims at analyzing the importance of usage of newspaper and magazines in the classroom and finding the ways on how to use print media. Resources help students to learn and comprehend in a better way so they should be used effectively and appropriately. They stimulate and motivate students. Resources can be anything from book to objects that make teaching and learning easier, clearer and more interesting. They should hold students and motivate them because teaching is a long and difficult process.

Newspapers are in a way handy for English language learning. English language teaching can be made fresh, imaginative, inspiring and engaging if it is taught through real life situations, events and incidents that are happening around which give an opportunity for the learner to involve and participate in English language learning. As Penny Ur states “it would seem fairly obvious that in order for our students to learn something new (a text, a new word, how to perform task) they need to be first able to perceive and understand it. One of the teacher’s jobs is to mediate such material so that it appears in a form that is most accessible for initial learning”. For teachers the newspaper offers a special attraction. It has been called the living textbook and it lives up to that name. The newspaper can be used to enhance skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking, math, social studies and science. Critical thinking is the natural outgrowth of using a newspaper to learn. Unlike textbooks, which are several years outdated by the time they get into students' hands, the newspaper comes alive with information. The newspaper expands the curriculum with an unlimited amount of information to use as background for learning activities.

These activities will help students improve their skills in reading and writing. These skills are among the ones they will practice: how to find the main idea, how to increase vocabulary, how to compare readings, how to form sentences, how to ask a good question and how to write a great summary. They will employ many critical thinking skills as they are required to interact with the authentic material found in the newspaper

Jon Chandler and Mark Stone have rightly remarked that newspapers are valuable but often under-used classroom resource. There is a breadth of

coverage in them, which means there is something of interest to almost all readers. They provide a good source of information, popular culture as they include articles on a variety of matters like arts, music, science, sports as well as advertisements for products and events. A newspaper may be the source of a wide range of activities for all levels. For example, in *The Hindu* we have a variety of materials with information ranging from regional level to international level. It is full of events, incidents, accidents, current affairs, sports, vacancies, editorials, business, commerce, industry, agriculture, information technology, features like fashion page, news cafe, Sudoku, T.V., Radio, young world, quest, opportunities, letters to the editor, readers mail, know your English, question corner, religion column. Even the Sunday magazine of the Hindu presents a variety of topics on literature, theatre, photo essay, sightings, cartoons, short stories etc. As S. Velayyudhan rightly suggests our students must read for information, for pleasure, for right reasons – the right reasons being language learning. Students learn when they are motivated and when the topics studied are relevant and interesting to their lives. In large classrooms newspapers are serving as some of the best motivational and timely resources. Using newspapers in the class room is not a new idea. The concept dates back to June 8, 1795 when the Portland Eastern Herald published an editorial that acknowledged the role newspapers can play in delivering, extending and enriching the curriculum.

With today's emphasis on resource based teaching, teachers at all levels in classrooms around the world are using newspapers to complement text books and provide supplementary and relevant resources in teaching language skills. Studies have shown that students using newspaper score higher on reading comprehension tests and develop stronger critical thinking

skills. Newspapers are the ‘living text books’ in the hands of the learners. The regular use of newspapers in the classrooms will instill habit of intensive and extensive reading.

In large classes, with few resources, newspapers and even the cutting and clippings are the most useful teaching and learning aids. They can create successful learning. They give the visual context. In the classroom language teachers can use newspapers to teach a wide range of topics from the alphabet to grammar structure, vocabulary, conversation techniques and skills including skimming and scanning on one hand and listening, speaking, reading and writing on the other and thus newspapers are treated as an object for linguistic dissection and analysis. Moreover, the additional advantage is that it instills a sense of confidence with a feeling of familiarity in the learner who uses it. Thus newspapers are good source for these materials as they are all contextualized, well-illustrated real news-items, containing a variety of material that conforms to the psychological needs of the pupil. Language learners find newspapers motivating because they offer interesting, relevant, topical and varied information.

Newspapers are the cheapest material in largest measure on the widest range of topics. They are the most accessible print medium. They are the authentic resource containing an immense variety of text types. Newspapers bring news about the daily incidents, accidents, science and technology, historical events, trade and reviews, sports, classified advertisements, literary reviews etc. They provide good source of popular culture as they often include articles on music, TV and sports as well as advertisements for products and events. Thus the immense range of information the learner gets

from newspapers is a natural source of many of the varieties of written English that become increasingly important as learners progress.

Use of Newspapers in the classroom.

Newspapers are an invaluable source of authentic materials and their use in the language classroom is very much in keeping with current thinking and practice in teaching pedagogy. Indeed, for many students, the ability to read and understand English language newspapers for work purposes represents a very real and tangible goal to aim for. A daily reading of newspapers may be fruitful for the students. It is very vital for an English teacher to eliminate the students fear of learning English language and instruct them to use the newspapers in an appropriate manner. . The classroom becomes a multidimensional environment. It is difficult for the teachers to manage this multidimensional environment. It is essential for them to make the students able to use the news paper and at the same time deal with other activities such as researching for information from books and magazines. Newspapers can definitely supplement the traditional lectures.

General Education value.

Newspapers help keep us informed about what is happening in the world thereby extending our knowledge and deepening our understanding. For this reason, they are of general education value and important to students. Language and Culture area is inextricably linked and the newspapers of a given target community reflect its culture through the

language they contain. At one level, culture permeates language through reference to the people, places, institutions, customs and traditions of that community. However, at a much deeper level this is achieved through the cultural associations of words and the shared experiences, knowledge, values, beliefs, emotions and attitudes that a writer assumes. Newspapers are an invaluable source of such information and the more widely students read, the greater their understanding of this socio cultural meaning will be.

Linguistic Data

Newspapers are linguistically topical and up-to-date and provide valuable linguistic data. They reflect changes in the language and help students and teachers keep abreast of such changes. The language used in newspaper is day to day language with all idiomatic expressions of that culture. We have various language styles which are not found in textbooks we can analyze the newspapers in the various ways – for academic writing, as the text for semantics and the stylistics. The real life events arouse student's curiosity and they not only provide knowledge, but give a practical way of indulging students in learning language. . The lexical text and the grammar exponents as reported speech, sentence style can be examined. We should also test if the text is suitable for 1. Role play 2. Discussion and 3. Pair works.

For Language Study.

Newspapers contain a wide variety of language styles and text types which are not generally found in the course books. They provide a natural source of many varieties of written English that become increasingly important to learners and valuable for study of language. Newspapers can be designed in such a way to develop reading comprehension, grammatical skills & Vocabulary skills, writing skills and critical analysis. Newspapers can be organized based on the skills that is needed to impart in the classroom. The length of the article, the time allotted, and student's capability to understand the density of the material should be considered before choosing the text. Most of the people generally read regional newspapers as they are easy to understand and the comprehension papers like Deccan Chronicle, The Hindu and various English Magazines and papers etc., provides literary and non- literary material. Through internet various newspapers can be browsed. Certain things that we have to keep in mind are: (a) If the article is lengthy it may take more time through which the pupil may lose interest. (b) If the students like the topic they get motivated and it would be easy to teach them. (c) The task should be devised in a systematic way to make it even more interesting. (d) Weather forecast, advertisements, headlines can be glanced quickly and students will not be self conscious. (e) Some time photographs and illustrations published in newspapers can also be useful to conduct activities among the students especially, group discussions, describing object and situations with the help of that particular image. If not the whole time at least a part of a time are as activity for communication skill newspapers can serve as cheapest material available for reading. It mainly develops reading skills and also the other skills like writing, speaking and listening skills which may be grasped at the

same time. Certain pre-activity tasks can foster the learning of the students, when we especially give the material to them in hand as a means of home work to pick up the skills next day, especially vocabulary task. Then as the class begins the next day students can arrive at the meaning and brain storming method can be used effectively for this purpose. Students can expect the meaning based on the context and can suggest the alternative titles that can be used and when questions are asked. They can quickly have a glance to arrive at the meaning and thus the newspaper activities are multi-dimensional. Students can learn the new vocabulary from the photo stories, movie pictures, famous faces, literary columns, classifying acts, jobs interviews, T.V. guidelines, horoscopes, weather predictions gives various sites in which language can be used effectively for various purposes across the world. Vocabulary can be taught in the class room with the help of newspapers. Reading newspapers make the students to be updated with the currents events. At the same time, academically they can develop command on the vocabulary. All the vocabulary needed may not be found in the newspapers but the related words around a particular word should be taken and pair work should be given to predict the meaning using dictionary and they should be asked to find out the antonym and synonym for that particular word. Various forms of that particular word as adjective, verb, noun can be looked into. At the first reading students should simply be advised to read the text at the stretch quickly to grasp the gist of the text. In the second reading they should understand the main argument.

Human Interest

The wide variety of subject matter in the newspapers is remarkable, interesting and motivating for learners because they report real life events arousing natural curiosity about the world around us and our fellow human beings.

Reading as Enjoyable Activity

Reading newspaper is an enjoyable activity and it is a popular time pass for many in the world. Inside the classroom it can help students discover their own tastes and interests. This in turn motivates them to read on their own. Even outside the classroom the activity does make them expose to English more by extending their contact with the language. The varied and stimulating newspaper material can be made use of judiciously by the English language teachers. The ability to read is one of the basic necessities of modern day life. In day-to-day life people encounter material for reading either in their first language or a foreign language. With the instances in normal day-to-day life that require a person to read a written text being numerous, reading becomes essential for everyone. The purposes of reading not only demand the capacity to decode printed or written letters but also to understand the meaning of words in the given context. Thus reading assumes much significance in day-to-day life. Teachers in education rely mainly on textbooks that are mostly outdated. These textbooks are not rich in providing variety in the use of vocabulary as well as in all aspects of life. So, the students tend to use only the words that they learn from the textbooks. For example, most of the books used at secondary schools include short stories that have direct questions which need to be answered along with grammar tasks at the end. There is no social interaction among the

students or their teachers in the class except for the answers to the direct questions. This is only the activity in the reading and comprehension class at these schools. The newspaper articles are seen to be highly motivational for students of all ages and students enjoy the variety of reading and visual material included in the newspaper. Teachers will help their students comply with state educational standards and prepare them for both standardized tests and real life situations by using newspaper articles and photos in conjunction with specific strategies and rubrics. Therefore, the important function of modern education which is to teach students to use many informational resources available, including the newspaper as a current reference can be achieved. The study identifies reading and its relation to comprehension as well as the importance of both reading and comprehension for learning English as a second language

Diversity of Information

Teachers of English for specific purposes can make use of the diversity of information given in newspapers to suit the needs and interests of the students. This is especially important to teachers of specialist subjects in their search for suitable materials. Even a cursory glance through a newspaper and the special interest sections and supplements will reveal a wealth of material for those involved in teaching special subjects. Students learn through reading and reading about interesting new things undoubtedly helps motivation. Newspaper is considered as a great source of learning language and it also provides industry materials for variety of people especially for students i.e., sports column, education column, cultural activities column, historical and geographical columns as well.

Teaching Materials

The constant and ongoing supply of new information on a daily basis of the newspapers provide the language teachers with a lot of teaching materials that can be used to develop the learner language skills.

Convenient Units

Newspaper items are conveniently self-contained units which range from short paragraph to a complete page. Thus they offer a great deal of flexibility for teachers in selecting material to suit their needs and the level of the students.

Skimming and Scanning

Newspapers are the most suitable material to exercise skimming and scanning skills of a very high order. Reading can be a task based reading to know what we are looking for or we can continue reading a particular feature - a reading for meaning. The skills of such a high order are practiced because of the nature and variety of text in the newspapers. The materials are the most naturally suited to teaching authentic reading skills when we know that second language learners are slow learners. It is difficult to think of materials more naturally suited to teaching authentic reading skills in a second language, particularly when we know that second language learners usually read slowly and often inefficiently.

“Here is no greater asset to a reader of today than highly developed skill in skimming. Skimming enables a person to select quickly the content which he wants to read and discard that in which he is not interested or which is

inconsequential to his purpose. Most adults develop some skills in skimming newspapers and magazines. This skill can be further developed to a very high degree and used profitably in doing all kinds of reading. Such development, however, requires instruction and practice if it is to function in the best capacity.” (G.C. Ahuja and Pramila Ahuja)

Topicality

Newspapers are topical and so are the freshest materials in the classrooms. Theorists and linguists like Chomsky and Krashen feel that learning should be relatively natural. Learning through newspapers is really natural. Pal Sanderson stated that a very important thing that enhances success in using newspapers in the classroom is the careful design of tasks. “Grade the task - not the material” is a well-known maxim in language teaching. Lindsay Clanfield and Duncan Ford remark that for any learner of the English as a second language and for any teacher teaching English as foreign language what comes to mind as an authentic reading activity for their learners is reading a newspaper. The newspapers are much more current than course books. They make an excellent springboard for lessons and feature different types of language (narratives, stories, weather reports, letters to the editor, etc).

CONCLUSION

Students get motivated and they really feel confident to deal with day to day life as the newspapers connect their lives with their surroundings and this is the more practical method and the change can prove more effective, especially in developing the vocabulary, synonyms, antonyms, guessing the

meaning based on the context; homonyms, homophones and homographs for effective language speaking and writing. Thus, for improving reading and comprehension skills, newspaper should be used supplementary to the textbook in accordance with the student's level of knowledge and they should be helped by their teachers to overcome the difficulties they encounter. And finally students can enjoy reading topics independently based on their own interests even outside the classroom.

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AUTHORS' PROFILE

Author -1



Dr. Sarita Jain is Associate Professor in the Department of English, Gauri Devi Govt. College for Women, Alwar. She has to her credit about Twenty eight articles published in various national, International Journals and anthologies. She has attended and presented papers in about 35 national and international conferences. She has

attended and participated in six national and one international workshop. She has authored one book namely, *Methods of Teaching English in India*, and edited four books namely *Critical Responses to Comparative Literature: A Study in Post Modern Perspective*, *English Language Teaching in India and Diaspora* and *Trans nationalism: Gender, Race and Narratives. Glass Ceiling and Ambivalent Sexism* in two volumes. She has been in the editorial board of peer-reviewed international journal *Literary Endeavour*. She has done one online course in English conducted by the University Of Oregon. She has done one Major and one Minor research project sanctioned by U.G.C. She has teaching experience of 24 years. Her areas of interest include English Language Teaching, Gender Studies and Diaspora Literature. She completed her Post Doctorate in April 2017 which was awarded by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) New Delhi.

Author-2

Dr. Kusum R. Yadav Ph.D. (Education), M.Ed., M.A.(English), M.Sc. (Chemistry) is working as a Head of Department, R. H. Patel English Medium B.Ed. College, faculty of Education, Kadi Sarva Vishvavidyalaya, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India. She has twenty years of wide experience and deep interest in education. She teaches Pedagogy of English, Language Across the Curriculum, Educational psychology, Guidance and counselling, Environmental Education at B.Ed., M.Ed., M.Phil. M.A.(Education) level. She has participated and Presented research papers in more than twenty seven international, national and state level conferences and seminars. Chaired technical sessions in international and national seminars and conferences. Research Guide at M.Phil. M.Ed., M.A. and Ph.D. (Education) level. She is also Intel Master Trainer. She has completed research project of M.H.R.D. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan as a co-investigator. Published 6 research papers in referred journals, authored Educational

Psychology Reference Book for B.Ed., M.Ed. students .She also rendered her services as a reviewer for Standard-10 English Textbook of Gujarat State Text Book Board . She is taking expert sessions in Induction Training Programs of Government and private engineering and polytechnic college lecturers on various pedagogical aspects .