



Newspaper – an ICT Instrument to Facilitate Teaching-Learning Process

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Article History	Abstract
Received: 06 June 2023 Revised: 05 Sept 2023 Accepted: 14 Nov 2023	<i>Proficiency in English language can be a driving force for a person to excel in his/her careers, either at national or international level. Recent statistics indicate that the readership of newspapers, more particularly, that of English newspapers has increased to an appreciable level, and it is this strand which needs to be exploited. In spite of the digital revolution, the sheen of print media has not faded. Edgar Dale's 'Cone of Experience' explicitly states that decoding the textual symbols is at the top of the cone, and thus by reading newspapers, one not only strengthens LSRW skills but also enhances higher order skills – problem solving, research, editorial, autonomous learning competence, and critical analysis. In the teaching- learning process, blended learning and flipped classroom are some methods which can be employed in the process of using newspaper as a learning device. Through activities like description, analysis, and synthesis; comparison and contrast; process description - learners will be able to upgrade their cognitive skills.</i>
CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0	Keywords: Proficiency, English language, newspaper, language skills, autonomous learning competence

1. Introduction

Language plays a vital role in the day-to-day lives. It acts as a binding force among various people, strengthens relationships and bolsters empathy among one another. It acts as a major channel in sharing knowledge related to various fields. It is not an exaggeration to say that its role as an interventionist force in ironing out conflicts and differences among people, families, various bodies and nations is indispensable. In the absence of a language, communication gap invariably builds up which would naturally lead to tension and friction.

In the essay 'English Zindabad Vs Angrezi Hatao' Kushwanth states, "English language opens the window of a village hovel to the city; it opens the window of India to the world." Interchange of thoughts take place via the medium of English language. It is books and newspapers written in English which enable people from other countries have better understanding of India and vice versa. India being a multilingual country, English serves as a bridge between people speaking their mother tongues. People can, without any scruple, indulge in any interaction or dialogues with others by using English language.

Introduction of English education in India through Macaulay's Minutes in the year 1835 has proved to be a blessing in disguise. Exposure of Indians to English language from then onwards has helped them seek employability at not just local level but also at global level.

Newspapers, by dint of them having features like news articles, feature articles, editorial, letters to the editor, international news, business sections, sports, entertainment, lifestyle, science, technology, politics, beauty education, classifieds meet the needs of practically every section of society. By engaging students with activities keeping English newspaper as base, student will be able to better their pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. As reporting news comes under expository writing, it can be used as an instructional aid in an ELT classroom and thereby boost technical writing skills.

History of English Language in India:

The history of English language in India dates back to 1600 when Queen Elizabeth I granted charter to the East India Company to undertake activities related to trade in India. From 1600-1800, the British consolidated their hold over Indians by way of trade and proselytisation of Christianity – but they didn't feel that these alone were not adequate and so took the plunge of focusing on education. The Charter

Act of 1813 was the country's concrete step toward modern education – Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit then languages in use had no other option but to give way to English.

Against the backdrop of schism between the Orientalists – opponents of English education and Anglicists – supporters of English education, Macaulay was entrusted the task of sorting out the differences by the British Crown. Macaulay took charge as the President of the General Committee of Public Instruction in June 1834 and from then there was no going back for English in India. He, through his minutes, emerged successful in imposing English on Indians by justifying that it was an intellectually superior language and would inculcate scientific bent of mind. It is ironical that Indians had used English language extensively to drive the British out of India.

Even post-independence, Dr. Radha Krishnan Commission (1948) and others have upheld incorporating English in Indian educational system. Now we have reached a point from where there is not going back – now English is deeply entrenched in Indian psyche. Although, according to statistics only 10% of Indians speak English, no person can hold a conversation without a liberal use of English words.

Newspaper:

Newspaper in India is an edifice reflecting the multiple dimensions of our society. It is a blend of Information – society, sports, geography, current affairs, science, technology, medicine, finance etc., Education – career guidance and opportunities, educational avenues, arts, literature and culture Entertainment – movies, theatre, arts

It is vigilant of the day-to-day occurrences the world over and reports diligently. Newspaper is a mass media catering to the needs of various sections of society.

The Hicky's Bengal Gazette – a very small two-sheet English weekly newspaper was the first English newspaper and it was published on 29 January 1780 by James Augustus Hicky under the British Raj. It was also called as 'Calcutta General Advertiser' and people used to simply remember it as 'Hicky's Gazette'. Following Hicky's Gazette entered the arena Indian Gazette (1780), Calcutta Gazette (1784), The Bengal Journal (1785), Madras Gazette (1795), Indian Herald (1796), and Bombay Herald (1789). Raja Ram Mohan Roy recognized the power of newspapers in bringing about awareness regarding the evils of certain social practices like sati.

The dynamics of various newspapers had changed post-independence with the formation of Press Trust of India (PTI) in the year 1946. With the rise in literacy level, the readership has also seen a boom and in 1970s newspaper has transformed itself into an industry– it could generate employment for many people. In spite of the inroads of technology into the field of print media, the readership of newspapers has not dwindled. According to the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) 2019, English newspapers saw a growth of 10.7 percent.

Problem Statement:

Keeping under-graduate level students as base, general observation is that the learners are not able to proceed beyond first two levels of Bloom's taxonomy i.e., Memory and Understanding. Most of the learners don't have the proficiency in English that they can reach Bloom's third level i.e., Application. They just read English as a subject but not as a language. In order to be proficient in a language, one needs to use it on a regular basis. Their basic communication is being carried out through the vernacular and thereby English being foreign language is getting sidelined.

There are three types of learning

Observational learning:

Observational learning takes place by observing others. Even though one doesn't know English, upon observation of others' conversation in English, one imbibes the language.

Collaborative learning:

Collaborative learning involves working in teams or in pairs like those in mini-projects.

Social learning:

The learning that takes place in a social milieu i.e., communicating with neighbors, friends, relatives or in shops etc.,

Unfortunately, the three learning processes cited above are not materializing. Their exposure to English language even in classrooms is limited. Collaborative learning implies that it is done in teams or pairs which means with their peer group. Learners don't have to use English language as all the peers are well conversant in vernacular language and they use that language itself. As far as social learning is concerned, when they are surrounded by people speaking in vernacular, the need of using English language doesn't arise. So, now it is imperative that we take an alternative method with the objective of encouraging the learners to gain proficiency in English language.

Novel Teaching Practices:

Traditional practice in a classroom involves giving inputs regarding grammar rules to learners. This is done through teacher-centric lecture method. It has been proven that this method is not helping learners gain proficiency. It has resulted in a fiasco. Learners feel bored as they don't feel engaged. This method has failed to retain the interest of learners. It is high time that the novel pedagogical methods like Flipped classroom, Blended learning and Hybrid learning are adopted.

Flipped Classroom:

Flipped classroom is a classroom where a learner learns as much as s/he can outside and applies this knowledge in the classroom with teacher acting as a facilitator. In this classroom, active learning takes place.

E.g., In a lesson of tenses, students are asked to learn about tenses outside their classroom and then activities based on tenses are given to the students in the classroom by the teacher. Teacher, being the facilitator, can provide resources.

Blended Learning:

In blended learning teacher not only teaches in the classroom but also shares online materials. Here learning takes place in two ways i.e., from the teacher in the classroom and through online resources outside the classroom. Neither of them substituting one another. Teachers use online course to post articles, videos, podcasts, quizzes and do interactive online activities for students to engage with outside of face-to-face class time. Blended learning results in higher motivation and lower anxiety.

Hybrid Learning:

In hybrid learning, both online and offline teaching take place. Online teaching-learning can be either synchronous – teaching-learning process is live, e.g., Google Classroom or asynchronous – teacher's presentation is recorded and posted, learner can access the video at his/her convenience and pace, e.g., NPTEL courses. A learner can opt for either online or face-to-face classroom, based on his/her convenience.

Why English Newspapers?

Using newspapers in classroom as an instructional aid has the following advantages:

- They are cost-effective and portable.
- They relay the latest information and stimulate discussions and debates on various issues.
- Learning through newspaper can be fun and engaging as it caters to learners of various cognitive levels.
- Newspapers can make students autonomous learners.
- It is prospect to the world.
- As it is flexible, it can be easily adaptable across all curricula and grades.
- They hold a brief for authenticity.

Activities for Enhancing LSRW Skills Using Newspapers:

Listening Skills:

Dictoglass:

Dictoglass is an activity where a teacher/any learner reads out a text more than once, and learners in the meantime note down points and reconstruct the text.

E.g. A teacher reads out a short editorial text and learners listen to it, and write a paragraph in their own words keeping the text as base. This activity can be individual, pair or group work.

Listening Comprehension:

Listening Comprehension is another activity which is suitable to learners of all age groups. Here learners listen to a text and answer questions related to the text. This sharpens a learner's individual listening capacity.

Sub-skills:

- Listening for detail
- Intensive listening
- Listening for gist, global understanding
- Deducing meaning from context

Reading Skills:**Supply a Headline:**

Groups of three or four learners are given a text from a newspaper and told to supply a headline.

News Reading:

Learners are asked to read out any article from newspaper. Initially teacher gives a demonstration.

Sub-skills:

- Reading for detail
- Predicting
- Reading for gist, global understand
- Deducing meaning from context
- Note taking
- Skimming
- Scanning
- Editing

Speaking Skills:**Presentations:****Weather Reports:**

Learners have to take one satellite picture of weather and give a presentation of it.

Sports:

Learners can give a review of any sports event. They can give their opinion about the performance of a particular team or player or both. They can compare and contrast the performances of teams/players.

Political Affairs:

Learners can present a summary of any article – political, foreign, business, fashion, contests etc., in the newspapers.

Sub-Skills:

- Summarizing
- Paraphrasing
- Using interactive strategies
- Inferring attitude, feeling, and mood

Writing Skills:**Précis/Summary/Paraphrase:**

Learners are given a text from a newspaper and asked to develop a précis or write a summary or paraphrase.

Data Interpretation:

Students have to take graphs, pie-charts, tables from a newspaper and interpret the data in writing.

Sub-skills:

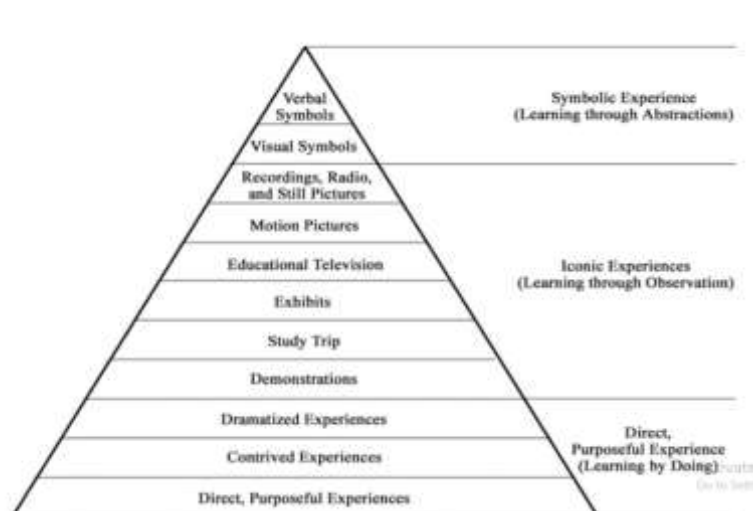
- Editing
- Proofreading

- Summarizing
- Paraphrasing

Learners, by doing the above-mentioned activities, will be able to gain not only productive, receptive, and sub-skills but also learn grammar – syntax, tenses, voice; and semantics.

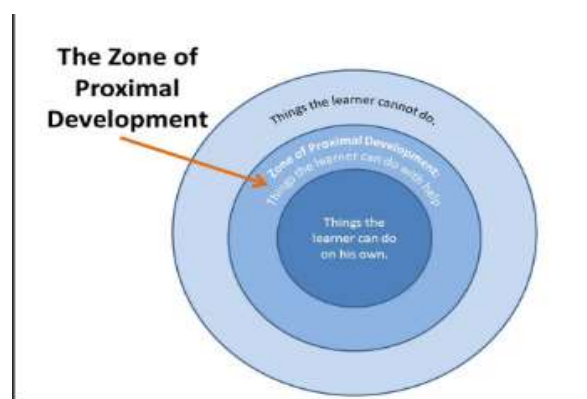
Cognitive Theories Buttressing the Use of English Newspapers in ELT Classroom:

Edgar Dale, in his 'Cone of Experience' differentiates between visual symbols – charts, diagrams, info graphics, graphs, flowcharts etc., and verbal symbols – terminologies, rules, formulae, etc.,



He states that visual symbols promote concrete experience whereas verbal symbols generate abstract learning experience. He has placed concrete learning at the base and abstract learning at the top of cone. This means that learning through newspapers implies covering the base and the top.

Lev Vygotsky, a Soviet psychologist in his 'Zone of Proximal Development' has said that there are three types of learning processes:



- 1) Things which a learner can do without anyone's assistance
- 2) Things which a learner can do with the assistance from adult guidance or with more capable peer guidance.
- 3) Things which a learner can't do at all.

The activities that are given can be autonomous learning or with the assistance from others.

4. Conclusion

According to EF English Proficiency Index (2022), India stands within the score band range of 524-500 which is categorized as being moderate. Despite a majority of the institutions having English as the medium of instruction, the learners in India are not up-to-the mark when it comes to English. Though on paper it is said that the medium of instruction is English, in reality very few schools have teachers who teach in English. The upbringing of the learners also matters. India being a developing nation, for many students' survival assumes primary importance and learning next. Many students don't have enough money to buy books. Students in rural and sub-urban areas have the additional disadvantage of not having the resource like libraries and bookstores. On the one hand, people of India don't need English for their basic living but on the other hand they need for gaining employment. It is the latter thread which needs to be tackled.

It is through newspapers, which are affordable and easily reached that we can to a large extent, fill the gap. Newspaper is not a magic wand that it can make learners highly proficient over night, but it definitely has the capacity of improving the level of proficiency over a period of time.

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