

NEWSPAPERS AS A TOOL IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English as a second language to the non-native speakers with the help of newspapers is the most natural way of teaching the English language. India is a country with multiple languages. So, English plays a very great role as the lingua franca and helps in intercourse between people residing in various parts of the country. Hence good English communication skills area sine-qua-non for all the Indians. This research paper studies the impact of teaching speaking skills to the secondary school students between grades sixth to tenth with the help of newspapers. This paper also lists out the constraints faced by the author in implementing this strategy. A group of thirty-five students, belonging to the government high School, Rechini, Telangana were enrolled for the purpose of this study. Five students from each class were randomly selected for the purpose of this study.

KEYWORDS: *News Papers, Speaking Skills, School Level, Second Language Teaching*

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is the graveyard of English language. Unfortunately, most teachers in India begin English teaching through grammar. The students are taught all the grammatical rules first. Very less importance is attached to teaching the language in a natural way. As a result, the students in India find themselves on shaky ground when it comes to speaking in the English language, once they are out of the school. Also, this teaching methodology, which relies heavily upon making the students through with the grammar rules, has the additional disadvantage of instilling a sense of boredom into the hearts and minds of the students. This boredom, coupled with the feeling that the English language is all about grammar, hampers the ability of the students to master the language properly. This is the reason why most of the students are unable to bag lucrative career offers as they are found wanting on the language front. To correct this anomaly and instill the students with confidence to speak English with fluency and drive away the boredom that usually engulfs English language classes, newspapers were included in the speaking courses of the students.

Newspapers have become a major weapon in the armory of English teachers who are into Activity based teaching. Unlike the traditional teaching methods of book and blackboard, English language newspapers offer the students an opportunity to get a hang of the language in a more natural way. It introduces them to a whole lot of new words, phrases, and idioms. Also, the students have the additional advantage of acquainting themselves with different styles of writing. The students also find it interesting and exciting to read the newspapers unlike the rote method of mugging up the grammatical rules. Keeping

this in mind, a study has been conducted on 35 students of X standard, studying in Zilla Parishad High School, Rechini. The students were asked to read select news items and articles covering a wide range of topics from politics to the cinema to science. Later, they were asked to write the news stories they had read in their own words. Also, they were asked to speak on various topics. Debate programs were also conducted on the prominent news stories. The students were then evaluated.

DATA COLLECTION

A group of 35 students from 10th class studying in Zilla Parishad School, Rechini were selected randomly for the study. In this 20 were male and the remaining female.

Data for the qualitative research was collected through pre-tested interview schedule, close ended and open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews.

The aim of the study is to find out the usefulness of including newspapers in activity based teaching.

PROCEDURE FOLLOWED FOR THE STUDY

Students were divided randomly into five groups consisting of 7 members each four males and three females. Each group was given a topic from the newspaper daily during the course of the study. Students were asked to read and comprehend the given topic. The researcher helped the students whenever students could not get the topic entirely. The students were then asked to write a gist of the topic. Also, one group was asked to tell the students of other groups about what they had read. Before doing this study the students who were selected for the study were tested with their grammar, vocabulary, proficiency, and fluency.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

To know about general proficiency, basic levels, and backgrounds of the learners the researcher has taken a proficiency test, where the researcher realized that the students have enough cognizance on grammar rules but they lack understanding skills and vocabulary.

During the study, two mid tests were administered to know whether newspaper articles are showing any impact on the learners. As shown in table 2 and 3 the researcher has observed a remarkable change in the vocabulary and grammar of the learners.

As indicated above table 1 and 4 shows the scores of the students gained in both pre-test and post-tests. The tables clearly show that the students scored more marks in the post-test than in the pre-test. Hence it can be conveniently concluded that newspaper articles helped the students tremendously in enhancing speaking skills.

Table 1: Proficiency Pre Test Results (n = 35)

	Correct	Percentage	Wrong	Percentage	Null	Percentage	Total
Vocabulary(10 Questions)	154	44%	196	56%	0	0%	350
Grammar (10 Questions)	133	38%	105	30%	112	32%	350
Reading Comprehension (5 Questions)	121	69%	54	31%	0	0%	175
Total (25 Questions)	408		355		112		875

Table 2: Proficiency Mid Test-1 Results (n = 35)

	Correct	Percentage	Wrong	Percentage	Null	Percentage	Total
Vocabulary (10 Questions)	175	50%	140	40%	35	11%	350
Grammar (10 Questions)	147	42%	112	32%	91	26%	350
Reading Comprehension (5 Questions)	109	62%	39	22%	27	16%	175
Total (25 Questions)	431		291		153		875

Table 3: Proficiency Mid Test-2 Results (n = 35)

	Correct	Percentage	Wrong	Percentage	Null	Percentage	Total
Vocabulary (10 Questions)	217	62%	98	28%	35	11%	350
Grammar (10 Questions)	220	63%	39	11%	91	26%	350
Reading Comprehension(5 Questions)	96	55%	19	11%	60	34%	175
Total (25 Questions)	533		156		186		875

Table 4: Proficiency Post Test Results (n = 35)

	Corr	Percentage	Wrong	Percentage	Null	Percentage	Total
Vocabulary (10 Questions)	217	62%	98	28%	35	11%	350
Grammar (10 Questions)	238	68%	77	22%	35	11%	350
Reading Comprehension (5 Questions)	96	55%	79	45%	0	0%	175
Total (25 Questions)	533		156		186		875

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has thrown light on the importance of newspapers as a teaching aid in improving the communicative competence of rural English learners. Contrary to the rote methods of teaching English which scare away rural students, newspapers excite the learners as they are full of interesting news stories which are relatable to the students. Teaching the English language through newspapers is thus the most natural way of teaching the English language.

This paper will go a long way in equipping the language teachers with sufficient information about the efficacy of newspapers as a teaching aid and prod them to adopt this method.

APPENDIX-A

Model Pre and Post Test

GRAMMAR TEST

I. FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH ARTICLES. (a | an| the)

1. _____element of kindness is there in his personality.
2. Sarojini Naidu wrote _____poem at the age of six.

II. CORRECT THE UNDERLINED SENTENCES.

1. Anitha is as fat as Sunitha.
2. Chiranjeevi is not greater than Rajinikanth.

III.PREPOSITIONS

1. Follow the lesson_____page 30. (by, at on, in).
2. The MP left_____New Delhi. (for, to, at,of).

IV. VERB FORMS

1. Akbar _____(rule) India long ago.
2. Stories_____(like) by children very much.
3. The president of India_____(visit) America shortly.
4. I_____(work) as a teacher since 1999.

I VOCABULARY TEST (SYNONYMS)

1. Fatigue
 - a. Energy b. tiredness c. strong d.
2. Hindrance
 - a. Obstacle b. advantage c. help d. freedom

3. Gratitude

a. Thankfulness b. condemnation c. thankfulness d. censure.

II OCABULARY TEST (ANTONYMS)

1. Arrogant

a. Modest b. smug c. vain d. insolent.

2. Luxurious

a. Cheap b. richness c. leisure d. treat.

3. Voluntary

a. Compulsory b. independent c. unpaid d. unforced

III. Choose the right one out of two homophones given in the brackets

a. Pets are not _____ inside the theatre.(aloud \ allowed)

b. We _____ fo the speedy recovery of the injured families.(prey \ pray)

c. Do not _____ at others.(stair \ stare)

d. She has a long and beautiful _____(hair \ hare)

APPENDIX-B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- 1) Did you find reading newspapers interesting?
- 2) Do you feel this activity more exiting and useful than traditional teaching method?
- 3) Were you able to comprehend the news stories/articles given to you by the researcher?
- 4) Did you feel any difficulty in understanding new words?
- 5) How many news phrases/idioms have you come across?
- 6) Do you think that the styles of writing in newspapers were different from the text books?
- 7) Do you think you have made significant improvement in your language after the study?

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