



## NEWSPAPERS – A PORTAL FOR REALISTIC LANGUAGE LEARNING

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### ABSTRACT

*English teaching today has the primary objective of instilling and developing communication skills to help the students acquire lucrative jobs or at least be employable. The main concern of the teachers at the present context is not to teach language, but to develop learner's abilities to make them capable of using the language for a variety of communicative purposes. They devise new methods to reach their objective.*

Even though there are as many methods of teaching English, it is still impossible to arrive at a conclusion of fixed method of teaching English as each and every method has its own shortcomings and leads to devising new methods. The fact hidden behind in the complexity of choosing a right method is teaching and learning a language is purely confined to human emotions. The learners' will power, flexibility and determination play a vital role in acquiring any new language. A willed learner will use all the available sources and methods and learns a language as early as possible.

*"Language teachers have the responsibility to mediate changes in pedagogic practice so as to increase the effectiveness of language teaching". (Widdowson, 1987)*

Despite of the discrepancy in fixing a right method of teaching English, this paper suggests an option of using newspapers in the regular syllabus of Engineering and Technology students. Since, it is found to be more realistic when compared to the syllabus prescribed by the universities.

#### **Role of Newspapers**

In addition to the technical aptitude, the recruiters demand global awareness, and English competency among the candidates. A student can have accessibility to both by reading

newspaper. He understands the world, his field and himself. This is the reason candidates who appear for Public Services Examinations are asked to read newspapers daily to update themselves with the current affairs.

Following are the main advantages of using English newspapers in an ESL classroom:

1. Provide motivation for reading and discussion in English
2. Develop affection and interest towards the use of English Language. .
3. Make the process of learning interesting and innovative.
4. Flexible and adaptable to all curriculum areas and grade levels.
5. Promote good reading habits that will help in a better understanding.
6. Offer a wide variety of knowledge and information -- news, sports, weather, editorials, and comics.
7. A very cost-effective way to impart learning.
8. Contain practical vocabulary and the best models of clear, concise writing.
9. Develop writing, speaking and listening skills of the students.
10. Explore and unfold the world of knowledge and information.
11. Lessons take time to prepare. Once a teacher finds an interesting material, he/she may use it over and over again.
12. Helpful in learning grammatical usages, carefully crafted sentence structures and idioms and phrases besides new words

The language that is used in the newspapers is quiet functional and pragmatic. News items about one's own locality enable the readers to pay close attention to their living environment. So, the choice of diction used in the contents of the news items is relevant to the real walks of life and not like the artistic characters that are portrayed in literature. For instance:

*Flyovers alone will ease traffic snarls.*  
*Coin-vending machine launched.*  
*Sachin Tendulkar embraced history.*  
*Nabbing a culprit from anywhere is easy.*  
*E-auctioning of human hair fetches Rs.133 crores.*  
*Idol-procession begins.*

The above headlines that are used in the **The Hindu** are a few, but it teaches many vocabulary contents like flyovers, traffic snarls, coin-vending, embraced, banning, culprit, e-auction etc. Imagine how much a student could learn if he/she reads the newspaper fully. It functions as a reservoir of information and language where a student full access to all the essentials of life.

*“Learning words in any second or foreign language program involves not only learning the meaning of the words, but also learning how these words are used*

*appropriately in linguistic, socio-linguistic and cultural contexts... when we say that we know English, we mean that we know the meanings and usage of a few thousand words in English.” (Thirumalai, 2002)*

Along with the publication of daily facts, The Hindu also brings out several additional pages like Education Plus, Young World, Cinema Plus, Opportunities, Friday Review, etc which increases the flavor of application of the English Language in detailing the situation. Education plus gives information related to institutions and academic excellence. Young World cheers the youngsters with youthful contents. Opportunities deal with etiquettes for a profession. Friday Review appreciates the taste of music and literature and Cinema Plus criticizes movies of all languages. Overall The Hindu is a library of content explained with an excellence of the English Language. If a student is a consistent reader of the pages of the Hindu he/she will surely become a notable students and a responsible citizen in the years to come.

### **Teaching Methodology:**

Newspapers shall not be prescribed to each student in the class daily. Instead facts and information about various fields like politics, current affairs, technology, sports, business, and health should be carefully collected from various pages and compiled in the form of a handout which could be used for classroom reading and discussion. It may give better feedback when compared to the lessons based on abstract characters with illusive language. For instance, a lesson based on 2G scam kindles the interest of students because it the event that they witness in their life generation. Reading a prose, poetry, drama written by ex-era writers with obsolete language patterns may not sound interest among them. Pragmatic contents may bring sensible learning as it deals with tangible lessons.

Following are the main ingredients of the English Newspapers:

1. **News Stories:** The front page is considered as the mirror of any newspaper. It contains all the breaking or important news in it. The headlines of the front page are prepared meticulously with an aim to draw the attention of the readers.
2. **Feature Stories:** Feature stories are very helpful in sharing information on the topics of reader's interest. These stories may be based upon a trend, event, situation etc.
3. **Special Features:** Special features are meant to have a healthy discussion on a specific issue or a special case/event/story.
4. **Editorial and Letters to the Editor:** Editorial columns reflect the views of the editor/ editorial team/guest writer. Editorial columns are considered very insightful and thought provoking ones. They help the readers to build up their thoughts and views and promote a

high level of thinking skills. The Letters to the Editors represent the opinions of the readers. It is helpful in bringing out the views of the readers before other readers.

5. **Advertisements/Classified:** The advertisements/classified items are very helpful for the readers to know more about an existing or a newly launched product(s).

6. **Miscellaneous Items:** In a newspaper, the readers can easily find time table of Trains/Flights, schedule of events, television, theatre, movies etc. we can also get useful information on weather, fashion, share-market, trade and business etc.

### Summary

Teaching language through literature sounds good but it is intangible to necessities of Engineering students since they are not going to produce artistic writings or comment on culture and interpretations as an English literature student commonly does in criticism. An Engineering college student must know appropriate vocabulary, sentence patterns, flow of speech for better communication, appropriate diction in his business enterprise where creative language of literature has less job to do with. In this context the valuable source could be newspapers where students hit fruits in single blow, i.e. they are able to get exposed to the application of the English language and the contents as well. This is high time that scholars must work out a strategy on developing a new teaching model about using the English newspapers as an effective tool to improve English as a language. Hence, the students are expected to be trained in such a manner so that they can be able to read the English newspapers in an organized

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