

## ROLE OF ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

**Dr. Rupal S. Patel**

H.O.D. English

Shree Meghmani Parivar and Shree  
Bhailalbai A. Patel (Detrojwala) Umiya  
Arts & Commerce College for Girls,  
Sola, Ahmedabad-60.

E-mail : rupalashok@gmail.com

There are several first generation learners coming from semi urban areas and the farming community. Quite a few of them wish to return to farming or agriculture – based livelihood after they complete their undergraduate courses. Most of them depend on government scholarships which are used to meet domestic expenses or paying examination fees. This leads to less number of students buying the prescribed text books or guides for examinations. This is the context in which English newspapers could be used for active learning.

Newspapers are authentic texts which are more interesting than textbook materials, more up – to – date, related to the day to day life. In the words of Block:

*...published materials do not always provide the types of texts and activities that a teacher is seeking for a given class ( Block : 1991, 211 ).*

Newspapers have jokes, pictures, photographs, cartoons, maps, graphs, puzzles and information on various topics. So we can definitely see so many varieties in the English newspaper. We can see use English newspaper in teaching non – native speakers of English, mainstreamed students and those in remedial classroom too.

Newspapers are not very expensive. They can be cut up, written on and pasted down. And every morning, a bundle of them can be delivered to the door of your house as well as your educational institution. They are the easiest portable reading materials into the classroom. They are like carrying new textbooks everyday with continuity in themes and topics. They have elements of seriousness as well as fun. The sports columns represent phrasal verbs and idioms, cartoons enhance visual learning, crosswords are brain teasers. It improves and strengthens the use of prepositions, adjectives, adverbs, clauses, nouns, verbs etc.

Newspapers however, bridge cultural differences. A simple discussion about a political cartoon or movie ad gives us entrée into conversations with the classmates. They keep us in contact with current affairs. They can be used at different reading levels with students in the same class. We can arrange various activities with the help of newspapers. In the views of Picken:

*Advertisements can be used to practice grammar or to introduce specific vocabulary, such as words for items of clothing, of for skills practice. Classified*

*ads are often used to teach reading for specific information. Job advertisements are use as a stimulus for learning, especially of letters of application and resumes, and also as a starting point for job interview simulations ( Picken : 1999, 249 ).*

There are various ways of using newspapers for the improvement and fluency in English. Some of the ways are described here:

### **1. Showing Pictures or Photographs**

Pictures or photographs are important sources of English language learning. Show the picture or photograph to the students and encourage them to describe the picture or photograph. You can divide the activity in two groups:

- Activity for average students
- Activity for non – native students

For average students cut out a picture or photograph that contains a new vocabulary word. Have the student select the correct definition by using them and give context clues.

For non – native speakers, the teacher should cut out photos reflecting cultural interests. Paste them on card board and write words underneath describing what is being shown.

### **2. Comic Strips**

Comic strips encourage students for creative writing. It promotes students in developing the skill of narration. Again we can divide it in two groups :

- Activity for average students
- Activity for non – native students

For average students, the teacher cuts apart frames of comic strips and the students will put them back in the right order. While for non – native speakers repeat the same activity using another strip with more words.

### **3. The Television Guide and Weather Maps**

By television guide and weather maps, the students enjoy the knowledge of different areas of the world. By observing and studying the maps of different countries and areas, students learn about variations of various countries or areas. With weather maps, students can compare local temperature with the temperature of other areas. All kinds of students enjoy the activities like identifying television programmes and characters.

## 4. Headlines or Titles of Articles

Headlines and title of articles are important sources for vocabulary learning. Students learn new words from them and enrich their vocabulary. They also start to refer to the dictionary. Again, we can divide this task in two categories:

- Activity for average students
- Activity for non – native students

For average students simple headlines can be cut from articles, taped on paper and students can then fill in underneath what they think the articles might have been about. While the non – native speaker students can participate in this exercise, using the simplest headlines possible.

## 5. Advertising

Advertising is another source for English language learning. Reading of advertisements make the students aware of various fields of productions. For it, the teacher should cut out ads and ask questions about process, items on sale etc. This activity also familiarizes students with areas for shopping and kinds of items available for purchase in the market.

## SOME ACTIVE LEARNING WITH THE HELP OF NEWSPAPERS

### 1. Individual Work

An individual student can be given or asked to bring a newspaper in the classroom and inspire him/her to read the headline from it. After reading, new words should be given from the headline and ask them to refer to the dictionary. The students even talk about what he/she read for a minute. This improves their vocabulary as well as reading and speaking skill. It should also develop their boldness, confidence, fluency and body language. The listening skill of the remaining students should also be developed. The other students can ask questions also.

### 2. Pair Work

A pair of students can be given two different newspapers to study and compare its reports, cartoons, headlines and other information about sports and games and entertainment. Comparison should also be done on international, regional, educational, movies, health, travel, culture etc. This pair activity improves their creativity and thinking power.

### 3. Group Activity

In India, we have large classes having the capacity and strength of 150 or 170 students. So group activity is helpful in conducting such classrooms. Prepare a group of seven or eight students. Give each group different newspapers. Give the topics on different areas like culture, political, educational, sports and games, health etc. and ask them to prepare a report on it in your words. Such an activity builds leadership quality, team working, collaborative learning, sharing and accountability.

## Limitations

Though this activity is helpful in so many ways, there are certain limitations of it also. They are as under:

- Prescribed syllabus has to complete within a given time. So such type of activity is not possible regularly.
- Newspapers cannot be taken daily in the classroom. They can be used only as an additional output.
- Newspaper cannot become a text on which the examination is to be held.

## Bibliography

- ✂ Block , David. "Some Thoughts on DIY Materials Design". *ELTJ*. 45.3, 1991.
- ✂ Picken, Jonathan. "State of the ad : the Role of Advertisements in EFL Teaching". *ELTJ*. 53:4, 1999.
- ✂ Sinha, H.S. *Approaches and Methods in English Language Teaching*. Mangal Deep Publications, Jaipur: 2003.