



NEWSPAPER AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVING READING SKILLS

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Abstract :

Newspapers are a useful tool in the ELT classroom for improving **reading** skills and **enhancing** students' knowledge of current affairs. There is a danger of putting students off **reading newspapers** if teaching is done in the same way as course books, with tedious comprehension activities. If used in a more inspiring way, newspapers can help students to develop not only reading skills but also writing, grammar, vocabulary and speaking skills. Reading newspapers provides wide ranging benefits for everyone in general but especially for the students they remain the most invaluable source of news and information, despite the onslaught of the electronic media

INTRODUCTION

It's a well known fact that in these tech savvy days Newspaper reading might have taken a backseat slightly. So its anything but obvious that students have to be taught the importance of Newspapers. First and foremost all the students do not have an access to personal computers and the internet, but the newspapers reach everyone.

Newspapers are a useful tool in the ELT classroom for improving reading skills and enhancing students' knowledge of current affairs. Reading newspapers automatically improves one's language skills. News items and articles are written by learned and intelligent people. They know how to use language as an efficient tool for expression and communication. Reading newspapers automatically improves one's language skills.

Role of Newspapers

Newspapers expand the curriculum with an unlimited amount of information to use as background for learning activities. Discovering new ways to use the newspaper in our language studies, and activities from the Newspapers develops language learning every day. The beauty of the newspaper in the classroom is that it is also fresh each day. It comes to us 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. One can sharpen one's **communication skills**, i.e. reading and writing. By reading newspapers regularly at an appointed time **reading and comprehension abilities** get enhanced. The more one reads, new words and expressions reveal their meaning to the reader's mind. Automatically the vocabulary gets enriched and the language becomes richer, fluent and more expressive

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. Lots of information encompassing current affairs, politics, science and technology, education, health, medicine, sports, industry and the markets can be received anywhere at any time of the day through newspapers.



Important data, timetables, advertisements, courses and career options for various categories of students appear in newspapers

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. In reading a text for meaning, it is desirable to go from the whole to the parts. An efficient reader will first try to form overall picture of the entire text (global comprehension), before getting into its details (local comprehension).

Skimming

Skimming and scanning are strategies for effective reading. While scanning is done to locate specific information within a text, skimming is used to quickly identify the main ideas. We often skim when we have a large amount of text to read in a limited time. An important first step while reading a text is to skim through it to understand what the passage is about. Once you have oriented yourself to a text, it is important to identify the main ideas in the passage. Often, each paragraph within a text focusses on a different aspect of the topic. It helps if you can quickly identify these main ideas from the key words.

Scanning

Scanning is a useful reading strategy. When we have a definite purpose in our mind for reading something, we run our eyes quickly over the text to locate specific words or phrases that are of interest to us. For instance, in a job advertisement, we look for specific details such as the position, salary, requisite qualification and experience and location of the job, among other things. In a TV programme guide, we focus on a specific time slot to see which programmes are on. The key to successful scanning is being absolutely clear about what we are looking for and where we might find it. When we are not sure about the exact location, we might first want to skim through the material and then scan for specific details.

Intensive and Extensive Reading

Extensive and intensive reading refers to approaches to language learning and teaching. From their names, you can probably deduce that they both celebrate reading as an integral part of language learning. Where they differ, however, is in their approach to this activity.

Extensive reading can essentially also be referred to as reading for joy. This approach advocates reading as much material in your target language as humanly possible. This way, its advocates claim, you will be exposed to the widest range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. All of this is supposed to make you a better language learner and help you on the way to fluency.

Intensive reading, on the other hand, focuses on closely following a shorter text, doing exercises with it, and learning it in detail. According to this approach, this helps language learners really understand the language's grammar and syntax. The proponents of this method use a range of exercises to complement the reading itself. Foreign language students can, for example, read a short paragraph and then answer questions about the text, order sentences, or find specific words.

The advantages of each approach

Extensive reading is a great tool for people who already enjoy the activity. Switching your reading into your target language will certainly expose you to much more vocabulary than you would normally learn. The aim of this approach is not to look up every single unfamiliar word but to simply immerse yourself in your target language. You can use context to figure out most of the words you don't know in a text and, with extensive reading, you don't exert yourself too much. Instead, you can take joy in engaging with texts that you can comfortably manage. With extensive reading, you can read material that doesn't challenge your comprehension too much since the idea is to simply subject yourself to as much of the written word as possible.

Intensive reading, however, opens the doors of full understanding of a text. You can take a passage of Shakespeare when learning English or Murakami for Japanese and work out the very essence of that paragraph. You translate every word you don't

understand, think about the meaning of what was written, and really engage with the text and its author. While you're not exposed to as much new vocabulary as with extensive reading, the intensive style helps you truly understand the language.

You can take comprehension tests, deconstruct the more complicated grammar, and gain valuable skills deconstruct the more complicated grammar, and gain valuable skills that will help you in learning your target language. This approach is also invaluable to those who do not enjoy reading so much as to take up extensive reading. Instead of reading a lot superficially, you can deeply engage with a short text and walk with a great sense of achievement.



Drawbacks

While extensive reading is a great tool for those who enjoy reading, it really doesn't work for those language learners who find the activity tedious. In addition, reading the texts superficially will mean that you will certainly miss important details that would come in handy in learning your target language. The evidence behind how much this approach helps learners acquire new vocabulary is also dubious.

The problems with intensive reading mostly have to do with the amount of concentration this approach requires. Since you're pretty much doing a word-by-word autopsy of the text, the mental effort required for that will leave you exhausted after even a short period. That means you can only dedicate a limited time for this activity and should also pick times when you feel mentally prepared. While it is suited for people who do not find reading enjoyable (but are able to suffer through a short text), the close analysis of the text intensive reading requires can be tedious and boring for a lot of students.

How to get the best out of newspapers?

A quick and careful scan of the newspaper gives a clear idea of what to read and what to ignore. One should also quickly identify the items/articles of utmost importance. They can be read carefully while the other contents can wait to be read if the time permits. It is a good idea to keep a pen and scissors handy. One should clearly mark and underline anything of interest so that it can be read later with greater focus.

What to avoid

- It is an art to source useful information from newspapers as all the information may not be use to a particular reader.
- Students are short of time and should therefore avoid gossip columns and crime news which is of no immediate concern to them.
- Avoid going through unnecessary advertisements.
- Avoid even political news of little national importance and which can mislead the youth.
- Ignore news about superstitions and magic formulas promising success without hard work

Conclusion

Reading newspapers automatically **improves one's four language skills**. News items and articles are written by learned and intelligent people. They know how to use language as an efficient tool for expression and communication. Precision and meticulous use of words and expressions comes naturally to them. One can imbibe these qualities easily by paying attention to language and style while going through news items and articles in a newspaper. Newspapers are a treasure trove of information for students preparing for competitions and contests. Knowledge coupled with good expression sets the stage for success in any examination.

References :

Author: Kate Joyce

There is a danger of putting students off reading newspapers if articles are used in the same way as course books, with tedious comprehension activities. If used in a more inspiring way, newspapers can help students to develop not only reading skills but also writing, grammar, vocabulary and speaking skills. Below are some tips and activities which I believe can help.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/newspaper-reading-activities>



[Paul Sanderson](#)

Reading Aids Series

Teaching
Reading Skills
through the
NEWSPAPER
Arnold & Clavin
University of Mass.

IRA
An ICA Service Bulletin
Published by the
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
Newark, Delaware, USA

Recognizing that newspapers are among the best supplementary instructional materials, this booklet offers suggestions for the use of newspapers for teaching or reinforcing specific reading skills.

