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Newspaper as Productive Materials for Teaching Writing Skills: A Transition towards Implying Innovative Teaching Materials for ELT

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Language learning in general is an interesting activity for most of the learners. This is true with the first language, that is the native language. When it comes to the second language, attitude differs. Not every learner shows utmost interest in the learning activity. It is the responsibility of the teacher to motivate the student to get involved in the language learning activity, using in teaching aids materials.

As far as language teaching is concerned, media sources serve as quite innovative teaching materials. Mass media resources include newspapers, magazines, radio, Television and movie. These resources provide students with a lot of language practice materials through activities and tasks. This paper focuses on newspapers as productive materials in teaching language skills, with special reference to writing skills. Using mass media resources in the classroom and how to bring them to the Class to teach language is a challenge. It is the task of the teacher to help students and pupils understand the information, transmit it and try to use it for language teaching.

Newspapers are easy to be brought in the class in different subject and courses. The variety of subject and topics newspapers interesting and motivating for the students to work with. Newspapers report real life events, and this arouses student's curiosity. Newspaper based activities in the classroom, engages students in enjoyable activities and encourage their language skills. They are invalid sources of authentic materials.

Newspapers can be used effectively with that wide range of levels. Committed teachers can design exercises to develop critical thinking skills, writing skills grammar skills and what vocabulary skills. In planning a lesson using a newspaper, the teacher should take into consideration the length of the article, paragraph, the complexity of the language, density of the information the subject matter and content, the time available and the level of the students.

Writing as a part of the language learning process is always associated with difficulty. The major reason for this is that the written discourse, ways a great job degree of formal accuracy. Piece of writing would mistakes and half finished sentences is judged as illiterate by native speakers. Therefore there is often greater pressure for written accuracy then there is for accuracy in speaking. By accuracy in writing it is meant to use the vocabulary in the right context, frame grammatically accurate structures and sequence and paragraph the structures.

For all the above mentioned outputs, newspapers play a vital role as productive materials. Some teachers might be off the impression that any printed material would help such an activity. But it is not so. Newspapers infact, have a tremendous impact on increasing the general motivation level. There is always far distinction between newspaper cutting and any other printed material psychologically every learner feels that newspapers have life, that is, every news is a real time experience and this motivates the learner to actively involve in

any learning activity, using a newspaper cutting or newspaper. Motivation can still be increased by a few small techniques applied by the teacher.

While introducing the newspaper in the classroom teaching the teacher must be concerned about the choice. By choice it is meant not only the choice of the newspaper in general but also of the internal news items. A newspaper contains items categorized on the many topics like General news on incidents government activities both state and central, parliament report, education, Science and Technology, commercial events, entertainment, sports, editorial column, etc. In choosing an item out of the variety, every learner has to be given freedom to choose an item of his own interest. And this has to be applied only at the initial stages of acquiring writing skill. Else, a learner would always tend to learn only when the newspaper material caters to his taste. Giving freedom to choose the news item actually motivates the learner. After an initial course of the learning period, the learner has to be trained to work with a newspaper item which may not be of his choice or interest. Here, the teacher has to allot the newspaper cuttings of the teacher's choice, seeing to it that every able learner gets different news paper item for the classroom learning activity. This, psychologically has a greater impact on the learning process using newspapers as materials. In both cases the teacher's choice and learner's choice it must be seen to it that there is variety; that is each learner is to be allotted distinct news item. Choosing newspaper in general has to be done exclusively by the teacher.

A competing teacher will be able to choose a newspaper, which will serve as a productive material in teaching writing skills. As like other media sources, newspapers do have a visual impact on the learner. The general outlook, the splitting of columns, the size and shape of the font used, the clarity of the letters, the quality of the paper material, all these factors have an impact on the learning process. The teacher has the responsibility to choose the newspaper based on the general standard of the newspaper in content, quality and accuracy in language. The cultural background of the newspaper is also to be taken into consideration. That is for teaching language skills, in English, a teacher need not go for a newspaper published in Britain or USA. The choice has to be from Indian Dailies in English, for instance The Hindu.

Once the newspaper and newspaper and newspaper item are being chosen, the next step is to apply methodology for teaching writing skill. Learning to write means familiarity with words, framing grammatically accurate structures, contexting the right vocabulary, sequencing the sentence structures and paragraphing. Language cannot be taught by teaching rules of grammar and instead the parts of speech and definitions must be made familiar.

In teaching vocabulary, the chosen newspaper cutting should be given to the learners. Each learner has to read the particular news item and learn the spelling of the new vocabulary with its meaning. Each learner must be supported with a dictionary to browse through the meanings. This activity must be completed within a particular duration of time. In the attempt to perceive the content, every learner learns a few new words though he's not actually conscious of the fact he is learning words and acquiring vocabulary. Once the words being made familiar, the learner must involve in a self dictation to confirm his vocabulary acquisition. After the words are learnt, the learner must focus on the sentence structure. For this the learner has to read the news item given. When it is repeated for a few times the sentence structure is registered in the brain. Now the learner must be provided with a few more vocabulary other than which he has learnt, with meanings and context to fix.

This technique may not work with all languages. But taking into account the nature of the sentence structures in English language, this technique brings out the expected outcome as the learner is now familiar with the sentence structure, part of speech and definitions.

- I am eating a cake.
- She is eating a cake.
- The baby is eating cake.
- The government announces subsidy for farmers.
- The government supplies handloom for Weavers.

Now that the learner is familiar with the structures he has to involve in a written activity, framing structures replacing the given parts of speech. Now the learner is able to write sentences independent without the help of the teacher.

At this stage the learner has to reread the news item focusing on the issue dealt with, so that he is able to sequence structures explaining a particular event or process. This is based on the familiarity of the learner with the issue in discussion. Add this point, newspapers serve as highly productive materials, as the learner is able to relate the current event, within the language context. Now learner has almost, acquired writing skills. The final stage is learning to paragraph the structures.

The material to the learner has already has a paragraphing for itself. The learner perceives the paragraphing basis and now he has learnt to write or acquired the writing skill. The learner can base his own elements for paragraphing depend on the subject. After acquiring the skill, the learner must experiment with the skill he has acquired, that is, start writing on topics of his own choice. This can be redone, edited and redrafted based on instructions given by the teacher, which is very common with even expert learners.

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