

NEWSPAPER AS ENRICHMENT MATERIAL IN IMPROVING STUDENTS'
PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA
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Abstract

Newspaper is a widely available and accessible source of language enrichment material that can be used to enhance students' performance in English. It provides a range of authentic and contemporary written texts that offer opportunities for reading, writing, speaking, and listening practice, as well as exposure to a variety of vocabulary, grammar, and language structures. This paper explored the benefits and advantages of using newspaper as a tool for language learning and how it can be effectively integrated into language instruction. The study examined the pedagogical value of incorporating newspaper activities into language learning and investigates how such activities can enhance students' language proficiency. The study also adopted socio-cultural theory as its theoretical frame work. The review also considered the role of teachers in facilitating the use of newspaper as an effective educational tool, roles of newspaper in language learning, what makes newspaper a good teaching tool, problems associated with the use of newspapers and some suggested solutions. Recommendations were also highlighted. The findings of this paper highlight the potential of newspaper as a valuable language enrichment material and suggest that its inclusion in language instruction can positively impact students' language learning and performance.

Keywords: Newspapers, enrichment material, language skills

Introduction

Many reasons have been put forward for students' consistent poor performance in English Language (Obiegbu, 2016). Some of such reasons is the lack of adequate and relevant teaching materials, absence of a well-defined objective, the dearth of trained language teachers, and the use of strangely unrealistic syllabuses and testing devices. Added to these problems is the seemingly absence of enrichment materials in the schools nowadays.

Before now, many secondary schools had libraries that were fairly stocked with good novels and the teachers encouraged the students not only to read but also to record summaries and new vocabulary items gained from each week's reading in their exercise books. This way, the teachers were able to expand their students' intellectual horizon in terms of new ideas and expressions. At present, however, many schools do not have libraries, and those that have cannot afford the high cost of textbooks and even where they are available, they are too few to cope with the ever

increasing students' enrolment due to population explosion in schools. Sadly, some of the most fascinating teaching materials, such as the newspaper, have largely been ignored in the teaching and learning of language skills in secondary schools.

In an era dominated by digital media, newspapers remain a valuable and often overlooked resource for enhancing students' language skills. Perhaps, because Nigeria is a thoroughly multilingual country, the English Language has continued to play significant and elaborate roles in almost all the facets of our lives. A particularly unique area where variability and vitality in the use of English Language is greatly experienced is in the domain of mass media, mainly in newspaper and news reporting. Here, activities in the areas of education, politics, crime and law, children and women, sports, art and leisure to mention but few are reported mostly through the medium of English Language.

The contents of the newspaper or magazine are always current and as a result of this currency, students develop language and academic skills within real and relevant contexts. Also, due to its immediacy, students easily relate what they read in the newspaper with what goes on in the society. In this way, the content of learning is within the learner's experience. This invariably motivates and develops students' interest. In addition, the newspaper can be a great language enrichment material, particularly in writing and reading classroom. For instance, it is easy to adopt, it can be marked, cut, pasted, coloured and discarded easily as new issues appear daily. Finally, photographs, paintings, drawings, graphics, maps, cartoons and sketches serve as comprehension aids because they provide context clues to students working with the newspaper (Tafida & Dhalhatu, 2014).

Ajayi (2002) emphasizes that newspapers are an extremely abundant source of information; they convey current information on political, health, music, sports, entertainment, arts, fashion, law, economics, medicine, science, and technology issues, as well as local, national, and international affairs. This implies that newspapers provide information on various facets of life as well as suitable linguistic applications. In language teaching, it provides authentic, practical, and readily evaluable materials, activity-based teaching and learning situations, self-instruction, freedom, and learner-centeredness, and authentic, practical, and easily evaluable materials for the teacher. Using newspapers in the classroom facilitates the effective acquisition and utilization of English as a communication instrument (Education World, 2011). Using periodicals in the classroom enhances vocabulary, expands knowledge, and makes learning more enjoyable and interactive.

The acquisition of English Language skills is a fundamental component of students' education. Finding innovative and effective strategies to enhance these skills has been an ongoing concern for language educators. This article investigates the use of newspapers as enrichment material in the English language classroom.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted sociocultural theory, developed by Lev Vygotsky as a framework. Socio-cultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and

cultural factors in the learning process. According to this theory, individuals acquire knowledge through their interactions with others and through the cultural tools and resources available to them. When using newspapers as an enrichment tool, one can draw upon sociocultural theory by incorporating social interaction and cultural context into the learning experience as below:

- a. Collaborative Learning: Encourage students to work together in pairs or small groups to read and discuss newspaper articles. They can share their interpretations, opinions, and insights, promoting language practice and fostering social interaction.
- b. Language Use in Context: Newspapers provide authentic language input and expose students to real-life discourse. Encourage students to analyse and discuss the language used in the articles, helping them develop a deeper understanding of the culture and context in which the language is used.
- c. Cultural Awareness: Newspapers offer a window into various cultures and perspectives. Use newspaper articles to initiate discussions about cultural values, customs, and current issues. This will help expand students' cultural awareness and intercultural competence.
- d. Integrated Skills: Engage students in activities that integrate multiple language skills. For example, you can have them read an article, summarize it in writing, and then discuss it orally with their peers. This promotes holistic language learning and reinforces various language competencies. Remember that flexibility is key when applying any theory to your teaching practice. Adapt your approach to meet the specific needs and proficiency levels of your students. By incorporating Sociocultural Theory, you can create a rich and engaging language learning experience using newspapers as an enrichment resource.

Sociocultural theory can be effectively applied in using newspapers as enrichment material in language learning. Firstly, newspapers provide learners with authentic and real-life language materials, allowing them to engage with and make sense of language in a meaningful context. This aligns with socio-cultural theory's emphasis on learning within social and cultural contexts. Secondly, newspapers offer a wide range of topics and genres, exposing learners to diverse vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structures. Through analysing news articles, learners can develop their language skills, as well as expand their knowledge about various subjects.

Furthermore, socio-cultural theory highlights the importance of interaction and collaboration in learning. Teachers can encourage language learners to engage in discussions and debates about current events or news stories. This interactive process not only enhances language skills but also fosters critical thinking and socio-cultural awareness. In addition, newspapers often contain advertisements, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor, which can be used as prompts for writing activities. Learners can write responses, letters, or even create their own newspaper articles, providing opportunities for language production and creativity. Overall, utilizing newspapers

as enrichment material aligns with socio-cultural theory by promoting meaningful, contextual, and interactive language learning experiences. It facilitates language development while fostering critical thinking, cultural understanding, and language production skills.

Incorporating Newspapers in Language Instruction

Integrating newspapers in language teaching and learning can be a valuable educational tool. By incorporating newspapers in language instruction, real-world language usage, critical thinking, and wider cultural awareness are promoted. Incorporating newspaper activities into language learning has several pedagogical values. Firstly, it provides authentic and real-world examples of language usage, exposing students to different writing styles, genres, and vocabulary. This helps in enhancing their reading and comprehension skills. According to Chan, Bhatti, and Dutt (2018), newspaper activities facilitate critical thinking skills as it helps students to analyze and evaluate information, identify bias, and develop their own opinions. By engaging with current events and news articles, students also develop cultural awareness and global perspectives.

Furthermore, newspaper activities promote language production, as students can engage in discussions, debates, and writing tasks based on the news articles. This leads to improved speaking and writing skills, as emphasized by authors like Nunan (2003) and Harmer (2007). In addition, incorporating newspaper activities fosters independent learning and self-directed inquiry, as students are encouraged to explore different topics of interest in the newspapers. This promotes autonomy and motivation in language learning, as proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000) in their Self-Determination Theory. Newspapers however, can be incorporated into language classroom through the following;

Newspaper can be incorporated in to English Language Classroom by assigning newspaper articles to students, either as individual tasks or as a group activity. Students should also be encouraged to read articles and answer comprehension questions to gauge their understanding. This way, their reading comprehension can be improved. Since newspapers provide a wide range of vocabulary, students should be asked to highlight new and unfamiliar words to create their own word lists. Students word lists can be discussed, meanings found, words use in sentences, and thereafter, students can then engage in interactive vocabulary-building activities. Newspaper articles can also be used to create grammar exercises or language activities. Students can be asked to identify different sentence types, verb tenses, or practice grammar rules within the context of the articles.

Furthermore, newspapers can be integrated into language classroom by discussing current events as captured in the newspapers. Articles that discuss current events should be selected and students should be encouraged to voice their opinions and engage in classroom discussions. This helps to develop critical thinking, persuasive communication, and debating skills of students. Newspaper articles can also be connected to other subject areas, such as history, science, or social studies etc.

This helps students see the relevance of language learning across different disciplines.

In addition, writing tasks based on newspaper articles can be assigned to students to write summaries, opinions, or even create their own articles based on the news. This enhances writing skills, encourages creativity, and reinforces language structures. Moreover, students should be introduced to different sections of the newspaper to expose them to various writing styles, like editorials, letters to the editor, advertisements, and feature articles. This aids in developing a broader understanding of written language and its purposes.

Roles of Newspapers in Language Learning.

The role of newspapers in language learning cannot be over emphasised as the newspaper articles provide easy access to the various components of language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. They serve as authentic reading materials, promote active reading and boost analytical thought, development vocabulary and language competence and promote media literacy and evaluation of information

Newspapers offer a comprehensive and authentic reading experience, providing students with content from the real world that reflects current events, diverse perspectives, and a variety of writing styles. According to Smith (2022), exposure to authentic texts facilitates the development of reading comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking. By reading newspaper articles, students are exposed to a broad spectrum of topics, from politics to science, sports to culture, fostering a well-rounded understanding of the world.

Another role of newspapers in language learning is that students are actively involved in the newspaper reading process. They develop the ability to navigate through headlines, subheadings, captions, and articles while making connections between various pieces of information. This active reading promotes analytical thinking, as students must interpret, evaluate, and synthesize information from various sources, as noted by Johnson (2021). It promotes the growth of higher-order thinking skills, such as formulating inferences, posing questions, and drawing conclusions.

Through the use of newspaper in language learning, students are also exposed to various registers, idiomatic expressions, and specialized terminology by reading newspapers. According to research conducted by Brown (2023), newspaper exposure to a voluminous vocabulary improves language proficiency and comprehension. In addition, newspapers frequently include editorials, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor, which expose students to persuasive writing techniques and facilitate the development of their own critical voice.

In an era of false news and misinformation, it is crucial to teach students how to evaluate information sources critically. Newspapers provide educators with an excellent opportunity to promote media literacy. Students develop a critical eye and become discerning information consumers by analyzing articles for credibility, bias,

and reliability. As advocated by Thompson (2022), this enables students to become knowledgeable, able-bodied citizens who can distinguish between fact and fiction.

What Makes Newspapers Good Teaching Tools

Availability: A teaching tool has no value if it is not available. In the absence of other materials, newspapers are the most readily available English language teaching. Relevant parts of newspapers can easily be multiplied by photocopying.

Affordability: Newspapers are cheap and so both instructors and students can afford to buy them, quite unlike books, which tend to be prohibitively expensive when they are available.

Relevance: Learning materials are more relevant, interesting and motivating if they are structured within the experience, culture and environment of the learner. Newspapers in Nigeria fulfil these qualities. For example, editorials, feature articles and gossip columns are normally based on local issues which readily arrest the attention of readers.

Malleability/Endurance: A teaching tool, should be easy to operate. Sophisticated tools are often difficult to repair when they break down. Newspapers are beyond this problem; they are not only easy to handle, but do not break down like machines.

Cost-effectiveness: In a deprived teaching environment, the teachers' best friend are materials that can use many times and for a long time, properly handled and stored, newspapers can endure long periods of use, and the longer the period they are preserved and used, the more cost-effective they become.

Roles of Teachers in Facilitating the Use of Newspaper as an Enrichment Material

The role of teachers in facilitating the use of newspaper as an effective educational tool is crucial in ensuring that students develop critical thinking, reading comprehension, and writing skills. The following are some key roles of teachers:

One of the key roles of teachers in facilitating the use of newspapers as an enrichment material is the selecting and evaluating of relevant articles. Teachers should carefully choose newspaper articles that align with the curriculum and the interest of students. They should review the content to verify its accuracy, relevance, and appropriateness for the grade level. This is crucial as using irrelevant aspects will not bring the desired change expected of the students. In line with this, incorporating newspapers into lesson plans is an important function of the teachers. Teachers can integrate newspapers into various aspects of language learning and current events discussions. They can design activities and assignments that involve analyzing and interpreting newspaper articles, encouraging students to think critically and make connections to their studies.

Furthermore, teachers play a vital role in helping students develop media literacy skills. They can guide students to identify biases, distinguish facts from opinions, and critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of news sources. This empowers students to be informed and discerning consumers of news. In addition, teachers can encourage students to read newspaper articles to enhance their reading comprehension, vocabulary, and language proficiency. Teachers can guide students in analyzing the structure of news articles, understanding headlines, and interpreting complex information.

In conclusion, teachers can use newspapers to spark up writing activities, such as opinion pieces, summaries, letter-to-the-editor responses, or news reports. This allows students to practice their writing skills, reinforce their knowledge, and engage with current issues.

Problems and Suggested Solutions

Despite the benefits of newspapers as a teaching instrument, newspapers have presented challenges for English language instruction. Undoubtedly, there are good newspapers in Nigeria that can be used in the classroom, but the majority of the papers only provide examples of nonstandard usage and poor editorial work and proofreading, making them inappropriate for classroom use. The implication for English language instruction is that for many people, particularly language learners, written language is pristine and sacred. The phrase "I read it in the paper" is frequently used to emphasise the infallibility of print media. Certain terms are used excessively, rendering them ineffective or devoid of meaning. There are incorrect spellings, such as re-circle for recycle, as well as aberrant uses of prepositions, such as contribute in for to; confidence on for in, etc. The language of advertisements is one of the most concerning issues for English instructors. Grammatical contortions and non-standard English pronunciations may be amusing to the general public, but they have become significant problems for English teachers who are already overworked. Another widespread issue is the incorrect use of words with similar sounds but distinct meanings, such as being and been, formerly and formally, etc.

It will be impossible for the mass media (Newspapers) to facilitate English language teaching and learning if they use incorrect expressions and forms of the language. This does not imply a condemnation of the use of regional dialects or a resistance to linguistic change. It means that the media and educators must be on the lookout for deviant language elements that make teaching difficult or hinder communication. Due to the scarcity of literature and related materials, newspapers are inevitably utilized in the English classroom. Pemagbi, (2006) states, "The higher the quality of newspapers, the more effective the language teaching aids they produce." Therefore, the first stage is for English teachers to influence the quality of newspapers through their association. This influence can take the form of making them aware of the problems they are causing through the national broadcasting commission. A direct compilation of the problem areas from the documents is an essential first step.

Conclusion

Using newspapers as enrichment material in English Language classrooms offers numerous advantages in developing students' language skills. The activities suggested in this paper can serve as effective teaching strategies to enhance reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. By nurturing students' interest in current affairs and promoting critical thinking, newspapers contribute to an enriched learning experience and prepare students for real-world language use. It is essential for language educators to explore the potential of newspapers as an accessible and engaging medium for language instruction. Due to students' poor performance in English Language, the need for additional resources in the English Language classroom is greater than ever. Therefore, English Language instructors should be more creative and innovative in their search for instructional materials. The newspaper is an exceptional language enrichment resource.

Recommendations

1. When developing writing materials for secondary school students, curriculum designers should take advantage of the inherent potential of newspapers. Textbooks can be designed in a way that some newspaper elements can be incorporated into classroom instruction. For instance, students may be required to rewrite a newspaper article in order to enhance it, respond to newspaper advertisements, and compose letters to the editors. Books can be designed so that students can interact with newspaper photographs, drawings, paintings, graphs, caricatures, vocabulary words, and narrative elements.
2. Lessons in the English language should be activity-based. This should involve incorporating valuable resources like newspapers to make the language instruction engaging.
3. Some newspaper aspects should be incorporated into English language textbooks.
4. Secondary schools should have functioning libraries and consistent newspaper supplies.
5. English language teachers should use the local resources in their areas that are available for teaching the language.
6. Teachers should create assignments and learning materials that encourage engaged participation from their students.

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