

# English Through Newspapers a Note

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## **Abstract:**

It is indubitable that English language enjoys the most favoured status across the world. But, the process of learning English language has been dwarfed by various factors in a non-native country like India. Extracting the sweetness of the English language has been a hard nut to crack for millions of people in many countries where English is learnt and taught as a second language. India is no exception. Learners and teachers are found in extreme duress, especially in rural schools in India. Learners are in a quandary regarding the modes of learning English language as various perplexing modes are suggested by the stake holders and policy makers.

But the process of learning turns a bit easier for those who have passion for it. The mastery of eminent scholars of English language and literature are an epitome of the innovative practices they adopted for learning. But novelty and innovation are always a welcome sign in learning the English language. It is irrefutable that learning the English language is not deterrent to the determined. Fear and tension among the learners can be invalidated through a right approach. Initially, the road to learning should be stress-free. If we dispense with the obsolete modes, sailing with the tide of learning converts to a hassle-free one. Tiding over the process of acquiring the English language is no longer an arduous task. Being impervious to innovative mode of teaching and learning is the major obstacle for acquiring mastery over the language. A surface study of the existing situation in all educational institutions exemplifies that every method, not to mention the name, will help acquire language. It is tested and proved that regular reading of the English newspapers will certainly help improve one's English language. Whether it be reading skill or writing skill, English newspaper is a powerful vehicle in learning English language. This paper is an attempt to show how English newspaper helps in developing the skills of English language.

**Keywords:** favoured status, dwarfed, determined, innovative practices, newspaper

“Dwelling on the process of learning English language without proper planning is a daydream and process of learning it without proper vision is a nightmare.”

English language is the most loved one of all. The whole world pivots around English language. The significance of the language has been growing at a phenomenal pace across the world. But, the voice of many learners of English language has an aggrieved tone that the process of learning English as a second language is a path strewn with many obstacles. Some strive to acquire the skills of the language and reap the harvest. Some others are said to have given up their efforts unable to sail through the arduous task for want of proper channel or guidance. Unearthing the unexplored domain is necessitated in this context. The savour of learning English language lies stored in unexplored and invisible learning hives and the key function of the learners and teachers concerned is to extract the honey of learning from these hives. Fear grips the learners of English language in a non-native situation. As tension and panic are prevailing among the learners, they are on the brink of losing inclination to develop the skills of English

language. This panic is the result of diffidence in the minds of learners. Wiping out the rampant fear in learning the English language is not beyond the reach of the main stake holders. When attainment of something becomes toilsome, degree of confidence gets plummeted. So, building confidence among the learners is the prerogative of the stake holders. Unleashing this tension and panic and building confidence is not impossible. Various means of learning English language have been tested by the education system. Some modes have turned out to be triumphant whereas, some others have become futile. Today the teacher-taught process is making new strides in the educational era. Novel methods of learning always have an edge over the tested ones. Mastery of the English language is a prerequisite for a successful career in the global context whether it be a corporate office or an educational institute. It is an irrefutable point that novel modes of learning a subject will have favourable impact. Learning of English language is not different.

A keen observation illustrates that achieving the end is more important than adhering to a set means. Though opinions vary from one learner or teacher to the other, any tested mode of learning will reap its harvest. Reading newspapers exclusively for learning the English language is one of the best and least expensive modes available to all learners. Whether it be **The Hindu, The Deccan Chronicle, The Times of India, The Indian Express, or The Hans India**, it is a vital source in learning English vocabulary, idioms, phrases, comprehension, and grammar. Prior to adopting these innovative modes of learning, it is indispensable to know the aspects to be focussed while using English newspaper as a means of learning English language. Identification of these elements will help us proceed in the right direction.

**Vocabulary** is the nucleus of any language. English is no exception. It is annoying to imagine the process of acquiring English language without required vocabulary. Thoughts, ideas, feelings, and emotions of human beings have no barriers. Giving vent to these thoughts and feelings gets easier only when we have right vocabulary at our disposal. As language is a means of communication, usage of a right word at a right moment, on a right occasion for a right means is a very significant aspect. If a right word does not strike at the most needed moment, our annoyance is inexplicable. Acquisition of vocabulary can't take place in isolation. Words are to be learnt in contextual situations. Incorporation of all situations we come across in the journey of life is not possible in the study material. Reading novels, classics, journals, and newspapers is the right means of acquiring adequate vocabulary. It is said that John Milton and William Shakespeare know maximum number of words in the English language. They held a sway over many readers with their wonderful writings in English literature. Their mastery over vocabulary is beyond human imagination.

The vocabulary we encounter in the newspapers is context-based. It is observed that this vocabulary can't be acquired through textbooks alone. Development of needed vocabulary becomes an easy process through reading English newspapers regularly. To cite a few examples: the words related to various activities, incidents, accidents, natural calamities, meetings, and programmes are readily available in the newspapers. An involuntary learning of vocabulary occurs through the hobby of reading. Many unknown English words become part of our communication when we read newspapers regularly. If the hobby is unabated, his/her mastery of vocabulary and inclination towards learning the language will foster. The habit of recording unknown words and their meanings for later use will certainly add to the treasure of vocabulary. This activity will help in gaining general knowledge as well as commonly used words, phrases, and idioms.

There is an urgent need to dispel the conception among many parents and students that getting through the scheduled examinations is not the be all and end all of education. Various surveys unfold the fact that major chunk of the students does not have the required skills for gaining employment in the current scenario. It is observed that majority of today's students refrain from active participation in academic discussions. Active participation in academic discussions is a powerful tool for enriching spoken communication. This participation demands mastery of the subject as well as language. This mastery can be acquired through reading English newspapers.

The purpose of learning English language is not myopic. It has reached a stage where we use it as a powerful instrument to develop ourselves in all aspects. Learning this language has a global advantage. Indeed, newspapers keep us informed of many aspects across the globe. At the same time, newspaper can be used as a powerful tool to promote the learning process of English language. Relying on textbooks alone for teaching and learning English language is a short-sighted approach. A learner can explore every possible material for enriching his/her language. A text is only a pretext. Going beyond the text book is indispensable to develop the skills of the language. Rudyard Kipling opines that history can never be forgotten if it is narrated in the form of stories. Similar is the case regarding the learning of English language. Newspaper is a fertile area for improving the reading comprehension of English language.

**Grammar** is another essential component in both the year end examinations of the academics and competitive examinations. If grammar is taught through traditional modes, generating interest will be on the wane. Novel techniques always have a positive impact. The learner needs to be taught grammar from application point of view. A cursory reading of the following excerpts illustrates the fact that there is a lot of grammar and vocabulary in the text of the newspapers:

### **I. The Hindu – February 7, 2020:**

#### **‘Jatara – an Opportunity to Bond with Relatives’**

**Medaram:** The Jatara – congregation of people around a temple – is what the hardworking rural folk look forward to all through the year. The Jatara gives them the sought-after break from the monotony of daily grind. The pilgrimage to places like Sammakka-Sarakka Jatara at Medaram inculcates them with a sense of devotion and exposes them to a variety of things. Many find their relatives, lost by time and distance, and have a cheerful time.

People from every nook and corner of the state came in processions and swarmed the entire Medaram village and surrounding habitations. They pitched temporary tents and made merry before and after praying at the altar. They sacrificed animals, boozed and dozed off in the winter chill in the woods.

**The following language items can be identified for teaching and learning in the given newspaper item:**

- 1. Vocabulary used in the paragraph:** congregation, inculcate, pitched, merry, booze, procession, cheerful, devotion, habitations, sacrifice, altar, etc.
- 2. Phrases and idioms used in the paragraph:** rural folk, look forward to, sought-after, doze off, nook and corner, etc.
- 3. Tense structures used in the paragraph:**

- a) **The Jatara** gives them the sought-after break. (S + V1 – Simple Present Tense)
- b) **The pilgrimage** to places like Sammakka-Sarakka Jatara at Medaram **inculcates** them with a sense of devotion and **exposes** them to a variety of things. (S + V1 – Simple present tense)
- c) **Many find** their relatives. (S + V1 – Simple Present Tense)
- d) **People** from nook and corners of the state **came** in processions and **swarmed** the entire Medaram village.  
(S + V2 – Simple Past Tense)
- e) **They pitched** temporary tents and made merry before and after praying at the altar. (S + V2 – Simple Past Tense)
- f) **They sacrificed** animals, boozed and dozed off in the winter chill in the woods. (S + V2 – Simple Past Tense)

## II. The Hindu - 31March, 2020:

### ‘19 from Warangal Who Took part in prayers Traced’

Warangal: After six persons, who took part in a Tablighi Jamaat event in the Nijamuddin area of Delhi died on Monday due to Corona virus, officials of the erstwhile Warangal district have been alerted by the state government to identify all those who took part in the event.

Accordingly, various district administrations within the Warangal district area have swung into action and started tracing those who had attended the meeting as well as those with whom the returnees had come into contact. In Jangaon district three persons who attended the meeting have been traced. While, two are asymptomatic, one has been found to be symptomatic. All three have been shifted to Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad.

**The following language items are identified for teaching and learning English language in the given newspaper item:**

1. **Vocabulary** – erstwhile, alerted, trace, asymptomatic, symptomatic, etc.

2. **Phrases:** due to, accordingly, swung into action, etc.

3. **Clauses:**

- a) six persons, who took part in a Tablighi Jamaat event
- b) those who had attended the meeting
- c) those with whom the returnees had come into contact
- d) three persons who attended the meeting, etc.

4. **Passive Voice:** (S + have/has been + V3 – Present Perfect Tense)

- a. have been alerted
- b. have been traced
- c. has been found
- d. have been shifted, etc.

### 5. Coherence/organization of ideas

The use of such items of newspaper regularly in the classrooms will generate change and interest in the classrooms. They tend to acquire vocabulary, phrases, idioms and grammatical structures involuntarily.

The same topic, if taken for discussion, will generate interest towards listening also as the topic selected is concrete. The newspaper opens windows for creative writing skill too. It will also open many avenues for enriching one's language skills. It will generate interest towards the happenings in the world. On the other hand, it will help them develop mastery over the current events for discussion anywhere required. It is discernible that most of the students have a sense of scare in taking active part in Group discussions which are part of selection process in the current scenario. This occurs due to lack of adequate information, analytical skills, and language. These skills are ensured through newspaper reading when it is developed as a hobby.

**Publication** of articles in reputed national and international journals is a prerequisite for gaining entry in universities for undertaking research nowadays. In fact, the writing skills of most of today's students are woefully bad. Basic structures of English are needed to express their ideas. If they are inefficient in expression, they fail to express what they incline to do. Sometimes, a slight change in the structure will affect the whole desired meaning. Participation in seminars and conferences poses a threat, if the candidate is not good at speaking English. This can be acquired by reading English dailies regularly.

**Motivation** is the key to learning English language. Teachers should adopt their own techniques to draw their attention towards newspaper reading. The following language activities can be adopted for enriching their language skills through newspaper reading:

1. Reading comprehension
2. Description of events/experiences, etc.
3. JAM (Just a Minute) sessions
4. Assignments on writing about events
5. Group Discussions
6. Vocabulary, phrases, and idiomatic expressions
7. Various modes of reporting
8. Grammar practice through news items such as **Tenses, Reported Speech, Passive Voice, Degrees of Comparison, Prepositions, Articles, Synthesis of Sentences**, etc.

Besides news pertaining to every nook and corner of the world, we find contributions of renowned authors and reviews of the noted books. Newspapers exemplify the fact that they are committed to quench the thirst of learners who intend to enrich their proficiency of English language. The points thus epitomize that use of newspaper is an innovative and useful tool for teaching and learning English language.