

NEWSPAPERS AS A TOOL OF IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING SKILLS WHILE TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

ГАЗЕТА ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ УДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ СТУДЕНТАМИ НАВИЧОК ЧИТАННЯ У ВИКЛАДАННІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЯК ІНОЗЕМНОЇ

The paper focuses on improving students' reading skills, newspapers being regarded as an effective tool in the process of teaching English as a foreign language. The objective of the paper is to investigate the phenomenon of newspapers and the corresponding discourse in terms of its vocabulary/ language, to prove that using newspapers is quite beneficial and highly recommended for this purpose.

Newspaper discourse, dealing with every aspect of human activities, comprises informational texts found in editorials and articles, infographics including tables, graphs and charts, as well as illustrations and photographs. It is an educational resource being renewed on a regular basis.

Even with the advancements in computer technology, newspapers continue to be an important aspect of everyday life. An international program called Newspaper in Education (NIE), promotes literacy particularly for young people by using the newspaper, in both print and digital form, as a teaching tool. Through NIE programs, teachers use newspapers which are beneficial for their students in many ways: by promoting reading they stimulate students' media literacy as well as interactive ways of teaching and create a generation of critical thinkers and informed citizens. Newspaper materials regarded by Florida Press Educational Services as a 'living textbook' enable students not only enhance their academic achievements by improving their reading and writing skills but also emphasize analytical thinking, finally resulting in problem-solving and decision-making skills. Besides in the framework of studying English newspaper discourse students get acquainted with current international events, history, culture, etc. which due to the developed critical thinking make it possible to cultivate the habit of lifelong reading for a better understanding of the world and global processes going on avoiding tunnel vision and narrowmindedness. Thus, reading skills are crucial in forming personal outlook, newspapers being one of the tools which when not overused and kept in balance prove to be both beneficial and effective.

Key words: newspaper discourse, educational resource, teaching tool, reading skills, English as a foreign language.

Стаття присвячена питанню вдосконалення навичок читання студентів у контексті газетного дискурсу, що є ефективним інструментом навчання англійської мови як

іноземної. Метою статті є дослідити феномен газети та відповідного дискурсу з точки зору лексики/мови і довести, що використання газет є корисним засобом для досягнення цієї мети.

Газетний дискурс, стосуючись кожного аспекту людської діяльності, містить інформаційні тексти, які можна знайти в редакційних статтях, інфографіку – таблиці, діаграми, а також ілюстрації та фотографії. Це освітній ресурс, який регулярно оновлюється.

Незважаючи на досягнення комп'ютерних технологій, газети продовжують залишатися важливим аспектом повсякденного життя. Міжнародна програма під назвою «Газета в освіті», використовуючи газету, як у друкованому, так і в цифровому вигляді, у якості навчального інструменту, сприяє розвитку грамотності, особливо серед молоді. За допомогою цієї програми вчителі мають змогу опрацювати зі своїми студентами газетний дискурс, що є корисним у багатьох відношеннях: пропагуючи читання, вони стимулюють медіаграмотність студентів, а також інтерактивні способи навчання та створюють покоління критично мислячих, інформованих громадян. Газетні матеріали є «живим підручником», який дає можливість студентам не тільки покращити свої академічні досягнення, шляхом вдосконалення навичок читання та письма, але й розвинути аналітичне мислення, що в кінцевому підсумку призводить до вміння вирішувати проблеми і приймати рішення. Крім того, в рамках вивчення англійської газетного дискурсу студенти знайомляться з актуальними міжнародними подіями, історією, культурою тощо, що завдяки розвиненому критичному мисленню призводить до кращого і суттєво глибшого розуміння світу та глобальних процесів. Таким чином, навички читання мають вирішальне значення у формуванні особистого світогляду, при цьому газети є одним із інструментів, які, якщо їх не використовувати надмірно, виявляються корисними та ефективними в освітньому процесі загалом і навчанні англійської мови як іноземної зокрема.

Ключові слова: газетний дискурс, освітній ресурс, засіб навчання, навички читання, англійська мова як іноземна.

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Baibakova I.M.,

Candidate of Philological Sciences,
Associate Professor,
Associate Professor at the Foreign
Languages Department
Lviv Polytechnic National University

Hasko O.L.,

Candidate of Philological Sciences,
Associate Professor,
Associate Professor at the Foreign
Languages Department
Lviv Polytechnic National University

The problem being regarded. Learning and teaching a foreign language do not belong to simple tasks, as they require plenty of time, ambition and involvement. Patience and ingenuity are the basis of effective results, especially when it comes to teaching rather than learning. As English is one of the most known and useful languages all over the world, plenty of young people decide to acquire English skills and teachers' obligation is to provide some special and interesting exercises to make the lesson pleasant as

well as understandable. Therefore, some teachers use varied useful materials while teaching English. Newspapers are one of the most useful instruments in the classroom and there are some reasons for that. In the article we are going to analyze newspapers as a tool of improving students' reading skills via the phenomenon of newspapers.

Research and publications review. The skill of reading is one of the basic skills necessary to gather information from written sources. English

is not an exception in this case; a proper use of reading skills allows a person to understand a text written in English and pick necessary data from it. In the case of teaching English, it is very important to serve the students' written data proper to both their language level and interests. There are some experts who have different definitions for reading. E. Pang claims that reading is understanding written texts; she underlines that reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. The first proves that a student shall be able to understand the meaning of the text while the second guarantees that the students find the text interesting [8]. Moreover, Jeremy Harmer states the fact that if the students are struggling to understand every word, they can hardly be reading for pleasure [7]. Reading comprehension ability is directly connected with a reading process which is thoroughly analyzed by such scholars as M. Dambacher, D. Brown and T. S. Farrel. They distinguish three types of reading process: top-down processing which deals with background knowledge, bottom-up processing that is related to word recognition and interactive processing which combines the first two [3; 4; 5]. A number of scholars investigate a newspaper as a valuable source of information including local, national and international announcements, news, advertisements, points of view, public opinions, jokes, sports news and television listings [1; 12].

An international program called Newspaper in Education (NIE), promotes literacy particularly for young people by using the newspaper, in both print and digital form, as a teaching tool [14]. Newspaper materials are regarded by Florida Press Educational Services as a 'living textbook', 'Research shows that students using the newspaper as an educational resource score more highly on standardized tests, develop the habit of lifelong reading and are more likely to become engaged citizens and regular voters' [11]. Even with the advancements in computer technology, newspapers continue to be an important aspect of everyday life. There are a number of publications referring to using newspapers as a tool to teaching foreign languages, English in particular. D. Shaw focuses his attention on elaborating newspapers as teaching materials to develop students' language skills. [13]. Some scholars concentrate their attention on advantages and disadvantages of using newspapers in the classroom, warning not to overuse them sometimes, to keep different tools for training reading skills in balance.

Issues requiring further consideration. In spite of the fact that there are many investigations in the field of newspaper usage methodology still more consideration should be given to reading purpose and reading comprehension ability identifying comprehension as the process of deriving meaning from connected text. Reading comprehension ability

falls out into three types depending on the reader's comprehension: a) literal comprehension which is the ability to recall factual information in the text, b) inferential comprehension that is related to the ability to read between the lines and infer the meaning and c) critical and evaluative comprehension which is the ability that needs deeper thinking to clarify the message of information [12]. Understanding different kinds of reading comprehension helps proceed with using newspapers as a tool for diversifying teaching methodology for training students' reading skills.

The aim of the article: the objective of this paper is to investigate the phenomenon of newspapers, their signification of vocabulary and language, to prove that using newspapers in the classroom is an effective tool of improving students' reading skills in teaching English as a foreign language.

The main body. By providing a particular newspaper article as a tool of learning how to read effectively, a teacher shows the students that the usage of newspapers may open a new world to most of them: a world of using English *in real life*, out of the classroom. The general knowledge of the language is not really crucial only during a lesson, but also while communicating with masses of people who speak English.

What is more, through the use of newspapers in classroom activities, a teacher might aim to help them train their reading and text processing skills – finding precise and concise information on a topic, analyzing the information further and forming a conclusion with the use of analyzed data. "A second methodological aim is to get the students to teach themselves, as far as possible, by giving them authentic, involving activities to work on, usually in pairs and small groups" [6, p. 5]. At a certain language level, it becomes possible for one to broaden one's own knowledge of the language using sources spoken and written only in that language. That level is defined only by the level of the sources themselves and varies from recording to recording, from book to book.

The lack of interest in newspapers' content is often enough to prevent students from participating actively in that kind of activity. In most cases, students usually avoid reading any type of articles as they presume that it is simply a waste of time. In addition, using newspapers tends to be connected with boredom.

While reading some articles in a foreign language students come across plenty of obstacles. Some information and expressions are simply too difficult to understand. It is often connected with a variety of words that students are not always familiar with. But is that the reason why newspapers should not appear as a tool of teaching language by a teacher in the classroom? Obviously not, as one of the arguments for it is the fact that the information included in them is always authentic. As far as the level of difficulty is concerned, the material should be chosen adequately to the level of students' knowledge and age. The important thing is that students

should not be bored while working with newspapers, so the articles should be selected according to their interest or even hobby [15].

It has been already proven that newspapers are worth using in a variety of ways during English lessons. With their proper usage, students can be taught in particular, how to summarize, generalize, think critically, interpret meanings hidden between the lines or judge whether information they are looking at is relevant or irrelevant to their needs. It will be elaborated on how newspapers might prove useful in improving students' reading skills in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESP (English for Specific Purposes) teaching.

The nature of newspaper data is that it is very common to integrate reading exercises with training of other English skills; if, for instance, a student is given an analytical article predicting the future of a certain job, showing arguments of both sides and the author's own point of view, they might form their own opinion and form it into a short speech, a letter to the editors or an article in response.

When dealing with the so-called *hot topics*, meaning occurrences which are heavily discussed at a certain moment, a teacher might utilize different media in classes; they might, for example, give each student a copy of a newspaper article treating a certain matter, let them listen to the TV interview about the same happening and possibly organize an on-topic discussion. Then, a good idea would be to summarize shared opinions and make some conclusions about which of the chosen topics seemed to be most popular and interesting among students, and which ones remained too difficult and less worth reading. Because of the fact that newspaper articles contain a huge number of various vocabulary and language, the exercises will not be exclusively training English reading skills. The tasks are meant to train the general usage of data, which includes utilizing textual sources of English-written information.

According to E. Bndaka's thought, acquiring reading skills is often connected with the ability to guess the whole meaning of the article which has been written before [2]. When it comes to reading, an opportunity to train practical language is presented by a *live* kind of text: newspapers. They are written anew every day or a couple of days and they have a multitude of authors and editors. The language used within is the same sort of language used commonly around, as newspapers aim to be accessible for everyone. Newspapers are a source of text perfect for training reading skills. A majority of news articles are concise fragments of text, aiming to be precise summaries of recent occurrences, giving a student a possibility to skim through an article and paraphrase its meaning.

Live texts, such as the ones found in newspapers, contrary to schoolbook texts are unpredictable when it comes to what they are about and they may use any

and all forms of grammar found in commonly spoken language [10].

After one reaches a certain level of advancement in English, it is no longer necessary to give him/her tasks that require focusing only on one aspect of the language, such as pronunciation, vocabulary or grammar. As soon as one is able to accept a part of a written text as a whole, without splitting it into sentences and words to study their meaning alone and within their context, it becomes increasingly important to train one's ability to work with language commonly found outside the class. It will raise the student's interest in the topic studied.

The kind of articles filling most of an average newspaper's space can be split into two kinds of text. One of them is an informational newspaper article – a relation from a recent occurrence, series of happenings or process, done from an objective purpose. It often includes quotes from other people mentioned and is meant to be purely informative. This kind of text is used in news articles.

The other sort of texts are journalist materials, written about a political, sociological or cultural subject. They show the matter from the writer's subjective point of view, often with their own studies, reflections or thoughts about the topic. It might include quotations meant to support or oppose the author's view.

When it comes to reading, both kinds of articles are useful to train on, though there is a slight difference in what kinds of tasks they open to students.

Informational texts work well both with general understanding tasks and the ones searching for details. It is advisable for students to be introduced to a technique of skimming while dealing with such texts [9].

The journalist kind of articles tend not to be suitable for tasks requiring searching for details. Authors of journalist works tend to concentrate on their opinion on a matter they write upon. When utilizing such a kind of text in classes, a teacher should emphasize agree/disagree concepts, and also (counter) arguments that follow one's own point of view.

Newspapers, regardless of their language, also tend to contain data that does not utilize purely textual works. They often contain information such as currency exchange values, stock market information or weather forecasts.

Often present are also articles that contain many numbers, often related to stock markets and economy as well. They are mostly analytical studies, commentaries to recent happenings to the company in the light of micro- and macro-economy and predictions about its future. Along with statistical data, they might become a valuable asset in a teacher's means of using newspapers during ESP classes.

There are plenty of ways of teaching reading without using the whole magazine or newspaper but only a small sheet of paper which can be a crucial source of knowledge for a student with no doubt.

Newspaper articles are divided into three major parts: headlines, leading sentences and main article content. A good article tends to be a summary of a happening or one's thoughts, a good leading sentence is often a summary of a whole article, while a good headline – of the leading sentence. As far as reading comprehension is concerned, such construction makes the whole text easily readable and clear. In most articles, whenever any of these three parts are detached, the general idea of the article can still be conveyed. For instance, an article without a headline might perhaps cause some confusion, but would still be readable. An article without its main content would be more of a small remark than a fully-sized article – but it would still convey the main part of its message. What is more, it still consists of varied words which the student is obliged to look for their meaning in a dictionary, which improves the knowledge of English vocabulary.

Conclusion. We have provided some information to show the significance of newspapers in the classroom as well as in our life; their usage, types, availability and variety. It has been proved that newspapers are a good source for EFL and ESP teaching. Moreover, we elaborated on ideas of developing reading skills during English lessons in the classroom. Given examples of tasks using newspapers prove that such a way of teaching reading skills leads to effective results.

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