

Mass Media And Its Role In Enhancing Students English Language Skills

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Abstract: This study focuses on highlighting the role of Mass Media in the development of English Language Skills. In recent years the strategies of Mass Media usage in the foreign language teaching process are developed arduously. Language learning becomes more interesting, colorful and emotionally-saturated due to them. Mass Media includes Newspapers, Magazines, Radio, Television, Internet, Movies, Books etc. It provides students with a lot of language practice through activities and tasks. It also creates unique opportunity for foreign languages learners to use authentic means (to listen and to communicate to the native speakers). It's necessary to carry out careful selection of texts for elimination of barriers in understanding. Activities designed from mass media gives opportunity for learners to develop LSRW skills and also to show their creative literary potential, raise the will of sharing their ideas in English, and develop skills of social competence and critical thinking.

Keywords: Mass Media, LSRW Skills, Authentic Means

In today's world every communication order is ultimately conditioned or influenced by the political system and cultural milieu and the ends and purposes for which it is to be used. With the dawn of freedom, the Indian media were delinked from the apron-strings of British Political and Cultural imperialism.

The mass media are a very important component of society. Their use in a developing country like India is considered most crucial in the challenge to mobilize people for development activities. Therefore, there must be a communication policy, and more specifically a mass media policy in each country. Our daily lives are so interwoven with the media that we are scarcely aware of their presence and influence. The modern media of mass communication like newspapers, books, radio, television and video are important sources of information. To these, devices like telephones, computers, etc., can be added.

It is a well-known proposition that the media can teach. But our concern here is their role in the teaching of language. It is trusted that genuine audio-visual materials used for teaching language are more effective than the traditional teaching aids like blackboard, textbook, poster, flashcard and

so on. We begin with the assumption that media definitely have a positive role in facilitating learning and teaching in general. Well-known attributes of media, such as that they simultaneously reach more learners. Media stimulate learners by motivating them, and they bring the best teacher or teaching team within the reach of all learners, justify this assumption. Media "inform, amuse, startle, anger, entertain, thrill, but very seldom leave anyone untouched," Biagi Shirley (1996).

The usage of media in the classroom has always been a challenge, and how to bring various kinds of media in the classroom is more than a challenge. Media are a resource to the teachers and the students with creative and practical ideas. Through these instruments a teacher can meet various needs and interests of their students.

Various activities designed using Newspapers, Magazines, Radio, Television, Movies, Books, Internet, etc; provide lot of opportunities to students in developing their LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) skills. They entertain students and encourage reading English in general, both inside and outside the classroom, promoting extensive reading by giving the students the confidence, the

motivation and the ability to continue their reading outside the classroom. We should perceive the significance of the media, the messages they give and their affect upon us, how to utilize this abundant information and create a succession of the vivacity media creates in the life of people and why not in the classroom where students spend a lot of their time.

NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers and magazines are informal but provide very influential education. They provide a variety of information. They cover almost all areas of knowledge. Instruction through newspapers introduces variety and element of play-way'. The newspapers are very useful for the study of languages. Pupils learn many new words and expressions. They learn how to express themselves and how to follow the expression of others.

Newspapers are the most accessible print media for most people. They are the cheapest reading material. They bring out news about the daily happenings, popular science, historical events, entertainment features, human interest stories, political affairs, trade and economic matters, sports, shopping and many more, giving the reader a panoramic view of human life and society. In short, newspapers are the richest and the most easily available reading material for all.

For students in the classroom, newspapers can be a source of all subjects. In the language classroom newspapers can be used to reach a wide range of topics and areas from the alphabet to sentence structure, grammar, discourse, techniques, style and all the major composition skills including rhetoric, logic and creative writing.

Newspapers may be used either to add to the supplementary readers or to replace them completely. They are the essence of language learning and teaching, the use of newspapers and materials in the classrooms in India seems to be quite appropriate mainly in terms of quantity. Textbooks may not match the newspapers in terms of cost and effectiveness.

The daily events, what happens around the teachers and the students are printed in the newspapers. The learners can understand more easily than in the textbooks. Translations of the same matter can be had in the regional medium newspapers or even from the electronic media to some considerable extent, because the subject matter for the most part will be the same in all media. The learners can perceive the language in action outside their classroom as well, and the parents and other elders may also give unlike textbooks which require 'specialized persons to explain them, the newspapers can be discussed by anyone who reads them.

Newspapers are full of topical materials. They deal with Politics, Commerce, Mathematics, Science, Religion, Earthquakes, Scams, Cricket, Academics, Murders, Rape, Theft, Catastrophes, Space of adventure, Child prodigies and everything else that happens in contemporary human society. If a bit of that learners interesting topic be brought into the classroom then the learner will be quite willing to come to the classroom. For centuries the learners have been "creeping like snail unwilling to school" (Shakespeare) largely due to unattractive learning materials in the classroom. Newspapers are primarily meant for conveying meaning and message. In a second language situation, like India, newspapers are essential

means of exposure to communicate through English. The learners can realize how the second language functions in the context.

Extensive reading may be started with newspapers which contain communication skills and highly contextualized materials for all higher levels of learners. If the learner does not have interest on news story, he/she can just drop or skip it and go for another one. But the learner cannot throw away books or text books as early as an item or a day's issue of a newspaper.

Skimming and scanning can be well taught using newspapers. And these skills are important as a part of second language acquisition. G.C. Ahija and Prameela Ahija say: "There is no greater asset to the reader of today than highly developed skill in skimming. Skimming enables a person to select quickly content which he wants to read and discard that in which he is not interested or which is inconsequential to his purpose.

Most adults develop some skill in skimming newspapers and magazines. This skill can be further developed to a very high degree and used profitably in doing all kinds of reading. Such development, however, requires instruction and practice if it is to function in the best capacity.

The Newspaper is considered as the most commonly read print medium throughout the world. The fundamental reason of selecting English newspapers as a teaching aid is very sensible as they cover a wide array of information and knowledge. In a language classroom they can be used very effectively with a multitude of activities from simple to advanced level. The success of these activities mainly depend on how well the teachers design exercises to develop reading competency, higher order thinking skills, writing skills, usage of grammar, vocabulary and more. So, it is the responsibility of the teachers to plan activities for mixed-ability classes.

In planning a lesson using a newspaper, the teacher should take into consideration the length of the article, paragraph, the complexity of the language, the density of information, the subject-matter and content, the time available and the level of the students. Nowadays, we are living in a period of rapid technological changes in mass communications. Though Internet, we are now able to access thousands of newspapers and magazines worldwide.

RADIO AND EDUCATION

Radio is one of the earlier media to be used in the classroom. Recently there has been a tremendous interest in the use of pop songs to teach, second/ foreign languages. The BBC, for example broadcasts two programmes, "Pop World" and "Pop English" which attempt to teach English through pop songs. Researchers have found that the songs can be used to teach any of the four skills of languages—Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

R.G. Reynolds says: "radio is the most significant medium for education in its broadcast sense that has been introduced since the term of the century. As a supplement to class room teaching its possibilities are almost unlimited. Its teaching possibilities are not confined to the five or six hours of the school day. It is available from early morning till long after mid night. By utilizing the rich educational and cultural

offerings of the radio, children and adults in communities, however remote, have access to the best of world's store of knowledge and art. Some say its use as educational instruments will be as common place as text books as black boards."

Radio plays a major role in improving people's imagination, in creating images in the mind through the power of words, it triggers the imagination to fill in the visuals, etc. The listeners see the drama in their heads. Thus, when radio is used in the classroom it helps students to promote their imagination, to voice their creativity.

Many programmes that are broadcast on radio contribute to language learning. Besides getting the latest information and entertainment, in English language classes, radio helps the students to improve their pronunciation, intonation, the pitch of their voice etc. These sort of activities might be successful if we spend adequate time for preparation and create carefully graded tasks. Students attain a feeling of contentment from having understood something of an authentic broadcast. We can see a sense of happiness in their faces. They develop greater confidence in their ability to cope with English and this confidence drives them to use English outside the classroom also.

Institutes of English and Foreign Languages in Indian broadcast many programmes to teach English Language radio. Many state governments provide T.Vs and Radios to the schools and Colleges. Radios and TVs are frequently used in Indian schools to learn knowledge. English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, designed many English programmes to High School students in Andhra Pradesh. Such programmes help the students to learn correct pronunciation, intonation and grammar. Radio lessons in English are heard in hundreds of school classrooms in Andhra Pradesh.

TELEVISION AND THE CLASSROOM

Television has a tremendous potential for mass education and human resource development. In a gigantic country like India the problem of providing education to all is a huge task. Here the role of mass communication in general and T.V in particular is therefore very significant. In India context, Doordarshan has to be conscious of its role. Today there is scarcely a country which is not utilizing television with a view to achieving its culture, social, political and economic development. Television gives information by transmitting programmes through space satellites to people all over the world. Media men often view T.V as an electronic magic carpet, the 20th century's creation of the technological revolution, the great instrument of persuasion, and the most powerful weapon for social change. The scope of T.V programmes can be broadly visualized from three angles, i.e. information, education and entertainment.

Television is the most potential instrument in educating masses and helpful in narrowing down the gap of progress between the developing and developed countries of the world. T.V can be an important central media in providing functional, formal and non formal education to the masses. Television helps in enforcing the public understanding of social, political and scientific advancement of a country. TV programs may be used as warming up activities, pre-activities for the coming

issue, as supplementary material for a certain topic, for up-to-date information, to update the information in the textbooks, etc.

Many programmes are designed to teach English Language through television. English and Foreign Language Training Institutes in India prepare different types of programmes to teach English for Indian learners. The B.B.C has designed several of programmes to learn vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar etc. The students of many schools and college get benefit from such programmes.

INTERNET FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

First, we have to have computer skills in order to bring this kind of Media to our classrooms. There is a separate course for computer skills in our curriculum but this is not enough. Emphasis should be given on providing awareness to students on various aspects of internet use and ways to browse the information from the internet.

Internet is not merely a source of authentic material in English but also a source of information for all sorts of topics we may want to discuss in the classroom and at the same time a source of professional knowledge for teachers in the form of bibliographies, articles, courses and conferences. But to get all these we need to have some practice and experience. It is often that we spend a lot of time searching the Internet, and we feel that we are wasting time and finding nothing that we really wanted. So, it is crucial to have some tips about the ways how to search the Internet, especially the key words of research.

Internet helps students and teachers to compare and classify information, to induce and deduce ideas, to analyze errors, to abstract concepts, to analyze perspectives, to gather information, to work in teams, etc. The Internet is a marvelous tool for locating the latest news which is not yet published. Information on the Internet has three characteristics that distinguish it from traditional classroom materials such as books, supplementary readings, videos and films. The information on the Internet is extensive, dynamic and readily accessible. Acknowledging these characteristics will provide a better

Internet is nowadays considered to be the greatest innovation in Information Technology. The number of the Internet users increasing dramatically every day. The benefits and uses of the Internet for education are growing with every passing day. Internet can make education more attainable to more people. It can promote improved and new type of learning. The use of internet in the classroom is a challenging task. Today schools and universities are spending a lot of money for this technology. It is the "the Age of Internet." Currently computers are being used in the classrooms in our country, but still a lot of schools do not have computers and Internet access. Universities, some high schools and thousands of individuals are connected to the Internet. Some teachers have Internet access in their classrooms.

One can browse a mine of information through Internet. The information can be available in various languages. But no other language is near to English language to obtain information through net. Different types of language learning programmes are available through net. Many such

programmes are designed by the B.B.C. The users of Internet, especially in English, are increasing day by day.

CONCLUSION

Multimedia helps us (teachers) teachers make teaching and learning visual (easy for visual learners). A picture not only provides ample information but it also helps learners enhance their thinking capacity, observation skills and promotes imagination etc. Radio (playing the audio) helps learners to develop their listening skills in a better way. Listening to the tape and then having the script is a clear combination that helps learners for a better understanding. Internet has three main educational uses. It serves as source of information, a place for collaboration, and a place to learn and publish. In this manner by using various kinds of media in the classroom, we can promote students' language acquisition.

The mass media are recognized as the useful tool to teach English language in the classroom. The schools in the 21st century have introduced electronic media in the classroom from Kindergarten. Audio-visual teaching is attracted by the young learners. As English is the essential language of computer, the younger learners pay more attention to learn English first to operate the system to learn various language components.

Many language programmes are designed to teach English language to Indian English learners. Thousands of students are curious to utilize such programmes to improve their Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills in the classroom. The Mass Media, especially electronic media, play a vital role to teach English in Indian classrooms.

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