

Таким образом, использование Интернета, платформ интерактивной коммуникации создает психологически-комфортные условия для развития разных видов речевой деятельности (чтения, восприятия и понимания иноязычной речи на слух, письменной речи, говорения), позволяет организовать учебный процесс в соответствии с личностными способностями учащегося, уровнем его обученности; формирует у учащихся информационную грамотность, способствует социальной адаптации личности, позволяет повысить эффективность процесса обучения иностранным языкам, создав учащимся языковую среду.

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### **TEACHING AND LEARNING FUNCTIONAL LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY THROUGH PRINT MEDIA**

*With the growing importance of English in India's new economic environment, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) organization has made important changes in the English language curricula for secondary education, emphasizing functional language proficiency (FLP). While it is a challenging task in rural schools infested with infrastructural resources, the professionalism, and creativity of*

*a teacher may help a learner acquire language proficiency. In this article, we describe how printed materials, newspapers, in particular, can be used to help students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. It is also can support students learning through various reading newspaper articles, listening when reading them loud, speaking when describing them, and writing about them. We implemented this approach in some rural schools in India and found it to be beneficial and interesting for students.*

## **ПРЕПОДАВАНИЕ И ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ ПОСРЕДСТВОМ ПЕЧАТНЫХ МЕДИА**

*В связи с растущим значением английского языка в экономике Индии организация Национального совета по исследованиям и обучению в области образования (NCERT) внесла важные изменения в учебные программы по английскому языку для среднего образования, сделав упор на владение функциональной языковой компетентностью (FLP). Хотя в сельских школах достижение поставленной цели вызывает определенные трудности в связи с недостаточностью имеющихся ресурсов, профессионализм и творческий подход учителя могут помочь учащемуся овладеть языком. В статье представлена методика использования печатных материалов, в частности газет, с целью формирования у учащихся необходимых знаний и навыков. Учащиеся могут узнать много нового, читая разнообразные газетные статьи, слушая друг друга при чтении статей вслух, обсуждая содержание статей и составляя письменные сочинения на их основе. Автор описывает опыт внедрения данного подхода в некоторых сельских школах Индии и отмечает, что он оказался весьма полезным и интересным для учащихся.*

*“If we teach today as we taught yesterday,  
we rob our children of tomorrow.”*

*John Dewey*

In the era of globalization, while we witness tremendous developments in the field of technology, we need to recognize that interactions among people across the globe have dramatically increased and, with it, acquiring functional proficiency in a common global language has become even more important. In India, the economy has experienced rapid growth during the past two decades or so. The service-based industries have been the major contributors to this surge in economic growth. Unlike in

agriculture and manufacturing, human-to-human interactions are of utmost importance. Such interactions are possible only when there is a common medium of interactions. In a multi-lingual country like India where people from different parts of the country speak different languages and dialects it becomes challenging when an integrated economic system require people to communicate not only across different regions within the country but also across different countries around the world. In India, English has been an official language since the British colonial period. The nature of the emerging economic system in India is such that proficiency in the English language has a premium in the labor market in terms of relatively higher salaries and better working conditions. The recognition of these emerging trends have partly led the education planners and policymakers to shift the emphasis of the English language curricula at the school level from the erstwhile grammar-based written language proficiency to functional language proficiency (FLP).

In order to pursue the objective of this new curriculum, special efforts have been made to teach English language effectively. New teaching methods have been introduced with a focus on oral communication skills which has equal emphasis on reading, writing, listening and speaking, the four components of FLP. Yet the teachers and the students are facing new challenges in achieving FLP. In particular, the students in rural areas are lagging behind. In this article, we will be highlighting some of the impediments facing teachers and students whose English is a second language (ESL) leaving in rural India. We will discuss how the print media, particularly English language newspapers, magazines, journals, etc. can be used as an available and inexpensive source of information. Print material can also be an effective language teaching and learning tool for the ESL students in rural India with a lack of requisite resources. There are many local, regional, and national newspapers and other printed material published in respective regional languages as well as in English.

### **Challenges and opportunities for developing FLP in rural schools**

Language plays an important role in our lives. People use language to communicate with others in society. While learning another language other than home language offer more scope to get connected to a large group of people, at the same time, it is challenging to learn another language.

Teaching English language has always been challenging in India, particularly in the rural areas where most schools are vernacular (regional language) medium schools. Alongside these schools there are English medium schools where the medium is English from the beginning of the

school years. They are mainly connected in urban areas. But in vernacular medium schools students learn English as a second language and other subjects in their own language. Because of the socioeconomic environment in which students do not have to use English or another language for day-to-day conversations. As a result, students in rural India hardly get any chance to listen and to communicate in English. There is no pressing need for learning the language. Although, changes have taken place for teaching-learning process in schools due to many educational policies but teaching English in rural India has not changed much. But with the current wave of globalization as the interactions among the people have increased the importance of English has also increased. Many people use English to communicate with others across the world and it helps them to be connected. Due to importance of English, it has received its status as a global language.

Before the new curriculum was introduced, hardly any emphasis had been placed on the students acquiring functional proficiency. However, the increasing importance of India as an economic, political and technological participant in the global community has made its way for the need of English in people's life. According to Azam, Chin, and Prakash [1], there are sizable economic returns to English language skills in India. Further, being fluent in English increases hourly wages of men by 34%, which is as much as the return to completing secondary school and half as much as the return to a bachelor's degree. They also find that educated, experienced and able workers receiving significantly higher returns to English language skills. They also opine that who are proficient in English language skills have better prospects of getting well paid jobs in the new service-based, globally integrated economy.

However, the physical environment of rural school is not at all conducive to teaching and learning English as compared to the 'language-classrooms' in big city schools with the latest technology and other resources. Meganathan [2] in one of his studies found that conditions of the learners in rural schools appalling as compared to urban schools. In many rural schools, classrooms are not completely supportive for teaching and learning a foreign language. Kaur & Kundra [3] have highlighted that the students of rural areas in India face many problems as English is not their mother language. Because of the socio-cultural background, rural students don't find opportunity to learn English. Their parents are also not educated to teach English at home. Therefore, students depend on their teachers for the education in English. Further, students in these areas don't learn English as medium of communication and they are not aware of its

inherent importance of being global. While need of the use of technology as a vehicle for teaching English is widely felt Kumar & Malekar [4] find that rural students don't have opportunities as city students have i.e. language lab and audio-visual aids available in urban schools. Majority of students read English only for sake of examination. Students of rural students face a lot of problems as English is not their mother language. Neither they get the chance to speak or read English nor they have language lab like city schools (Madhusudana [5]). Similarly, Khan [6] concluded although English has become the language of instruction in most schools and Higher Education institutions, the situation in village schools is severely vulnerable concerning pedagogy and learning of the English language. The students of rural India hardly get any opportunities to learn English other than school.

There are shortages of the basic furniture and sometimes there is not enough light and space for students in rural areas to learn. Students do not have enough access to audio-visual equipment that is so important for language learning. Most of the classrooms are not suitable for effective group activities, which is one of the basic components of language teaching and learning. Due to the challenges mentioned above students in most rural schools are not motivated enough to use and learn English. Even the teachers rarely use English for communication and those few who are enthusiastic often get demotivated. As a result, ESL students in the rural communities are falling far behind.

As discussed above, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) organization has made some important changes in English language curricula emphasizing FLP. The new curriculum has been adopted by many national and state level school boards including Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). The changes in the curricula require new classroom activities that involve listening and speaking, and developing practical writing skills such as note taking, summarizing, report writing, creating advertisement, writing business letters and job applications well as preparing resume. In our experience, we have found that the upper-level high school students have started paying attention to the importance of English in present day world. They love to be able to speak in English and recognize that learning English is an essential skill. This presents an opportunity for developing FLP among students in rural areas, who often lag behind, and may reduce the gap in people's English language proficiency between rural and urban areas. However, the task of teaching English language learners to master the most important language skills (LSRW) is still challenging. It is always the teacher who has to make special efforts to help the rural students

overcome the challenges. We found that use of printed material, such as newspapers, magazines, and journals can be one of the solutions to support Indian students from rural areas to develop FLP.

### **Use of newspapers in teaching-learning process**

In this section, we discuss an effective and innovative method that makes use of print media to develop all four skills of language learning namely reading, writing, listening, and speaking (LSRW) skills among the students particularly in rural areas.

Newspaper is the least expensive reading material that can be used by anyone from the low economical society. It is observed that use of English newspapers helps students in ESL classroom (Mehta [7]). By using newspaper on a regular basis in the ESL classroom, teacher can help students to overcome the challenges in developing their abilities in all the four skills (LSRW). Reading newspaper is a good habit and students can be encouraged to develop this habit so that they can take advantage of this inexpensive learning resource. Students who read newspapers regularly are “more proficient and aware about the happenings that occur near or far away world” [7]. A newspaper provides a variety of knowledge and information on sports, music, fashion and films. Most students living in rural areas do not have access to television or the Internet service, but they seem to be interested in gathering news from across the world, specifically from the world of sports and movies. A variety of subjects and topics makes newspapers interesting and motivating for the students (Tafari [8]).

Newspaper based activities in the ELS class may be interesting and encouraging for the students. They may also help them develop a habit of reading newspaper regularly. Teachers in the rural areas can bring a copy of newspaper or may encourage students to bring newspapers to the class for discussion. It may be even a two- or three-day old issue of the newspaper but can effectively be used for teaching-learning purpose. While some students may be hesitant to read newspaper, the teacher can read aloud some interesting news like sports and movies to develop an interest in reading habit. One of the greatest challenges of teaching English in rural areas is the lack of motivation among the students and by using English newspaper in ESL classroom teacher would be able to motivate the students for learning and using English.

As newspaper uses a variety of texts such as articles, stories, advertisements, letters, reports that are a part of newly adopted curricula and can be used in the class to sharpen students’ writing ability. It can be used to teach all objectives from alphabet to sentence structure, grammar, technique, style, and all other major composition skills including creative

writing. Regular use of newspaper in the classroom would encourage the learners to read with courage and confidence both inside and outside the classroom. The four most important advantages of newspaper are:

- Newspaper provides creative and practical ideas.
- Newspaper-based activities can facilitate interactions among the students and teachers.
- Students learn and enjoy collaboration/teamwork.
- Help meet the new challenges and develop student abilities and performances.

### **Literature Review**

As mentioned previously newspapers can be used as an effective tool to develop language skills. Newspapers are easily available and anyone can avail a newspaper because of its affordable price. They can be used in ESL classrooms in a variety of ways. In particular, newspapers can be used in the schools where there is lack of resources. They can be used to conduct various language activities. Due to globalization English has been used as medium of social and professional conversations with a focus on oral communications. Use of technology or audio-visual aids could be useful in ESL classrooms to practice listening and speaking English skills. It can facilitate students' oral communication in English developing all four language skills. While students in rural India are deprived of digital infrastructures in their schools due to various challenges teachers can yet help the learners practice communication with the help Newspaper activities. However, there may be a few disadvantages which include unsuitable content or news piece in terms of grade level. Secondly, some teachers have challenges designing the activities according to the learning outcome of targeted students.

Nevertheless, Covid-19 pandemic brought about a change in the pedagogy shifting traditional class to online teaching. Yet language skills of students could be still appalling for a lot of other challenges mentioned above. But teachers with little innovations can help learners overcoming the challenges in developing their language skills.

Tafari [8] pointed out how using newspapers in English class may develop language skills. Newspapers are also a great source for ESP teachers, she said. Use of printed media enables teachers to meet the needs and interests of their students. The variety of subjects and topics makes newspapers interesting and motivating for students to work with. They can be used as teaching materials to develop students' language skills. Teachers can design exercises to develop reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, writing skills, grammar skills, vocabulary and

more. Mehta [7] commented that English newspaper can be used as an effective teaching tool in an ESL classroom. Since they are less expensive students can be encouraged to improve the vocabulary, grammar and thinking skills as regular reading of newspapers can provide them opportunity to express and exchange their thoughts on variety of issues. Seeing the importance of English language in the Global world Radhika & Rajeswari [9] have suggested use of print-media. Through the newspaper a teacher can meet the various needs and interests of their students. Mittal [10] pointed out that newspapers can be vital in all their talents as they play an important role in teaching English to non-native speakers. He further said a teacher with innovation can make his lessons interactive with appropriate planning for his syllabus. In other words, newspapers have sufficient potential for the improvement for ESL students' reading skills and increase their motivation to learn English, Singatullova et al. [11].

### **Activities through newspaper**

Since the students come from a regional language medium school, it has always been challenging to engage them in reading English newspapers. Therefore, teachers need to be vigilant in selecting or organizing any activity using newspapers. Sometimes teachers have to go to the beginner's level to motivate them to such activities. There are several newspaper materials focused on learning English available for people on a weekly basis. Weekly English language learning columns like "Know your English" published on Tuesdays in the newspaper named *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com/>), column "Planet Young" usually published on Thursdays, "Mind your English" appearing on Fridays and Sunday supplement of a regional newspaper *The Assam Tribune*. All of these publications can be successfully used for ESL students' activities.

### **Reading Activities**

Keeping in mind the large number of students in a classroom, the teacher would first select a passage or a topic from a newspaper and make enough number of photocopies to be distributed among the students. The teacher will ask students to read closely and deeply, marking the sentences in which they may need assistance with. The time of reading a passage is also noted down in order to keep a record of time with more reading exercises.

#### **1. Skimming**

The students may enjoy skimming through the newspaper and tell their peers about the news they like and remember after skimming.

#### **2. Quiz**



Teacher distributes a newspaper to each group of four or five students and tells them to prepare a quiz based on a particular section of the newspaper. The questions will be set on 'who, what, how, when, or how long...'. Teacher walks around the classroom and checks if the students do not have difficulties with the questions. Once the group completes the questions, they will pass the questions to the other group. Teacher can clarify the activity if needed. The teacher will determine the time limit and the number of questions for the quiz according to the standard and competency of the students in the ESL class.

### 3. Show and tell

As a 'last few minutes class activity' the teacher will give a copy of a newspaper article to each student or if they have not enough copies, at least some students per day can receive the article. Teacher asks students to prepare a written report about the article as homework. After the homework will be completed by the first group of students, another group of students will receive the same materials and do the homework assignment. This should encourage students reading outside the class and use of dictionary.

"People learn through reading and reading about interesting new things in one's interest subject, undoubtedly helps motivation" Paul Sanderson [12]. Regular reading can help to build the students confidence, motivation, develop interest and ability to continue reading outside the classroom. As a result of this work, students learn to read faster and reduce the time to read articles or passages. It also helps students receive information on various events.

### ***Listening Activities***

In order to involve students in listening activities, the teacher can ask them to select a passage or a topic from the newspaper.

1) Then the teacher reads it with correct pronunciation and stress. After that the students could be asked to read aloud the same piece and rest of them can listen to their reading.

2) If the passage is in a dialogue format, students can work in pairs and can read their dialogues with teacher's help.

3) As the students listen to the reading of the same part for the second time, it may help them to understand it better.

4) To test students' listening comprehension, teacher will read aloud a small passage to them and give pop quizzes on that passage. It would not take a long time and can be used in the middle of the class hour to break the monotony. The teacher has to prepare the questions beforehand.

### ***Speaking Activities***

In the newspaper columns mentioned above, we often come across phrases and idioms, meaning of the words, pronunciation and its usage. After reading the columns to them, teacher will explain the new words and its usage. Teacher can ask students to use new words in sentences orally and practice with other students in class.

1) Select a picture, show, and tell activity

Teacher brings photos cut out from various newspapers about recent news or events. Only photos that are familiar to the students and interesting to them should be selected. Teacher conducts this activity by holding up the picture and asks students describe the picture.

Now teacher asks students to do the same activities with students' pictures that they had to bring to class earlier. Students work in pairs and speculate what the news could be. As a follow up, they can write a caption for the photo on a separate piece of paper. Teacher collects the captions and pictures from newspapers. Finally, teacher redistributes those to the students who will match the caption with the picture.

2) Role-playing activities

*Newspaper as a prompt*

The class is divided into groups of three or four students and teacher will distribute English newspapers to them. One newspaper for each group and tell the students to skim through the newspaper within a certain time. Then the teacher asks each one in the group to report to each other whatever they remember from the news. The teacher has to be sure that students report to each other in English.

Students can read something from a newspaper and need to explain to their group members in English what they read.

*Newspaper as a prop*

Teacher can use a newspaper as a prop in the class for a role-playing activity without having the students to read it. By giving the newspaper teacher asks students to play a role in a conversation between two people over a cup of tea in the morning as follows:

A. (Holding a newspaper) Have you read this?

B. What?

A. Angarag Mahanta(a popular singer) is coming to our town.

B. When?

(Teacher can use a bell to stop the conversation and call other two to start the conversation again)

*Playing a role in news/story*

By selecting an interesting story / news / article the teacher asks the students to read it and then to play a role in the story / news. The students will take a role of a person in the story and act out the play.

### ***Writing Activities***

The newly adopted syllabus has given more emphasis on writing composition such as summary, note making, report writing, letters to editor, business letter along with notice and advertisement. Writing is a necessary skill that can be developed with the help of different newspaper activities.

#### **1) Notice / Advertisement**

After considerable exposure to a variety of newspaper activities, the students are encouraged to read some of the articles, advertisements, notice and even editorials. Teacher may ask students to write their own advertisement. Teacher has to take for consideration different students writing skills. Teacher always helps students to write without hesitation. Writing proves to be a serious barrier in learning English in rural India. These activities can encourage students to continue writing more and improve their writing skill.

#### **2) Letter to the editor**

After reading some of the letters the students would come forward to write their own letters to the editor on a topic given by the teacher. Students already have some experience in writing a notice or an advertisement and now they can write a letter with 50-70 words.

#### **3) Understanding headlines**

Teacher writes a few headlines from newspapers and asks students to write the headlines on their notebook and to underline the difficult word. Teacher allows students to use dictionary or thesaurus to write a synonym for each word and replace the 'newspaper word' with the synonym. Students can see if the headline makes sense or they understand the headlines better.

### **EXAMPLES (from The Assam Tribune)**

**1) CM announces slew of schemes...**

**2) Parliament remains stalled for...**

**3) Model hospital sans staff...**

**4) Enthusiasts flock to parlours...**

After going through the example students will come to know that though the word looks embroidered or imprecise in the headlines the meaning is soon revealed.

Teacher can give this as homework and students will note the headlines in a copy and find a synonym and antonym for each difficult

word. This practice encourages students to use dictionary and work after school. Furthermore, taking part in such classroom activity outside the school will not only motivate students but build their confidence to overcome their challenges. As a result, learning becomes more enjoyable.

### ***Miscellaneous Activities***

#### **1) Stump the class**

Students can play a game by searching for words in the newspaper that they don't know. They can list the words in a paper or write on the blackboard. Any student who knows the word can receive a point if they explain the meaning of the word and use it in a sentence. Teacher may help students with the words in a sentence.

#### **2) Building vocabulary**

Teacher asks each student in the class to choose a letter from the alphabet and to find five words from the newspaper with the assigned alphabet. Students have to:

- List the words
- Find the definition
- Find the plurals
- Learn proper pronunciation

### **Concluding Remarks**

While 'language classrooms' with the latest technology are available only in big city schools, it is essential for the ESL teacher to make special efforts to use whatever resources are available to help students in rural areas to overcome their introversion and make them feel comfortable in using English. This paper describes the use of newspaper effectively to develop the FLP in ESL classroom in rural India when much attention has been paid to oral communication. Newspapers like "The Hindu" and "The Assam Tribune" have regular columns like "know your English", "Education Plus", "Mind your English", "Young Planet" that can help students develop English language proficiency. Both teacher and students should work hard on developing the techniques of using newspaper as a teaching-learning tool to develop students' language skills.

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