



Introduction & Overview **for the Teacher**

Many ESL/EFL students would like to read English newspapers, but they find it too difficult, in part because they do not know enough about the conventions of newspapers and newspaper articles or because they tend to approach newspaper articles in class from the perspective of form – grammar and vocabulary rather than the “informative purpose” for which it is intended.

WHY DID WE WRITE THIS BOOK?

To set a purpose for reading and removing fear of not understanding English newspapers by raising awareness of the whole organization and arrangement of English Newspaper.

There are numerous books in the market helping students to deal with the same problem. The newspaper can be daunting for beginners so why write a book in a daunting way too!

The goal of the book is to show the students a different perspective of

newspapers. Though we are saying the same thing that other books are, we intend to simplify the concept of reading the newspaper to reduce the stress surrounding the students and increase their satisfaction, enthusiasm and pleasure while using the book.

We thought it might be better to come out in a “*less serious attitude*” and try to “*loosen the tension*” already present in the black and white and congested pages of words and appear as colorful and frolic as possible. When we talk of fun, it does not mean fooling around and wasting time. Learning can also take place in unserious environments. In fact, it takes place faster and better!

OBJECTIVES

In order to understand how this book has been designed and developed, it is necessary to first outline its objectives. They are twofold:

- A. Encouraging students to bin their phobias relating to English newspapers and dealing with them as a rich **informative** source for **learning the language** and **getting information** on topics that interest them, appreciating them as a **sign of literacy** in the target language. We have tried to design the book considering psychological aspects like humor, pictures, color and large fonts. Psychologically better learning takes place in a stress-free environment.
- B. Teaching students how to read newspapers in English by developing their general reading skills through **critical thinking and reading abilities** in reading newspaper articles and develop their ability to use context to garner the meanings of unknown words and make reading newspapers a not so difficult task to accomplish.

We want our students to learn to read newspapers efficiently in English. We want them to be able to skim through pages on the worldwide web and identify relevant information with speed and efficiency. We hope that one day many of them will read quickly and efficiently enough in English to use

the language as a medium of study at university level or beyond. If we want to encourage this kind of reading, we need to recreate the circumstances in which readers operate in the real world outside the classroom. We are going to look at a **skill/task-based approach** to reading which will enable us to do this.

SYLLABUS DESIGN AND APPROACH

The purpose of this book is to teach some specific skills that are considered necessary or useful in reading newspapers. **Skill-based syllabus** focuses on skills, and gradual development of skills gives learners *confidence*. This has been designed and implemented while keeping in mind the learners' cognitive levels. Skill-based syllabus groups linguistic competencies (grammar, vocabulary and discourse) together into generalized types of behavior, such as reading for the main idea, summarizing, etc.

Students read well, but fail to understand what they have just read. Reading comprehension is simply "Depth of Analysis". Students with poor thinking skills have poor reading comprehension skills, too.

Burmeister (1986 qtd. in Cherney, 1986) defines critical-creative reading and thinking as requiring the skills of **analysis, synthesis and evaluation**. He adds that such cognitive abilities require readers or thinkers to reason using techniques of formal logic or at least to be consciously aware of the thought processes they are using. Analysis, according to Burmeister, requires the examination of parts of the whole; synthesis is the act of combining or unifying elements into a coherent whole; and evaluation requires the establishment of standards and also a judgment as to the goodness of fit of the idea. Burmeister considers evaluation to be the highest level of the cognitive domain.

Students will comprehend and critically evaluate text as they read to find the main idea. They will construct meaning as they analyze news articles and write a summary.

We thought the best approach for writing this book which provides

techniques and strategies on **How to read newspapers in English** would be a skill-based/task-based approach since it is:

- useful when learners need to master specific types of language,
- easy to predict skills students will need to deal with in a context, and
- relevant to students' needs or wants.

SELECTION OF MATERIAL/LANGUAGE DATA

Appropriateness

We could have chosen newspaper articles randomly and provided the students with the reading strategies but based on our objective which was “*to interest*” them. We have tried our best to choose less boring and upsetting topics and articles, which are more appropriate for university students while *trying to eliminate all kinds of cultural, religious and political bias*. Also the topics and articles are chosen according to the amount of “*general knowledge*” that would be useful and interesting to the students.

Length

We were careful to avoid long articles. Reading a news report in a second language is demanding, and if the article is too long, it will discourage students and also take up the time of the class.

Language Content and Data

Data is taken from “*authentic sources*” which in this case are “*newspapers*”. Besides the general interest in the topic and length, the articles were chosen with a *reasonable degree of difficulty*: They are chosen from local newspapers or standard news sites like the BBC or the CNN;¹ therefore, the language as well as the news provided are more of a *Standard*

1. These sites have a wider range of international followers rather than English newspapers with limited domestic news about a certain English speaking country that would require the reader to be living there in order to understand that news.

English – neither too professional nor too facilitated. Information provided is *linguistic, experiential* and *cultural*.

Generative

The topics lend themselves to discussion and further language practice.

Tables

Tables of vocabulary used in newspapers, abbreviations and acronyms have been placed in the book.

THE ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

The chapters of the book have been chosen according to the skills of **analysis, synthesis** and **evaluation** i.e., starting out with looking at newspapers as a whole.

Warm up: All chapters in the book start off with a warm up section to give the students an idea of what they are about to encounter and also raise questions in their mind about the information they will be processing soon.

Part 1: This part includes three chapters with the help of which students will be able to use the following strategies necessary for understanding a newspaper article:

- ✓ using reading strategies to comprehend,
- ✓ understanding the headlines and predicting what will occur in the selected reading,
- ✓ using a variety of strategies to analyze words and guess meanings from context,
- ✓ determining main idea and relevant details,
- ✓ understanding correct usage of punctuation marks,
- ✓ correctly identifying parts of speech,
- ✓ identifying details and using information to construct meaning and make inferences,

- ✓ distinguishing between facts and opinions,
- ✓ summarizing the key supporting details and ideas and evaluating the article.

Part 2: Here students are introduced to various sections of the newspaper where they use their analytic, synthetic and evaluative skills acquired through the previous chapters. Students are provided with articles to practice the knowledge they have gained in Part 1 of the book.

All articles are provided in the reading section of the chapters and consist of four parts:

- Before You Read
- Comprehension Check
- Vocabulary Booster
- Translation

Before You Read: We have set up reading activities which provide a context and a reason for reading. These are used to raise awareness of the topic and to activate knowledge and current language. The following activities are used:

a. First, we need to provide a context.

Before students begin to read, they will have some idea what it will be about and what to expect from it. We start with questions which are interesting in themselves and which are not detailed. When we read real life, we usually have some expectations about what we are going to read. Perhaps we know quite a lot about a topic and we want to check on a few details. Or perhaps we have just heard about something and are curious to know more about it. We rarely set out to read something without knowing anything at all about the topic and without having any expectations about what we are going to read.

b. Secondly, we need to provide a reason for reading.

We have provided a reason for reading in that we arouse the

curiosity of the learners by asking questions that are directly related to the text. This provides one reason for reading: to find an answer to the question. Sometimes in our reading we are looking for very specific information. We may have certain beliefs which we want to confirm or perhaps to reconsider. Or perhaps our curiosity has been aroused by a newspaper headline or the title of an article in a magazine, and we want to satisfy that curiosity. We try to put our students in the same situation when they approach a reading. What exactly do they expect to get out of the reading? What gaps in their knowledge do they want to fill? What expectations do they have which they want to check against their reading? How has it added to their general knowledge?

Comprehension Check: Students are made to use their critical reading and thinking skills in answering the comprehension questions related to the stories in the articles. **The questions** in the book **are not to test** students but a way to help them understand and give them practice.

- True or false
- Choose the best answer, a, b or c
- Which paragraph says ...?
- What do these numbers refer to?
- What do these people think?
- Putting events in chronological order
- Summarizing

Students need to be reminded to focus on meaning rather than form.

Grammar questions are introduced as a means of getting information from the news and not a topic to be answered on per se. They are taught to be used as decoders and a strategy for extracting information from the newspapers. In this way, students do not look at these grammatical tools as boring obstructions to understanding newspapers. Often a news article provides good examples of grammar – for example the past perfect. In this case,

asking students to put particular **events** in chronological order leads to further work on this verb form.

Unlike most course materials, **the grammar work in this book is based on context.**

Vocabulary Booster: We want to develop students' general reading fluency and their ability to use **context** to garner the meaning of unknown words focusing on strategies like **prediction, anticipation, looking for synonyms, clarifications and explanations** and **guessing words**.

Lexical sets: An article may provide vocabulary associated with particular topics – money, crime, and politics. Students either search the article for members of a given lexical set with a sorting activity which uses words from the text. This is a key skill for students to develop. Students are given either definitions of certain words or a matching exercise (match the word to a definition). They can then check their ideas with a dictionary (if there is time).

Affixes: To familiarize students with formation of words, exercises in which students are to find a particular suffix or affix are provided to help them guess meanings and grammar of words once they learn the affixes used with them.

Choice of words was based on:

- A greater incidence of some words
- Words having different (most common) meanings when used in headlines
- Some words often having an unusual part of speech in headlines, e.g., the verb “to pen”
- Different collocations or number of incidences of them (lift + embargo, life + ban, etc.)
- Gap filling

Translation: Though using the mother tongue in English teaching atmospheres has been quite a taboo. Research has shown that it has

proved very effective in better understanding of concepts of the news and comprehension of the students.

Newspaper Activity: Here students are given the chance to bin their phobias relating to newspapers and are ready to hold one in their hand and dig into it for extracting the information asked from them.

Teachers can use these activities as homework projects and depending on the time they have at hand, students can exchange information in class or give them to the teacher to be checked and marked.

Breaktime: After each unit we have a breaktime which has various stress-free materials related to solely news or newspapers. The aim is to just give the students a sense of relaxation and renewing the used up energy after each chapter of work.

LEARNER OUTCOMES

What happens when you read a book, a newspaper or magazine **for information** on a topic that interests you, or when you are reading as part of a course of study? If you are a good reader, you almost certainly don't read every word carefully. You **read with a purpose**, and as your eye skims over the page you take from it whatever you need, predicting what is likely to come next and adjusting your predictions as you go along. Our goal is that students become more proficient in getting information from newspaper articles.

Breaking the Ice!



In our modern world, the news is everywhere. On TV, radio and the internet it is both fast and easy to stay informed about what's happening around the world. So, why read the newspaper?



The answer to that is simple. It's just like the difference between going to the theater and reading a book; the book is almost always better.



Tick the true statement/s about newspapers.

- Newspapers are a means by which we learn languages.
- Newspapers are the source of the information about the world – cultural, political, etc.
- Newspapers give you a chance to improve your general knowledge about the world and make you a more interesting person to hang out with.
- Newspapers can help you find a job or rent an apartment in the country where you are going to move.

- Newspapers are a waste of time when we have TV news channels and can get news faster and more conveniently.

Why Newspapers?

It doesn't matter whether you read the news in the form of print in a newspaper or magazine or online. What's important is that you understand the language and concept of news telling. Understanding news requires knowing the "behind the scenes" events – knowing about columnists, feature writers and reporters. There is a whole new world you need to discover about news – whether in paper, online, or on news channels! And this will remove your fears of the unknown and then you shall see the light!

Why English Newspapers?

If your goal is to read at a native speaker level:

Then you need to read things a native speaker reads!

So if you are a university student, then you need to be reading at that level in the foreign language.

What Is the Role of Newspapers in Our Lives?

The newspaper may be the most commonly read print medium anywhere in the world. It has always been a means by which we **learn languages** and improve our **awareness of the world** – many read newspapers to learn about cultural and political situations.

Newspaper reading can boost students' test scores!!

“Research from the University of Minnesota indicates that students who read a newspaper in class score 10 percent to 30 percent better on standardized reading tests than their peers who do not read newspapers in class.”

For those who are going to pass international exams (IELTS / TOEFL / FCE / CAE) in English, examiners recommend to read newspaper articles in English regularly as such articles will be used in Reading and Writing. Cambridge exams want to check not only how well you understand articles but how well you can write them, too. It's especially useful to read *New Scientist* and *The Economist* to get ready for the Academic Module.

- You read more, you can write better essays because your knowledge is adequate, too.
- You can provide interesting ideas to talk about.
- Shortly, reading English newspapers will not only upgrade your language ability but also makes you more knowledgeable.

What Kinds of English Newspapers Are There?

Newspapers in English can be divided into those published in English speaking countries and in others. Newspapers are written for native English speaking people and for those who study the English language (ESL learners). And newspapers for native speakers can be divided into professional and popular.

Where Does Fear of Reading Newspapers in a Foreign Language or Boredom from Reading Newspapers Arise from?

People are always afraid of the unknown! When you do not know the concept of news writing and what it is based on, you get both bored and frightened and think it is the hardest and most boring concept in the world.

Here are some suggestions to help you with an easy start!

1. If you haven't read a newspaper in your native tongue, how can you read it in a foreign language? Seven-year-olds may not know the words "population, economy, government, referendum, currency" in their native

tongue, so, reading a foreign newspaper would be difficult for them, because reading a newspaper in their mother tongue is difficult”.

But then you are asked to do that in English!

To understand English newspapers, you also have to know all of the news and concepts in the newspaper. The best way to deal with foreign newspapers, at the beginning, is to read a news story in your own language.

Then read the same news story in the foreign language newspaper. Also you can watch the news in your own language and then in whatever language you are studying, and compare them.

It **isn't just** about knowing words. You have to know concepts.

2. If you choose to read the news, keep your dictionary close by and use it. Do not use the dictionary 24/7 i.e., all the time. Sometimes you can guess the meaning of the words that you don't understand.
3. Writing out vocabulary helps remember it. Start a vocabulary notepad. Use each page for the each letter, A-Z. When you learn a new word, write it in your vocabulary notepad on the right page.
4. Explore the different sections of the newspaper. Some will be easier than others. Choose the interesting parts of the newspaper you really want to read. Read the first paragraph, then stop unless you think it's interesting. If so, go ahead.
5. Everyday read five articles which you are interested in. Once you become familiar with the vocabulary in newspapers which appear several times, you will remember them easily.
6. Read them as fast as a student can. In a short time, understand what the main ideas are in newspaper articles. In addition, translate them.
7. Keep reading the newspaper regularly. The more hours you invest, the better you will get. It may seem difficult at first, but keep going! Don't give up.

Start from today!

**Keep reading English news as your
daily habit.**



We hope this information is useful to you. Enjoy your book. It is written for you!