
ENHANCING READING SKILLS THROUGH ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS FOR THAI ESL LEARNERS

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Abstract: The Objective Of This Research Paper Is To Correlate The Reading Competence Of Students In A Reading Course After Taking The Subject For One Semester, To Determine The Impact Of English Newspapers, With The Main Focus Being The Use Of Bangkok Post, One Of Thailand's Leading English News Dailies To Look At Their Awareness Of The Use Of Words And Language As A Whole Which Is Used In The World Of Journalism.

The Action Research Model Included Data Collection Through Personal Interviews And By Distributing Questionnaires To Students Who Had Undertaken This Major Required Course And The Results Also Determined The Impact Of New Technologies In The Importance Of Language Learning Through English Newspapers.

This Paper Takes A First Step In Trying To Analyze The Complexities Of Understanding An English Newspaper As Faced By A Non- Native Asian Learner, When It Comes To Comprehending The Stories, Barriers Caused By Limited Vocabulary Awareness And The Use Of Journalistic Words And Their Impact On Learners At The Tertiary Level.

The Paper Aims To Argue That A Habitual Approach To Read The Newspaper Is Desired, To Enhance The Language Awareness Of EsL Learners, As Learning Is A Continual Process. The Impact The Newspaper Makes On The Student Is Clearly Identifiable Over A Period Of Three To Four Months As Is Evidenced By Their Ability To Read, Interpret And Understand Better The Overall Context Through Sustained And Continuous Assimilation Of Words From The Context Of Regular Reading.

Keywords: Reading, Competence, Newspapers, Impact, Technologies, Awareness.

Introduction: Tracing The Roots Of The Media From The Early Stages Gives Us The Insight That The Basic Function Of Newspapers Has Always Been Manifold; Fundamentally The Functions Are To: Inform ,When It Comes To News Reporting Of All Forms, To Entertain When It Comes To Feature Stories And Those Of Reviews; Including And Not Restricted To Movie Reviews, Book Reviews And Any Other Review Or Arts, Performances, Theatre And So On; Then To Sway Through Strong Language Usage Through Regular Columns Or The Editorial Everyday And Letters From The Readers Everyday Too.

Teaching In Most Classes At The Tertiary Level In Thailand, Is Through The Lecture Method, With The Convenience It Offers And. In The First Place, A Large Number Of Students Can Be Handled Simultaneously. The Teacher Is In Full Control Of The Lesson. He Is The Sole Source Of Information And It Has Been Accepted As An Age Old Practice Where Thai Students Are Told Not To Question The Words Of Wisdom Imparted By Their Guru, Their Teacher, Hence It Is Almost, Always, The Jug-To-Mug Approach In The Classroom, Which Often Stifles The Learner's Thinking Ability.

A Lecture Can Be Used To Cover A Large Syllabus Area In A Limited Time. It Not Only Enlightens An Assembly, But Motivates It And Even Inspires It. It Is Fine For Pep Talk. In Science And Technology, The Information Given In Textbooks May Be Outdated.

Even The Latest Update Can Be Presented To The Classroom Through A Lecture. Above All, Many Teachers Enjoy Their Lectures Because Of Their Potential For Aesthetic Pleasure.

Kumar (1995) Stated That Mass Media Also Played A Social Role As It Has The Power To Reinforce And Transmit Values To People In Society. Therefore The Use Of Mass Media Becomes A Tool Not Only "For Cultural Transmission But Also For Cultural Change" (P.160). He Also Believed That Mass Media Are Considered To Be Social Agents, Who Enable The Public To Achieve Common Understandings And Hold Certain Values. From A Vast Number Of Studies Which Were Synthesized By Kumar (1995) We Can Conclude That Social Learning Occurs From The Informal Use Of Mass Media.

In Spite Of These Merits, We Should Remember That The Lecture Method Is Not Considered To Be One Of The Most Effective Methods Of Teaching. The Students Have Little Involvement; They Are Often Mere Passive Listeners Or Silent Witnesses. Those With Poor Listening Skills Do Not Benefit Much. If They Do Not Take Notes, They Will Forget Most Of What They Have Heard. Some Lectures May Be Boring If It Is Not Supplemented With Adequate Reading Time In The Class. If Reverse Questions Are Not Encouraged, Those Who Have Not Followed A Part May Not Grasp What Comes Later. This Results In A Teaching Disaster.

Some Of My Findings From The Language Classroom In The Course En4240, Reading In English Newspapers Made Me Feel Surprised At The Impact Made By The Newspaper, Bangkok Post, As It Was Evident In The Student At The End Of The Course, In Terms Of Their Assimilation Of Vocabulary And Ability To Engage In Education Through A Passive Reading Activity.

Going From The Known To The Unknown: You Learn Something In The Form Of An Addition Or Extension To Your Existing Knowledge. Go From Simple To Complex, And From Concrete To Abstract. My Classroom Strategy Was In Going To The Specifics After The General Was Covered, When Students Were Asked To Read Basic News Stories Which Had A Clearly Written Headline And An Accompanying Lead Paragraph To Facilitate Understanding.

The Chalkboard Should Be Used In Tandem Along With The Power Point. Other Teaching Aids May Also Be Used, As Appropriately Necessary, As I Had Seen My Students Use Their Mobile Phones As Their Dictionaries When They Quickly Tried To Scout For The Meanings Of Words, Even Though, I Had Instructed Them To Refrain From Using The Dictionary As Much As Possible As The Basic Emphasis Was In Trying To Gather The Meaning From The Larger Context. A Natural Conversational Style Would Usually Be More Effective Than Styles Of Spellbinding Oratory.

Research Objectives: Bernard Cohen In His Book Democracies And Foreign Policy Said That The Function Of Newspapers Was To Inform, Entertain And Sway. This Action Research Project Went To Examine Bernard Cohen's Thoughts In The Classroom With A Major Focus On:

1. The Impact Of English Newspapers On Students Who Learnt English As A Second Or Foreign Language.
2. Awareness To Vocabulary Related To Journalistic Writing And Being Able To Use Them Appropriately.
3. Ability To Write Media Style Headlines At The End Of The Course Through Reading Only The Lead Paragraphs.

Guided Discussions: At The Beginning Of The Class The Students Were Usually Informed To Scan The Stories Of Each Day And Then The Researcher Picked Out A Set Of Words Which Were Not In Their Active Vocabulary And Asked Them To Come Up With Synonyms From The Reading Context. The Students Were Informed Of The Topics To Be Discussed And The Lesson Objective, Thereby Enabling Them To Make Adequate Preparation To Make The Discussion Lively And Effective. In Other Words, A Guided Discussion Has To Be Planned Well.

During The Discussion, The Teacher Has To Be Vigilant So That No Misleading Idea Is Presented By A Pupil, Because Of His/Her Ignorance: Perhaps He Or She Might Have Misunderstood What Was Read From The Newspaper.

The Researcher Treated Everyone In The Class Impartially And Gave Appropriate Guiding Comments And Encouraged Questions From The Participants. After All, Learning Comes Mostly From Questions And Answers In A Guided Discussion. We Teachers Can Initiate The Session By Posing More Open Questions In Order To Promote Greater Critical Thinking.

If A Pupil Makes A Mistake, The Teacher Should Correct Him. There Should Be No Sarcasm In The Teacher's Words, Since It Would Dissuade Pupils From Active Participation. The Teacher Can Ask A Student To Explain A Point In Detail, For Which He Has To Ensure That The Discussion Is In The Right Track, And Bring It Back If It Goes Astray. However, The Teacher's Intervention Should Be The Minimum Required And The Discussion Should Not Ramble For Long.

The Teacher Needs To Answer A Question Only If No Student In The Group Can Do It. He Should Keep A Note That Contains All The Points That Should Emerge From The Discussion, And Supplement It Appropriately. For Each Sub-Topic, The Teacher May Pose A Leading Question. The Objectives Of The Lesson So Taught Should Be Clear, And Should Be Achieved By The End Of The Discussion. There Has To Be A Conclusion That Highlights All The Essential Points. The Pupils Should Prepare Notes Based On The Discussion.

Research Methodologies: Primarily, The Research Aimed And Expected To Measure The Outcome Of Language Awareness With A Particular Emphasis On Students Being Able To Assimilate And Use Targeted Vocabulary, In Order To Ease Their Understanding In Reading The Bangkok Post Which Was Used As The Classroom Research As Part Of The Requirement Of The Course En4240 Reading In English Newspapers. The Research Then Went On To Synthesize The Vocabulary Awareness Of The Students And Further Analyse And Examine The Impact Which Was Made By The Newspaper On The Student Through The Use Of Journalistic Vocabulary And Their Retention For Further Use.

Is It Fact Or Opinion?: At The Beginning Of The Semester The Students Were First Told To Understand The Basic Differences Between Fact And Opinion In A Newspaper And Then Told To Look For Unusual Words In The Various Sections Of The Bangkok Post Newspaper. The Next Was In Asking Them To List Ten Sentences Which Will Describe Bangkok, The City Where They Live With Facts, Of 10

Aspects.

Then, They Were Told To Come Up With Ten Sentences On Bangkok Which Contained Their Opinion; Reading The News Paper Was The Next Step. News Reports From The Main Section Everyday Was The Major Focus For "Hard News", Which Had The Primary Objective To Inform And The Students Were Asked To Lend Extra Focus To Both The Headlines And The Lead Paragraphs.

While They Had To Also Observer Those Stories Which Appeared As Daily Editorials And Commentaries For The "Sway" Kind Of Writing, Classified As "Soft News"; In Addition The Class Also Had Them Read Letters From Readers In The Post Bag Section Which Also Had The Opinions Of Readers To Express Their Ideas From The Stories Which Appeared In The Paper.

Even Though "Feature Stories" Did Not Form A Regular Part Of The Class Because Of Time Constraints, Students Were Given The Basic Objectives Of Those Narrative Style Stories And Asked To Read A Few Of Them At Their Convenience And Observe The Language Style To Compare It With Those Of Hard News.

The Key Highlights Of The Course Were Observations Made From The Headlines Used By English Language Dailies With A Particular Emphasis On The Bangkok Post Which Was Used As A Resource Throughout The Semester; Some Of Those Headlines With Unusual Vocabulary Or Those Which Might Mean A Rather Easier Meaning In The Normal Course Of The Language Are Highlighted As Follows:

Travelers Cancel Jal Flights Amid Japan-China Row Japan Airlines Said Wednesday More Than 1,000 People Had Cancelled Reservations For Flights Between Japan And China Amid A Row Over Tokyo's Detention Of A Chinese Trawler Captain In Disputed Waters.

Man Bashed After Row Over Barking Dog A Barking Dog Sparked A Fight Between Two Neighbours In Sydney's Northwest, Leaving A 23-Year-Old Man In Hospital With Serious Head Injuries.

Putin Reiterates Claim To Disputed Islands Japan Deadlock Russian President Dmitry Medvedev On Wednesday Reiterated His Country's Claim To The Disputed Kuril Islands Group, Which Is Also Claimed By Japan.

Clash Feared In Zoning Stalemate Rayong Authorities Have Placed 200 Security Personnel On Standby In Case Clashes Break Out Today Between Two Opposing Groups In The Map Ta Phut Industrial Zoning Controversy.

Israel Stalls Peace Talks As Palestinians Fume Palestinian Leaders Have Been Left Fuming Over Israel's Attempts To Stall Peace Talks Between The

Warring Countries

Pakistani Minister Axed For Criticizing Military, Supreme Court Pakistan's Minister For Defence Production [Abdul Qayyum Jatoi](#) Was Shown The Door On Sunday Following His Outburst Against The Armed Forces And The Supreme Court Chief Justice A Day Earlier.

Is Modern Life A Bar To Marriage? New Labour Leader Ed Miliband Has Said He Intends To Marry Partner Justine Thornton But That Political Events Have Prevented Them Setting A Date. So, Does Modern Life Get In The Way Of Marriage?

Jpmorgan Eyes Growth In Asia One Of The Hottest Areas Of Competition Is Asia. Jpmorgan Is Moving Fairly Aggressively To Tap The Opportunity. The Firm Plans To Invest One Third Of Its Intended \$100 Million Global Investment In Asia, "With As Many As 300 Bankers Dedicated To Its Global Corporate Bank," Notes *Finance Asia*.

Pakistan, Afghanistan Ink Historic Power Transit Fee Accord Pakistan And [Afghanistan](#) Have Signed An Agreement On Electricity Transit Fees, A Deal That Will Facilitate Transmission Of Cheaper Electricity From Central Asia To The South Asian Country.

Conclusions: While It Was Not Easy For The "Students To Learn To Unlearn" Initially, They Got Over It In A Few Months' Time And By The End Of The Semester Most Of These Words Had Become Commonplace Vocabulary For Them, So Much That They Started To Use Them In Their Daily Communications. A Regular Habit Of Reading An English Newspaper Does Make An Impact On The Learning Skills As Measured By Their Outcome Through The Use Of Both Cloze Tests And Vocabulary Awareness Tests In The Classroom As Well As Their University Exams; Surprisingly At Least Two Hundred New Words Were Found To Have Been Added To Their Active Usage Vocabulary List, From A Total Of Around One Thousand Words, Which Were Identified, Used And Tested. In More Than Forty Percent Of The Cases, The Students Were Found To Have A Hang Of Over 75% Of The Words Used In Their Vocabulary As It Was Used By Them In Their Normal Course Of Reading, Writing And Speaking, Much To The Delight Of The Researcher.

This Is The Duty Of A Teacher, An Ideal Where You Do Your Duty Without Fear Or Favour And Without Expecting Any Reward. But You Should Seek Returns In The Form Of The Student's Upliftment And In Their Performance And Career Advancement Alone You Derive Joy. The Teaching Profession Demands Commitment Among Those Who Decide To Become Teachers Since This Is Not A Profession To Be Chosen By Accident Or Because It Gives Them A Livelihood, It Is Possible To Inculcate A Change In A Short

Period Of One Semester Itself, If An Earnest Attempt Is Made.

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