

Beyond Headlines: News App For Language Enrichment

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Abstract

Vocabulary enhancement is a gradual process. It takes time and unwavering effort. It is a teacher's prime duty to assist those students in their learning process with some innovative resources that help them expedite the process. Choosing newspapers that cover different subjects and varying writing styles will expose the student to a broader range of vocabulary. By incorporating certain novel strategies into one's newspaper reading routine, a student can expand his vocabulary and become a more effective communicator. The proposed strategy will also help the teacher to a great extent to make the classroom learning experience an interesting one since all the learning materials are reports on real life incidents which any student or learner can easily connect himself with.

Keywords: Newspaper, Reading, News App for English, Enhancement of vocabulary, Vocabulary, Spelling, Pronunciation

Introduction

English teachers are hunting for handy resources that can be used in the classroom. One of the easiest available tools is a mobile phone or a laptop with internet connectivity. This article elaborates using one of the leading news apps – ‘Google News’ to improve the learners’ vocabulary using different news articles on¹ the same news for improving English vocabulary, and pronunciation. Any learner of English can use this app and get maximum benefit, thanks to the user-friendly layout of the Google News App page. With various tabs such as ‘Latest’, ‘India’, ‘World’, ‘Business’, ‘Technology’, ‘Entertainment’, ‘Sports’, ‘Science’ and ‘Health’, and the most interesting ‘Full Coverage of this story’, one can dive deep into an ocean of information reported through some of the most prominent news article writers and editors who through their experience have mastered the art of writing in English. They craft clear and concise headlines that capture the essence of the story. It is these headlines which make a wonderful reservoir of teaching learning material. Let's see how.

Methodology

The teacher can either choose a news item or click a word of his/ her choice in the search bar, and all the headlines that contain the particular word is right before your eyes thanks to search engine technology. Just with a single click, the teacher can freeze the whole teaching learning

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material on screen. . By opening ‘Full Coverage of this Story’ tab, the teacher gets material to be discussed in the class. The presentation and discussion can further be improved by showing visuals posted along with the text.

Activity 1:

Focus: Developing Vocabulary and Pronunciation

Level: Intermediate

Time: 60 minutes

Class Strength: 10 to 30 students

Objectives: To improve range of vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation

Materials: Audio-visual system, teacher’s laptop/mobile, handouts of headlines of news articles from various news websites accessed through Google News link.

Preparation (5 minutes)

Teacher elicits responses to the following:

- a. What do you know about the phenomenon – ‘melting glaciers’?
- b. How does it affect the environment?
- c. Is there any solution?

Main Activity (30-40 minutes)

Procedure:

1. The teacher provides handouts of headlines of different news articles –at least five – about one particular news from different news websites accessed through ‘Full Coverage of this story’ link in Google News. Here, articles on recent floods in Pakistan worsened by melting of Himalayan Glaciers. The teacher may also present them on screen if it is a smart classroom.
2. The teacher discusses natural disasters and floods in general and Pakistan floods in particular with the learners, and they read the news headlines subsequently from handouts. The teacher encourages students to mark different key words related to the particular phenomenon and its effects. Students may be asked to read repeatedly and scan for key expressions and understand them in context.
3. Learners underline the different words, phrases and chunks used to describe the phenomenon and its effects.

a. Gathering words:

Given below are certain headlines accessed through the app:

‘Why should melting Himalayas scare you? Look at Pakistan’(India Today) ,Here’s how Himalayan glacial melts worsened Pakistan deluge.(Times Now) , Rapid glacial melt puts India, Pakistan at high flash flood risk.(Hindustan Times), Pakistan’s melting glaciers are ‘erupting’ and worsening floods(CNN)

The teacher helps the students understand the meaning of different words and phrases either by explaining or by giving synonyms.

b. Practicing Pronunciation: Teacher reads the headlines aloud so that the students follow and try to emulate the teacher. This exercise helps the students learn the correct pronunciation

c. Learning the right spelling: The teacher reads the headlines again and asks the students to write the headlines. This exercise helps the students learn the correct spelling.

4. Learners end up with a set of phrases that can be used in day to day conversation and writing.

Follow-On Activity (15 minutes)

Topics on natural disasters which give scope to use acquired phrases and chunks can be given to students to promote practice and usage.

- (a) Can you recall any natural disaster you have watched on TV?
- (b) How did you feel while watching those frightening visuals?
- (c) How can the impact of disasters be mitigated?
- (d) What are emergency preparedness basics?
- (e) Why is resilience so important?

Activity 2:

Focus: Collocation.

Level: Intermediate

Time: 60 minutes

Class Strength: 10 to 30 students

Objectives: To improve range of vocabulary with particular focus on collocation.

Materials: Audio-visual system, teacher's mobile, handouts of headlines of news articles from various news websites accessed through Google News link (details given below)

Preparation (5 minutes)

Teacher elicits responses to the following questions underling the concept of collocation.

1. What do we call food that can be prepared in a short period-Fast food or quick food?
2. How do we call a train that moves fast-fast train or quick train?
3. Do you start a new account or open a new account?

To start with a formal explanation of collocation is given with simple examples such as fast food, to save time, to open an account etc., The teacher describes through various examples that a collocation is 'a word or phrase that is often used with another word or phrase, in a way that sounds correct to people who have spoken the language all their lives,....'

(Source:<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/collocation>) The teacher also explains how other combinations sound unnatural.

Main Activity (30-40 minutes)

Procedure

1. The teacher introduces the word ‘issue’ as a verb to the class with its meaning and pronunciation.

-to produce or provide something official:

-The office will be issuing permits on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

-The school issued a statement about its plans to the press.

2. The teacher provides handouts of headlines of different news articles –at least five - from different news websites accessed through ‘Full Coverage of this story’ link in Google News. Article headlines from various newspapers can also be flashed on the screen. The teacher reads aloud the headlines, and draws the focus of students towards words often used in combination with issue.

“IMD issues orange alert for Uttar Pradesh, Bihar.”

“Biden issues an executive order restricting U.S. investments in Chinese technology.”

“Mental Health: Delhi High Court Issues Directions To Authorities For Protecting 'Mental Integrity, Soundness Of Mind' Of Prisoners.”

“NMC issues advisory for students looking for admissions in foreign medical universities Telangana.”

“Odisha issues guidelines for rescue, release of snakes; says only certified handlers allowed to carry out operation.”

3. The teacher discusses the usage of the word ‘issue’ with different words with the learners, subsequently they read the news headlines from handouts or from the screen. The teacher encourages students to write their own sentences

a. Gathering words: The teacher helps the students understand the meaning of different words used with the word ‘issue’ .Students also come to know that an alert, an executive order, **an advisory, a notice**, a direction, **sanctions** and guidelines are always ‘issued’.

b. Practicing Pronunciation: Teacher reads the headlines aloud so that the students follow and try to emulate the teacher. This exercise helps the students learn the correct pronunciation

c. Learning the right spelling: The teacher reads the headlines again and asks the students to write the headlines. This exercise helps the students learn the correct spelling.

4. Learners end up with a set of words that can be used in day-to-day conversation and writing.

Follow-On Activity (15 minutes)

Teacher asks the students to write their own sentences using the word ‘issue’ as a verb.

Activity 3

In English, most words belong to more than one word-class. There are many words in the English language that are both nouns and verbs. The teacher can use the same word ‘Issue’ to explain the usage of the word as a noun and verb.

Focus: Differentiating the usage of a word as noun and verb

Level: Intermediate

Time: 60 minutes

Class Strength: 10 to 30 students

Objectives: To improve range of vocabulary with particular reference to words that can be used as nouns and verbs.

Materials: Audio-visual system, teacher's mobile, handouts of headlines of news articles from various news websites accessed through Google News link

Preparation (5 minutes)

The teacher recalls along with the class how the word 'issue' was used as a verb in newspaper headlines. The teacher explains the grammar concept to the class by showing concrete things for nouns and later elicits answers as to how they are used as verbs.

Main Activity (30-40 minutes)

Procedure:

Main Activity (30-40 minutes)

1. The teacher shows pictures of commonplace examples such as a lock, a watch, etc. Then the teacher explains through slides or pictures how the same words are used to refer any action.
2. And subsequently, a table containing headlines wherein the word 'Issue' is used as a noun and a verb is flashed on the screen. This juxtaposition table helps in clear understanding of the grammar concept. Headlines used for collocation can be used for explaining the usage the word 'Issue' as a verb. And for noun the following headlines are used.

“OnePlus India announces lifetime warranty for its smartphones affected by green screen issue”

“Digital trade issue continues to be a major cause for concern for India.”

“Rohit admits No. 4 has been an issue for India 'for long time' in ODIs. India captain "will see" how Iyer and Rahul will perform on returning from injuries”

“Chennai Apartment Issue: Fear Grips Residents as Ceilings Crumble in Jains Westminster Apartments”

3. The teacher can also type a particular word and ask the students to find out whether the particular word in the headline is used as a verb or noun. For example, a teacher types the word 'address', he/ she gets the following headlines:

“Made Payment To Wrong UPI Address? Here's How To Reverse It”

“16-yr-old Ludhiana teen to deliver keynote address at edtech UK”

“Baiyappanahalli metro station gets additional escalator to address increasing passenger flow”

Follow-On Activity (15 minutes)

Teacher asks the students to write their own sentences using the word 'issue' as a verb and a noun.

b. Practicing Pronunciation: Teacher reads the headlines aloud so that the students follow and try to emulate the teacher. This exercise helps the students learn the correct pronunciation

c. Learning the right spelling: The teacher reads the headlines again and asks the students to write the headlines. This exercise helps the students learn the correct spelling.

4. Learners end up with a set of words that can be used in day-to-day conversation and writing.

Evaluation and Perceived Outcomes of the activity:

1. New words and chunks get registered in memory very easily when learnt in context.

2. Each news portal describes the details its own way without compromising factual accuracy, and hence students find it very interesting when reading the same news in different styles and in different words. This variety gives the teacher a lot of room to introduce and discuss a lot of new words or chunks along with proper pronunciation and spelling. These news articles serve as a Thesaurus which are comparatively plainer.
3. Learning collocations is important since they make one's language sound natural. Moreover, it adds a touch of professionalism when one speaks and writes, and unusual collocations projects the speaker or writer in a bad light. Newspaper headlines are an interesting source for learning collocations since there is huge variety.

Conclusion

Improving the vocabulary of vernacular medium students is a gradual process, and so a teacher needs to be patient and resourceful. The key is consistent effort and practice. Reading newspapers regularly and actively engaging with the content can significantly expand students' vocabulary over time. Students complain of boredom and monotony when asked to do grammar or vocabulary exercises, and in such situations this strategy of teaching and learning through real life contexts and examples is a safe bet. Given the easy access to this popular news app and the zero-cost involved, this approach will be an economical option with almost zero subscription.

Future Scope

Writing in English requires a strong command of vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar to effectively communicate information. Hence, all these headlines and news articles can be used in the classroom to address issues in the following areas: Vocabulary, Choice of Active and Passive forms, Diverse vocabulary (to avoid repetition), Redundancy, Straight forward sentence structures (for the sake of readability), Subject verb Concord, Parallel Structures, Transition Words, Punctuation, Tense Consistency, Proper Noun Capitalization, Apostrophes, Run-On Sentences and Fragments .It is up to the teacher to find more.

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