

Journalism and its Impact on enhancing LSRW Skills for English Language Learners

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ABSTRACT

In the paper, I have analyzed the status of English Newspapers between 1959 and 2009 that are of national importance. Reportage in English as an employable skill during the first decades post Independent India was only exclusive to the ones who had access to university education or to the ones who went abroad and returned home armed with degrees. But, since the beginning of the 21st century, it has been considered as the dawn of Information Age in India. And along with universalization of education and vast increase in the circulation of English Newspapers, current generation of learners in schools, colleges and researchers have found scope in English as a language as strong medium of communication and as a tool for learning for the upcoming new generation of learners as well. English Language learners till today find journalism as a medium to not just read or hear from it but also contribute toward it.

Keywords: English, Language, Journalism, Learner, Information.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of language in any journalistic medium is not only to relay information as it is but also to inform with style and distinction. English, which was primarily looked at, as the language of the westerners did not confine itself to a boundary of the colonial past. But, spread around in a geometrical fashion with an objective of setting benchmarks that in turn earned reputation when spoken or written.

Since the dawn of Information Age, incidents and circumstances have been relayed immediately as they happen. In terms of information dissemination, the presence of emails, mobile phones, spy cameras and satellite technology have all added new colors to the already existent palate of journalism. And for a country that has evolved with numerous languages, the language of English served as a link language to connect all masses through out the country.

With the advent and exit of the British, the English language came along with it and never ceased since then. Journalists have to carry out a detailed in-depth of analysis almost on any given topic and often cannot be basing on their interest and expertise. They are spread through out the world. Journalists often work under twin-objective parameters. They need to work on fact-finding missions coupled with verification before they could be officially reported.

During the era of Post Independent India, Journalists needed to cover an extensive plethora of events ranging from celebrations to assassinations, celibacy to democracy and speeches to Dharnas in real-time. The use of English language as a tool in reportage to spread news covering all aspects was threadbare for a young and growing democracy like ours.

ENHANCING READING AND WRITING SKILLS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

To begin in a befitting scenario, Rajesh Chavan in one of his letters written to Kushwanth Singh, which appeared in Tehelka in 2001, asked thus

“Is the focus on the English language and consequently, all things western, taking us away from our roots”?

To which, Singh replied thus:

“I don’t think the English language is anymore Indian. It is very much part of the Indian linguistic scenario. It has been recognized by the Constitution. It is the only link language we have in India. Any north Indian going down South or any southerner coming North, there is no other language except English in which he can communicate.

We have had the best writers in the language; like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh and many others. They are not only writing well but also are writing about India and telling the world, and they can be compared with the best writers of the language. I think it is best to remember Shri Rajagopalachari, who described English as the greatest gift that goddess Saraswati had given to India”.

STATUS OF THE CIRCULATION OF INDIAN ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS IN 1959

There was an unfortunate turn of events in the first few decades of post-independence era. The stark reality unfolded to an indigestible fact that many of Indians did not realize that the British had left India and that she was no longer colonized. The extensive geographical spread of India was unimaginable even after about the 600 odd princely states were united to form one single dominion as a single nation.

Arthur Bonner, in his article “India’s Masses The Public that cant be reached” wrote on The Atlantic, in October 1959 thus,
“The daily circulation of newspapers in India, with a population of 400 million, is only 3.1 million, and one-third of these papers are in English. The dozen or so English-language papers are extremely important, since 99 per cent of the people are ruled by the 1 per cent who speak English”

At the time of Independence and the immediate decades that followed, there were four major cities: Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. And these cities had the opportunity to have either radio facility or community radio systems. But the rest of the country in majority had no access to information. Language was a further barrier for the people of India to communicate with each other in one single voice. The makers of our Constitution realized that the language of English is vital to connect all regions of the country and hence made it as one of the official languages of India.

REPORTING ON INDIAN ECONOMY IN 1991

The famous phrase “*Nobody can grab a free lunch in today’s world*” had its origins way back in 1991 when the India’s financial system had to be restructured. The current account deficit (CAD) at that time ranged between 6 and 10 billion US dollars. Often Journalists covering news on finance and economy tend to report in simple English words in order to ensure that the common mass understand the issues involved in a lighter tone.

India had to open its markets to the outer world to attract investments in India. And until that time we followed an economy based on socialistic principles. And in the year 1991, we moved to a capitalist economy and thereby opening doors to other countries to invest in India and vice-versa. ‘Market reforms’ were the key words that dominated the news coverage in the last years of the 20th century.

David Housego’s interview with Dr. Manmohan Singh, who was the Finance Minister at the time, added fresh impetus on finance and market reforms. In an interview titled “India’s Financial Architect” which appeared in Financial Times in September 2 1991, Dr. Singh said, “*We can’t assume that the market will take care of our problems. They are millions outside the market who live on the edge of subsistence. They cannot be dealt with through the market mechanism”.*

In the above interview, one could decipher the mind of the interviewee. The writer realizes that the words spoken by Dr. Singh were carefully chosen. To further make things easier for the reader to understand the context behind Dr. Singh’s words of choice, the writer implores on it and comes out with the views of his own.

To set things straight, Housego argued, “*His other problem is that he is part of a government that is itself a minority administration and is riddled with dissension. It is to offset these factors and to provide a guarantee of the continuity of reform that he is keen that India should seek a further loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under its Extended Fund Facility, which could provide India with \$5 Billion to \$7 Billion over three years”.*

The reality that surrounded Mr. Singh's predicament is that he was part of the government that was in minority and that market reforms he envisioned could always be tested at the floor of the parliament house before becoming a reality by itself. The excerpts from the article clearly portray that the market reforms are bound by political decisions and the will power that is inextricably attached to it.

ENHANCING LSRW SKILLS THROUGH INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM AND VICE VERSA

Investigative Journalism in theory and reality does not confide to closed spaces in the gamut of Journalistic studies. Instead, it remarkably reflects major themes opened to its surrounding. Journalism dealing with core issues has been witnessing tectonic shifts due to changing times in the fast moving world amidst the evolving modern marvels of science.

Investigative Journalism involves detailed analysis of inextricable relationships between the causes and effects of human experiences. There is no prescribed protocol or predetermined frame of mind for a comprehensive work of investigative journalism to be established. It requires courage and complete dedication to be part of it and survive efficiently. Because, journalists often report from the harshest conditions possible known to mankind and sometimes stay over for years in unknown terrains to collate information and thereby get their works published.

One such incident that assumes significance is the Mumbai Terror Attack in 2008, wherein; about 166 innocent people lost their lives. Terrorism in the 21st century is an international industry. And every type of weapon they imagine is available in the black market of the third world.

Adrian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clark were one of the key investigative journalists who covered the incident and published a book titled "The Siege: The Attack on the Taj". They depicted a scene about Will and Kelly the couple who stayed in the Hotel who shut themselves behind closed doors when the siege was being undertaken.

Adrian and Cathy argued, "*Explosions rolled down the corridor like a massed band. Glass splintered somewhere on the third floor and wood snapped. It sounded as if a boot had been planted through a partition wall and was now being twisted and flexed*".

Investigative Journalists are by far armed with the full extent of LSRW skills.

1. **Listening:** They have to interview dozens or hundreds of people depending on the circumstances.
2. **Speaking:** Ability to gather information from the people depends on the reporter's speaking and convincing capabilities.
3. **Reading:** Reports drawn from local sources (of the place) is vital for information to be fool-proofed.
4. **Writing:** Ability to present facts coupled with detailed reporting.

SCENARIO OF CIRCULATION OF INDIAN ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS IN 2009

According to the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) of the first quarter in 2010, the total number of English Dailies that are being circulated and read in India stands at eight million. But there are some important factors to be considered with reference to the growth of English Newspapers in India.

Since the dawn of Information Age between the years 2000 and 2008, the rise and growth in percentage of English newspaper readers in English has been startling. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Report published in June 2010, between the years 2008 and 2009, the percentage of growth in the rise of circulation of newspapers in India stood at a staggering growth of 45% as against 29% in China and 34% in South Africa.

These instances also gain weightage with the following two narratives. One narrative is that the readership has been remarkably increasing through subscriptions. And the other, though the print media is being threatened by the influence of digital media, Print media does not confine itself to traditional choices bound by boundaries but is ever evolving with new illustration designs and earmarks huge potential for advertising spaces which also fuel our economy.

CONCLUSION

The paper clearly discusses about enhancing LSRW skills through Select English Reportage for English Learners and also depicts major events that occurred and were covered in articles and radio dispatches between

1959 and 2009. English Reportage as a medium available as a scope for employment is huge and rewarding. To gather the required LSRW skills, one could utilize the journalistic medium itself either through print media or the impact of television that dominates most of the first years in the 21st century.

English language learners tend to proceed in a learning cycle with respect to learning through print or mass media. First, they read or hear from a specified source and scan for words for improving one's vocabulary. Second, the meaning of the scanned words are drawn from dictionaries and then recorded for learning purposes.

Mass Media however immensely popular it has become, it requires men and women to be on the ground to report. And for news and information to be reported effectively, it is important for the journalists to verify it before tabling it. And the Language of English as a medium for reportage forms the epicenter of journalism and becomes one of the focal points for many English language learners not just in India, but the world over as well.

And for India to strive and excel in the world of global competence, arming English Language's LSRW for English Language Learners is vital to that effect at the least for about another fifty years to come. Journalism as a medium not only serves to disseminate information to the common mass but also provides a platform for enhancing communication skills to language learners.

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