



# **USING NEWSPAPERS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**ANDREW AK KUNEK**  
**4397**

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Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

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It is hereby confirmed that the student has done all the necessary amendments of the projects for acceptance.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Supervisor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Supervisor)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
1.0	Introduction 1
1.1	The current Position of English in the Malaysian Education System 1
1.2	History of Newspapers in Education 3
1.3	History of Newspapers in Education in Malaysia 5
1.4	General Advantages of using Newspapers in the Language Classrooms 6
1.5	Statement of Problem 10
1.6	Research Objectives 12
1.7	The Research Specific Objectives 12
1.8	The Research Questions 12
1.9	The Significance of the Study 13
1.10	Definition of Terms 13
1.10.1	Newspapers 13
1.10.2	Newspapers in Education (NIE) 13
1.11	Summary 14
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	<b>REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</b>
2.0	Introduction 15
2.1	Advantages of Employing Newspapers in Education 15
2.2	Sample Activities employ in Using Newspapers in the four Language Skills 23
2.2.1	Using Newspapers in Reading Lessons 23
2.2.2	Using Newspapers in Listening and Speaking Lessons 26
2.2.3	Using Newspapers in Writing Lessons 29
2.3	The Limitations of using Newspapers in Language Classrooms 31

2.4	Conclusion	33
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### **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.0	Introduction	34
3.1	Samples and Sampling Procedures of the Study	34
3.2	Data Collection Procedures	35
3.3	Data Collection Instruments	36
3.3.1	Semi-structured Interview	36
3.3.2	Collection of Relevant Materials	37
3.3.3	Classroom Observation	37
3.4	Data Collection Schedule	38
3.5	Data Analysis Procedures	39

### **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

4.0	Introduction	40
4.1	The Respondents	40
4.2	The Respondents' Teaching Experience	40
4.3	The Distribution of Respondents employing and not employing Newspapers in ESL classrooms	41
4.4	Data Analysis	42
4.4.1	The Reasons for using Newspapers in English Language Classrooms	42
4.4.2	The Benefits of using Newspapers in Teaching English Language	45
4.4.3	The Benefits of using Newspapers in English Language classrooms to Students	48
4.4.4	The Newspapers used by Teachers in English Language classrooms.	50
4.4.5	The Sources of Newspapers used by the Respondents in their English Language classrooms	51
4.4.6	Frequency of using Newspapers in English Language classrooms by the Respondents	52
4.4.7	Using Newspapers to integrate the Four Language Skills in English Language classrooms	52
4.4.8	The Activities in using Newspapers in English Language lessons	54
4.5	Reasons for abstaining from the use of Newspapers in English Language classrooms	58
4.6	Summary	60

### **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.0	Introduction	61
5.1	Summary of the Findings	61
5.1.1	Reasons for employing Newspapers in English Language classrooms	63
5.1.2	Benefits of using Newspapers in English Language Classrooms to English Teachers	63
5.1.3	Benefits of using Newspapers to Students in English Language Classrooms	63
5.1.4	The Newspapers employed by English Language Teachers in English Language Lessons	64
5.1.5	The Source of Newspapers for English Language Classrooms	64
5.1.6	The Frequency of using Newspapers in English Language Classrooms	65
5.1.7	Using Newspapers to integrate the Four Language Skills in English Language Classrooms	65
5.1.8	Activities in using Newspapers in English Language Classrooms	65
5.1.9	Abstaining from using Newspapers in English Language Classrooms	66
5.2	Suggestions and Recommendations	66
5.2.1	Suggestions to Education Planning and Research Division	67
5.2.2	Suggestions to the School Principals	67
5.2.3	Suggestions to the Head of English Panel in Schools	67
5.2.4	Suggestions to English Language Teachers	68
5.3	Limitations of the Study	68
5.4	Recommendation for future research	69
5.5	Conclusion	70
<b>REFERENCES</b>		71
<b>APPENDICES</b>		

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Tables</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.1	Language Skills related to articles in newspapers	8
1.2	Features and Columns of The New Straits Times and their summaries.	9
3.1	Data Collection Schedule	38
4.1	Respondents' Teaching Experience	41
4.2	The Distribution of Respondents employing and not employing Newspapers in ESL Classrooms	41
4.3	The Newspapers used by the Respondents in English Language classrooms.	50
4.4	Activities in using Newspapers in English Language Lessons	54
4.5	Respondents abstained themselves from using Newspapers in English Language classrooms	58

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EPRD	Education Planning and Research Division
NIE	Newspapers in Education
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
R	Respondents
N	Number of responses form the respondents
PMR	Penilaian Menengah Rendah

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## Abstract

### Using Newspapers in English Language Classrooms in Rural Secondary Schools

Andrew ak Kunek

This study attempted to investigate the reasons for employing and not employing newspapers in English language classrooms in Rural Secondary Schools. This study also attempted to find the methodologies of using newspapers in English language classrooms by English Language teachers. The study involved 30 English Language teachers from four selected rural secondary schools in Serian District.

Three instruments were used for the purpose of data collection: the semi-structured interview, the collection of relevant documents and the classroom observation. A semi-structured interview was conducted prior to the classroom observation and the collection of relevant documents. For classroom observation, emphasis was given on the methodologies of using newspapers in the English language classrooms. The data collected were triangulated to establish validity and to find out irregularities.

The findings of the study identified reasons for employing, not employing newspapers in English language classrooms. The findings of the study also discover a few methodologies in using newspapers in English language classrooms. The findings seem to suggest that more seminars and workshops to be held to expose teachers to NIE activities because they benefits both teachers and students.

## *Abstrak*

### *Menggunakan Suratkhobar di dalam Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris di Sekolah-Sekolah Menengah Luar Bandar.*

*Andrew ak Kunek*

*Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti sebab-sebab mengguna dan tidak mengguna suratkhobar di dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris di sekolah-sekolah menengah luar bandar. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti kaedah-kaedah menggunakan suratkhobar dalam pengajaran-dan pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris oleh guru-guru disekolah-sekolah luar bandar. Kajian ini melibatkan 30 orang guru bahasa Inggeris dari empat buah sekolah menengah di daerah Serian.*

*Tiga alat kajian diggunakan untuk rtujuan menggumpul maklumat iaitu; temuduga struktur-separuh, pengumpul dokumen yang relevan dengan kajian dan pemerhatian bilik darjah. Temuduga struktur-separuh dijalankan sebelum pemerhatian di dalam bilik darjah dilakukan dan penekanan diberi kepada kaedah-kaedah penggunaan suratkhobar. Maklumat-maklumat yang dikumpul 'disegitigakan' untuk memastikan kesahan dan kehadiran sebarang ketidaksekataan.*

*Dapatan kajian mengenalpasti sebab-sebab mengguna dan tidak mengguna suratkhobar di dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris di sekolah-sekolah menengah luar bandar. Di samping itu dapatan kajian juga mengenalpasti kaedah-kaedah penggunaan suratkhobar oleh guru-guru di sekolah menengah luar bandar. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan keperluan-keperluan mengadakan seminar-seminar dan bengkel-bengkel suratkhobar di dalam bilik darjah untuk mendedahkan aktiviti-aktivitinya kepada guru-guru kerana ia memberi faedah kepada guru-guru dan pelajar-pelajar.*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 An Overview**

This chapter discusses the current position of English language and the history of Newspapers in Education, the development of Newspapers in Education and its spread in rural secondary Schools in the Malaysian context. The statement of problem, the research objectives, the research questions, the research specific objectives and the key terms of this study will also be elaborated.

#### **1.1 The Current Position of English Language in the Malaysian Education System**

The Razak's Report of 1956 became the cornerstone of the Malaysian Educational policy whereby Bahasa Malaysia became a compulsory subject. Despite the government decision to promote Bahasa Malaysia, English language still plays important role in the Malaysian society. English language is taught in both primary and secondary schools in Malaysia and has a position that of a second language. It is a means of communication in certain daily activities and job situations. It is an important language enabling Malaysia to engage meaningfully in local and international trade and commerce. It also provides an additional access to academic, professional, and recreational materials.(Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris, Tingkatan IV,1980).

The standard of English language in Malaysia has deteriorated. This can be seen through the poor results in the national examinations such as Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) and Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM). In 1991, the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr.

Mahathir as cited in Pillay (1998) expressed his concern regarding the poor results in the national English language examinations. Apart from the problem of mastering the proficiency of English language by students, there are other factors affecting the students' performance in these examinations. These factors include the general knowledge that the students possess and their mastery of the thinking skills. Some of the questions in the comprehension section in these examinations are developed based on current issues from newspapers. Thus, if the students are not exposed to these events they may not be able to answer these questions. Other questions in this section involve higher level of thinking such as predicting outcomes and making inferences. Teachers can use newspapers as source of articles such as the text, pictures, advertisements, schedules and opinions for teaching these skills. Rhoades and Rhoades (1985), as cited in Aiex (1988), mentioned that teachers can use newspapers to teach comprehension, critical thinking skills and to help students to develop sensitivity and awareness of the self, community, the nation and the world.

As Cited in Pillay (1998), the falling standard of English in Malaysia worries the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir because the Malaysians still shares ideas from the West which are largely in written English. She may lose her economic competitiveness and face difficulties to progress in industrial and technical fields because the workforce is not competent in English. The demand of the Malaysian Education Philosophy will not be met if the standard of English continuously deteriorates. Thus, one of the ways to improve their proficiency in English is to expose them to reading English newspapers as early as possible. One of the ways is through newspapers in English language classrooms.

## 1.2 History of Newspapers in Education

Newspapers have a long history of being regarded as a useful educational tool and their usage in classroom setting dated back further than most expect. Quoted by Cowen 1, as cited in Thompson (No Date);

“Much has been said and written on the utility of newspapers, but one principal advantage which might be derived from these publication has been neglected, we mean that of reading them in schools and by the children in families.... Newspapers are plenty and cheap- the cheapest book that can be bought, and the more you buy, the better for your children, because every part furnishes some new and valuable information!”

(Thompson, No Date)

The above quotation was written in an article in the Eastern Herald, June 8, 1795 in the State of Massachusetts. This exemplifying the fact that newspapers have long being used as instructional tool.

Thompson (No Date) further mentioned that the actual recorded of the uses of newspapers in the classroom dated back to the 1890s and in 1911. In 1929, Richard S. Kimball as cited in Thompson (No Date) published a book entitled Current Events Instruction, which was widely accepted by educators of the time because it contained suggestions for incorporating current events in the classroom. In 1939, Luvella and Alfred Reschke, also cited in Thompson (No Date) wrote “The Newspapers in the Classroom”. This book contained specific lesson plans incorporating newspapers as instructional and enrichment tools. The ideas behind this book stemmed from a contest called “How to Use Newspapers in the Classroom,” in the Milwaukee Journal. Thus, successful teaching methods contributed by teachers made up a major part of the book and this was popular among teachers.

Besides that, there are many events throughout the twentieth century that also helped to develop the significant usage of newspapers in the classrooms. Thompson (No Date) mentioned that the outbreak of the World War II lead to a greater number of students to read newspapers that contributed to the use of newspapers as instructional tools.

In the United States, Newspapers in Education or commonly known as NIE began in New York in the 1930s when Social Studies teachers in New York City Schools asked the newspaper press to arrange for bundles to be delivered to schools to in order to use them in current event activities (Tribune-Review, 2001). Soon, the concept of Newspapers in Education, which was still called Newspapers in Classroom spread rapidly across the country. Then, in the late 1970s, the name was changed to Newspapers in Education. This was because newspapers were clearly beneficial in educational setting. Prior to that, articles in newspapers were already used in education since 1720s when the first English-language newspaper in London, England was published (Tribune Review, 2001).

As mentioned in Aiex (1988), newspapers have been widely used in education programme in developed countries such as the United States and Canada. About 600 newspapers in the United States and Canada participated in the Newspapers in Education program, which involved approximately 90,000 teachers and approximately 16,000 schools each year. As such, it is obvious that newspapers play vital roles in the teaching and learning processes.

### 1.3 History of Newspapers in Education in Malaysia

Prakash (1998) mentioned that Newspapers in Education at national level in Malaysia was officially launched by Minister of Education, Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on January 6, 1985 through a programme initiated, The New Straits Times. At present, The New Straits Times publishes its 16 pages education pullout on every Tuesday which contains newspaper-related activities, ready-to use student worksheets and lots of ideas and suggestions. The themes for education pullout focus on meeting different curriculum needs at different levels.

On August 7, 2001, in addition to the pullout, New Straits Times launched its website on education available at <http://nie.nst.com.my>. This is a one-stop storehouse for parents because they can search for tips to help in their children's homework. It is also useful for teachers because it includes lesson plans and insightful literary column to help them to impart the love for literature to students.

The About Star-NIE (1998), Newspapers in Education of The Star newspaper in Malaysia was officially launched by Minister of Education, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on September 16, 1997. Its aims include to support the national goals of improving English proficiency, inculcating the reading habit among students as well as building an informed society. Besides that, the Star provides a variety of resources for teachers and students. These include workshops for teachers from primary and secondary schools, the monthly Star-NIE Supplement and NIE pages in Education pullout. The content of the workshops are in line with the National English language Syllabus provided by the

Malaysian Ministry of Education. Apart from that, The Star also publishes its NIE Monthly pullout every last Wednesday of the month except during the school holidays. The NIE Supplement is distributed free of charge with The Star. It contains sufficient NIE activities for a month. In addition to that, The Star also publishes its one or two pages Education pullout on every Sunday. These pages are a forum for news and views from NIE practitioners. NIE practitioners can share their ideas and to find out the upcoming events in this pullout.

#### **1.4 General Advantages of using Newspaper in the Language Classrooms**

Pemagbi (1995) narrated her teaching experience in English as a Second Language in a remote area in Sierra Leone, Africa with hardly any teaching and learning materials. The textbooks were insufficient and out dated and the use of modern teaching technology was dream of the distant future. On the other hand, students have to learn, and in order to learn, they must be taught. Thus to overcome the shortage of the teaching and learning materials she uses newspapers as instructional materials in her classrooms.

In Malaysia, the shortage of teaching and learning materials also occurs. This is mainly due to the remote geographical locations of the school and poor public facilities such as electricity and telephone. This made the teaching of English very difficult to be carried out. Besides that these conditions also restrict students of the rural secondary schools from current issues locally and internationally. On the other hand, Awang (1994) in his article "Phases of Development of Modern Education in Malaysia" as cited Malaysian Development Changes and Challenges, (1994) mentioned that the Malaysian Education



Philosophy demanded that education in this country produces Malaysians, who are knowledgeable, skilled, possess high moral standards and capable of achieving their own happiness and able to contribute towards harmony and prosperity of their own society and nation. However, this effort will fail if students are not kept abreast with the ever-expanding knowledge and current issues. Thus, one of the ways to produce knowledgeable and well-informed Malaysians is to expose them to the ever-expanding knowledge and current events through newspapers.

The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir as cited in Leong (1998), mentioned that by 2020, Malaysia will be developed in all dimensions; economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically and culturally. In order to face these targets, one must learn and relearn new skills and fresh knowledge on an ongoing basis throughout life. The attitude of knowledge seeking can be cultivated through reading. One of the ways to encourage reading among students is to introduce newspapers in English language classroom.

Hopkins (1998) mentioned that teaching current events through newspapers develops students to acquire good news reading skills and an awareness of current events. Besides these, he also outlined a few benefits of teaching them to students. Firstly, the newspapers themselves are using the English Language. Besides these, newspapers cover wide range of areas related to the Form IV English syllabus.

**Table 1.1 Language Skills related to articles in newspapers**

Skills	Skill specifications
2.7	Read and understand; locate main ideas and supporting details follow sequence of events and ideas and find proof to support statements in report such as newspaper report and book report.
2.9	Read and understand information contained in informal letters in newspapers
2.12	Read and understand; follow sequence of ideas; and find proof to support statements in opinions on current issues, such as unemployment

The National English Language Examination covers wide topics. For example, the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM), 2000, English Paper 1 adapted two articles from newspapers. The first article was about the relocation of monkeys following their attacks on two children. (See Appendix A on page 74) The name of the newspapers was not mentioned but the news was taken from *Bernama*, the Malaysian national news agency. The second article was about Kuala Trengganu, adapted from *The Star*, November 1997. As such, teachers need to expose students to newspapers in English language lessons to give them ample exercises to prepare them for the examination.

Secondly, using newspapers in language classrooms helps to build skills in vocabulary, reading, critical thinking, problem solving, listening, speaking and writing. Teachers can carefully choose the articles, pictures, advertisements and comic strips to suit their teaching and learning objectives. Picking articles from newspapers without considering the proficiency level of students may lead to failure of using newspapers as instructional tools. This is because students may face difficulties in understanding the contents of the lesson.

Thirdly, using newspapers in English language classrooms helps to develop an informed society because they cover a vast range of information. Based on NIE Workshop by The New Straits Time in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UiTM) in Kota Samarahan on May 19 2001, The New Straits Times contains many features and columns as shown in the table below.

**Table 1.2 Features and Columns of The New Straits Time and their summaries.**

Features or columns	Summaries
National, Asean and World News Opinion	The latest local, state, national, regional and international coverage of important events. Editorial comments reflecting the views of the paper on current world and local issues.
Letters Business	Provide a forum for readers to air their gripes and praises. Another separate pullout which concentrates on business. It also carries news on sports.
Sports	Besides reporting on sports events, this section covers different aspects of sport everyday of the week.
Life is.....	Offers the latest scoop from the entertainment world, from home – grown artistes to Hollywood stars. This column also include; It’s showbiz, Music, Reel Stuff, Hot’n Happening, Aerial View, TV Guide, Artifacts, Covers, Upstage and Scene
Life & Times	A pullout of different features and columns everyday. There are also regular section like Coffee Break, Comics, Today in History, Crossword, Look What I Found on the Net, Sport the Difference, Your Stars
Classified Advertisements Obituaries Happenings	

Fourthly, using newspapers in English language classrooms provides “writing model” to students. For example newspapers provide abundant examples of writing genres such

reports and instructions. These writing genres can be analyzed and discussed in the classroom to familiarized students with the different types of genres. Besides that, teachers can use these genres as models for teaching in the English language classrooms.

Fifthly, using newspapers in English language classrooms can open up communication between students and parents. For example if the students are given some topics in the newspapers in the English language classroom, they can discuss these with their parents at home. Apart from that, students also can discuss the news from newspapers with teachers and other students in the classroom. This helps to build up their general knowledge. It also executes the skill 1.13 in the Form IV English Syllabus that reads; Listen to and understand, ask for and give opinion on current issues such as unemployment.

### **1.5 Statement of Problem**

Based on the preliminary findings, researcher found out that there were mixed reactions about using newspapers in English language classrooms in the rural secondary despite the invaluable effort rendered by the popular Malaysian newspapers to promote the Newspapers in Education Program.

Based on the results of the informal interviews with a few English teachers, the researcher found a few reasons why teachers were not employing newspapers in English language classrooms. Among them are, using newspapers are time consuming because they have to search relevant article that suit the topic, skills and the level of proficiency

of the students. Others said that using newspapers as instructional tools in English language classrooms are expensive as most of the students are from low-income families. Apart from that, some teachers are bound by the backwash effect of the public examination so the teaching and learning activities are inclined to examination oriented. Besides that some teachers prefer to use textbook and commercial workbook because the activities are already prepared for them. Apart from the mentioned reasons, it is believed that there are still other reasons that refrain them from using newspapers in the English language classrooms such as the need to finish the syllabus, difficult to find relevant articles and not exposed to NIE activities.

On the contrary, some teachers do utilize newspapers in their English language classrooms. Thus, it is the objective of this study to find out the reasons for utilizing or not utilizing newspapers in the English language classrooms. Besides that, it is also the purpose of this study to investigate the methodologies involved in utilizing newspapers as instructional tools in teaching and learning processes in the rural English language classrooms.

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## **1.6 Research Objectives**

The general objectives of this study are to find out reasons for using and not using newspapers as instructional tools in the English language classrooms. It is also the objective of this study to find out methods of using newspapers as instructional tools by English language teachers in rural schools where this study was carried out.

## **1.7 The Research Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of this study are:

- 1.7.1 to investigate reasons for using newspapers as instructional tools in the English language classrooms,
- 1.7.2 to investigate reasons for not using newspapers as instructional tools in the English language classrooms, and
- 1.7.3 to investigate how teachers utilize newspapers in their English language classrooms.

## **1.8 The Research Questions**

- 1.8.1 Are rural teachers utilizing newspapers in their English language classrooms?
- 1.8.2 If not, why do these teachers abstain themselves from using newspapers in their English language classrooms?
- 1.8.3 How do rural teachers utilize newspapers in their English language classrooms?

## **1.9 The Significance of the Study**

The findings in this study are expected to provide useful information for English language teachers regarding the advantages of using newspapers as instructional tools in teaching and learning of English Language. It is also hoped that the findings in this study will be able to provide new methodologies and approaches in using newspapers in the English language classrooms thus further promote the use of newspapers as teaching tools in language lessons. In addition to that, the methodologies discussed in this study could provide deeper insight for teachers to utilize newspapers in English language classrooms effectively.

## **1.10 Definition of Terms**

### **1.10.1 Newspapers**

Newspapers are printed publications usually daily or weekly with local and abroad news. This study does not include the use of magazines or tabloids.

### **1.10.2 Newspapers in Education (NIE)**

According to Tri-City Herald, NIE is a worldwide program that promotes the use of newspapers in the classroom. Newspapers can be used to teach other subjects apart from language for instance they can be used to help students to improve their ability to find information, identify main ideas in paragraphs, improve critical thinking and improve proofreading skills. In this study, Newspapers in education means the involvement of newspapers in classroom activities. For example, teachers use articles from the

newspaper to teach vocabulary. In this study NIE refers to the involvement of newspapers in teaching and learning of English Language in rural Malaysian Classrooms.

### **1.11 Summary**

The poor performance in English Language in the schools and public examinations arouse the awareness to take measures to improve students' performance in English language. Newspapers in Education is one of ways to assist in English language teaching and to promote its uses in schools. The following chapter discusses sample activities in using newspapers in English Language classroom based on the local and foreign studies that have been done about NIE. The next chapter presents the review of the related literature.

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