

### Research Article

## The Impact Of Reading English Newspapers For Improving Vocabulary Mastery And Reading Skills (A Study Based On Grade 08 Students Of Mahmud Ladies College, Kalmunai)

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**Abstract.** This research aims to explore the effect of reading English newspapers on enhancing reading skills and vocabulary knowledge among students at Mahmud Ladies College, Kalmunai. The study follows an experimental design, targeting grade 8 students from MLCK. Participants were divided into two groups of 30 students each. Data was gathered using tests and questionnaires. Students were given pre-test to know their ability. After conducting treatment to the experimental group, the researcher conducted post-test for both groups to know the students' progress before and after treatment. Drawing from the results of tests and questionnaires, the research investigates the influence of English-language newspapers on the improvement of vocabulary acquisition and reading proficiency. The results showed a statistically significant improvement, suggesting that students' language skills improved over time through this method.

**Keywords:** Skills, Progress, Questionnaire, Vocabulary, Effect, Experiment.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This study looks at how reading English newspapers can help improve the vocabulary and reading skills of Grade 8 students at Mahmud Ladies College, Kalmunai. English is an important language in Sri Lanka and around the world, but many students, especially in rural areas, find it hard to learn. They often have a small vocabulary and poor reading skills because they don't get enough practice with real-life English. In many schools, students only use textbooks, which may not be interesting or helpful for improving language skills

Newspapers in English can be a helpful educational resource. They include new words, different writing styles, and interesting topics like news, sports, science, and culture. Reading newspapers can help students understand more, learn new words, and feel more confident using English. However, many schools in Sri Lanka don't use newspapers in the classroom. This study wants to find out if newspapers can really help students improve their English and make learning more interesting.

The main goals of the study are to see if newspapers improve students' vocabulary, how well students can use the new words they learn, and how much time they spend reading. The study used tests before and after the newspaper reading period to compare students who read newspapers with those who didn't. This research could help teachers and education planners find better, low-cost ways to teach English. The study is only focused on reading and vocabulary for Grade 8 students at one school.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A literature review is an essential part of any research as it provides background information, highlights what has already been studied, and supports the purpose of the current study. Many researchers agree that newspapers are valuable tools for language learning. Studies by Cheyney (1982), Strommen and Mates (2004), and Chang (2009) suggest that newspapers help improve vocabulary, reading interest,

and overall language development. Their real-life content, affordability, and accessibility make them effective for both classroom use and self-study. Bilingual newspapers, in particular, have been shown to aid word retention and comprehension (Chun-Ru-Lin, 2015). Moreover, reading newspapers has been linked to better motivation and deeper understanding of the language (Raju Ahmmed, 2016).

Newspapers are especially useful for teaching reading in a second language, as they cover a wide range of topics and provide real-world context. Sanderson (2001) noted that newspapers help build not only reading skills, but also grammar and cultural awareness. However, some researchers, like All Wright (1981) and Hill (1990), caution that articles must be carefully chosen to match students' language levels. When selected appropriately, newspapers can support both broad comprehension and detailed reading strategies. Additionally, vocabulary learning is crucial for mastering a new language. Scholars like Schmitt (2000) and Nation (2001, 2011) emphasize that vocabulary is central to all areas of language use—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—and is essential for effective communication and continued language development.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed an experimental research design to examine the impact of using English newspapers on improving reading skills and vocabulary among Grade 8 students at Mahmud Ladies College, Kalmunai. A total of 60 students participated, divided equally into an experimental group, which received the newspaper-based intervention, and a control group, which did not. The research process involved administering a pre-test to both groups to assess their initial reading and vocabulary levels, followed by a three-month treatment period during which the experimental group regularly read English newspapers. After the intervention, a post-test was conducted to measure any improvements, and a questionnaire was distributed to gather students' feedback on the use of newspapers in learning. Data collected through these instruments were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), focusing on mean, median, mode, and standard deviation, with a t-test applied to determine the statistical significance of the differences observed between the pre- and post-test results of both groups. The methodology was structured to evaluate whether English newspapers serve as an effective tool in enhancing the language abilities of adolescent learners.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Overall Pre-test and Post-test Scores for Experimental Group:

**Table-01**

	Pre-test	Post-test
No. of students	30	30
Mean	9.73	12.57
Median	9.00	12.00
Standard Deviation	1.760	1.995

Table 01 presents descriptive statistics for the experimental group's performance before and after the intervention. Thirty students participated in both the pre-test and post-test. The mean score increased from 9.73 in the pre-test to 12.57 in the post-test, indicating a notable improvement of 2.84 points following a three-month intervention using English newspapers to enhance vocabulary and reading skills. The median score also showed progress, rising from 9.00 in the pre-test to 12.00 in the post-test. These median values closely aligned with their respective means, suggesting consistency in student performance. The increase in both mean and median scores reflect the overall effectiveness of the intervention.

In terms of variability, the standard deviation rose slightly from 1.760 in the pre-test to 1.995 in the post-test. This implies that while students' scores were relatively similar before the intervention, there was slightly more variation in scores after the treatment. Nonetheless, the results demonstrate that the use of English newspapers had a positive impact on students' vocabulary development and reading skills.

**Table-02 Paired Sample T-Test**

Pre-test	Mean	Standard deviation	t	df	Sig
	9.73	9.00	-	28	.000
Post-test	12.57	12.00	18146		

Table 2 presents the results of a paired sample t-test comparing the pre-test and post-test scores. The significance value (Sig) is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant difference between the two test scores. Since the post-test mean (12.57) is higher than the pre-test Mean (9.73), the test confirms that students performed better after the intervention. Therefore, it can be concluded that using English newspapers in teaching had a positive effect on improving students' vocabulary and reading skills.

Overall Pre-test and Post-test Scores for Control Group:

**Table-03**

	Pre-test	Post-test
No. of students	30	30
Mean	9.63	10.10
Median	10.00	10.00
Standard Deviation	1.790	2.006

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the control group's pre-test and post-test results. A total of 30 students participated. The average (mean) score increased slightly from 9.63 in the pre-test to 10.10 in the post-test, showing a small improvement of 0.47 points. The median score remained the same at 10.00 for both tests, indicating that most students' performance did not change significantly. The median values closely matched the mean scores in both tests, suggesting consistency across student performance.

The standard deviation increased slightly from 1.790 to 2.006, indicating a small increase in the variation of scores after the post-test. Overall, the control group showed only a slight improvement, and the change was minimal compared to the experimental group.

**Table-04 Paired Sample T-Test**

	Mean	Standard deviation	t	df	Sig
Pre-test	9.63	1.790	-2.311	29	.028
Post-test	10.10	2.006			

Table 4 displays the paired sample t-test results for the control group. The significance value is 0.028, which is below 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, even though the improvement was small.

While the increase in scores was less than that of the experimental group, the results still show that students made a slight but meaningful improvement over time.

Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores of the Control and Experimental Group:

**Table-04**

Group	No. Of students	Mean Score		Improvement
		Pre-test	Post-test	
Control	30	9.63	10.10	0.47
Experimental	30	9.73	12.57	2.84

Table 5 compares the mean pre-test and post-test scores of both the control and experimental groups. In the control group, students improved slightly from a mean score of 9.63 to 10.10, showing a small gain of 0.47 points over three months. In contrast, the experimental group showed a much larger improvement, with their mean score increasing from 9.73 to 12.57—a gain of 2.84 points.

These results clearly indicate that the experimental group, which used English newspapers during the study period, experienced significantly greater improvement in vocabulary and reading skills than the control group. Initially, the experimental group had weaker reading skills and a limited vocabulary compared to the control group, struggling with many unfamiliar words in the pre-test. However, by the post-test, they showed notable progress—completing tasks within an hour and correctly identifying word meanings. Their performance reflected better understanding of vocabulary, sentence structures, idioms, and phrases gained through reading newspapers.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that using English newspapers had a strong positive impact on students' vocabulary acquisition and reading skill development.

#### 4.4 The results of questionnaire:

The questionnaire's goal was to discover how students' vocabulary and reading abilities were impacted by reading English newspapers. Students acquired it following the completion of their exams. When asked about their interest in reading English newspapers, most students responded positively, saying they enjoyed it and found it helpful for learning. In terms of reading habits, most had been reading newspapers for about two months, while a few had been reading for over a year. This shows a general interest among students in using newspapers to improve their English.

Students were also asked whether reading newspapers helped them build vocabulary. The majority confidently agreed that their vocabulary was improving daily, and no student disagreed with this. Similarly, when asked about reading skills, all students reported noticeable improvement, with none saying their skills stayed the same.

In conclusion, the questionnaire responses clearly indicate that reading English newspapers significantly helped students enhance both vocabulary and reading skills.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored how English newspapers can effectively help struggling students improve their reading skills and vocabulary. The findings showed that students in the experimental group, who used newspapers regularly, performed better than those who did not. Newspapers offer a wide range of current, real-life content that not only enhances general knowledge but also supports language learning by introducing new vocabulary, sentence structures, and idiomatic expressions. As Newspapers are an accessible and useful educational resource that can help students develop their language skills and promote self-directed learning. Based on the results, it is recommended that students make newspaper reading a regular habit to build vocabulary and improve writing and reading skills. Teachers are encouraged to integrate newspapers into classroom activities, use them for vocabulary tasks, and adopt creative teaching methods to keep students engaged and motivated in language learning.

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