



Using The Hindu Editorials to Improve Grammar and English Proficiency Among Competitive Exam Aspirants

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Abstract

In the highly competitive landscape of government job recruitment in India, proficiency in English grammar and comprehension has become a crucial component of exam success. While traditional grammar teaching methods offer limited contextual exposure, newspaper editorials—particularly those from The Hindu—present a rich, real-world source of formal English. This paper explores the use of The Hindu editorial section as a practical teaching tool to enhance grammar accuracy, vocabulary development, and comprehension skills among students preparing for competitive exams such as SSC, IBPS, and State PSCs. Based on classroom observations, mock test results, and learner feedback, the study demonstrates that structured editorial reading can lead to significant improvement in English section scores. The paper also proposes a model for integrating editorial analysis into daily classroom practice.

Keywords

The Hindu, grammar teaching, competitive exams, SSC, IBPS, vocabulary, comprehension, English pedagogy, editorial reading, ELT

1. Introduction

Government jobs in India offer financial stability, job security, pensions, and professional growth, making them highly attractive to millions of aspirants. Positions in banking, civil services, insurance, and other public sector domains are considered prestigious and secure. For many students, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, cracking these exams represents a life-changing opportunity.

To qualify, candidates must perform well in competitive exams like SSC, IBPS, and various State PSCs. Among the multiple sections tested, English has emerged as a critical area where students often underperform. This is especially true for aspirants from regional language backgrounds, who may struggle with grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, and time-bound accuracy.

English is not just a subject but a gateway skill—it helps candidates read instructions properly, write formal answers, and engage confidently in interviews. Despite this, most coaching systems rely heavily on rote learning of rules, outdated practice books, and mechanical worksheets. To address this gap, educators are turning to real-world resources, especially editorial sections of English newspapers, for meaningful engagement.

Among these, The Hindu stands out for its high linguistic standards. Its editorials offer formal tone, strong argumentation, advanced vocabulary, and contextual grammar use—making them excellent tools for developing language proficiency in exam-relevant areas. This study explores the pedagogical value of using The Hindu editorials to enhance students' grasp of English, particularly in areas tested by banking and government recruitment boards.

2. Literature Review

Research in language pedagogy supports the use of authentic materials in classroom learning. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) advocates for exposure to "comprehensible input" that is slightly above the learner's current level. Similarly, Nation (2001) highlights that learner's acquire vocabulary more effectively when it is encountered in meaningful contexts.

Dahiya (2017) examined the role of newspapers in improving English fluency among Indian undergraduates and found a significant increase in their vocabulary and reading speed. Patil and Sharma (2020) studied SSC aspirants and concluded that context-based learning methods improved grammar retention and accuracy more than rule-based memorization.

However, there is limited research specifically focusing on editorial-based grammar learning for competitive exams. This study seeks to fill that gap by demonstrating how The Hindu editorials, when systematically integrated into teaching modules, improve language performance in an exam-focused environment.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate the effectiveness of editorial reading in improving grammar and vocabulary.
- To track changes in student performance in English sections of mock tests before and after the intervention.
- To propose a structured teaching model for using editorials in competitive exam coaching.

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

The study involved 60 aspirants enrolled in an English foundation course for SSC and Bank exams at Sapling - Saarthi Education, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, over a 6-week period.

4.2 Materials Used

- Daily editorials from The Hindu (March–May 2025)

- Vocabulary worksheets (synonyms, antonyms, meanings, usage)
- Grammar exercises based on editorial extracts (error spotting, fillers, prepositions, voice, tense)
- Weekly mock test sets and progress charts
- Feedback forms and student interviews

4.3 Procedure

1. A pre-test (25-mark English section) was conducted.
2. Each day, one editorial was selected and analyzed in class.
3. Students extracted vocabulary, identified grammar patterns, and answered comprehension questions.
4. Weekly grammar drills were conducted based on that week's editorials.
5. A post-test was conducted at the end of 6 weeks.
6. Student feedback was collected anonymously.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Improvement in Test Performance

Before the intervention, students had an average score of 11.6/25, primarily struggling with grammar rules, sentence formation, and vocabulary usage. Post-intervention, after 6 weeks of structured editorial reading, the average improved to 18.3/25.

This represents a 57.7% improvement, as visualized in the above chart. Sections with maximum score jumps included:

- **Error Spotting**
- **Double Fillers**
- **Reading Comprehension (Inference-based)**
- **Vocabulary in Context**

5.2 Task Structure Assigned to Students

To support active learning, the following daily and weekly tasks were assigned:

- **Daily Editorial Task (15–20 mins):**
- **Read the selected editorial aloud in class.**
- **Underline 5–10 high-level vocabulary words.**
- **Identify 2–3 grammar patterns (e.g., voice, tense, conjunction use).**
- **Extract 3 sentence types to analyze structure and punctuation.**



Editorial Vocabulary Diary:

- Record: Word, Meaning, Synonyms, Antonyms, Usage, and a Trick to Remember.
- Submit diary entries weekly for review and feedback.

Grammar Reinforcement Activities:

- Error detection based on 3 extracted editorial lines.
- Voice and speech transformation exercises using editorial sentences.
- Double and single fillers using vocabulary from that day's article.

Weekly Tasks:

- Mock Test (25 marks) using IBPS/SSC English-style pattern.
- Mini-presentation by students explaining one editorial's key grammar points.
- Peer review sessions to discuss comprehension and usage.

5.3. Student Feedback & Behavioral Shift Quantitative Feedback (60 Students):

- 82%: “Improved understanding of grammar in real contexts”
- 76%: “Editorial vocabulary came directly in mock questions”
- 68%: “Felt more confident during comprehension questions”

Qualitative Examples:

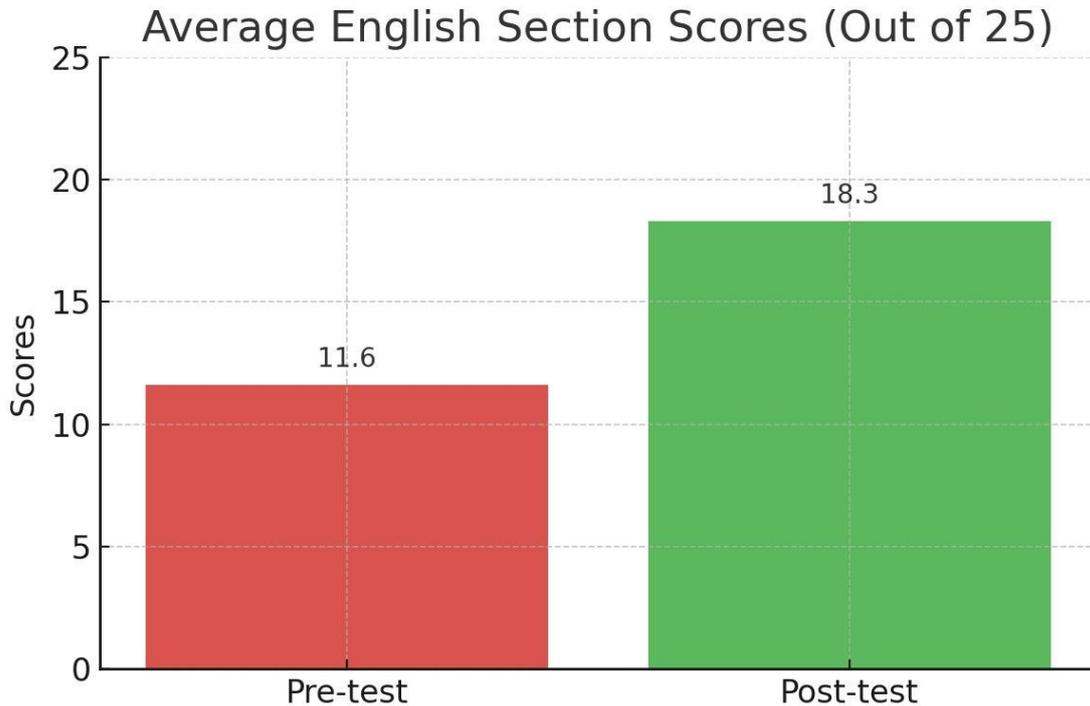
- “I had never used a transition phrase properly. Now I can identify them in passages.”
- “Editorials made me understand where tenses change subtly but grammatically.

5.2 Student Feedback

- 82% reported better understanding of grammar usage in real contexts.
- 76% said vocabulary from editorials appeared in mock tests.
- 68% felt more confident attempting comprehension passages.

5.3 Classroom Observations

- Students became more curious and participative during grammar discussions. There was visible improvement in identifying modifiers, transitions, and sentence patterns. Some even began using new vocabulary in classroom discussions.



6. Conclusion

This study confirms that The Hindu editorials can significantly enhance grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension skills in competitive exam aspirants. Unlike traditional textbooks, editorials provide language in action—formal, precise, and exam-relevant. When guided properly, even students from vernacular backgrounds can benefit greatly.

The use of editorial reading as a daily activity promotes deep learning, improves retention, and connects language with real-life contexts. This method not only boosts performance in exams but also contributes to long-term communication skills.

7. Recommendations

- Institutions should allocate at least 20 minutes daily for editorial analysis.
- Teachers can create weekly practice sheets combining vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension from selected articles.
- Students should maintain personal editorial diaries, recording new words and grammar rules they observe.
- Online sessions can integrate editorial readings with interactive MCQ-solving.

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