

## The Efficacy Of The Newsela Application To Develop Reading Skills Of Tertiary Level Students

Avadhuta Patel<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Sunilkumar Shah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English, Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat Gujarat, India

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of English, Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat Gujarat, India

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### Abstract

This study examined the Newsela application's effectiveness in improving tertiary-level students' reading skills. Newsela is an Educational Content Platform that enhances reader engagement and learning across all disciplines. As a tool for education, the Newsela program can assist both educators and students in the process of compiling references that will enhance scientific knowledge. A small study was conducted at Uka Tarsadia University, Gujarat, India, with 100 computer science students as participants who studied Professional Communication subject as a part of their curriculum. The data was gathered by a questionnaire and examined on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The results demonstrated students' favorable attitudes and responses to using Newsela in their reading process.

**Keywords:** Newsela, reading skills, tertiary level

### Introduction

Technology in education provides many advantages for students, helping them comprehend subjects more easily while creating smooth communication among classmates and instructors. Language learning apps and other technological tools have revolutionized the process of language acquisition. Mastering new tongues has now become part of everyday learning processes. Thus, the question is not whether to implement technology but how best to utilize and select suitable tools (Chapelle & Sauro 2017). As students in the twenty-first century adapt to an eclectic blend of traditional and contextual teaching approaches, educators face an uphill task when finding strategies that effectively integrate new teaching methods into classroom instruction.

To improve students' learning outcomes, Warschauer and Liaw (2011) stressed the significance of dispersed learning and developing technologies. According to the study, students can learn more effectively and comprehend technical texts if they have access to immediate feedback, a collaborative learning environment, and personalized learning experiences through digital tools, mobile technologies, and online learning platforms.

Reading comprehension has become an indispensable skill that allows individuals to thrive in all aspects of their lives: personal, professional, and academic. As per Rahavard (2010), reading comprehension poses a significant challenge for individuals whose primary or fundamental language is not English. Language learning is widely recognized as the foundational skill, providing the basis for all other aspects of development including listening, speaking, writing, vocabulary development, and grammar usage. At any point in history, limited access to written materials has posed a formidable barrier to literacy. Without access to books, attainment of literacy has remained out of reach. But now, affordable mobile technology is slowly breaking down this barrier; basic mobile phones provide an accessible, user-friendly gateway into an array of reading materials.

According to Chen et al.'s (2019) meta-analysis of technology-enhanced reading comprehension treatments, students across a variety of areas, including engineering, concluded that these interventions were successful in increasing their reading comprehension abilities. To increase student engagement and motivation, the study emphasized the value of implementing a variety of digital technologies, including gamified learning experiences, multimedia texts, and online

reading platforms. A research study by Pinal and Kshirsagar (2020) also found that using online reading platforms significantly improved learners reading comprehension and speed.

This research seeks to assess the potential influence of Newsela, an online news reading platform, on students' reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, the study investigates undergraduate student involvement with technical resources like Internet browsers, web-based applications/services, and interactive software products in general, regarding reading capabilities within this context.

Through this research, we aim to assess whether Newsela can enhance students' ability to understand written material effectively. With just a few clicks, students have access to an abundance of news articles and content related to real-time events; providing access that was previously inaccessible in classroom settings.

Newsela serves as an effective reading comprehension booster by offering engaging visuals that accompany articles, deepening students' understanding, and engagement with the content. Furthermore, Newsela incorporates engaging audio elements to further enrich learning experience. The way a teacher uses Newsela in the classroom is up to them, however according to Newsela (2017), their website "gives educators the primary solution to dramatically improve students' literacy skills for the 21st century."

Newsela stands out among other platforms by connecting students to a global reader and writer community through original content sharing, providing students with an invaluable way to collaborate and broaden their perspective globally. It is a well-liked and effective language learning site among students since it offers them various handy choices like underlining words and phrases, adding notes to words, and changing the font size (Bhagwat, 2018).

Through conducting this research, our aim is to gather empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Newsela in improving students' reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, we will assess its effect on undergraduate students as they make use of technical resources within an academic environment.

This study's goal is to shed light on the benefits of incorporating Newsela into educational practices, with particular attention paid to reading abilities in relation to modern technological resources. Newsela is an extremely powerful tool designed specifically for teachers that allows them to find articles tailored specifically to each of their student readers' reading levels. With its vast library of articles covering real world events and topics that educators can incorporate into classroom instruction; Newsela offers more than simply reading material as it also features stimulating questions and engaging writing prompts aligning with Common Core standards.

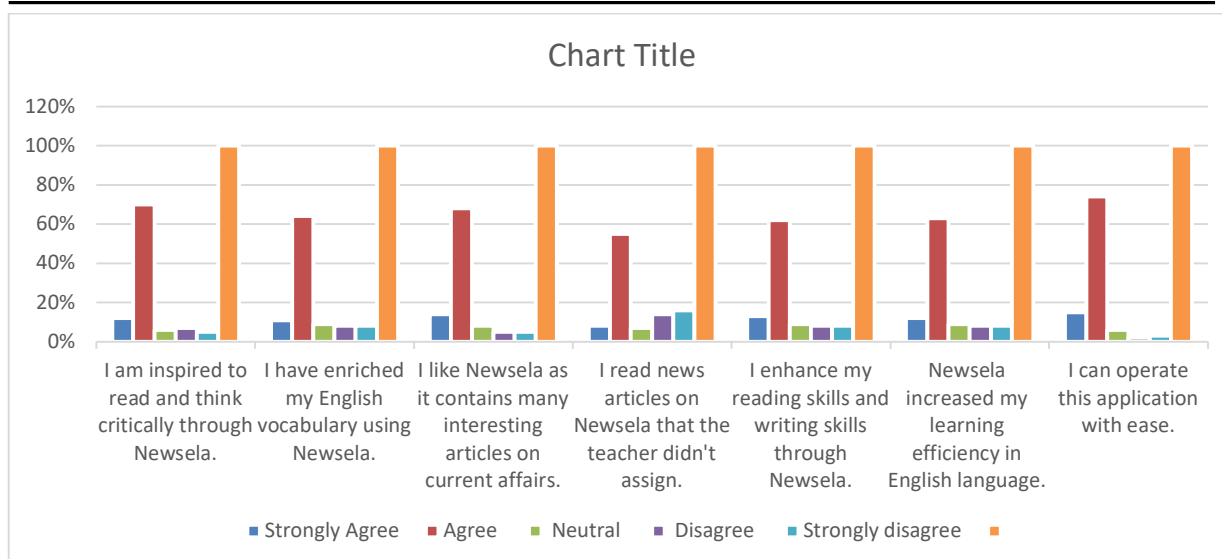
Newsela is an interactive annotation tool that enhances the reading experience as well as it encourages active engagement in learning in learning activities. It not only enhances the capacity to comprehend and develop critical thinking skills but also encourage interaction and engagement with the article.

Newsela also comes with an upgraded premium edition known as Newsela PRO that includes additional options and sources. With this edition, teachers have access to a vast online collection of reliable information as well as news articles that expand the topics they can cover in their class.

Newsela is an ideal instrument for teachers who wish to incorporate actual life events and actual world events into their lessons. With annotation tools, degree adaptation feature, along with comprehension assessments for reading as well as comprehension questions for reading, Newsela offers teachers an interactive platform that draws students and aids in the development of their abilities. Through the integration of Newsela into the classroom, instructors can provide students a comprehensive learning experience that lets students participate in their learning experience.

## Result and Analysis

The below chart presents the results of a study taken by students to assess the way they perceive Newsela as an educational tool in relation to their thinking and reading abilities. The goal was to understand the way students evaluated its effectiveness across a wide range of categories which included encouraging critical thinking, increasing vocabulary, as news stories that encourage discussions and private reading sessions increasing their reading and writing skills, and increasing the efficiency of learning. Data was gathered employing a Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree."



### Interpretation:

#### 1. Inspiration for Reading and Critical Thinking

According to the chart, 70% of them believed that Newsela had changed readers' ways of thinking and studying.

This shows how effective Newsela inspires students to be engaged with its material while enhancing the ability to think critically.

#### 2. Enrichment of English Vocabulary

Newsela has been found to have an impact on 64% of the students' English vocabulary, showing its ability to expand students' vocabulary.

#### 3. Interest in Newsela's Articles on Current Affairs

About 68% of students expressed satisfaction about Newsela because of its extensive collection of engaging and relevant content on current events that proves its effectiveness in attracting students with interesting content that discusses current events.

#### 4. Independent Reading

As per the analysis, fifty-five percent of students claim to have seen news stories on Newsela that they were not given by their instructors. This implies that reading independently and investigating subjects outside of the curriculum are encouraged by the platform.

#### 5. Enhancement of Reading and Writing Skills

A large number of the students (62%) agreed that Newsela helped improve their writing and reading abilities which suggests its potential as a powerful tool for enhancing students' skills in literacy.

#### 6. Increased Learning Efficiency in English Language

Sixty-three percent of learners reported Newsela positively impacting their English learning performance, which suggests it gives students efficient and effective learning experience.

#### 7. User-Friendliness

Students discovered Newsela to be simple to use and navigate (74 percent) which suggests that its user interface is simple and accessible to students, resulting in a pleasant user experience.

Overall, the results of the survey indicate that students see Newsela as an educational resource that encourages the critical thinking process, increases vocabulary, offers engaging news articles as well as encourages independent reading. It improves writing and reading skills, boosts efficiency of learning and provides a pleasant user experience. These results support the efficacy of Newsela in assisting students' academic development as well as providing a conducive learning

environment. Additional research and observations in the classroom will provide more insight on the effect of Newsela on students' performance and learning outcomes.

### Findings and conclusion

The findings of the indicate that using digital resources like Newsela to help children improve critical reading skills might be rather beneficial. Online reading platforms address the unique difficulties students encounter while interacting with complicated texts by providing customised reading materials and interactive features. The results showed that students' reading comprehension skills were much improved by their adaptive nature, vocabulary augmentation characteristics, and emphasis on analytical thinking.

Students were able to find Newsela to be simple to use and navigate which suggests that its user interface is simple and accessible to students, providing a pleasurable user experience. It promotes extensive reading aids students in enhancing their knowledge base and makes reading enjoyable.

Newsela can be utilized in classrooms to encourage intensive reading, as well as for lengthy reading. Newsela can be a great help for educators. Teachers can quickly set up a virtual class inviting students, and then provide reading materials and supervise the students' progress with minimal effort.

In conclusion, this study offers substantial evidence that using technology-based treatments might enhance tertiary level students' reading comprehension skills. Teachers may help students successfully traverse complicated technical texts by utilising interactive elements and adaptive learning, facilitating professional and academic growth.

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