

ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO NEWS LITERACY

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Abstract. The article discusses the role and importance of the work with News and mass media to learn English. It describes the special role of the teacher as the main methodologist in application of these aspects of teaching. The article also refers to the multiple approaches how to work with News in the classroom, and learn which works best for the students. At last, make News in the Teaching Languages more accessible and possibly even more enjoyable for learners.

Keywords: mass media information, challenge, course syllabus, approach, communication studies, problem – solution pattern, teaching strategy, critical debate.

Introduction. Teaching is a transformational process in the sense that it modifies us continuously, and teacher educators at the university level must provide the leadership needed to revamp their own education programs. In this process, they need to adhere to the changes brought about by new, challenging technology, changes in which the mass media play a crucial role.

Main part. Our Tashkent University of World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED) is very fortunate to have a chance to work in a perfect computer center and what is more valuable to use internet, which has been functioning at our university

since 1997. If we, foreign language teachers, can provide or create life-like situations in which our students are exposed to adequate foreign language inputs, and motivate the students to use the foreign language while teaching them language concepts, the students will greatly improve their communicative competence.

The use of news processing in the classroom is just one aspect of the developments in technology that are taking place. Undoubtedly, TV news and the press, together with e-mail communication and Internet availability, influence both teachers and learners in profound ways. The goal of this article is therefore to show how these media can be profitably used to provide training that is not only site-based, but also contextual and specific to the individuals' needs of the students.

The classroom should be an Extension of the learner's world. In an everyday situation, the student is exposed to both written and oral information coming from the press and TV. So, why not to implement the same procedure in the classroom? Both modes of presenting news and feature stories provide creative and original ideas for making effective use of the wealth of readily authentic, accessible, and up-to-date English. The ultimate goal is to familiarize the student with journalese language, register, and other stylistic devices that are at play when a piece of news is presented on TV or in the press, along with some printed material found on the Internet. The tasks accompanying each text should give the student confidence to read and view English language news in print and on the television for themselves outside the classroom. They should be challenged with increasingly demanding and thought-provoking tasks, which are practical and oriented to helping them enhance their thinking powers and develop their critical skills. In sum, the aim of this approach is to achieve autonomous learning by developing their competence in English. The most important point to bear in mind when using broadcast/print news is that the materials are a resource. They are in no way intended to be the only material used during the course. They should be specifically designed to provide the

student with stimulating, topical, challenging, and real material to support the course syllabus. Therefore, the teacher should decide when it is the most convenient moment to expose the students to mass media information. The news or TV clips should not be dated when shown to the learners. In a more specific situation, such as the case of students in communication studies (e.g., ESP course), the criteria may be slightly different. Experience shows that they profit much from being exposed to updated, daily material, which they have to process, (i.e., understand, retrieve, and reconstruct after viewing or reading the news item). This is precisely what they are expected to do in their professional lives. Therefore, the frequency of exposure should depend on the students' needs, interests, and time availability, as is the case with any other teaching endeavor.

Teachers should consider text structure, length, linguistic difficulty (including vocabulary), and content of both the press and television news. All of these are important to any task to be presented to the student, and each can be manipulated as a variable in itself. Apart from dealing with the linguistic aspect, attention should also be drawn to the discovery of the macro structure of the whole text, since this constitutes a crucial criterion for the selection of the material. The student should be able to recognize different patterns, such as an expository presentation with a problem-solution pattern, an argumentation or debate with a hypotheses-confirmation format, or a sequencing of events presented in a narrative text. Likewise, the analysis and retrieval of information based on layout, "info grams" pictures, and personal responses to news stories should be encouraged. The lesson should also develop critical viewing by providing the learner with problem-solving and research skills through the use of news clips and newspaper cuttings and past-paced graphics which depict formats and features. In case of broadcast news, the teacher, the teacher should tape the program when it airs and show all or parts of it to the class. For example, a teacher may begin with a review of the day's or week's top news stories. Discussion may focus on current issues and trends unfolding in the

news. International news should be brought to the class so student can explore selected events around the globe. All sorts of topics may be discussed including business and commerce, science and medical achievements, and special feature such as art, drama, music, and literature. As stated above, this choice should be based on course requirements, objectives, and the learner's interests. The learning of English can actually be facilitated and optimized by explicitly teaching the linguistic features, plus helping the learner become aware of the strategy required to extract meaning when confronted with oral or written media texts. Length is an important factor in text selection. A news item should be long enough to allow the student to become involved in reading and viewing, but not so long that the student becomes fatigued by the demands of the task. A length of between five and ten minutes seems to be appropriate under most conditions. Less proficient students may be asked to read or view shorter passages so that they will not feel the strain of an overload of information which may turn out to be difficult to process. Another important factor for consideration should be the level of difficulty. The cognitive load imposed by reading and viewing the piece of news should not be so great as to prevent the student from being able to process what the learner has seen or read; nor should the text be so far below the learner's ability that it is only perceived at a superficial level, thus encouraging little strategy use. Material with subject matter entirely unfamiliar to the learner is to be avoided. Possible subject matter variables include overall level of foreign language proficiency, conceptual, competence, and familiarity with the news item. Topics having to do with the human conditions, such as family relationships, education, environmental problems, or issue of everyday life, provide interesting material as long as they are universal enough to be understood. The same piece of news should be presented in the two modes, oral (television) and written (printed reports from the Internet and newspapers) from different angles, as far as possible. The student should be conversant with piece of news by first reading about it and then watching it on television or vice versa.

For advanced students, critical debate should be fostered. To help foster critical debate, it is suggested that information be obtained from several newspapers or their web sites. The learner should be able to compare and contrast different treatments of the same news item. They should be asked to identify different points of view and comment on the subjectivity of the news item. For groups with higher levels of proficiency, another aspect to be covered in class is the function of persuasion in the news, since no piece of news or editorship is devoid of it. In doing so, the students can retrieve the most important aspects of the news story, take the roles of the journalists, and reconstruct or rewrite their own version of the story.

To achieve the goals of the lesson, we suggest that the teacher provide the students with guidelines that may be applied to all kinds of texts. In our classes we use the traditional five Ws (who/whom, what, when, where, and why/how) as the basic procedure. We then use a set of more detailed elicitation tasks to go deeper into the story. With respect to televised news, we apply the view-internalize-retrieve-reconstruct technique by which the learner is constantly required to relate the new information with prior knowledge. In the case of print items, the read-internalize-retrieve-reconstruct technique is applied in a similar fashion. The view/read stage involves all steps that gradually lead first to the general and then to a more detailed comprehension or internalization of the text in question. When the learner retrieves information, he/she is expected to select those chunks that are essential for the understanding of the material. Finally, the student should be able to give one of the many possible versions of this interpretation: his/her own, based on the material that has just been read or viewed. As stated above, bringing the news into the classroom offers a whole range of interesting possibilities to enhance the learner's command of the English language.

Because reading newspaper articles is an essential part of learning a foreign language and its culture and because developing students' proficiency in the Teaching Languages is a necessary element of successful Foreign Languages

learning, using activities to allow students to get to know a material well and interact with it will facilitate these goals. As teachers try multiple approaches to work with News in the classroom, they will learn which work best for their students and will make News in the Teaching Languages more accessible and possibly even more enjoyable for learners.

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