

CHOICE OF INTERNET RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH IN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES

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The article touches upon the issue of significance of using reliable internet resources while teaching English at technical universities. Particular attention is given to the linguistic peculiarities of BBC on-line resources reflecting recent developments in science and technologies internationally.

Key words: teaching English, internet resources, BBC on-line, science and technologies.

Teaching English as a second language in a technical university has a number of challenges. Keeping pace with rapidly changing world of technologies is probably one of the most pressing one. Fortunately, there are no grounds to complain of the availability of information a teacher of English can choose from to "modernize" the materials used in the classroom. The availability of information today is naturally associated, in the first place, with internet resources. However, for obvious reasons they cannot be viewed as a wholly reliable source particularly for teaching purposes. The abundant information on the internet does not always comply with certain linguistic standards we have to teach. This brings us to the necessity to be careful about the choice of information and to rely on reputable sources which, on the one hand, allow to update the content of syllabus materials to catch up with recent trends in technologies, on the other hand, to be sure of meeting linguistic standards.

The choice of BBC World News Service does not seem to pose any questions under the circumstances. The BBC information provides strong reporting and analysis of global events of every nature. The service is consolidating its position as the world's most trusted source of information. Clearly, the resource is tremendous and offers a variety of options, which might be used in suitable combinations to facilitate the effect of learning. This article focuses its attention on the BBC's international on-line news site, the Science and Environment and Technology categories in particular since this information is of interest to the students in our case.

The students' linguistic competence, by and large, allows to use the materials from the above mentioned sections as the information they contain is popular scientific by nature, thus quite comprehensible to this category of readership and specifically orientated at informing the readers about recent developments in relevant fields. The students are receiving a two-fold gain while working over the information. They advance in

learning general and specialist language and get updated on the novel developments in technologies.

However, alongside the gains there are certain hurdles to make notice of. Mass media information, articles in particular, differ a lot by their format from the texts the learners are used to deal with. The texts are normally more complete, more formal, whereas mass media articles are more versatile in their stylistic expression. The media reflect all aspects of human condition and make available to the public many varieties of the language. Not all the printed matter found in the newspapers come under newspaper style which is distinguished as a specific style within the formal English language. The modern newspaper carries materials of an extremely diverse character. The BBC news site is illustrating the issues in the most vivid fashion. The articles from Science and Technology categories of the site present a mixture of styles with the scientific prose, publicistic, and documentary review styles being dominant. Moreover, there are significant differences in mass media formats within and between cultures. The intercultural differences in the information presentation are obvious and deserve special attention with Ukrainian learners.

Mass media writing includes a system of interrelated lexical, phraseological and grammatical means serving the purpose of informing, instructing, and, in addition, of entertaining the reader. How do these principles work with BBC relevant materials and how can we make them useful for teaching practices?

The informing principle reveals itself most overtly as the content of the articles is arranged in the form of facts review usually with lots of background information. Thus, we may say that the articles create the context for themselves. This is an extremely important feature for the second language learners who most likely lack information on the history of the subject. The articles are supplied with links that shed additional light on the topic. The learners, thus, can have

quite a big picture of the story. Obviously, the information really reflects recent facts and data.

Admittedly, the manner of presenting information differs from the way Ukrainian mass media narrate. At this point we come to the discussion of objectivity of information in the sense that real objectivity is unattainable. The term objectivity might be reasonable to replace with impartiality, a detached and balanced viewpoint on the subject. It is not always easy for a Ukrainian student to realize that there is hardly an absolute authority on a point of discussion. The students usually have to learn that objectivity is basically in the multiplicity of opinions even when it comes to scientific research. The articles may at times look somewhat chaotic to a Ukrainian learner because they contain too many quotes differing in small details or reflecting different points of view. Although a high degree of redundancy is generally understood to aid language comprehension [5:9], this may not be the case in our situation. The details take space and time needed to work on the text, therefore when preparing the articles for work in the classroom, some of "the redundant" information might be omitted with care not to disrupt the fabric of the context. Alternative opinions, being the normal practice of democratic press, may produce the impression of confusion with learners as practice shows. The abundance of quotes is a distinct feature of BBC articles as opposed to other sources that normally unambiguously seek to influence public opinion on the matter. The factual style of reporting aims at unemotional recounting of verifiable information to an intellectually mature audience. The reporting consists of stating facts and letting readers draw their own conclusions. This might be viewed as a very important tool of instructing learners. Alternative opinions may give rise to a serious discussion around interesting issues of scientific or technological nature, which is another advantage of using the source.

The brief analysis of the vocabulary characteristic of the articles shows that the bulk of it is neutral, literary words. The articles do not have many words with evaluative connotation, such as *to allege*, *to claim*, which make it clear to the reader that those are not affirmed facts. It is only natural that the vocabulary contains a lot of neologisms and professionalisms. With computer technologies penetrating every field of research the neologisms related to this sphere outnumber all others, for example, online auction, animatronics, blogs, etc. Quite characteristic of the information are foreign words that come from different languages. For example, *hoc* (specialized; from Latin), *carte blanche* (complete freedom; from French), *glitch* (a small fault in working of something; from German). Abbreviations are very typical of the articles and require considerable attention. Among them are abbreviated names of or-

ganizations, state bodies, industrial and other companies, various offices. To name just a few are NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), EU (European Union), UNO (United Nations Organization), CEO (Chief Executive officer), ESA (European Space Agency), etc.

Although in general the reporting is matter-of-fact, and devoid of emotional colouring there is a marked trend of conversationalisation of the "dry" scientific matter. Let us consider an extract from the article "Expedition Set for Ghost Peaks". The article dwells on the Antarctic expedition to find the explanation for the location of a mountain range buried under the White Continent:

...Now, the international team is setting out on a deep-field survey to get some answer. The group comprises scientists, engineers, pilots, and support staff from the UK, Germany, Australia, China and Japan. It's rather like being an archaeologist and opening up a tomb in a pyramid and finding an astronaut sitting inside. It shouldn't be there...

The comment of the author referring to an archaeologist opening up a tomb is an example of the conversational style infiltrating the formal information. In other words, the scientific news in the example contains the element of 'infotainment', neologism, being the combination of words 'information' and 'entertainment'. Thus the functions of entertainment and informing are realized through infotainment.

When viewed as the material for instruction all the features of the articles are of importance for the learners. Which of them are really difficult to cope with? The problems with comprehension syntactically lengthier structures may be one way or another resolved with the help of the context. The gist of the story is anyway a number one priority for the future engineers. Mention should be made of the occasional disregard for the grammar standards, the sequence of tenses rules in particular. What is originally looked upon as a gross violation of grammar rules in any other kind of writing is becoming increasingly common as a functional peculiarity of newspaper style.

The rule of maintaining generally neutral style in compliance with the principle of impartiality seems to be often broken when it comes to headlines for articles. Apart from giving information about the subject, headlines also carry a considerable amount of appraisal or emotionally coloured words. Headlines are read and interpreted first and their formal or semantic information initiate a complex process of understanding. Translating article headlines is a tough decision because they are often inventive, allusive, idiomatic or metaphoric. Like the article itself they may contain quotes. Everything seems to serve the purpose of attracting reader's attention. The popular magazine "Business Spotlight" in its regular column *Behind the Headlines* draws atten-

tion to the difficulties of understanding headlines for the second language learners. "Headlines in English-language media can be difficult to understand. They are often very idiomatic and full of jargon and wordplay. Also, to save space words may be left out, which makes it difficult to recognize the grammatical structure". The advice to translate the headline after reading the contents does not seem to work in our case because the headline itself is a guide to the information of interest. It may either attract attention to the information or leave important information "unattended".

Students have to cope with linguistic material of a definitely higher level of difficulty when they come out to search for information related to their sphere of interest by headlines. The title "Standing Watch over Crowded Space" can hardly arouse interest with the students though it contains very interesting and relevant to the students' speciality information. It is really hard for the learners to see the real phenomena under "the standing watch" which means in the context "continuous supervision" as well as "crowded space" denoting here "polluted cosmos". As it appears, the seemingly simple words like *stand*, *watch* or *crowd* being used in phrases or metaphorically considerably complicate the process of understanding the material.

The learners have to bear in mind the grammar irregularities that are very characteristic of the headlines. Omitted are quite often linking or auxiliary verbs, articles, particles which makes the grammar structure of the headline difficult to discern. "Tech show in long economic shadow" headline can illustrate a number of difficulties for

the learners. Firstly, the headline is based on the use of a metaphor "to be in the shadow", here used in reference to a position of relative inferiority of a technological exhibition because of the global economic crisis. Mention should be made about the grammar cut-offs. The linking verb "is" is missing as well as the articles. One needs to know that the abbreviation "tech" stands for technology.

The effectiveness of teaching English engaging the appropriate internet resources is rising significantly when and if tutors give proper attention to updating the content of materials dwelling on the state of the art developments in technologies internationally. Eventually, students are learning the English language to be in the know of the developments. In the meantime it is important not to forget the responsibility of selecting the materials that meet the linguistic standards students have to acquire. This appears to be quite a sensitive issue even when reputable sources, like BBC sites, come into play. With careful consideration of many factors, and conscious approach to the selected materials the above mentioned ambitions could be met. The choice of BBC news site, the sections of Science and Technology in particular, may be justified both for the formal, linguistic, and informative features for the particular category of learners in the technical university. Profound understanding of the specifics of the online publication to be used in the classroom can enhance learning the real world English and eventually open the door to the international technological community.

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