

Authentic newspaper articles as a source of speaking activity for teenagers

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Newspapers are an excellent source of authentic texts, that can bring contemporary issues into the classroom and provide a basis for discussion. They give the opportunity to use samples of modern spoken and written English.

But at the same time there are problems in getting the students to really "push" their productive skills in a mean-

ingful way. Another thing is the students are not interested in the topic or they don't have enough vocabulary to participate in discussion.

So, speaking activities need preparation, you have to:

- study the topic
- activate the required language
- engage the students to speaking activity

- provide them with the topic which is interesting for teens

After a survey the following topics may be interesting and involving:

- lifestyle
- moral issues
- work and education
- food and health
- world issues



Where to find materials?

One of the best sources is reading newspapers on the net and selecting materials from different newspapers. You can offer several websites of British newspapers and give an outline of them.

"Red Tops" – they all have a red logo and contain mostly gossip and sensational news.

The Daily Mirror – www.mirror.co.uk

The Sun – www.thesun.co.uk

The Daily Star – www.dailystar.co.uk

"The middle market" covers more serious items as well as gossip and controversy.

Daily Mail – www.dailymail.co.uk

The Daily Express – www.express.co.uk

"The serious papers" cover quality news and issues.

The Times – www.timesonline.co.uk

The Guardian – www.guardian.co.uk

The Independent – www.independent.co.uk



Practical activities for using newspapers in the classroom

Activity 1. Choose one of the sites, find several headlines and try to predict the topic of the article.

Activity 2. Find the article with a picture or photo and try to prove the following saying "A picture is worth thousands of words". Find correspondence between the article and the picture.

Activity 3. Choose one of the sites to explore the structure of the newspaper.

Activity 4. Choose one of the articles and look at it from the language point of view. Find answers to the five W's in the article:

- Who?
- When?
- What?
- Why?
- Where?

Activity 5. Find information about the same event in different newspapers, find similarities and differences in describing the same event.

It was already mentioned that the students need key vocabulary to keep conversation going.

Before introducing the topic and problems to be discussed, there are some helpful tips to start working with newspapers:

- Explaining ideas (namely, such, for example, for instance, in other words, that is)
- Putting ideas in order (firstly, then, meanwhile, finally, next, later, further, lastly)
- Adding to ideas (in addition, moreover, also, too, besides, likewise, similarly)
- Cause and effect (because, in order to, as a result, for that reason, consequently)
- Compare and contrast (however, nevertheless, but, yet, still, rather, by contrast, after all, nonetheless, on the other hand, despite this, though)
- Conclusion (therefore, so, as a result, hence, in conclusion, thus, all in all, finally, consequently, to sum up, this resulted in, all this leads to)

Practice

Sample lesson

Level: Intermediate and above

Age: 14–18

Aim: to provoke discussion on urgent topic "Smoking"

Time: one lesson

There are several suggestions for warming up activities:

Task 1. Smoking vocabulary.

Ask the students to write as many words as they know on the suggested topic.

Keep "talking game". The rule is very simple: to speak for 1 min. on the suggested topic.

Pre-reading discussion.

1. What do you think about smoking?
2. Should it be banned in public places?
3. What is the age limit of smoking?
4. What do you think about advertising of tobacco companies?
5. Do you know any facts and figures for your country about smoking?

Task 2. Excuse me, can I smoke here?

Name some places where smoking should be banned (schools, banks, public transport, hospitals, universities, restaurants). Is it allowed to smoke in these places in your country?

Task 3. Look at some titles of newspaper articles and read comments on them.

"Smoking age limit to be raised from 16 to 18 in October."

"One puff link to future smoking."

"Cigarette-buying age set to rise."

1. The only thing that will do is to make it "cool" to smoke at 16. Knowing you're breaking the law is always more exciting.
2. Why wait October?
3. Good idea. Who starts smoking as adult? If they want to cut off the main source of cigarettes to kids, they now need to ban unsupervised vending machines, which is the easiest way for them to buy.
4. Like driving a car and also drinking alcohol, it should be raised to 21.

5. The sale of tobacco should be licensed similar to alcohol. If a shop sells tobacco to underage persons then loses his license.

- Do you agree to the British Law? Why or why not?
- Write to local newspaper to express your views.

Task 4. Read the article from *The Sun* and look at it from linguistic point of view.

"Harry: I've smoked last fag"

Heavy smoker Prince Harry will today quit cigarettes for the New Year-ahead of an Army ban.

The soldier prince, 22, has been known to get through 20 Marlboro Lights a night

But he has vowed to stub out for good, to the delight of dad Charles.

A Royal insider said: "Harry tries not to be seen smoking in public, but behind closed doors and at parties he's always lightning up. He loves a drink and the two sort of go together. His dad nags him constantly."

Harry, an officer with the Blues and Royals, took up smoking aged 14 while at Eton.

His bid to quit comes as the Ministry of Defense prepares to ban smoking at Army barracks in March.

An Army source said: "Harry's clearly decided to steal a march on that."

(*The Sun* 1.01.2007)

- What is the article about?
- Who is in the article?
- When did Harry start smoking?
- Why did he decide to give up smoking?

You can have a look at some modern language items and the way of describing the fact.

Task 5. Imagine you work for the health department; try to plan a campaign to encourage smokers to give up.

Write your slogan for the campaign. Work in pairs or in groups.

Task 6. Express your personal attitude to smoking.