



Back to the Source for Advanced Learners of English

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Abstract

Today's world is interconnected and online: on the spot we can read an Australian newspaper's article and compare it to our local interpretation of the event, we can search a database to see what a Spanish newspaper had to say about it 20 years ago and with the necessary access codes we can explore academic research and publications on the topic. Today's world is also complex and lacks transparency as current media operate from ideological, cultural and historical backgrounds. Furthermore, today's merging and conglomerating of traditional media players further complicates the search for reliable information on current events.

To respond to this complexity and interconnectivity we propose a current affairs based approach of foreign language teaching. For the last four years we have had the opportunity to experiment yearly with some 80 third year students of English as a foreign language, studying to become teachers of English themselves. Our paper will describe these experiences, with reflections both from the lecturer's as the student's point of view.

Due to the nature of our target audience we have focused on three main objectives; how to improve our students' overall language proficiency (make them better language users), how to improve their lifelong language learning skills (use any input as a basis for language learning, and raise their language learning awareness) and how to prepare them to take active part in contemporary society in which media wisdom and critical thinking skills are essential. The first objective might be obvious, the second can be considered the holy grail for all educators, the third one however is a focal point of our programme. We will describe how we search for sources and select the materials used in class, we will present the general outline of our class discussions and we will take a closer look at the didactic and pedagogical ideas that are present throughout our lessons.

Although the ideas we describe are taken out of an English course for advanced students, we strongly believe that more media based, current affairs driven lessons will be essential for the future of education at any level.