

## The news – a conversation lesson

**Topic:** The news

**Level:** SfL L2/SQA Higher/CEFRC1/C2

**Time:** 90 minutes

### Aims:

- to develop vocabulary related to the news
- to give practice of retelling the main points of a news story
- to develop the ability to discuss news stories

### Introduction

In this lesson, students will develop their vocabulary to talk about the news. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss the news with their classmates and retell a newsworthy story that is important to them.

### Procedure

#### Stage 1 – What’s in the News Today? (10 minutes)

- Write up and ask students the following questions: Do you feel up-to-date with the news? Do you watch it or read it? Why do you watch or read it? What stories have you heard in the news recently? Are these local or global news?
- Have a brief discussion about the top stories, either local or global.

#### Stage 2 – Vocabulary (20 mins)

- Elicit words related to the topic of news, e.g. *headlines, tabloid, broadsheet* etc.
- Hand out Worksheet 1 and set up students in pairs.
- Ask students to read the short text about news and discuss the meaning of the words in bold.
- Ask each pair to join another pair to compare definitions.
- Write the words on the board and invite students to give examples of the word in a sentence to correct and/or check full understanding.

#### Stage 3 – Discussion Questions (10 mins)

- Set students up in pairs.
- Write the following questions on the board and encourage students to discuss.
  - What is the main purpose of television news? To inform, entertain or influence?
  - Do you think people generally believe all news stories are true?
  - What are some of the differences between television news and the news in the newspapers?
  - What do you think makes a good news story? (e.g. celebrities and their cars, a general election, the discovery of a cure for a bad disease etc.)

#### Stage 4 – Retelling an important news story (20mins)

- Give students an example of a news story you will always remember.
- Give students a few minutes to think of their own story they remember and to note down a possible headline, when it happened, what happened, where they were and what they were doing when they heard about it.
- In groups of three or four, ask students to share their news stories.
- Have brief whole group feedback to elicit any particularly interesting stories.

**Stage 6 – Discussion – Which stories are newsworthy? (30 mins)**

- Elicit job of a TV news editor and pre-teach *newsworthy*.
- Hand out Worksheet 2.
- Set up students in groups of three or four.
- Ask students to discuss the news headlines and select six of these stories to include in the news broadcast. They should decide on the order they should be presented and give reasons for their choices.
- Whole class feedback – ask one student from each group to briefly present their choices, order and reasons.

**Extension activity – Types of Media**

- In pairs, students discuss and write lists identifying the advantages and disadvantages for each type of media e.g. tv, radio, internet, newspapers etc.
- If you have less time, allocate one type of media per group to discuss.
- BBC Learning English materials and the Grammar Challenge series have recently published several podcasts with a focus on the news, which could supplement this lesson.

## Worksheet 1

### Conversation Lesson – News

#### Discuss the words in bold.

News on any one day can be about a very wide range of things. Unfortunately, most television channels do not put the **focus** on good news. They are more interested in telling us about **natural disasters** and **scandals**, you know, the depressing stories. And then you can't believe a lot of what they say. The news is like films and general TV, some people think it is a form of entertainment, so the media tends to **sensationalise** stories to get, and keep, people's attention.

It could also be said that there is a lot of **ensorship**. Maybe this is a good thing, but not everybody agrees. Some people think the press should not be **restricted**, that a free press is an important part of a free society. Other people think that the media should not be allowed to say what they want.

Finally, a lot of the criticism of the news comes from the fact that many newspapers and TV channels are too interested in **human interest stories**, for example David Beckham's new hairstyle and Britney Spears' marriage problems. It might be interesting to some people, but it's not **current affairs**.

## Worksheet 2

You are a television news editor.

All these events have happened today but there isn't enough time to broadcast all the stories on the national TV news at 6pm. You need to decide which 6 stories are newsworthy and then choose the order that they should be presented.

Decide which stories, and give reasons why you chose them:

- A local boy has bought a new bike from the shop (red with 18 gears).
- The President of your country has been involved in a road accident. He is hurt but his life is not in danger.
- An old woman from a small village on the sea has won \$10,000,000 on the national lottery.
- A cat has scratched its owner's sofa.
- A company from your country has won a multi-million pound contract to supply car parts to Ferrari.
- There is a train workers' strike which has resulted in there being no train services all day.
- Weathermen predict that severe weather will hit the capital tomorrow.
- The national economy may go into recession if the government does not solve the unemployment problem.
- A group of schoolchildren have painted pictures of the school dog.
- Your country has won the World Team Darts Championship.
- The national health service advises people not to eat cheese because of a food scare. A bacteria can be found in certain cheese which should be avoided until the problem can be solved.
- A local film maker has been nominated for an Oscar.