BUILDING AND ENRICHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY OF A (YOUNG) JOURNALIST

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Building and (or) enriching vocabulary of a foreign language that is adequate to one's communication needs has to be a personal goal for every writer or speaker. Especially professions where language is essential require constant attention paid to the correctness and appropriateness of the language and its style. A solid vocabulary in any language, whether it is one's native tongue or the fifth language, is an absolute necessity, for it not only allows one to better understand both the spoken and written forms of the language, but gives a much greater breadth of self-expression. For a journalist it becomes more and more impossible to escape the inevitability of being the fluent and solid user of English language. In the presented article we will focus at some of the ways of how students of journalism can build, practice and enrich their English vocabulary at EFL classes. We follow vocabulary teaching from several aspects and in each we provide at least one sample strategy in the form of an exercise, class activity, a role play or a text analysis.

Key words: mass media, language, English, lexicology, journalism

1 English for future journalists

At present there are no unified standards for teaching foreign language in the context of professional or vocational training. Also, it could be a matter of discussion, whether such standards would be able to create as well as apply successfully into the process of language teaching. In principle, developing teaching modules, materials and the like should be based on professional prerequisites for such scientific fields (natural sciences, humanities, arts, history, etc.) that would meet the needs of foreign language learning of each specific group of students. The first assumption is that higher education has assumed a certain level of mastery of the English language. Ideally, it is the management of a common language at a common communication level, eventually at B2 or C1 level according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Another prerequisite is the professional targeting of the study and the related use of a foreign language in specific situations. In case of journalism the scope is very wide as the main role of a journalist is to inform basically about all social, cultural, political and other similar phenomena. Journalists should be fluent and proficient in all four language skills and excellent in writing, i.e. writing reports, articles, feature stories, editorials, and essays. This requires excellent command of the language. In order to unify and make the teaching process more effective a new teaching module in both English and Russian for journalists is being currently applied at the Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra.

The aim of the module application is to upgrade non-philological study programs and for specific main task it sets deepening both professional and ethnocultural elements of foreign language teaching in the study field of journalism. This way the module focuses also on updating motivational and educational components. Altogether, these participate in the creation of a favourable environment in the process of increasing language competencies and skills. In parallel with the creation, application and verification of specified foreign language learning module, new teaching materials that reflect the current needs of the study field are going to be created in the form of print and electronic publications as well as e-learning courses and there are invited lectures in foreign languages to be held along with practical workshops for prospective journalists.

The Department of Journalism in Nitra offers their students a three-year study of English within their compulsory list of subjects. The students all have to be at least of B2 level of English. In the first year of the study it is necessary to unite the students in terms of their general language knowledge that covers grammar, stylistics and syntax. Gradually, topics and language aspects specific for journalists are applied into the teaching process. In the presented article we deal with some of the possible ways of how presenting a new vocabulary as well as practising the already gained one can be applied into the English class. Our aim is to point out some of the practical vocabulary-based approaches, exercises, role plays and other class activities that could meet the goal of both building and enriching vocabulary. Moreover, the vice-versa principle is also applied here: a language activity of a primarily different purpose (reading comprehension activity for instance) may serve the same task, which is practising vocabulary. Teaching English vocabulary for journalists is thus presented in the following system according to several aspects:

- basic language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking)
- linguistically conditioned vocabulary (idioms, abbreviations, word creation)
- professionally conditioned vocabulary (journalistic curriculum)
- politically, historically, socially and culturally conditioned vocabulary (facts on English speaking countries)
- We provide at least one concrete example of a class activity in each of the above mentioned aspects as well as students' feedback where possible.

2. Learning vocabulary by the four language skills

2.1 Vocabulary and reading comprehension

One of the crucial skills in foreign language comprehension is reading and proper perception of written information. A text read in the class may along linguistic purposes serve an irreplaceable source of widening the scope of

knowledge of a student, his cultural knowledge, critical thinking and the alike. Some of the most relevant are also the cultural, motivational and interdisciplinary aspects: learning new cultures, values and world-views, evoking curiosity and student's interest in the topic. For some foreigners long English written texts, especially long sentences, seem to be tricky because of the fact that a form of a word may have the function of a noun, a verb or an adjective depending on the position in a sentence as well as the context. Especially academic or highly professional written texts may show such difficulties. If a text evokes problems with understanding the best way to cope with it is to follow the basic syntactical rules and cut the text into several shorter units. The following extract of Philip Roth's text consists of one single sentence. The students' task is to divide the text into shorter parts, retell what each part is about and at the same time to try disclose the meaning of unknown words from the context:

Elizabeth, New Jersey, when my mother was being raised there in a flat over her father's grocery store, was an industrial port a quarter the size of Newark, dominated by the Irish working class and their politicians and the tightly knit parish life that revolved around the town's many churches, and though I never heard her complain of having been pointedly ill-treated in Elizabeth as a girl, it was not until she married and moved to Newark's new Jewish neighbourhood that she discovered the confidence that led her to become first a PTA "grade mother," then a PTA vice president in charge of establishing a Kindergarten Mothers' Club, and finally the PTA president, who, after attending a conference in Trenton on infantile paralysis, proposed an annual March of Dimes dance on January 30 – President Roosevelt's birthday – that was accepted by most schools. (Roth)

Interestingly, when students are asked what the first word of the text (Elizabeth) is related to, they usually suppose it is a person, most often "the mother". Such a mistake helps them to easily understand how important it is to pay attention to the context.

There are of course many other possibilities that can be done with a text in the process of reading as well as after reading, e.g. multiple choice exercises, discussion, questions. Some of the possible topics to discuss include: whether the writer convinces the reader of anything; what structural elements do hold the text together; creating an outline or scheme of the text's content; discussing what a good review (essay, article, paper) should be like in order to attract the reader and many others.

2.2 Vocabulary and writing

Appropriate use of words helps the writer to avoid word repetition (use of synonyms), add emotional emphasis, make the text coherent, and many others. Coherence of a text is supposed to be one of the most important aspects of the

vocabulary and writing relation, since inappropriate use of transitional tags, direction words or adjectives can make the text completely unreadable, and what is worse, even illogical. Good transitions can connect paragraphs and turn writing into a unified whole. A writer can provide transitions between ideas by using transitional expressions, repeating key words and phrases, using pronoun reference, and using parallel form. Especially in professions where a lot of writing is needed, and journalism is that kind, the practice of transitional tags is a must. Transitional tags run from the most simple - the little conjunctions "and", "but", "nor", "yet", "or" - to more complex signals that ideas are somehow connected - the conjunctive adverbs and transitional expressions such as "however", "moreover", "nevertheless", "on the other hand".

Having a random set of transitional devices students are asked, while practicing them, to write a logical, coherent text, where every sentence should contain one of them - with no possibility to change the sequence. Depending on other aspects, such as proficiency in English of the group, practicing certain writing skills and others, the students may be asked to write a simple story concentrating on the progress of the events, or even a more complex feature story or essay. If, to illustrate, the students are given a set of words such as "certainly, although, of course, namely, even though, indeed", their text could be of the following kind:

Yesterday I had my birthday party, and "certainly" it was one of those parties I will never forget. "Although" there were not many people celebrating with me, I enjoyed it very much. "Of course", I invited some of my friends apart from my family members. "Namely", there was Peter, John, Sue and Maggie. "Even though" they were busy, they promised me to come. I appreciated that very much "indeed".

Such an approach to writing, however, makes the final text sound more or less unnatural; nevertheless, the students are forced to focus their attention on each specific transitional tag: its meaning, use, position in a sentence. Usually the students are rather confused at the beginning, but as they are used to the system of work with the text, they tend to enjoy it, especially if they are writing a story, where they could use their imagination freely.

2.3 Vocabulary and listening

When it comes to listening comprehension, there are numerous ways of how to include vocabulary learning or practicing into the teaching process by applying true or false exercises, gap filling, choice of synonyms, notes taking, simple question answering and many others. For future journalists audio (or video) recordings should include, as an example, various news programmes, press conferences, interviews, political debates, even commercials. The students may be asked to check for key words from an audio recording, to write a short

newspaper article about an event they have just heard of, to summarize the message of a press release, to explain and discuss selected words or terms from the recording.

2.4 Vocabulary and speaking

While practicing vocabulary by speaking, it is necessary to be acquainted with words and terms related to the topic as well as the ability to search for a synonym if needed. One of the important results is that careful and proper oral production makes the student aware of the difference between their passive and active vocabulary. A good way for future journalists to practice their oral skills may be a fictional press conference introduced by Kevin Roche (Political Nightmares), where they have to be quick-witted, inventive, ready to defend own opinion and argue in quite a fast pace. In the press conference, some students are chosen to represent ministers, and the rest of the group represent journalists. The "ministers" are given a list of topics they have to discuss: attitudes and opinions they have to defend or scandals they have to explain. A fictional foreign minister, for instance, may be accused of the following scandals:

- he thought East Timor was in Scotland
- on a visit to America he thought that the Vice President was a waiter and asked him to get him a cup of tea
- on a visit to Latin America he was quoted as saying "I wish I had studied Latin at school then I might be able to understand you guys."
- when asked his opinion on China he was quoted as saying "I don't know much about the country but the people make great servants. Very hard-working."

In the case the scandals are exaggerated or the attitudes are absurd, the activity evokes atmosphere where students do not feel tensed and dare to ask provoking questions. The more humour and absurdity there is, the more the "press conference" tends to be emotional and lively.

3. Linguistically conditioned vocabulary

3.1 Phraseology and idioms

Phraseology and idiomatic expressions are a common language phenomenon and tend to be informal in most cases. Waldnerová (2005) agrees on the fact that they can be quite easily disclosed by the students since they are usually based on imagery, or simply because there are similar expressions in the student's mother tongue. However, idiomatic expressions can be also very difficult to understand. A student "may be able to guess the meaning from context but sometimes it can be very difficult, because many idioms, for instance, come from favourite traditional British activities such as fighting, sailing, hunting and

playing games. As well as being quite specialist in meaning, some of the words in idioms were used two or three hundred years ago, or longer." (Waldnerová, 90)

In the class, idioms can be practiced directly from a text similar to the following one taken from the Cambridge Dictionary, where idiomatic expressions are shown in italics:

Richard has always determined to *make it* in business. After leaving school, he set up a stall in the market selling cheap CDs and cassettes and was soon *doing a roaring trade*. Being a *big fish in a small pond* was not enough for him, however. He knew that if he wanted to be a *big shot* in the business world, he needed *to stay ahead of the pack*. Over the next few years, he opened eight shops in the area and became known as a *hard-nosed* businessman, who *drove a hard bargain*. Even when the other companies *were going to the wall*, he kept going. He's now one of the most successful business people in the region, but unlike some *fat cats*, he supports a lot of local charities and looks after his staff well. He often says he'd like to retire soon, but I can't see him *hanging up his hat* just yet – he loves his job too much. (Cambridge International Dictionary Of Idioms, 456-459)

While working with the text, students are asked to both disclose the meaning of each idiom as well as discuss its imagery or semantic motivation. Further practice may include, for example, rewriting a text where students are asked to use at least one idiom in each sentence. In such a way, different styles and modes of an utterance can be discussed as well.

3.2 Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviations and acronyms¹ are a common part of our everyday lives, both in our daily communication within general society, as well as in more formal settings, though often we do not realise it. So many of them are not even noticed as such, and thus are often overlooked as being abbreviations.² Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union consistently used a large number of them and thus for many years they came to be regarded as a negative linguistic feature (for

¹ Though abbreviations and acronyms look similar they are actually quite different in form. Acronyms are formed by taking the first initials of a compounded-word or phrase and then using those initials to form a word that looks very different from the longer phrase, but means the same thing. For example, LASER, pronounced "lazer", is an acronym for Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation. NATO, which is pronounced "natoh", means North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and though FBI look like an acronym for Federal Bureau of Investigation, it actually is not an acronym, but instead an abbreviation (since it is pronounced F-B-I, not "fbi").

² Further in the text we use the term abbreviation (abbreviations) to refer generally to both abbreviations and acronyms.

example kolkhoz, Comintern, Gestapo), though in the past few decades this negative trend has changed quite significantly. Today many linguists, as well as the general public, regard abbreviations as not only common, but a normal part of their daily lives. In connection with media, and especially with internet, we meet with abbreviations very often. Chats, blogs, social networks and others are overloaded with abbreviations. For journalists as active users and creators of such communicative environment it becomes necessary to at least get the basic knowledge of abbreviating and both its formal as well as informal usage. Students have to be also aware of the fact that in more formal writing abbreviations are most often not used and can even be considered bad form in some instances, especially if they are being used only to save energy, time or space.

The following sample exercise described by Michelčíková a kol. (31) shows examples of abbreviations that could be easily met in common everyday communication, as well as in a more formal sphere. Students are asked to look at some of the common abbreviations provided and firstly try to either disclose their meaning or choose those they are fluent with. Subsequently, they are asked to match them with their meaning from the chart below. Finally, the students discuss where they can meet such abbreviations and whether they are the common ones:

24/7, AA, AC, ASAP, B&B, BCE, BYOB, CC, CST, FYI, GMO, HAZ-MAT, ID, ISBN, MS, PC, PI, PIN, PMB, PR, PS, Q&A, RIP, SOS, TEAM, TIA, UFO, UPC, WASP

As Soon As	Personal	Save Our	Hazardous	Air Condi-	Thanks In	Rest in
Possible	Mail Box	Souls	Material	tioning	Advance	Peace
Public Relations	Credit Card	Alcoholics Anonymous	24 Hours a Day, 7 Days a Week	Post Script	Central Standard Time	Universal Product Code
Bring Your Own Beer/Bottle	Politically Correct	Before the Common Era	For Your Information	Private Investigator	Together Everyone Achieves More	Bed and Breakfast
Personal Identifica- tion Num- ber	Manuscript	Identifica- tion	International Standard Book Num- ber	Unidenti-	Questions and An- swers	Genet- ically Modified

A similar principle can be applied for different types of abbreviations, such as:

- titles before (Mrs, Mr, Ms, Prof, Dr, Gen, Rep, Sen, St) and after (Sr, Jr, PhD) names
- names of familiar institutions (CIA, FBI, NATO, BBC, CNN), countries (USA, UK), corporations (IBM, CNN, ITT), famous people (FDR, JFK), very familiar objects (TV, VCR, CD-ROM, www, sms)

- terms of mathematical units (15 in., 15 ft., 15 kg, 15 m, 15 lb)
- long common phrases (IQ, mph for miles per hour)
- words used with numbers (am, pm, BC, AD)
- common Latin terms (etc., i.e., e.g., et al., q.v., v., ibid.)
- abbreviations used in business communication (a/d, Co., Bros., doz., Inc., mos., No.(s), p.t.o., sgd., vs., art.)
- pseudo acronyms (ICQ for "I seek you", IOU for "I owe you")

Informal abbreviations used in e-mail communication and social networks (THX, PLS, GR8, HAND, BTW and many others) are extremely popular among students and usually it is possible to come to an enormous number of examples in the class.

3.3 Word creation

The world of words in any language can often be a daunting environment for those trying to master the language, whether they are native speakers, beginners, or linguists who have learned many languages. Everyone who has ever written a class project, a magazine article, a dissertation, a poem, or a novel understands the eventual frustration of not being able to find the correct word for a specific context. The same happens to students and professional journalists as well. It can be a matter of not being able to recall a particular word at that time or never actually having known the word in the first place. A solid vocabulary in any language, whether it is one's native tongue or fifth language is an absolute necessity, for it not only allows one to better understand both the spoken and written forms of the language, but gives a much greater breadth of self-expression.

At least half of the words in the English language are derived from Greek and Latin roots. Knowing these roots helps the students to grasp the meaning of words before they look them up in the dictionary. It also helps them to see how words are often arranged in families with similar characteristics. For instance, "sophomoric" are students in their second year of college or high school. The "sopho" part of the word means "knowledge". The "ic" ending is added to indicate adjectival word in English, and the "more" part of the word comes again from the Greek root meaning "dull". Thus sophomoric are people who think they know a lot but really don't know much about anything, and a sophomoric act is typical of a "wise fool". The same can be applied for the use and importance of prefixes (bilateral – consisting of two sides, parts) and suffixes (waitress – the "ess" ending indicating a female). As a matter of fact, students are more interested in the topic if they can immediately see its practical impact. The importance of understanding the principles of word creation can be shown by logical disclosing of the meaning of different phobias, for example, which is

usually accompanied with some fun: demophobia, Francophobia, bacteriophobia, zoophobia, acrophobia, heliophobia, gamophobia and others. A more serious approach is applied in a task, where the students have to disclose the meaning of words arranged into groups according to the same prefix bearing certain meaning.

Prefix or word root	Meaning of the prefix	Sample words
pre	in front of	prevent, preview, precaution, prefer, pre-owned, preamble
un	not	unplug, uncertain, unconscious
bio	life	autobiography, symbiosis, biosphere, biopsy
ex	out of	express, expand, export, exclude
con	with	conduct, conform, contemplate, convey
bene	good	benefit, benevolent
mal	bad	malnutrition, malicious, malignant, mal de mer

4. Professionally conditioned vocabulary

Apart from the communication oriented (language skills of reading, speaking, listening and writing) and linguistically oriented (idioms, abbreviations and word creation) vocabulary building that serve as a core of work in any (English) language teaching (ELT), a professionally or vocationally oriented vocabulary is a must in any (English) language for specific purposes (ESP). In case of journalism, such a vocabulary is of a relatively wide range since it covers society in almost any aspect: politics, history, science, culture, economics, geography, education and many others. Being more precise with the range of topics that journalism covers, we can simply shorten the list only to those related somehow to media, communication and spreading information. From such a perspective, the following can be mentioned: history of journalism (ways of spreading information in different historical eras, emergence of journalism in its contemporary shape, important historical milestones affecting journalism, inventions that influenced journalism), media (their kinds, content, functions, audience/receiver), writing and style (serious and yellow journalism, newspaper genres, inverted pyramid structure, news), public presentation (PR, advertising, image-making, commercials), important achievers in journalism (qualities of a good journalist), investigative journalism and truly up to date topics such as civic and citizen journalism, internet and blogging or even conspiracy theories. To deal just with one example regarding advertising, a poster advertisement of a restaurant (showing basic information about the restaurant's special or daily offer displayed in a unique style and providing also detailed information about e.g. opening hours, special location, etc.) might be discussed in the class as follows:

- what is the style of the advertisement? Is it the "why style" or "image style"?
- what are the strategies used to attract a customer?
- who is the target group, how the group is approached, by what means?
- how efficient the advertisement is? Does its form meet its content?
- is there anything to discuss regarding advertising ethics?
- does it in any way use humour, stereotypes, does it use specific imagery, colours?
- does it manipulate subconsciousness or does it attack senses and emotions in any way?

5. Historical, political and socio-cultural aspects

It is generally supposed that facts, knowledge and independent orientation in politics, history, economics, society and culture are the core of a professional readiness of a future journalist. He has to be well prepared for being able to find interconnections of certain social phenomena, to be able to compare them, point out the specifics, willing to go deeper into an issue. Otherwise it is very difficult to inform, for instance, about possible tensions in Northern Ireland without having background knowledge about their historical roots. For such purpose we suppose that work with authentic historical and up to date documents in the class is an inevitable condition. Authentic documents for ESP within journalism studies may be classified as follows:

- public speeches: J.F. Kennedy's inauguration speech (1961),
 M.L. King's "I had a dream" speech (1963), HM Elizabeth II. Opening of Parliament speech (annually) and others
- public discussions: University of Westminster panel discussion on Brexit, for instance
- surveys: public opinion polls on presidential election winner in the USA, etc.
- fiction: N. Hawthorne's *Scarlet letter*, H.B. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Ch. Dicken's *Pickwick Papers*, various biographies, etc.
- original political documents: Hansard (annual official report of the British House of Commons), Senate resolution 301 (USA, 1954, censure of Senator Joseph McCarthy), programmes of political parties and similar
- judicial documents: Brown vs. Board of Education (USA, 1954), etc.
- non-fiction: K. Fox's Watching the English, etc.

In the following class activity, students are supposed to already have basic information about different names for certain political institutions and functions in the Republic of Ireland. Along with common terms used in English (for instance parliament, prime minister, Senate, House of Representatives) in Ireland they prefer using their own names mainly of Irish Gaelic origin even in

media: Oireachtas, Taoiseach, Seanad Éireann, Dáil Éireann, just to mention some. In the given example, after having read a text about Irish political system, reading comprehension is checked by the following true or false exercise, where along with general facts students have to understand specific terminology related to Irish political system. Correct information (if needed) is provided in each sentence immediately in the brackets; vocabulary to focus on is displayed in italics:

- A candidate may be nominated for election as President by no fewer than 10 (20) members of the *Oireachtas* or by 10 (4) or more of Ireland's 34 County and City Councils.
- A retiring President may nominate themselves as a candidate for reelection twice (once).
- President Mary McAleese was serving her two terms after having succeeded President Mary Robinson the first instance in Europe (worldwide) where one woman has followed another as an elected head of state.
- The Presidential Commission consists of three members: Tánaiste deputy prime minister (chief justice); chairman of Dáil Éireann; chairman of Seanad Éireann.
- The prime minister, or *Taoiseach* in Irish, is appointed by the President after being elected by the *Seanad* (*Dáil*), upper (lower) house of Parliament, as the leader of the political party, or coalition of parties, which wins the most seats.

As the last example we deal with a vocabulary related to geography and industry. Such a vocabulary may be later applied in tasks such as writing a travelogue or writing a blog about travelling or writing a brochure for tourists wiling to visit certain country. In the sample activity, the students' task is to divide the given vocabulary according to given topics:

industry cliff college copper corn dairying distillery estuary flax flour glen product of industry grain grazing head hedgehog herring inlet lead leather marble marsh mill monastery mouth muslin otter oyster peak peat peninsula pillar pottery precipice quarrying reptile salmon seal slate slope spire		
product of industry grain grazing head hedgehog herring inlet lead leather marble marsh mill monastery mouth muslin otter oyster peak peat peninsula pillar pottery precipice quarrying reptile salmon seal slate slope spire	animal	abbey badger bog brewery cape castle cathedral cattle cave church
industry mill monastery mouth muslin otter oyster peak peat peninsula pillar pottery precipice quarrying reptile salmon seal slate slope spire		cliff college copper corn dairying distillery estuary flax flour glen
raw material pottery precipice quarrying reptile salmon seal slate slope spire	product of	
	industry	
architecture squirrel stream summit tannery tide timber tower valley wool	raw material	
	architecture	squirrel stream summit tannery tide timber tower valley wool
land / moun-	land / moun-	
tains	tains	
water (sea /	water (sea /	
rivers)	rivers)	

Conclusion

As a matter of fact, vocabulary teaching covers an enormous variety of topics and strategies. Even when it is restricted to a single ESP, which is English for journalism in the presented paper, the amount of approaches is not any lesser. Our aim, however, was not to provide a complete list of strategies but rather a system the vocabulary teaching could be built upon. As we observed, if the vocabulary is included in exercises or activities focusing primarily on other aspects of language teaching (speaking, role play, listening and others), it is adopted more naturally.

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