Voice of America: Current Event Activities in the English Language Classroom

By Phil Dierking, Voice of America -Learning English

Objectives

- 1. Understand what current events are and why they are important
- 2. Learn about the benefit of using current events in the English language classroom
- 3. Learn about Voice of America and the different resources it offers English language teachers
- 4. Learn how to use Voice of America resources in the English language classroom

Introduction to Current Events



What Are Current Events?

Current Events

Events in the present concerning important people, places, things, or ideas

News

- A report of recent events, information, people or things
- Often recorded in print, radio, television, or online

What is the Media?

Media

► The industries and people that produce news and mass communication content

Why Teach Current Events in the English Language Classroom?

- Builds language ability in reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills
- Builds new vocabulary
- Offers endless topics that connect to all areas of a curriculum
- Keeps students aware of events happening locally, nationally, and internationally
- Promotes critical thinking
- Motivates students to have further discussions with friends and family
- ► Can inspire students to become active in their communities

Where Can You Access Current Events?

- ▶ Internet
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- ▶ Television
- ► Radio
- Social Media
- Podcasts

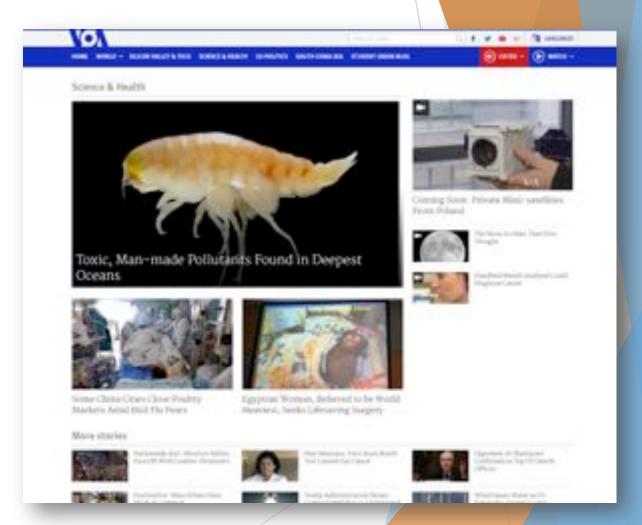


Voice of America - Learning English



Voice of America

- Created in 1942
- Largest U.S. international broadcaster
- Provides news in over 40 languages to over 200 million people a week



Voice of America

- Produces content for digital, television, and radio platforms
- Accessible online, from mobile phones, social media, satellite/cable, FM/ MW Radio



Voice of America Languages

- Afan Oromo
- Albanian
- Amharic
- Armenian
- Azerbaijani
- Bengali
- Bosnian
- Burmese
- Cantonese
- Chinese

- Dari Persian
- French
- Georgian
- Haitian Creole
- Hausa
- Indonesian
- Khmer
- Kinyarwanda
- Kirundi
- Korean

- Kurdish
- Lao
- Macedonian
- Ndebele
- Pashto
- Persian
- Pilipino
- Portuguese
- Russian
- Serbian
- Shona

- Somali
- Spanish
- Swahili
- Thai
- Tibetan
- Tigrinya
- Turkish
- Ukrainian
- Urdu
- Uzbek
- Vietnamese

Voice of America - Learning English

- VOA's multimedia source of news for English language learners
- Accessed online
- Uses English for intermediate and upper-beginner levels
- Online texts, MP3s, videos, and podcasts

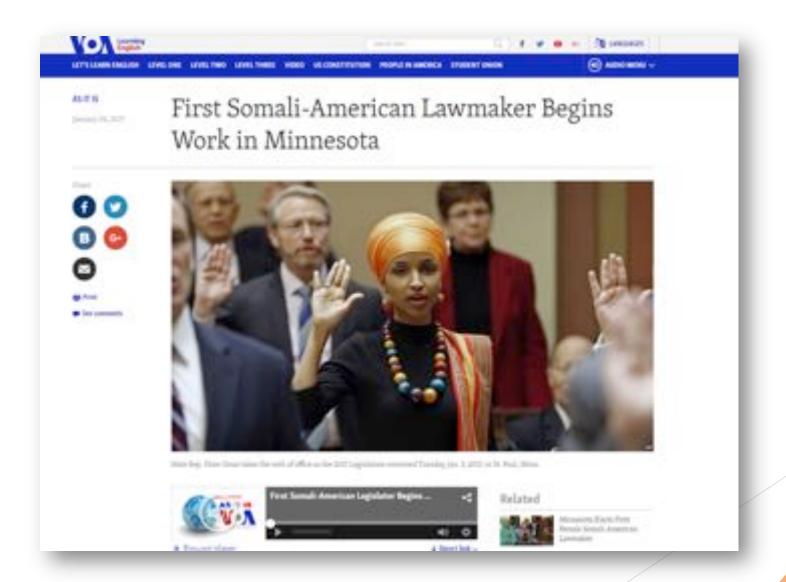


Voice of America - Learning English

- ▶ Began in 1959
- Read by English language learners, teachers, publishers, and anyone interested in the news
- Content drawn from world news, business, science, U.S. life, popular culture, etc.
- ► Texts, MP3s, videos, and photos free to the public



News Stories



News Stories

- General News
- Education
- ► Health & Lifestyle
- Personal Technology
- Science in the News
- What's Trending





(III) AUCHO MENU V



Vice President Breaks Senate Tie to-Approve New Secretary of Education

Officials Consider the US-South Korea Free Trade Deal

Amnesty International: Syria Killed Thousands in Hangings

Uber Asks NASA Engineer to Develop Flying Cars

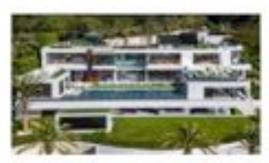
Is China Ready for Possible Conflict with

Militant Groups in Afghanistan Make Money Stranggling Minerals

Let's Learn English



Lesson 44: Making Healthy Choices



America's Most Expensive Home Is \$250 Million



Running in Cold Weather Improves Performance

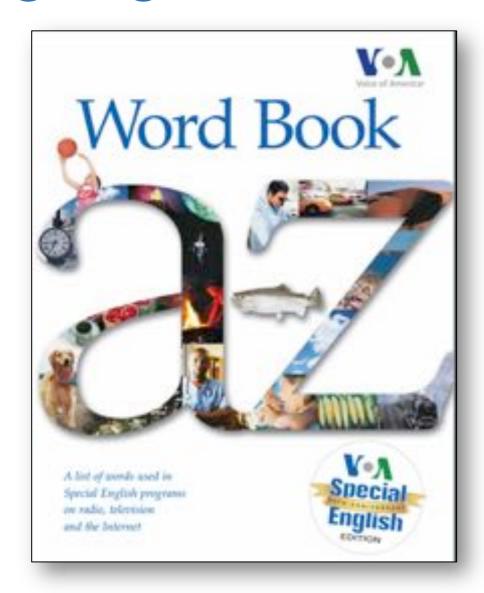


For Highest US Court, a Harvard or Yale Education Is a



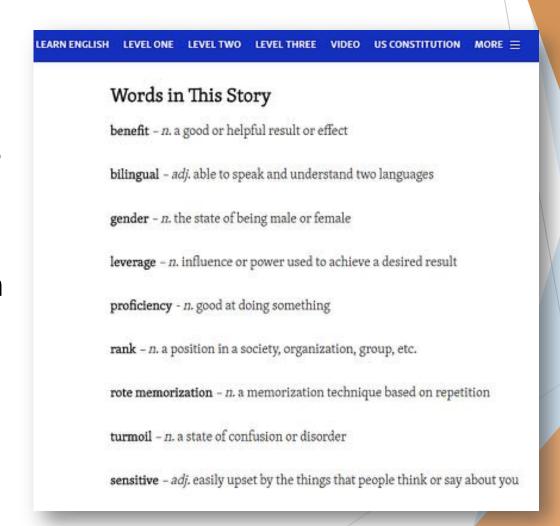
New Technology Helps Move Hearts

Learning English Word Book



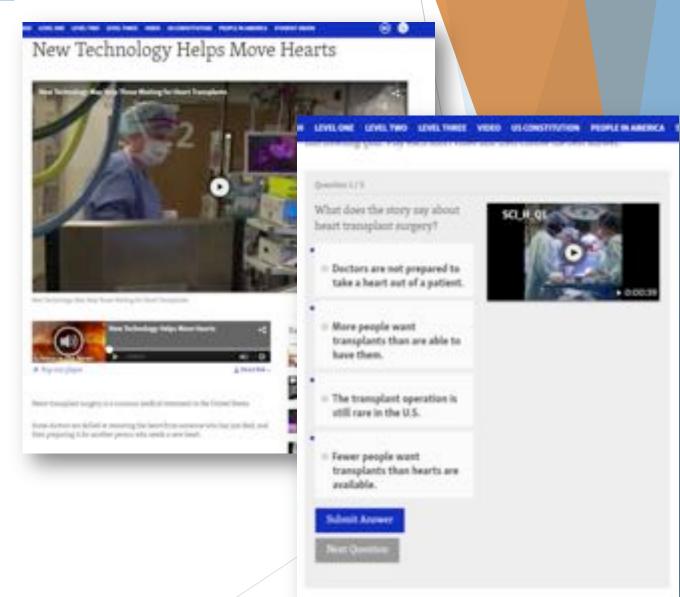
News Stories Level 1

- For beginning English learners
- Articles generally have one idea per sentence, with
 500 words or less
- Most words can be found in the VOA Learning English Word Book, or they are explained at the bottom of the story



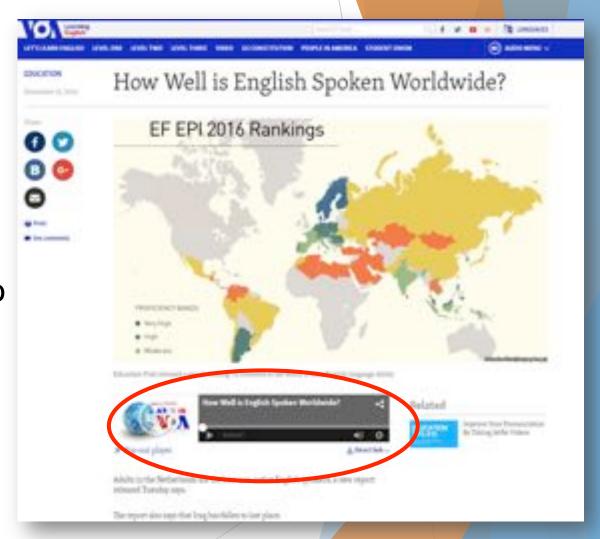
News Stories Level 2

- For intermediate learners of American English
- Stories are often more than 500 words, and may use more complex sentences or language
- New words are explained at the bottom of the story
- Stories may include audio from newsmakers
- There may be a quiz to test your understanding

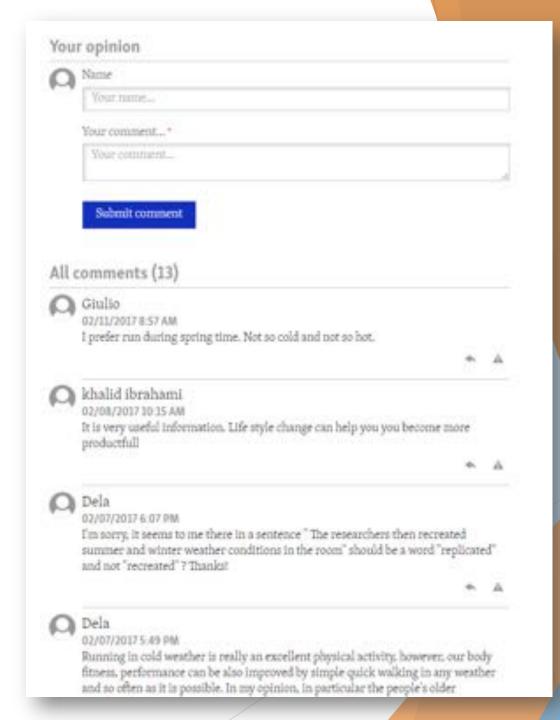


News Stories Level 3

- Are aimed at non-native English speakers who have studied American English and wish to improve their reading and listening skills
- Articles are usually more than 500 words in length and may include audio from newsmakers
- Some may use more complex sentences or language
- New words are explained at the bottom of the article

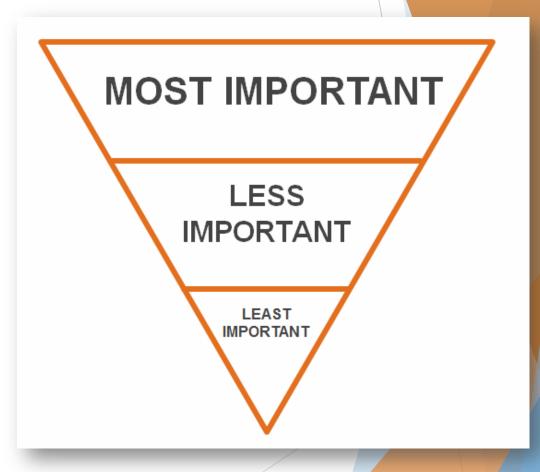


News Stories - Comments section



Using Learning English News Stories in your Classroom

- Who
 - ▶ Who is the story about?
- What
 - ► What happened?
- When
 - ▶ When did the story take place?
- Where
 - ▶ Where did the story take place?
- Why
 - ► Why did it happen?





http://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/how-well-is-english-spoken-worldwide/3597100.html

On Tuesday, the private education company Education First (EF) released the 2016 English Proficiency Index report online.

The English Proficiency Index is based on the online test scores of 950,000 adults from 72 countries.

The results do not show the English ability of a country's entire population. They are based on people who took an online test, the EF Standard English Test (EFSET), during 2015.

The study is the sixth produced by EF. It is a yearly report that examines the English knowledge level of adults from 72 countries.

Who?	
What?	
When?	
Where?	
Why?	

On Tuesday, the private education company Education First (EF) released the 2016 English Proficiency Index report online.

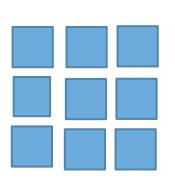
The English Proficiency Index is based on the online test scores of 950,000 adults from 72 countries.

The results do not show the English ability of a country's entire population. They are based on people who took an online test, the EF Standard English Test (EFSET), during 2015.

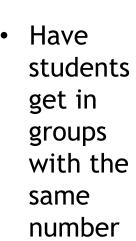
The study is the sixth produced by EF. It is a yearly report that <u>examines the English</u> knowledge level of adults from 72 countries.

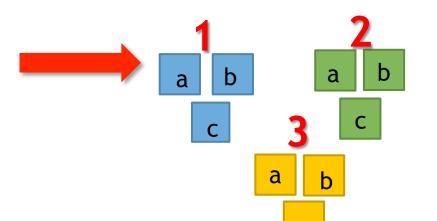
	Why
Who?	The private education company Education First
What?	Released the 2016 English Proficiency Index report
When?	Tuesday
Where?	Online
Why?	Examines the English knowledge level of adults from 72 countries

A News Jigsaw Activity

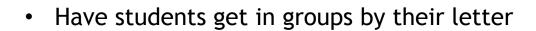


Assign your students a number





- Give each group a different news story
- Groups analyze the story
- After, assign each person in each group a letter



- Each person in the group should have read a different story
- In the new groups, have each person take turns summarizing their story to the group

Learning English Podcast



Making Podcasts in Class

Group Podcast

- Put students in groups, and have each student in a group research a current event and write a news story
- Have groups record themselves reading each of their news story

Class Podcast

Have each group research one current event per group and write a news story

Record each group reading their news story

If you don't have audio recording equipment, then have groups read stories out loud as a podcast "role play"

News Words - Video



News Words Activity

- Create a list of vocabulary from current events
 - ► Example: "Practical"
- ▶ Put students in groups. Give each group a word, and have them find a news article that uses the vocabulary word
 - Example: "Students Live in Floating Shipping Containers" by Deborah Block
- Students create presentation where they define word, and read part of news story that uses word



This Day in Photos



This Day in Photos

What do you think is happening in this photo? WHY?

▶ If you were to give this photo a title, what would it be?



This Day in Photos



A ceremony participant spits water on a sword as he takes part in Hei Neak Ta, or procession of the spirits, which marks the end of the celebration of the Lunar New Year for the Chinese community in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Learning English TV

Learning English TV



JANUARY 12, 2017

Traditional New Orleans Cooking Meets a Taste of Vietnam

- 1. Give the video title and ask students what they think the article is going to be about
- 2. Give post-video comprehension questions
- 3. Give students a prompt for a follow up reaction to the video

Learning English TV

The video's title is:

"3D Printers Allow Tanzania Hospital to Make Artificial Limbs Quickly"

What do you think the video will be about?

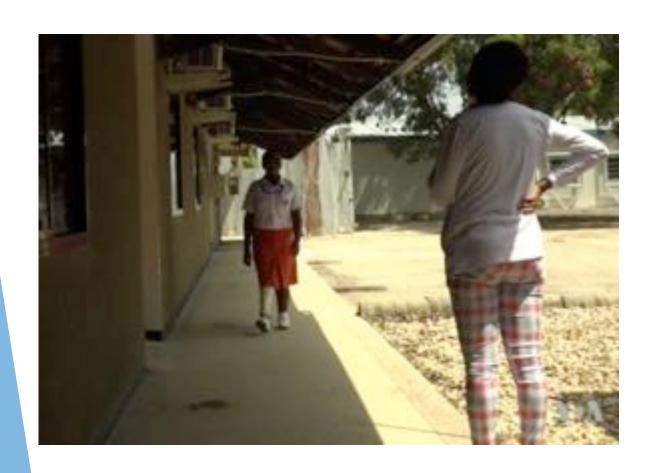
Share your ideas in chat box.

Learning English TV



- 1. The video's title is: "3D Printers Allow Tanzania Hospital to Make Artificial Limbs Quickly"
- 2. How did Pendo James get her prosthetic leg?
- 3. What do you think of this new technology? Share your thoughts.

Learning English TV



Have students watch the video clip without sound, and write what they think the story is about

Interviews

- Assign your students to write a current events story for class
- Require at least one interview for the story
 - Requires both listening and speaking skills
 - Gives students the opportunity to hear different accents of English



Role Plays

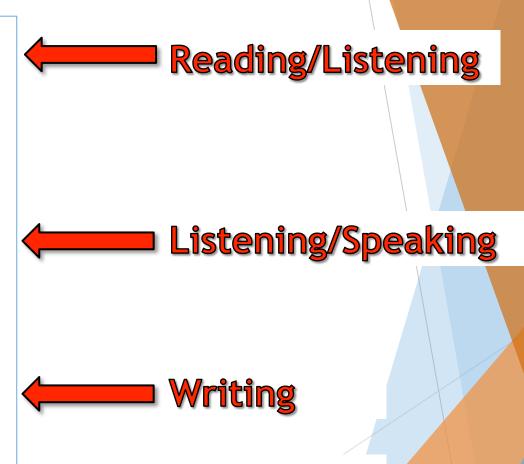
- Assign your students a current events topic
- In groups, have your students research the topic, and write their own summary
- ► Have them make a skit and present the current event as a newscaster

► To create more speaking opportunities, assign multiple current event topics to each group



A Class Project With Current Events

- 1. Put students in groups, assign them a current event.
- 2. In groups, students research the current event, and find the information to answer who, what, when, where, and why
- 3. The students then go out and interview people outside of class for the story
- 4. Students take their research and interviews and write summaries of the story in news form.
- 5. Students present their current event summaries in a role-play as newscasters.



Speaking

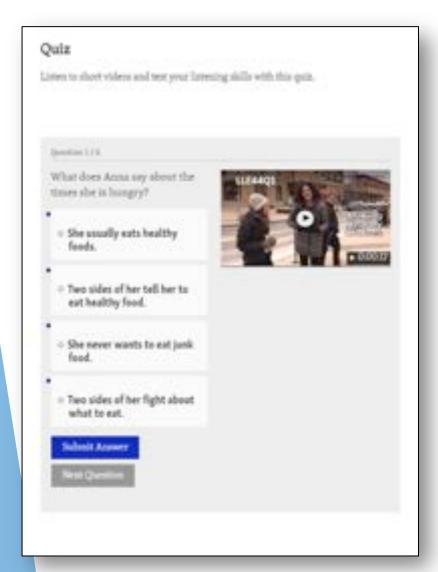
Other VOA Learning English Resources

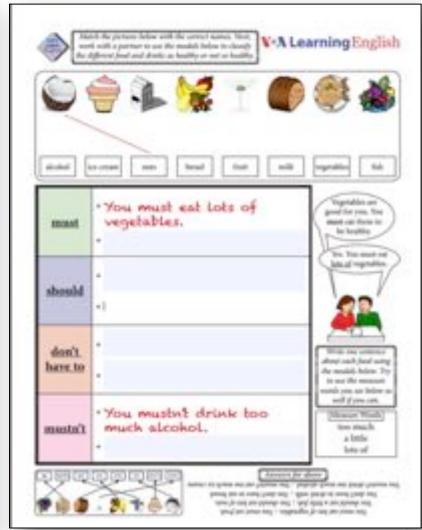
- Let's Learn English
- People in America
- Everyday Grammar

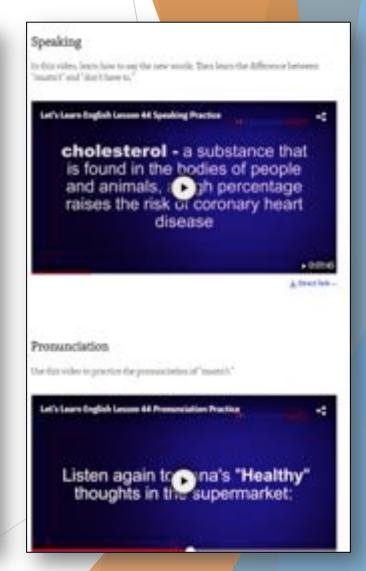
Let's Learn English Video Series



Let's Learn English Video Series







People in America -Video Series



Everyday Grammar



Everyday Grammar TV



Everyday Grammar Podcast

Review

- 1. Understand what current events are and why they are important
- 2. Learn about the benefit of using current events in the English language classroom
- 3. Learn about Voice of America and the different resources it offers English language teachers
- 4. Learn how to use Voice of America resources in the English language classroom

Resources

- Voice of America www.voanews.com
- ▶ VOA Learning English www.learningenglish.voanews.com
- Breaking News English www.breakingnewsenglish.com
- The New York Times The Learning Network Blog www.nytimes.com/section/learning
- News in Levels www.newsinlevels.com/
- English Club www.englishclub.com/efl/category/listeningnews/
- Education World www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/ lesson/lesson072.shtml

References

- ▶ Bainville, Sean. Breaking News English. 2017.
- Dierking, Phil. "How Well is English Spoken Worldwide?" Voice of America Learning English. 2016.
- ► Hanna, Amy. "Current Events" *English Teaching Forum*. Volume 53, Number 3. 2016

Thanks for Attending!