ONLINE TEACHING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR JOURNALISM (ON THE EXAMPLE OF PREPARING A BROADCAST COPY)

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Abstract

Thanks to the development of information and communication technologies, today it has become possible to teach a foreign language of profession in a distance format. The MGIMO Faculty of International Journalism uses educational materials based on the online course "English for Journalism" developed by the University of Pennsylvania(USA) to teach students of an intermediate level of the English language proficiency. The article deals with teaching students in an online format how to work on the copy for the radio broadcast. The training module includes listening to four six-minute video lectures, test tasks aimed at understanding the material listened to (multiple choice), as well as creative tasks representing the creation of a pitch for a radio broadcast and writing one's own radio report.

Keywords: audio segment, video lecture, to go on the air, multiple choice, pitch, radio report, copy.

In the conditions of an information society that focuses on self-education, the ways of presenting educational material and working on it have changed [1, p.67]. Thanks to the use of information and communication technologies, distance learning, which is a new educational approach, has wholly fitted in the educational environment. The second important innovation in the field of education is the widespread use of content and language integrating learning (CLIL), the emergence of which is dictated by the processes of globalization and objective conditions for the development of foreign language education in the world [2, p. 6]. MGIMO University uses both distance and CLIL approach for training future journalists. Students are offered educational materials prepared on the basis of the online course English for Journalism, which was developed by the University of Pennsylvania (USA) and is designed for students of an intermediate level of English proficiency.

The object of the study is the educational process within the framework of English journalism (level B1). The students represent an adult audience consisting of those specializing in international journalism. In this article, the task is to show how students are trained in an online format within the framework of one of the traditional topics of journalism – the creation of a radio report. Observation, analysis, synthesis and comparison were used as the main research methods.

The training module dedicated to working on a radio report includes listening to four six-minute video lectures, test tasks aimed at understanding the material listened to (multiple choice), as well as creative tasks representing the creation of a pitch for a radio broadcast and writing one's own radio report.

In the first video lecture, students get acquainted with specialists who work in the radio studio; these are news anchors, correspondents, producers and control room operators. Sometimes a radio program is named after the host, since it is he/she who goes on the air with it during the week, for example, the program *Nightly News with Lester Holt* is named after its host Lester Holt. A correspondent is working on the content of the text of the radio script. This can be a general correspondent who covers news stories, or a special correspondent who talks about events in a certain field of activity, for example, in business or medicine. The anchor and the correspondent are the participants in the broadcasting process who go on the air. In radio journalism, people who remain in the shadows are also important, for example, the producer. It is he/she who chooses the topics for the radio program, determines the duration of each audio

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segment, indicates in what order the segments should be broadcast, manages the broadcasting process and decides when to make advertising breaks. The word of the producer is crucial for the broadcast of the program. Control room operators work side by side with journalists. They technically process audio segments, adjust the sound, and provide technical support for the broadcast. After the students have listened to the video lecture, they must do a short multiple-choice test, determining which word corresponds to the proposed definition. For example, the definition *the lead journalist who reads the news* is given, the students need to define the word that corresponds to it: *teleprompter, anchor, correspondent* or *producer*.

The second video lecture is devoted to the types of radio broadcasts and the presentation *(pitching)* of the radio broadcast project *(copy)* for approval by the producer. Genre-wise, radio reports can belong to one of the four types: news report, a commentary, a consumer report and a story of general interest.

It is important to convince the producer that the information offered by the journalist is interesting and important for radio listeners. The easiest way to get the producer's approval is by creating a news report. To do this, the most important thing is to avoid factual errors, demonstrate impartiality and create a message on the topic of the day. Sources of information should be carefully checked. Mistakes in news reports are fraught with radio listeners' losing confidence in the radio channel and stopping listening to it.

It is more difficult to convince a producer to air radio broadcasts of other genres. For example, if a journalist wants to create a report on an event of general interest, they must submit a text that necessarily includes four parts: 1. a brief overview of the event or a question to be answered; 2. a list of persons to be interviewed; 3. a link to the current state of affairs; 4. an explanation of why this story is important for radio listeners. Messages of this kind, as a rule, cause deep empathy of radio listeners, since each of them may find themselves in the center of a similar event. For instance: *Imagine that a person goes to a food cart to get lunch every day for years. And one day the food cart disappears, and nobody knows where it's gone.* We can use the aforementioned four-point structure to present this story to the producer's judgment. The first thing we do is ask the question: *"What happened to the food cart?"* Next, we suggest conducting several interviews – with former buyers, with the seller of a nearby stall and with a local trade inspector who may know what has happened. After that, we establish a connection with what is happening today, for example, noting that food "on the go" is becoming more and more popular. Finally, we point out why this story is important: a food cart is more than a place where food is bought, it has a social function, here people meet, talk, establish and maintain relationships.

To make the pitch more effective, we add the final touch. There are two ways to do this – to summarize the story or to establish one's own involvement in the events described. In the case of the disappeared food cart, one can summarize the events in the first sentence of the report *(This is a story about a missing food cart and how people were affected by it)* or show one's own connection with what happened *(For two years I bought my lunch from the same food cart. I chatted with the owner about football, asked him how his children were doing, and one day, it was gone).* It seems that such a pitch will convince the editor to approve of the copy.

The second task is to create one's own pitch. The student is required to propose an idea for their own radio copy and write a pitch of one hundred words. When creating a pitch, it is important to focus on why this story is of news value, who is interested in it, what are the sources of information, and how long a preliminary study will take. The following text is offered as a sample: *A local wildlife organization is seeking volunteers to feed baby birds. This story is newsworthy because many of our local birds are endangered. This time of year, many birds are born but they often don't survive. Many people are interested in learning about how they can support our local wildlife. I plan to interview the organization's volunteer coordinator, a wildlife specialist, and people who volunteered in previous seasons. I will need three days to research and write the story.*

After completing this task, students listen to the third video lecture dedicated to conducting interviews with people involved in the described event and including the information

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provided by them in the copy. These may be eyewitnesses of the event, friends, relatives, experts or those in power. The interview consists of so-called *wh-questions* that begin with question words: *who, what, where, when, why*. As part of the radio program about feeding baby birds, it is planned, for example, to interview the coordinator of the volunteer movement. It is suggested that he/she is asked the following questions: *Why do the baby birds need help? Who should people contact to volunteer? When do you need volunteers? What is the minimum age to volunteer? Where can people find more information about your organization?* After listening to the video lecture, students should write a list of persons to conduct interviews with and questions that they should be asked.

The fourth video lecture, deals with the style of radio reports. Despite the fact that the anchor has a copy before their eyes, he/she should not read it and speak speak as if they are having a personal conversation with the interlocutor who is sitting next to them. To establish contact with radio listeners, it is important to use a conversational style. The first recommendation is the use of short simple sentences [3, p.51]. The radio listener does not have the opportunity to go back and read the sentence again, like in print media; they must understand what it is about at once. For example, in a printed article one can find such a sentence: *The police have been conducting a house-to-house search in a continued effort to apprehend the suspects*. In the radio copy, this idea will be stated more briefly: *Police are still looking for the suspects.*

The second recommendation is to use introductory words that contain a summary of what will be discussed. For example, the presenter says: *more bad news from the stock.* Listeners will immediately understand that the report will be devoted to some sad events in the financial sphere. The third recommendation is the use of abbreviations [3, p.53]. In everyday speech, people constantly resort to abbreviated versions of words and grammatical constructions. The anchor also uses abbreviated speech forms to maintain close contact with the audience. So, instead of *I am* he/she will say *I'm,* instead of *I will – I'll*. It is important for the anchor to create a feeling among radio listeners that the event is happening right at the moment, and they are its witnesses. For this purpose, radio reports mainly use the present and present progressive tenses as well as the active voice of the verb, which creates the illusion of personal presence of radio listeners at the event site. Next, students are offered a short test paper in which it is necessary to transform the syntactic structures of print media into a text for a radio copy. For example, a print media sentence would be as follows: *The Mayor has begun the process of choosing her deputy for the upcoming election.* And in the radio copy it will be transformed as follows: *The Mayor is looking for her next deputy.*

After completing the test, students familiarize themselves with a sample of the radio report: *"City Announces New Internship Program" by Eve Nora Litt, Education Correspondent: Philadelphia will host a new internship program. That's what Bill Wallace of the City Department of Education said on Thursday. High school students can earn high school credit at City Hall. They'll work with a city council member. Participants will go through a two-step application process. The program won't begin until next fall. Bill Wallace explained that high school students need real world experience and something to put on their college application. This program hopes to increase the rate of college-bound high school graduates and decrease drop-out rates. The two-step application begins in April. First applicants will write an essay about a local issue that they're passionate about. Drinking water, bullying, crime, public transportation, and school lunches are other hot topics for student essays. After reviewing the essays, only 100 students will be brought in for interviews for only 20 spots. The internship will start at 2 PM and end at 5 PM on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from September to December. Buses will pick students up from all over the city. Interns should wear business casual clothing. Many city council members are looking forward to working with interns.*

After the students have studied the sample of the radio copy, they are required to write the text of their own copy based on the pitch they have already submitted. In their text, they should include answers to the questions that were put to the interviewees. These questions can be

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presented in the form of quotations, in direct speech, as well as in the form of retelling, that is, in indirect speech. Doing this task completes the work on the radio copy in English.

As predicted by the Japanese sociologist and futurologist Yoneji Masuda, who was at the outset of the concept of the information society, in which we live today, the development of information technologies will lead to the emergence of an open educational environment, to turning self-education and self-study into leading educational forms and to lifelong learning [4]. In this regard, it seems that materials for online teaching of foreign languages and textbooks for online forms of open education will become more and more in demand.

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