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Reading Newspaper Articles as a Motivation Tool for Students with Nonlinguistic Major

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Abstract

This article deals with the motives and attitudes of students with nonlinguistic major studying English as a foreign language in a higher educational institution. Nowadays, having a good command of English both oral and written is a prerequisite for a successful promotion in every field, students must learn how to communicate by means of a foreign language on a very high level. The aim of this paper is to show the efficiency of reading activities for motivating students during their studies, as well as to emphasize the relevance of reading authentic newspaper articles. Significance of the work is contained in finding and using new methods and teaching means for improvement of students' competence in reading in a foreign language. Results of the empirical study conducted by the authors represent evaluation of authentic newspaper articles' potential for reading comprehension in a classroom and, furthermore, demonstrate effectiveness of this method for EFL and ESL teaching. In other words, the use of authentic text materials from modern Russian and English newspapers with their adaptation and application of various types of communicative tasks before and after the process of reading has been proved to increase the motivation of students to learn English. Reading newspaper articles, therefore, has been also detected to be an effective tool for development of intercultural competences. The experimental part of the investigation was conducted in the Kazan Federal University (Russia), and consisted of a questionnaire that was filled in anonymously by various groups of students, answers to which helped to determine the popularity of reading newspapers among students.

Keywords: Education, Reading, Article, Newspapers, Higher education, Motivation, Student, University, Teaching methodology, Teacher, Foreign language.

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Introduction

Nowadays a lot of attention is paid to the training of highly qualified professionals in higher education. The economic situation of Russia requires new rules of business relations on a level of a state. There is an exact problem of training a new generation of professionals who can conduct business with foreign companies in the business world. In order to work with such companies people often need a good level of English, both oral and written form. Every year in the higher education requirements for proficiency in foreign languages increase. This is due to the need to combine our state standards with international trends of progress. The main task of teaching a foreign language is to organize educational services in accordance with the level of the famous ancient universities. The educational institutions actively apply the latest technologies of language training. We cannot forget the initial level of language preparation of students (Yahin, Sakaeva, & Burenkova, 2016a: 223).

Reading foreign newspapers is compulsory and inseparable stage at the lessons of foreign languages in the era of the multimedia revolution. Owing to this fact, reading must be studied in a new way, and to realize it as an essential component, it is necessary to create new methodological rules related to its performance and preparation. As a specific aspect of a subject, foreign language is able to create a more stable complex communication skill. Problems, requiring special training are solved throughout the learning a foreign language. Certainly, reading in a foreign language increases vocabulary, enriches the speech, introduces a level of education and spiritual life of the country, and improves the student's research work.

During the reading students have to think comprehensively, check the factual and logical arrangement of the article, analyze the context, explore alternatives, to explain their point of view. Analytical reading teaches students to work with many categories of information easily. The ability of students to use different types of texts will help them efficiently apply all kinds of information sources. This is due to the actuality of the question of reading technologies.

A significant contribution to the study of reading techniques is made by such Russian scientists as S.K. Folomkina, I.L. Bim, E.V. Komarova, I.A. Zimnyaya, Z.I. Klychnikova, A.A. Veyze, M.V. Plaskina, A.A. Leontev, E.A. Bogdanova, G.V. Rogova, T.S. Serova, S.F. Shatilov, I.M. Kompaniets, and E.V. Melekhina. Teaching technologies aimed to motivate students to read are always required because in the process of reading various articles future specialists will be able to receive relevant information from authentic printed sources. From the point of view of teachers, reading forms fundamental, undoubted basis for educational and theoretical skills. On the basis of the State Program of Education, reading plays dominant role from the methodological point of view, and becomes available kind of speech activity. Reading in teaching foreign languages is necessary because of the distance of foreign countries.

Widespread audio and video collections in open access in the era of multimedia revolution leads to the displacement of the reading from methods of learning foreign languages. Students prefer to listen to audio, watch videos, participate in discussions at the lessons of foreign language. Because of the predominance of the communicative method, reading sometimes takes a secondary position. However, it is always necessary, and for this reason, it is useful to remember the opportunities and benefits of the use of articles for reading. We must remember the fact that reading is one of the most common types of human activity. Students must improve their reading in order to be able to read basic signs, advertisements, instructions for use of the goods, entertainment resources, imaginative literature on different Internet sites. Reading helps to prepare students to participate actively in the communications with foreigners that require a spontaneous reaction in the course of discussion.

In modern methodology of teaching foreign languages, reading is recognized as one of the fundamental skills, when the further training is impossible without it's mastering. The purpose of reading is to extract

information contained in the text. In addition, with the real text you can train the student's speaking, listening, and writing. The main aim of such work is to teach them to read without translation. Only this kind of reading gives you the opportunity to learn how to extract information from the text because the translation often prevents to understand the text. Therefore, the emphasis in the training of highly qualified specialists, attention should be paid to the development of students' interests linked with the mastery of the profession (Yahin, Sakaeva, & Burenkova, 2016: 4048).

With regards to this, the main goal of a present work is to evaluate the potential of reading the authentic newspaper articles online for the improvement of ESL students' reading skills and the increase of their motivation to learn English. In order to collect the necessary data, authors of a present paper conducted a poll, questions of which covered the general concerns. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix 1, the exact methods and results are presented in sections 2.1 and 2.2. Experimental work with the poll was driven by certain prediction. Based on the theoretical conclusions authors refer to in this article, it can be predicted that authentic online newspapers have sufficient potential for the ESL learners and teachers due to their diverse content and availability. To prove that this work helps to compare their prominence with the same ratio for online news sources written in the native language of the participants. It is also predicted that disregarding its high potential, reading comprehension through the use of authentic sources available in a great amount online, is limited in use, due to the difficulties with understanding of a core idea, terminology or struggling with high complexity of academic style of writing. In addition, it is worth to determine the general preferences of ESL students in reading online newspapers, such as which services do they use to access the sources, how do they utilize certain options presented on a website of a publisher like collections of related articles, completed in accordance with the reader's preferences, or availability of video and sound content and etc. All in all the present paper should provide supplementary empirical arguments for the current theoretical data, as well as reveal some interesting findings from comparing habitual aspects of reading online newspapers in a native language of a reader and in English.

Theoretical background

The base of the reading consists of lexical, perceptual, grammatical skills. Fragmentation of any species of listed skills negatively affects to the results of the learning process of reading in a foreign language. Good reading skills consist of such qualities as maturity, flexibility, and automation.

Motivational aspect stands out as one of the determinative factors in the process of reading. Articles from the newspapers often represent real events that influence to our perception of reality. They give start for the successful acceptance of knowledge. Every article can represent the real sequence of events. As publicism contains real events written by the author.

Today, there is a huge amount of definitions of articles in linguistics. As a complex of sentences, it has a certain paradigm, orientation. The article is considered to be the product of speech process that has completeness, formed in the form of the written object. Scientists from the field of linguistics confirm that the article contains such features as integrity, completeness, semantic completeness.

Reading newspapers help the students to develop language skill. It also increases their vocabulary. And at last, students become more educated. Then they can take part in discussions, debates. We can say about newspapers that they are most advantageous types of media. It provides significant information, which is not accessible in other formats of media like radio and television. They are more formal and use standard models of languages, while news on television is less official (Mustaq, 2015: 13).

Foreign articles from newspapers in the teaching of foreign languages give great motivating resource. Thus, the article has the following properties:

- Contains material of a foreign culture that can be a source for the formation of social, cultural communication;
- Reflects the information on specific topics to meet the individual needs of readers;
- Encourages communication, so that students or readers had the opportunity to express their point of view on described topics in the article;
- Becomes a cause of formation of different social relations, as group, interpersonal, project;
- Considered as a reproductive model, it can be perceived, reproduced;
- It is the material for the development of phonetic, grammatical, lexical, morphological skills;
- Reflects the thought processes of a native speaker, in addition, it meets the needs of a new generation of people in the actual topics;
- It has a variety of types, for this reason, may be used at the lessons to realize the conversational purposes (Melekhina, 2013: 2-3).

The article can serve as a basis for motivation because of the thematic directionality, a variety of presentation forms, and the probability to make lessons in interesting style. They allow the teacher to find a topic for communication, serve as a model in respect of language and suggest to the readers special rules for the use of language patterns. They give us all the information about other countries, continents, the level of living. Students receive new knowledge through the articles, increase their experience of life.

In the classroom of a foreign language freshmen are prepared purposefully for speech interaction in the professional and social, cultural fields of communication, what is difficult to adjust at first. Initially, nonlinguistic high schools must use articles with the social, cultural context, in order to raise the level of training of students by improving the ability to read general words. Then you can transit to the introduction of popular science articles, as they represent the difficulty for the students and they need to have good language skills for reading articles in specialty. Careful selection of articles with professional terminology helps to form the necessary skills, the ability to extract and to rethink the important material. Selected articles must not only correspond to the interests and the age of pupils, but also social, cultural and professional competences. It is also necessary to pay attention to the fact that at first teacher should take into account the cognitive side of information, acceptability, the integrity, and the logics of the plot.

The article prepared for further work, is a real source of kept, compressed sample of the story. There is no doubt that a true original article plays an effective role in learning a foreign language. Famous scientists, teachers say about their preferences of original materials, among them R.P. Milrud, L.N. Yakovlev, and G.I. Voronin can be mentioned. Besides, articles do not only reflect the speech activity, but also demonstrate the culture of the native speaker. Articles containing information about the social life of the peoples of studied language motivate to learn, to improve the level of knowledge, to acquire knowledge about the culture of the nation, to develop skills for understanding.

Z.I. Klychnikova emphasizes that reading is divided into the investigating, the searching, the viewing and introductory forms, which in their turn contain different tasks, and all contribute to the appearance of the fluent, flexible reading. It is recommended to use all kinds of reading. Otherwise, it will lead to inefficiencies of learning (Klychnikova, 1983: 46).

In the classroom of a foreign language, even the simplest tasks can be motivating. Creative tasks must touch the personal motivations of students. Such qualities as competition, contest gives motivation during the learning of language. It is also necessary to take into account the nature of the difficulty of tasks with which students work. Due to the difficult tasks, students may lose interest in the text. Motivational

exercises include all of the same tasks performing before reading the material, during reading and after reading articles.

Therefore, the motivational tasks before reading contain these types:

- forecasting about the headline of the article;
- task on the theme;
- inventing hypotheses;
- preparation of dialogue;
- formation of relations (with the given words from the article).

Motivational tasks during the reading of the article include the following:

- restoration of the text;
- a visual representation of the information;
- questionnaire;

Motivational activities after reading the text:

- transforming the style of the text;
- searching for the other headline;
- changing the content;
- inventing the end;
- to write another article.

These kinds of reading are distinguished in a foreign technique of reading:

- 1) Reading with understanding of the meaning, to find the main idea, intensive;
- 2) First viewing of text material to determine the basic idea;
- 3) Introductory reading to understand the basic essence and useful side;
- 4) The total reading to find out all the necessary details of the material, extensive.

It can be assumed that the differences between the types of reading in different countries carry terminological directionality. A student's possession of all kinds of reading shows his level of speech skills. It can be concluded that in non linguistic high school skimming, intensive types are should be used, so it is also necessary to improve the introductory, extensive types of reading. As it is known that there will not be the result if the understanding of the text is absent.

As we know, motivated students are more active in reading difficult newspaper articles. They can read such articles even out of the class, because of their desire to read. There are many factors that help students to become good readers: extensive practice and exposure to print, attention to reading fluency, comprehension skills practice and discussion (Sigacheva, 2016: 310).

Empirical data

Methodology

To evaluate the potential impact of using authentic online reading sources for advancement of the students, a questionnaire (Appendix 1) was prepared that was filled in by several groups of students of the Kazan Federal University (Russia) with technical and IT major, where English is included in a core curriculum for first two to three years of education. 56 students took part in an anonymous poll, where the most of them are at the age of 18 (30 participants) and 19 years old (12 participants) as they are in their 2nd semester of a general Bachelor program. Other 14 participants represent different age groups (17-23), they are nevertheless also students of the 2nd semester, who was enrolled to the university either earlier or later than usually due to their private matters such as a gap-year or army services (Table 1). As it was noted previously, the poll was fully anonymous; the only information that was required from the students was a number of years⁴. There will be presented the questions and explained their relevance for the topic of a current study. Results of the poll in a percentage rate will be introduced and discussed in the next section.

Table 1. Age scale and amount of the participants

Age	Number of participants
17 years	2
18 years	30
19 years	12
20 years	1
21 years	2
22 years	8
23 years	1
Total: 56	

As it can be seen in the Appendix 1, the questionnaire consisted of 9 questions subdivided into two blocks requiring answers about reading newspapers in a native language and in English. We used a formulation 'native language' instead of Russian in order to avoid misunderstandings, as we often deal with a multinational audience, where a certain amount of students are the representatives of other nations (mostly from Post-Soviet countries) and, therefore, are not native speakers of Russian, so they can prefer reading newspapers in their own language. What concerns the questions, attempt was made to address the issue of reading authentic sources online from various perspectives. For instance, the first question was constructed as a general one, answers to which helped to underline pure statistics of using online newspapers by the younger generations, namely the 2nd semester Bachelor students in this case.

⁴ Participation in the poll was voluntary. All the participants were informed about its methods and purposes in advance.

Questions 2, 3 and 6 served to define the general preferences of the readers with regards to tools and techniques they use to access an online source, their concerns when choosing the source and etc.

Questions 4 and 5 were aimed to find out what do students choose to read and whether they consider the online reading sources as prominent ones for their particular field of studies. It should be reminded here that all students who participated in the poll are the students with a technical, physical or IT major, what makes the choice of a newspaper a relevant matter for the investigations of a current paper as well.

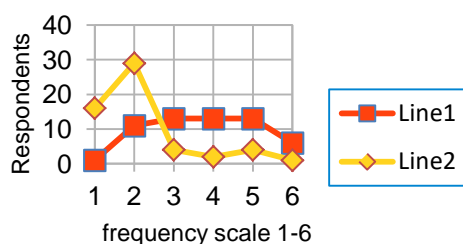
Question 7 deserves more profound discussion. While including this question attempt was made to evaluate not only the students' certain preferences, but also the potential of online sources to attract the reader's attention to other content of a particular website. In other words, the answers to this question should demonstrate how efficient are other services of an online paper such as availability of video -or audio- content or navigation and search for related topics and entries and etc. Finally, questions 8 and 9 consider reading online newspapers in English only, in order to analyze the key difficulties non-native speakers can be faced with while reading them. It was as well questioned what measures could be useful for the students in overcoming these struggles.

To close up, questions used in the poll were formulated with accordance to the predictions and aims of the study that are presented in the introductory section. The results that received will be discussed in details within the following paragraphs.

Results

Generally speaking, the results of the poll appeared to be compatible with the predictions made by the authors and the general theoretical frame of the current research. Rare instances of controversy receive special attention in this section. To begin with, it can be stated that the responses of the students to the first question, where they had to rate the frequency of reading online newspapers on a scale from 1 to 6, fully met researchers' initial expectations.

Figure 1

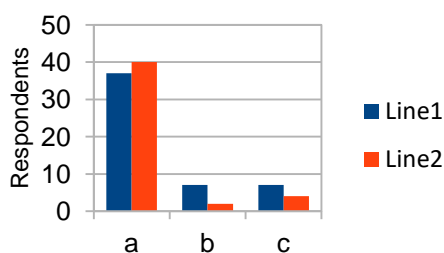


As illustrated in Figure 1, students consistently read online newspapers in their native language, what is supported by their answers. As for English, 15 participants (what makes it around 30 % of the all the respondents) admitted that they do not read news in English at all, whereas only 1 student reads authentic sources online very often. The absolute majority of the participants is placed between numbers 2 to 5, what allows to conclude that, fortunately for the present research, students do at least sometimes read online news

sources in English.

Results for the questions 2, 3 and 6 are as well illustrated in the graphical tables (Figures 2, 3, 4 respectively).

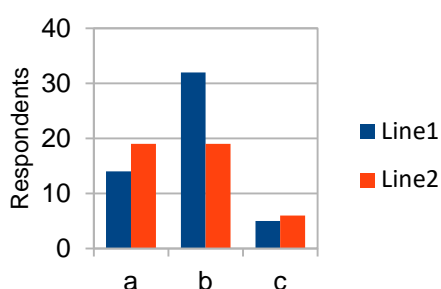
Figure 2



have chosen the answer (b).

As it was predicted for both types of sources (in English and in native language), students prefer to read them at home, numbers in Figure 2 support it with nearly the same amount of respondents choosing the answer (a). Another approval was received from the poll, namely that students prefer using social networks such as Facebook or Twitter to read the contemporary articles of various publishers, can be seen in Figure 3, where the most of the respondents (over 30 for native language sources and around 20 for the English ones)

Figure 3

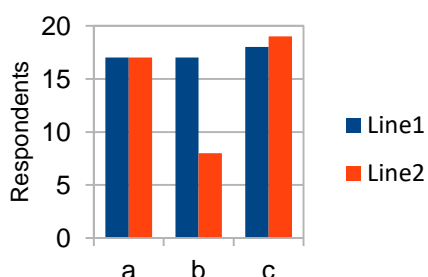


language and in English.

It worth mentioning, that quite a significant amount of respondents (around 20 for each language) admitted visiting official pages of news agencies in Internet rather often as well. These findings enable the researchers to say that instances of accessing the news sources online are indeed highly prevailing among the contemporary youth.

As for the choice of a source, corresponding Figure 4 interestingly shows that the students more often look for specific articles (answer c) or rely on the reputation of a publisher (answer a) when reading both in their native

Figure 4

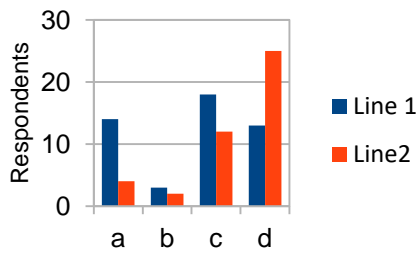


throughout the times.

Even more interesting is the fact that answer (b), demonstrating the prominence of the amount of visitors and followers of a certain source, is only relevant for the respondents when reading online news in their own language. The same answer for the authentic online sources received the minimum of 8 votes, what regarding the amount of the participants makes it less than 7 %. It can be, thus, concluded that students are confident enough to make a choice based on their own special preferences and needs, or in case they are not, they rather rely on the reputation of a source, gained

The next block of question (4 and 5) referred to the preferences of the respondents with regards to the clusters of information they usually 'click on' when reading newspapers online. Results were as totally as expected for reading in a native language. Students, who took part in the poll, expressed little attention to the political news and even less to world of finance (Figure 5, answers a, b). Social and cultural events are more popular with around 30% of respondents in case of both native and authentic sources (Figure 5, answer c).

Figure 5



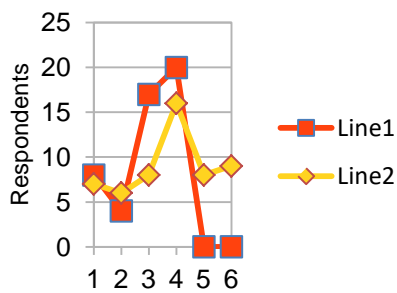
Surprisingly though is the preference of the students in favor of authentic online sources, writing about their particular fields of studies.

Around 50 % of respondents admitted reading academic articles about the topics they study in English, in comparison with only c. 20 % of the votes for scientific articles written in their native language (Figure 5, answer d). This tendency was also supported by the answers to question 5, where the students were to evaluate the prominence of information

presented in the media sources for their study purposes.

Figure 6 represents the scale of answers from 1-6, where 6 means highly relevant. The difference between the answers for native language and for the English language proves, that authentic sources are treated as more relevant ones than the native, when it comes to the particular field of study students are interested in.

Figure 6

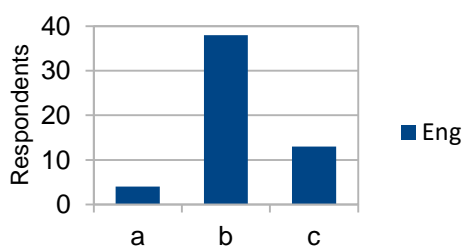


As long as question 7 was introduced by the authors out of a general interest, it does not need specific attention. It is, however, worth mentioning that it was proved that the students use online newspapers for reading comprehension mostly: when accessing a website or Facebook page of a newspaper respondents of a current poll either read an article they were looking for and leave the page, or continue reading related articles for more data on a specific topic. The fact that only 8 % of students participated in the study search for video or audio content on the same website is not surprising, as long as there exist more suitable tools and services for that such as YouTube or Vimeo and etc.

exist more suitable tools and services for that such as YouTube or Vimeo and etc.

The last block of questions was dedicated to the reading of authentic online newspapers and the difficulties the students can meet when approaching them. The corresponding Figures 7 and 8 demonstrate that our expectations with regards to these questions and answers to them were fulfilled. For the question 8, the key struggle for the students was revealed to be understanding the specific vocabulary with about 40 votes (Figure 7, answer b).

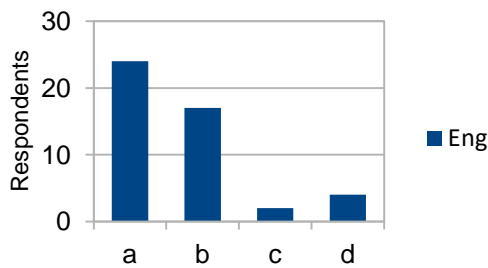
Figure 7



Around 15 % of the respondents (13 participants) found academic style of writing troublesome. This is compatible with the predictions of a current study underlining problems students are faced with due to the lack of knowledge of a professional lexicon. Finally, answers to the question 9 illustrate a strong volition of students to gain more confidence in reading authentic sources. Their responses reveal that regular reading of these sources in English together with courses of English included in their

curriculum can empower them with the competences they require to work with the sources related to their fields of studies. (Figure 8, answers a, b).

Figure 8



To conclude this section, it should be stated that findings derived from the conduction of the poll in Appendix 1 are proved to compatible with aims and predictions of the current paper. In the following paragraphs we will discuss the meaning of these findings with regards to the outlined theoretical framework and possibilities for further implementation of these empirical findings in the process of ESL and EFL teaching in the university classrooms.

Discussion

Reading newspaper articles in general was subject of the research. Moreover, preferences and tendencies in using authentic reading sources online were evaluated. In fact, most students are dependent on the Internet and other digital sources available nowadays. So, it is not a surprise that the data show that students highly appreciate the opportunity to use both printed and online reading sources for informational purposes, and in case of reading in English, as an extremely effective comprehension tool. Results also show that the reputation of a publisher plays an important role for young readers, as well as its popularity and diversity of its content. The overall potential of implementation of authentic newspaper sources for the improvement of reading skills in a university classroom can be evaluated as very high: it can increase motivation of the students for the learning process in general; the authenticity of an implied content serves to up-grade students' literacy in a foreign language; finally, it enables the students to develop their intercultural competences and helps them to evaluate the global landscape objectively.

At the lessons, the use of newspaper articles depends on teacher. Reading articles must become a habit, because it provides a good motivation to continue regular reading. Teachers need to ask students to anticipate, predict and summarize in order to determine their goals for reading. While students are reading for authentic purposes, teachers encourage practice. Even small changes can make to improve their abilities of reading. More or less teachers are in a position to change approaches to reading. They may improve the students' reading abilities by helping them to become better readers. It is just a simple thing that students learn to read better by reading a lot, which is difficult to achieve in some cases. In spite of it, teachers can create conditions when students are motivated to read independently. The other question appears when articles are not interesting, boring. Such reading does not give pleasure, it is frustrating. Sometimes students are concerned about their grades and begin competition with each other. It is called "required motivation", which may be negative, but may be positive under the right conditions. Another way to provide reading is to give a choice. It serves like an excellent motivator.

Conclusion

The technique of using a newspaper article as a motivational component of classes, and not only as a material for forming the skills of reading, allows to build a learning process correctly, taking into account existing motives. Moreover, this approach is applied to the article by the teacher to develop specific training material based on the individual needs of a specific group and motivating factors. At present much attention is given to the development of oral communication skills, and the teacher dedicates all of his work to solving problems of communication skills. Reading in class loses its specificity and is mixed with the spoken language and material for reading becomes an additional motive for the development of speaking skills. Speaking and reading are two kinds of speech activity. They have a single connecting

specificity. The basis of any speech skills have certain abilities, i.e. those actions that student do automatically, without thinking about how and what he is doing.

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Appendix 1. (Questionnaire)

In your native language \\ in English.

1. How often do you read online newspapers?

(0 – I do not read them; 5 – very often)

0 1 2 3 4 5

2. Where do you usually read online newspapers?

a) Official page of a newspaper in Internet

b) Facebook, Twitter or other social networks

c) I have a special app

3. Which platform do you usually use to read online newspapers?

a) Official page of a newspaper in Internet

b) Facebook, Twitter or other social networks

c) I have a special app

4. Which news blocks do you prefer?

- a) Politics
- b) Economics and Finance
- c) Society and Culture
- d) Articles related to my field of studies

5. How would you evaluate the prominence of both printed and online media for your particular field of studies?

(0 – not relevant at all; 5 – highly relevant)

0 1 2 3 4 5

6. How do you choose the newspaper?

- a) I read only prestigious and trustworthy publishers
- b) Based on the amount of visitors and followers
- c) I look for specific articles, disregarding the publisher

7. Your actions after reading article?

- a) I click on “Related Articles” to find some more information
- b) I search for more articles of the same author
- c) I search for a related video/audio content
- d) I close the page/ app/ log out from Facebook

8. When reading newspapers in English, what are your main struggles?

- a) My knowledge of English is not enough to understand even a general idea
- b) I can understand a general idea but I have problems with understanding specific terminology
- c) I understand the core idea and I have a good command of specific vocabulary in my field, but I cannot follow the line of argumentation in academic articles.

9. In your opinion, what could help you to overcome the above-mentioned difficulties?

- a) Regular reading
- b) More hours of English in general
- c) More sessions on professional vocabulary
- d) More sessions on academic reading and writing.