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China regulates news websites

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26 September, 2005

THE ARTICLE

China regulates news websites

BNE: China has created new rules and regulations for Internet news sites. It wants to try and control the stories and information released by news agencies and other news websites. The government says this will "safeguard public interest," according to official news agency Xinhua. China's large Internet police department will block sites that do not benefit "social progress". This includes educational websites containing news such as Breaking News English.com, which was blocked earlier this year. Authorities say they only want "healthy and civilized news" online.

China's rapidly growing population of Internet users is the second largest in the world at 100 million. Surfers now have easy access to news from all over the world, which worries the authorities. The Associated Press reports the Chinese government "encourages Internet use for education and business, [but] also keeps...extremely tight [control] over online content, usually blocking material it [considers] subversive or pornographic". The government now also requires people to register their websites and blogs as well as enter their official identity card numbers when visiting Internet cafes.

WARM-UPS

1. NEWS: In pairs / groups, talk about news. Why do you like it? Do you follow the news for any of these reasons?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. To feel intelligent | f. To kill time |
| b. To know what's happening | g. To find out new things |
| c. Because I'm a world citizen | h. The news is living history |
| d. News is interesting | i. It keeps my brain active |
| e. I love discussing current events | j. It's just a habit |

2. NEWS WEBSITES: What do you think the news websites are like in the countries below? What kind of news do you think is popular in these countries?

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| a. China | f. Venezuela |
| b. USA | g. Bhutan |
| c. Zimbabwe | h. Great Britain |
| d. Saudi Arabia | i. Tahiti |
| e. Russia | j. Cuba |

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

China / Internet / news sites / safeguarding public interest / Internet police / social progress / healthy news / current events / pornography / blogs / ID cards / cafes

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. CHINA: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with China. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. NEWS TALK: Talk about each of the arguments below with a partner for just two minutes, before moving on to the next partner. Student A agrees with the first argument, Student B, the second.

- There can be no restrictions on news reporting. vs. Some news is harmful.
- Only fearful governments control news sources. vs. All governments do it.
- Governments should block more websites. vs. The Web should have no barriers.
- Web users should always log on with their ID cards. vs. How ridiculous.
- Only "healthy" news should be allowed online. vs. That's being overprotective.
- The Internet is a dangerous place. vs. The Internet is a liberating place.

6. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION: How important is freedom of information to you? Do you think your government blocks the kinds of information journalists can report on? Is the news you receive 100 percent accurate and truthful and? Talk about this with your partner(s).

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. China has created new rules and regulations on Internet news sites. | T / F |
| b. Authorities say the public is not satisfied with the news it receives. | T / F |
| c. China will also block educational websites that have news content. | T / F |
| d. China wants to allow only "healthy and civilized news" online. | T / F |
| e. China has the largest number of Internet users in the world. | T / F |
| f. China wants its citizens to read news from all over the world. | T / F |
| g. The Chinese government encourages Internet use for education. | T / F |
| h. Internet café visitors must register their ID numbers when online. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| a. created | help |
| b. released | wants |
| c. safeguard | web users |
| d. benefit | made |
| e. civilized | quickly |
| f. rapidly | protect |
| g. surfers | very |
| h. extremely | issued |
| i. requires | frequenting |
| j. visiting | cultured |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| a. China has created new rules | social progress |
| b. stories and information released by | all over the world |
| c. safeguard public | news agencies |
| d. will block sites that do not benefit | of Internet users |
| e. blocked | requires people to register |
| f. rapidly growing population | over online content |
| g. easy access to news from | and regulations |
| h. keeps extremely tight control | or pornographic |
| i. subversive | interest |
| j. The government now also | earlier this year |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WHOOPS: Five of the ten words in bold in each paragraph are incorrect. Find and delete them. In pairs / groups, think of a better word.

China regulates news websites

BNE: China has **cremated** new rules and **regulations** for Internet news sites.

It wants to try and **control** the stories and information released by news agencies and other news websites. The government says this will "**lifeguard** public interest," according to **official** news agency Xinhua. China's large Internet police department will **black** sites that do not **benefit** "social progress". This includes educational websites containing news such as Breaking News English.com, which was blocked **later** this year. Authorities say they only want "healthy and **civilized** news" **offline**.

China's **rapidly** growing population of Internet users is the **seventieth** largest in the world at 100 million. Surfers now have **easy** access to news from all over the **village**, which worries the authorities. The Associated Press reports the Chinese government "encourages Internet use for education and business, [but] also keeps...**extremely loose** [control] over online **content**, usually blocking material it [considers] subversive or **pornographic**". The government now also requires people to register their websites and **logs** as well as enter their official identity card **photos** when visiting Internet cafes.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'public'** and **'interest'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WHOOPS: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "NEWS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about news and freedom of the press.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| • regulations | • population |
| • control | • surfers |
| • safeguard | • encourages |
| • benefit | • content |
| • educational | • register |
| • healthy | • numbers |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think when you first read this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Do you often use the Internet for news?
- d. Do you believe all you read in the news?
- e. Do you think your government controls news content?
- f. Do you think that only news benefits "social progress" should be put online?
- g. Why do you think China blocks educational sites like Breaking News English.com?
- h. What do you think of the idea of governments controlling the Web?
- i. Do you think news can be dangerous?
- j. What kind of news do you think is "healthy and civilized"?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think China can permanently block international news sites?
- d. Why do you think China is blocking domestic news sites?
- e. What would happen in your country if the government blocked freedom of the press?
- f. Does your government do enough to control pornographic sites?
- g. What do you think of the idea of registering with an ID card every time you go online?
- h. Do you think the Web is a dangerous place?
- i. Do you think China is right in trying to block subversive sites?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

INTERNATIONAL NEWS: Look at the headlines taken from the Chinese website People's Daily Online (<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/china.html>). Imagine international journalists wrote these stories and posted them on international web sites. What reasons can you think of why China might consider these as "healthy" or "dangerous".

HEADLINES	HEALTHY	DANGEROUS
Taiwan writer says China experiencing high-level prosperity		
China's peaceful rise		
40 th anniversary of the founding of Tibet Autonomous Region		
Chinese-Japanese relations		
100 th anniversary of Deng Xiaoping's Birth		
176 flights cancelled for military exercise		

Change partners and tell each other what you previously talked about.

Discuss what you think the content of the news stories are.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

China regulates news websites

BNE: China has _____ new rules and regulations for Internet news sites. It wants to try and control the stories and information _____ by news agencies and other news websites. The government says this will "safeguard public interest," _____ official news agency Xinhua. China's large Internet police department will block sites that do not _____ "social progress". This includes educational websites containing news such as Breaking News English.com, which was _____ earlier this year. Authorities say they only want "healthy and civilized news" online.

China's _____ growing population of Internet users is the second largest in the world at 100 million. Surfers now have easy _____ to news from all over the world, which worries the authorities. The Associated Press reports the Chinese government "_____ Internet use for education and business, [but] also keeps... _____ tight [control] over online content, usually blocking material it [considers] subversive or pornographic". The government now also _____ people to register their websites and blogs as well as enter their _____ identity card numbers when visiting Internet cafes.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information China. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. CHINA WEBSITES: Visit some English language Chinese news websites. Write a report on what you thought of the sites. Show your reports to your partners in your next class. Did you all write about similar things?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to the head of China's Ministry of Information. Tell him / her what you think of his / her decision to control the news available to Chinese citizens on the Internet. Offer advice on what to regulate. Read your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. F c. T d. T e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| a. created | made |
| b. released | issued |
| c. safeguard | protect |
| d. benefit | help |
| e. civilized | cultured |
| f. rapidly | quickly |
| g. surfers | web users |
| h. extremely | very |
| i. requires | wants |
| j. visiting | frequenting |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| a. China has created new rules | and regulations |
| b. stories and information released by | news agencies |
| c. safeguard public | interest |
| d. will block sites that do not benefit | social progress |
| e. blocked | earlier this year |
| f. rapidly growing population | of Internet users |
| g. easy access to news from | all over the world |
| h. keeps extremely tight control | over online content |
| i. subversive | or pornographic |
| j. The government now also | requires people to register |

WHOOOPS:

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