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Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

## **Bird flu spreading to Europe**

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**23 August, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Bird flu spreading to Europe**

**BNE:** Avian bird flu is migrating west and has sparked fears of a global pandemic. The deadly influenza strain originated in Asia two years ago, where 61 people died in China, Vietnam and Thailand. Migratory birds have since carried the virus west to Siberia, Russia, where it killed 11,000 birds and prompted vets to slaughter 127,000 others in an attempt to halt its spread. Russian officials have alerted Western European nations that the deadly H5N1 strain is on its way. Countries are now scrambling to shore up their defenses against any outbreaks among their poultry populations. Holland has ordered all chicken farmers to keep their birds indoors as a precautionary measure.

Dr. Evgueny Nepoklonov from Russia's Department of Agriculture has appealed for international financial help to prevent the virus from threatening human life. He said in a news conference: "This isn't a problem of a single state...it is a problem of all mankind that must be studied together and that needs consolidated and well-coordinated activity." Time is of the essence in expediting measures to fight against the virus. Experts believe thousands of flocks of infected birds will migrate to Western Europe in mid-September and then to North America. The World Health Organization has voiced concerns that the virus might mutate and spread among humans, which could potentially kill millions.

## **WARM-UPS**

**1. IT'S HERE:** Imagine avian bird flu has arrived in your country. How will it affect your life? What will you expect your government to do? Will you be glued to the TV? Walk around the class and talk to other students. Ask them for their latest information on news of the virus.

**2. PANDEMICS:** In pairs / groups, talk about the following pandemics that have affected or might affect the world. Which ones are you particularly worried about? Which ones have directly affected your life (or might do so)?

- Avian bird flu
- Terrorism
- Materialism
- Coca-colarization
- Anti-Semitism
- Demonization of Muslims
- AIDS
- Pollution

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

*Bird flu / west / global pandemics / influenza / Asia / migratory birds / viruses / Siberia / poultry / flocks of birds / North America / World Health Organization*

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

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

**5. OPINIONS:** How far do you agree with the following opinions on avian bird flu?

- a. Governments will prevent it from becoming a threat.
- b. It will never find a way to pass from human to human.
- c. Governments should start stockpiling drugs that fight the virus.
- d. Countries need to listen to the WHO, who says millions of people could die.
- e. Many governments blindly believe bird flu is an "Asian problem".
- f. Bird flu will be big and develop into a deadly pandemic.
- g. Hunters should start killing all wild birds now.
- h. Eating chicken is too risky.

**6. QUICK DEBATE:** Students A think bird flu will become a global catastrophe and emergency measures should be taken now. Students B think scientists are scaremongering and the virus will cause no human deaths. Change partners often.

## **BEFORE READING / LISTENING**

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

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. Avian bird flu is migrating east.                                  | T / F |
| b. Russian vets slaughtered 127,000 birds to halt the virus' spread.  | T / F |
| c. European countries are trying to protect their beaches and shores. | T / F |
| d. Holland has ordered its farmers to keep their poultry indoors.     | T / F |
| e. A Russian doctor called for international efforts to save ducks.   | T / F |
| f. Time is of the essence in expediting measures to fight the virus.  | T / F |
| g. There is little chance of the virus reaching North America.        | T / F |
| h. The WHO has warned the virus could kill millions of people.        | T / F |

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

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| a. sparked      | groups       |
| b. strain       | strengthen   |
| c. slaughter    | accelerating |
| d. shore up     | petitioned   |
| e. poultry      | combined     |
| f. appealed     | stock        |
| g. consolidated | fowl         |
| h. expediting   | triggered    |
| i. flocks       | expressed    |
| j. voiced       | destroy      |

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

- |                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. sparked                      | carried the virus west to Siberia |
| b. The deadly influenza         | well-coordinated activity         |
| c. Migratory birds have since   | fears of a global pandemic        |
| d. Countries are now scrambling | from threatening human life       |
| e. keep their birds indoors     | and spread among humans           |
| f. prevent the virus            | to shore up their defenses        |
| g. needs consolidated and       | of infected birds will migrate    |
| h. Time                         | strain originated in Asia         |
| i. thousands of flocks          | is of the essence                 |
| j. the virus might mutate       | as a precautionary measure        |

## **WHILE READING / LISTENING**

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### **Bird flu spreading to Europe**

**BNE:** Avian bird flu is \_\_\_\_\_ west and has sparked fears of a global pandemic. The deadly influenza \_\_\_\_\_ originated in Asia two years ago, where 61 people died in China, Vietnam and Thailand. Migratory birds have \_\_\_\_\_ carried the virus west to Siberia, Russia, where it killed 11,000 birds and \_\_\_\_\_ vets to slaughter 127,000 others in an attempt to \_\_\_\_\_ its spread. Russian officials have alerted Western European nations that the deadly H5N1 strain is on its way. Countries are now \_\_\_\_\_ to shore up their defenses against any outbreaks among their \_\_\_\_\_ populations. Holland has ordered all chicken farmers to keep their birds indoors as a precautionary \_\_\_\_\_.

Dr. Evgueny Nepoklonov from Russia's Department of Agriculture has \_\_\_\_\_ for international financial help to prevent the virus from threatening human life. He said in a news conference: "This isn't a problem of a \_\_\_\_\_ state...it is a problem of all \_\_\_\_\_ that must be studied together and that needs \_\_\_\_\_ and well-coordinated activity." Time is of the \_\_\_\_\_ in expediting measures to fight against the virus. Experts believe thousands of \_\_\_\_\_ of infected birds will migrate to Western Europe in mid-September and then to North America. The World Health Organization has \_\_\_\_\_ concerns that the virus might \_\_\_\_\_ and spread among humans, which could potentially kill millions.

*halt*  
*strain*  
*measure*  
*poultry*  
*migrating*  
*prompted*  
*scrambling*  
*since*  
*consolidated*  
*voiced*  
*appealed*  
*mutate*  
*mankind*  
*essence*  
*single*  
*flocks*

## **AFTER READING / LISTENING**

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

- 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. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. 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 "BIRD FLU" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about bird flu and global pandemics.

- 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:

- |            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| • sparked  | • appealed     |
| • died     | • single       |
| • prompted | • consolidated |
| • alerted  | • expediting   |
| • shore    | • flocks       |
| • measure  | • mutate       |

## **DISCUSSION**

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

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Are you concerned about avian bird flu?
- d. Do you think the world is treating the threat seriously enough?
- e. What is your government doing to protect your country?
- f. What would you do if a human-to-human strain found its way into your country?
- g. What do you think is an effective way to fight the virus?
- h. The WHO has said the virus has the potential to kill millions. Have you seen, heard or read about this big news elsewhere?
- i. Do you think this could be a case of scientists scaremongering?
- j. Do you think more money will be made available to find a cure for bird flu if it reaches North America?

### 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. Should governments kill all wild birds to wipe out bird flu?
- d. What would happen to the world if millions started dying in Europe and North America?
- e. Do you think it's only time before a devastating pandemic hits the world?
- f. What do you think of the WHO's claim that millions could die?
- g. Do you think governments are coordinated in fighting bird flu?
- h. Will you now think twice about eating chicken?
- i. Do you think you'll become suspicious of flocks of birds?
- 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**

**ROLE PLAY:** This role play is to discuss whether or not more international action should be taken immediately to halt the spread of avian bird flu. Team up with classmates who have been assigned the same role as you. Develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies” before the role play begins.

Introduce yourself to the other role players.

### **Role A – Head of WHO**

You are convinced avian bird flu poses the greatest threat to mankind for centuries. You are amazed so few countries seem concerned. You have data that suggest the virus is very close to mutating and spreading to and among humans. Worldwide action must be taken now.

THINK OF ACTIONS THAT MUST BE TAKEN TO FIGHT BIRD FLU.

### **Role B – Chicken farmer**

Your livelihood is at risk from bird flu. You understand the danger but do not want to kill any of your chickens until people start dying. You don't think more humans will die. You think the WHO is over-reacting. You believe keeping chickens indoors will prevent the spread of the virus.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY BIRD FLU WILL NOT BE A PROBLEM.

### **Role C – Citizen**

You are alarmed that your government is not acting to protect your country from bird flu. You know 61 people died in Asia from the virus. You think it's only a matter of time before the virus mutates and spreads to humans. You believe international governments will be caught off-guard.

THINK OF MEASURES YOUR GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE TAKING.

### **Role D – Government official**

Naturally, you know about bird flu. You have all of the scientific reports available. You are 100% sure the virus will not affect humans. It did so in Asia because people lived so close to poultry. You are shocked at the WHO's irresponsibility in scaring people. You have enough vaccine.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY BIRD FLU IS NOT A BIG RISK.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

In pairs / groups, discuss whether you really believe in what you said while you were in your roles.

## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Bird flu spreading to Europe**

**BNE:** Avian bird flu is \_\_\_\_\_ west and has sparked fears of a global pandemic. The deadly influenza strain \_\_\_\_\_ in Asia two years ago, where 61 people died in China, Vietnam and Thailand. Migratory birds have since carried the virus west to Siberia, Russia, where it killed 11,000 birds and \_\_\_\_\_ vets to \_\_\_\_\_ 127,000 others in an attempt to halt its spread. Russian officials have alerted Western European nations that the deadly H5N1 strain is on its way. Countries are now \_\_\_\_\_ to shore up their defenses against any \_\_\_\_\_ among their \_\_\_\_\_ populations. Holland has ordered all chicken farmers to keep their birds indoors as a precautionary \_\_\_\_\_.

Dr. Evgueny Nepoklonov from Russia's Department of Agriculture has \_\_\_\_\_ for international financial help to prevent the virus from \_\_\_\_\_ human life. He said in a news conference: "This isn't a problem of a single state...it is a problem of all \_\_\_\_\_ that must be studied together and that needs \_\_\_\_\_ and well-coordinated activity." Time is of the essence in \_\_\_\_\_ measures to fight against the virus. Experts believe thousands of \_\_\_\_\_ of infected birds will migrate to Western Europe in mid-September and then to North America. The World Health Organization has voiced concerns that the virus might \_\_\_\_\_ and spread among humans, which could potentially kill millions.

## **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 on avian bird flu and the H5N1 virus. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. LETTER:** Write a letter to your government. Express your concerns over the threat of a potentially lethal, global bird flu pandemic. Tell the government what it should be doing right now. Read your letters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

**4. CHICKEN:** You are a chicken. You have heard the stories about bird flu. You're not sure which worries you more – bird flu or being slaughtered by your farmer. Write your diary / journal entry for a day in your life and your thoughts on the virus reaching your farm. Read your entries to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all have similar concerns?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

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

### SYNONYM MATCH:

a. sparked	triggered
b. strain	stock
c. slaughter	destroy
d. shore up	strengthen
e. poultry	fowl
f. appealed	petitioned
g. consolidated	combined
h. expediting	accelerating
i. flocks	groups
j. voiced	expressed

### PHRASE MATCH:

a. sparked	fears of a global pandemic
b. The deadly influenza	strain originated in Asia
c. Migratory birds have since	carried the virus west to Siberia
d. Countries are now scrambling	to shore up their defenses
e. keep their birds indoors	as a precautionary measure
f. prevent the virus	from threatening human life
g. needs consolidated and	well-coordinated activity
h. Time	is of the essence
i. thousands of flocks	of infected birds will migrate
j. the virus might mutate	and spread among humans

### GAP FILL:

#### Bird flu spreading to Europe

**BNE:** Avian bird flu is **migrating** west and has sparked fears of a global pandemic. The deadly influenza **strain** originated in Asia two years ago, where 61 people died in China, Vietnam and Thailand. Migratory birds have **since** carried the virus west to Siberia, Russia, where it killed 11,000 birds and **prompted** vets to slaughter 127,000 others in an attempt to **halt** its spread. Russian officials have alerted Western European nations that the deadly H5N1 strain is on its way. Countries are now **scrambling** to shore up their defenses against any outbreaks among their **poultry** populations. Holland has ordered all chicken farmers to keep their birds indoors as a precautionary **measure**.

Dr. Evgueny Nepoklonov from Russia's Department of Agriculture has **appealed** for international financial help to prevent the virus from threatening human life. He said in a news conference: "This isn't a problem of a **single** state...it is a problem of all **mankind** that must be studied together and that needs **consolidated** and well-coordinated activity." Time is of the **essence** in expediting measures to fight against the virus. Experts believe thousands of **flocks** of infected birds will migrate to Western Europe in mid-September and then to North America. The World Health Organization has **voiced** concerns that the virus might **mutate** and spread among humans, which could potentially kill millions.