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China regulates news websites

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26 September, 2005

THE ARTICLE

China regulates news websites

BNE: China has imposed new rules and regulations on Internet news sites in an attempt to further control the content put out by news agencies and other news websites. Authorities say the new measures will "satisfy the public demand for receiving news and information from the Internet as well as safeguard public interest," according to official news agency Xinhua. China's proactive and bulging Internet police department will block sites that are contrary to public interest and are not "conducive to social progress". This extends to educational websites containing news such as Breaking News English.com, which was blocked earlier this year. The Ministry of Information said it will "standardize the management of...information" and allow only "healthy and civilized news" online.

China's rapidly growing population of Internet users is the second largest in the world at 100 million, surpassed only by the United States, which has 135 million. The Web has quickly emerged as an influential and primary source of news from around the globe, which is cause for alarm for the government. It now requires domestic news sites to only post news on current events and politics but did not stipulate what kind of news is acceptable. The Associated Press reports the Chinese government: "encourages Internet use for education and business, [but] also keeps an extremely tight rein over online content, usually blocking material it deems subversive or pornographic." Chinese "netizens" must now 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 stay informed | g. To find out new things |
| c. Because I'm a world citizen | h. The news is living history |
| d. News is fascinating | 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 following countries? 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 DEBATES: Debate each of the arguments below with a partner for just two minutes, before moving on to the next partner and debate. 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 restricts the kinds of information news sources can report on? Is the news you receive 100 percent accurate, truthful and objective? 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 imposed 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 with 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. Very few people in China use the Web as a source for news. | 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. imposed | enthusiastic |
| b. safeguard | Internet users |
| c. proactive | helpful |
| d. bulging | exceeded |
| e. conducive | protect |
| f. surpassed | specify |
| g. stipulate | inflammatory |
| h. rein | introduced |
| i. subversive | control |
| j. netizens | expanding |

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

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. imposed new | Internet police department |
| b. control the content put | kind of news is acceptable |
| c. safeguard | by the United States |
| d. China's proactive and bulging | out by news agencies |
| e. standardize the management | deems subversive or pornographic |
| f. surpassed only | rules and regulations |
| g. primary source of news | over online content |
| h. did not stipulate what | of information |
| i. keeps an extremely tight rein | from around the globe |
| j. blocking material it | public interest |

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 **imposed** new rules and regulations on Internet news sites in an attempt to further control the **containers** put out by news agencies and other news websites. Authorities say the new measures will "**satisfy** the public demand for receiving news and information from the Internet as well as safeguard **private** interest," according to official news agency Xinhua. China's **proactive** and **bulging** Internet police department will block sites that are contrary to public interest and are not "conducive to social progress". This **extremes** to educational websites containing news such as Breaking News English.com, which was **blackened** earlier this year. The Ministry of Information said it will "standardize the management of...information" and allow only "**healthy** and civilized news" **offline**.

China's rapidly growing population of Internet users is the second largest in the world at 100 million, **surpassed** only by the United States, which has 135 million. The Web has quickly **submerged** as an influential and primary **sauce** of news from around the globe, which is cause for **alarm** for the government. It now requires domestic news sites to only **mail** news on current events and politics but did not **stipulate** what kind of news is acceptable. The Associated Press reports the Chinese government: "**encourages** Internet use for education and business, [but] also keeps an extremely tight **rain** over online content, usually blocking material it **dooms** subversive or pornographic." Chinese "netizens" must now register their websites and blogs as well as enter their **official** identity card numbers 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 **'demand'**.

- 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 "healthy and civilized" 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:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| • imposed | • surpassed |
| • measures | • influential |
| • proactive | • alarm |
| • conducive | • stipulate |
| • blocked | • rein |
| • civilized | • netizens |

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. 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 that is "conducive to social progress" should be put online?
- g. Why do you think China would block an educational site like Breaking News English.com?
- h. What do you think of the idea of governments policing the Web?
- i. Do you think news can be dangerous?
- j. What kind of news do you think is "contrary to public interest"?

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 regulating domestic news sites?
- e. What would happen in your country if the government imposed controls on freedom of the press?
- f. Does your government do enough to control pornographic sites or sites that cater for pedophiles, terrorists, racists, etc?
- 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 has become a dangerous place?
- i. Do you think China is correct in trying to regulate subversive content?
- 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 these features 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 websites. What reasons can you think of why the stories might be considered either "healthy" or "subversive" in China.

FEATURES	HEALTHY	SUBVERSIVE
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.

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BNE: China has imposed new rules and _____ on Internet news sites in an attempt to further control the content put out by news agencies and other news websites. Authorities say the _____ will "satisfy the public demand for receiving news and information from the Internet as well as _____ public interest," according to official news agency Xinhua. China's proactive and _____ Internet police department will block sites that are contrary to public interest and are not "_____ to social progress". This extends to educational websites containing news such as Breaking News English.com, which was _____ earlier this year. The Ministry of Information said it will "standardize the management of...information" and allow only "healthy and _____ news" online.

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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 news censorship. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. CHINA WEBSITES: Visit some English language Chinese news websites. Write a report on your impressions. 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 introduce more regulations 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. imposed | introduced |
| b. safeguard | protect |
| c. proactive | enthusiastic |
| d. bulging | expanding |
| e. conducive | helpful |
| f. surpassed | exceeded |
| g. stipulate | specify |
| h. rein | control |
| i. subversive | inflammatory |
| j. netizens | Internet users |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. imposed new | rules and regulations |
| b. control the content put | out by news agencies |
| c. safeguard | public interest |
| d. China's proactive and bulging | Internet police department |
| e. standardize the management | of information |
| f. surpassed only | by the United States |
| g. primary source of news | from around the globe |
| h. did not stipulate what | kind of news is acceptable |
| i. keeps an extremely tight rein | over online content |
| j. blocking material it | deems subversive or pornographic |

WHOOOPS:

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