

Words In The News

Teacher's pack

Lesson plan and student worksheets
with answers

Russia orders British
Council closures
26 December 2007



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Russia orders British Council closures – 26 December 2007

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Level: Intermediate and above

Topic: The Russian government has ordered the British Council to close their operations in Russia, probably due to worsening relations between the two countries.

Language: Vocabulary of a news report

Aims:

Reading skills	– Understanding a short news report
Language skills	– Imminent future with 'about to'
Speaking skills	– Negotiating

Materials:

Worksheet 1	– Comprehension questions
Worksheet 2	– Vocabulary matching task
Worksheet 3	– Grammar/language focus – present perfect
News story	– Available online at:

Preparation: Before the lesson, make enough copies of worksheet 2 so that there is one worksheet for every 4 – 5 students. Cut up the vocabulary and explanations, to make a matching exercise. Students also need one copy each of worksheets 1 and 3.

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LESSON STAGES

A Stimulate student interest in text

Tell students to think of a country (it could be their home country). Tell them to think of one true fact and one false 'fact' about the country. Put students into small groups 2-5 and then ask each student to share their true and false statements. The other students should guess which is true and which is false. Allow conversations about the different countries to develop.

After 10 minutes, ask the class as a whole what they have learned about other countries, what any unusual tales they have heard, and give clarification and feedback where necessary.

Tell students you have a true and false about a country – Russia. 1. Parts of Russia are further East than China (True – Vladivostock) 2. The national flag is green and yellow (False – it is red, white and blue). Ask students what else they know about Russia.

B Pre-teach essential vocabulary

Elicit/present key vocabulary that students need either to understand the key points in the text or to understand and/or answer any questions that you'll set them later in the lesson. The vocabulary is from Words in the News (so you can elicit the vocabulary by using the explanations provided online or below).

You could either pre-teach the vocabulary at this stage of the lesson or you could use the vocabulary building activity from further down in this lesson plan. Have students working together in small groups and ask them to try to match the vocabulary with the definitions. Encourage them to work with the other groups to pool their knowledge. When they have done as much as they can, if they have dictionaries, ask them to look up the words to check their answers and to find out the definitions of any words they are not sure of. If they don't have dictionaries, check their answers and give them help with any words they aren't sure of.

Whichever method you use to elicit/present the vocabulary, you should then model it (say it clearly, highlighting the word stress) and get them to repeat the words after you.

spokesman

a person who speaks for another person or group

suspend

stop (usually temporary)

headquarters

the centre of operations of an organisation

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operating

running or continuing business

whole raft of

a number of, a range of

violated

broken (especially law)

compliant

obeying, following the regulation

expulsion

driving out, sending out

diplomats

people representing a country in negotiations with other countries

take yet another turn

become

C Written record of vocabulary

Write the words on the board, eliciting spelling as you write. Elicit and show the word stress of each item and word class, if appropriate.

Give students some time to copy the boardwork into their notebooks.

Boardwork:

spokesman

suspend

headquarters

operating

whole raft of

violated

compliant

expulsion

diplomats

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take yet another turn

D Set global questions.

Tell the students they are going to read a text about the British Council in Russia. Put these questions on the board:

1. What did the Russian government tell the British Council to do?
2. What reasons did the Russian government give for this?
3. How do you think relations between the two countries are?

Students read text the first time.

Give them a time limit (1 - 2 minutes) to read the text quickly to find the answer to the first 3 questions. They do not need to understand the details for each topic.

E Check answers

Elicit students' answers and tick the correct answers on the board.

The answers are:

- 1 – The Russian government want to suspend all the work from the British Council in Russia (Paragraph 1).
- 2 – The government said 'there is no legal basis...violated tax laws' (paragraph 2)
- 3 – Encourage speculation. Likely answer would be – relations between the two countries are not very good and are getting worse (paragraph 3)

F Set specific information questions

Hand out Worksheet 1 or use the online quiz. Students complete the worksheet to help them understand the text in more detail. Give them a time limit (5 - 6 minutes) to read the text a second time in more detail and to answer the questions.

G Check answers

Elicit True or False answers. Direct attention to a particular paragraph. If an answer is wrong, try to elicit the correct answer (see worksheet 1 and answer key).

H Vocabulary consolidation/building

Students do the vocabulary matching exercise (worksheet 2 that you cut up before the lesson): in small groups they match the correct word with the right definition.

I Check answers

Elicit answers. If an answer is wrong, ask other students to try to elicit the correct answer.

J Grammar focus: Imminent future using 'about to'

When you want to express what is going to happen in the immediate future, there are several different ways you can do it. You can use the future simple 'I will go to school', the present continuous 'I am going to go to school' or you can use 'about to'.

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Subject + present of 'be' (+ not) + about to + infinitive

I am *about to* go to school

They are *about to* finish their presentation

NB: 'about to' may also be used with past tenses to indicate that sequence of events:

I was *about to* go to school when the phone rang

They were *about to* finish their presentation when the fire alarm rang

Hand out Worksheet 3 which reviews 'about to'

K Check answers

If an answer is wrong, ask other students to try to elicit the correct answer (see worksheet 3 and answer key).

L Follow-up activity: Negotiating

Split students into groups of three. Tell students that they are negotiators for either the British Council or the Russian government (you can assign a role to each group).

Give students about 10 minutes to discuss their strategy and decide the arguments they want to use. Then pair groups up, putting a 'Russian government officials' with 'British diplomats'.

Encourage students to re-use the vocabulary from the text,

M Feedback

Give praise for content and show your interest in the different views expressed.

Give praise for correct language.

Give feedback on incorrect language you heard/saw. You could write some example phrases or sentences on the board and elicit from students which ones are correct and which ones are wrong and why.

STUDENT WORKSHEET 1

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Are the following sentences true or false?

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 1. | The Russian government wants to close 15 British Council offices. | T/F |
| 2. | The office in Moscow was opened by Tony Blair last year. | T/F |
| 3. | The British Council admits violating tax laws. | T/F |
| 4. | The British Council made an agreement to work in Russia in 1890. | T/F |
| 5. | Russian diplomats were sent away from London. | T/F |
| 6. | Relations between Russia and the UK are likely to get worse. | T/F |

STUDENT WORKSHEET 2

VOCABULARY

Match these words and phrases to their definitions.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. spokesman | A. people representing a country in negotiations with other countries |
| 2. suspend | B. become |
| 3. headquarters | C. the centre of operations of an organisation |
| 4. operating | D. driving out, sending out |
| 5. whole raft of | E. broken (especially law) |
| 6. violated | F. stop (usually temporary) |
| 7. compliant | G. a number of, a range of |
| 8. expulsion | H. a person who speaks for another person or group |
| 9. diplomats | I. running or continuing business |
| 10. take yet another turn | J. obeying, following the regulation |

STUDENT WORKSHEET 3

GRAMMAR FOCUS – Immediate future with 'about to'

Exercise 1: Read the following sentences and add 'about to' where appropriate. Don't forget to add or take away parts of the sentence to make sure it makes sense.

1. The two governments will meet this afternoon to resolve the issue.
2. The offices in Russia are going to close very soon.
3. I can't talk to you now, I'm going to the meeting.
4. They will move into their new offices next year.
5. You can't ask Mary, she's going to have a baby next week.
6. He was going to eat his sandwich when he noticed an ant inside.

Exercise 2: Make your own sentences using 'about to' using the following prompts

1. Don't tell me what happened, I'm about to _____

2. I was about to get onto the train when _____

3. No wonder she looked nervous, she was about to _____

4. I'm not about to change my mind. Your behaviour _____

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ANSWER KEY

STUDENT WORKSHEET 1

1. True – paragraph 1 of the written text says, 'all fifteen regional offices of the British Council would have to suspend their activities'.
2. False – paragraph 1 says, 'the new office in **St Petersburg** opened by Tony Blair last year'.
3. False – paragraph 2 says, 'But the Council says it's **fully compliant** with all tax requirements'.
4. False – paragraph 2 says, 'it operates on the basis of an agreement signed in the **1990s**'.
5. True – paragraph 3 says, 'the expulsion of its diplomats from London last July'.
6. True – paragraph 3 says, 'Now relations between Moscow and London are about to take yet another turn for the worse'.

STUDENT WORKSHEET 2

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. H | 2. F | 3. C | 4. I | 5. G |
| 6. E | 7. J | 8. D | 9. A | 10. B |

STUDENT WORKSHEET 3

Exercise 1

1. The two governments **are about to** meet to resolve the issue. (**no need for additional time phrase**)
2. The offices in Russia are **about to** close. (**no need for additional time**)
3. I can't talk to you now, I'm **about to** go to the meeting.
4. They will move into their new offices next year. **Not immediate. No change**
5. You can't ask Mary, she's **about to** have a baby (next week).
6. He was **about to** eat his sandwich when he noticed an ant inside.

Exercise 3: Accept any answers which are accurate and appropriate and demonstrate correct use of 'about to'.