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Russia to start 24-hour TV news in English

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7 June, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Russia to start 24-hour TV news in English

BNE: Russia will soon start its own 24-hour English language TV news channel. Its name is *Russia Today* and it will be similar to CNN. The new channel will broadcast up-to-the-minute news of world and Russian affairs. Everything will be from a Russian viewpoint.

Russia Today will initially be broadcast in Russia, Europe, the USA and some C.I.S. and Asian countries. It is due to screen from as early as late summer. The launch may coincide with President Vladimir Putin's speech to the U.N. in September.

Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of *Russia Today*, said it was time to challenge CNN and the BBC. She said *Russia Today* will offer an alternative to the U.S.-British stranglehold on English-speaking world news coverage. She also said it would make interesting viewing.

The channel is an arm of Russia's tightly controlled state media. Many people have expressed doubts over how much independence journalists will have. Others fear the Kremlin will inject propaganda into the news stories. Many doubt whether non-Russians will want to watch Russian news in English.

WARM-UPS

1. NEWS: Write down three good things that have happened to you recently and three not so good things. In pairs / groups tell each other your good and not so good news.

2. TV NEWS: In pairs / groups, talk about TV news. Do you watch TV news every day? Do you have a favorite news station? Why do you watch a particular TV news station? Do you ever watch news in English? Which is better, the BBC or CNN?

3. WORLD CHANNELS: In pairs / groups, talk about your images of what kinds of stories are reported on the TV news in the countries below. Change partners to hear more ideas.

U.S.A.	Brazil	Nigeria	Pakistan	Indonesia
Japan	Iceland	Saudi Arabia	Bhutan	North Korea

In each of these countries, do you think the news is (1) interesting, (2) true, (3) balanced, (4) internationally focused?

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

24-hour TV news / news in English / CNN / Russian news / Vladimir Putin / journalists / world news / the media / the Kremlin

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

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

6. OPINIONS: Talk with your partner(s) about these opinions. Do you agree or disagree with them?

- It's time for an alternative to the BBC and CNN.
- Russia's international image will greatly improve with the *Russia Today* channel.
- The quality of reporting will be the same as CNN's or the BBC's.
- Absolutely no one is going to watch Russian news in English.
- The *Russia Today* channel is part of Vladimir Putin's propaganda machine.
- News of Chechnya will not be fairly reported.
- I think it'll be funny.
- I can't wait for copycats like "China Today", "Cuba Today" or "Iran Today".

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

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

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. A new TV station is being set up to help Russians study English. | T / F |
| b. Russia's new news station will be from a Russian viewpoint. | T / F |
| c. The channel will air only in Russia and C.I.S. countries. | T / F |
| d. The first story may be a Vladimir Putin speech at the U.N. | T / F |
| e. The channel will definitely end the dominance of CNN and the BBC. | T / F |
| f. The editor-in-chief said it wouldn't be interesting. | T / F |
| g. The channel is a privately operated station. | T / F |
| h. The channel will be very popular with non-Russians. | T / F |

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

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. channel | angle |
| b. broadcast | put in |
| c. viewpoint | air |
| d. initially | address |
| e. speech | voiced |
| f. alternative | station |
| g. stranglehold | uncertainty |
| h. expressed | dominance |
| i. inject | first |
| j. doubt | substitute |

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

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. news | viewpoint |
| b. broadcast | doubts |
| c. from a Russian | coincide with |
| d. It is due to screen | news coverage |
| e. The launch may | up-to-the-minute news |
| f. offer an | tightly-controlled media |
| g. English-speaking world | channel |
| h. an arm of Russia's | from as early as late summer |
| i. people have expressed | propaganda into the news stories |
| j. the Kremlin will inject | alternative |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the correct spaces.

Russia to start 24-hour TV news in English

BNE: Russia will soon start its _____ 24-hour English language TV news channel. Its name is *Russia Today* and it will be _____ to CNN. The new channel will broadcast up-to-the-minute news of world and Russian _____. Everything will be from a Russian _____.

affairs
similar
viewpoint
own

Russia Today will _____ be broadcast in Russia, Europe, the USA and some C.I.S. and Asian countries. It is due to _____ from as early as _____ summer. The launch may _____ with President Vladimir Putin's speech to the U.N. in September.

screen
coincide
initially
late

Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of *Russia Today*, said it was time to _____ CNN and the BBC. She said *Russia Today* will _____ an alternative to the U.S.-British stranglehold on English-speaking world news _____. She also said it would make interesting _____.

coverage
offer
viewing
challenge

The channel is an _____ of Russia's tightly controlled state media. Many people have _____ doubts over how much independence journalists will have. Others fear the Kremlin will _____ propaganda into the news stories. Many _____ whether non-Russians will want to watch Russian news in English.

doubt
inject
arm
expressed

AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

- 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 RUSSIAN NEWS SURVEY: In pairs / groups write down questions about news of Russia in English.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make a mini-presentation to another group / the class 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:

- own
- similar
- viewpoint
- initially
- due
- coincide
- challenge
- alternative
- interesting
- arm
- fear
- non-Russians

DISCUSSION

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

- a. What was your first reaction to this headline?
- b. Do you think Russian news in English is a good idea?
- c. Will you watch it?
- d. Would you like news in English that is not from the U.S.A. or U.K.?
- e. Do you think BBC and CNN news is balanced? Which is better?
- f. Do you think *Russia Today* will produce good quality news reports?
- g. Are you interested to see news of Chechnya on *Russia Today*?
- h. Would you like to see other countries introduce English news?
- i. Will *Russia Today* improve Russia's international image?
- j. Do you think there'll be a Russian Larry King?

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

- a. Did you like reading the article?
- b. Are you interested in Russian news?
- c. Do you think *Russia Today* will be successful?
- d. Will the new news channel end the grip of CNN and the BBC?
- e. Do you think the channel will still be on air a year after its launch?
- f. Does your country have news in English on its TV channels?
- g. Do you ever think that the news you watch may not be true?
- h. Can you think of any times you thought the news was wrong?
- i. Can you live without TV news?
- 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

RUSSIAN NEWS: Below are some stories that were on the website of the Russian news service Pravda (<http://english.pravda.ru/main/>) on June 6, 2005. Perhaps these stories are a taste of things to come from *Russia Today*.

1. In pairs / groups, discuss your views on each of the stories.
2. Talk in greater detail about what each story is about.
3. Rate each story from 1 to 10 (1 is best) on points A-D in the table:

HEADLINE	A. News-worthiness	B. Fun	C. Truth	D. Order to be read in news program
New TV channel to improve Russia's image abroad				
Doctors create first-ever transsexual dog				
Shepherd stolen instead of sheep				
Man performs act of extreme striptease in the center of Kiev				
Laura Bush and Lyudmila Putin do not understand their husbands' jokes				
Two U.S. travelers to be evacuated from the Russian North				

After you have finished, change partner(s) and compare what you spoke about with your earlier partner(s). Reach agreement on the scores you assigned to the headline criteria.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Russia to start 24-hour TV news in English

BNE: Russia will soon _____ 24-hour English language TV news channel. Its name is *Russia Today* and it will _____ CNN. The new channel will broadcast up-to-the-minute news of world and _____. Everything will be from a Russian _____.

Russia Today will _____ in Russia, Europe, the USA and some C.I.S. and Asian countries. It is _____ from as early as late summer. The launch may coincide with President Vladimir Putin's _____ in September.

Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of *Russia Today*, said it was _____ CNN and the BBC. She said *Russia Today* will offer _____ the U.S.-British stranglehold on English-speaking world news coverage. She also said it would _____.

The channel _____ Russia's tightly controlled state media. Many people have _____ over how much independence journalists will have. Others fear the Kremlin will inject propaganda into the news stories. Many doubt whether non-Russians _____ Russian news in English.

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 the *Russia Today* TV news channel. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. CNN vs. BBC: Make a poster comparing the BBC and CNN. Write a conclusion telling the reader which channel you think is better and why. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you have the same ideas?

4. MY STATION: Write a letter to the leader of your country explaining why his/her government should immediately start a state run TV news channel in English. Read your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

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

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. channel | station |
| b. broadcast | air |
| c. viewpoint | angle |
| d. initially | first |
| e. speech | address |
| f. alternative | substitute |
| g. stranglehold | dominance |
| h. expressed | voiced |
| i. inject | put in |
| j. doubt | uncertainty |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. news | channel |
| b. broadcast | up-to-the-minute news |
| c. from a Russian | viewpoint |
| d. It is due to screen | from as early as late summer |
| e. The launch may | coincide with |
| f. offer an | alternative |
| g. English-speaking world | news coverage |
| h. an arm of Russia's | tightly-controlled media |
| i. people have expressed | doubts |
| j. the Kremlin will inject | propaganda into the news stories |

GAP FILL:

Russia to start 24-hour TV news in English

BNE: Russia will soon start its **own** 24-hour English language TV news channel. Its name is *Russia Today* and it will be **similar** to CNN. The new channel will broadcast up-to-the-minute news of world and Russian **affairs**. Everything will be from a Russian **viewpoint**.

Russia Today will **initially** be broadcast in Russia, Europe, the USA and some C.I.S. and Asian countries. It is due to **screen** from as early as **late** summer. The launch may **coincide** with President Vladimir Putin's speech to the U.N. in September.

Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of *Russia Today*, said it was time to **challenge** CNN and the BBC. She said *Russia Today* will **offer** an alternative to the U.S.-British stranglehold on English-speaking world news **coverage**. She also said it would make interesting **viewing**.

The channel is an **arm** of Russia's tightly controlled state media. Many people have **expressed** doubts over how much independence journalists will have. Others fear the Kremlin will **inject** propaganda into the news stories. Many **doubt** whether non-Russians will want to watch Russian news in English.