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# News can help predict the future

http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1109/110913-predictions.html

## Contents

**13th September, 2011**

# THE ARTICLE

Researchers say they can use news stories to help predict the future. Scientists from the University of Illinois in the USA input over 100 million news articles into a supercomputer for analysis. The stories went back as far as 1945 and came from many sources, including the BBC and New York Times. The data showed how much unrest and discontent there was in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya before their recent revolutions. The computer also saw early indications of the whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden before he was captured. Researcher Kalev Leetar said the study could now help analysts spot future trouble in potential hotspots around the world. Business strategists already do a similar thing to advise their clients.

Leetar explained the importance of news to look into the future: "News gives you incredible information about people, places, and organizations. It also tells you about the relationships between them, about how people view each other," he said. Leetar used terabytes of data to look at three key areas. One looked at the tone of the journalists' writing. It used 1,500 different emotions to build an assessment of a country's stability. Secondly, it examined geocoding to track references to people's movement. A third technique was network analysis to show how much news channels focused on one place. Leetar likened his predictions to weather forecasting, saying: "It's never perfect, but we do better than random guessing."

# WARM-UPS

**1. PREDICTIONS:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about predictions. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

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

> researchers / predict the future / analysis / discontent / revolution / captured / clients / news / organizations / relationships / terabytes / journalists / stability / forecasting

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. THE FUTURE:** What are your predictions? Complete this table and share what you wrote with your partner(s). Change and share again.

|  | Good things | Bad things |
|---|---|---|
| This year for you |  |  |
| Your country |  |  |
| Sport |  |  |
| Inventions |  |  |
| The world |  |  |
| Your old age |  |  |

**4. PREDICTING THE FUTURE:** Students A **strongly** believe computers will do this very well one day; Students B **strongly** believe it's impossible. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

**5. NEWS:** What do you like best? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- world
- financial
- celebrity gossip
- sport
- weather
- national
- politics
- weird

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

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

## 1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if  a-h  below are true (T) or false (F).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| a. | Scientists fed 100 million news articles into a supercomputer. | T / F |
| b. | The news storied dated back to the late nineteenth century. | T / F |
| c. | The data gained from the stories helped the CIA find Osama bin Laden. | T / F |
| d. | Researchers will now be able to forecast trouble in the world. | T / F |
| e. | Kalev Leetar said news wasn't such an important information source. | T / F |
| f. | Researchers used around 500 gigabytes of data in their analysis. | T / F |
| g. | The project looked at over one thousand different emotions. | T / F |
| h. | Leetar said his predictions were similar to those of weather forecasts. | T / F |

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

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | predict | | a. | examination |
| 2 | analysis | | b. | judge |
| 3. | discontent | | c. | forecast |
| 4. | whereabouts | | d. | amazing |
| 5. | potential | | e. | location |
| 6. | incredible | | f. | find |
| 7. | view | | g. | haphazard |
| 8. | track | | h. | possible |
| 9. | likened | | i. | unhappiness |
| 10. | random | | j. | compared |

## 3. PHRASE MATCH:  (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | input over 100 million | | a. | of Osama Bin Laden |
| 2 | how much unrest and | | b. | weather forecasting |
| 3. | the whereabouts | | c. | do a similar thing |
| 4. | spot future trouble | | d. | between them |
| 5. | business strategists already | | e. | random guessing |
| 6. | It also tells you about the relationships | | f. | journalists' writing |
| 7. | the tone of the | | g. | news articles |
| 8. | track references to people's | | h. | in potential hotspots |
| 9. | Leetar likened his predictions to | | i. | discontent there was |
| 10. | we do better than | | j. | movement |

# WHILE READING / LISTENING

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

Researchers say they can use news stories to help predict the future. Scientists from the University of Illinois in the USA (1) _____ over 100 million news articles into a supercomputer for analysis. The stories went back as far as 1945 and came from many (2) _____, including the BBC and New York Times. The (3) _____ showed how much unrest and discontent there was in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya before their (4) _____ revolutions. The computer also saw (5) _____ indications of the whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden before he was (6) _____. Researcher Kalev Leetar said the study could now help analysts (7) _____ future trouble in potential hotspots around the world. Business strategists already do a similar thing to (8) _____ their clients.

*captured*

*recent*

*sources*

*advise*

*spot*

*input*

*data*

*early*

Leetar explained the (9) _____ of news to look into the future: "News gives you (10) _____ information about people, places, and organizations. It also tells you about the relationships between them, about how people (11) _____ each other," he said. Leetar used terabytes of data to look at three (12) _____ areas. One looked at the tone of the journalists' writing. It used 1,500 different (13) _____ to build an assessment of a country's stability. Secondly, it examined geocoding to (14) _____ references to people's movement. A third technique was network analysis to show how much news channels (15) _____ on one place. Leetar likened his predictions to weather forecasting, saying: "It's never perfect, but we do better than (16) _____ guessing."

*emotions*

*incredible*

*key*

*random*

*importance*

*focused*

*view*

*track*

# LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

Researchers say _____ stories to help predict the future. Scientists from the University of Illinois in the USA input over 100 million _____ supercomputer for analysis. The stories went back as far as 1945 and came from _____ the BBC and New York Times. The data showed how much _____ there was in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya before their recent revolutions. The computer also _____ of the whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden before he was captured. Researcher Kalev Leetar said the study could now help analysts _____ in potential hotspots around the world. Business strategists already do a similar thing to advise their clients.

Leetar explained the importance of news to look into the future: "News gives you _____ about people, places, and organizations. It also tells you about the relationships between them, about how people view each other," he said. Leetar used _____ look at three key areas. One looked at the tone of the journalists' writing. It used 1,500 different _____ assessment of a country's stability. Secondly, it examined geocoding _____ people's movement. A third technique was network analysis to show how much news channels focused on one place. Leetar _____ to weather forecasting, saying: "It's never perfect, but we do better _____."

# AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms … for the words 'predict' and 'future'.

| predict | future |
|---|---|
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

- 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 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. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

| | |
|---|---|
| • stories | • importance |
| • far | • tells |
| • unrest | • view |
| • recent | • 1,500 |
| • spot | • third |
| • advise | • random |

# STUDENT  WORLD PREDICTIONS SURVEY

From  http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1109/110913-predictions.html

Write five GOOD questions about  world predictions in the table. Do this in pairs.
Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.
When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

|  | STUDENT 1 _____ | STUDENT 2 _____ | STUDENT 3 _____ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q.1. |  |  |  |
| Q.2. |  |  |  |
| Q.3. |  |  |  |
| Q.4. |  |  |  |
| Q.5. |  |  |  |

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

# WORLD PREDICTIONS DISCUSSION

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

a)   What did you think when you read the headline?

b)   What springs to mind when you hear the word 'future'?

c)   Are you optimistic of pessimistic about the future?

d)   Would you like to know about your future?

e)   What do you think about news stories being used to predict the future?

f)   Do you think the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya could have been predicted anyway (without news analyzing stories)?

g)   Where do you think the next revolutions will take place? Why do you think so?

h)   Do you think the 100 million news stories could have been helpful in finding Osama Bin Laden?

i)   What do you think business strategists do with news stories?

j)   What are your predictions for the future of the world?

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# WORLD PREDICTIONS DISCUSSION

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

a)   Did you like reading this article?

b)   What is the importance of news?

c)   Do you believe in things like palm reading or crystal balls to look into the future?

d)   What do newspapers tell us about relationships?

e)   Are the three key areas the researcher looked at useful?

f)   What do you think of our having 1,500 emotions?

g)   What do you think of geocoding to track people?

h)   Has a prediction you've ever made been right?

i)   Which is more accurate, weather forecasting or future predicting?

j)   What questions would you like to ask Kalev Leetar?

# LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From  http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1109/110913-predictions.html

Researchers say they can use news stories to help predict the future. Scientists from the University of Illinois in the USA (1) _____ over 100 million news articles into a supercomputer for analysis. The stories went (2) _____ as far as 1945 and came from many sources, including the BBC and New York Times. The data showed how much (3) _____ and discontent there was in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya before their recent revolutions. The computer also saw (4) _____ indications of the (5) _____ of Osama Bin Laden before he was captured. Researcher Kalev Leetar said the study could now help analysts spot future trouble in potential (6) _____ around the world. Business strategists already do a similar thing to advise their clients.

Leetar explained the importance of news to look (7) _____ the future: "News gives you incredible information about people, places, and organizations. It also tells you about the relationships between them, about how people (8) _____ each other," he said. Leetar used terabytes of data to look at three (9) _____ areas. One looked at the (10) _____ of the journalists' writing. It used 1,500 different emotions to build an assessment of a country's (11) _____. Secondly, it examined geocoding to track references to people's movement. A third technique was network analysis to show how much news channels focused on one place. Leetar likened his predictions to weather forecasting, saying: "It's never perfect, but we do better than (12) _____ guessing."

**Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.**

| 1. | (a) | instilled | (b) | insisted | (c) | input | (d) | inverted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. | (a) | up | (b) | back | (c) | forward | (d) | in |
| 3. | (a) | unrest | (b) | rest | (c) | rests | (d) | rested |
| 4. | (a) | fast | (b) | quick | (c) | rapid | (d) | early |
| 5. | (a) | whereas | (b) | where | (c) | whereabouts | (d) | wherewithal |
| 6. | (a) | hot air | (b) | hotpots | (c) | hotfoot | (d) | hotspots |
| 7. | (a) | up | (b) | into | (c) | around | (d) | after |
| 8. | (a) | view | (b) | gaze | (c) | stare | (d) | opinion |
| 9. | (a) | lock | (b) | key | (c) | chain | (d) | padlock |
| 10. | (a) | tone | (b) | hone | (c) | cone | (d) | zone |
| 11. | (a) | stab | (b) | stable | (c) | stabbing | (d) | stability |
| 12. | (a) | ranting | (b) | rancid | (c) | ranger | (d) | random |

# WRITING

Write about **world predictions** for 10 minutes. Correct your partner's paper.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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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 out more about world predictions. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. WORLD PREDICTIONS:** Make a poster about world predictions, including yours. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. STRATEGISTS:** Write a magazine article about the future of the world. Include imaginary interviews with business and political strategists.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

**5. LETTER:** Write a letter to a futurologist. Ask him/her three questions about world predictions. Give him/her three of your predictions about the future of the world. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

# ANSWERS

## TRUE / FALSE:

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

## SYNONYM MATCH:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | predict | a. | forecast |
| 2 | analysis | b. | examination |
| 3. | discontent | c. | unhappiness |
| 4. | whereabouts | d. | location |
| 5. | potential | e. | possible |
| 6. | incredible | f. | amazing |
| 7. | view | g. | judge |
| 8. | track | h. | find |
| 9. | likened | i. | compared |
| 10. | random | j. | haphazard |

## PHRASE MATCH:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | input over 100 million | a. | news articles |
| 2 | how much unrest and | b. | discontent there was |
| 3. | the whereabouts | c. | of Osama Bin Laden |
| 4. | spot future trouble | d. | in potential hotspots |
| 5. | business strategists already | e. | do a similar thing |
| 6. | It also tells you about the relationships | f. | between them |
| 7. | the tone of the | g. | journalists' writing |
| 8. | track references to people's | h. | movement |
| 9. | Leetar likened his predictions to | i. | weather forecasting |
| 10. | we do better than | j. | random guessing |

## GAP FILL:

**News can help predict the future**

Researchers say they can use news stories to help predict the future. Scientists from the University of Illinois in the USA (1) **input** over 100 million news articles into a supercomputer for analysis. The stories went back as far as 1945 and came from many (2) **sources**, including the BBC and New York Times. The (3) **data** showed how much unrest and discontent there was in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya before their (4) **recent** revolutions. The computer also saw (5) **early** indications of the whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden before he was (6) **captured**. Researcher Kalev Leetar said the study could now help analysts (7) **spot** future trouble in potential hotspots around the world. Business strategists already do a similar thing to (8) **advise** their clients.

Leetar explained the (9) **importance** of news to look into the future: "News gives you (10) **incredible** information about people, places, and organizations. It also tells you about the relationships between them, about how people (11) **view** each other," he said. Leetar used terabytes of data to look at three (12) **key** areas. One looked at the tone of the journalists' writing. It used 1,500 different (13) **emotions** to build an assessment of a country's stability. Secondly, it examined geocoding to (14) **track** references to people's movement. A third technique was network analysis to show how much news channels (15) **focused** on one place. Leetar likened his predictions to weather forecasting, saying: "It's never perfect, but we do better than (16) **random** guessing."

## LANGUAGE WORK

1 - c     2 - b     3 - a     4 - d     5 - c     6 - c     7 - b     8 - a     9 - b     10 - a     11 - d     12 - d