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Remote control inventor dies aged 96

22nd May, 2012

http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1205/120523-remote_control.html

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THE ARTICLE

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120523-remote_control.html

The inventor of the television remote control has passed away at the age of 96. The Associated Press news agency reported that Eugene J. Polley died of natural causes on Sunday. His creation is one of today's most commonly used and ubiquitous devices. Mr Polley worked as an engineer for a company called Zenith, now part of Korea's LG Electronics. He introduced his gun-shaped remote control, called the Flash-Matic, in 1955. It was one of 18 patents he owned. The Flash-Matic used light to turn the TV on and off, adjust the volume and change channels. His invention was followed up five years later by fellow Zenith engineer Robert Adler, who used ultrasound instead of light. Today's remote controls use infrared light.

Polley worked for Zenith for 47 years and held some top technology posts. In 1997, the USA's National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences honoured him by awarding him with an Emmy Award for 'Pioneering Development of Wireless Remote Controls for Consumer Television.' Polley's invention is something we all take for granted nowadays. Generations of people have grown up not knowing that before remote controls, people actually had to leave the sofa and push a button or turn a dial to change their TV settings. Today we use remotes for everything from adjusting the brightness of lights to changing songs on our iPods to opening the garage door from 30 metres. Life would be quite different without this handy gadget.

WARM-UPS

1. REMOTE CONTROL: Walk around the class and talk to other students about remote control. Change partners and share your findings often.

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

inventor / passed away / news agency / ubiquitous / engineer / patents / ultrasound / technology / awards / pioneering / take for granted / nowadays / generations / handy

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

3. HANDY: What new inventions would be handy? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you wrote. Change and share again.

For...	The gadget's name	Its handy function(s)
studying		
music		
fashion		
travelling		
eating		
sleeping		

4. GADGET: Students A **strongly** believe the remote control is one of the best gadgets ever invented; Students B **strongly** believe it isn't. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. INVENTIONS: What are the best modern-day inventions? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- remote control
- microwave
- 3D movies
- credit cards
- Velcro
- digital camera
- e-tickets
- zip / zipper

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

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120523-remote_control.html

1. TRUE / FALSE:

Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- a. The inventor of remote control died from exposure to infrared rays. T / F
- b. The article says the inventor founded a company called Zenith. T / F
- c. The first remote control was in the shape of a gun. T / F
- d. The inventor used light in his invention to change TV channels. T / F
- e. The inventor worked for Zenith for nearly five decades. T / F
- f. The inventor never won any awards for his work. T / F
- g. The writer says many people are unaware of life before remote control. T / F
- h. The article says remote control is a very convenient and useful device. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH:

Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. inventor | a. today |
| 2. passed away | b. modify |
| 3. ubiquitous | c. jobs |
| 4. adjust | d. died |
| 5. instead of | e. prize |
| 6. posts | f. useful |
| 7. award | g. creator |
| 8. nowadays | h. rather than |
| 9. songs | i. ever-present |
| 10. handy | j. tracks |

3. PHRASE MATCH:

(Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. passed | a. ubiquitous devices |
| 2. died of natural | b. of lights |
| 3. commonly used and | c. technology posts |
| 4. adjust the | d. away at the age of 96 |
| 5. infrared | e. gadget |
| 6. held some top | f. volume |
| 7. something we all take for | g. change their TV settings |
| 8. turn a dial to | h. causes |
| 9. adjusting the brightness | i. light |
| 10. handy | j. granted nowadays |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120523-remote_control.html

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

The inventor of the television remote control has passed (1) _____ at the age of 96. The Associated Press news agency reported that Eugene J. Polley died of natural (2) _____ on Sunday. His creation is one of today's most (3) _____ used and ubiquitous devices. Mr Polley worked as an engineer for a company called Zenith, now part of Korea's LG Electronics. He introduced his gun-(4) _____ remote control, called the Flash-Matic, in 1955. It was one of 18 (5) _____ he owned. The Flash-Matic used light to turn the TV on and off, (6) _____ the volume and change channels. His invention was (7) _____ up five years later by fellow Zenith engineer Robert Adler, who used ultrasound instead of light. Today's remote controls use (8) _____ light.

shaped
followed
causes
patents
away
infrared
commonly
adjust

Polley worked for Zenith for 47 years and (9) _____ some top technology (10) _____. In 1997, the USA's National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences honoured him by (11) _____ him with an Emmy Award for 'Pioneering Development of Wireless Remote Controls for Consumer Television.' Polley's invention is something we all take for (12) _____ nowadays. Generations of people have grown up not (13) _____ that before remote controls, people actually had to leave the sofa and push a button or turn a dial to change their TV (14) _____. Today we use remotes for everything from (15) _____ the brightness of lights to changing songs on our iPods to opening the garage door from 30 metres. Life would be quite different without this (16) _____ gadget.

granted
adjusting
posts
handy
held
knowing
awarding
settings

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120523-remote_control.html

The inventor of the television remote control has _____ age of 96. The Associated Press news agency reported that Eugene J. Polley died _____ Sunday. His creation is one of today's most commonly _____ devices. Mr Polley worked as an engineer for a company called Zenith, now part of Korea's LG Electronics. He _____-shaped remote control, called the Flash-Matic, in 1955. It was one of 18 _____. The Flash-Matic used light to turn the TV on and off, adjust the volume and change channels. His invention was followed up five years later by fellow Zenith engineer Robert Adler, who used ultrasound _____. Today's remote controls use infrared light.

Polley worked for Zenith for 47 years _____ technology posts. In 1997, the USA's National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences honoured him _____ with an Emmy Award for 'Pioneering Development of Wireless Remote Controls for Consumer Television.' Polley's invention is something we all _____ nowadays. Generations of people have grown up not knowing that before remote controls, _____ leave the sofa and push a button or turn a dial to change their TV settings. Today we use remotes for everything from adjusting _____ lights to changing songs on our iPods to opening the garage door from 30 metres. Life would be quite different without _____.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120523-remote_control.html

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

remote	control
---------------	----------------

- 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:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• passed• causes• part• gun• adjust• instead	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• top• award• take• leave• songs• handy
---	--

REMOTE CONTROL SURVEY

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120523-remote_control.html

Write five GOOD questions about remote control 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.

REMOTE CONTROL 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 'remote control'?
- c) How useful are remote controls?
- d) How do remote controls work?
- e) What do you think of remote controls?
- f) Are there things you would like a remote control for that you don't have?
- g) Do remote controls make us lazy?
- h) Can you always find your remote control?
- i) Have you ever argued over who has control of the remote control?
- j) Can you think of a better name for the remote control?

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REMOTE CONTROL DISCUSSION

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

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you think people like Eugene Polley should be more famous?
- c) How far up the list of great inventions do you think the remote control is?
- d) Do you take the remote control for granted?
- e) What would life be like if there were no remote controls?
- f) What happens if your remote control breaks?
- g) Do you have too many remote controls?
- h) Would we be fitter and healthier without remote controls?
- i) What other handy gadgets do you take for granted?
- j) What questions would you like to ask a remote control expert?

LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1205/120523-remote_control.html

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Polley worked for Zenith for 47 years and held some top technology posts. In 1997, the USA's National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences honoured him by (7) ____ him with an Emmy Award for 'Pioneering Development of Wireless Remote Controls for Consumer Television.' Polley's invention is something we all (8) ____ for granted nowadays. Generations of people have grown up not (9) ____ that before remote controls, (10) ____ actually had to leave the sofa and push a button or turn a dial to change their TV settings. Today we use remotes for everything from adjusting the brightness of lights to changing songs on (11) ____ iPods to opening the garage door from 30 metres. Life would be quite different without this (12) ____ gadget.

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

- | | | | | |
|-----|------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) past | (b) parsed | (c) pursed | (d) passed |
| 2. | (a) cause | (b) causes | (c) caused | (d) causing |
| 3. | (a) commonly | (b) commons | (c) commonality | (d) commoner |
| 4. | (a) manufactured | (b) shot | (c) shaped | (d) directed |
| 5. | (a) patients | (b) parents | (c) patents | (d) patterns |
| 6. | (a) along | (b) up | (c) over | (d) as |
| 7. | (a) awarding | (b) rewarding | (c) forwarding | (d) regarding |
| 8. | (a) give | (b) like | (c) do | (d) take |
| 9. | (a) knows | (b) knowing | (c) knowledge | (d) known |
| 10. | (a) we | (b) us | (c) each | (d) people |
| 11. | (a) their | (b) them | (c) our | (d) all |
| 12. | (a) handy | (b) hands | (c) hand | (d) handed |

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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 the remote control. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. REMOTE CONTROL: Make a poster about how remote controls are used in our life. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. INVENTION: Write a magazine article about the remote control. Include imaginary interviews with people who are for and against it.

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 technology historian. Ask him/her three questions about the importance remote control. Give him/her three of your opinions on it. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

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

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. inventor | a. creator |
| 2. passed away | b. died |
| 3. ubiquitous | c. ever-present |
| 4. adjust | d. modify |
| 5. instead of | e. rather than |
| 6. posts | f. jobs |
| 7. award | g. prize |
| 8. nowadays | h. today |
| 9. songs | i. tracks |
| 10. handy | j. useful |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. passed | a. away at the age of 96 |
| 2. died of natural | b. causes |
| 3. commonly used and | c. ubiquitous devices |
| 4. adjust the | d. volume |
| 5. infrared | e. light |
| 6. held some top | f. technology posts |
| 7. something we all take for | g. granted nowadays |
| 8. turn a dial to | h. change their TV settings |
| 9. adjusting the brightness | i. of lights |
| 10. handy | j. gadget |

GAP FILL:

Remote control inventor dies aged 96

The inventor of the television remote control has passed (1) **away** at the age of 96. The Associated Press news agency reported that Eugene J. Polley died of natural (2) **causes** on Sunday. His creation is one of today's most (3) **commonly** used and ubiquitous devices. Mr Polley worked as an engineer for a company called Zenith, now part of Korea's LG Electronics. He introduced his gun-(4) **shaped** remote control, called the Flash-Matic, in 1955. It was one of 18 (5) **patents** he owned. The Flash-Matic used light to turn the TV on and off, (6) **adjust** the volume and change channels. His invention was (7) **followed** up five years later by fellow Zenith engineer Robert Adler, who used ultrasound instead of light. Today's remote controls use (8) **infrared** light.

Polley worked for Zenith for 47 years and (9) **held** some top technology (10) **posts**. In 1997, the USA's National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences honoured him by (11) **awarding** him with an Emmy Award for 'Pioneering Development of Wireless Remote Controls for Consumer Television.' Polley's invention is something we all take for (12) **granted** nowadays. Generations of people have grown up not (13) **knowing** that before remote controls, people actually had to leave the sofa and push a button or turn a dial to change their TV (14) **settings**. Today we use remotes for everything from (15) **adjusting** the brightness of lights to changing songs on our iPods to opening the garage door from 30 metres. Life would be quite different without this (16) **handy** gadget.

LANGUAGE WORK

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