

1. WikiLeaks

This week's lesson is about WikiLeaks, an organization that has hardly been out of the news since late November last year when it released the contents of more than 250,000 confidential telegrams between the US State Department and US embassies around the world.

Level

Upper intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B2 and above)

How to use the lesson

1. Ask your students what they know about the activities of WikiLeaks, and particularly the release of the US diplomatic cables in November 2010. Why do they think there was so much media interest in the contents of the cables? What do they think could be the motives of the people behind WikiLeaks? What do they think are the possible pros and cons of leaking governments' secret information to the media?
2. Give your students between five and ten minutes to read through Worksheet A, encouraging them to look up new vocabulary. Note, however, that many of the words that might be new are not in the glossary because they form part of Exercise 1.
3. Give each student a copy of Worksheet B, then divide the class into pairs and ask students to work together to do Exercise 1, in which they have to find the words to match the definitions.
4. Check answers in open class.
5. Ask the students to turn over their copies of Worksheet A or to give them back to you temporarily. Then, keeping the students in their pairs, hand out Worksheet C and ask them to move on to Exercise 2, in which one word has been omitted from each line of the text. With no indication of what the words were, or any blanks to show exactly where they have been taken from, how many of the words can the students remember and replace? This is not a test of memory alone, however: the students should be able to draw on their grammatical and lexical knowledge, and you should also point out that both the glossary and the students' correct answers to Exercise 1, on Worksheet B, should be of some use. Award a point for each word that is correctly replaced. (You could perhaps award half a point if the students come up with a word that fits the sentence but is not actually the original word – e.g. “origin” instead of “source” in line 22.) The pair with the most points is the winner.
6. Check answers in open class.

Answers:

Exercise 1

1. leak 2. hacker 3. sift through 4. extradite 5. release/publish
6. espionage 7. get away with 8. embassy 9. roughly speaking
10. intelligence 11. opinion (is) divided 12. whistle-blower
13. driving force 14. ethical

Exercise 2

1. little 2. news 3. the 4. nonprofit 5. up 6. roughly 7. away 8. the 9. to
10. from 11. inside 12. official 13. force 14. front 15. cables 16. State
17. newspapers 18. publishing 19. diplomats 20. in 21. conversations
22. source 23. media 24. been 25. trial 26. divided 27. freedom 28. leaks
29. as 30. military 31. but 32. fear 33. extradited 34. espionage

2. Related websites

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself.

<http://wikileaks.wiki-mirror.de/>

A “mirror website” (duplicate, to protect the original from attack) of the official WikiLeaks website (wikileaks.ch). Challenging for upper intermediate level.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/WikiLeaks-Poses-Legal-Challenges-for-US-Prosecutors-112180424.html>

Discussion of the “divided opinion” on WikiLeaks, and the possible espionage charges to be brought against Assange, from the Voice of America News website (December 2010). Challenging for upper intermediate level.

<http://www.npr.org/2011/01/21/133102953/wikileaks-assange-finds-support-in-native-australia>

A National Public Radio (NPR) news broadcast (January 21, 2011) about the reaction to WikiLeaks and Assange in his homeland, Australia. Audio with transcript. Challenging for upper intermediate level.