

INDUCTIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING ASSOCIATED PRESS STYLE AT THE LESSONS OF ENGLISH FOR JOURNALISTS

Oľga Csalová

Jazykové centrum FF UKF v Nitre

In this article we focus on the problematics of teaching journalistic writing style at the lessons of English as a foreign language for students of journalism whereby The Associated Press Stylebook is incorporated into the teaching process as a special-purpose reaching tool. On the basis of our own teaching practice, we support inductive approach to teaching AP style and present a short example of a lesson plan.

Key words: *journalistic writing style, The AP Stylebook, inductive approach, English for journalists, lesson plan*

Introduction

Adherence to accepted writing standards is a mark of a professional writer. Considering students of journalism, they should be aware that when they enter the world of the mass media, they will encounter certain expectations about their work. One of the most basic expectations concerns style.

There is a huge variety of styles and conventions of journalism that have been developed over the years to obtain the goals of accuracy, clarity, and brevity. In many journalism courses, producing media-ready copy is acknowledged as a primary objective; therefore, teachers of English for journalists are supposed to design the lessons to enable the students to understand the necessity of having a good knowledge and consistent use of style. In other words, the lessons should help students becoming skilled writers through awareness of the specifics of journalistic writing style that is significantly different from writing done in English class and for business. Therefore, The Associated Press Stylebook (AP Stylebook) should be incorporated into the teaching process since it is the standard. We consider it as being highly appropriate to be used as a special-purpose reaching tool.

1 Associated Press style

The content of newspapers and other mass media is generally the result of many different writers and editors working together. In the United States, many non-journalistic professional compositions follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Scholarly writing often follows *The MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*. A basic style guide for the public is *The Elements of Style*, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, or *Words into Type*, by Marjorie E. Skillin. Journalists generally follow *The Associated Press Stylebook*, or *The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage*, by The New York Times.

Associated Press style (AP style) provides consistent guidelines for such publications in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation and language usage. The 2016 edition of *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law* has already been released by The Associated Press, founded in 1846, that is the essential global news network delivering fast, unbiased world news to all media platforms and formats.

AP style changes every year and continues to add entries that reflect the language of our fast-changing world. In illustration of this fact, here are some examples of the changes in the new edition: switching *internet* and *web* to lowercase in all instances; allowing *DJ* on first reference; recognizing *spokesperson* in addition to *spokesman* and *spokeswoman*; and providing new guidance on the terms *marijuana*, *cannabis* and *pot*; *cross dresser* and *transvestite*; *accident* and *crash*; *notorious* and *notoriety*. It also features 36 new and updated entries in the food chapter, from *arctic char* to *whisky/whiskey*, and eight in the fashion chapter, including *normcore* and *Uniqlo*. Therefore, for journalism students, it is essential to learn how to use the stylebook and commit themselves to staying current.

2 The AP Stylebook – a special-purpose reaching tool

The students can't be expected to appreciate the stylebook without some guidance. The approach of a teacher is crucial there to give students an overview of the AP stylebook and apprise them of the nature of its items, so they can be urged to consult it all the time, out of habit, when writing their stories. According to R. DiNicola (1994), students should be encouraged all the times to ask themselves, "Does the stylebook cover that?".

Reaching the above mentioned way of a copy-writing precisely following AP style requires systematic and effective cooperation between the students and their teacher at the classes. The AP Stylebook is considered to be an authentic tool used in a teaching process where the students are expected to meet specific learning objectives: adherence to journalistic writing standards, effectiveness of journalistic writing, and acquaintance with journalistic glossary. It is a big challenge for a teacher, therefore selection and implementation of a proper teaching method should be considered carefully.

3 Inductive approach

English courses are traditionally taught deductively. A deductive approach to teaching language starts by giving learners rules, then examples, and practice. It is a teacher-centred approach to presenting new content. Considering the motivation students have to learn the material, often it is only the fact that it will be important later in their careers. Failure to connect course content to the

real world has repeatedly been shown to contribute to students leaving the studies (Seymour and Hewitt, 1997; Kardash and Wallace, 2001).

A better way to motivate students is inductive teaching, in which the teacher begins by presenting students with a specific challenge, such as particular rules to interpret, a study to analyze, or a complex problem to solve. Students grappling with these challenges quickly recognize the need for facts, skills, and conceptual understanding, at which point the teacher provides instruction or helps students learn on their own. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) survey extensive neurological and psychological research that provides strong support for inductive teaching methods. The literature also demonstrates that inductive methods encourage students to adopt a deep approach to learning and that the challenges provided by inductive methods serve as precursors to intellectual development. Felder and Brent (1996) mentioned that an inductive approach comes from inductive reasoning stating that a reasoning progression precedes from particulars, such as observations, measurements, or data to generalities, for example, rules, laws, concepts or theories. According to Brown (2000), an inductive approach is an inductive reasoning storing a number of specific instances and inducing a general law or rule or conclusion that governs or subsumes the specific instances. Learners must infer certain rules and meanings from all the data around them.

Inductive teaching methods come in many forms, f.e. discovery learning, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, case-based teaching, or just-in-time teaching. Prince and Felder (2006) provide an extensive analysis of the conceptual frameworks and research bases for inductive teaching and state the roles of other student-centered approaches, such as active and cooperative learning.

4 Inductive approach in teaching journalistic writing style

We suggest to apply right the inductive approach to teaching journalistic writing style at the lessons of English for journalists.

Our focus is put on an assertion that the less explicit instruction and guidance students are given before and while they are addressing a challenge, the greater the resistance is likely to be. In other words, the main attention is put to the amount and form of guidance students receive from their teacher as they attempt to meet the task. Students are presented with the challenge and guided by valuable instructions to learn what they need to know to get at it.

We provide a short example of a lesson plan for inductive method supporting its selection for reaching objectives by the motivation factor at the side of students. The lesson plan is following CH. J. Dixon (Lesson Plans for Teaching Writing, 2007).

Lesson plan:

Purpose:

- To improve the writing with guided directions and make the writing effective
- To analyze the accuracy from the point of view of grammar
- To work with The AP Stylebook
- To acquire particular issues of AP style

Preparation:

- Prepare the students for this activity by giving them an overview of The AP Stylebook and apprising them of the nature of its items.
- Prepare the students by revising the inverted pyramid structure of the article.
- Props/Materials:
- Handout (Fig.1)
- The AP Stylebook/ online version

Process/Procedure:

- Assign students to read the text on the handout;
- then they are to pretend that they are expected to write their own copy out of the writing.
- Students need to respond to the questions on the handout and revise the writing as if it was a media-ready copy.
- They are to hand in their copies.
- In small groups, students may then discuss and review their individual responses and compare and contrast techniques.

Fig.1: Handout

HANDOUT

Challenge: Read the following writing and then answer the questions given below to help you produce your own media-ready copy. Consider the mechanical, spelling and stylistic errors in the following sentences. Consult The AP Stylebook.

police praise traveller which jumped on to tube tracks to rescue man

press association, 17th august 2016, 12.35 BST

police want to trace a brave passenger who put his life in danger to jump on to underground tracks and pull a man to safety

just on tuesday before 5pm a forty-seven years old man was standing on a northbound northern line platform at tottenham court road underground station when he suddenly became unwell

he stumbled on the platform and fell on to the tracks prompting a bystander to jump on to the rails and pull him safely back on to the platform the man was treated by medicine man at the scene before being taken to a hospital officers said they have since been told he suffered light cuts and bruises and would make a full rehabilitation

praising the work of the bystander supt chris horton of british transport police said going on to the tracks is extremely dangerous but the bravery of this man has to be praised the man sprung to the rescue and hauled him back on to the platform while other commuters alerted the first aid.

while the approaching train was immediately put on a red signal the quick thinking of him and other passengers on the platform avoided what could have been a tragedy on behalf of everyone at british transport police I'd like to commend this man for his brave actions his quick thinking most likely saved the mans life police want to find the rescuer and recognise him for his courage

(www.theguardian.com)

Questions:

1. *How are collective nouns treated? When it is treated as singular/ plural? (police)*
2. *What is the rule for relative pronouns usage in relative sentences? (which/ that/ who)*
3. *What is the norm form for headlines? (tense/ word choice)*
4. *Consider the usage of the words: underground, and tube.*
5. *What do the rules of AP style for dates and numbers implementation in a text say?*
6. *How would you use the capitals in the writing?(northbound northern line platform at tottenham court road underground station)*
7. *Does AP style approve usage of the following words in the context of the writing: bystander, medicine man, officers, to suffer, rehabilitation?*
8. *What about writing the titles? (supt chris horton of british transport police)*
9. *What does The AP Stylebook say about the expressions: first aid, and emergency services?*
10. *Focus on the last paragraph of the writing. How would you keep the story gripping till the end? (narrativeness, word choice, direct speech, etc)*

Conclusion

Journalism is a field that is constantly changing, which can make teaching it difficult. Future journalists and analysts may specialize in a range of writing-

based activities, including print or broadcast journalism, public relations, advertising, online media compositions, and analytical essays. They become experts in a range of skills such as researching information, interviewing, organizing, drafting and revising, writing for specific audiences, or judging the quality of current publications. What all journalists have constantly in common is that they should adhere to journalistic style (The AP Stylebook) as it has specific criteria to make a copy effective. It should be the main interest of a teacher to provide efficient support to journalism students for gaining the ability to produce journalistic work of demanded quality. It is up to the teachers whether they do their best to cope with that challenging objective, or leave it on enhancing student self-study attitude.

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