



TEACHING WITH AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

By David Heitler



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New technology will abolish the difference between fixed-line and mobile phones

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TEACHING WITH AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

What do we mean by authentic materials?

For the purposes of this article, authentic materials are any texts written by native English speakers for native English speakers. All the texts used in this site are articles taken from *The Economist* to complement the materials from *Intelligent Business*.

Why choose authentic materials?

Well, let's have a look at some of their advantages.

- 1 Authentic materials bring learners into direct contact with a *reality level* of Business English.
- 2 Authentic materials drawn from periodicals are always up-to-date and constantly being updated.
- 3 Authentic materials from a particular source, such as *The Economist*, tend to work in consistent areas of language, so, after a while, students who practice reading *The Economist* will become experts in reading English language business publications.
- 4 Authentic materials provide us with a source of up-to-date materials that can be *directly relevant* to business English learners' needs.

Now let's take them in order:

- 1 Authentic materials bring learners into direct contact with a *reality level* of English.

Real Business English – that is, English as it is used by businesspeople to communicate with other businesspeople – English that has not been made especially easy for learners – can be a great motivator. Constant exposure to real English as it is used to talk about business defines the end of the tunnel – the goal – for many learners. “If I work with and practice real Business English, I am developing a tool that I can use in real life.” The other extremely important point here is that many of our learners are already in business so they will have had a certain amount of exposure to the English language that is used to conduct *real business*. A lot of value can be generated out of a marriage between real Business English and our learners' real business experience.

- 2 Authentic materials drawn from periodicals are always up-to-date and constantly being updated.

Materials that are *always up-to-date and topical* have their own reason for being read with interest. They not only practise English, they also update our learners so that, at the end of their English lessons, they are better informed – and maybe also better businesspeople. Also, the English language itself is constantly developing and changing, so working with up-to-date materials not only means that the content of the material is up-to-date, it also means the language itself is up-to-date. It is also part of the work of businesspeople to be aware of current news issues (they may even have been following these issues in the press in their own languages), so material of this kind will allow your students to bring their own knowledge of the world to their lessons.



- 3 Authentic materials from a particular source type, such as *The Economist*, tend to work in consistent areas of language, so after a while, students who practice reading *The Economist* will become experts, not only in reading *The Economist* but also in reading other English language business publications.

Having the wherewithal to be able to read the commercial and business press is another great motivator. And, by *limiting the area of English* that is being practised, many of your students will be able to witness and measure their own progress.

- 4 Authentic materials provide us with a source of up-to-date tools that can be *directly relevant* to business English learners' needs.

Learners who work for big companies will sooner or later find articles about their own companies. These articles will present their company in a different light from their own internal view. This different light will broaden learners' perspectives of their own company.

Learners who work for smaller companies will always be able to find articles about their area of business or industry. This can lead to interesting discussions about how their company compares with, or differentiates itself from, the rest of their industry. Either way, the combination of *directly relevant* authentic materials and the learners' own input will generate better English and better business knowledge.

Some criteria for choosing the most appropriate articles

So, from the information above, we now have four tools to help us choose the most suitable articles:

- 1 Is this the kind of *real English* that my student(s) need? Will we get additional value out of a marriage between the real English in these materials and my learners' *real business (and general) knowledge*?
- 2 Is it *up-to-date*? Is it *topical*? Will even experts – as my students are – learn something new? Will they be able to combine their knowledge of the world with the knowledge they gain from this material?
- 3 Am I *limiting the area of language* sufficiently for my students to feel that they are making genuine progress?
- 4 Is this material *directly relevant* to my students' requirements?

Using authentic materials with classes

How long should such an article be?

That really depends on how you are going to use it.

At intermediate level as a rule of thumb, if the students are going to read it and discuss it during a 60–90 minute lesson, then a comfortable length is between half and one and a half A4 pages in 12-point type. If the article is longer (see [sample article 1](#)), it is a good idea to shorten it (see [cut article](#)) or simply work with the first half of it (see [cut off article](#)). When your students are familiar with the content of the shortened article, then they may well be 'hooked' enough to read the complete article for homework – and of course there are a number of [follow-up activities](#) that can be done.



How much time do I need to invest in preparing an article?

As you have intermediate students, and *The Economist* is an authentic source of materials, some preparation is definitely necessary. The question is, how much of this preparation can your students do and how much preparation should you be doing?

For students' preparation of materials see *Lessons that require little or no preparation*.

Otherwise allow yourself half an hour of preparation time for an article of 900–1200 words. Remember you can often use the same preparation with several groups!

What types of interaction are possible with this material?

Perhaps a more useful question to ask here is 'What are my students' requirements from this course?' as this will often generate the types of interaction that you will need. Here are a few examples:

Presenting and discussing a proposal at a meeting.

Businesspeople often need to present ideas at meetings. Normally, the presenter informs him or herself about the proposal and presents it for discussion. This person is also able to clarify things and answer questions. In a typical language school situation, such a meeting could be about choosing a diversification project, for example – and maybe three or four such proposals could be presented and discussed. A different article, one that is relevant to his or her field of expertise, could be chosen for (or chosen by) each presenter.

Of course they will need to prepare, so give them time to do this or set this for homework.

Tell your students that you will take the article(s) back before the actual meeting – that way they will have to express themselves in their own words.

Your students are then practising *verbal summarising and explaining* at the meeting – and you can tell them that they have to explain themselves so clearly that even a financial manager can understand! (Of course, financial managers will have to explain themselves so clearly that even an engineer/advertising executive can understand!) They will also be practising asking and answering questions.

A variation on this is to give the same article to two students, or two groups of students.

They then have to look for all the arguments in the article in favour of the proposal and all the arguments in the article against the proposal – and combine this with their knowledge of the world.

In the meeting they then present their arguments and debate whether to adopt the proposal or not.



Preparing a written report.

A number of businesspeople need to write reports.

Normally, in business the purpose of a report is to assist managers in making an informed decision, so you can judge the effectiveness of a report on whether all the necessary information is there, and whether it is then possible to reach a decision (often yes or no) on the basis of such a report.

In preparing a report, students can look at one or more articles about the same issue and combine this with their knowledge of business and of the world to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of adopting a particular course of action.

After these reports have been tidied up (with the help of the trainer) they can also be distributed and read out – and used as the basis for reaching decisions in groups.

Incidentally, it is often the same people who have to write reports who also have to write up the minutes of such meetings.

Reading, understanding and discussing business texts and learning vocabulary.

Many businesspeople need to be quickly able to read, understand and be better informed by reading about business in English.

You can help them by making lessons based on authentic materials a regular feature of your course and keeping a record of the vocabulary and expressions that they learn and recycling this in tests and subsequent lessons.

And, of course, many businesspeople simply want to feel at ease when they talk in English. In which case some of the less specialised, discussion-based lessons below will be useful.

What else should I bear in mind?

What are the specialities of your group? Are they ‘techies’? Then, before you start the article, show them the technical bits and get them to explain them – and don’t let them stop explaining until everyone (including you) understands! Are they bankers? Then get them to explain all the financial bits! Are they lawyers? Are they doctors?

If you have only one ‘techie’, banker, lawyer or doctor in your group, then show the relevant bit of that article to them in advance – and give them time to think about it before they prime the rest of the group!

Preparing your materials

Basic principles

It is one thing to give your students an article that they find interesting and satisfying to read – and quite another thing to give them an article to read in class (even if it is an interesting and relevant one) that is so difficult for them to understand that they have problems with every third word and lose all confidence in their English. So, particularly when you start using authentic materials with them, you will need to be extremely patient and gently support them in their learning process. It is at this point where you need to make adjustments for your group to compensate for their level of comprehension and vocabulary. See [lessons that provide added value](#) and [a first lesson with authentic materials](#).



Making it interesting for everyone

As you get to know your groups it will be easier for you to choose the most appropriate, relevant material – but, of course, you can always ask your groups to choose (the people in your group can even take it in turns to choose an article)! It is always worth bearing in mind, however, that if you give your groups *something interesting to do* with the article, then the interestingness or the relevance of the article itself can be less important!

An authentic materials preparation programme

Allow half an hour of preparation time for an article of 900–1200 words [Sample article 1](#), during which you can do the following:

Cutting

Cut the article, making sure that what is left still makes sense [Cut article](#) (see [things to look out for when cutting articles](#))

or

Cut the article at the point where it has become interesting but not everything has been said ... [Cut-off article](#)

[Things to look out for when cutting articles](#)

(These comments relate to an *Economist* article about the US Government suing the US tobacco industry. [view complete article](#))

Initials: When a company or organisation is first named, it is often followed by a set of initials by which it is referred to later in the article:
“The first of these forces was a legal settlement between GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) ... and the State of New York.”
So, if you have cut the first reference to the company, you will need to insert the whole name of the company plus the initials – here, “GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)” – when you first mention it in the cut version of the article.

Names of people: On first mention in an article, a person is named with both their first name, surname *and a brief description*:
“Henry Waxman, a democratic congressman from California, pointed out ... “
Later in the article he appears as Mr Waxman:
“Alan Goldhammer, another spokesman for PhRMA, claims that Mr Waxman was relying on preliminary data.”
If you have cut out the first mention of this person, remember to give his or her full name when you first mention that person.

Read it to yourself:

Check the cut article through once more to yourself to make sure it makes sense and it does not feel as if there is something missing.



Preparing yourself

Read the remainder of the article, making sure *you* understand everything – and marking all the words and expressions that you do not understand! See Words I don't know.

Look these up in either in a good English dictionary or, for neologisms, use Google, by first keying in

define: the word you don't know

for example

define: escrow

or

define: "the expression you don't know in inverted commas"

for example

define: "double jeopardy"

If this doesn't work, look this up in Google without the 'define:' feature.

And, if there is any *arithmetic* in the article, check that too to make sure you understand it. Arithmetic

Preparing the Lexis

Now mark all the lexis you feel that your students *should* know (see Vocabulary and expressions)

Keep a note of this in a file for that group, so you can recycle this in later lessons.

Now look for collocations such as:

- standard *adjective noun* combinations Adjective noun combinations

- standard *verb object* combinations Verb object combinations

Keep a note of these also in a file for that group, so you can re-cycle them in later lessons.

Making adjustments

– to compensate for level

You can make the article a lot more approachable if you get your students to work on some aspects of the comprehension *before* they see the whole article. There are a number of different ways you can reveal part of the article and, in the same process, pre-teach some of the ideas in the article. Good examples of this are 'Let's find out what you know already' (see lessons that require little or no preparation), 'Before you read true or false' or 'Matching split sentence halves' (see providing added value).

This, incidentally, makes the article more interesting for everyone, because by slowly revealing a bit of the article at a time, you are keeping your students guessing and whetting their appetites for the whole article at the same time!

– to compensate for difficult lexis

Also getting your students to work with some of the key lexis in the article before they see it will make it a lot easier and more satisfying for them to read. Some good examples of this are 'Group work on key vocabulary' (see lessons that require little or no preparation), 'Matching words, expressions or word partnerships to definitions' or 'Focussing on a lexical area' (see lessons that provide added value).



Asking questions

Often you can explain, or draw attention to, difficult vocabulary in your reading comprehension questions.

Remember you can ask specific questions to find out if your students have understood a particular point, or you can ask broad questions for them to discuss, where many different answers are possible.

Here are some examples of specific questions (based on the cut article):

- 1 What is a dead duck?
- 2 What does “cutting the cord” mean in this article?
- 3 What other “handy features” can you have on a mobile phone?
- 4 How can fixed-mobile convergence give consumers the best of both worlds?

You can also ask specific questions like:

- 5 How can integrated operators save money with fixed mobile convergence?

But be careful here! Your students will probably have to understand what “integrated operators” means in order to answer the question. But if their answer is “They can save money by merging network infrastructures and doing away with separate fixed and mobile divisions.” i.e. a verbatim quotation from the article which does indeed answer the question – it still does not indicate to you that they have understood any of the words in their answer!

You will still have to ask them to explain what “merging” and “doing away with” could mean, here.

A broader question, such as:

How will the organisation of integrated operators change with fixed-mobile convergence?

... will make your students think more about the words in this part of the article.

It is also important for your students to practise asking questions themselves. So, exercises that make your students ask questions are extremely valuable.

Discussion issues

To generate discussions that work after reading some authentic material, ask your students how the contents of the article, or an aspect of the article, could affect their industry, their company or their jobs.

This is an excellent way to round off your lessons and it reinforces the relevance of these materials to your students’ own professional life.

Some sample lessons

Lessons that require little or no preparation

Let’s find out what you know already

It’s always worth investing a few minutes finding out what your group knows already about the subject of the article. With sample article 1, you could ask:

- What are the differences between fixed-line telephones and mobile phones?
- Have you heard of ‘fixed-mobile convergence’? What is it? *or* What do you think it is?
- How could it work?

That way you can prime your group on some of the key vocabulary and anticipate some of its contents.

True or false? – *before you read!*

This is another way to prime your group on some of the key vocabulary and anticipate some of its contents. You will also find out a lot about what they know already by



getting them to discuss among themselves whether the statements you give are true or false. Here are some statements based on the cut article:

- 1 Nowadays, more people use mobile phones than fixed-line phones.
- 2 In ten year's time, there will be no more fixed-line phones.
- 3 Many telecoms companies are working together to develop a system known as "fixed-mobile convergence" that combines the advantages of mobile phones with fixed-line phones.
- 4 British telecom is working in partnership with the German company, T-Mobile, to create a converged fixed-mobile service.
- 5 Telecoms companies that already have both a fixed and a mobile network are not interested in convergence.
- 6 Mobile operator companies could save money by re-routing calls to fixed line networks.
- 7 Fixed-mobile convergence is becoming more realistic because mobile phones have become so popular.
- 8 Seven companies are working together to create a fixed-mobile technology called "Bluephone".

What do we think the article will tell us?

Ask your class to discuss and write down some questions that they believe the article will answer.

Vocabulary preparation

Divide your class into groups and give them each four or five lexical items to research and explain to the rest of the class.

It is always a good idea to present these items in the context in which they appear in the article, but you will need to alter the sentences slightly so that not too many new lexical items appear in the same sentence.

Your students can then demonstrate that they have understood these words and expressions by putting them into sentences of their own.

Here are some examples from the Cut-off article that you could give to your class:

First group

- 1 Is the fixed-line phone *a dead duck*?
- 2 If you look at the numbers and trends you might well *conclude* that it is.
- 3 Mobile phones have many *handy features*, such as the ability to store dozens of names and numbers, *text messaging* and other services.
- 4 It is often difficult to get *a strong mobile signal* indoors.

Second group

- 1 Calls are *handled* within the home by a small base station.
- 2 This is *plugged into* a fixed-line broadband-internet connection.
- 3 The base-station *pretends*, in effect, to be an ordinary mobile phone base-station.
- 4 As you enter your house, your phone "*roams*" on to it.
- 5 Calls made in this way are *billed* as fixed-line calls.



Third group

- 1 If you leave the house while making a call, your call will transfer *seamlessly* back on to the ordinary mobile network.
- 2 And when a friend comes to visit, her phone will use your base-station, but the charges for any calls made *appear* on her bill.
- 3 British Telecom (BT) is Britain's telecoms *incumbent* as a fixed-line operator.
- 4 BT one of the leading *proponents* of fixed-mobile convergence.
- 5 For fixed-line operators, the *appeal* of this idea is obvious.

Using broad questions

If you ask questions where a broad range of answers are possible, your students can discuss these questions using the contents of the whole article, and their own knowledge of the world, to develop as many different answers as possible.

Here are some examples:

Broad questions about the whole of sample article 1.

- 1 Is the fixed-line phone a dead duck? Why? Why not?
- 2 How will “fixed-mobile convergence” work?
- 3 What are the opportunities of fixed-mobile convergence for fixed-line operators?
- 4 What are “integrated operators” – and what are the advantages of fixed-mobile convergence for them?
- 5 How will this change the telecoms market?
- 6 How will this change users’ habits?
- 7 How should this be marketed?

You can show your class such questions before they read. They can then read the article and, in groups, they can discuss the answers to the questions (in English only, of course) before presenting them to the rest of the group.

Using broad questions with the cut-off article

Present the same questions to your class before they read the cut-off article.

Then ask your students how many of these questions, or parts of these questions, they can answer already.

Then split them into groups and get them to read the cut-off article to see how many more of the questions, or parts of the questions, they can answer. (This particular article stops at an interesting point, so many businesspeople should be able to anticipate a significant amount of what follows in the rest of the article!)

After they have discussed their answers with the whole class, let them read the second half of the article in their groups and pad out their answers.

Using broad questions with jigsaw reading

(This example is for a group of 12. You will have to alter this recipe a little for groups of other sizes.)

Give everyone in the class a copy of your broad questions.

Split your class into four groups of three.

Split the article into four pieces of approximately equal size (In my split article example based on the cut article, there is also a copy of the broad questions) and give each piece of article to each group of three people.

Each group then reads their part of the article and agrees on what it means. They then discuss how many of the broad questions, or parts of them, they can answer with their part of the article.

Each person in each group of three is then given a number – one, two or three. All the ‘ones’ become a group, all the ‘twos’ become another group and all the ‘threes’



become another group – so the four groups of three are now three groups of four. And each member of each new group has read a different part of the article.

Now take back the different parts of the article!

Then each person in each group describes the part of the article they have read to the rest of their group in their own words, and each group then agrees on the order of the different parts of the article.

After that, each group discusses among themselves all the answers to the broad questions.

A spokesperson from each group then presents their group answers to all the questions to the rest of the class.

Lessons that provide added value

When students work with an article on their own, they may well notice the words, and sometimes expressions, that they don't know.

They will almost certainly not recognise words or groups of words that commonly go together (fixed expressions, collocations, etc.) such as

an **increasing number**

handy features

A **reliable connection**

The **best of both worlds**

(see adjective noun combinations)

... and they will probably be unaware of the types of prepositions that go with particular verbs, such as

you might **conclude that** ...

they are **doing away with** ...

(see verb object combinations)

You can draw their attention to these types of common word combinations before they read the article by writing an exercise like this:



Matching split sentence halves

This exercise draws students' attention to the adjective noun combinations, given here in *italics*, from the beginning of the cut article.

Match the two halves of the sentences below.

- 1 A *fixed-line* ...
 - 2 A thing becomes a *dead* ...
 - 3 An *increasing* ...
 - 4 Mobile phones have many *handy* ...
 - 5 But it is often difficult to get a *reliable* ...
 - 6 It is important to have a *strong* ...
 - 7 People talk about a *current* ...
 - 8 A system that could use all the features of mobile phones along with the reliability of a fixed line network combines the *best* ...
- a. ... *of both worlds*.
 - b. ... *duck* when everyone has it but doesn't use it any more.
 - c. ... *number* of people use mobile phones all over the world.
 - d. ... *phone* is connected to your house through a cable network.
 - e. ... *signal* if you want to use your mobile phone for business purposes.
 - f. ... *enthusiasm* when many people are excited about a particular idea at the moment.
 - g. ... *features* such as text messaging and the capacity to store many telephone numbers.
 - h. ... *connection* on your mobile phone, particularly when you are inside a building or in the countryside.

KEY: 1 D, 2 B, 3 C, 4 G, 5 H, 6 E, 7 F, 8 A

As long as you ask your students to hand back or hide their article while doing this exercise, they can also do it *after* reading the article.

Focussing on a lexical area

Almost always, your whole class will know more words and expressions than any individual in the class. This is a good way of getting everyone in your class to learn from one another.

Before you look at the article, ask your students to think of as many words as they can to do with a lexical area in the article they are going to read. In our sample article, we could use *telephones* – and maybe split this up into *fixed-line phones* and *mobile phones*.

In this example, the whole class can brainstorm the telephones area, then half the class can brainstorm the fixed-line phones and the other half can brainstorm the mobile phones.

As your class has now split into two groups anyway, ask each group to choose five words or expressions for the other team.

Then each team can think of sentences using these words and expressions and read them out to the rest of the class.

The winning team is the one with the most correct complete sentences.



Matching words, expressions or word partnerships to definitions

Here are some of the lexical items from the cut article, which may be important for your class (see vocabulary and expressions).

You can either define the items yourself or look in a dictionary to make the definitions on the right. In a class, you can write the lexical items on cards of one colour and the definitions on cards of another colour, and the class would have to work together to find the matching pairs.

| | | | |
|--------|----------------|----|--|
| 1 | a dead duck | a. | a quantity that gets less |
| 2 | to conclude | b. | almost not at all |
| 3 | a flat number | c. | not at home |
| 4 | a declining | d. | as well as |
| number | | e. | of consistently good quality – so you can trust it |
| 5 | hardly | f. | agree with |
| 6 | not to mention | g. | people who pay regularly for a service |
| 7 | reliable | h. | a thing that is not useful or successful any more |
| 8 | testify | i. | decide that something is true after thinking about |
| 9 | subscribers | it | |
| 10 | out and about | j. | a quantity that does not change |

KEY: 1 H, 2 I, 3 J, 4 A, 5 B, 6 D, 7 E, 8 F, 9 G, 10 C

After reading the article your students can either answer some questions (broad or specific) set by you, or each other's questions.

Exercises that make your students ask questions

A. If you would like your students to set the questions, one way is to give them a range of question words to use:

Where? Why? How? How much? How many? What? Who? Who for? Who to? Who with? (don't forget that some languages, such as Russian or German, have different words for these 'Whos') When? etc.

Write these on cards and distribute them evenly among your class.

B. Alternatively, you can choose a few answers from the article and have your students write the questions. Here are some such answers based on the cut article.

- 1 The ability to store dozens of names and numbers, text messaging and other services. (paragraph 1)
- 2 Calls are cheaper and clearer, and connections are much more reliable. (paragraph 2)
- 3 Because they can stop losing business to mobile companies and win back some traffic. (paragraph 3)
- 4 They are telecoms companies with both fixed-line and mobile networks. (paragraph 4)
- 5 Because they can save money by routing calls along fixed networks. (paragraph 5)
- 6 It means that operators can proceed without the risk of being locked in to a particular technology. (paragraph 6)
- 7 Next spring. (paragraph 7)
- 8 They will become anachronisms within a few years. (paragraph 9)

As you can see, it is often useful to indicate which paragraph each answer refers to.



KEY: (MODEL ANSWERS) 1. WHAT SORT OF HANDY FEATURES DO MOBILE PHONES HAVE? 2. BUT WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF FIXED-LINE PHONES? 3. WHAT IS THE APPEAL OF FIXED-MOBILE CONVERGENCE TO FIXED LINE OPERATORS SUCH AS BT? 4. WHAT ARE INTEGRATED OPERATORS THEN? 5. SO WHY ARE MOBILE-ONLY OPERATORS MAKING DEALS WITH FIXED-LINE PROVIDERS? 6. WHAT IS THE POINT OF HAVING AGREED INTEGRATION STANDARDS? 7. WHEN WILL BT BE LAUNCHING ITS NEW FIXED-MOBILE TECHNOLOGY? 8. AND WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THE HISTORIC DISTINCTION BETWEEN FIXED AND MOBILE TELEPHONE SYSTEMS?

C. Another way to get your students to ask the questions is with rather shorter answers – and the question words for each question.

- 1 How ? (paragraph 1)
Around 5%.
- 2 How ? (paragraph 2)
Only one.
- 3 Who ? (paragraph 3)
British Telecom (BT).
- 4 What ? (paragraph 4)
They are telecoms companies who own both fixed-line and mobile networks.
- 5 Why ? (paragraph 5)
It would help them fill excess capacity on their 3G networks.
- 6 Why ? (paragraph 6)
Because mobile phones are successful and everyone has their own handset.
- 7 Who ? (paragraph 7)
A seven-company consortium that includes Alcatel, Motorola and Ericsson.
- 8 Is ? (paragraph 8)
No. Education is needed, and a focus on simplicity.
- 9 What ? (paragraph 9)
It is likely to trigger the launch of similar services elsewhere.

KEY: (MODEL ANSWERS) 1. HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE GOING ENTIRELY MOBILE IN EUROPE? 2. HOW MANY DIFFERENT TELEPHONE BILLS WILL PEOPLE BE RECEIVING IN FUTURE IF THIS FIXED-MOBILE CONVERGENCE IS SUCCESSFUL? 3. WHO IS THE CURRENT FIXED-LINE OPERATOR IN BRITAIN? 4. WHAT ARE INTEGRATED OPERATORS? 5. WHY ARE MOBILE-ONLY OPERATORS ALSO GETTING INVOLVED IN FIXED-MOBILE CONVERGENCE? 6. WHY IS FIXED-MOBILE CONVERGENCE ONLY ATTRACTING ATTENTION NOW? 7. WHO IS DEVELOPING THE 'BLUEPHONE' TECHNOLOGY? 8. IS IT GOING TO BE EASY TO CREATE CONSUMER DEMAND FOR THIS CONVERGED TECHNOLOGY? 9. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF 'BLUEPHONE' TURNS OUT TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN BRITAIN?



A first lesson with authentic materials

In a first lesson with authentic materials you may feel you have to be particularly careful if you don't want to put your students off this type of activity.

One way of being very gentle is by beginning with a matching words to definitions activity, followed by another activity such as matching split sentence halves which uses some of the new lexis in context. Alternatively you can make a gap-fill sentences from the article exercise like the one below to practise each item of the new lexis in context:

Gap-fill sentences from the article

This exercise uses the same lexis as the matching words, expressions or word partnerships to definitions activity above (chosen from the cut article in vocabulary and expressions), but directly in the context of the article, quoting the article as closely as possible.

Complete the sentences below with the words from the box.

| | | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|----------|-----------|--------|
| subscribers | not to mention | out and about | testify | declining | hardly |
| conclude | dead duck | flat | reliable | | |

- 1 If you look at the numbers and trends, you might well _____ that the fixed-line phone is a _____.
- 2 Mobile phones now outnumber fixed ones, and their numbers are growing fast, while the number of fixed lines is _____ globally and _____ in many countries.
- 3 While fixed-line phones have _____ changed in years, mobile phones have many handy features, such as the ability to store dozens of names and numbers, _____ text messaging and other services.
- 4 Fixed-line calls are cheaper and clearer, and connections are much more _____, as anyone who has trouble getting a strong mobile signal indoors will _____.
- 5 _____ use the same handset to make calls via fixed lines at home, and mobile networks when _____.

Your class can now check their answers by reading the cut article.

(KEY: 1. CONCLUDE, DEAD DUCK 2. FLAT, DECLINING 3. HARDLY, NOT TO MENTION 4. RELIABLE, TESTIFY 5. SUBSCRIBERS, OUT AND ABOUT)

After they have read the cut article, you can give your students the broad questions to first discuss in pairs before presenting their answers to the rest of the class.

There may well be some words or expressions that are still not clear. If this is the case, get the members of the class to ask each other about these words – only stepping in yourself if they get it wrong!



Follow-up activities

Finding out more and reporting back to the class

Get your students to find out more about this issue (from the web, other newspapers and magazines – even those in their own language) and report their findings back to the class at a later date.

Assessing the consequences

Get each of your students to write a report of the consequences of the article (in this case, fixed-mobile convergence) for their company. Students can then compare, contrast and discuss their conclusions in class.

Using authentic materials in one-to-one lessons

How long should such an article be?

That really depends on how you are going to use it.

At intermediate level as a rule of thumb, if your student is going to read it and discuss it during a 60–90 minute lesson, then a comfortable length is between half and one and a half A4 pages in 12-point type. If the article is longer (see [sample article 1](#)), it is a good idea to shorten it (see [cut article](#)) or simply work with the first half of it (see [cut-off article](#)). When your students are familiar with the content of the shortened article, then they may well be ‘hooked’ enough to read the complete article for homework – and of course there are a number of [follow-up activities](#) that can be done.

How much time do I need to invest in preparing an article?

As this course is designed for intermediate students and *The Economist* is an authentic source of materials, some preparation is definitely necessary. The question is, how much of this preparation can your student do and how much preparation could you be doing?

For students’ preparation of materials see [Lessons that require little or no preparation](#).

Otherwise allow yourself half an hour of preparation time for an article of 900–1200 words. Remember you can often use the same preparation with several different students!

What types of interaction are possible with this material?

Perhaps a more useful question to ask here is ‘What are my student’s requirements from this course?’ as this will often generate the types of interaction that you will need. Here are a few examples:



Presenting and discussing a proposal at a meeting.

Businesspeople often need to present ideas at meetings. Normally the presenter informs him or herself about the proposal and presents it for discussion.

This person is also able to clarify things and answer questions. In a one-to-one situation, your student can practise presenting their findings to you.

Allow your student to find the materials they require for this research from the web or from *The Economist* website.

Of course your student will need to prepare, so give them time to do this or set this for homework.

Tell your student that you will take the research material(s) back before the actual 'meeting' – that way they will have to express themselves in their own words.

Your student is then practising *verbal summarising and explaining* at the meeting – and you can tell them that they have to explain themselves so clearly, that even a financial manager can understand! (Of course, financial managers will have to explain themselves so clearly that even an engineer/advertising executive can understand!)

They will also be practising asking and answering questions. While they are presenting to you, you can take notes of the things they said well, the things they said that need improvement and, if necessary, the vocabulary and expressions that you believe they were trying to use.

If your student pronounces things in a way that is not clear to you, or does not express themselves clearly, you can always interrupt them and say "I am sorry, I didn't understand that. Could you explain that again with different words?"

If your student uses an expression or technical term that you do not know, you are perfectly in your rights to admit that you don't understand – and to ask them to go on explaining until you do (after all, that is what a finance manager would do!).

Preparing a written report.

A number of businesspeople need to write reports.

Normally in business the purpose of a report is to assist managers in making an informed decision, so you can judge the effectiveness of a report on whether all the necessary information is there, and whether it is then possible to reach a decision (often yes or no, or to adopt this or that option) on the basis of such a report.

In preparing a report, your student can look at one or more articles about the same issue and combine this with their knowledge of business and of the world to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of adopting a particular course of action.

After such a report has been tidied up (with the help of the trainer) it could be presented to another trainer or a non trainer who is a native English speaker – where that person would ask questions until they feel that they can make a decision.

Reading, understanding and discussing business texts and learning vocabulary.

Many businesspeople need to be quickly able to read, understand and be better informed by reading about business in English.

You can help them by making lessons based on authentic materials a regular feature of your course and keeping a record of the vocabulary and expressions that they learn and recycling this in tests and subsequent lessons.

And, of course, many businesspeople simply want to feel at ease when they talk in English. In which case some of the less specialised, discussion-based lessons below will be useful.

What else should I bear in mind?

What are the specialities of your group? Are they 'techies'? Then, before you start the article, show them the technical bits and get them to explain them – and don't let them



stop explaining until everyone (including you) understands! Are they bankers? Then get them to explain all the financial bits! Are they lawyers? Are they doctors? If you have only one 'techie', banker, lawyer or doctor in your group, then show the relevant bit of that article to them in advance – and give them time to think about it before they prime the rest of the group!

Preparing your materials

Basic principles

It is one thing to give your students an article that they find interesting and satisfying to read – and quite another thing to give them an article to read in class (even if it is an interesting and relevant one) that is so difficult for them to understand that they have problems with every third word and lose all confidence in their English. So, particularly when you start using authentic materials with them, you will need to be extremely patient and gently support them in their learning process. It is at this point where you need to make adjustments for your group to compensate for their level of comprehension and vocabulary. See [lessons that provide added value](#) and [a first lesson with authentic materials](#).

Making it interesting for everyone

As you get to know your groups it will be easier for you to choose the most appropriate, relevant material – but, of course, you can always ask your groups to choose (the people in your group can even take it in turns to choose an article)! It is always worth bearing in mind, however, that if you give your groups *something interesting to do* with the article, then the interestingness or the relevance of the article itself can be less important!

An authentic materials preparation programme

Allow half an hour of preparation time for an article of 900–1200 words [Sample article 1](#), during which you can do the following:

Cutting

Cut the article, making sure that what is left still makes sense [Cut article](#) (see [things to look out for when cutting articles](#))

or

Cut the article at the point where it has become interesting but not everything has been said ... [Cut-off article](#)

[Things to look out for when cutting articles](#)

(These comments relate to an *Economist* article about the US Government suing the US tobacco industry. [view complete article](#))



Initials: When a company or organisation is first named, it is often followed by a set of initials by which it is referred to later in the article:
“The first of these forces was a legal settlement between GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) ... and the State of New York.”
So, if you have cut the first reference to the company, you will need to insert the whole name of the company plus the initials – here, “GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)” – when you first mention it in the cut version of the article.

Names of people:
On first mention in an article, a person is named with both their first name, surname *and a brief description*:
“Henry Waxman, a democratic congressman from California, pointed out ... “
Later in the article he appears as Mr Waxman:
“Alan Goldhammer, another spokesman for PhRMA, claims that Mr Waxman was relying on preliminary data.”
If you have cut out the first mention of this person, remember to give his or her full name when you first mention that person.

Read it to yourself:
Check the cut article through once more to yourself to make sure it makes sense and it does not feel as if there is something missing.

Preparing yourself

Read the remainder of the article, making sure *you* understand everything – and marking all the words and expressions that you do not understand! See Words I don't know.

Look these up in either in a good English dictionary or, for neologisms, use Google, by first keying in

define: the word you don't know

for example

define: escrow

or

define: “the expression you don't know in inverted commas”

for example

define: “double jeopardy”

If this doesn't work, look this up in Google without the ‘define:’ feature.

And, if there is any *arithmetic* in the article, check that too to make sure you understand it. Arithmetic

Preparing the Lexis

Now mark all the lexis you feel that your students *should* know (see Vocabulary and expressions)

Keep a note of this in a file for that group, so you can recycle this in later lessons.

Now look for collocations such as:

- standard *adjective noun* combinations Adjective noun combinations

- standard *verb object* combinations Verb object combinations

Keep a note of these also in a file for that group, so you can re-cycle them in later lessons.

Making adjustments

– to compensate for level

You can make the article a lot more approachable if you get your students to work on some aspects of the comprehension *before* they see the whole article. There are a



number of different ways you can reveal part of the article and, in the same process, pre-teach some of the ideas in the article. Good examples of this are 'Let's find out what you know already' (see lessons that require little or no preparation), 'Before you read true or false' or 'Matching split sentence halves' (see providing added value).

This, incidentally, makes the article more interesting for everyone, because by slowly revealing a bit of the article at a time, you are keeping your students guessing and whetting their appetites for the whole article at the same time!

– to compensate for difficult lexis

Also getting your students to work with some of the key lexis in the article before they see it will make it a lot easier and more satisfying for them to read. Some good examples of this are 'Group work on key vocabulary' (see lessons that require little or no preparation), 'Matching words, expressions or word partnerships to definitions' or 'Focussing on a lexical area' (see lessons that provide added value).

Asking questions

Often you can explain, or draw attention to, difficult vocabulary in your reading comprehension questions.

Remember you can ask specific questions to find out if your students have understood a particular point, or you can ask broad questions for them to discuss, where many different answers are possible.

Here are some examples of specific questions (based on the cut article):

- 1 What is a dead duck?
- 2 What does "cutting the cord" mean in this article?
- 3 What other "handy features" can you have on a mobile phone?
- 4 How can fixed-mobile convergence give consumers the best of both worlds?

You can also ask specific questions like:

- 5 How can integrated operators save money with fixed mobile convergence?

But be careful here! Your students will probably have to understand what "integrated operators" means in order to answer the question. But if their answer is "They can save money by merging network infrastructures and doing away with separate fixed and mobile divisions." i.e. a verbatim quotation from the article which does indeed answer the question – it still does not indicate to you that they have understood any of the words in their answer!

You will still have to ask them to explain what "merging" and "doing away with" could mean, here.

A broader question, such as:

How will the organisation of integrated operators change with fixed-mobile convergence?

... will make your students think more about the words in this part of the article.

It is also important for your students to practise asking questions themselves. So, exercises that make your students ask questions are extremely valuable.



Discussion issues

To generate discussions that work after reading some authentic material, ask your students how the contents of the article, or an aspect of the article, could affect their industry, their company or their jobs.

This is an excellent way to round off your lessons and it reinforces the relevance of these materials to your students' own professional life.

Some sample lessons

Lessons that require little or no preparation

Let's find out what you know already

It's always worth investing a few minutes finding out what your group knows already about the subject of the article. With sample article 1, you could ask:

- What are the differences between fixed-line telephones and mobile phones?
- Have you heard of 'fixed-mobile convergence'? What is it? *or* What do you think it is?
- How could it work?

That way you can prime your group on some of the key vocabulary and anticipate some of its contents.

True or false? – *before you read!*

This is another way to prime your group on some of the key vocabulary and anticipate some of its contents. You will also find out a lot about what they know already by getting them to discuss among themselves whether the statements you give are true or false. Here are some statements based on the cut article:

- 1 Nowadays, more people use mobile phones than fixed-line phones.
- 2 In ten year's time, there will be no more fixed-line phones.
- 3 Many telecoms companies are working together to develop a system known as "fixed-mobile convergence" that combines the advantages of mobile phones with fixed-line phones.
- 4 British telecom is working in partnership with the German company, T-Mobile, to create a converged fixed-mobile service.
- 5 Telecoms companies that already have both a fixed and a mobile network are not interested in convergence.
- 6 Mobile operator companies could save money by re-routing calls to fixed line networks.
- 7 Fixed-mobile convergence is becoming more realistic because mobile phones have become so popular.
- 8 Seven companies are working together to create a fixed-mobile technology called "Bluephone".

What do we think the article will tell us?

Ask your class to discuss and write down some questions that they believe the article will answer.



Vocabulary preparation

Divide your class into groups and give them each four or five lexical items to research and explain to the rest of the class.

It is always a good idea to present these items in the context in which they appear in the article, but you will need to alter the sentences slightly so that not too many new lexical items appear in the same sentence.

Your students can then demonstrate that they have understood these words and expressions by putting them into sentences of their own.

Here are some examples from the Cut-off article that you could give to your class:

First group

- 1 Is the fixed-line phone *a dead duck*?
- 2 If you look at the numbers and trends you might well *conclude* that it is.
- 3 Mobile phones have many *handy features*, such as the ability to store dozens of names and numbers, *text messaging* and other services.
- 4 It is often difficult to get *a strong mobile signal* indoors.

Second group

- 1 Calls are *handled* within the home by a small base station.
- 2 This is *plugged into* a fixed-line broadband-internet connection.
- 3 The base-station *pretends*, in effect, to be an ordinary mobile phone base-station.
- 4 As you enter your house, your phone “*roams*” on to it.
- 5 Calls made in this way are *billed* as fixed-line calls.

Third group

- 1 If you leave the house while making a call, your call will transfer *seamlessly* back on to the ordinary mobile network.
- 2 And when a friend comes to visit, her phone will use your base-station, but the charges for any calls made *appear* on her bill.
- 3 British Telecom (BT) is Britain's telecoms *incumbent* as a fixed-line operator.
- 4 BT one of the leading *proponents* of fixed-mobile convergence.
- 5 For fixed-line operators, the *appeal* of this idea is obvious.

Using broad questions

If you ask questions where a broad range of answers are possible, your students can discuss these questions using the contents of the whole article, and their own knowledge of the world, to develop as many different answers as possible.

Here are some examples:

Broad questions about the whole of sample article 1.

- 1 Is the fixed-line phone a dead duck? Why? Why not?
- 2 How will “fixed-mobile convergence” work?
- 3 What are the opportunities of fixed-mobile convergence for fixed-line operators?
- 4 What are “integrated operators” – and what are the advantages of fixed-mobile convergence for them?
- 5 How will this change the telecoms market?
- 6 How will this change users’ habits?
- 7 How should this be marketed?

You can show your class such questions before they read. They can then read the article and, in groups, they can discuss the answers to the questions (in English only, of course) before presenting them to the rest of the group.

Using broad questions with the cut-off article

Present the same questions to your class before they read the cut-off article.

Then ask your students how many of these questions, or parts of these questions, they can answer already.



Then split them into groups and get them to read the cut-off article to see how many more of the questions, or parts of the questions, they can answer. (This particular article stops at an interesting point, so many businesspeople should be able to anticipate a significant amount of what follows in the rest of the article!) After they have discussed their answers with the whole class, let them read the second half of the article in their groups and pad out their answers.

Using broad questions with jigsaw reading

(This example is for a group of 12. You will have to alter this recipe a little for groups of other sizes.)

Give everyone in the class a copy of your broad questions.

Split your class into four groups of three.

Split the article into four pieces of approximately equal size (In my split article example based on the cut article, there is also a copy of the broad questions) and give each piece of article to each group of three people.

Each group then reads their part of the article and agrees on what it means. They then discuss how many of the broad questions, or parts of them, they can answer with their part of the article.

Each person in each group of three is then given a number – one, two or three. All the ‘ones’ become a group, all the ‘twos’ become another group and all the ‘threes’ become another group – so the four groups of three are now three groups of four. And each member of each new group has read a different part of the article.

Now take back the different parts of the article!

Then each person in each group describes the part of the article they have read to the rest of their group in their own words, and each group then agrees on the order of the different parts of the article.

After that, each group discusses among themselves all the answers to the broad questions.

A spokesperson from each group then presents their group answers to all the questions to the rest of the class.

Lessons that provide added value

When students work with an article on their own, they may well notice the words, and sometimes expressions, that they don’t know.

They will almost certainly not recognise words or groups of words that commonly go together (fixed expressions, collocations, etc.) such as an **increasing number**

handy features

A reliable connection

The best of both worlds

(see adjective noun combinations)

... and they will probably be unaware of the types of prepositions that go with particular verbs, such as

you might **conclude that** ...

they are **doing away with** ...

(see verb object combinations)

You can draw their attention to these types of common word combinations before they read the article by writing an exercise like this:



Matching split sentence halves

This exercise draws students' attention to the adjective noun combinations, given here *in italics*, from the beginning of the cut article.

Match the two halves of the sentences below.

- 1 A *fixed-line* ...
 - 2 A thing becomes a *dead* ...
 - 3 An *increasing* ...
 - 4 Mobile phones have many *handy* ...
 - 5 But it is often difficult to get a *reliable* ...
 - 6 It is important to have a *strong* ...
 - 7 People talk about a *current* ...
 - 8 A system that could use all the features of mobile phones along with the reliability of a fixed line network combines the *best* ...
- i. ... *of both worlds*.
 - j. ... *duck* when everyone has it but doesn't use it any more.
 - k. ... *number* of people use mobile phones all over the world.
 - l. ... *phone* is connected to your house through a cable network.
 - m. ... *signal* if you want to use your mobile phone for business purposes.
 - n. ... *enthusiasm* when many people are excited about a particular idea at the moment.
 - o. ... *features* such as text messaging and the capacity to store many telephone numbers.
 - p. ... *connection* on your mobile phone, particularly when you are inside a building or in the countryside.

KEY: 1 D, 2 B, 3 C, 4 G, 5 H, 6 E, 7 F, 8 A

As long as you ask your students to hand back or hide their article while doing this exercise, they can also do it *after* reading the article.

Focussing on a lexical area

Almost always, your whole class will know more words and expressions than any individual in the class. This is a good way of getting everyone in your class to learn from one another.

Before you look at the article, ask your students to think of as many words as they can to do with a lexical area in the article they are going to read. In our sample article, we could use *telephones* – and maybe split this up into *fixed-line phones* and *mobile phones*.

In this example, the whole class can brainstorm the telephones area, then half the class can brainstorm the fixed-line phones and the other half can brainstorm the mobile phones.

As your class has now split into two groups anyway, ask each group to choose five words or expressions for the other team.

Then each team can think of sentences using these words and expressions and read them out to the rest of the class.

The winning team is the one with the most correct complete sentences.

Matching words, expressions or word partnerships to definitions

Here are some of the lexical items from the cut article, which may be important for your class (see vocabulary and expressions).

You can either define the items yourself or look in a dictionary to make the definitions on the right. In a class, you can write the lexical items on cards of one colour and the definitions on cards of another colour, and the class would have to work together to find the matching pairs.



| | | | |
|----|-----------------------|----|--|
| 1 | a dead duck | a. | a quantity that gets less |
| 2 | to conclude | b. | almost not at all |
| 3 | a flat number | c. | not at home |
| 4 | a declining number | d. | as well as |
| 5 | hardly | e. | of consistently good quality – so you can trust it |
| 6 | not to mention | f. | agree with |
| 7 | reliable | g. | people who pay regularly for a service |
| 8 | testify | h. | a thing that is not useful or successful any more |
| 9 | subscribers | i. | decide that something is true after thinking about it |
| 10 | out and about | j. | a quantity that does not change |

KEY: 1 H, 2 I, 3 J, 4 A, 5 B, 6 D, 7 E, 8 F, 9 G, 10 C

After reading the article your students can either answer some questions (broad or specific) set by you, or each other's questions.

Exercises that make your students ask questions

A. If you would like your students to set the questions, one way is to give them a range of question words to use:

Where? Why? How? How much? How many? What? Who? Who for? Who to? Who with? (don't forget that some languages, such as Russian or German, have different words for these 'Whos') When? etc.

Write these on cards and distribute them evenly among your class.



B. Alternatively, you can choose a few answers from the article and have your students write the questions. Here are some such answers based on the cut article.

- 1 The ability to store dozens of names and numbers, text messaging and other services. (paragraph 1)
- 2 Calls are cheaper and clearer, and connections are much more reliable. (paragraph 2)
- 3 Because they can stop losing business to mobile companies and win back some traffic. (paragraph 3)
- 4 They are telecoms companies with both fixed-line and mobile networks. (paragraph 4)
- 5 Because they can save money by routing calls along fixed networks. (paragraph 5)
- 6 It means that operators can proceed without the risk of being locked in to a particular technology. (paragraph 6)
- 7 Next spring. (paragraph 7)
- 8 They will become anachronisms within a few years. (paragraph 9)

As you can see, it is often useful to indicate which paragraph each answer refers to.

KEY: (MODEL ANSWERS) 1. WHAT SORT OF HANDY FEATURES DO MOBILE PHONES HAVE? 2. BUT WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF FIXED-LINE PHONES? 3. WHAT IS THE APPEAL OF FIXED-MOBILE CONVERGENCE TO FIXED LINE OPERATORS SUCH AS BT? 4. WHAT ARE INTEGRATED OPERATORS THEN? 5. SO WHY ARE MOBILE-ONLY OPERATORS MAKING DEALS WITH FIXED-LINE PROVIDERS? 6. WHAT IS THE POINT OF HAVING AGREED INTEGRATION STANDARDS? 7. WHEN WILL BT BE LAUNCHING ITS NEW FIXED-MOBILE TECHNOLOGY? 8. AND WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THE HISTORIC DISTINCTION BETWEEN FIXED AND MOBILE TELEPHONE SYSTEMS?

C. Another way to get your students to ask the questions is with rather shorter answers – and the question words for each question.

- 1 How ? (paragraph 1)
Around 5%.
- 2 How ? (paragraph 2)
Only one.
- 3 Who ? (paragraph 3)
British Telecom (BT).
- 4 What ? (paragraph 4)
They are telecoms companies who own both fixed-line and mobile networks.
- 5 Why ? (paragraph 5)
It would help them fill excess capacity on their 3G networks.
- 6 Why ? (paragraph 6)
Because mobile phones are successful and everyone has their own handset.
- 7 Who ? (paragraph 7)
A seven-company consortium that includes Alcatel, Motorola and Ericsson.
- 8 Is ? (paragraph 8)
No. Education is needed, and a focus on simplicity.
- 9 What ? (paragraph 9)
It is likely to trigger the launch of similar services elsewhere.

KEY: (MODEL ANSWERS) 1. HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE GOING ENTIRELY MOBILE IN EUROPE? 2. HOW MANY DIFFERENT TELEPHONE BILLS WILL PEOPLE BE RECEIVING IN FUTURE IF THIS FIXED-MOBILE CONVERGENCE IS SUCCESSFUL? 3. WHO IS THE CURRENT FIXED-LINE OPERATOR IN BRITAIN? 4. WHAT ARE INTEGRATED OPERATORS? 5. WHY ARE MOBILE-ONLY OPERATORS ALSO GETTING INVOLVED IN FIXED-MOBILE CONVERGENCE? 6. WHY IS FIXED-MOBILE CONVERGENCE ONLY



ATTRACTING ATTENTION NOW? 7. WHO IS DEVELOPING THE 'BLUEPHONE' TECHNOLOGY? 8. IS IT GOING TO BE EASY TO CREATE CONSUMER DEMAND FOR THIS CONVERGED TECHNOLOGY? 9. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF 'BLUEPHONE' TURNS OUT TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN BRITAIN?

A first lesson with authentic materials

In a first lesson with authentic materials you may feel you have to be particularly careful if you don't want to put your students off this type of activity.

One way of being very gentle is by beginning with a *matching words to definitions* activity, followed by another activity such as *matching split sentence halves* which uses some of the new lexis in context. Alternatively you can make a *gap-fill sentences from the article* exercise like the one below to practise each item of the new lexis in context:

Gap-fill sentences from the article

This exercise uses the same lexis as the *matching words, expressions or word partnerships to definitions* activity above (chosen from the cut article in *vocabulary and expressions*), but directly in the context of the article, quoting the article as closely as possible.

Complete the sentences below with the words from the box.

| | | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|----------|-----------|--------|
| subscribers | not to mention | out and about | testify | declining | hardly |
| conclude | dead duck | flat | reliable | | |

- 1 If you look at the numbers and trends, you might well _____ that the fixed-line phone is a _____.
- 2 Mobile phones now outnumber fixed ones, and their numbers are growing fast, while the number of fixed lines is _____ globally and _____ in many countries.
- 3 While fixed-line phones have _____ changed in years, mobile phones have many handy features, such as the ability to store dozens of names and numbers, _____ text messaging and other services.
- 4 Fixed-line calls are cheaper and clearer, and connections are much more _____, as anyone who has trouble getting a strong mobile signal indoors will _____.
- 5 _____ use the same handset to make calls via fixed lines at home, and mobile networks when _____.

Your class can now check their answers by reading the cut article.

(KEY: 1. CONCLUDE, DEAD DUCK 2. FLAT, DECLINING 3. HARDLY, NOT TO MENTION 4. RELIABLE, TESTIFY 5. SUBSCRIBERS, OUT AND ABOUT)

After they have read the cut article, you can give your students the broad questions to first discuss in pairs before presenting their answers to the rest of the class.

There may well be some words or expressions that are still not clear. If this is the case, get the members of the class to ask each other about these words – only stepping in yourself if they get it wrong!

Follow-up activities

Finding out more and reporting back to the class



Get your student to find out more about this issue (from the web, other newspapers and magazines – even those in their own language) and report back to you at a later date.

Assessing the consequences

Get your student to write a report of the consequences of the article (in this case, fixed-mobile convergence) for their company.

Appendix – Hyperlinks to *Economist* articles

Sample article 1

New technology will abolish the difference between fixed and mobile phones

IS THE fixed-line phone a dead duck? Look at the numbers and the trends, and you might well conclude that it is. Mobile phones now outnumber fixed ones, and their numbers are growing fast, while the number of fixed lines is flat globally and declining in many countries. An increasing number of people, including 5% of Europeans, are “cutting the cord” and going entirely mobile, doing away with their fixed lines altogether. And while fixed-line phones have hardly changed in years, mobile phones have many handy features, such as the ability to store dozens of names and numbers, not to mention text messaging and other services.

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Behind the scenes, this involves some clever tricks. Calls are handled within the home by a small base-station plugged into a fixed-line broadband-internet connection. This base-station communicates with nearby handsets using radio technology that operates in “unlicensed” spectrum, such as Bluetooth or Wi-Fi (so you will need a new handset). The base-station pretends, in effect, to be an ordinary mobile-phone base-station. As you enter your house, your phone “roams” on to it. When you make a call, it is routed over the broadband link, which has enough capacity to handle several calls at once by different members of the household. Calls made in this way are billed as fixed-line calls. If you leave the house while making a call, you roam seamlessly back on to the ordinary mobile network. And when a friend comes to visit, her phone roams on to your base-station, but the charges for any calls made appear on her bill.

Great expectations

For fixed-line operators such as BT, Britain's telecoms incumbent and one of the leading proponents of fixed-mobile convergence, the appeal of this approach is obvious: rather than losing out to mobile phones, fixed lines can now co-operate with them, and win back some traffic. After selling off its wireless arm a few years ago, BT has re-entered the mobile market by reselling airtime on other operators' networks; most recently, it has formed a partnership with Vodafone. A converged fixed-mobile service will enable BT to lower costs by shifting some mobile calls on to its fixed network; it will also allow the company to differentiate itself from mobile-only operators.

So-called integrated operators, which own both fixed and mobile networks—such as Germany's Deutsche Telekom and Japan's NTT—also like the idea of fixed-mobile convergence. They can save money by merging network infrastructures and doing away with separate fixed and mobile divisions. France Telecom, for example, is reorganising itself into consumer and business divisions, rather than fixed and mobile. And Cingular, an American mobile operator owned by two fixed-line incumbents, BellSouth and SBC, is pursuing convergence as a way to improve coverage within buildings, and thus exploit fixed networks to gain a competitive advantage over other mobile operators.

Even mobile-only operators are getting involved, and making deals with fixed-line providers. Fixed-mobile convergence could help them fill the excess capacity on their 3G networks, and enable them to unload calls on to cheaper fixed networks where possible, to reduce costs. In short, everyone in the telecoms industry seems to like the idea, because they hope it will expand the market overall. Once people get into the habit of carrying their mobile phones around with them at all times, even in the home, they will probably make more calls. Vendors love the idea too, notes David Brown of Motorola, the world's second-largest mobile-handset maker, because as well as requiring lots of back-end equipment, fixed-mobile convergence presents the opportunity to replace a billion or so existing fixed-line phones.



It all sounds great, which explains why the idea of fixed-mobile convergence has been around for several years. But it is only now gaining any traction. One reason, says Niel Ransom of Alcatel, a telecoms-equipment maker, is the success of mobile phones: fixed-mobile convergence only makes sense if everyone has their own handset, which they now do, in the rich world at least. It is also now possible to cram multiple radios (one for mobile use, and one for use within buildings) into a single handset without adding much to its cost or size. But perhaps most important of all is the emergence of technical standards. This month a consortium of operators and suppliers, including Alcatel, BT, Cingular, Ericsson, Motorola, Nokia, Nortel and T-Mobile, announced specifications for integrating wide-area mobile with short-range Bluetooth and Wi-Fi networks. An agreed standard means that operators can proceed without the risk of being locked in to a particular technology.

Most observers agree that BT is the operator to watch. In July it co-founded an alliance of operators called the Fixed Mobile Convergence Alliance, the other members of which include NTT, Brasil Telecom and Korea Telecom. BT's trailblazing fixed-mobile convergence technology, known as "Bluephone", is being developed by a seven-company consortium that includes Alcatel, Motorola and Ericsson, and is being closely watched by other operators. "If I go anywhere in the world, and talk to any operator, they want me to tell them about Bluephone," says Mr Ransom. "They've all got their eye on it, and they will all be watching BT very carefully to see how this works." Now that technical standards have been agreed and handsets are becoming available, BT expects to start trials of Bluephone in December, in preparation for a launch next spring.

The big unanswered question is: do consumers actually want these new converged phone services? BT plans to market Bluephone on the basis that it is a simplifying technology, yet explaining exactly how it simplifies things is not easy. "Education is needed, and a focus on simplicity," says Andrew Cole of A.T. Kearney, a consultancy. One way to think of fixed-mobile convergence, he suggests, is that it brings the features of mobile phones into the fixed environment. Market research shows that people are receptive to the idea, he says, particularly if it means lower prices.

If Bluephone proves a success in Britain, it is likely to trigger the launch of similar services elsewhere. Mobile-only operators may then rush to team up with cable operators in order to compete, since being a mobile-only or fixed-only operator will no longer be viable, says Lars Godell of Forrester, a consultancy. More companies might also follow the lead of France Telecom, and merge their fixed and mobile divisions. The historic distinction between the two types of telephones would vanish. If all of this comes to pass, the terms "fixed" and "mobile" could become anachronisms within a few years.



Cut article

New technology will abolish the difference between fixed and mobile phones

IS THE fixed-line phone a dead duck? Look at the numbers and the trends, and you might well conclude that it is. Mobile phones now outnumber fixed ones, and their numbers are growing fast, while the number of fixed lines is flat globally and declining in many countries. An increasing number of people, including 5% of Europeans, are “cutting the cord” and going entirely mobile, doing away with their fixed lines altogether. And while fixed-line phones have hardly changed in years, mobile phones have many handy features, such as the ability to store dozens of names and numbers, not to mention text messaging and other services.

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Words I don't know

This extract is from an *Economist* article about the US Government suit against the tobacco industry ([view complete article](#)).

Once a decision has been reached, a court cannot try the same person, or company, for the same crime.

To the tobacco firms, this looks like double jeopardy. In 1998, the four biggest reached a deal—the “master settlement agreement” (MSA)—with 46 state governments that accused them of pushing up the states' health-care costs.

Even if these were not to blame for past smoking-related ill-health, they had to sign up, or pay up just as if they had, into escrow accounts held by the states.

Arithmetic

This extract is from an *Economist* article about the US Government suit against the tobacco industry ([view complete article](#)).

Money that is paid into a special account for legal reasons, and kept there until certain conditions have been fulfilled.

In 1998, the four biggest reached a deal—the “master settlement agreement” (MSA)—with 46 state governments that accused them of pushing up the states' health-care costs. They agreed to pay \$206 billion over the first 25 years, via a levy that is by now almost 50 cents a pack; four other states had already settled, for \$40 billion over 25 years. Other companies have signed up.

(46 States in the USA have reached a settlement where tobacco companies pay them \$206 billion over 25 years by charging nearly 50 cents more per pack for their cigarettes. The “levy” is this nearly 50 cents.)



Vocabulary and expressions

Lexis that I think my student or class should know.

IS **THE fixed-line phone** a **dead duck**? Look at the numbers and the trends, and you might well **conclude** that it is. Mobile phones now outnumber fixed ones, and their numbers are growing fast, while **the number of** fixed lines **is flat** globally **and declining** in many countries. An increasing number of people, including 5% of Europeans, are **“cutting the cord”** and **going** entirely **mobile**, doing away with their fixed lines altogether. And while fixed-line phones have **hardly** changed in years, mobile phones have many **handy features**, such as the ability to store dozens of names and numbers, **not to mention** **text messaging** and other services.

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Adjective noun combinations

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| | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| a fixed line | phone |
| a dead | duck |
| an increasing | number |
| handy | features |
| reliable | connections |
| a strong | signal |
| the current | enthusiasm |
| the best | of both worlds |
| the freedom | of mobile [phones] |
| the low | cost |

Verb object combinations

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Split article 1

Broad questions sheet

New technology will abolish the difference between fixed and mobile phones

- 1 Is the fixed line phone a dead duck? Why? Why not?
- 2 How will “fixed-mobile convergence” work?
- 3 What are the opportunities of fixed-mobile convergence for fixed-line operators?
- 4 What are “integrated operators” – and what are the advantages of fixed-mobile convergence for them?
- 5 How will it change the telecoms market?
- 6 How will it change users’ habits?
- 7 How should this be marketed?

Split article 2

jigsaw piece

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Split article 3

jigsaw piece

Great expectations

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Split article 4 jigsaw piece

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Split article 5 jigsaw piece

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View complete article – [words I don't know] [arithmetic]

The federal government launches its lawyers against the United States' leading cigarette makers

THE hearings begin on September 21st. America's federal government charges its top cigarette makers—Philip Morris, R.J. Reynolds, Brown & Williamson (an arm of British American Tobacco that is now merging with Reynolds), Lorillard and Liggett Group—plus a British arm of BAT, with lying to the public about the hazards of smoking, of trying to fiddle or hide the scientific evidence, of deliberately getting people addicted to nicotine, of selling knowingly to people below smoking age, of pushing low-tar cigarettes as safer than others, while knowing they were not; and more. All untrue, say the companies. For them, it better had be: the government says they made \$280 billion in “ill-gotten” profits and wants it disgorged.

To the tobacco firms, this looks like double jeopardy. In 1998, the four biggest reached a deal—the “master settlement agreement” (MSA)—with 46 state governments that accused them of pushing up the states' health-care costs. They agreed to pay \$206 billion over the first 25 years, via a levy that is by now almost 50 cents a pack; four other states had already settled, for \$40 billion over 25 years. Other companies have signed up. Problem solved.

Not so. The Clinton administration soon launched a federal suit, heavily reliant on a law meant to help the government recover health-care costs if someone injures a soldier. The judge threw out this part of the case, but left in another, based on the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act of 1970.

This law, originally aimed at the mob, makes normal business a crime when it is part of an illegal conspiracy. That is what the tobacco men were up to, says the government, when they met on December 15th, 1953 in a doubtless smoke-filled room in a New York hotel, and schemed to mislead the public about the risks of smoking.

But did not the government itself once distribute cigarettes to GIs? Does not it still prop up tobacco prices and collect taxes on cigarette sales? It does indeed: about \$8 billion a year. On top of that federal rake-off, states' excise taxes take about \$9 billion. In addition, the 46 MSA states alone used to get about \$8 billion a year from that agreement, though this has slid to an estimated \$5.2 billion in 2003-04. Securitisation of the revenues has brought some states huge short-term windfalls.

It is hard to see the government really wanting to butcher this milch cow, even if it can persuade a court to lend a hand. And if the tobacco barons were “defrauding the public”, as it alleges, what was it doing itself as it raked in tax revenues? Were its own scientists duped too?



Yet the industry has reason to worry. In pre-trial hearings, it argued that the MSA shielded it from the federal case. The judge disagreed. She also refused to cap the size of the government's claim, though that ruling is under appeal. However, to make the firms pay up, the government will have to prove that they not just defrauded the public but are likely to go on doing so. Since the MSA also imposed strict limits on their marketing, that will not be easy.

Expect no swift conclusion to this case. If the companies lose, they will certainly appeal. At which point a re-elected George Bush might call off the suit. And even if they were to lose all the way up—some sort of deal is more likely—it is (as stock markets agree) by no means sure that they would have to cough up the full \$280 billion.

The spectre of FDA regulation

Meanwhile, the industry itself is volunteering to become even more virtuous than it claims to be already. More exactly, Philip Morris is. Along with the rest of big tobacco, it fought regulation tooth and nail in the 1990s. But now it is promoting legislation to give the Food and Drug Administration jurisdiction over tobacco. Why? Critics suspect the aim is not virtue, but protection for Philip Morris. They call the measure the “Marlboro Monopoly Act”.

Tobacco growers want to get rid of the Depression-era production quotas that keep crop prices high, but invite cheap imports. They want compensation, however, some \$12 billion of it, for their quota certificates. And lo, Philip Morris has volunteered the cigarette makers to pay the cost—but only in return for FDA regulation.

Both chambers of Congress have passed a tobacco-buyout bill this year. But while the Senate goes along with Philip Morris, the House has passed a taxpayer-funded version with no FDA regulation. The two have soon to hash out agreed details of a corporate-tax bill to which the legislation is attached. Philip Morris says it will withdraw its support if the bargain it struck in the Senate is tinkered with.

But why should taxpayers look this gift horse in its nicotine-stained teeth? What is the company after? FDA regulation would spell big changes for the industry: larger warning labels and more disclosure of toxins on cigarette packs; marketing—already banned from radio and television—limited to simple black-and-white print ads and retail displays; no flavoured cigarettes (bar menthol brands); FDA-set limits on tar and nicotine, and pre-approval to market cigarettes as “light” or “low-tar”. Has Philip Morris caught masochism of the throat? No, say its rivals: it is just trying to lock in its half-share of the American market. Tight marketing rules would hurt lesser brands more than they would Marlboro.

Maybe, but newcomers to the market find it odd to hear any bit of big tobacco carping about anti-competitive tactics: the big boys have done well enough under the MSA, which some see as a state-sponsored cartel. It forced signatory firms to pay up, and accept marketing restraints. But it also gave states less of the cash if they did not pass laws to hit non-signatories too. Even if these were not to blame for past smoking-related ill-health, they had to sign up, or pay up just as if they had, into escrow accounts held by the states. Within days of the MSA deal, the big firms raised prices by 45 cents. Further rises followed fast.

Yet things have changed, which may explain why Philip Morris has changed tack. Discount firms have pushed into the market, undercutting the high-priced leading brands by as much as \$1 a pack, and they have still made a profit, despite the escrow



costs—or simply evaded these. The discounters' market share has climbed from 2% in 1997 to about 12% now. In 2001, Philip Morris's share began to slip, though this year it is creeping up again.

Importers have done well: witness the recent threat from Vector Group, Liggett's parent, to sue the 46 MSA states for the allegedly over-easy signing-up terms that they allowed to an importer of Colombian cigarettes that sold 3m packs in 2000 and 380m last year. And after several failed attempts to challenge state laws, importers who do not want to sign up saw a New York appellate court in January reinstate one such case, writing, in an unusually candid opinion, that the MSA “threatens to become a permanent, nationwide cartel.” If the importers eventually win, similar suits could burgeon across the country.

How could FDA regulation help the big boys? A nicotine limit would aid makers who already have low-nicotine cigarettes. Many small firms lack the technology to make these. And Philip Morris would not weep at a ban on cigarettes that appeal to the young: Brown & Williamson and R.J. Reynolds have invested in sweet-flavoured brands, which do just that.