**Linguaskill Lesson Plans**

**Reading Lesson 7**

**Description**

The topic of this lesson is brain training. Practice of vocabulary related to the mind and of cohesive devices is used to give guidance on completing gapped-text paragraph tasks, one of the task-types in the Linguaskill Reading Test.

**Teacher’s Notes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Aims of the lesson** | * to present and practise vocabulary for discussing the mind and cohesive devices * to raise awareness of the requirements of Linguaskill Reading gapped-text paragraphs tasks * to develop techniques and strategies for this task-type based on practice of a sample task |
| **Time required** | * 45 minutes |
| **Level** | * Suitable for C1–C2 level |
| **Materials required** | * Student’s Worksheet 1: Brain training – text cohesion * Student’sWorksheet 2: Sample Linguaskill Reading task (Brain training) |

**Procedure**

1. Start the lesson with a word puzzle. You could do hangman (use the word ‘brain’ as the key) or you could log into an online word puzzle (i.e. *Wordle*). Learners work together to complete the puzzle. Ask learners for their thoughts: *Do you enjoy this kind of activity? Why do people like doing puzzles?* Learners can discuss the questions in pairs before sharing their opinions with the whole group. Guide the discussion to elicit the idea of using different types of puzzles to exercise the brain.
2. Focus on ‘jigsaw’ puzzles and check understanding of what this type of puzzle involves (i.e. putting pieces in the correct place). Tell learners that this lesson will look at puzzles in two ways: related to the topic of the text and as a strategy for completing Linguaskill Reading gapped-text paragraphs tasks.
3. Give learners **Student’s Worksheet 1**. Explain that it includes extracts from part of a text about how to boost brain power. The text is not complete, so learners should not worry about it making sense as a whole. Ask learners to scan the text for examples of ways to improve brain power [**KEY:** sleeping well, eating healthy food, exercising, daily brain exercises, reading, learning new things]. Then learners complete the gaps in the paragraphs using the words in the box, like they would if they were choosing the correct piece to complete a jigsaw puzzle. Learners check with a partner before checking as a whole group [**KEY:** others, so, this, ones, these, it].
4. In feedback, focus on text cohesion by discussing with learners how they chose which words to put in each gap. The gapped words are referencing and linking words which refer back to something mentioned earlier in the sentence or paragraph. Note with learners that these can also refer forwards. Ask learners to work with a partner to highlight on their worksheets what each of the gapped words refers to. Check that learners have highlighted the correct words.
5. Explain that identifying cohesive devices is an important strategy in gapped-text paragraphs reading tasks. Discuss what the task requires: learners are given a text from which five paragraphs have been removed, and a choice of six separate paragraphs. They need to decide where to put these paragraphs in the main text. There are six paragraphs, so there is one that they do not need to use.
6. Ask learners to look at **Student’s Worksheet 1** again, this time thinking about the gaps between the paragraphs. Ask them to highlight words in the paragraphs that indicate information that should appear in the gaps. Remind learners that the words can refer forwards or backwards. Learners first work with a partner, then check as a whole class. In feedback, ask learners to explain what kind of information is missing, i.e. in Paragraph 3, *everyday tasks like these* indicates that the paragraph in the gap before it will need to mention more than one example of an everyday task.
7. Give learners **Student’s Worksheet 2** which has the full Linguaskill Reading gapped-text paragraphs task. Ask learners to work on their own, using the strategy of identifying cohesive devices. They need to read the gapped paragraphs, highlight the cohesive devices which will help them make the correct match, and then use this information and the highlighted words on **Student’s Worksheet 1** to complete the task. Allow 5 minutes for learners to work alone, then they compare their answers with a partner. If they have different answers, they need to show evidence highlighted in the text to justify their choice (KEY 1:D 2:F 3:C 4:A 5:E).
8. Check answers as a whole class and ask learners to explain the reasons for each match. For example, for Gap 1, the key is **D** because *the question* refers back to *scientists have tried to find out* and *these two factors* are *our genes* and *the environment.* Discuss that identifying cohesive devices is one strategy for completing this task-type, but learners should confirm their choice by reading the whole paragraph to check for logical development of the argument.
9. Finish the lesson by asking learners to summarise the writer’s point of view and discuss whether they agree with it.

**Student’s Worksheet 1**

**Brain training – text cohesion**

**Complete the gaps in the paragraphs using the words from the box.**

|  |
| --- |
| so these others it this ones |

Have you ever thought about why some of us excel in sports, whereas \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are better at playing the guitar or performing mathematical calculations? For many years, scientists have tried to find out which parts of our talents and abilities are determined by our genes and which parts are influenced by the environment.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Many of us look for ways to harness the full potential of our brains, and the internet is full of tips encouraging us to do \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Advice includes sleeping well, eating healthy food, and exercising. But there is also a technique called brain training. After doing just a few minutes of daily brain exercises, users report impressive changes, ranging from improved concentration to getting higher scores on computer games.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

We know that doing everyday tasks like these helps shape your brain, and we also know that the potential to train your brain exists. Unfortunately, researchers are still trying to understand how to achieve \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Would you take the risk and potentially waste your time ‘brain training’, or would you rather spend your time doing something fun, like playing basketball with your friends?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In addition to this, by remembering new words and information, connections are built in the brain and existing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are strengthened. So, the more knowledge you have, the easier it becomes to concentrate. Have you ever noticed how the rest of the world seems to disappear when you are absorbed in reading a story? This is possible because your brain is actually hard at work.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Without the use of either of these capabilities, you would not understand the words that are used nor could you create a full story in your mind. Research has shown that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are skills which can be improved upon by simply enjoying stories. For example, trying to understand and remember what’s happening in a story is ‘brain training’ in itself.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Even though developing brains are flexible, and it should be possible to make yourself smarter, the evidence that ‘brain training’ will help you do so is mixed at best. If you want your brain to function at its optimal level, put \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to work and keep on learning new things.

**KEY (Stages 3 and 4)**

Have you ever thought about why **some of us** excel in sports, whereas others are better at playing the guitar or performing mathematical calculations? For many years, scientists have tried to find out which parts of our talents and abilities are determined by our genes and which parts are influenced by the environment.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Many of us look for ways to **harness the full potential of our brains**, and the internet is full of tips encouraging us to do so. Advice includes sleeping well, eating healthy food, and exercising. But there is also a technique called brain training. After doing just a few minutes of daily brain exercises, users report impressive changes, ranging from improved concentration to getting higher scores on computer games.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

We know that doing everyday tasks like these helps shape your brain, and we also know that the potential to **train your brain** exists. Unfortunately, researchers are still trying to understand how to achieve this. Would you take the risk and potentially waste your time ‘brain training’, or would you rather spend your time doing something fun, like playing basketball with your friends?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In addition to this, by remembering new words and information, **connections** are built in the brain and existing ones are strengthened. So, the more knowledge you have, the easier it becomes to concentrate. Have you ever noticed how the rest of the world seems to disappear when you are absorbed in reading a story? This is possible because your brain is actually hard at work.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Without the use of either of these capabilities, you would not **understand the words that are used** nor could you **create a full story in your mind**. Research has shown that these are skills which can be improved upon by simply enjoying stories. For example, trying to understand and remember what’s happening in a story is ‘brain training’ in itself.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Even though developing brains are flexible, and it should be possible to make yourself smarter, the evidence that ‘brain training’ will help you do so is mixed at best. If you want **your brain** to function at its optimal level, put it to work and keep on learning new things.

**KEY (Stage 6)**

Have you ever thought about why some of us excel in sports, whereas others are better at playing the guitar or performing mathematical calculations? For many years, scientists have tried to find out which parts of our talents and abilities are determined by our genes and which parts are influenced by the environment.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Many of us look for ways to harness the full potential of our brains, and the internet is full of tips encouraging us to do so. Advice includes sleeping well, eating healthy food, and exercising. But there is also a technique called brain training. After doing just a few minutes of daily brain exercises, users report impressive changes, ranging from improved concentration to getting higher scores on computer games.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

We know that doing **everyday tasks like these** helps shape your brain, and we also know that the potential to train your brain exists. Unfortunately, researchers are still trying to understand how to achieve this. Would you take the risk and potentially waste your time ‘brain training’, or would you rather spend your time doing something fun, like playing basketball with your friends?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**In addition to this**, by remembering new words and information, connections are built in the brain and existing ones are strengthened. So, the more knowledge you have, the easier it becomes to concentrate. Have you ever noticed how the rest of the world seems to disappear when you are absorbed in reading a story? This is possible because your brain is actually hard at work.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Without the use of either of **these capabilities**, you would not understand the words that are used nor could you create a full story in your mind. Research has shown that these are skills which can be improved upon by simply enjoying stories. For example, trying to understand and remember what’s happening in a story is ‘brain training’ in itself.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Even though developing brains are flexible, and it should be possible to make yourself smarter, the evidence that ‘brain training’ will help you do so is mixed at best. If you want your brain to function at its optimal level, put it to work and keep on learning new things.

**Student’s Worksheet 2**

**Choose the correct paragraph (A–F) for each gap. You do not need to use one of the paragraphs.**

Have you ever thought about why some of us excel in sports, whereas others are better at playing the guitar or performing mathematical calculations? For many years, scientists have tried to find out which parts of our talents and abilities are determined by our genes and which parts are influenced by the environment.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Many of us look for ways to harness the full potential of our brains, and the internet is full of tips encouraging us to do so. Advice includes sleeping well, eating healthy food, and exercising. But there is also a technique called brain training. After doing just a few minutes of daily brain exercises, users report impressive changes, ranging from improved concentration to getting higher scores on computer games.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

We know that doing everyday tasks like these helps shape your brain, and we also know that the potential to train your brain exists. Unfortunately, researchers are still trying to understand how to achieve this. Would you take the risk and potentially waste your time ‘brain training’, or would you rather spend your time doing something fun, like playing basketball with your friends?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In addition to this, by remembering new words and information, connections are built in the brain and existing ones are strengthened. So, the more knowledge you have, the easier it becomes to concentrate. Have you ever noticed how the rest of the world seems to disappear when you are absorbed in reading a story? This is possible because your brain is actually hard at work.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Without the use of either of these capabilities, you would not understand the words that are used nor could you create a full story in your mind. Research has shown that these are skills which can be improved upon by simply enjoying stories. For example, trying to understand and remember what’s happening in a story is ‘brain training’ in itself.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Even though developing brains are flexible, and it should be possible to make yourself smarter, the evidence that ‘brain training’ will help you do so is mixed at best. If you want your brain to function at its optimal level, put it to work and keep on learning new things.

**A** However, few of us realise the complexity of the task. When you engage with a book, you need to keep track of different characters, their goals, and details about their personalities and behaviour. Moreover, you frequently need to read between the lines to understand what the writer means. To accomplish this, you apply both your general knowledge and your executive functions.

**B**  In contrast, some people noted a difference and were keen to incorporate these tasks into their routines. Although few of them were able to quantify or clearly articulate how their lives had changed as a result of ‘brain training’, they believed their actions would help them in the long run.

**C**  You’d probably choose the latter, and research shows that physical activity is not only good for your body, but also for your brain. Done regularly, it’s proven to be beneficial for school performance. Similarly, reading books appears to have a significant influence on your thinking skills. Studies suggest that regular reading helps make you smarter by building your vocabulary and increasing your general knowledge.

**D** It turns out there is no simple answer to the question, because these two factors always work together. Although the traits we inherit may influence our capacity to learn, our surroundings determine the rate of development. Thus, there is some built-in flexibility in the way the brain develops which helps us adjust to the circumstances that we grow up in.

**E** Besides increasing your memory and comprehension abilities, reading might also encourage readers to take the perspective of and sympathise with different characters. These are important skills for real life, but it seems highly unlikely that they could be acquired or even practised using the kinds of techniques used in ‘brain training’.

**F**  Despite the claims, ‘brain training’ is just practising the brain’s executive functions by performing complex mental tasks. Although research has shown that this can result in changes in the brain, that is less impressive than it sounds. In fact, everything you do makes small changes in your brain, whether it is doing your homework, meeting friends, or reading this article.

**KEY (Stage 8)**

**A** However, few of us realise **the complexity of the task**. When you **engage with a book**, you need to keep track of different characters, their goals, and details about their personalities and behaviour. Moreover, you frequently need to read between the lines to understand what the writer means. To accomplish this, you apply **both your general knowledge and your executive functions**.

**B** In contrast, some people noted a difference and were keen to incorporate these tasks into their routines. Although few of them were able to quantify or clearly articulate how their lives had changed as a result of ‘brain training’, they believed their actions would help them in the long run.

**C**  You’d probably **choose the latter,** and research shows that **physical activity** is not only good for your body, but also for your brain. Done regularly, it’s proven to be beneficial for school performance. Similarly, reading books appears to have a significant influence on your thinking skills. Studies suggest that **regular reading** helps make you smarter by **building your vocabulary and increasing your general knowledge.**

**D** It turns out there is **no simple answer to the question**, because **these two factors** always work together. Although the traits we **inherit** may influence our capacity to learn, our **surroundings** determine the rate of development. Thus, there is some built-in flexibility in the way the brain develops which helps us adjust to the circumstances that we grow up in.

**E** Besides increasing your memory and comprehension abilities, reading **might also** encourage readers to take the perspective of and sympathise with different characters. These are important skills for real life, but it seems **highly unlikely** that they could be acquired or even practised using the kinds of techniques used in ‘**brain training’**.

**F** **Despite the claims**, ‘brain training’ is just practising the brain’s executive functions by performing complex mental tasks. Although research has shown that this can result in changes in the brain, that is less impressive than it sounds. In fact, everything you do makes small changes in your brain, whether it is **doing your homework, meeting friends, or reading this article**.

Acknowledgements:

Jolles, D and Van Leijenhorst, L (2020) Want to train your brain? Read this article! Front. Young Minds 8, 71. doi: 10.3389/frym.2020.00071. Copyright © 2020 Jolles and Van Leijenhorst