**Reading Lesson 8**

**Description**

The topic of this lesson is innovation in business. Practice of vocabulary related to innovation and invention is used to give guidance on completing gapped-text sentences tasks, one of the task-types in the Linguaskill Business Reading Test.

**Teacher’s Notes**

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| **Aims of the lesson** | * to present and practise vocabulary for discussing inventions and innovations
* to raise awareness of the requirements of Linguaskill Business Reading gapped-text sentences tasks
* to develop techniques and strategies for this task-type based on practice of a sample task
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| **Time required** | * 50 minutes
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| **Level** | * Suitable for B1–B2 level
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| **Materials required** | * Student’s Worksheet 1: Inventions and innovations – contrasting points and explanations
* Student’s Worksheet 2: Language practice – introducing explanations
* Student’s Worksheet 3: Sample Linguaskill Business Reading task (Innovation in business)
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**Procedure**

1. Write on the board *invention* and *innovation.* Divide the class in half. Ask one half of learners to write a definition for *invention* and one to write a definition for *innovation.* Then ask learners to stand up and talk to learners from the other half of the class to compare their definitions. Monitor while they are talking to identify a good selection of definitions. Bring the class back together and nominate one or two learners from each half to share their definitions. Ask learners whether they think *inventions* and *innovations* are the same or different.
2. Give learners **Student’s Worksheet 1**. Ask them to skim read the text to find out if the writer believes *inventions* and *innovations* are the same or different. Then check understanding of the text by asking them to organise the cut-up slips from the bottom of the worksheet into two categories: *inventions* and *innovations.* Learners check in pairs. In whole-class feedback, nominate learners to come to the board and add their strips of paper under the appropriate heading. If there is a difference of opinion on whether the examples are inventions or innovations, allow learners to justify their opinion and accept that this is a point that is often debated.
3. Ask learners to look again at the text and ask them whether the writer’s description is simple or detailed. Agree that it is a detailed description, which includes explanations and contrasting comments. Learners highlight words and expressions which introduce these details. They can do this on their own first, and then compare with a partner. [**KEY:** **Contrast** *While, In contrast, whereas* **Explanation** *which could be, This can involve, That is, as.*]
4. Give learners **Student’s** **Worksheet 2**. The exercise focuses on different expressions that can be used to explain or justify points made. Learners use the words in the box to complete the expressions. [**KEY:** 1.this. 2. reason. 3. illustration. 4. which. 5. point.] Discuss with learners that developing their understanding of a range of expressions like these will be useful preparation for this type of task.
5. Explain to learners that they are going to work on a gapped-text sentences task from the Linguaskill Business Reading test. In this task, they are presented with a text from which five sentences have been removed. They need to identify the five sentences from a list of eight and put them in the correct places in the text. Discuss how the activities they have done so far this lesson are useful strategies for completing this task-type: reading the text through for general understanding and to identify key points first, then identifying language which connects ideas in the text, i.e. contrast and explanation.
6. Give learners **Student’s Worksheet 3**. This is a full sample gapped-text sentences task on the topic of *Innovation in business*. Learners will use strategies from this lesson to complete the task. First, ask learners to scan the main text to answer questions to help with general understanding. You can either write the questions on the board, or you can ask them to the whole class one by one and ask learners to put up their hands when they think they have the answer. Questions could be: 1. *What was the situation that required innovation?* 2*. Who came up with the innovative idea?* 3. *According to the text, what kind of innovation does this story illustrate?* 4. *What common problem with innovation in business does the writer mention?* [**KEY:** 1.Designing a sensor to detect small amounts of pollutants underwater. 2. A marine biologist. 3. Open innovation. 4. Businesses limit themselves to one type of strategy.]
7. Now ask learners to work on their own to do the task. They then check with a partner before checking as a whole group. [**KEY:** 1 F. 2 B. 3 D. 4 H. 5 A.] In whole-group feedback, ask learners to say what evidence they have for the correct answer. Evidence may be in the form of expressions for connecting ideas, as practised in this lesson, but it could be based on related vocabulary and paraphrase. Ask learners to look at the sentence for Gap 2 (B). The sentence refers to a *solution.* The *problem* this relates to is in the sentence for Gap 1 (F), so learners should remember they may need to check further than the paragraph immediately before or after the gap.
8. To end the lesson, ask learners to work in small groups and discuss their predictions for new areas of invention and innovation. You can give them prompts of specific fields, such as entertainment, technology, travel and shopping.

**Student’s Worksheet 1**

**Inventions and innovations – contrasting points and explanations**

**Invention and innovation are important features of society and business. While they are often used to mean the same thing, there are in fact some key distinctions between the two. An invention is about creating something new, which could be a new method, system or object.** This can involve researching and brainstorming to identify potential problems or needs and then developing a solution that addresses those needs.**In contrast, innovation takes an invention and turns it into something useful, practical or valuable. That is, an invention can lead to innovation, whereas not all inventions are innovative, as they may not find a market or solve a problem effectively.**

**KEY**

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* **[Teacher use] Slips to cut up for organising activity:**

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| --- |
| **Innovation** |
| Finding new ways to use or adapt existing products or technology |
| Adding value to something which exists |
| Focused on the concept of ‘how’ |
| Electric cars |
| Touchscreen smartphones |
| Flatscreen TVs |
| **Invention** |
| Creating a completely new idea, concept, method or product |
| Entirely original |
| Focused on the concept of ‘what’ |
| The telephone |
| The car |
| The internet |

**Student’s Worksheet 2**

**Language practice – introducing explanations**

**The sentences below can all be used to explain or justify an opinion. Complete the sentences using words from the box.**

|  |
| --- |
| illustration point this which reason |

By **1.** …………….. I mean that it should be seen as a set of tools.

It’s for this **2.** …………………… that every innovation strategy fails if followed too rigidly.

This is an excellent **3.** …………………… of what has been called ‘open innovation’,

**4.** ……………. means deliberately expanding your skill domain beyond a particular area of expertise when you’re faced with a really tough problem.

The **5.** ………………. being made was that a relatively straightforward solution was to hand.

**Student’s Worksheet 3**

**Sample Linguaskill Business Reading task**

**This is a full Linguaskill Business Reading gapped-text sentences task on the topic of *Innovation in business*.**

**Read the text. Choose the correct sentence for each gap. You do not need to use three of the sentences.**

**Innovation in business**

*What businesses should do to ensure that they are able to remain relevant and competitive*

One of the best stories about innovation I ever heard came to me from a senior executive at a leading tech firm. His company had won a million-dollar contract to design a sensor that could detect pollutants at very small concentrations underwater.

**1.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

To tackle it, the firm set up a team of the very best microchip designers, and they started putting their heads together. About 45 minutes into their first working session, the marine biologist assigned to their team walked in with a bag of clams and put the edible sea creatures on the table. Seeing the confused looks of the chip designers, he explained that clams can detect pollutants at just a few parts per million, and when that happens, they open their shells.

**2.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Indeed, they didn’t really need a fancy chip to detect pollutants – just a simple one that could detect when clams open their shells, which is a sign of them trying to filter the pollutants from the water. ‘They saved $999,000 and ate the clams for dinner,’ the executive told me. This is an excellent illustration of what has been called ‘open innovation’, which means deliberately expanding your skill domain beyond a particular area of expertise when you’re faced with a really tough problem.

**3.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Many believe it’s just this kind of unusual collaboration that’s key to innovation in business. Open innovation is only one way to solve a problem, however. It’s important for businesses to recognise that there’s no one ‘true’ path to innovation.

**4.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Yet all too often, these possibilities are ignored by organisational leaders. They lock themselves into one type of strategy and say, ‘This is how we innovate.’ It may work for a while, but eventually they find themselves stuck in a set of solutions that don’t fit the problems they need to solve. Essentially, their organisations become square-peg companies in a round-hole world and lose relevance. We need to start treating innovation like any other area of business.

**5.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This would be like having an array of marketing tactics or several sources of financing, for example, rather than trying to make do with one for every eventuality in the life of a business.

1. By this, I mean that it should be seen as a set of tools, each designed to accomplish specific objectives.
2. The point being made was that a relatively straightforward solution was to hand.
3. For these types of problems, conventional strategies are usually effective.
4. In my example, it involved putting a marine biologist in a room with microchip specialists.
5. It’s for this reason that every innovation strategy fails if followed too rigidly.
6. This was an unusually complex problem with no immediately obvious solution.
7. So, innovation begins by asking how well we can define the problem.
8. It could be said that there are as many ways to approach it as there are issues to be addressed.