**Reading Lesson 7**

**Description**

The topic of this lesson is marketing during a recession. Practice of vocabulary related to marketing and the economy is used to give guidance on completing gapped-text paragraph tasks, one of the task-types in the Linguaskill Business Reading Test.

**Teacher’s Notes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Aims of the lesson** | * to present and practise vocabulary for discussing marketing and the economy * to raise awareness of the requirements of Linguaskill Business Reading gapped-text paragraphs tasks * to develop techniques and strategies for this task-type based on practice of a sample task |
| **Time required** | * 60 minutes |
| **Level** | * Suitable for C1–C2 level |
| **Materials required** | * Student’s Worksheet 1: Summary sentences – identifying key points * Student’s Worksheet 2: Gapped sentences – identifying text development and cohesion * Student’s Worksheet 3: Sample Linguaskill Business Reading task |

**Procedure**

1. Write on the board *Marketing is …* and ask learners to discuss with a partner how to complete the sentence. Then ask two or three pairs of learners to join together and compare their sentences. They should choose two of their favourite sentences to share with the group. In feedback, identify which sentences are definitions of marketing and which are opinions.
2. Tell learners they are going to look at a text with the title *Marketing during a recession.* Check understanding of ‘recession’ and ask learners whether they think companies should increase or reduce marketing activity during a recession. In feedback, focus on the key pros [e.g. increasing sales and profits, building company profile] and cons [e.g. costs] of marketing during a period of economic crisis. To increase learner interaction, you could ask learners to brainstorm these ideas in pairs, for example by nominating some pairs to think of reasons why marketing during an economic crisis is a positive move, and other pairs to think of reasons to restrict marketing at these times.
3. Explain to learners that the text they will be working on comes from a Reading gapped-text paragraphs task from the Linguaskill Business Reading test. This task-type has a text from which five paragraphs have been removed and learners need to decide where to put them in the main text. They have a choice of six paragraphs, so there is one that they do not need to use. The next stages of this lesson will give learners some strategies they can use for completing this task-type.
4. Give learners **Student’s Worksheet 1**. Explain that Exercise 1 has the main text from the task and Exercise 2 has the paragraphs which have been removed. Divide the class in half. Ask one half to work on Exercise 1 and the other half to work on Exercise 2. Learners should read each paragraph in their part and match it with the correct summary sentence. Allow five minutes for learners to work on their own before checking with a partner. Then put learners into new pairs, so that each pair has one learner who has worked on Exercise 1 and one who has worked on Exercise 2. Learners share their answers and explain what evidence they used to make their choices. Learners should highlight the information in the paragraphs that appears in the summary sentences.
5. Bring the class back together and check answers. [**KEY: Exercise 1** 1 b, 2 f, 3 d, 4 c, 5 a, 6 e **Exercise 2** 1 d, 2 a, 3 f, 4 e, 5 b, 6 c.] Discuss how identifying the key points is a useful technique for completing this task-type, because learners will not be distracted by irrelevant information in the paragraph.
6. Now give learners **Student’s Worksheet 2**. Explain that they will be doing a simplified version of the gapped-text paragraphs task-type, focusing on the summary sentences rather than the whole paragraphs. Learners work together to complete the text, putting the removed sentences in the correct gap. To do this, they will need to look for evidence in the texts. This evidence may be words and expressions which paraphrase the same idea, or cohesive devices, such as linking words and referencing, which support the logical development of the argument. In feedback, ask learners to identify the evidence that confirmed their choices. Remind them that when they are matching paragraphs this information may be spread over more than one sentence. [**KEY:** E, A, C, D, B.]
7. Give learners **Student’s Worksheet 3**, which has the full sample task. Ask learners to complete the task, preferably without referring to **Student’s Worksheet 2**. [**KEY:** D, B, F, A, E.] As before, use whole-class feedback to focus on the language evidence which confirms the correct choice.

**Student’s Worksheet 1**

**Summary sentences – identifying key points**

* The paragraphs below are part of a text about marketing during a recession. Match each paragraph with the sentence which summarises the key points.

Exercise 1

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1.** | It is received wisdom that in a period of general economic recession you should concentrate on your core business, and trim the fat. Non-essential fripperies can wait for the good times to return. And one of the most costly non-essentials is marketing. So it stands to reason that this is one area where savings can immediately be made. Chopping the marketing budget is a no-brainer. Isn’t it? Well, not really. | **a.** | So, the marketing focus for companies during a recession should be on keeping customers by strengthening relationships and responding to their needs, even if this means changing what they normally do. |
| **2.** | It is tempting to disregard this point because it is easy to cut a marketing budget. There will be an immediate reduction in expenditure which looks good to shareholders or investors who might be worried about the level of outgoings. Moreover, cutting marketing budgets has little immediate effect on sales, so it can be spun as a decision with no downsides. | **b.** | During a recession, it may seem that cutting the marketing budget is a good way of saving money, but that is not really the case. |
| **3.** | Those with a more long-term view of things should be aware that copious, compelling research shows that advertising aggressively during a recession increases sales and long-term profits. As the cost of advertising goes down and others are advertising less, those who do advertise find their voice stands out and is, to all intents and purposes, amplified. You get more bang for your advertising buck in a recession. | **c.** | Companies without a clear marketing strategy may risk losing regular customers to companies which offer lower prices. |
| **4.** | Those companies that are a bit too vague about their market position, or what their promises are, should be aware that during tough times people might be looking for something offering better value. They may feel a little less committed to the brands that they usually purchase. | **d.** | Companies which take advantage of the opportunities for cheaper advertising during a recession are likely to improve their profile and see benefits in the long run. |
| **5.** | In a recession, then, marketing budgets should give due attention to developing brand loyalty. For many firms, especially those involved in selling to other businesses, that often hinges on developing personal relationships and sharpening up messaging. During a recession it can be particularly appropriate for all types of business to focus on tailoring products to individual clients’ needs, rather than pushing what they already do. | **e.** | Economic crises are more common these days, so companies need to be better prepared to cope. |
| **6.** | Bearing all this in mind should mean that firms are battle-hardened and better prepared for a recession. In the good old days, crises only came along once every decade or so. Now ‘permacrisis’ has been added to the dictionary. That brings challenges, but should at least mean the solutions marketers used last time around should still be fresh in their minds. | **f.** | Cutting marketing budgets is seen as an instant saving with no immediate impact on sales, so it looks like this is a positive move. |

Exercise 2

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1.** | For firms at the budget end of the spectrum, this means that their pricing is likely to be a bonus in a recession. But they should not ignore the fact that habits vary with the seasons. For example, at times of major festivals, customers actually tend to trade up as a treat and go to more expensive retailers. | **a.** | However, the impact of changes to marketing may not be felt until long after they were made. |
| **2.** | Unfortunately, that is not the case. The problem is that the consequences of marketing come with a time lag. Any money put into it might have an impact one or two years later. And in two years from now, the managers who made the budget cuts might well have moved on to a new job. The damage will have been done, but it is not their problem. | **b.** | In order to survive, a company needs to keep building its brand loyalty, even in difficult times. |
| **3.** | That’s why, although there is little you can do to change the economy, a business can do its best to ensure it is well placed to deal with what is happening. When you’re cutting your marketing resources, you’re limiting your ability to develop brand loyalty. | **c.** | Companies should still be careful with their marketing budgets and take this opportunity to focus on what they are good at and meeting the needs of their customers. |
| **4.** | This assumes a view of marketing as an expense, which it makes sense to reduce. But marketing might well be better considered as an investment. Seen this way, the moment you reduce your marketing spend, you are potentially turning a short-term problem into a long-term one. | **d.** | This means companies offering cheaper goods may benefit during recessions, but there will still be occasions when customers are willing to spend more. |
| **5.** | This will help brands become resilient to negative shocks. As some big-name businesses have discovered to their cost, negativity about brands can go viral in no time. Marketing is about creating loyalty so strong that it weathers these storms. That work can’t stop just because inflation is high. | **e.** | Marketing should not be viewed as a cost that needs to be cut, but as an investment for the future. |
| **6.** | Of course, it remains wise to spend marketing money as intelligently as possible. It’s important to check the pledges made to customers ensuring they focus on what you do well and are attuned to the economic conditions. Indeed, a recession can be the perfect time to review marketing strategies to make certain they are focused on your business’s strengths. | **f.** | Businesses can’t change what’s happening in the economy, so they need to find the best way to cope with a recession. |

**Student’s Worksheet 2**

**Gapped sentences – identify text development and cohesion**

**The text below is a summary of the main text, with the sentences in the correct order. Decide which of the sentences below the text fits in each gap. There is one sentence that you do not need to use.**

During a recession, it may seem that cutting the marketing budget is a good way of saving money, but that is not really the case.

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

Cutting marketing budgets is seen as an instant saving with no immediate impact on sales, so it looks like this is a positive move.

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

Companies which take advantage of the opportunities for cheaper advertising during a recession are likely to improve their profile and see benefits in the long run.

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

Companies without a clear marketing strategy may risk losing regular customers to companies which offer lower prices.

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

So, the marketing focus for companies during a recession should be on keeping customers by strengthening relationships and responding to their needs, even if this means changing what they normally do.

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

Economic crises are more common these days, so companies need to be better prepared to cope.

1. However, the impact of changes to marketing may not be felt until long after they were made.
2. In order to survive, a company needs to keep building its brand loyalty, even in difficult times.
3. Companies should still be careful with their marketing budgets and take this opportunity to focus on what they are good at and meeting the needs of their customers.
4. This means companies offering cheaper goods may benefit during recessions, but there will still be occasions when customers are willing to spend more.
5. Marketing should not be viewed as a cost that needs to be cut, but as an investment for the future.
6. Businesses can’t change what’s happening in the economy, so they need to find the best way to cope with a recession.

**Student’s Worksheet 3**

**Sample Linguaskill Business Reading task**

**Read the text.**

**Choose the correct paragraph (A–F) for each gap.**

**You do not need to use one of the paragraphs.**

**Marketing during a recession**

It is received wisdom that in a period of general economic recession you should concentrate on your core business, and trim the fat. Non-essential fripperies can wait for the good times to return. And one of the most costly non-essentials is marketing. So it stands to reason that this is one area where savings can immediately be made. Chopping the marketing budget is a no-brainer. Isn’t it? Well, not really.

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

It is tempting to disregard this point because it is easy to cut a marketing budget. There will be an immediate reduction in expenditure which looks good to shareholders or investors who might be worried about the level of outgoings. Moreover, cutting marketing budgets has little immediate effect on sales, so it can be spun as a decision with no downsides.

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

Those with a more long-term view of things should be aware that copious, compelling research shows that advertising aggressively during a recession increases sales and long-term profits. As the cost of advertising goes down and others are advertising less, those who do advertise find their voice stands out and is, to all intents and purposes, amplified. You get more bang for your advertising buck in a recession.

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

Those companies that are a bit too vague about their market position, or what their promises are, should be aware that during tough times people might be looking for something offering better value. They may feel a little less committed to the brands that they usually purchase.

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

In a recession, then, marketing budgets should give due attention to developing brand loyalty. For many firms, especially those involved in selling to other businesses, that often hinges on developing personal relationships and sharpening up messaging. During a recession it can be particularly appropriate for all types of business to focus on tailoring products to individual clients’ needs, rather than pushing what they already do.

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

Bearing all this in mind should mean that firms are battle-hardened and better prepared for a recession. In the good old days, crises only came along once every decade or so. Now ‘permacrisis’ has been added to the dictionary. That brings challenges, but should at least mean the solutions marketers used last time around should still be fresh in their minds.

1. For firms at the budget end of the spectrum, this means that their pricing is likely to be a bonus in a recession. But they should not ignore the fact that habits vary with the seasons. For example, at times of major festivals, customers actually tend to trade up as a treat and go to more expensive retailers.
2. Unfortunately, that is not the case. The problem is that the consequences of marketing come with a time lag. Any money put into it might have an impact one or two years later. And in two years from now, the managers who made the budget cuts might well have moved on to a new job. The damage will have been done, but it is not their problem.
3. That’s why, although there is little you can do to change the economy, a business can do its best to ensure it is well placed to deal with what is happening. When you’re cutting your marketing resources, you’re limiting your ability to develop brand loyalty.
4. This assumes a view of marketing as an expense, which it makes sense to reduce. But marketing might well be better considered as an investment. Seen this way, the moment you reduce your marketing spend, you are potentially turning a short-term problem into a long-term one.
5. This will help brands become resilient to negative shocks. As some big-name businesses have discovered to their cost, negativity about brands can go viral in no time. Marketing is about creating loyalty so strong that it weathers these storms. That work can’t stop just because inflation is high.
6. Of course, it remains wise to spend marketing money as intelligently as possible. It’s important to check the pledges made to customers ensuring they focus on what you do well and are attuned to the economic conditions. Indeed, a recession can be the perfect time to review marketing strategies to make certain they are focused on your business’s strengths.

**KEY**

It is received wisdom that in a period of general economic recession you should concentrate on your core business, and trim the fat. Non-essential fripperies can wait for the good times to return. And one of the most costly non-essentials is marketing. So it stands to reason that this is one area where savings can immediately be made. **Chopping the marketing budget is a no-brainer. Isn’t it? Well, not really.**

**D. This assumes a view of marketing as an expense, which it makes sense to reduce. But** marketing might well be better considered as an investment. Seen this way, the moment you reduce your marketing spend, you are potentially turning a short-term problem into a long-term one.

It is tempting to disregard **this point** because it is easy to cut a marketing budget. There will be an immediate reduction in expenditure which looks good to shareholders or investors who might be worried about the level of outgoings. Moreover, cutting marketing budgets has **little immediate effect** on sales, so **it can be spun as a decision with no downsides**.

B **Unfortunately, that is not the case. The problem is that the consequences** of marketing **come with a time lag**. Any money put into it might have an impact one or two years later. And in two years from now, **the managers** who made the budget cuts might well have moved on to a new job. The damage will have been done, but it is not their problem.

**Those with a more long-term view** of things should be aware that copious, compelling research shows that advertising aggressively during a recession increases sales and long-term profits. As the cost of advertising goes down and others are advertising less, **those who do advertise find their voice stands out** and is, to all intents and purposes, amplified. **You get more bang for your advertising buck in a recession.**

F **Of course, it remains wise to spend marketing money as intelligently as possible**. It’s important to check the **pledges** made to customers ensuring they focus on what you do well and are attuned to the economic conditions. Indeed, a recession can be the perfect time to **review marketing strategies** to make certain they are focused on your business’s strengths.

**Those companies that are a bit too vague about their market position**, or what their **promises** are, should be aware that during tough times **people might be looking for** something offering **better value.** They may feel a little less committed to the brands that they usually purchase.

A For firms at the budget end of the spectrum, **this means** **that their pricing is likely to be a bonus** in a recession. **But** they should not ignore the fact that **habits vary** with the seasons. For example, at times of major festivals, customers actually tend to trade up as a treat and go to more expensive retailers.

In a recession, **then, marketing budgets should give due attention to developing brand loyalty**. For many firms, especially those involved in selling to other businesses, that often hinges on developing personal relationships and sharpening up messaging. During a recession it can be particularly appropriate for all types of business to focus on tailoring products to individual clients’ needs, rather than pushing what they already do.

E **This will help brands become resilient** to negative shocks. As some big-name businesses have discovered to their cost, negativity about brands can go viral in no time. **Marketing is about creating loyalty so strong that it weathers these storms.** That work can’t stop just because inflation is high.

**Bearing all this in mind** should mean that firms are battle-hardened and better prepared for a recession. In the good old days, crises only came along once every decade or so. Now ‘permacrisis’ has been added to the dictionary. That brings challenges, but should at least mean the solutions marketers used last time around should still be fresh in their minds.