

Why do we feel pain?

Language

Vocabulary connected with pain, collocation, zero conditional (optional)

Level

Elementary to pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A1/A2–B1 and above)

Comment

This eLesson looks at how and why people experience pain following recent research into pain. The exercise on zero conditionals can be omitted if not appropriate for your students.

How to use the lesson

- 1 Before handing out the text, ask students to imagine that they can feel no pain. Ask them to think of how this could be good and how it could be a problem. Elicit one example of each before putting students into pairs / groups to think of more ideas. Take feedback, writing their ideas on the board. Ask if they know any ways to reduce pain, eg taking painkillers, but see if they have any other ideas and add these to the board.
- 2 Tell students that they can't use a dictionary during the lesson. Pre-teach any vocabulary that might prevent students from doing the first reading task (exercise 2), but avoid teaching any words from exercise 4 as these are to encourage students to practise guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary from context. Focus the students on the ideas on the board from exercise 1 and tell them to read the text quickly and see which of their ideas were in the text. Give a brief time limit, eg 1–2 minutes depending on students' level to encourage fast reading. When the time limit is up, students can discuss their ideas in pairs in appropriate. Take feedback to check which of their ideas were mentioned in the text.
- 3 Before doing exercise 3, pre-teach any of the unknown vocabulary in the questions, eg *hypnosis*, *operation*. You can refer them to the Glossary if appropriate. Students read the text and compare answers if appropriate. Take feedback.
- 4 Exercise 4 asks students to guess words from context. If they are not used to this, you may need to explain why it is important:
 - if they stop to check each one in a dictionary it will stop the flow of their reading
 - the words might not be worth looking up as they could be very uncommon
 - it will help students if they take exams.

Reading a lot is one of the best ways of learning new vocabulary, but the text should only be a little above the students' level for them to benefit from extensive reading without a dictionary. You could ask students to scan the text and underline the words, then do the first example together. Students continue alone or in pairs.

- 5 This exercise helps students summarise some of the main points in the text. Stronger students could try and complete the sentences without looking back at the text, but less able students will probably need to read the text to complete the sentences. All the sentences are present real conditionals, sometimes called 'zero' conditionals. If this is appropriate for your students, you could highlight the form of these (*If / When* + present tense, present tense) and the fact that it is used to talk about what you normally do / what normally happens. See exercise 7 below for ideas to exploit the grammar.

- 6 This exercise focuses on word partnerships (collocations). Students choose the correct word. This might be an appropriate time to tell students / remind students to make a note of new vocabulary with any words which are typically used with them.
- 7 Set the discussion task for small groups if appropriate. As a follow-up, you could ask students to think of a time when they hurt themselves and write a short story about it trying to use at least six new words from the text. To practise the zero conditional, students could write a questionnaire about social behaviour, either alone at home or in groups in class, eg *If / When someone invites you to their house, do you arrive 10 minutes early, on time or 10 minutes late?* Give students some general prompts for this, eg visiting family and friends, going to a restaurant, when someone gets married. They could then report on their findings either orally or in writing.

Answer key

1, 2 Students' own answers.

3

- 1 T
- 2 F (a few hundred people in the world feel no pain)
- 3 T
- 4 T
- 5 T
- 6 F (patients are awake and can talk to the doctor)
- 7 T
- 8 T

4

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| 1 painkiller | 5 faulty |
| 2 discovery | 6 awake |
| 3 promising | 7 relieve |
| 4 rare | 8 believe |

5

- 1 If you feel no pain, you can **hurt** yourself.
- 2 If you are under hypnosis, you can have an **operation** and feel no pain.
- 3 If you concentrate on a game, your **brain/mind** can't think about the pain.
- 4 If you are playing a sport, you can sometimes have an **injury** and continue to play because you don't feel the pain.
- 5 If you are born with a faulty gene, the pain message doesn't get to your **brain**.

6

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 to have an operation | 4 to play a game |
| 2 to be under hypnosis | 5 in the world |
| 3 to concentrate on something | 6 make progress |

7 Students' own answers.

Related websites

The following websites might be useful for either you or your students.

- http://www.nydailynews.com/lifestyle/health/2010/06/16/2010-06-16_jonathan_metz_man_who_partially_amputated_own_arm_saved_himself_from_lifethreat.html
http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/12/061213-pain_2.html
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-560534/The-hypnotist-snubbed-anaesthetic-sent-trance-painful-bone-cutting-surgery.html> (this could be upsetting for some people)
<http://www.regit.com/malaysia/festival/thaipsam.htm>
<http://legacy.clark.edu/~reiness/neurobiology/Lectures/Pain%20Perception.pdf> (academic)