

## Basics

Whether you are thinking about global issues or your personal life, understanding how facts are related is essential to gaining perspective. If you know the reason behind a specific event, or are able to identify examples of a certain trend, you will have a better idea of the whole picture.

## The academic context

Often in your studies, just knowing a fact isn't enough. You have to be able to understand the reasons behind it. Similarly, it is often easier to understand difficult or abstract concepts with a good example. Therefore, being able to listen for reasons and examples is an important skill for developing your knowledge.

## Key features

- It's very important to understand the structure of the text. Whether it is a narrative, with a timeline; a process, with different steps; or an argumentation, with points for and against: there will be a logic to the text.
- As you listen to different facts, ask yourself *why* questions, such as *Why did this happen?* *Why is this important?* This will prepare you to understand the reasons when they are presented.
- Reasons and examples are often introduced by discourse markers (see the table below). Listen out for these to help you identify the relationship between the ideas. For example, reasons are often introduced by rhetorical questions, such as *Why does this happen?* *Because ...*
- Develop note-taking symbols and use them consistently, so that they come naturally to you when listening and you can understand them later. For example, you could use arrows to indicate reasons, and e.g. for examples.

Discourse markers	
Giving reasons	Giving examples
<i>That is because ...</i> <i>Due to ...</i> <i>Owing to ...</i> <i>As a result of ...</i> <i>Why ...? Because ...</i>	<i>For instance, ...</i> <i>..., like ...</i> <i>... such as ...</i> <i>To give an example, ...</i> <i>..., namely ...</i> <i>Let's say ...</i>

## Challenges / difficulties

Sometimes, there won't be a discourse marker to make the connection clear. In these cases, you have to understand how the sentences relate based on the facts themselves. Look at this example:

*I go by bike to work. It's quicker and better for my health.*

We can see clearly that the second sentence contains reasons for the first, even though the speaker doesn't use the word *because*.

## How can I develop this skill?

Whenever you are listening, try looking out for discourse markers. You could keep a list, starting with those listed in the Key features section, and add any new ones you hear. Understanding what you hear is mostly an unconscious process, but by repeatedly and consciously noticing in this way, you can gradually train your mind to follow the direction of a speaker's thought more easily.

## Learning outcome

Understanding the reasons for a particular fact, or having good examples of it, can give you a much better perspective on any topic. These forms of understanding also help you to memorize information: it is much easier to remember a fact if it is connected to something else.

## Theory to practice

### 1 Read the transcripts and complete the notes.

- a** When we make a decision, do we really make the decision? Do we have a choice? Let me explain. When you put a shirt on in the morning, how do you decide which shirt? Let's say you chose the cleanest one. Why? Because you have a tutorial today, and society tells us to wear clean shirts, not dirty shirts, for tutorials. So we don't make a decision; it was already made. We just don't know it.

Example of decision:

Reason for choosing a clean shirt:

- b** The number pi is the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter, and it is very useful for mathematicians. However, because the number is extremely long, people use mnemonics to remember as much of the number as possible. One way is to think of a sentence and use the number of letters in each word to represent the numbers in pi. The first eight numbers in pi are 3.1415926. So we can use the sentence *May I have a large container of coffee?* May is three letters, I is one letter, have is four letters, and so on.

Reason for using mnemonics to remember pi:

Example of mnemonics:

### 2 Read the transcripts again and underline the phrases used to introduce reasons and examples.

## Ways to get more practice

In your notebook, draw two columns, headed *Reasons* and *Examples*. Watch some online videos (tutorials, lectures or seminars if possible) and make notes, focusing on these two categories. Try to use symbols consistently in your notes to gain familiarity with them.