

BEC Higher Listening - Handbook for teachers

Part 3 - Option multiple choice

1. Part 3 is an interview or conversation. There are 8 multiple choice comprehension questions.
2. It is useful to read the instructions as it helps to understand what the conversation is about.
3. Once again it is important for students to concentrate on listening rather than reading the questions.

Students could listen and note stressed words and expressions. They could also listen out for 'interesting' words and phrasal verbs. The analysis shows that comprehension of some C2 level words is important.

4. It is also important to establish whether or not your students really understand the questions and answer choices.
5. Look at these matches for the answer choice and what is said.

no change of ownership	turned down the offer
less willing to pay their prices	increase pressure to cut our profit margins
it makes products of high quality	we don't send anything out unless it meets very exacting standards
relationships between managers and workers are poor	alienated a lot of workers. it's an uphill struggle to ...
too much is expected of them	faced with unreasonable demands
each person carries out one part of the production process	each of them undertaken by one machinist
now made in smaller quantities	reduced batch sizes
more work falling below the required standard	more batches fail quality inspections

To recycle some of this language you could get students to write sentences using some of the key language.

Text Analysis

F: Good morning, nice to meet you. Do sit down.

M: Thank you.

F: Now you're Human Resources Manager of Jenkins, aren't you? Give me some background on the company - so I get a general picture.

M: Stephen Jenkins founded the company nearly 30 years ago, and named it after himself, and he ran it for a long time. Last year one of our competitors proposed combining, with the idea that separately the two companies were too small to survive. They were probably right, but anyway Stephen turned down the offer. Then, because he was getting on, he handed over the day-to-day running to his daughter, Catherine, while retaining full control himself.

F: And you make children's clothes, don't you? Aren't there problems in the sector?

M: Well, we mostly sell to retail chains, which sell them under their own brand labels. Things aren't as easy as they were, what with cheap imports, and the more expensive children's boutiques making inroads at the top end of the market. But we position ourselves in the middle range, so we're not too badly affected. We're under increasing pressure to cut our profit margins, though, because of growing competition between high-street retailers.

F: What would you say is the company's strength?

M: It certainly helps that we supply those large retailers I mentioned, and in fact some of them have been customers for years. I suppose, though, that we wouldn't have survived this long if it wasn't that we don't send anything out unless it meets very exacting standards. Our customers appreciate that, plus the fact that we aim to keep the time from order to delivery very short, and they're prepared to pay a premium for it.

F: What about weaknesses?

M: Well, we've got a poor record in providing training on the machines we're currently using. And I have to say that Stephen used to run the company in a very old-fashioned, autocratic way, which alienated a lot of the workers. Despite Catherine's more enlightened approach, it's an uphill struggle to try to change attitudes and improve co-operation.

F: Never an easy task!

M: No.

F: You mentioned on the phone that there's a problem with a particular group of workers.

M: Yes, there's very high turnover among the machinists, that's the people who actually make the clothes. They say they're faced with unreasonable demands all the time, like having to learn to operate several machines instead of just one or two. Many of them think they could get an easier job for the money, because there are plenty of other jobs on offer locally. The reasonably healthy state of our order books gives them a certain amount of job security, but they just don't seem to care.

F: How's their work organised?

- M: We've changed to a 'sectionalised flow' approach, which means the machinists work in teams. Rather than each machinist being assigned a complete item of clothing, the work is divided into batches involving various operations, each of them undertaken by one machinist. As that person finishes, the work is passed on to the machinist responsible for the next stage.
- F: Has that had any impact on what you produce?
- M: Yes, it's enabled Catherine to introduce a policy of rapid diversification of the product range, so the number of itemised clothes has leapt. That's the total number of different styles, in all the different sizes. And that's reduced batch sizes: long runs on an item are a thing of the past. At least half the styles used to be carried through from one year to the next, but now only a quarter are, so as you can see, it's had quite an impact on the rate of change.
- F: What's the effect on the machinists?
- M: That policy was part of a raft of changes, one of which is that the machinists are now paid on a piecework basis, rather than at an hourly rate. They're furious about that, though to be fair, the rate that's paid for learning to use a new machine has been calculated so as to make sure that no-one loses out in the short term. And they're also aggrieved because so much is new, and far more batches of work fail quality inspections and have to be redone.
- F: Now tell me something about training ...

f good morning A1 nice A1 to A1 meet A1 you A1 do A1 sit A1 down A1 m thank you A1 f now A1 you A1
 re human B1 resources B2 manager A2 of A1 jenkins aren t you A1 give A1 me A1 some A1 background B1
 on A1 the A1 company A2 so A2 i A1 get A1 a A1 general B1 picture A1 m stephen jenkins founded B2
 the A1 company A2 nearly A2 years A1 ago A2 and A1 named B1 it A1 after A1 himself A2 and A1 he A1 ran A1
 it A1 for A1 a A1 long A1 time A1 last A1 year A1 one A1 of A1 our A1 competitors B1 proposed B2 combining B2
 with A1 the A1 idea A2 that A1 separately B2 the A1 two A1 companies A2 were A2 too A1 small A1 to A1
 survive B2 they A1 were A2 probably A2 right A1 but A1 anyway A2 stephen turned down B1 the A1 offer A2
 then A1 because A1 he A1 was A1 getting on A2 he A1 handed over B2 the A1 day A1 to A1 day A1 running A1
 to A1 his A1 daughter A1 catherine while A2 retaining C2 full A2 control B1 himself A2 f and A1 you A1
 make A1 children A1 s clothes A1 don t you A1 aren t there A1 problems A1 in A1 the A1 sector C1 m
 well A1 we A1 mostly B1 sell A2 to A1 retail C1 chains A2 which A1 sell A2 them A1 under A1 their A1 own A2
 brand B2 labels B1 things A1 aren t as A1 easy A1 as A1 they A1 were A2 what A1 with A1 cheap A1
 imports B2 and A1 the A1 more A1 expensive A1 children A1 s boutiques making A1 inroads at A1 the A1
 top A2 end A1 of A1 the A1 market A2 but A1 we A1 position B1 ourselves A2 in A1 the A1 middle A2 range B1
 so A2 we A1 re not A1 too A1 badly A2 affected B2 we A1 re under A1 increasing B1 pressure B2 to A1
 cut A2 our A1 profit B2 margins C2 though B1 because of B1 growing A2 competition A2 between A1 high A2
 street A1 retailers C2 f what A1 would A1 you A1 say A1 is A1 the A1 company A2 s strength B2 m it A1
 certainly A2 helps A1 that A1 we A1 supply B2 those A1 large A2 retailers C2 i A1 mentioned B1 and A1 in A1
 fact A2 some A1 of A1 them A1 have A1 been A1 customers A2 for A1 years A1 i suppose A2 though B1 that A1
 we A1 wouldn t have A1 survived B2 this A1 long A1 if A2 it A1 wasn t that A1 we A1 don t send A1
 anything A1 out A2 unless B1 it A1 meets A1 very A1 exacting standards B2 our A1 customers A2 appreciate B2
 that A1 plus A2 the A1 fact A2 that A1 we A1 aim to B1 keep A2 the A1 time A1 from A1 order A2 to A1
 delivery B1 very A1 short A1 and A1 they A1 re prepared A2 to A1 pay A1 a A1 premium C2 for A1 it A1 f
 what A1 about A1 weaknesses B2 m well A1 we A1 ve got A1 a A1 poor A1 record A2 in A1 providing B1
 training B1 on A1 the A1 machines A2 we A1 re currently B2 using A1 and A1 i A1 have A1 to A1 say A1
 that A1 stephen used to B1 run A1 the A1 company A2 in A1 a A1 very A1 old A1 fashioned autocratic way A2
 which A1 alienated a A1 lot A1 of A1 the A1 workers A2 despite B1 catherine s more A1 enlightened
 approach B1 it A1 s an A1 uphill C2 struggle B2 to A1 try A2 to A1 change A1 attitudes B1 and A1 improve A2
 co operation B1 f never A1 an A1 easy A1 task B2 m no A1

you A1 mentioned B1 on A1 the A1 phone A1 that A1 there A1 s a A1 problem A1 with A1 a A1 particular B1
 group A1 of A1 workers A2 m yes A1 there A1 s very A1 high A2 turnover C1 among A2 the A1 machinists
 that A1 s the A1 people A1 who A1 actually A2 make A1 the A1 clothes A1 they A1 say A1 they A1 re
 faced B1 with A1 unreasonable B2 demands B1 all A1 the A1 time A1 like A1 having A1 to A1 learn A1 to A1
 operate B1 several A2 machines A2 instead A2 of A1 just A2 one A1 or A1 two A1 many A1 of A1 them A1
 think A1 they A1 could A2 get A1 an A1 easier A1 job A1 for A1 money A1 because A1 there A1 are A1 plenty B1
 of A1 other A1 jobs A1 on A1 offer A2 locally the A1 reasonably B1 healthy A2 state B2 of A1 our A1 order A2
 books A1 gives A1 them A1 a A1 certain B1 amount B1 of A1 job A1 security B1 but A1 they A1 just A2 don t
 seem B1 to A1 care A2 f how A1 s their A1 work A1 organised m we A1 ve changed A1 to A1 a A1
 sectionalised flow B1 approach B1 which A1 means A2 the A1 machinists work A1 in A1 teams A2 rather B1
 than A1 each A1 machinist being A1 assigned C1 a A1 complete A2 item B1 of A1 clothing B2 the A1 work A1
 is A1 divided B1 into A1 batches involving B1 various A2 operations B1 each A1 of A1 them A1 undertaken C1
 by A2 one A1 machinist as A1 that A1 person A1 finishes A1 the A1 work A1 is A1 passed on B1 to A1 the A1
 machinist responsible B1 for A1 the A1 next A1 stage A2 f has A1 that A1 had A1 any A1 impact B2 on A1
 what A1 you A1 produce B1 m yes A1 it A1 s enabled B2 catherine to A1 introduce B1 a A1 policy B2 of A1
 rapid B2 diversification of A1 the A1 product B1 range B1 so A2 the A1 number A1 of A1 itemised clothes A1
 has A1 leapt C2 that A1 s the A1 total B1 number A1 of A1 different A1 styles B1 in A1 all A1 the A1
 different A1 sizes A2 and A1 that A1 s reduced B1 batch sizes A2 long A1 runs on C1 an A1 item B1 are A1
 a A1 thing A1 of A1 the A1 past A1 at A1 least A2 half A1 the A1 styles B1 used to B1 be A1 carried A1
 through A2 from A1 one A1 year A1 to A1 the A1 next A1 but A1 now A1 only A1 a A1 quarter A1 are A1 so A2
 as A1 you A1 can A1 see A1 it A1 s had A1 quite A2 an A1 impact B2 on A1 the A1 rate B2 of A1 change A1
 f what A1 s the A1 effect B1 on A1 the A1 machinists m that A1 policy B2 was A1 part A1 of A1 a A1
 raft of A1 changes A1 one A1 of A1 which A1 is A1 that A1 the A1 machinists are A1 now A1 paid A1 on A1
 a A1 piecework basis B2 rather B1 than A1 at A1 an A1 hourly B2 rate B2 they A1 re furious B2 about A1
 that A1 though B1 to A1 be A1 fair A2 the A1 rate B2 that A1 s paid A1 for A1 learning A1 to A1 use A1 a A1
 new A1 machine A2 has A1 been A1 calculated B2 so A2 as A1 to A1 make sure A2 that A1 no one A2 loses A2
 out A2 in A1 the A1 short term B2 and A1 they A1 re also A1 aggrieved because A1 so A2 much A1 is A1
 new A1 and A1 far A2 more A1 batches of A1 work A1 fail A2 quality B1 inspections C1 and A1 have A1 to A1
 be A1 redone f now A1 tell A1 me A1 something A1 about A1 training B1

C1	C2	Unlisted
assign	leapt	aggrieved
inspections	margins	alienated
retail	premium	autocratic
runs on	retailers	batches
sector	retaining	boutiques
turnover	uphill	diversification
undertaken		enlightened
		exacting
		fashioned
		inroads
		itemised
		locally
		machinists
		organised
		piecework
		raft
		redone
		sectionalised