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TEXT GRAMMAR

- 1 The original text is as follows:

Though many people dream of becoming self-employed, there are a number of advantages to working for an employer. **In many ways**, it is simpler and much less stressful to have a job working for an employer than it is to be self-employed. **However**, there are **also** disadvantages to working for an employer. Before making the decision to be an employee or self-employed, a person should **thus** carefully consider the differences.

With regard to taxes, there are two clear advantages of being employed. **First**, the employer takes care of making a tax withholding for an employee through payroll deductions while self-employed person must make quarterly tax payments. **Secondly**, an employer pays a percentage of the employee's Social Security tax, while a self-employed person pays all of it himself. **For example**, in 2011 the Social Security tax rate was 10.4 percent. The employer paid 6.2 percent **and** the employee paid 4.2 percent of the employee's income.

- 2 The original order is as follows:

1. A volcano beneath the Red Sea has given Earth a New Year's gift: a new island about 40 miles (60 kilometers) off the coast of Yemen.
2. The currently unnamed landmass first appeared in NASA satellite photos taken on December 23.
3. By January 7, it had grown to a size of 1,730 by 2,300 feet (530 by 710 meters).
4. By January 15, the volcano had stopped erupting, NASA's Earth Observatory reported.

5. The new island is the first permanent island to be formed since an eruption in Iceland created the island of Surtsey in 1963.
6. But while Iceland is a known volcanic zone, the eruption in the Red Sea was more of a surprise, experts say.
7. “We tend to forget that the entire floor of the Red Sea is a plate boundary, and that submarine volcanism here is probably very frequent,” said Haraldur Sigurdsson, a volcanologist at the University of Rhode Island.
8. The volcano is part of the Zubair island group, a chain of volcanoes whose last known eruption was more than a hundred years ago, Sigurdsson said.

In the second sentence *the currently unnamed landmass* refers back to the *new island* from sentence 1. Sentences (3) and (4) start with dates that follow on from *December 23* in sentence (2). Sentence (5) starts with *the new island* – it could thus have been suitable as a second sentence as well. But it is better placed as number (5) because the new island is formed only *after* the volcano has stopped erupting, which we know from sentence (4). Sentence (6) continues the topic of *Iceland* but sets up a contrast (*but*) to return to the new island in the Red Sea. Sentences (7) and (8) represent “what the experts say” (= the end of sentence 6); (8) fits better as the last sentence because the speaker is presented more fully in (7) and is thus given information in (8) where he is referred to only by his last name.

- 3 The members of the following sentence pairs differ in terms of vocabulary. Describe the difference in terms of synonymy, hyponymy or lexical opposite.
 - a. *Flowers* is a superordinate term and *roses* is a hyponym. Sentence (a2) thus gives more specific information about the flowers.
 - b. *Very ill* and *quite healthy* are lexical opposites (antonyms), thus the sentences contradict each other.
 - c. *Police* and *cops* are synonyms, but they differ in style. The second sentence is thus more informal than the first (which is neutral in style).
 - d. *Withhold* and *give out* are lexical opposites (antonyms). Thus the sentences contradict each other.
 - e. *Criticism* and *condemnation* both convey negative judgements, but to different degrees, so they are only near-synonyms. *Condemnation* is much stronger than *criticism*.

4 Read the following text and answer the questions below:

Will first saw Angie – or, as it turned out, **he** didn't see **her** – in Championship Vinyl, a little record shop off the Holloway Road. **He** was browsing, filling up the time, vaguely trying to hunt down an old R & B anthology **he** used to own when he was younger, one of **those he** had loved and lost; **he** heard **her** tell the surly and depressive assistant that she was looking for a Pinky and Perky record for her niece. **He** was trawling through the racks while she was being served, so he never caught a glimpse of her face, but he saw a lot of honey-blond hair, and he heard the kind of vaguely husky voice that he and **everyone else** thought of as sexy, so he listened while she explained that her niece didn't even know who Pinky and Perky were. (From *About a Boy* by Nick Hornby)

- a. The personal pronouns in the text have been marked with **red and bold**. All the instances of *he* refer back to *Will* and all those of *she/her* refer to Angie. Two instances of *her* have not been marked because they are possessive determiners rather than personal pronouns. Similarly, *it* in the first line has not been marked, as it is an example of a dummy *it*, and part of the construction *it turned out*.
- b. Examples of lexical repetition in the text include *record* and forms of the verb *see*.
- c. Words in the text that belong to the lexical field of “record shop” include: *Championship Vinyl, record, R & B anthology, racks, assistant, browse, serve*. The last three (or even four) are more general, i.e. typical of more kinds of shops than just “record shops”.
- d. The definite article is natural with *the shop assistant* because people know that shops have shop assistants, and so the presence of the assistant is a given, even if he/she has not been mentioned earlier.
- e. An example (though not a whole sentence): *He was trawling through the racks while she was being served, so he never caught a glimpse of her face...* The subject (*he*) is given information from the previous sentence, what he was doing is new information, and also what Angie was doing (*being served*). After *so*, the subject *he* is still given information, *never caught a glimpse of* echoes *didn't see* in the first sentence, but *her face* is new information. These clauses thus agree well with the information principle, with given information first and new information last.
- f. The conjunctions that connect clauses or sentences in the text have been underlined. *Or* expresses addition (i.e. an added alternative); *as* is a subordinating conjunction expressing comparison; *when* signals a temporal relationship; *that* (occurring twice) is a subordinating conjunction introducing a nominal clause; *while* (occurring twice) is a subordinating conjunction signaling a temporal relationship; *so* (occurring twice)

is a conjunction signaling that what follows is an effect of what has gone before; *but* signals a contrast; *and* signals addition.

- 5 The passages given under questions 5b–5d are just a few of the possible examples found in the British National Corpus. You may have found others that illustrate the patterns equally well.
- a. In general, those connectors that occur most in spoken English are informal, particularly as the spoken English of the BNC contains a lot of informal conversation. Academic language and newspaper language are considered more formal.

connector	most frequent in	least frequent in	notes on formality level
<i>however</i>	academic	spoken	relatively formal
<i>cos</i>	spoken	newspaper	very informal, not common in writing
<i>thus</i>	academic	spoken	formal
<i>for a start</i>	spoken (+ fiction)	academic	informal, frequent also in fiction, so acceptable in writing (though possibly in fictional dialogue)
<i>in the end</i>	fiction	academic	non-academic: possibly used for structuring narratives
<i>finally</i>	fiction (+magazine)	spoken	also probably used for structuring written narrative, not much a feature of speech
<i>therefore</i>	academic	fiction	formal
<i>anyway</i>	spoken	academic	informal

- b. The phrase *the question is* most typically brings out the question-answer pattern, but problem-solution can also be found:

The problem-solution pattern:

[PROBLEM – i.e. grammar is not learned in an effective manner] **The question is** how should grammar be learned so that its intrinsic communicative character is understood and acted upon. [NOT RIGHT SOLUTION] This cannot be done by restricting attention to its formal properties, the relations and regularities which make up the internal mechanism of the device. No matter how legitimate it might be to define the

scope of linguistics in this way (and this is currently a controversial matter), it will not do for language pedagogy. [SOLUTION] Learners need to realize the function of the device as a way of mediating between words and contexts...

[PROBLEM – stated as a series of questions] **the question is**, how exactly should they be interpreted? What is it that makes them intelligible? What kind of facts do the propositions communicating such claims express? [OUTLINE OF SOLUTION] One well-known and well-publicised attempt in recent philosophy to address this problem in a “non-reductivist” spirit has gone under the name of Existentialism, and I shall now comment briefly on what I take to be the main features of the existentialist approach before outlining my own position.

The question-answer pattern:

And we do, **the question is** can we afford it [ANSWER] and we think we can.

...and **the question is** are we to express that reality or must we continue to obscure it. [ANSWER] We must express it for the world to see and to believe.

The question is, what constitutes wild salmon at its best? [ANSWER 1] Not the sexually played-out kelt, nor a fish that has undergone an exhausting twenty minutes or so battling with a master angler. Fighting for its life causes chemical changes in the flesh. That does not render it inedible if you cook it within a few hours – or freeze it immediately. [ANSWER 2] If you want to eat a salmon at its best, try to find one that has been netted at the river mouth or offshore early in the spring..

- c. Note that most examples of the cause-effect structure have the effect before the cause, as shown in the following:

Those readers who like the gossip found in “Heard on my Rounds” will have noticed [EFFECT] that the column has not appeared in this issue. [CAUSE] **The reason is** that there is nothing to put in.

Though commercial banks have lent the majority of the capital, [EFFECT] the debt-servicing burden is lower. [CAUSE] **The reason is** that Malaysia’s exports have been much stronger.

- d. In the first example below *the fact is* introduces an elaboration of the statement preceding it; in the second it introduces a correction to a false statement (the true-false pattern).

Some manufacturers now charge little or nothing extra for diesel. But at the other extreme some manufacturers impose what seems an incredible loading against diesel versions. **The fact is** that diesel engines are produced in huge volume compared with a few years ago, reducing costs considerably, while petrol engines have grown ever more complex.

Some shops are offering old squarials at knock-down prices and implying that [FALSE] they're a good buy because they can be converted to receive Sky next year. But that's all pie in the sky. [TRUE] **The fact is**, they'll only give you BSkyB until December.