

46

Describing situations

A Existence and location

Look at these extracts from history lectures. Note the words in bold.

The existence of a large population of migrant workers put pressure on the country's **infrastructure**¹.

Historians noted the **absence**³ of a clear political ideology in the actions of the workers.

We need to look at all the **circumstances**² surrounding the events of 1926.

Looking at events in their social context means taking **all** the factors of a person's social **environment** into account.

The **conditions** in which the poorest sector of the population lived were bad.

The **status**⁴ of women was not a serious subject of debate until the 1960s.

¹ basic systems and services, such as transport and power supplies ² facts or events that make the situation the way it is ³ opposite = *presence* ⁴ official position, especially in a social group

B Factors affecting situations

(n) = noun (v) = verb (adj) = adjective (opp) = opposite

word	examples	notes
constrain (v) constraint (n)	Scientists are constrained by the amount of funding they can obtain / are subject to the constraints of funding.	being controlled and limited in what they can do
restrain (v) restraint (n)	Growth in car ownership could be restrained by higher taxes. High land prices are a restraint on the expansion of private housing in the city.	limiting the growth or force of something
minimum (n/adj) (opp) maximum minimal (adj)	The minimum/maximum temperature was recorded at each stage. Damage to buildings was minimal .	smallest/largest amount allowed or possible very small in amount
confine (v)	Major industrial pollution is confined to the big cities in the north of the region.	limited to
restrict (v) restriction (n)	The government took measures to restrict the sale of tobacco products to young people. To fight traffic congestion, the city imposed a restriction of one car per household.	limiting something and reducing its size or preventing it from increasing
intrinsic (adj) (opp) extrinsic	English language is an intrinsic part of the college curriculum.	extremely important and basic characteristic of it

integral (adj)	Users' experiences are integral to the way libraries measure their performance.	necessary and important as a part of a whole
finite (adj) (opp) infinite	Oil is a finite resource; it will run out one day. There is evidence to suggest the universe is infinite .	having a limit or end /'faɪnaɪt/ having no limit or end /'ɪnfɪnət/
stable (adj) (opp) unstable stability (n) (opp) instability	It takes decades to create a stable democracy. Political instability is a threat to the whole region.	if something is stable, it is firmly fixed or not likely to move or change

Exercises

46.1 Choose one of the words in bold in A to complete each sentence.

- 1 To understand the problem, we need to look at all the many factors which may influence development in the child's social and physical
- 2 It has been claimed that the of teaching as a profession is not as high as it used to be or as it should be.
- 3 The infrared aerial photograph seems to show the of a large village around 1,000 years ago.
- 4 The company's president died in rather suspicious and his son took over.
- 5 In the of any clear instructions from above, I think we should decide ourselves how to proceed.
- 6 The country can never become a major economic player unless it improves its
- 7 I can't tell you what the word means unless you tell me it in
- 8 Students today live in very luxurious compared with students in the past.

46.2 Change the words in bold to the *opposite* meaning.

- 1 The economy has been **stable** for several years.
- 2 **Stability** has been a feature of government in the country for the last decade.
- 3 The northern region possesses an apparently **finite** supply of uranium.
- 4 The **presence** of cholera in the area was noted by scientists in 1978.
- 5 A **minimum** temperature of 20 degrees must be maintained at all times.

46.3 Rewrite the sentences without changing the meaning, using the word in brackets.

- 1 In the 1960s the government restricted the amount of money you could take out of the country. (RESTRICTION)
- 2 The problem exists only in the capital city. (CONFINED)
- 3 All fossil fuels will run out one day. (RESOURCES)
- 4 In the accident there was very little damage to the car. (MINIMAL)
- 5 All research is constrained by funding decisions. (SUBJECT)
- 6 The fact that the country is socially unstable deters investors. (SOCIAL)
- 7 Normally we would not behave in this way. (CIRCUMSTANCES)
- 8 Most small children believe that fairies exist. (OF FAIRIES)

46.4 Choose the best word in italics to complete each sentence.

- 1 The government has introduced legislation to *restrict* / *constrain* smoking in public places.
- 2 Learning from your mistakes is an *infinite* / *intrinsic* part of making progress.
- 3 Her attempt to *confine* / *restrain* the children from making a noise in the library met with little success.
- 4 The professor always insists that even the most junior research associate is an *unstable* / *integral* part of the team.
- 5 What are the *minimum* / *minimal* requirements for getting a place on the course?
- 6 During the exam period restrictions are *posed* / *imposed* on visitors to the college.
- 7 There were some rather curious *circumstances* / *contexts* surrounding the case.
- 8 The level of taxation in the country is a major *constraint* / *restraint* on foreign investment there.

**FOLLOW
UP**

Find a news article about a scientific development and read the description of the situation which led to it (often to be found in the introduction). Note any useful general nouns used there.