1.4 READING

Daniel Tammet • collocations

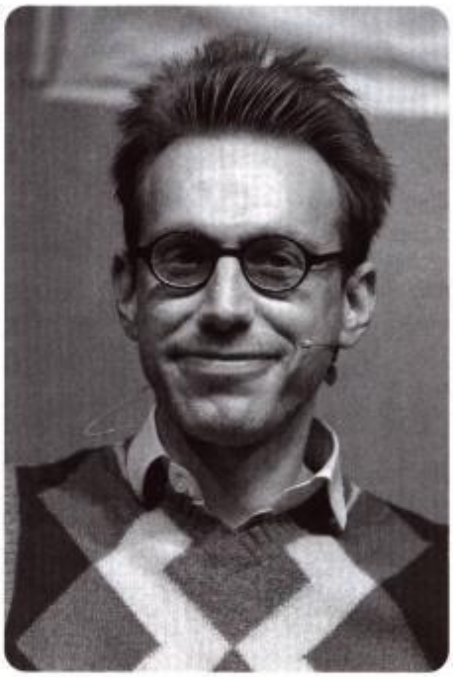
1 Read the text quickly and choose the best title for it.

1 The Real Rain Man
2 The Biggest Slice of Pi
3 The Man with the Amazing Mind

Daniel Tammet is a linguistic and mathematical genius. He speaks eleven languages, performs complex mental arithmetic in seconds, and on March 14, 2004 publicly recited pi from memory to 22,514 decimal places. It took him five hours and nine minutes. However, since childhood, despite his phenomenal mental abilities, Daniel has struggled to learn the personal skills that most of us take for granted: communication, empathy and the ability to see the big picture.

Daniel's skills and limitations are the result of Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism. He is a high-functioning autistic savant who possesses similar abilities to those of the character played by Dustin Hoffman in the film *Rain Man*. [1]__ 'I'm lucky,' he says, 'because most others who have rare abilities are also seriously disabled.'

Life is easier for Daniel now that he is in his thirties, but growing up with autism was tough for him and his family. As a baby, he used to cry constantly and only repetitive motion would stop him. [2]__ As a result, he never played with other children, or even with toys. 'Numbers were my toys,' he says.



To him, numbers have colours, shapes, textures* and personalities. He has described his visual image of 289 as particularly ugly, and 333 as particularly attractive. Three is green, five sounds like a clap of thunder, and thirty-seven is lumpy*. This cross-connection between unrelated senses is known as synaesthesia, and in Daniel's case it allows him to 'experience' numbers rather than calculate them. As he explains, 'When I multiply numbers together, I see two shapes. The image starts to change and evolve, and a third shape appears. That's the answer.'

It was this unique ability that helped him to remember pi to so many decimal places, back in 2004. [3]__ 'To me, it is as beautiful as the Mona Lisa,' he explains.

Daniel has many gifts often associated with autism. He can copy a picture so accurately that it could have been traced*, and he planned his autobiography *Born on a Blue Day* without taking a single note. Nevertheless, he is more aware of the many things he can't do. He knows, for instance, that he is difficult to live with because he cannot understand what others are feeling. He admits that most of the time, he has to pretend to show emotions. [4]__ He reveals that when his cat died, he cried and understood grief* for the first time.

In 2004, Daniel met Kim Peek, the savant on whom *Rain Man* was actually based. Unlike Daniel, Peek, who passed away in 2009, was unable to manage daily life independently. [5]__ 'We swapped facts and figures like others swap gossip,' says Tammet. With the help of his father, Peek travelled America spreading the message that difference is not necessarily a negative thing.

Like Peek, Daniel is putting his gifts to good use. He gives regular lectures, has written three successful books, and been the subject of numerous studies and documentaries. Much of his work involves helping scientists understand how the brain works. 'I used to long* to be like other people,' he says. 'But they tell me that I have the same effect on them as Professor Stephen Hawking. That in the contradiction* between ability and disability, they see humanity.'

GLOSSARY

texture *(n)* = the way a surface or material feels when you touch it
lumpy *(adj)* = covered with or containing small solid pieces
e.g. *a lumpy mattress*
trace *(v)* = copy a drawing by putting a very thin piece of paper over it and then drawing the lines you can see through the paper
grief *(n)* = extreme sadness caused by the death of someone you love
long *(v)* = want something very much, especially when it seems unlikely to happen
contradiction *(n)* = a difference between two statements, beliefs or ideas that means they cannot both be true

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2 Read the text. Complete gaps 1–5 with sentences A–F. There is one extra sentence.

A Despite these limitations, he is slowly extending his emotional range. ☐
B At school, he struggled to read body language or make eye contact, finding it impossible to interpret how other people were feeling. ☐
C *Born on a Blue Day* was named 'Best Book for Young Adults' in 2008 by the American Library Association. ☐
D Remarkably, though, he was able to read two pages of a book at once, one with each eye, and remember every single word. ☐
E There are only about fifty savants in the world (all men), but Tammet is unique in being able to describe how his mind works. ☐
F Tammet describes seeing the number as a landscape through which he travelled in his mind. ☐

3 Read the text again. Are statements 1–7 true (T) or false (F)?

1 The film *Rain Man* is partly based on Daniel's life story. ☐
2 Unlike other savants, Daniel is able to explain his remarkable abilities. ☐
3 At school, Daniel didn't find interacting with others easy. ☐
4 Daniel claims he can see, hear and feel numbers. ☐
5 Daniel may not actually be experiencing the emotions he shows to other people. ☐
6 Kim Peek and Daniel Tammet wrote a successful book together. ☐
7 Daniel says that people sometimes confuse him with Professor Stephen Hawking. ☐

4 Complete the collocations with the verbs in the box. There are two extra words. Then match the collocations with the meanings a–e.

find have involve make put read see ~~take~~

take something for granted ☐f
1 _____ something to good use ☐
2 _____ eye contact with someone ☐
3 _____ an effect on someone ☐
4 _____ someone's body language ☐
5 _____ the big picture ☐

a to influence someone to change their ideas or behaviour
b to understand the most important facts about a situation rather than the details
c to look directly into someone's eyes
d to understand physical communication such as gestures
e to make the most of something or use it to your advantage
f to expect something to be available all the time and forget that you are lucky to have it

REMEMBER BETTER

When learning a new collocation, remember that it may include words that have multiple meanings, e.g. in the collocation *to see the big picture*, the word *picture* refers not to a painting, drawing or photograph, but to a situation.

Complete the sentences with the collocations in Exercise 4. Change the form if necessary.

On this week's show, how to read your partner's body language.
1 Ellen was so embarrassed she couldn't even _____ the nurse.
2 Julia has _____ her bilingualism _____ working as an interpreter in the European Parliament.
3 The doctor's warning obviously _____ Kelly. She has started going to the gym again.
4 Ten hours into the power cut, Damien realised just how much we all _____ electricity _____ .
5 The chairman accused the union leader of focusing on minor details and failing to _____ .

WORD STORE 1E | Collocations

5 Complete the collocations. The first letters are given.

Man in accident

Sam Green, 23, was found unconscious in his car which had hit a tree in a storm. It is believed that during the crash he hit his head, causing him to [1]l_____ consciousness, and subsequently [2]f_____ into a coma. Doctors have confirmed that he [3]r_____ consciousness and [4]c_____ out of the coma a week later. Fortunately, Mr Green didn't [5]s_____ any other injuries and he has now fully [6]r_____ and left hospital. Nobody knows how the accident happened – it will [7]r_____ a mystery. Mr Green believes that his car might have been [8]s_____ by lightning as the engine suddenly stopped working, which is known to happen when lightning hits a vehicle.

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VOCABULARY PRACTICE | Expressions with *brain*

6 Look at the vocabulary in lesson 1.4 in the Student's Book. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first. Use expressions with *brain*.

I can't stop thinking about that song.
I've got that song on the brain.
1 Suddenly, Mark had a great idea.
Suddenly, Mark had a _____ .
2 Jackie was responsible for inventing that machine.
Jackie was _____ that machine.
3 I'm trying hard to remember that actor's name.
I'm _____ to remember that actor's name.
4 Shall we try and think of some new ideas?
Shall we _____ some new ideas?
5 She's very intelligent.
She's very _____ .

LIVEWORKSHEETS