

# 8 Describing change

## A Historical changes and their effects

The **transition**<sup>1</sup> from agriculture to industry challenged the economic and political **status quo**<sup>2</sup> in many countries. Millions of people **abandoned**<sup>3</sup> villages and rural areas and moved into cities. The **shift**<sup>4</sup> away from self-sufficiency meant most people became dependent on large corporations in one way or another, and had to **adapt**<sup>5</sup> to new social environments and **adjust**<sup>6</sup> to new ways of doing things. The **move**<sup>7</sup> towards smaller, nuclear families brought about **fundamental**<sup>8</sup> changes in family patterns in many parts of the world. **Maintaining**<sup>9</sup> the old ways became **increasingly**<sup>10</sup> difficult. On the other hand, the **elimination**<sup>11</sup> of diseases such as smallpox **transformed**<sup>12</sup> millions of people's lives, and the **expansion**<sup>13</sup> of healthcare in many countries saved countless lives. Technology **enhanced**<sup>14</sup> most people's lives in some way. For many people, nonetheless, the negative **impact**<sup>15</sup> of technology on the environment **altered**<sup>16</sup> the way we think of our relationship with nature, and **sustainable**<sup>17</sup> development, rather than development for its own sake, became an important goal for a number of countries.

<sup>1</sup> change from one form to another   <sup>2</sup> the situation as it was at that time   <sup>3</sup> left for ever   <sup>4</sup> change in position or direction   <sup>5</sup> change to suit different conditions   <sup>6</sup> become more familiar with a new situation   <sup>7</sup> action taken to achieve something   <sup>8</sup> in a very basic way   <sup>9</sup> not allowing them to change   <sup>10</sup> more and more   <sup>11</sup> removal of   <sup>12</sup> changed completely so that they are better   <sup>13</sup> increase in size or extent   <sup>14</sup> improved the quality of   <sup>15</sup> powerful effect that something, especially something new, has on a situation   <sup>16</sup> changed (usually slightly)   <sup>17</sup> causing little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time

## B More verbs for describing change

The exchange rate between the euro and the dollar has **fluctuated** recently. [changed or varied, especially continuously and between one level and another]  
 The technicians **modified** the flow of oil through the engine. [changed it slightly to improve it]  
 The company's lawyers **amended** the contract to take account of the new situation. [changed the words of a text, typically a law or a legal document]  
 Seven power plants were **converted from** oil to gas. [caused to change in form or character]  
 After 20 years of trading in the US, the firm **transferred** their operations to Brazil. [moved]  
 The economy **recovered** after three years of depression. [returned to a satisfactory condition]  
 Oil supplies are **diminishing** rapidly. **Acquiring** new supplies is vital for many countries. [becoming less; (formal) obtaining, getting]  
 We need to **refine** our analysis to obtain more accurate results. [improve it, especially by removing unwanted material]  
 The government **relaxed** controls on imports in 1997. [make less strict or severe]  
 Plans have been drawn up to **restore** 50,000 acres of wetland to their former state. [return something or someone to an earlier good condition or position]

## C Adjectives which often describe change

There was a **gradual change** in attitudes in the 1980s. [slow, over a long period of time]  
 A **sudden change** in the temperature of the liquid occurred after some minutes.  
 There is a **marked change** in how people perceive antisocial behaviour. [very noticeable]  
 There was no **perceptible change** in the learning outcomes between Time 1 and Time 2. [which could be perceived, i.e. noticed or seen]



A **change in** and a **change of** are different. A **change in** temperature/behaviour/attitudes/composition/policy, etc. suggests a process where something has become different (e.g. smaller, more radical). A **change of** clothing/government/approach, etc. means the complete substitution of one thing for another.

## Exercises

48.1 Fill in the missing words in each sentence with a word formed from the same root as the word in brackets. You may need a dictionary to help you with items 7 to 10.



- 1 There has been an enormous ..... in aviation in recent years. (EXPAND)
- 2 Economists are increasingly concerned that development should be ..... (SUSTAIN)
- 3 There has been no ..... change in the patient's condition. (PERCEIVE)
- 4 The survey found that most people feel that modern life is becoming ..... difficult. (INCREASE)
- 5 Industrial ..... has, of course, transformed people's working lives. (DEVELOP)
- 6 The group's aims include the ..... of famine and poverty. (ELIMINATE)
- 7 The apparatus worked well after we had made some ..... to it. (MODIFY)
- 8 With increasing unemployment many people have had to make ..... to their lives. (ADJUST)
- 9 Many linguists have studied first language ....., or how people learn their mother tongue. (ACQUIRE)
- 10 There is unlikely to be any ..... of controls in the near future. (RELAX)

48.2 Answer these questions about the language in this unit.

- 1 If prices *fluctuate* what do they do?
- 2 If a disease is *eliminated* how much of it remains?
- 3 If interest in something is *diminishing* is it becoming less or more?
- 4 If there is a *marked* change in someone's behaviour is it a big or a small change?
- 5 If most people feel that mobile phones *enhance* their lives, do they feel that their lives have become better or worse?
- 6 If controls on imports are *relaxed* do they become more or less strict?

48.3 Choose the best word in *italics* to complete each sentence.

- 1 The economy now seems to be *recovering* / *amending*.
- 2 Many people now are *converting* / *transforming* to using solar power.
- 3 Our survey did not succeed in getting all the information we need and so we shall have to *diminish* / *refine* our questions a little.
- 4 Why do some people *abandon* / *shift* their families and disappear without a word?
- 5 It takes most people some time to *alter* / *adjust* to living in a new country.
- 6 In recent years most societies have seen a major change in the *transition* / *status quo*.
- 7 It is increasingly hard to *adapt* / *maintain* traditions in the face of progress.
- 8 There have been some attempts to *restore* / *alter* the environment to its original state.

48.4 Which preposition is needed to complete each phrase?

- 1 a change ..... the climate
- 2 to transfer money ..... a Swiss bank account
- 3 a shift ..... the countryside towards the towns
- 4 to have an impact ..... the cost of living
- 5 to relax controls ..... immigration
- 6 to adjust ..... changes
- 7 the transition ..... one period to the next
- 8 to adapt ..... a new way of life