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Retire later to live longer

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22 October, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Retire later to live longer

Retiring from your job at an early age may not help people to live longer. There is a strong possibility early retirement may even shorten one's life. This is the conclusion of a study published on October 21 by the British Medical Journal. The research followed more than 3,500 employees working for Shell Oil in Texas. The workers retired at 55, 60 or 65 and were monitored for 26 years. Researchers studied the effect their age at retirement had on their lifespan. The team considered factors such as gender and economic status to find out whether retiring early is connected with better survival.

The results were surprising. The life expectancy of employees who retired at 55 was much lower compared with people who retired at 65. The researchers concluded that: "Retiring early at 55 or 60 was not associated with better survival than retiring at 65." In fact, the study found that people who retired at 55 often died earlier than those who continued working. Leader of the research team Shan Tsai said: "Although some workers retired at 55 because of [bad] health, these results clearly show that early retirement is not associated with increased survival."

WARM-UPS

1. RETIRED: You have now retired from your job after working hard for 45 years. Today is your first day of retirement. Walk around the class and talk to other students about retirement and your long working life. Are you happy or sad? What are your plans?

2. GOLDEN YEARS: What is your image of retirement? Do you think retirement will be a wonderful time? Talk about this with your partner(s). The following words may help you in your conversations:

- Hobbies
- Health
- Money
- Travel
- New interests
- Love life
- Grandchildren
- Memory
- Boredom
- Increased chances to study English

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Retirement / living longer / employees / Shell Oil / Texas / lifespan / gender / economic status / survival / bad health

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. LIFESPAN: How long do you want to live for? Would you like to live longer than 100 years? Talk with your partner(s) about the advantages and disadvantages of living to such an old age.

5. RETIREMENT: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with retirement. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. LONG LIFE OPINIONS: In pairs / groups, talk about what you think of these opinions on retirement and long life:

- a. Everyone should work until they are 70.
- b. Retiring at 55 is too young and too lazy.
- c. Retiring early means you are not doing your duty to your country.
- d. Early retirement is really just a luxury for those in rich countries.
- e. Early retirement means young people must pay more tax.
- f. Jobs will be created by new industries to help older people.
- g. People who work for 40 years deserve to retire early and have a leisurely life.
- h. Science will allow many of us to live to be over 100. We should then retire at 80.
- i. I want to retire now.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Retiring early means you'll have a longer life. | T / F |
| b. People who work for the Shell Oil Company have longer lives. | T / F |
| c. The study monitored 3,500 55-year-olds for 26 years. | T / F |
| d. The study monitored the survival techniques of the 55-year-olds. | T / F |
| e. The results of the study were pretty much as expected. | T / F |
| f. Retiring early was not associated with better survival. | T / F |
| g. People retiring at 55 often died earlier than those who retired later. | T / F |
| h. Many workers retired at 55 because of poor health. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| a. possibility | tracked |
| b. followed | demonstrate |
| c. factors | sex |
| d. gender | decided |
| e. connected | things |
| f. employees | discovered |
| g. concluded | chance |
| h. found | poor |
| i. bad | linked |
| j. show | workers |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Retiring from your job at | gender and economic status |
| b. a strong | a study published on October 21 |
| c. the conclusion of | expectancy |
| d. the effect their age at retirement | of bad health |
| e. factors such as | had on their lifespan |
| f. The results | associated with better survival |
| g. life | an early age |
| h. Retiring early at 55 or 60 was not | were surprising |
| i. people who retired at 55 | possibility |
| j. some workers retired at 55 because | often died earlier |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Retire later to live longer

Retiring from your job at an _____ age may not help people to live _____. There is a _____ possibility early retirement may _____ shorten one's life. This is the conclusion of a study published on October 21 by the British Medical Journal. The _____ followed more than 3,500 employees working for Shell Oil in Texas. The workers retired at 55, 60 or 65 and were _____ for 26 years. Researchers studied the effect their age at retirement had on their _____. The team considered factors such as gender and economic status to find out whether retiring early is connected with better _____.

even
survival
longer
lifespan
monitored
early
research
strong

The results were _____. The _____ expectancy of employees who retired at 55 was much lower compared with people who retired at 65. The researchers _____ that: "Retiring early at 55 or 60 was not _____ with better survival than retiring at 65." In fact, the _____ found that people who retired at 55 often died earlier than those who continued _____. Leader of the research team Shan Tsai said: "Although some workers retired at 55 because of [_____] health, these results _____ show that early retirement is not associated with increased survival."

clearly
surprising
bad
associated
working
life
study
concluded

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Retire later to live longer

Retiring from your job _____ age may not help people to live longer.

There is a strong possibility early retirement may even _____ one's life.

This is the conclusion of a study published on October 21 by the British Medical

Journal. The research followed more than 3,500 _____ working for Shell

Oil in Texas. The workers retired at 55, 60 or 65 and were _____ for 26

years. Researchers studied the effect their age at retirement had on their

lifespan. The team _____ factors such as gender and economic status to

find out whether retiring early is _____ with better survival.

The results were surprising. The life _____ of employees who retired at

55 was much lower _____ people who retired at 65. The

researchers concluded that: "Retiring early at 55 or 60 was not _____

with better survival than retiring at 65." In fact, the study found that people

who retired at 55 often died earlier _____ continued working.

Leader of the research team Shan Tsai said: "Although some workers retired at

55 because of [bad] health, these results _____ that early

retirement is not associated with increased survival."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'life' and 'span'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "RETIREMENT" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about retirement and the best age to retire.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- job
- shorten
- conclusion
- 55, 60 or 65
- lifespan
- factors
- results
- lower
- concluded
- in fact
- team
- health

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. When do you want to retire?
- c. What do you associate with retirement?
- d. Do you think people should work for as long as they can?
- e. Is early retirement something only for people in rich countries?
- f. Do you think you'd get bored in your old age?
- g. Should people retire later to prevent the government pension system from collapsing?
- h. What are the advantages of being old?
- i. Do the old people you know enjoy their lives?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. When does middle age and old age start in your country?
- d. Are you looking forward to retirement?
- e. What will happen to society if people live longer and longer?
- f. Do you think people who retire early are lazy?
- g. Would you like to live to be 150?
- h. What do you do to live longer?
- i. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

OLD AGE: People's ideas or images of old age are often quite different from the real thing. In pairs / groups, look at the topics below and talk about your perceptions of them in your old age.

TOPIC	YOUR IMAGE
Health	
Money	
Love life	
Hobbies and interests	
Ambitions	
Travel	
Free time	
Education	

Change partners and tell each what you talked about with your previous partner(s).

Compare your images with the real lives of some old people you know. Are there any differences in your images and the real lives of the old people?

Do you think your images will change when you get old?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on longevity around the world. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. LIFE: Make a poster describing the kinds of lives lead by two 65-year-olds in different countries. One retired at the age of 60 with a very comfortable pension. The other still works hard every as a farmer. Describe the future of the two people. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all describe similar things?

4. DIARY / JOURNAL: You have been retired now for one month. Write your diary/journal entry about your thoughts on that month. Describe a usual day spent in retirement. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. T d. F e. F f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| a. possibility | chance |
| b. followed | tracked |
| c. factors | things |
| d. gender | sex |
| e. connected | linked |
| f. employees | workers |
| g. concluded | decided |
| h. found | discovered |
| i. bad | poor |
| j. show | demonstrate |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Retiring from your job at | an early age |
| b. a strong | possibility |
| c. the conclusion of | a study published on October 21 |
| d. the effect their age at retirement | had on their lifespan |
| e. factors such as | gender and economic status |
| f. The results | were surprising |
| g. life | expectancy |
| h. Retiring early at 55 or 60 was not | associated with better survival |
| i. people who retired at 55 | often died earlier |
| j. some workers retired at 55 because | of bad health |

GAP FILL:

Retire later to live longer

Retiring from your job at an **early** age may not help people to live **longer**. There is a **strong** possibility early retirement may **even** shorten one's life. This is the conclusion of a study published on October 21 by the British Medical Journal. The **research** followed more than 3,500 employees working for Shell Oil in Texas. The workers retired at 55, 60 or 65 and were **monitored** for 26 years. Researchers studied the effect their age at retirement had on their **lifespan**. The team considered factors such as gender and economic status to find out whether retiring early is connected with better **survival**.

The results were **surprising**. The **life** expectancy of employees who retired at 55 was much lower compared with people who retired at 65. The researchers **concluded** that: "Retiring early at 55 or 60 was not **associated** with better survival than retiring at 65." In fact, the **study** found that people who retired at 55 often died earlier than those who continued **working**. Leader of the research team Shan Tsai said: "Although some workers retired at 55 because of [**bad**] health, these results **clearly** show that early retirement is not associated with increased survival."