Listening and speaking assignment:
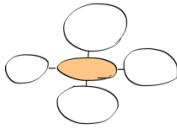
'How language shapes the way we think' – TED talk by Lera Boroditsky, to be found here:
https://www.ted.com/talks/lera_boroditsky_how_language_shapes_the_way_we_think?language=en

Pre-reading questions:
1. Write down at least ten words that come to mind when you think about language.
2. Have you ever thought about language and the power of language? Can you give an example of language that helps you to express yourself?

While-reading questions:
3. Take notes when listening to this talk and describe at least 3 (out of 5) examples that the speaker gives to show that language shapes the way we think.
4. Also try to notice what she does to entertain the audience and keep their attention.

Post-reading questions.
5. Write down at least 4 ways of what the speaker does to keep the attention of the audience.
6. As for structure: How is the TED talk structured?
7. Contents: Use the *CER Strategy* to summarise the speaker's message. The CER Strategy means: give a CLAIM (<u>what</u> does the speaker say?), use EVIDENCE (what does she tell you to <u>prove</u> her point?) and REASON (<u>why</u> did the speaker make that point?).

8. Rounding off: What do you think about language and its effects on your thoughts? Do you agree with Lera Boroditsky or do you think language can be seen independently? Give an example to prove your point.

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Pre-reading questions:

1. These can be anything: power, dialect, slang, poetry, rap music, books, metaphor, embarrassing, difficult, irony, politics, prejudice, multilingual, body language, etc. etc. etc.
2. Personal answer. Something like: I like using jokes to make my point. Or: I use direct speech when I tell a personal story to draw the listener into my story. Or: I don't like politicians like Trump but he uses language in such a way that it can be convincing.

While-reading questions:

3. The examples she uses are: (at least 3 should be mentioned)
   - Language can have *big* effects on one's thoughts (about chronology and time)
   - Language can have *deep* effects one one's thoughts (about numbers and count words)
   - Language can have *early* effects (about colours and the way peoples and cultures have different ways to indicate them)
   - Language can have *broad* effects when it concerns the feminine and masculine (grammatical gender)
   - Language can have *weighty* effects when it comes to the way people describe events and accidents. The example concerns active and passive ways and sentences describing the agent of a crime, for instance, and this has implications for eyewitness testimony and for blame and punishment.
4. And Post-reading question 5: At least 4 aspects should be noted.
   1. She starts quickly with '*So*…' and a brief explanation of what language is.
   2. She asks the audience to *do something* (close their eyes and point to south east)
   3. She uses *examples* that are funny so the audience laughs and she laughs, too.
   4. The way she speaks is neither too quick or too slow, and sometimes she waits and *pauses* to make people think.
   5. She *ends* with a *personal question*: How does language change the way YOU think and would you like it to be different?

Post-reading questions.

6. Structure:
   - She introduces the topic and explains some concepts.
   - She gives 5 examples that she clearly explains with clear slides (there's little text per slide).
   - She rounds off by summarizing her points, ending with 1 slide that contains an overview of her 5 examples.
   - She ends with a question to encourage the audience to do something with her ideas.
7. The speaker, being a psychologist and linguist, is convinced that our thoughts are influenced by the language that we speak (= CLAIM) which has an impact on society and social structure as a whole. She gives several examples (= EVIDENCE) that show that because in some languages particular words miss or are in fact present and more subtle when compared to other languages, this means one's thoughts, too, cannot be the same from one language to another. For evidence, see answers to question 3.

Lera Boroditsky is convinced that it is important to be aware of this effect of language in order to be able to deal with differences between people and cultures and to understand other people better. She also encourages the audience to think about the influence of language more often and realise what the effects may be on our daily lives. (= REASON) What would one like to change in order to be understood better or empathise more?

8. Personal answer. You could think of the Dutch word 'gezellig' that when translated into another language never quite reflects the same situation and atmosphere that Dutch people think of when using the word 'gezellig'.