**Task:** Choose an article from “the Economist” and write an essay.

**Skills that pay the bills (The economic value of skills)**

I have chosen an article from the Economist, a British weekly news magazine. It is entitled “[Skills that pay the bills](http://www.economist.com/blogs/freeexchange/2014/01/economic-value-skills)”. As the title suggests, the core of the article is employment and, in particular, it focuses on earning in proportion to one’s skills. The article is about a large survey made by PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) to analyze this problem: the survey involved workers from 25 to 54 years old and belonging to 24 countries. They were asked to solve problems and answer about their work. Numeracy is the main skill considered by the survey: it is the ability to reason and to apply simple numerical concepts. In other words, PIAAC values one’s ability in maths as a significant skill to earn money.

Results saw the U.S. at the first place and, according to authors, low results are strictly linked to politics.

As one would expect, the language used mainly hints to money (bills, reward, earning, rent) practical skills and school (skills, competencies, numerical, literacy, problem, high school, graduate, university, numeracy), and finally research (question, think-tank, survey, data, database, interview, respondent, result, analysis, density, increase). It also includes numbers and percentage, due to the survey and its results.

The article is not a linear text: it includes a picture – visual language – with a graphic showing the results of the survey.

The article seems not to show any difficulties on content or language level: this makes it an accessible article and easily clear to people in general. However, it is meant to reach a specific part of the audience.

In particular, the article is meant to address workers: the expression “pay the bills” suggests that it is addressed to someone who already pays them (this narrows the field again: it doesn’t include, for example, teenagers who work after school to earn a few money). The use of the word “bills” instead is not just meant to make a rhyme: “bills” is more frequent in every day’s life than “taxes” and it is probably used to involve the reader in the article. Moreover, the question opening the article – *How well are your skills rewarded?* – uses the second person and the present tense and straight addresses the reader and implies that the reader has a job.

Workers may be interested in reading the article in order to know whether they are paid well or not, proportionally to their skills, and also what’s behind their earning. Their attention will probably be caught by the result of the survey (see the graphic).

However, the article may be interesting not only to workers; indeed, it is also meant to address people who are looking for an occupation: young people who have just finished studying at the university (the article is about one's skills and therefore it could be interesting to someone who has finished school) and now need a job, or just people who may need more information.

Probably this part of the audience will be interested in knowing where a job is paid more, considering one’s skills, in order to know whether they are in the right place or not. They may also be interested in knowing where people’s skills are better and, therefore, where education is more effective.

Therefore, as one can see, people addressed by the article includes a large part if the audience: people mainly from 25 to 54 years old, with or without a job.