Using repetition and linking devices

The text that you are going to read is taken from an article in a magazine. It is about the issue of overweight people. When you read the text for the first time, you should not use a dictionary if you don’t understand all the words. Instead, try and guess the meaning of unknown words from the sense of the whole sentence. Now read the following text: Get fat by dieting, and answer the questions that follow.

It has been revealed in a new report that if you follow one of the many ‘get thin quickly’ diets which have been invented by ‘experts’ all around the world, you are more likely to gain weight than lose it in the longer term. Professor Marianne Cluse of Arizona Statewide University conducted a study over six months on 500 people who undertook a specialised dieting program. The participants selected their choice of diet from a list: the grapefruit diet, the ‘no-fat’ diet, the carbohydrate diet, and a number of other options taken from published dieting books. In the study, the participants were weighed at the beginning of the dieting period. Of the 500 volunteers, 400 were considered to be overweight and the remaining 100 were within the normal limits for their heights, gender and age. They were then all weighed at periods throughout the six months, and a journal was kept on their eating habits during this time.

At the end of the research period, it was found that 70% of all participants had actually increased their weight. Of the 100 people who had not been overweight when they commenced the study, 50% had experienced a gain in weight. This was not a surprising finding for Professor Cluse, who has provided an explanation for the phenomenon in an article published last month in the North American Medical Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics. She explains that when a person goes on a diet that promotes fast weight loss, there is usually a reduction in the amount of bodily muscle. As the muscle is lost, the amount of energy required by that person is also reduced. This means that he or she doesn't need to eat as much as before in order to keep the same weight. If the dieter continues to eat less, he or she will lose more muscle and need even less food. In addition, physical exercise will become more difficult due to the loss of muscle power. The overall result is that dieters will quickly lose weight at first, but when they start to eat normally again they will put on more weight as their body requires less food to feed the muscles.

So, it seems to have been demonstrated from Professor Cluse’s research that ‘get thin quickly’ diets have the opposite effect of that desired. This might be one reason why the number of overweight people in developed countries is increasing. Perhaps we need to change our approach to dieting. Instead of losing a lot of weight in a short space of time, we should try slowing the pace, eating a balanced diet and exercising regularly.

Activity 1: Get fat by dieting - Reading comprehension: Answer the questions below.
The first four questions are to check your general understanding of the passage; the next four questions are to practise your ability find specific information, and the final four questions are to help you with your vocabulary. You can refer back to the text if you are not sure of the answers from memory.

a) What was the purpose of Professor Cluse’s study?
b) What was the result of her study?
c) Why do people need less food after they have started a ‘get thin quickly’ diet?
d) What approach to dieting does the article recommend?
e) Where does Professor Cluse work?
f) How many participants took part in the study?
g) How many participants were not overweight at the start of the study?
h) How long did the study last?

i) Does your ‘gender’ indicate whether you are male or female?

j) Does the expression ‘go on a diet’ mean to start a special eating program designed to help a person get thinner?

k) Does the word ‘less’ mean the same as ‘fewer’?

l) If you ‘slow the pace’ in a diet program, how will your habits change?

**Using repetition:** A good text needs to have cohesion. This means that the words have been chosen to help you follow the ideas in the text in a logical way. There are two very common techniques of creating cohesion. The first technique is the use of repetition. Key words are repeated at points throughout the text to link the ideas. Have a look at the example taken from the ‘get fat by dieting’ text.

*She explains that when a person goes on a diet that promotes fast weight loss, there is usually a reduction in the amount of bodily muscle. As the muscle is lost, the amount of energy required by that person is also reduced. This means that he or she doesn’t need to eat as much as before in order to keep the same weight. If the dieter continues to eat less, he or she will lose more muscle and need even less food. In addition, physical exercise will become more difficult due to the loss of muscle power.*

**Using cohesive devices:** The second technique is by the use of cohesive devices (also called ‘transition signals’). Cohesive devices are words or phrases that logically connect ideas, sentences or clauses. The words ‘and’ and ‘but’ are the most common cohesive devices, but there are very many more that you already know, such as ‘however’, ‘moreover’, ‘in contrast’, ‘for example’, and so on. Have a look at the examples below of cohesive devices taken from the ‘get fat by dieting’ text.

*As the muscle is lost, the amount of energy required by that person is also reduced. This means that he or she doesn’t need to eat as much as before in order to keep the same weight. If the dieter continues to eat less, he or she will lose more muscle and need even less food. In addition, physical exercise will become more difficult due to the loss of muscle power.*

When you write a text, it is important to remember that you should use repetition to help the reader follow your ideas, but at the same time you need to vary your vocabulary so that it is interesting to the reader. With cohesive devices, it is important to make sure that you use the appropriate word or phrase to make the logical connection you want, and to check that it is followed by the correct grammatical form.

**Activity 2:** Have another look at the first paragraph of the ‘get fat by dieting’ article above. Find as many examples of repetition as you can.

**Activity 3:** Have a look at the last paragraph of the ‘get fat by dieting’ article. Make a list of the cohesive devices in that paragraph. Now see if you can think of any synonyms (different words with a very similar meaning) for each of the cohesive devices you have listed.