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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Read, Listen, Succeed: How English Skills Drive Workplace Success

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Abstract

Language is the key to success, especially in areas with high demand for communication, such as academia, business, and leadership. Proficiency in language use enables effective communication. Further, English, being the global language, is commonly used as the workplace language in a multicultural environment. But an important and common aspect that one can think of is, how can anyone gain proficiency/expertise in the English language? English language proficiency is based on the four fundamental skills of language, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are complementary and supplementary to each other, and mastery of the English language depends on a perfect balance between the four. Listening is the receptive skill, where one understands the spoken words. Speaking is a productive skill that allows people to convey thoughts and ideas in words. Reading is another receptive skill that enables learners to read and comprehend written texts. The last skill is writing, which is also a productive skill used effectively for writing business letters, emails, and all other business-related things. The current paper discusses in depth the two important skills and their role in the English Language, i.e., Reading and Listening, which are responsible for workplace success.

Keywords: Active listening, Language proficiency, Career advancement, Interpersonal skills, Verbal and non-verbal communication, Effective collaboration, Soft skills development

Introduction:

Proficiency in the English Language plays a key role in succeeding in the workplace. The reasons are many, i.e., having better communication, being a global language, and most importantly being the common language of the internet and many more. Let us understand in depth how reading and listening play an important role in this aspect of workspace success.

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What is reading?

Reading is an essential communication skill, which in turn is essential for thriving in any kind of social group. One cannot consider oneself fluent in a language unless one can read effectively in that language.

What is Listening?

Listening is a fundamental language modality that requires the active engagement of an individual. It entails the dynamic interaction between a sender, a message, and a receiver. Psychologically, listening involves the processes of receiving, attending to, interpreting, and responding to messages, whether they are conveyed through verbal or non-verbal means.

Presented hereafter is a detailed discussion of the two aforesaid skills of the English Language and how expertise in these two skills can lead to success at your workplace.

Discussion: Reading

What would happen if you were not reading properly? Consider some common everyday examples like not reading the expiry dates on medicines and food items, not reading the operational instructions of a device, or not taking into cognizance the repeated warnings

while driving, and many more. Reading the expiry dates would have saved a bad consequence, reading properly the instructions and warnings would have saved you from an accident or mishap. There are examples like a speeding train colliding with a stationed one, just because of failure to follow safety protocols and miscommunication. Such examples illustrate the importance of reading and the consequences of misreading.

Reading is fundamentally a way to learn the things we need to know. Unfortunately, it is often not possible to learn from direct experience due to various limitations, such as the availability of time and resources. As a solution, we have books, written sources, and the internet covering nearly every subject imaginable, which can help you acquire the knowledge you want or need. Good reading habits mean you are learning valuable things essential for your life.

Contextually understanding why reading is important in a professional scenario, a prominent answer would be that reading develops language abilities and capabilities essential for communication. No one can be fluent in a language unless they can read effectively in that language. Applying the same concept in English, one has to understand the English grammar and next, expand the vocabulary, which will happen not just by reading books but through extensive reading.

The scope of the textbook is, in a way, limited, but well-written books provide multiple ways to correctly use the words in a variety of contexts. This also implies that reading is a crucial component of learning good writing. Once a wide variety of good reading is done, you truly understand how to write well and how to adapt the correct writing style.

Reading develops creativity and inspires imagination. Reading is also an important problem-solving tool that applies to all areas of life. Also, reading helps in expanding language abilities, knowledge, and imagination. Further, it improves the reasoning and analytical abilities. Thus, reading also sharpens critical thinking.

How to read?

There are two ways of reading. Intensive reading and Extension reading. These two ways are classified based on the purpose of reading. Whether you are reading a particular piece of

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information, or book, or an article for the sake of information or the sake of entertainment and relaxation? Depending on the nature of the reading material and one's purpose, a competent user of the English language needs to switch between an extensive and intensive mode of reading. Let us understand both terms briefly.

1. Intensive Reading: -

This type of reading involves reading in detail and is usually tied to a learning objective or a work-related task. In an academic scenario, the comprehension questions after the poems, essays, and stories require intensive reading. Considering the professional scenario, important documents like work reports, instruction manuals, analyses of processes and situations demand intensive reading. Also, another important aspect of intensive reading is that it requires concentration. One should avoid any distractions as much as possible. One can also take notes or jot down a few points, which would help further in summarising the content in your own words. Also, intensive reading may seem a little difficult in the beginning, but when we get used to it, it proves extremely useful.

2. Extensive Reading: -

This is also known as “free reading” or reading widely, especially the longer texts. Examples like Analysis of annual reports of an educational institute for 5 years, or maybe feedback analysis part of the company for 10 years, and many more examples, which require a lot of exploration, require extensive reading. This is an additional reading, along with certain basic information that already exists.

The objective of extensive reading is also to encourage reading fluency, seeing to it that one does not stop frequency just because he/she is not understanding a passage. Also, care should be taken that the reading material is not demotivating and discouraging. Reading for pleasure is also an aspect of extensive reading. If one decides to make this thing a habit, a small amount of recurring time (may be 10mts or 20mts, or 30 minutes) should be set aside extensively for reading.

Discussion – Listening

Consider a situation when an important talk or presentation is going on, and the speaker is delivering it very well with the help of a PowerPoint. You, as a listener, just miss out few slides and are clueless at the end of the talk. How can anyone analyse the gist of a talk in such a scenario? How can you know what was being said? Listening is an essential/ very important part of communication, and listening with attention is an essential aspect of service excellence and will do a lot to gain the trust and loyalty of your seniors or clients. It is also one of the crucial skills for problem-solving and conflict resolution, which will, in turn, prevent a customer complaint from escalating. Listening involves a sender, a message, and a receiver. It is the psychological process of receiving, attending, constructing a meaning, and responding to spoken/and or non-verbal messages. (3) The discussion herewith will explain the key components, process, and strategies of listening.

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Listening: Key Components

- Identifying sounds
- Recognizing words and comprehending their meanings
- Identifying expressions and groups of utterances that aid in interpreting meaning
- Recalling significant words and ideas
- Understanding non-verbal cues

Process of Listening

The listening process comprises five distinct stages:

- Receiving – Hearing
- Understanding – Learning
- Remembering – Recalling
- Evaluating – Judging
- Responding – Answering

A brief explanation of each stage is provided below:

- **Hearing** – This is the physiological response to sound waves that stimulate the auditory receptors of the ear. It is essential to hear in order to listen, but hearing alone does not constitute listening.
- **Understanding** – This involves the recognition and retention of symbols, both auditory and visual, which facilitate comprehension.
- **Remembering** – This crucial stage indicates that the listener has not only received and interpreted the message but has also stored it in memory for future recall.
- **Evaluating** – At this stage, active listeners assess the content. They critically analyze facts, opinions, and evidence, identifying any biases or assumptions present in the message.
- **Responding** – This final stage requires the listener to provide feedback through verbal or non-verbal means. It serves as the only way for the sender to confirm whether the message has been effectively communicated.

Strategies of Listening

Listening strategies can be categorized based on the manner in which the listener processes the auditory input:

1. **Top-down strategy** – Involves listening for the central idea, making predictions, drawing inferences, and summarizing information.
2. **Bottom-up strategy** – Involves focusing on specific details, identifying cognates, and recognizing word-order patterns.

Steps for effective listening-

Many learners often confuse hearing with listening, assuming the two to be synonymous. However, hearing and listening are fundamentally distinct processes. Hearing is a passive act—one may hear various sounds without consciously registering or reacting to them. In contrast, listening is an active, psychological process that involves focused attention, interpretation, and response. Failure to distinguish between the two can lead to significant communication errors. Listening requires mental engagement and intentional concentration.

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Tips to Enhance Listening Skills

1. **Face the Speaker** – Sit upright or lean slightly forward to demonstrate attentiveness and interest.
2. **Maintain Eye Contact** – Establish eye contact at a comfortable level to signal engagement and respect.
3. **Minimize External Distractions** – Eliminate disturbances by turning off the television, putting away reading material, silencing mobile phones, and requesting others to do the same.
4. **Respond Appropriately** – Use brief verbal cues such as “Really?”, “Interesting,” or questions like “What did you do then?” and “What did she say?” to encourage the speaker and show involvement.
5. **Keep an Open Mind** – Avoid premature judgments. Allow the speaker to complete their thoughts before forming an opinion or response. Suspend assumptions and remain receptive to differing perspectives.

Having recognized the importance of effective listening, let us now summarize its key benefits. Mastering the skill of active listening not only fosters personal development but also contributes significantly to professional success. The primary advantages include:

1. **Effective Communication** – Active listening enhances clarity in information exchange, thereby improving interpersonal interactions and contributing to one’s success within an organization.
2. **Reduced Misunderstandings** – Even with clear written or spoken communication, active listeners can prevent potential misinterpretations through focused attention and timely clarification.
3. **Stronger Relationships** – Poor listening often leads to damaged relationships and emotional distress. Practicing attentive listening conveys respect, affirms the speaker’s value, and strengthens mutual trust.
4. **Personal and Professional Growth** – Growth in both spheres depends on the ability to listen actively, understand diverse viewpoints, and manage disagreements constructively. Effective listening fosters emotional maturity, adaptability, and collaborative strength.

Conclusion

Success is a personal and subjective experience, generally defined as achieving goals and satisfying one’s values. However, success at workplace is a multifaceted concept and can be defined in many ways which in general involves achieving personal goals, contributing to the team and institute/company objectives and fostering a positive and productive environment. As discussed in detail about the role of English language in becoming successful at workplace, and specifically the role of reading and listening in achieving this is of prime importance, we can meaningfully infer that reading and listening helps us overcome the internal and external challenges that have the highest likelihood of defeating oneself on the entrepreneurial path. Further, reading is a skill that is fundamental to functioning in today’s society. Many workplaces require you to understand and respond to written texts of various complexity. Better

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reading comprehension will reduce the time it takes to understand what is required of you and help you to communicate effectively. Not only in the workplace, but reading in English is more important outside the workplace. Dealing with legal documents, agreements, contracts, forms, applications, bills, news, laws, manuals, directions, and advertisements can be easily deciphered if one has good English language reading skills. In the same vein, listening is a tool that acts positively on the personal development portfolio, equips you to grow and become successful, explore more ideas, and implement them.

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