
Splendid Speaking Podcasts

Topic: Acknowledging Your Partner's Contributions

First Issued: April 19th 2007

This show can be listened to at the following address:

<http://splendid-speaking.com/blog/?p=38>



Comprehension Questions

As you listen, decide if the following questions are true according to what Ana and Jonas say.

- 1) Ana thinks evening yoga sessions would be popular.
- 2) Jonas thinks it would be easy to organise yoga lessons.
- 3) Jonas thinks they would need volunteers to deliver the courses.
- 4) There are solutions which don't require exercise.
- 5) The aim should be to make employees experts in ergonomics.

Transcript

Introduction

Welcome to the Splendid Speaking podcast. My name's Pete Travis and this week we're listening to Ana from Austria and Jonas from Switzerland, who is currently living in India. A reminder that transcripts for all podcasts including this one are available to subscribers of our mailing list. You can sign up to the newsletter from www.splendid-speaking.com.

Shortly before the interview in Skype I sent Ana and Jonas the following question:

“Imagine you both work for the same company. Most of your employees have sedentary jobs, sitting at computer screens and getting little exercise. You have been asked to come up with suggestions to encourage staff to adopt a healthier lifestyle. Discuss with your partner and agree on 3 or 4 realistic actions to report back to your manager. You have about 4 minutes to do this.”

In previous interviews we've looked at the importance of working cooperatively in role plays like this. Working together can give you a better chance of completing the task in the limited time available and can also allow you to show off your interactive communication skills as you acknowledge, respond to and develop points made by your partner. As you listen to Ana and Jonas, decide the extent to which they acknowledge each other's contributions and make a note of any examples you hear of how they do this. If you have access to the transcript, listen a second time and answer the comprehension questions. Finally, make a note of their use of English, which we'll look at in the feedback session.

Let's listen to Ana and Jonas.

Ana: Ok ... well I think ... it's certainly important to find a way ... for ...employees to ... live healthier and the first thing that comes to my mind would be maybe the possibility of ... doing a little walk together in the lunch break. Jonas, what do you think about it?

Jonas: Yes, that's ... exactly what I had on my mind as well. And then I came up with the ... the thought that maybe a ... a communal stretching session would be appropriate as well ... or maybe I don't know a yoga lesson in the evening.

Ana: Yes, sounds interesting though I'm not so sure if it would be ... if everybody would like to take part if it is in the evening so I think maybe it would be better to find things that are during the day.

Jonas: Yes ... that's quite ... quite right ... but ... but ... if you ... I mean it would be pretty realistic to organise something like this ... between ... in breaks or I don't know and it would be of course all on a voluntary basis you wouldn't ... wouldn't be forced to do yoga or anything like that.

Ana: Yes but ... yeah ... yeah maybe ... a few more breaks would be good. What about ... introducing breaks of about 15 minutes one in the morning and one in the afternoon ... during which people can go to the gym ... and I mean you mentioned some stretching ...

Jonas: Yes I think that would be quite ... appropriate and ... and then ... I

think I find that ... I forgot the idea ...

Ana: I just had the idea of ... I mean maybe there are some exercises certain exercises people can do in a very short time even if they stay in front of their computers but ... yes ... just a little bit of stretching ... standing up every now and then ...

Jonas: Yes, right ... and I think ... the problem about being in front of the computer all the time is that ... you tend to get back problems ... problems in the back and a pain or ache in the neck and just adjusting ... adjusting the stool a bit or the height of the stool or the angle at which you look at the computer screen I think that would help to a great degree and it wouldn't cost much time either.

Ana: Yes I think you're absolutely right here ... maybe engaging somebody who is an expert on ... how it is healthy to sit in front of your computer would be a good idea so that people ... even if they stay ... they could stay in the most healthy position at least.

Jonas: I think that's the ... that's profession of ergonomics ... I think that would be a good idea inviting someone from that profession.

Peter: OK ... so can I ask you for your suggestions then?

Jonas: Well we ... agreed on the communal stretching, no?

Ana: Yes we did yeah.

Jonas: And then the ergonomics ... and the third was the walking sessions.

Ana: Yeah exactly.

Peter: OK ... excellent three very good ideas especially the computer and I'm sitting here at the moment with a neck ache so I understand exactly

what you mean about the need for ergonomics.

Feedback

First of all, thanks to Ana and Jonas for taking part in this Skype interview and for agreeing to be recorded. If you go to the Splendid Speaking website you can leave your own comments on their role play.

Now for some feedback. Both Ana and Jonas proved to have excellent conversational skills and this role play is a very good example of how to work cooperatively. Did you notice that every contribution made by Ana and Jonas started with them acknowledging a point that their partner had just made before going on to introduce a new suggestion of their own. This acknowledgement of what the other person has said has a very positive effect on the discussion. Obviously it shows your partner that you're listening to what they have to say and are interested in their comments. It can also be used to signal agreement and at other times to point out problems with your partner's suggestions. Here are just a few examples from the beginning of this role play:

Ana: ... and the first thing that comes to my mind would be maybe the possibility of ... doing a little walk together in the lunch break. Jonas, what do you think about it?

Jonas: Yes, that's ... exactly what I had on my mind as well. And then I came up with the ... the thought that maybe a ... a communal stretching session would be appropriate as well ... or maybe I don't know a yoga lesson in the evening.

Ana: Yes, sounds interesting though I'm not so sure if it would be ... if everybody would like to take part if it is in the evening ...

If you have the time listen again or refer to the transcript and note all the times this happens. Interacting in this way also made it easy for Ana and Jonas to complete the task within the time limit.

A further example of how Ana and Jonas worked together included Ana quickly coming to the rescue when Jonas had forgotten what he wanted to say, which consequently helped keep the conversation flowing:

Jonas: Yes I think that would be quite ... appropriate and ... and then ... I think I find that ... I forgot the idea ...

Ana: I just had the idea of ... I mean maybe there are exercises certain exercises people can do in a very short time even if they stay in front of their computers but ... yes ... just a little bit of stretching ... standing up every now and then ...

Both Ana and Jonas have excellent use of English and their contributions were fluently presented with virtually no pronunciation problems. They both used language to speculate and the whole conversation was peppered with 2nd conditional statements. Their English was very accurate throughout. However, here are four minor errors for you to try and spot:

...and the first thing that comes to my mind would be maybe the possibility of...

...Jonas, what do you think about it?

...Yes, that's ... exactly what I had on my mind as well...

...the thought that maybe a ... a communal stretching session would be appropriate as well...

So, did you spot the mistakes?

...and the first thing that comes to my mind would be maybe the possibility of...

To be fair to Ana this isn't wrong as such but a more natural way of expressing this would be to omit 'my' and to say 'the first thing that comes to mind'.

...Jonas, what do you think about it?

Again, a minor error but it would be more natural to say 'What do you think about this?' or 'What do you think about that?'

...Yes, that's ... exactly what I had on my mind as well...

To say you have something 'on your mind' means to be preoccupied or worried about something. It would be better to say 'That's exactly what I had in mind'.

...the thought that maybe a ... a communal stretching session would be appropriate as well...

This is a pronunciation error. The word should be pronounced 'communal' not 'communial'.

OK. That's the end of this podcast. Once again, many thanks to Ana and Jonas. Until next week it's 'Bye' from me Pete Travis. And remember that you can download the transcript to this and all previous podcasts by signing up to the Splendid Speaking newsletter, a link to which you'll find at www.splendid-speaking.com

Answers to Comprehension Questions

1) Ana thinks evening yoga sessions would be popular.

Ans: False

2) Jonas thinks it would be easy to organise yoga lessons.

Ans: True

3) Jonas thinks they would need volunteers to deliver the courses.

Ans: False

4) There are solutions which don't require exercise.

Ans: True

5) The aim should be to make employees experts in ergonomics.

Ans: False

The Splendid Speaking Self Study Course

Strategies for active listening and showing interest in what others have to say are practised in Volume 1 of the 'Splendid Speaking Self-Study Course'.

Volume 1: Introductions and Small Talk

In this volume you'll learn how to:

- Make an impact with a 15-second introduction (Unit 1) - a useful skill in a job interview or networking situations.
- Make small talk using the S.O.F.A. strategy (Unit 2)- a surefire way to make social situations much easier.
- Listen effectively and show interest in what others have to say (Unit 2), so you can build an immediate rapport with other people.
- Relate a S.T.A.R. story (Unit 3) that illustrates a personal achievement - ideal in an interview for a job or training course.

Plus 2 other key speaking strategies on body language and giving examples.

Volume 2: Powerful Presentations

In this volume you'll learn how to:

- Captivate your audience by choosing one of five memorable ways to start a presentation, and then signpost it clearly so your audience don't get lost (Unit 4).
- Introduce photographs and information graphics (graphs, charts, tables, etc) to illustrate your talk (Unit 5).
- Avoid worrying when you're asked to "say a few words". You'll soon be giving a T.O.P. spontaneous talk, and using pauses for effect (Unit 6).

In addition to these 12 key strategies you can test yourself with our interactive quizzes on useful collocational phrases to do with work, business, education and relationships, for example.

For further information visit

<http://www.splendid-speaking.com/products/>