**Listening Lesson 4**

**Description**

The topic of this lesson is pressure at work. Practice of vocabulary related to working under pressure is used to give guidance on completing note completion tasks, one of the task types in the Linguaskill Business Listening Test.

**Teacher’s Notes**

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| **Aims of the lesson** | * to present and practise vocabulary for discussing work and pressure * to raise awareness of the requirements of Listening note completion task * to develop techniques and strategies for this task type based on practice of a sample task. |
| **Time required** | 50-60 minutes |
| **Level** | Suitable for C1–2 level. |
| **Materials required** | * Student’s Worksheet 1: Listening Note Completion task – tips * Student’s Worksheet 2: Listening Note Completion – Sample Linguaskill Business Listening task transcript (Working under pressure) [Optional] |

**Procedure**

1. Write on the board *The top five reasons people complain about their job.* Ask learners to work in small groups and agree on what they think will appear on this list. Then give each learner in a group a number, i.e. 1–5, and ask them to move to make new groups (for example, all the 1s make a new group, all the 2s make another new group, and so on). In the new group, they compare their lists and come up with a final one. As a whole group, get feedback from the groups and write a list on the board. If learners do not suggest it, elicit the idea of deadlines and pressure at work. Ask learners whether they think pressure at work can be a good thing.
2. Tell learners that in this lesson they will look at a Linguaskill Business Listening Note Completion task on the subject of working under pressure. Ask learners what they know about this task type. Write on the board the following numbers: *2, 3, 5, 45.* Ask learners what they think these numbers tell them about this task type. [**KEY:** they hear the recording twice; they can write up to three words in each gap; there are five gaps to fill; they have 45 seconds to read through the notes before the recording starts].
3. Ask learners to suggest the best ways to use the 45 seconds they have before the recording starts. Then give learners **Student’s Worksheet 1** and ask them to work on **Exercise 1**. They need to match the sentence halves to find tips on how to use the preparation time. Check answers to **Exercise 1** and talk through the tips using the notes in the key. Discuss how knowing what to do during the preparation time helps learners make the best use of that time.
4. Ask learners to look at **Student’s Worksheet 1 Exercise 2**, which is a sample Business Listening Note Completion Task. Learners work on their own to highlight or underline important information in the notes, using the tips from **Exercise 1** as guidance. Learners check with a partner before checking together as a whole class. In feedback, elicit possible synonyms and paraphrase for the key information highlighted.
5. Tell learners you are going to play the first part of the recording. They need to listen and write their answer for sentence 1. Learners check with a partner before you play the same extract again. Check answers as a whole group and elicit evidence from the recording for the correct answer. [**KEY:** (looming) deadlines. This example shows that it is important to listen for synonyms: *work performance* is expressed as (*achieve*) *outcomes; enhanced* is expressed as *I work better like this; seldom* is expressed as *rarely*.]
6. Now tell learners you will play the whole recording. They listen to confirm the answer for sentence 1, then continue listening to write their answers to gaps 2–5. Remind them they can write up to three words only. Play the recording twice, then ask learners to check with a partner before discussing as a whole class. In whole group feedback, ask learners to explain why their answer is correct. [**KEY:** 2. priority 3. well-being 4. daily struggle 5. innovation/innovating]

**OPTIONAL ACTIVITY:** To support feedback on the exercise and reinforce the tips for this task type, you could give learners a copy of **Worksheet 2**, which has the transcript of the recording. Learners can highlight the information which confirms each answer in the task.

1. Finish the lesson by asking learners to compare working for a company and working for yourself. Which do they think might lead to more work pressure?

**Student’s Worksheet 1**

**Listening Note Completion task – task tips**

**Exercise 1**

**Match the sentence beginnings and endings to make four tips you can use when preparing to listen to the recording.**

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| --- | --- |
| Read quickly through the notes | and think of other words or expressions with the same meaning. |
| Decide whether each sentence | in case the recording mentions similar ideas but with the opposite meaning. |
| Identify key vocabulary in each sentence | refers to a fact or an opinion. |
| Notice negative words and structures | to get a general understanding of what they cover. |

**Exercise 2**

**Here are the notes from a Linguaskill Business Listening Note Completion task on the topic of working under pressure. Highlight the important words in the sentences below.**

According to Holly, work performance is seldom enhanced by the pressure of **1** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Holly argues that to achieve success from employees, goal setting should not be seen as a

**2** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the workplace.

Holly mentions the US industrialist Henry Ford in order to point out how both productivity and **3** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ increased due to his ideas.

Holly says that a recent US survey found that performance targets were described as a

**4** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by a small proportion of workers surveyed.

Holly wonders whether performance pressure may negatively affect the amount of

**5** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ staff are capable of.

**Now listen to the recording and complete the sentences. Use no more than three words in each gap.**

**KEY**

**Exercise 1**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Read quickly through the notes | to get a general understanding of what they cover. | *This will help learners listen out for cues in the recording for each of the sentences.* |
| Decide whether each sentence | refers to a fact or an opinion. | *The speaker may mention a fact and an opinion, and learners will need to know which one fits the gap.* |
| Identify key vocabulary in each sentence | and think of other words or expressions with the same meaning. | *The speaker will often use synonyms or paraphrase the words in the sentence.* |
| Notice negative words and structures | in case the recording mentions similar ideas but with the opposite meaning. | *The speaker may say something that fits the sentence topic, but it is ruled out because of the negative.* |

**Exercise 2**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **According to** Holly, **work performance** is **seldom enhanced** by the pressure of  **1** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . | This sentence is about the speaker’s opinion (*According to)* on work performance*. enhanced* is a positive word, but *seldom* means the focus is on the opposite idea. |
| Holly **argues** that to **achieve success** from employees, **goal setting** **should not be seen as** a **2** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the workplace. | This sentence is about the speaker’s opinion (*argues*) on success at work and setting goals. *not* indicates learners need to listen for something the speaker feels is incorrect. |
| Holly mentions the US industrialist **Henry Ford** **in order to** point out how both productivity and **3** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **increased** due to his ideas. | This sentence is about the impact of Henry Ford. The word in the gap will be something positive (*increased*) he achieved which the speaker thinks people need to know about. |
| Holly says that a recent US **survey** found that **performance targets** were described as a **4** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by a **small proportion** of workers surveyed. | This sentence is about a fact from a survey about performance targets. The *small proportion* indicates the word(s) to put in the gap will not be the main result of the survey. |
| Holly **wonders** whether **performance pressure** may **negatively affect** the amount of **5** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ staff are capable of. | This sentence is about the speaker’s opinion (*wonders*). It will be an opinion about a problem (*negatively affect*) caused by performance pressure. |

**Keys**

**1. looming deadlines / deadlines**

**2. priority**

**3. well-being / wellbeing / well being**

**4. daily struggle / a daily struggle**

**5. innovation / innovating**

**Student’s Worksheet 2**

**Linguaskill Business Listening task transcript - Working under pressure [Optional]**

I’m Holly Marvin and I’d like to talk about a particular aspect of business psychology – working under pressure. Most of us know what it's like to feel pushed almost beyond our limits to deliver in a high-pressure situation. In fact, the outcomes that people do achieve when up against looming deadlines rarely lead anyone to say, ‘I work better like this.’ Recognised concepts and proven facts don’t always coincide. For example, making a superhuman effort to do something as rapidly as possible might be all very well for Olympic runners but that all turns out to be a myth in business. The evidence to back it up is very scarce.

Employees are expected to aim for a significant level of success in the workplace. There’s a huge reliance on establishing targets – and a marked tendency to assume these genuinely optimise performance, and are therefore a priority. However, I’d assert that they’re often meaningless to employees, while they concentrate on day-to-day tasks. Rethinking is necessary and different approaches need to be considered.

Someone who had a huge influence on industry a hundred years ago in the US was industrialist Henry Ford. Ford revolutionised the factory assembly line by maximising productivity while at the same time standardising the length of the working week. He made it shorter – down to forty hours. He understood that performance is not separate or disconnected from well-being – which you may not be surprised to hear went up. And this is the reason I draw your attention to Ford’s way of thinking.

However, in many of today’s companies, it’s performance targets that rule. A recent survey of US workers had some interesting findings. It seems that higher-level performance targets were attained through endurance, toughness, and sheer force of will. Nearly two thirds reported a problem with maintaining performance levels at times, and around one in twenty reported their feelings by using the phrase ‘a daily struggle’, which shouldn't be discounted.

If workers feel burnt out regularly, what does performance pressure achieve? With this bearing down on people, it could be that the potential for innovation is impacted. And this is highly undesirable. I look forward to in-depth studies to investigate further. I believe we can get great performance by supporting employees and taking a longer view rather than creating exhaustion, and aiming for quality at any cost.