

Recording scripts

Unit 9

Listening Part 1

Recording script CD2 Track 6

Extract One

Interviewer: The advent of the steam train made an enormous difference to nineteenth-century society in all sorts of ways, didn't it, Tom?

Tom: Yes, the change was tremendous. People's entire conception of the world, the way they related to it and the way they lived underwent a profound transformation. It wasn't all immediate, of course, but eventually, and to a very great extent it fashioned the way we live today. It started with things which we find laughable today such as people's terror that the trains' vibrations would shatter their skeletons. When they got onto trains, they found everything going past in a blur of speed, and that blur is something which was eventually reflected in the work of pre-impressionist and impressionist painters later in the century. And over the next hundred years railways had profound effects on the countryside, making it possible for people to live there and travel in to work in the cities. Outlying villages became suburbs and dormitory towns. And also quite suddenly human beings went from being comparatively slow and clumsy to being faster than any other living thing and I think this had a subtle but strong effect on the way people regarded the natural world. They began to think they could dominate it by their actions. I doubt if any other invention has had such a profound influence on the human psyche. Nineteenth-century literature and art is full of it.

Interviewer: The early steam trains also suffered some quite horrific accidents, didn't they?

Recording script CD2 Track 7

Extract Two

Woman: Do you think there are any limits to the speed people can run at? I mean, will there ever come a time when athletes at Olympic events just aren't breaking records any more?

Man: Well, we're already quite close to that stage, aren't we? When athletes broke Olympic records in the past, some of their feats were mind-blowing. For example, when Bob Beamon broke the long jump record in 1968, his jump was 55 centimetres longer than the previous record and it wasn't until 1991 that someone managed to better it. I can't imagine anyone making such a difference nowadays.

Woman: Although there'll always be those exceptional individuals who grab the headlines with their exploits.

Man: Though I suspect that they'll be relatively few and far between. Still, newspapers and TV have to live off something and they'll hype a relatively small achievement into something far bigger than it really is.

Woman: Small achievement! Breaking a record even by a millisecond is always going to be pretty incredible, something enormous for the individual who does it.

Man: But when all is said and done, we're pretty close to the limits of human potential now.

Woman: Maybe. In the past what made a difference was when sport stopped being for amateurs and people could devote themselves to it full time, not to mention new technologies which affected shoe or track design. Perhaps the next big step forward will be altering genes to produce better athletes.

Man: Yeah, that used to smack of science fiction, didn't it, but now it really is looking more and more likely, isn't it?

Woman: Yes, and not just better athletes, better everyone!

Recording script CD2 Track 8

Extract Three

Interviewer: Dr Desai, the difficulties of interstellar travel are enormous, aren't they?

Desai: Vast. When you think that the nearest star is 4.2 light years away, a spaceship using current technology would take seventy-two thousand years to get there. Much more than the entire known history of this planet.

Interviewer: What are the possibilities of building a spaceship that travels much, much faster?

Desai: Well, I'd say that with research and development it could be technically feasible, but it would probably need to be powered by a nuclear explosion to get it travelling at close to the speed of light. Building such a craft is certainly not on anyone's space programme yet. The explosion would of course have to be set off at a good safe distance from the Earth, but you have to remember that current treaties prohibit nuclear explosions in space, so at present it's a non-starter.

Interviewer: In your book you mention non-nuclear technology and in particular a generational spaceship. Can you explain for listeners exactly what this is?

Desai: Yes, indeed. Given the vast distances and the time involved, even a very fast spaceship using non-nuclear technology would take several thousand years to reach another star. And there are quite a lot of good candidates not too far away where we have identified planets. This means that the people volunteering to go on this journey, assuming that there are volunteers, won't live long enough to reach their destination, nor will their grandchildren or their great grandchildren, but many generations later on. These people, probably a hundred and fifty or two hundred of them, will have to live together in a confined space for thousands of years, travelling through the emptiness of space to we know not what they will encounter when they get there. What activities could we find for the crew to do during all this time? What would be the point of their lives? And there's always the risk that they could degenerate into barbarism and fighting amongst themselves like some small isolated societies here on Earth.

Interviewer: So, are there any realistic prospects for interstellar space travel in the near future?

Speaking Part 2

Recording script CD2 Track 9

Interviewer: Now in this part of the test I'm going to give each of you three pictures. I'd like you to talk about them on your own for about a minute, and also to answer a question briefly about your partner's pictures. Here are your pictures. They show people using different machines or devices. I'd like you to compare two of the pictures and say how the machines or devices help the people to do their work faster.

Candidate: Well, the first one is a policewoman using what I think must be a pda – you know, one of those hand-held devices which you can use when you want to connect to the Internet and check or send data. She's probably checking the identity of a driver she's stopped or she could be checking to see if the car she's looking at is stolen or something. The other picture shows – what do you call the person? – a cowboy or a shepherd, I'm not sure, riding one of those quad bikes while he's moving his herd, I mean his flock of sheep. The policewoman can do her job faster because she can do it in – what's the word? – in real time: she doesn't have to call someone at the police station or go there to check the information. She might even be able to give the driver a fine automatically. The shepherd doesn't have to walk or use a horse all day, so everything is quicker and he doesn't get so tired doing his job – and nor does his dog!

Recording script CD2 Track 10

Instructions for Set A

Interviewer: Now in this part of the test I'm going to give each of you three pictures. I'd like you to talk about them on your own for about a minute, and also to answer a question briefly about your partner's pictures. Here are your pictures. They show people using different machines or devices. I'd like you to compare two of the pictures and say if you think the machines or devices really help the people to do their jobs better.

Recording script CD2 Track 11

Instructions for Set B

Interviewer: Now in this part of the test I'm going to give each of you three pictures. I'd like you to talk about them on your own for about a minute, and also to answer a question briefly about your partner's pictures. Here are your pictures. They show people doing things in a traditional way. These things are often done using a machine nowadays. I'd like you to compare two of the pictures and say what the benefits are of doing the activities in a traditional way.