DAY 11: PROGRESS CHECK_READING 5-6

READING 5: You are going to read five reviews of books about communication. For questions 44 – 53, choose from the sections A – E. The sections may be chosen more than once.

Which book

clarifies the reason why listeners may disengage with what is being said?	44 .....
has the apparent capacity to better the circumstances of its audience?	45 .....
supports its central arguments by reflecting on work carried out in other disciplines?	46 .....
focuses on an ability to draw appropriate meaning from what is said?	47 .....
should attract audiences from all walks of life?	48 .....
is likely to appeal to readers who hold with a popular saying?	49 .....
contains a unique focus on the requirements of a minority?	50 .....
targets those who feel disadvantaged by particular personality traits?	51 .....
points out that there is an advantage in reconsidering the kind of language to use?	52 .....
concentrates on the disparity between how different groups of speakers communicate?	53 .....

A Actions speak louder than words by Karen Bradwell

As a general rule of thumb, no leader will be at his or her most effective as a communicator without possession of outstanding verbal skills, but his or her ability to mesmerize an audience also hangs on nonverbal skills – facial expression, gesture and the physical position assumed when addressing listeners included, whether this be in the boardroom, a conference or during a one-to-one. Actions speak louder than words is an indispensible guide to honing these skills to perfection, drawing as it does on neuroscience and psychological research with the sole aim of helping leaders to use body language to maximum effect – and read that of others. The guide also includes a one-of-a-kind and incredibly constructive chapter on communication for visually-impaired leaders, whose ability to understand aural cues in order to respond to others is paramount.

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B Communication is key by Arthur Mayhew

While peppering your speech with jargon and business speak may ostensibly make you look like you know what you're talking about, you could be, albeit unintentionally, alienating your audience. Have you ever wondered why employees sit nodding away in meetings only to go away and do the opposite to what you thought you'd intended they should do? If so, perhaps being more amenable to engaging your brain before your mouth may be a good course of action. Making concessions to your audience is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of a good – and thoughtful – communicator. Communication is key outlines how to paraphrase those expressions which many employees consider to be a barrier to effective communication. Adopting a few useful synonyms, Mayhew suggests, will be enormously beneficial in helping others identify your message.

C Public speaking by Paula Benson

Public speaking can be a nightmare for many of us at the best of times. It is a hard nut to crack and can leave shy and retiring folk floundering. In Public speaking, Paula Benson addresses the difficulty many such people have in getting up to speak in front of others, specifically in cases where the speaker is paralysed by fear or overcome with feelings of powerlessness to better their situation. In particular, she focuses on those who have a stutter or other speech impediment, detailing established speech therapy techniques that promote a smooth and articulate flow of words. While brief, this slim book is nothing less than enlightening, and has the potential to change lives – or at the very least vastly improve one area of it.

D Listening by Jonathan Strasbourg

Books devoted to the skill of listening are few and far between, so it is with open arms that we welcome this one to our bookshelves. If you've ever heard the expression that we're given two ears and only one mouth for a reason, and you concur with the sentiment behind it, then this book will resonate with you. All too often we go through the motions of listening, but how often we really hear what's been said is a different matter entirely. Founded on the principles of listening, i.e. applying an accurate interpretation to what you've just heard, however subtle the message, is, professes Strasbourg, the singular most effective way to engage with others and avoid breakdowns in communication. Many highly successful entrepreneurs credit mastering this art as the key to their prowess in business.

E Style and communication by Heather Burton

What is all too often overlooked in books about communication is the way in which the genders differ in style, resulting in either gross misunderstandings in the worst-case scenario or uncertainty at the best. Burton's in-depth analysis of what it is that goes wrong plays out through a series of case studies, in which she ponders ways to facilitate better understanding between the sexes and how this might come into play both at work and at home. While frustratingly inconclusive, there is much food for thought here and one could indubitably cobble together a strategy for getting to grips with other people's communicative styles. On the surface of it, this book appears to be geared towards businesspeople as a target market, but because this offers insights into domestic situations too, this is more likely to be found in the general reader section of a bookshop.

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READING 6: You are going to read an article about the food system. For questions 31 – 36, circle the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Creating a sustainable food system

The food system is perhaps the most vital component of our modern industrialized world. Without food in shops, it's fair to say society would unravel in a matter of days. The food industry is in many ways a success story, something to marvel at. It provides the majority of people on this planet with life sustaining, affordable food in the places they reside. As a species, over time we have largely broken free of the burden of food production, hunting and foraging that preoccupied our ancestors and are able to devote our time and resources to other aspects of human activity that bring progress. And yet the system we all rely on is incredibly inefficient.

Leaving to one side the negative environmental impact, the estimated one billion people who are under-nourished and further one billion overweight, it has been estimated that between 30% and 50% of all food produced worldwide is not eaten – it never makes it to the table. In the past it could have been argued that this material inefficiency was affordable in an era of cheap food. But we are already experiencing the beginning of a new era of stress on the food system as demand grows and environmental limits are reached. Global food prices continue to rise, and do so at a rate beyond the cyclical peaks and troughs inherent in the system. Thriving population growth will see a further two billion mouths to feed over the next 40 years. Complicating matters is the emergence of a voracious demand from growing economies such as China and India, and serious uncertainties around global warming.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that the solution to this impending crisis is to eat what's in the fridge before it expires. But while there has been a lot of attention paid to consumer food waste in recent times, the majority of wastage actually occurs elsewhere. According to a 2011 study from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, approximately two thirds of food waste in Europe occurs in the supply chain between production and retail. In developing nations this proportion can be far greater – another report by the Institute of Mechanical Engineers on the subject highlighted how some countries in South East Asia can lose as much as 80% of their rice crop to wastage. In the UK, recycling charity Wrap estimates that some 15 million tonnes of food waste is created each year. Of this, 7.2 million tonnes occurs in the home with the vast majority of the rest accruing in the supply chain.

The cause of these losses and their solutions vary. It's hard to avoid crop failure due to poor weather conditions. Human error, even within high-tech food supply chains, is hard to eliminate. But at the other end of the scale is wastage in the name of consumer choice. Critics argue that supermarket chains' refusal to accept cosmetic blemishes and variations in the shape of fresh fruit and vegetables sees perfectly edible, nutritious food binned. Although reliable statistics are thin on the ground, there can be little doubt that the quest for aesthetic uniformity, the bewildering range of food available in large retailers and overzealous 'best before' and 'use by' labels leads to wastage that is entirely avoidable.

Tackling this requires a multi-pronged approach. Consumers undoubtedly have a responsibility to reduce their personal food waste levels through making better decisions when buying and planning meals. This needs to be supported by consumer education and better labelling. Both government and industry have a role in this, as do groups like Wrap. But government and industry have to practise what they preach. Public sector catering in the UK in schools and hospitals is a billion pound with its own environmental burden. This provides an opportunity to demonstrate the business benefits of a more sustainable approach.

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However, it's the food industry that is crucial to reducing waste, more than any other group, because of major retailers' market power and direct relationship with consumers. Initiatives provide encouragement but progress is hampered by lack of data and transparency. Scandals about undeclared ingredients in pre-packaged meals, for example, are an illustration of the lack of transparency in the food sector. Industry food waste practices could prove just as repulsive to consumers but, as it stands, the lack of reporting requirements limit public understanding and therefore genuine pressure on industry to change. Mandatory reporting would empower market forces and allow consumers to move beyond 'fridge guilt' to positively support a more efficient and sustainable food system.

31 What point is made in the first paragraph?

A Despite being an impressive accomplishment, there are fault in the food system that need addressing.

B Spending more time on the food system would bring about important improvement to it.

C Without the food system, we would be forced to return to earlier methods of gathering food.

D There are fewer more important concerns than the provenance of the food we consume.

32 What does affordable refer to in the second paragraph?

A food production

B the price of food

C wasted food

D demand for food

33 What is the writer doing in the third paragraph?

A justifying the actions of certain manufacturing companies

B defining the role of particular countries in the production of food

C explaining the disparity in food production rates between continents

D acknowledging a common misconception about avoiding food waste

34 How does the writer feel about wasting food 'in the name of consumer choice' (fourth paragraph)?

A irritated by the lack of available information about processes

B dubious about the reasons given for mistakes that are made

C frustrated about the futile nature of trying to make changes

D disapproving of the way in which certain procedures are handled

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35 In the fifth paragraph, the writer says that

A education groups have failed to respond to a call for improvements.

B consumers have been failed by inadequate provision of information.

C governments have a responsibility to adhere to their own guidelines.

D schools and hospitals have a tendency to overspend on catering.

36 In the final paragraph, the writer says that

A public pressure groups take a dim view of industry malpractice.

B insisting on disclosure is the only way progress will be made in reducing food waste.

C consumers would welcome the opportunity to put their views about waste forward.

D retailers tend to exert a negative influence on consumers' eating habits.

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