



Unit I Reading, Listening, Talking and Writing. Self-evaluation

Introduction

This is an introductory chapter that presents a new point of view about the learning of professional English. Knowledge of medical English has been one of the historical disadvantages of health-care professionals from non-English-speaking countries, and this manual focuses on a practical approach to the English that health-care professionals in general, and physicians in particular, need.

Reading has to be considered the first step in the learning of a foreign language. Reading professional manuscripts is an essential task for everyone who wants to be informed, and medicine is a constantly changing environment where, unfortunately, being uninformed is extraordinarily simple.

Familiarity with some terms and grammatical structures will make articles easier to read and, therefore, allow you to get more accurate information. The goal in terms of reading would be to feel as comfortable with English papers as you are with those written in your native tongue.

In the beginning, reading out loud will be a troublesome task because there are a lot of words that, knowing their meaning and even their spelling, are very difficult to pronounce. As in many other aspects of life, two paths can be taken; the easy one is to avoid this demanding exercise and the difficult, and more profitable one, requires using the dictionary to look up not only the unknown words for their meaning but also the known ones for their pronunciation.

Bear in mind that the lack of pronunciation skill is one of the greatest enemies of self-confidence when speaking a foreign language. If the lectures we attend were subtitled, most of us would understand them because our ability to understand what we read is much greater than our ability to speak and understand what we listen to.

Being aware of this fact can represent a vital step in your training; reading out loud will triple a reading exercise that suddenly will become a reading-listening-speaking one. When I began this kind of exercise I was barely able to read a few lines without consulting the dictionary; it was terribly hard and to read a few paragraphs took several hours. Do not give up, time and patience will provide amazing results.