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The 4 page 60 minute ESL British English lesson – 20/03/15

Sarcasm and an understandable English accent give call centres in the Philippines the edge

The battle of the world's call centres between the Philippines and India appears to have been won for the moment by the Philippines. Its secret weapon is British sarcasm! Filipino call centres in Manila and Cebu also speak clear understandable English. Whilst this is positive for Filipinos, it is not good for their Indian call centre rivals.

To be honest many British people dislike speaking to British companies who have their call centres based in India. This is because they can't understand what the operator there is saying! Their Indian English accent can be so dreadful you sometimes need a translator!

Yet speak to any Filipino call operator and you'll hear a clear Filipino English accent, be it a bit American sounding, which is highly suitable for the lucrative call centre business.

Put bluntly, many British people today have a problem with an Indian speaking English on the phone from a call centre in India. Likewise, an Indian operator might not understand a real British accent, but that is not the point here!

"We've overtaken India!" said Dyne Tubbs, an executive at a chain of Filipino call centres. "British companies love us because our English is not accented. The brightest graduates from our universities fight to get a job here. We only take the smartest kids. And after we've finished training them they even get your British sarcasm." Really?

Call centres in the Philippines now employ more agents than India, as the booming business shifts to the Philippines from the US and Britain. There are an estimated 350,000 call handlers in the Philippines compared to 330,000 in India.

SPEAKING – WARM UP

Think of three things you know about a British accent. Go round the room swapping details with others.

LISTENING – WRITING - DICTATION

The teacher will read some lines of the article slowly to the class.

READING

Students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

SPEAKING - UNDERSTANDING

1) The article – Students check any unknown vocabulary or phrases with the teacher.

2) The article - Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- 1) What is the article about?
- 2) What do you think about the article?
- 3) Was this an easy or difficult article to understand?
- 4) Was this a boring or interesting article?
- 5) Discuss the article.

3) Article quiz - Students quiz each other in pairs. Score a point for each correct answer. Score half a point each time you have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A questions

- 1) What does 'put bluntly' mean?
- 2) Name the nationalities.
- 3) What does 'lucrative' mean?
- 4) What is lucrative?
- 5) Who is Dyne Tubbs?

Student B questions

- 1) What is dreadful?
- 2) Who have overtaken whom?
- 3) What do many British people dislike?
- 4) How many call handlers are there in the Philippines?
- 5) What is the secret weapon?

Category: Business / Call Centres / English Accent
Level: Intermediate / Upper Intermediate

WRITING / SPEAKING

In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with '**Call centres**'. *One-two minutes.* Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

WRITING / SPEAKING

In pairs choose three points from the article about call centres. Write them below. Talk about them!

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Add three things about call centres in your country. Compare with above. Discuss together.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

WRITING / SPEAKING

In pairs – think of three advantages and three disadvantages of working in a call centre.

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) What do you think about what you've read?
- 2) Would you like to work in a call centre? Explain why, why not.
- 3) Do you know anyone who works in a call centre?
- 4) Why are Indian English accents hard to understand?
- 5) Is sarcasm really the secret weapon?
- 6) Why are call centres booming in the Philippines and India?
- 7) What jobs in your country are being outsourced to another country?
- 8) Which is easier to understand – British or American English? Explain.
- 9) Are call centre workers in the Philippines or India exploited?
- 10) Have you learnt anything in today's English lesson?

SPEAKING – ROLEPLAY 1

In groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *Discussion FM* radio studio in Birmingham, UK. Today's interview is about: *Sarcasm and an understandable English accent give call centres in the Philippines the edge.*

- 1) A call centre operator in Manila.
- 2) A call centre operator in Bangalore.
- 3) A call centre operator in the UK.
- 4) A call centre operator in your country.

The teacher will choose some groups to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

SPEAKING - ROLEPLAY 2

In pairs. *Student A* is working in a call centre. *Student B* is a journalist in an office. *Student B* is writing an article on call centres. Start a conversation with *Student A*. 5 mins.

SPEAKING - DISCUSSION

Allow 10 minutes – As a class.

Call centres

The teacher can moderate the session.

DISCUSSION

Student B questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Which is easier to understand – Indian English or Filipino English? Explain.
- 3) Are call centres lucrative business?
- 4) What makes a good call centre?
- 5) Do you need to be a university graduate to work in a call centre?
- 6) Would you like to work in a call centre in Cebu or Bangalore? Explain.
- 7) What three challenges might a call centre operator face?
- 8) What is the future for call centres?
- 9) Will call centre wages / salaries go up?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

GAP FILL: READING

Sarcasm and an understandable English accent give call centres in the Philippines the edge

The (1)___ of the world's call centres between the Philippines and India appears to have been won for the moment by the Philippines. Its secret (2)___ is British (3)___! Filipino call centres in Manila and Cebu also speak clear understandable English. Whilst this is positive for Filipinos, it is not good for their Indian call centre rivals.

To be honest many British people dislike speaking to British companies who have their call centres based in India. This is because they can't understand what the operator there is saying! Their Indian English (4)___ can be so dreadful you sometimes need a (5)___!

Yet speak to any Filipino call operator and you'll hear a clear Filipino English accent, be it a bit American sounding, which is highly (6)___ for the (7)___ call centre (8)___.

Business / battle / sarcasm / suitable / accent / translator / weapon / lucrative

Put (1)___, many British people today have a problem with an Indian speaking English on the phone from a call centre in India. Likewise, an Indian operator might not understand a real British accent, but that is not the point here!

"We've (2)___ India!" said Dyne Tubbs, an (3)___ at a (4)___ of Filipino call centres. "British companies love us because our English is not accented. The brightest graduates from our universities fight to get a job here. We only take the smartest kids. And after we've finished training them they even get your British sarcasm." Really?

(5)___ in the Philippines now employ more (6)___ than India, as the booming business (7)___ to the Philippines from the US and Britain. There are an estimated 350,000 (8)___ in the Philippines compared to 330,000 in India.

shifts / chain / call handlers / bluntly / overtaken / agents / call centres / executive

GAP FILL: GRAMMAR

Sarcasm and an understandable English accent give call centres in the Philippines the edge

The battle of the world's call centres between the Philippines and India appears to have been won for the moment by the Philippines. (1)___ secret weapon is British sarcasm! Filipino call centres in Manila and Cebu also speak clear understandable English. Whilst this is positive for Filipinos, it is not good (2)___ their Indian call centre rivals.

To be honest many British people dislike speaking to British companies (3)___ have their call centres based in India. This is because they can't understand what the operator there is saying! Their Indian English accent (4)___ be so dreadful (5)___ sometimes need a translator!

(6)___ speak to (7)___ Filipino call operator (8)___ you'll hear a clear Filipino English accent, be it a bit American sounding, which is highly suitable for the lucrative call centre business.

yet / its / any / for / you / and / who / can

Put bluntly, (1)___ British people today have a problem (2)___ an Indian speaking English on the phone from a call centre in India. Likewise, an Indian operator (3)___ not understand a real British accent, but (4)___ is not the point here!

"We've overtaken India!" said Dyne Tubbs, an executive at a chain of Filipino call centres. "British companies love us (5)___ our English is not accented. The brightest graduates from our universities fight to get a job here. We (6)___ take the smartest kids. And after we've finished training them they (7)___ get your British sarcasm." Really?

Call centres in the Philippines now employ (8)___ agents than India, as the booming business shifts to the Philippines from the US and Britain. There are an estimated 350,000 call handlers in the Philippines compared to 330,000 in India.

more / even / might / many / only / with / that / because

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Sarcasm and an understandable English accent give call centres in the Philippines the edge

The battle of the world's call centres between the _____ appears to have been won for the moment by the Philippines. Its secret weapon is _____. Filipino call centres in Manila and Cebu also speak clear understandable English. Whilst this is positive for Filipinos, it is not good for their Indian call centre rivals.

To be honest _____ dislike speaking to British companies who have their call centres based in India. This is because they can't understand what the operator there is saying! Their Indian English accent _____ you sometimes need a translator!

Yet speak to any Filipino call operator and you'll hear a clear Filipino English accent, be it a bit American sounding, which is _____ the lucrative call centre business.

_____, _____ British people today have a problem with an Indian speaking English on the phone from a call centre in India. Likewise, an Indian operator might not understand a real British accent, but _____ here!

"We've overtaken India!" said Dyne Tubbs, an executive at a chain of _____. "British companies love us because our English is not accented. The _____ from our universities fight to get a job here. We only take the smartest kids. And after we've finished training them they even get your British sarcasm." Really?

Call centres in the Philippines now employ more agents than India, as the _____ shifts to the Philippines from the US and Britain. There are an estimated 350,000 call handlers in the Philippines compared to 330,000 in India.

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WRITING/SPELLING

WRITING / SPEAKING

1) On the board – As a class / In pairs – 20 things about **call centres**. 5-10 minutes. Discuss together.

2) Sentence starters - Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- 1) Sarcasm _____
- 2) Call centres _____
- 3) Indian English _____

3) Homework - Write and send a 200 word email to your teacher about: **Sarcasm and an understandable English accent give call centres in the Philippines the edge**. Your email can be read out in class.

GAP FILL READING

- 1) battle
- 2) weapon
- 3) sarcasm
- 4) accent
- 5) translator
- 6) suitable
- 7) lucrative
- 8) business

ANSWERS

- 1) bluntly
- 2) overtaken
- 3) executive
- 4) chain
- 5) call centres
- 6) agents
- 7) shifts
- 8) call handlers

SPELLING

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards check your answers.

- 1) weapon
- 2) suitable
- 3) understand
- 4) operator
- 5) yet
- 6) lucrative
- 7) bluntly
- 8) likewise
- 9) overtaken
- 10) universities

SPELLING

Use the following ratings:

Pass = 12

Good = 15

Very good = 18

Excellent = 20

- 11) really
- 12) employ
- 13) booming
- 14) shifts
- 15) sarcasm
- 16) accent
- 17) whilst
- 18) honest
- 19) dreadful
- 20) translator

Sarcasm and an understandable English accent... – *20th March 2015*