

More call centre workers in the Philippines than India

Over the last decade more and more companies have relocated their call centres to India. However, it might surprise you to know that the Philippines has now overtaken India with more agents employed there than in India. In fact, some Indian companies have even shifted some of their operations to the Philippines. But why? The answer is simple. Labour costs in India have gone up. It is no longer the cheapest place in the world to put a call centre. In the Philippines labour is cheap. A call centre shift in the Philippines now costs 1,000 pesos (US\$20) (£13.20) (€14.80). This is more than twice the minimum wage. The Philippines Contact Centre Association says that 350,000 are employed locally, compared to India's 330,000. However, most of the work is overnight. With 12m Filipinos unemployed there are few other options. It has thus overtaken India.

Companies have discovered in the Philippines they speak English with an American twang. This is one of the main reasons for the relocation of business there. Customers often struggle understanding Indian-accented English even though call centres in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore staff are taught to iron out their strong Indian accents. As one call centre company in the Philippines put it "To an American, the Philippine accent appears clear and neutral." The big name players are now all in the Philippines. Another strong reason the Philippines has proved suddenly popular is that because it used to be an American colony it still clings to many American values. Agents can identify with American callers. The Philippine education and legal system is based on the US. The Philippines is very much attuned to US culture. There's a very strong affinity with everything American. Basketball is more popular than football and many Filipinos migrate to the states. So the country is winning fans among American companies that need to hire phone operators to sell products or answer complaints.

However, in non-voice operations – business process outsourcing (BPO) like human resources, accounting and legal transcription – India still rules supreme and dwarfs the Philippines. Right now in the Philippines it's 60% voice, 40% non voice. But in a few years, it will be the other way around. Thanks to generous measures offered by the Philippine government BPO will continue its rapid expansion in the Philippines.

Category: Economic / Business / Call centres

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. **Call centres:** Briefly, what three things do you know about call centres? Go round the room swapping details.

2. **Geography: India and the Philippines:** Where will you find India and the Philippines? What seas surround them? What are their capitals? Draw a map on the board then **look on Google maps** to help you.

3. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

4. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

5. **Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

6. **The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

7. **Let's think!** Think of five things about call centres. Then add five issues you might deal with *if you worked in one*. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

Five things about call centres	Five issues you might deal with
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

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

8. **Let's roleplay 1: In the pub:** *In pairs*. You are in the pub having a drink. It is 7am and you have just finished your shift. You are with a fellow call centre worker. Discuss your day (night), who you spoke to, the challenges! What you will do later etc... (Imagine!) *5 minutes*.

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9 . Let's think! 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.

10. Let's roleplay 2: VOA: In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *Voice of America* radio studio in San Francisco. Today's interview is about: *Call centres in India and the Philippines*.

1 A call centre worker	3 Yourself
2 Call centre boss	4 American company boss

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

11. Let's think! Think of five economic issues about India. Then add five economic issues about the Philippines. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

Five Indian economic issues	Five Filipino economic issues
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

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

12. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Name the countries.
- 2) Name the cities.
- 3) What does BPO mean?
- 4) How many Filipinos are unemployed?
- 5) How much do Filipinos earn per shift?

Student B

- 1) How many people work in call centres in India?
- 2) Why are businesses relocating to the Philippines?
- 3) Name the sports.
- 4) Why are Indian call centres proving unpopular?
- 5) Which country used to be a British Colony?

13. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Call centres**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

14. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Call centres _____
- b) The Philippines _____
- c) India _____

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DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Have you ever visited The Philippines or India?
- 3) Why do the Filipinos like the American culture?
- 4) Why do many Filipinos migrate to the USA?
- 5) Do you have a twang when you speak English?
- 6) Does your company have a call centre in India or the Philippines? Explain why or why not.
- 7) Why do call centre staff in India have their accents ironed out?
- 8) What three bits of advice would you give India so it might reclaim its crown as call centre capital of the world?
- 9) Compare call centres in your country with those in this lesson.
- 10) Are call centres a good idea or is better for businesses to go back to how it used to done? (I.e. face to face or by post or with someone from their own country)?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Would you like to work in a call centre? Why? Why not?
- 3) Give three advantages of call centres.
- 4) Give three disadvantages of call centres.
- 5) Why is the Philippines so attractive to companies?
- 6) Why has India lost its crown as call centre of the world?
- 7) What three bits of advice would you give Indian call centres?
- 8) Have you ever worked overnight? Explain.
- 9) Have you ever struggled to understand a call centre conversation?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! Call centres

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Consider the following points to discuss:

20 things about call centres.

The teacher can moderate the session.

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GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

More call centre workers in the Philippines than India

Over the last (1)_____ more and more companies have relocated their call centres to India. However, it might surprise you to know that the Philippines has now (2)_____ India with more agents employed there than in India. In fact, some Indian companies have even (3)_____ some of their operations to the Philippines. But why? The answer is (4)_____. Labour costs in India have gone up. It is no longer the cheapest place in the world to put a call centre. In the Philippines labour is cheap. A call centre shift in the Philippines now costs 1,000 pesos (US\$20) (£13.20) (€14.80). This is more than twice the minimum (5)_____. The Philippines Contact Centre Association says that 350,000 are employed locally, compared to India's 330,000. However, most of the work is (6)_____. With 12m Filipinos (7)_____ there are few other (8)_____. It has thus overtaken India.

Companies have discovered in the Philippines they speak English with an American (1)_____. This is one of the main reasons for the relocation of business there. Customers often (2)_____ understanding Indian-accented English even though call centres in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore staff are taught to iron out their strong Indian accents. As one call centre company in the Philippines put it "To an American, the Philippine accent appears clear and (3)_____." The big name players are now all in the Philippines. Another strong reason the Philippines has proved suddenly popular is that because it used to be an American colony it still clings to many American values. (4)_____ can identify with American callers. The Philippine education and legal system is based on the US. The Philippines is very much (5)_____ to US culture. There's a very strong (6)_____ with everything American. Basketball is more popular than football and many Filipinos migrate to the states. So the country is winning fans among American companies that need to (7)_____ phone operators to sell products or answer (8)_____.

shifted

overtaken

options

unemployed

simple

overnight

wage

decade

affinity

complaints

attuned

neutral

struggle

twang

hire

agents

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GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

More call centre workers in the Philippines than India

Over _____ and more companies have relocated their call centres to India. However, it _____ to know that the Philippines has now overtaken India with more agents employed there than in India. In fact, some Indian companies have even shifted some of their operations to the Philippines. But why? _____. Labour costs in India have gone up. It is no longer the cheapest place in the world to put a call centre. In the Philippines _____. A call centre shift in the Philippines now costs 1,000 pesos (US\$20) (£13.20) (€14.80). This is more than twice the minimum wage. The _____ Centre Association says that 350,000 are employed locally, compared to India's 330,000. However, most of the work is overnight. With 12m Filipinos unemployed there are _____. It has thus overtaken India.

Companies have discovered in the Philippines they speak English with an American twang. This is one of the main reasons for the _____ there. Customers often struggle understanding Indian-accented English even _____ in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore staff are taught to iron out their strong Indian accents. As one call centre company in the Philippines put it "To an American, the Philippine accent appears _____." The big name players are now all in the Philippines. Another strong reason the Philippines has proved suddenly popular is that because it used to be an American colony it still clings to many American values. Agents can identify _____. The Philippine education and legal system is based on the US. The Philippines is _____ US culture. There's a very strong affinity with everything American. Basketball is more popular than football and many Filipinos migrate to the states. So the country is winning fans among American companies that need to hire phone operators to sell products _____.

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

More call centre workers in the Philippines than India

Over the last decade more and (1)___ companies have relocated their call centres to India. (2)___, it (3)___ surprise you to know that the Philippines has now overtaken India (4)___ more agents employed there than in India. In fact, (5)___ Indian companies have even shifted some of (6)___ operations to the Philippines. But why? The answer is simple. Labour costs in India have gone up. It is no longer the cheapest place in the world to put a call centre. In the Philippines labour is cheap. A call centre shift in the Philippines now costs 1,000 pesos (US\$20) (£13.20) (€14.80). This is more than twice the minimum wage. The Philippines Contact Centre Association says that 350,000 are employed locally, compared to India's 330,000. However, most of the work is overnight. With 12m Filipinos unemployed there are few (7)___ options. It has (8)___ overtaken India.

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and

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	decade	11	twice
2	twang	12	Bangalore
3	dwarfs	13	relocation
4	outsourcing	14	call centre
5	expansion	15	attuned
6	India	16	migrate
7	overtaken	17	affinity
8	association	18	transcription
9	taught	19	generous
10	business	20	The Philippines

LINKS

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/philippines/8644987/Call-centres-in-Philippines-employ-more-agents-than-India.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-14149615>

<http://www.callcentrehelper.com/special-report-call-centres-in-the-philippines-2231.htm>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/banksandfinance/8624959/Santander-brings-India-call-centres-back-to-UK.html>

http://www.outsource2india.com/why_india/articles/call_centers_india.asp

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: More call centre workers in the Philippines than India: Over the last **decade** more and more companies have relocated their call centres to India. However, it might surprise you to know that the Philippines has now **overtaken** India with more agents employed there than in India. In fact, some Indian companies have even **shifted** some of their operations to the Philippines. But why? The answer is **simple**. Labour costs in India have gone up. It is no longer the cheapest place in the world to put a call centre. In the Philippines labour is cheap. A call centre shift in the Philippines now costs 1,000 pesos (US\$20) (£13.20) (€14.80). This is more than twice the minimum **wage**. The Philippines Contact Centre Association says that 350,000 are employed locally, compared to India's 330,000. However, most of the work is **overnight**. With 12m Filipinos **unemployed** there are few other **options**. It has thus overtaken India.

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