

Speaker 1:

Hi there. My name is Oliver and I'm the founder of the advanx language school. The topic I would like to talk about today is telephoning. And once again, I'm joined by Bridget who will give us some useful insights into this topic. Hi, Bridget. Today we're meeting face to face, but what makes a phone call more difficult than a direct meeting?

Speaker 2:

Hi Oliver. First of all, the phone rings suddenly, and there's no time for preparation. Secondly, you can't see the other person. For example, the facial expression and body language, you can only hear their voice. And thirdly, there could be all kinds of technical problems, background noises, and the silence during a conversation feels much more awkward than in a face to face meeting.

Speaker 1:

So how can we cope with these problems?

Speaker 2:

You should be prepared and learn all the important idioms and phrases. Translating your sentences while you're phoning is very exhausting and there is a potential risk of sounding unprofessional and confused.

Speaker 1:

So if I make a phone call in German, I would start by saying: My name is Oliver. Is that correct?

Speaker 2:

That actually sounds a bit unprofessional. We would rather say: 'This is Oliver' or 'It's Oliver'. A standard phone call would begin with something like: 'This is Oliver from company ABC. And I'm calling about...'

Speaker 1:

Now a different question. What does it mean when somebody says: 'Speaking', like in 'Can I speak to Mr. James' and the other person answers: 'Speaking'?

Speaker 2:

Yes, this can also cause misunderstanding because it doesn't mean that Mr. James is speaking to somebody else. It just means that he's on the phone. So don't say 'It's me' or 'I'm on the phone'.

Speaker 1:

What else can you do to prepare for a phone call?

Speaker 2:

Possibly make some notes about what you would like to speak about. Otherwise you might get lost and forget to ask or answer some important questions. Another good tip is to take control over the conversation.

Speaker 1:
What exactly does that mean?

Speaker 2:
Don't be afraid to interrupt the caller if he speaks too fast, or if you have problems to understand the accent. Remind the native speaker from time to time that it's not your mother tongue.

Speaker 1:
Is this polite and how can I do this?

Speaker 2:
Yes. The other person certainly wouldn't mind if you say 'I'm sorry, could you speak a little more slowly' or 'I'm sorry, I didn't catch that'. Or even 'I'm sorry, I don't speak English very well. Could you repeat that please?'

Speaker 1:
How can you make sure that the other person understood the caller correctly?

Speaker 2:
One way is to repeat the important facts. For example, you could say: 'So what you mean is that we should increase the prices by 3% and not 5. Is that correct?' And it's also good to summarize all the facts at the end of the call. Should you still be unsure about the information, ask the caller to briefly summarize the key point in an email.

Speaker 1:
It is also important to practice active listening so that the other person knows that you're following the conversation. Can you give me some examples for that?

Speaker 2:
Yes, of course. You can say things like: *Yeah. Oh, I see. Right.* Just to name a few.

Speaker 1:
And what can I do if I'm completely lost and I cannot understand the caller.

Speaker 2:
As a last resort, you could pretend someone just came in or you've got a call on the other line and put the caller on hold by saying something like: 'Could you hold for a moment' or 'Do you mind holding for a moment' or 'May I put you on hold please?' Or you can ask him to write an email: Sorry. I'm not at my desk or in the office right now. Could you please write an email and I'll get back to you as soon as possible.

Speaker 1:
So do you have some final tips for a successful phone call?

Speaker 2:
Always be polite. So use words like *could, should and would*, and don't be too direct. Use *I would like* rather than I want. And *could you send me*, it sounds much better than send me,

you want to create a positive atmosphere, for example, by smiling when you're speaking. And finally, learn the English basics like the numbers, dates, and alphabet.

Speaker 1:

And certainly last, but not least: practice, practice practice. Don't avoid phone calls, try to have at least one English phone conversation every day. Even if you just ask a German colleague to practice with you on the phone. Thank you, that's all for today.

So please have a look at the script below and do the following exercises. As always, you can download your certificate if your answers are all correct. Thank you, Bridget for joining me today for this podcast, for more information, please send an email to podcasts@advanx.de. See you later. Bye.