



Language Links

ILC 1/2017

DATE 27-01-2017 VOL.1

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Consult the English Oracle

This month's issue is all about **the** Philippines. Have you ever wondered why we preface the name, Philippines, with the definite article '**the**'; whereas, when we refer to Thailand simply as 'Thailand'?

The reason is that the Philippines is a collection of something, in this case islands, and we always preface collections that are grouped together, usually using a plural noun, to form a single state with **the**. Other examples include **the** Maldives, **the** Gambia, St. Vincent and **the** Grenadines, **the** United States of America and **the** Netherlands.

We can also use '**the**' to highlight the system of government. For example, we can refer to Thailand, purely as Thailand (I live in Thailand) or we can highlight the fact that it is ruled by a King (I live in **the** Kingdom of Thailand). Other examples are: **the** people's republic of China (highlighting the fact that it is a republic with a president as the head of state), **the** United Kingdom of Great Britain (highlighting that is actually made up of a group of former kingdoms under the rule of a single King or Queen) and **the** Belgian Congo (highlighting the fact that, at the time, it was once ruled by another country, Belgium).

We can also use '**the**' to talk about a state that was proposed but never actually existed, for example **the** state of Jefferson, which was a proposed state consisting of northern California and southern Oregon.

Below are the official names of the countries in ASEAN, which of them should be prefaced with '**the**'? (The answers are at the bottom of the page)

1. _____ Kingdom of Cambodia
2. _____ Republic of Indonesia
3. _____ Lao People's Democratic Republic
4. _____ Malaysia
5. _____ Republic of the Union of Myanmar
6. _____ Nation of Brunei, the Abode of Peace
7. _____ Republic of Singapore
8. _____ Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Do you have a question about English grammar, listening, speaking or something in general? If so, then send them to the Oracle, Kevin Kirk, at kevin@coreenglish.club or you can go onto my website at www.coreenglish.club and post them there (let me know you've registered, by email and I will immediately authorize your free membership). You can watch English language videos and use the grammar checker and translator on the site; all free of charge.

Kevin joined the institute in October 2016 after spending 7 years teaching English (Writing, Speaking, Listening and exam taking [i.e. TOEFL]) in the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Mahidol University. Prior to that he was a university lecturer in the UK.





Learning Strategies

How to Study English Effectively

Here are some tips to successfully help as you study English.

Study English Every Day

It's important to study English every day. However, don't exaggerate! Study for thirty minutes every day instead of two hours once a week. Short and steady practice is much better for learning than long periods on an irregular basis. This habit of studying English every day will keep The English in your brain fresher.



Using Different Methods to Learn

Don't just use one way to study English, try to use a variety of methods, which will use all the parts of your brain; multiple intelligences. For example, if you are learning new vocabulary, create a word map, describe a picture, make a list and study that way. Also type out the words five times. All of these methods together help to reinforce your learning.



Study English by Finding Some Friends

There is nothing like having a few friends to study English together with. You can practice the exercises together just by having a conversation, in English of course, and, as you study English together, you can help each other with exercises that you might not understand by yourself.



Choosing Topics That Interest You

One of the most important things to do is find topics that you enjoy. This will motivate you because you will also be learning about a topic you find interesting while you study English.





Culture Corner

Business Meetings in the Philippines

If you are scheduling a meeting with associates in the Philippines, it is not uncommon to make arrangements as far as a month in advance. As a professional courtesy, always confirm the date by phone a few days prior and provide advance copies of whatever materials are necessary to clarify and enhance the objectives of the meeting. According to Asiatype, Inc.'s "Doing Business in the Philippines 2008," even if your company has had a longstanding relationship with a Filipino business, you will be treated like a newcomer if it is the first time they have met you in person. This occurs, for instance, if you are replacing someone or have just been hired. Punctuality is paramount in getting meetings underway even though actual negotiations may move at a snail's pace.



Introductions

If you are the visitor, it is customary to offer your business card first. Be aware, however, that you may not get one in return if your rank is not comparable to or higher than your Filipino recipient. As with other Asian cultures, business cards are presented face up with both hands. When you receive a card, take a thoughtful moment to study it before pocketing it. Always greet the oldest or highest-ranking person at the meeting first. Firm handshakes are standard protocol in the Filipino community and individuals are addressed by their titles and surnames until such time as familiarity has been established.



Conversations

The strong emphasis in the Filipino culture on fostering warm relationships with others often leads them to be overly inquisitive when it comes to conversations with strangers. As travel experts Alfredo and Grace Roces point out in their book, "Culture Shock! Philippines: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette," your Filipino colleagues and new acquaintances are not being aggressively nosy when they ask you about your family history, your marital status, or the names of your children and how they are doing in school. They are simply inquiring about the same things that occupy the center of their own universe. As Paul Rodell discusses in his book, "Culture and Customs of the Philippines," Filipinos are quite well versed on American pop culture and it's not unusual for business meetings to end with 15 to 20 minutes of social chatter about what's new. "Losing face" is shameful in Filipino society; accordingly, they don't like to show anger, raise their voices, engage in debates or get pushed to make hasty decisions.



Gifts

If you are going to give a gift to a Filipino colleague, keep in mind that a lot of weight is given to how beautifully it is packaged. This is a direct reflection of the amount of thought and time you have put into the gesture. In other words, do not just stick your present in a paper bag and say, "Here." Because there are no color prohibitions in terms of wrapping papers and ribbons, the more festive the better. Just do not be disappointed when your gift is not unwrapped until after you have left. Outside the family circle, Filipinos consider gift-giving a private affair and do not want to hurt the feelings of those present who are not getting anything. Gifts such as books, small electronic gadgets and items unique to your own country are appropriate business gifts. If you are invited to a colleague's home, flowers (with the exception of lilies and chrysanthemums) are always appreciated. As far as edible gifts are concerned, stick to candy. To bring anything other than that will be construed as an insult that you think the household is poor.



ASEAN CORNER



Happy New Year to all ILC participants!!! Welcome to the ASEAN Corner column. In this column, you will learn many interesting facts about ASEAN countries especially the Philippines where we are going to have a study visit on 22 - 24 February 2017. For this week, first let's find out New Year's traditions and superstitions in the Philippines.

Wear polka dotted clothes for good luck.

Polka dots symbolize coins which, in turn, symbolize good fortune. Wearing garments with these patterns is said to bring money and good fortune to whoever wears it.



Jump to be taller.

As soon as the clock strikes midnight, seeing kids and adults jumping as high as they could is not new. Filipinos have this belief that jumping as the New Year comes will help them to grow taller.

Every dinner table must have 12 rounds fruits.

It is a must for every family to have 12 kinds of round fruit during their *media noche*. They believe that doing so will give them good luck and good fortune for all 12 months of the year. This is the reason why as soon as the last days of the year arrive, everyone rushes out to buy all kinds of round fruit – from Lychees to the biggest Watermelons.

No chicken or fish should be served at the *media noche* or the New Year's day banquet.

Chickens and fish symbolize scarcity, so it's definitely a no-no for anyone to be serving these at a dinner table during the first day of the year. People believe that doing this will also bring scarcity and bad luck to their lives.



There should always be sticky rice at every feast.

Especially during family gatherings, delicacies made of glutinous or sticky rice (*malagkit*), like *biko*, should be served. Doing this would maintain the "stickiness" or the unity of the family, and so the good fortune will "stick" throughout the year.



Eat pancit for long life.

Serving and eating pancit or noodles would bring long life to the members of the family, and this is the reason why this dish has always been a staple in various celebrations – be it during the New Year's celebration or during birthdays.

Everyone gathers for the *media noche*.

The *media noche* is the New Year's Eve version of Christmas' *Noche Buena*. It's when the family gathers and dines together in celebration of the coming of the New Year. This usually happens after everyone is done lighting up their firecrackers and observing the traditions they usually do during this holiday.





Bits and Pieces

Popular Tongue Twisters

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
Did Peter Piper pick a peck of pickled peppers?
If Peter Piper Picked a peck of pickled peppers,
Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?



She sells seashells by the seashore.
The shells she sells are surely seashells.
So if she sells shells on the seashore,
I'm sure she sells seashore shells.

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck
If a woodchuck could chuck wood?
He would chuck, he would, as much as he could,
And chuck as much as a woodchuck would
If a woodchuck could chuck wood.

Did you know?

“She sells seashells by the seashore” is about a real person. Mary Anning was an 1800s Englishwoman from a poor family who dug up fossils on the beach and sold them to make money. She made many important discoveries for the scientific community that changed what people thought about prehistoric life, but men stole the credit for most of her work. Her life story was so inspirational that a song was written about her, and we still use the lyrics as a tongue twister today.

http://www.fun-with-words.com/tong_example.html

<http://didyouknowblog.com/post/156005511469/she-sells-seashells-by-the-seashore-is-about-a>

Language Links is an internal publication of Devawongse Varopakarn
Institute of Foreign Affairs , Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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