Unit 1. Telephone Conversations

Part A. Listening (20 marks)

Take 1 minute to read the following questions. Listen to the conversations. Mark down useful notes and answer the following questions in complete sentences on the space provided.

1. Who was calling?

2. What was the caller’s telephone number?

3. Where was Jason?

4. Why did the caller call?

5. Did the caller want Jason to call him back?
Part B. Grammar (30 marks)

In telephone conversations, it is common that we use modal verbs, question tags and short replies.

1. Modal verbs

We use modal verbs to express different meanings and achieve different purposes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Verbs</th>
<th>Meanings/Purposes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can/Could</td>
<td>Ability</td>
<td><em>Birds can fly. I can swim.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Permission</td>
<td><em>Yes, you can go to the cinema. She could come if you let me know earlier.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May/Might</td>
<td>Permission</td>
<td><em>You may start your work now.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possibility</td>
<td><em>It may rain tomorrow. She might be sick.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shall/Should/Ought to</td>
<td>Future Actions</td>
<td><em>We shall come again next time.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td><em>They should bring their textbooks to school. You ought to ask for her permission.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will/Would</td>
<td>Future Actions</td>
<td><em>He will join our team next year.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td><em>I would call Sue if I remember her number.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must/Have to</td>
<td>Necessity</td>
<td><em>Human must eat.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obligation</td>
<td><em>We must hand in our homework on time.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- After ‘can’, ‘could’, ‘may’, ‘might’, ‘shall’, ‘should’, ‘ought to’, ‘will’, ‘would’, ‘must’, ‘have to’, we use a **bare infinitive** (i.e. an infinitive without ‘to’). We do NOT use a past form of a verb nor an ing-form.

- The infinitive can be active. When necessary, it can be **passive**. For example, 
  *The robbers may be caught soon.*
  *Your money may be found soon.*
  *I think this radio can be repaired.*

- The negative form of the modal verbs as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal Verbs</th>
<th>Negative (Formal)</th>
<th>Negative (Short Form)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can</td>
<td>Cannot</td>
<td>Can’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could</td>
<td>Could not</td>
<td>Couldn’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>May not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Might</td>
<td>Might not</td>
<td>Mightn’t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Modal verbs are always used in making requests, offers, permission and invitations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressions</th>
<th>Modal verbs</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Requests</strong>- asking people to do things</td>
<td>Can</td>
<td>Can you give me a pen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Could</td>
<td>Could you wait for a while?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offering</strong>- to do something</td>
<td>Can</td>
<td>Can I help you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offering/Inviting</strong></td>
<td>Would</td>
<td>Would you like a cup of coffee?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permission</strong></td>
<td>Can</td>
<td>Can I speak to Steve, please?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Could</td>
<td>Could I use your phone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>May I come in? (more formal/polite)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exercise**

1. _______ I turn on the fan for you?
2. _______ I go to the washroom?
3. The plant _______ grow with water.
4. _______ you mind telling me the answer please?
5. I was so tired, I _______ have slept for a week.
6. She _______ play the violin very well.
7. We _______ follow the rules at school.
8. _______ we go to the Ocean Park together?
9. Tony _______ finish all his work before heading home.
10. How _______ you like your steak to be cooked?
2. Question Tags

It is very common to use question tags in daily conversations. Question tags are mini-questions that we often put at the end of a sentence in spoken English.

- We usually use an auxiliary verb in question tags. For example,
  
  ‘Karen *plays* the piano, *doesn’t she*?’
  ‘You *didn’t lock* the door, *did you*?’

- Normally we use a negative question tag after a positive sentence OR a positive question tag after a negative sentence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive sentence + Negative tag</th>
<th>Negative sentence + Positive tag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate <em>will be</em> here soon, <em>won’t she</em>?</td>
<td>Kate <em>won’t be</em> late, <em>will she</em>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There <em>was</em> a lot of traffic, <em>wasn’t there</em>?</td>
<td>They <em>don’t like</em> us, <em>do they</em>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael <em>should pass</em> the exam, <em>shouldn’t he</em>?</td>
<td>You <em>haven’t got</em> a car, <em>have you</em>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note that meaning of *yes* and *no* in answer to a negative sentence:

You’re *not* going out today, are you?  
*Yes.* (= Yes, I’m going out.)  
*No.* (= No, I’m not going out.)

Exercise

1. The boys were here last night, ____________?
2. Jason is your brother, ____________?
3. Jojo won’t scold her, ____________?
4. We shan’t go, ____________?
5. They could finish the task on time, ____________?
6. You may bring the books home, ____________?
7. John was absent yesterday, ____________?
8. She has gone home, ____________?
9. We must talk with our parents more, ____________?
10. You need it, ____________?
3. **Short Replies**

Short answers are always used in conversations. A short answer has some of its words left out. Each answer begins with ‘Yes’ or ‘No’.

**Exercise**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes, ______</th>
<th>No, ______</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have they done it?</td>
<td>Yes, ______</td>
<td>No, ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does she know the news?</td>
<td>Yes, ______</td>
<td>No, ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Will your father be there?</td>
<td>Yes, ______</td>
<td>No, ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is Peter singing?</td>
<td>Yes, ______</td>
<td>No, ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Have Ricky eaten the apple?</td>
<td>Yes, ______</td>
<td>No, ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do monkeys like bread?</td>
<td>Yes, ______</td>
<td>No, ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Can you swim?</td>
<td>Yes, ______</td>
<td>No, ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Will the dog bark at night?</td>
<td>Yes, ______</td>
<td>No, ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Are we going too?</td>
<td>Yes, ______</td>
<td>No, ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Has Mrs. Chan a car?</td>
<td>Yes, ______</td>
<td>No, ______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Americans Still Prefer Talking on Phone


American adults still prefer the old-fashioned way of talking on the phone, according to research firm Harris Interactive, offering a reality check on those who wonder what the microphone on their iPhone is for.

The poll, sponsored by voice-over-IP provider Rebtel, found that among "online Americans" who don't exclusively communicate face-to-face, "voice" is the preferred method when speaking to family, friends, and spouses, with e-mail being preferred only for work colleagues.

In descending order, people preferred calling, e-mail, text messages and social networking for keeping in touch with friends and family. Social networking was most popular for communicating with friends, but only 15 percent prefer it to other methods.

"Today's results are a tell-tale sign that the more things change, the more they stay the same, and nothing comes close to replacing the familiar sound of a loved one's voice at the other end of the line," said Andreas Bernstrom, Rebtel's chief executive.
Although teens reportedly prefer texting to talking, and social media for reaching out to family in a pinch, the survey shows that voice calls are still the mainstream tool of choice for distance communication.

This may help justify Microsoft's recent purchase of Skype, which could help it integrate VoIP calling across its range of software platforms. Google and Facebook were reportedly interested in buying the company as well, suggesting that one way or another, they also plan to strengthen their current voice offerings.

Despite voice calling's dominance, today's text and social networking-focused teens may keep those habits as they grow older, turning them into the new mainstream.

Glossary:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>prefer (title)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>old-fashioned (line 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>poll (line 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>sponsored (line 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>exclusively (line 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>tell-tale (line 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>pinch (line 15)</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>survey (line 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>mainstream (line 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>purchase (line 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>integrate (line 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>strengthen (line 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>dominance (line 21)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. What is the most preferable method to communicate with family and friends? Why?
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

2. What is the most preferable method to communicate at work? Using your own words and ideas, why is it so?
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

3. How popular is social networking as a communication method?
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

4. What communication method do the teenagers prefer?
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

5. What do the several intended purchases of Skype show?
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
Part D. Writing (20 marks)

Expository Writing

Use of Mobile Phone in Hong Kong

Write a short composition of no less than 250 words for the above topic. You may hand in the writing to your ELLRC instructor for corrections. The following questions may help you to brainstorm your writing:

1) How did people communicate with one another in the past? How about now?
2) Are mobile phones commonly used in Hong Kong? Who use them?
3) Why do people use mobile phones?
4) Do different age groups use mobile phone for different purposes?
5) What are the benefits of using mobile phones?
6) Do you think mobile phone has become a daily necessity?
7) How do you feel if you forget to bring the mobile phone?
8) Are there any disadvantages of using mobile phones?
9) Do you think mobile phone is a great invention? Explain.

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Part E. Speaking (10 marks)

Find a partner or make an appointment with your ELLRC instructor to practise the following oral scenario:

A: Hello, … , let’s talk about different means of communication today. How do you usually communicate with your family or friends?

B: Well, I usually…

A: Ok. So do you know how people communicated with one another in the past?

B: Well, I think that they… as the technology were not so advanced in the past.

A: Yes, you’re right. How do you find these communication methods?

B: I think they are … because…

A: You’ve got your point. Have you ever written a letter to someone before?

B: Yes/No. I have / I haven’t because…

A: Alright. So do you like writing a letter or writing an email more?

B: I prefer writing a letter / writing an email because…

A: Ok. As you know, people nowadays prefer talking on mobile phones. Do you think this is a good practice?

B: Yes, I think so. / No, I don’t think so. I think using mobile phone is good / bad for…

A: So how do you see the text message function? Do you find it useful?

B: I think the text message function is / isn’t useful because…

A: More and more people are using smart-phones nowadays. Do you have one yourself?

B: Yes / No. I use/ don’t use smart-phones because…

A: How do you see the Whatsapp function? Do you know anything about it?

B: As far as I know, Whatsapp is an application which…/ Sorry, I haven’t heard of it…

A: I see. Thanks for your time. Goodbye!

B: Many thanks to you too. Goodbye!