Carmela: You want shortcuts to quick, fluent and natural-sounding English. And that’s what *Business Language to Go* is all about.

Each week we look at a different situation with different language so it’s a good idea for you to have a pen and paper handy to write down the language that we cover in the programme.

Today’s topic is telephone language. As usual I’m joined by David Evans, our business English expert.

David - telephoning in a language you’re learning isn’t easy, is it?

David: No, I think that telephoning in a foreign language is surprisingly difficult actually. I suppose that’s because we rely a lot on facial expressions, on gestures, even on lip reading to help us to understand what the other person is trying to communicate. And I think when you haven’t got those things to rely
on, on the telephone it’s a much more challenging thing to do.

**Carmela:** But at work we have to use the phone all the time, I mean telephoning is a really vital part of your working life.

**David:** Yes, of course. I mean, business runs by the telephone. At one time it was just that people were on the phone in offices, but now they’ve got mobile phones as well, so they’re on the telephone on the train, at airports, in their car, telephoning is everywhere. I mean, of course over the past five or six years, e-mail has become more and more important and so some people are using e-mail where in the past they might have made a phone call. But I think we can’t escape the fact that telephoning is a fantastically important skill for anyone in business to master.

**Carmela:** Okay. Let’s hear our first examples of phone calls. As you listen, concentrate on what the person answering the phone is saying. So, listen out for the language used by the person answering the phone.

**CLIP**

Michelle: Hello, you’ve reached the marketing department. How can I help?
Man: Yes can I speak to Rosalind Wilson, please?
Michelle: Who’s calling, please?
Man: It’s Richard Davies here.
Michelle: Certainly. Please hold and I’ll put you through.
Man: Thank you.

*END OF CLIP*
CLIP

Michelle: Hello, marketing. **How can I help?**
Man: **Could I speak** to Jason Roberts, please?
Michelle: Certainly. **Who shall I say is calling?**
Man: **My name’s** Mike Andrews.
Michelle: Just a second - I’ll see if he’s in. (...Hello, Jason! I’ve got Mike Andrews on the phone for you ...). OK - **I’ll put him through.**
**Hang on a moment. I’m just putting you through.**

END OF CLIP

Carmela: So, lots of language there. First of all let’s look at the phrases used by the receptionist, by the person answering the phone. David, what did she actually say when she first picked up the phone?

David: Well, she actually said **You’ve reached the marketing department**, which is quite a formal way of answering the phone. You’ll also hear people say **You’re through to marketing**, or indeed they may pick it up and say **marketing**. Obviously there she is giving the name of her department. In certain cases the receptionist might pick up the phone and give the name of the company. If you’re answering the phone as an individual, rather than as a representative of a company, you would probably pick up the phone and give your name - **Hello, David Evans**, for example. The receptionist we heard in that call then went on and said **How can I help?** - which is the standard way of beginning any kind of business transaction - be it on phone or indeed even in the shop.
Carmela: And when she asked who the callers were, what did she say?

David: Again she used another standard telephone phrase - Who’s calling please? The second time we heard her say Who shall I say is calling?

And then while she was trying to connect the callers she asked them to wait. She said, I think first time, Please hold and the second time Hang on a moment.

Again, both standard ways of asking a caller to wait on the phone. And then when she managed to make the connection she said I’ll put you through meaning I’ll connect you.

Carmela: Okay, let’s hear those phone calls again. And this time concentrate on the language the caller uses.

CLIP
Michelle: Hello, you’ve reached the marketing department. How can I help?
Male: Yes, can I speak to Rosalind Wilson, please?
Michelle: Who’s calling please?
Male: It’s Richard Davies here.
Michelle: Certainly. Please hold and I’ll put you through.
Male: Thank you.

END OF CLIP
CLIP

Michelle: Hello, marketing. How can I help?
Male: Could I speak to Jason Roberts please?
Michelle: Certainly. Who shall I say is calling?
Male: My name is Mike Andrews.
Michelle: Just a second - I’ll see if he’s in. (...Hello, Jason, I’ve got Mike Andrews on the phone for you ...pause). OK - I’ll put him through.
Just hang on a moment, I’m just putting you through.

END OF CLIP

Carmela: There were two different callers there, but both started the conversation in really almost exactly the same way. What did they say?

David: Well, yes it was very similar - at the beginning. The first caller I think said Can I speak to ... Can I speak to Rosalind Willson please? The second caller began by saying Could I speak to... Could I speak to Jason Roberts, please? Can I speak to ...Could I speak to - have basically exactly the same meaning on the telephone. They were then both asked for their names, and we heard two reasonably similar ways of giving your name. The first person said, My name’s Richard Davies. The second one simply said, It’s Mike Andrews.

Carmela: Well, it’s nice and straightforward when you can put callers through to people that they want to speak to, but what are the best phrases to use when you can’t do that? Listen to this next phone conversation and find out.
CLIP
Claire: Hello, finance department
Female: Hello, can I speak to Adrian Hopwood please?
Claire: I’m afraid he’s in a meeting at the moment. Can I help?
Female: No I need to talk to Mr Hopwood I think. What time will he be out of the meeting?
Claire: In about an hour. Can you call back later?
Female: Okay I’ll do that.
Claire: Or Can I take a message?
Female: Actually, would you mind? Could you tell him that Jennifer McAndrews called and that I’m in the office all day if he could call me back.
Claire: Can I take your number, please?
Female: Yes, it’s 5556872.
Claire: (5556872). Okay, I’ll make sure he gets the message.
Female: Thanks very much for your help, bye!
Claire: Goodbye!

END OF CLIP

Carmela: So when the person answering the phone said that Adrian Hopwood was unavailable what phrase did she use?

David: She said, I’m afraid he’s in a meeting - and you’ll hear that a lot on the telephone. I’m not always sure that the people actually are in meetings, it’s just become a standard excuse for not coming to the telephone. Anyway, that phrase “I’m afraid” is used an awful lot on the telephone, and it can go with all sorts of other phrases.

I’m afraid … he’s out of the office all day
I’m afraid … she’s on another line
I’m afraid … she can’t come to the phone

Carmela: So Mr Hopwood is actually in a meeting, that’s established, but the conversation doesn’t end there, does it?

David: No, first of all, the receptionist asks, Can you call back later? Then she thinks again about it and she offers to take a message and using the phrase Can I take a message? And she asks for the number - Can I take your number? All pretty straightforward, standard language there. If you are in a situation where the person hasn’t offered to take a message you can always use the phrase Can I leave a message? and make sure that you get your message through that way.

Carmela: Something we all have to deal with in the office is a wrong number. Have a listen now to some useful phrases for dealing with this situation.

CLIP
Hello, this is the press office.
Rachel Allsop please.
I’m sorry, You must have the wrong number. There’s no one of that name here.
Oh. Can I check the number I’ve got…. is that not 5568790?
No, it’s 5558790
Oh sorry about that. I must have dialled the wrong number.
No problem! Bye!

END OF CLIP
CLIP
Male: Hello, press office, can I help you?
Male: I’m sorry, you’ve got the wrong number, but he does work here. I’ll try and put you through. In future his direct number is 5558770
Ruth: Did I not dial that?
Male: No, you rang 5558790
Ruth: Oh, sorry to have troubled you.
Male: No problem. Hang on a moment and I’ll put you through to Paul’s extension.
Ruth: Thanks.
END OF CLIP

Carmela: David, we had two calls there. Two wrong numbers. How was that established very quickly at the beginning of the conversation?

David: Well, the person taking the call said in the first case, I’m sorry, you must have the wrong number. In the second case I think they said, I’m sorry you’ve got the wrong number. So, the English is really very easy to deal with that but obviously it’s important that you don’t forget to say I’m sorry. We do a lot of apologising on the telephone I’m afraid you’ve got the wrong number, I’m sorry you’ve got the wrong number. I think it’s important because it establishes a friendly relationship and it ensures that you don’t sound too aggressive.
Carmela: And if you’re the caller, it’s also a good idea to offer a quick apology too?

David: Yes, in both cases there the callers also apologise.

Carmela: Ok, thanks David. And just to say that David Evans will be joining me next time for more Business Language to Go.