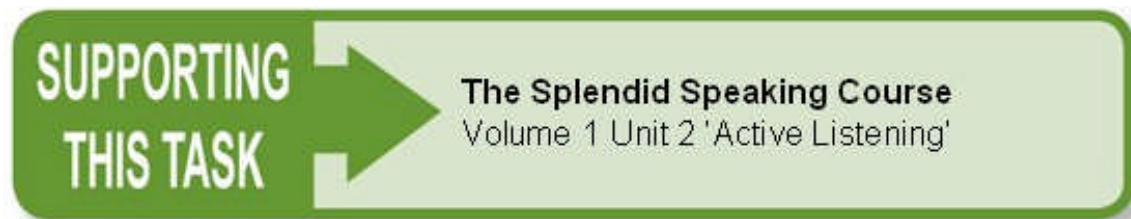

Splendid Speaking Podcasts

Topic: Taking Part in Discussions
(Interview 11: January Archives)

This show can be listened to at the following address:

<http://splendid-speaking.com/blog/?p=26>



Comprehension Questions

- 1) Why does Arturo talk about the climate in Italy?
- 2) Where do most people meet for Christmas in Italy?
- 3) Do both speakers think children still believe in Santa Claus as much as ever?
- 4) What is a secret friend?
- 5) When do people in Brazil open their presents?
- 6) Why does Solange think the children in Italy are particularly lucky at Christmas?
- 7) When do children receive presents at another time in Brazil?
- 8) When do Christmas celebrations end in Italy and Brazil?

Transcript

Introduction

If you'd like to improve or practise the skills involved in taking part in a discussion and describing events then this podcast will be of interest to you.

A reminder that you can get a transcript - the words - to the latest podcast by joining the Splendid Speaking Mailing list. Starting this week we're including comprehension questions along with the transcript to help you test your understanding of the podcast. You can sign up to the mailing list at our homepage at www.splendid-speaking.com.

This podcast features Solange from Brazil and Arturo from Italy who was using Skype for the first time. In this task they both had to compare the way Christmas is celebrated in their two countries. This task requires the speakers to show they can take part in a discussion, initiating and responding to questions, listening actively and responding to their partner's contributions appropriately, and of course being able to describe clearly and without undue hesitation Christmas in their country.

As you listen using this criteria, decide how successful their discussion was. Listen to the interview a second time if necessary to answer the comprehension questions in the transcript and while you listen make a note of Solange and Arturo's use of English, which we'll look at in the feedback session.

Let's listen to Solange and Arturo.

Solange: Arturo so ... about Christmas in Italy. How do you celebrate it?

Arturo: OK. You have to think that Italy is a long country ... very long ... it's almost 1,200 km long ... so very different kind of temperatures. So in northern Italy it's very cold in southern Italy where there is Sicily ...

Campagna and other ... regions the climate is mild ... so we have very different way of celebrating Christmas. In southern Italy we like to stay together ... all the family. We gather generally in the house of our father or mother if a family ... because you know it's very difficult to find a job around where you are born so a lot of people goes abroad or moves in Italy in northern Italy because in northern Italy there is jobs lots of jobs and so a lot of work to do ... and so we like to stay altogether and celebrate. We make presents to each other we ... generally until you are old you write letters to your father to your mother saying what you like ... what you don't like and making some very nice thought about them.

Solange: Do you believe in Santa Claus as well in Italy?

Arturo: Yes sure, we believe in Santa Clause. It's very different when I was a boy and now. When I was a boy it was felt more someone very ... that come ... that came from a place very far from Italy. Now they know that it's someone in your house ... and it can be your grandfather or grandmother ... your father. And it's a pity because a lot of children just wait for ... because they ... they ... wait for presents.

Solange: I understand. I think it's very similar to Brazil. Nowadays ... when I was a child it was really different because we really believed Santa Claus existed but we try to keep on the tradition and try to explain the children that Santa will come and you have to leave our socks by the window and ... at Christmas eve we have a big meal and we make a kind of a game here ... I don't know if in Italy you do like this ... that you have to take some names from a bag and then you have to buy this person a present but this person doesn't know who is going to give the present we call secret friends. And then at midnight we open presents and laugh and drink champagne and it's quite fun.

Arturo: You talked about socks. So your presents are put in a sock ... socks?

Solange: A small one .. you can put ... but this represents that ...

Arturo: Because in Italy we have two different times when people ... when children receive presents. We have just Christmas when presents are put under the trees.

Solange: Ah but we do this as well.

Arturo: And then we have on the 5th of ... on the night of the 5th of January when the king reached the Jesus... because Italy is a Christian country ... almost ... and so that night a lot of children receive presents and they put in these socks just near their beds.

Solange: Ah ... so they get two presents?

Arturo: Yes, we spoil them ... we spoil them!

Solange: Ah but that *** something they enjoy it a lot, eh?

Arturo: There is another feast during the year when in Brazil the children receive presents or not?

Solange: We have on the 12th October, that is Children's Day but Christmas is much more fun because you gather all the family together so you can really have the feeling and the atmosphere of a family evening ... so it's quite interesting. And we make trees as well but on the 6th of January we take the ... the ... the ... gift not the gift but the tree ... we put the tree down.

Arturo: Ah ... so you close all your holiday ... Christmas holiday ends on the 6th of January?

Solange: Exactly!

Arturo: It's the same in Italy.

Feedback

OK if you're ready to check your answers here's the feedback.

First of all I'd like to thank Solange and Arturo for agreeing to be recorded. You can comment on their conversation at the Splendid Speaking website.

This was a lovely discussion to listen to particularly as this was the first time these two people had spoken together and that one person was new to Skype. Both were able to initiate and respond to questions, and both people listened actively, often responding to comments made by their partner. In general during their own turns they described Christmas celebrations without undue hesitation.

You may have noticed when describing whether children still believe in Santa Claus that Arturo needed time to think of what he wanted to say. As a result there were a few 'stretched' syllables and 'errs'. One way to avoid this is to practise inserting short pauses to allow for thinking time.

Here are a selection of some of the errors that occurred during the discussion. Can you spot the mistakes?

"...You have to think that Italy is a long country ..."

"...a lot of people goes abroad or moves in Italy in the north of Italy ..."

"...we make presents to each other ..."

"...but we try to keep on the tradition and try to explain the children that Santa will come..."

"...at Christmas Eve we have a big meal ..."

"...we make a kind of a game here I don't know if in Italy you do like this ..."

"...when the king reached the Jesus ..."

"...we make trees as well ..."

"...we put the tree down ..."

Did you spot the mistakes?

"...You have to think that Italy is a long country ..."

OK, not 'You have to think that Italy is a long country'. More natural here would be 'You have to consider', 'You need to realise'.

"...so a lot of people goes abroad or moves in Italy in the north of Italy ..."

Not 'a lot of people goes abroad' but 'a lot of people go abroad' or 'move in Italy'.

"...we make presents to each other ..."

Not 'We make presents to each other' but 'We give presents to each other'.

"...but we try to keep on the tradition and try to explain the children that Santa will come..."

Not 'keep on the tradition' but 'keep up the tradition' and 'try to explain to the children'.

"...at Christmas Eve we have a big meal ..."

Wrong preposition here. Not 'at Christmas Eve' but 'on Christmas Eve'.

"...we make a kind of a game here I don't know if in Italy you do like this ..."

You don't 'make a game', you 'play a game' and not 'if in Italy you do like this'. It should be 'if you do this in Italy'.

"...when the king reached the Jesus ..."

No definite article here. We would just say 'when the king reached Jesus'.

"...we make trees as well ..."

We wouldn't say 'make trees as well'. We'd say 'have trees'.

"...we put the tree down ..."

And finally you 'take the tree down'.

Finally, one point worth mentioning. On three occasions Arturo asked questions with a statement:

"... You talked about socks ... so your presents are in a sock ... socks?"

“... There is another feast during the year when in Brazil the children receive presents or not?”

“... So you close all your holiday ... Christmas holiday ends on the 6th January?”

It's very common to ask questions with a statement, especially when the question is actually asking for confirmation, such as in the first and last question. However, the second question would probably best be expressed as 'Is there another feast during the year ...'. And by the way a better word for 'feast' here would be 'celebration'.

OK. That's the end of this podcast. Don't forget comprehension question and transcript of the latest podcast are available from the Splendid Speaking mailing list that's available at www.splendid-speaking.com. Until next week it's 'bye' from me, Pete Travis. Bye!

Answers to Comprehension Questions

1) Why does Arturo talk about the climate in Italy?

Ans: Because the different climate in the North and south of Italy affects the way people celebrate Christmas.

2) Where do most people meet for Christmas in Italy?

Ans: At their parent's house.

3) Do both speakers think children still believe in Santa Claus as much as ever?

Ans: Not as much as when the speakers were younger.

4) What is a secret friend?

Ans: Someone who buys a present for someone but who remains a secret.

5) When do people in Brazil open their presents?

Ans: Christmas Eve.

6) Why does Solange think the children in Italy are particularly lucky at Christmas?

Ans: Because they receive presents twice over the Christmas period.

7) When do children receive presents at another time in Brazil?

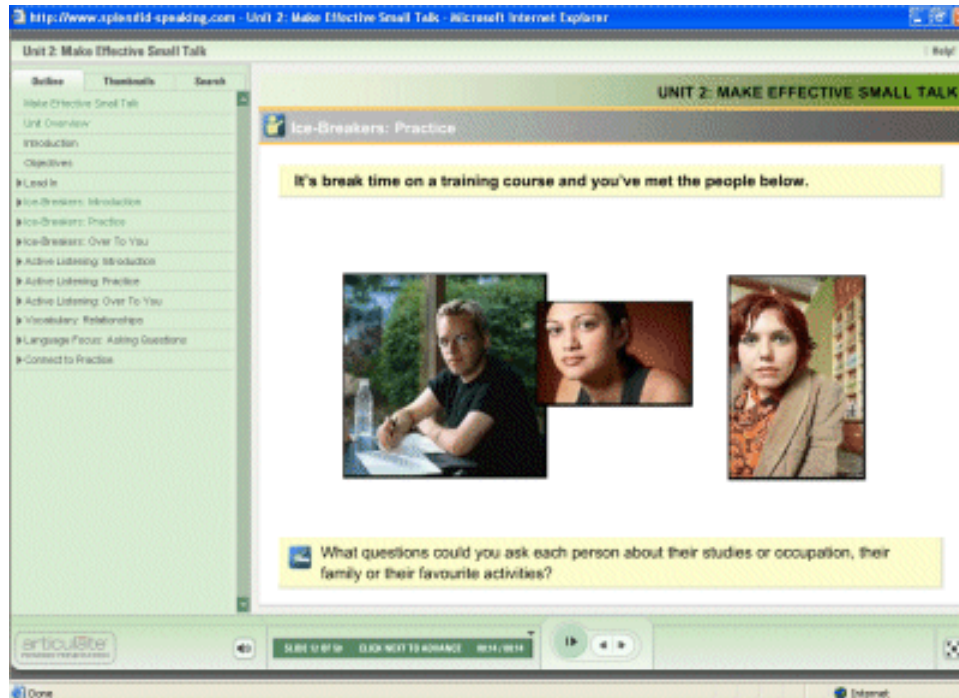
Yes. On Children's Day.

8) When do Christmas celebrations end in Italy and Brazil?

Ans: 6th January.

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