Every Phone Call Tells a Story

We use the phone a lot in this day and age... but sometime we forget how it all started... let's go back in time...

First a quick revision of the different past tenses...

We can use the **past simple** to talk about actions and states which we see as completed in the past.

- I bought my first Ikea furniture I was eighteen.
- I called the CRC to ask about a delivery problem.

We can use the **past continuous** to talk about past events which went on for a period of time.

- While I was driving home, Brad was trying to contact me.
- I was thinking about him last night.

We can use the **present perfect** when we want to look back from the present to the past.

- I've broken my watch so I don't know what time it is.
- She hasn't arrived yet.
- We have had a lot of issues with our delivery service.

The **Present Perfect Continuous** can be used to talk about an action or actions that started in the past and continued until recently or that continue into the future.



- You look tired. Have you been sleeping properly?
- I've been waiting for him for 30 minutes and he still hasn't arrived.
- He's been phoning me all week for an answer.

We can use the **past perfect continuous** to look back at a situation in progress.



- We had been thinking about buying a new house but then we decided to stay here and go to Ikea to buy some furniture.
- The phone had been ringing a lot before I answered it.
- She said she had been trying to call me all day.

Many stories are told in song... let's have a look at some famous songs about phone calls...

Activity One - Read the Blog article and answer the questions that follow. Concentrate on your intonation.

Source http://www.zdnet.com/blog/ip-telephony/lets-have-fun-with-old-songs-about-phones-do-they-still-hold-up-in-2006/1334

Old Phone Songs

Earlier today as I was thinking about Thanksgiving Day phone calls I might make later on, my thoughts turned to telephone songs. Songs about making phone calls, about not completing phone calls, calls about what was said during these calls.

Then the thought hit me: would the lyrics of these songs be relevant in today's advanced telecom world of VoIP, 3G mobile, etc?

After analyzing the lyrics of about 20 of these songs, I've concluded that while the main message- one of important communication- is timeless, the details about the phone process in some of these songs have been superseded by advances in technology and services.

So let's have some fun by going over some of these songs and see how they fare in the telecom world of today.

"Hello My Baby"- Thought to be the very first telephone song, this actually came out in 1899. One part of the lyrics said:

> "Ev'ry single morning
> you will hear me yell
> Hey central, fix me up
> along the line
> He connects me with
> my honey and I ring
> the bell

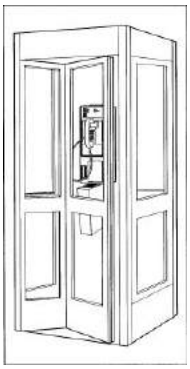
Some interesting points: the calls have to be routed through a human at a central switchboard, and that board is literally manned by a "he." Actually the earliest telephone operators were boys between 10 to 15. And the central switchboard operator has to be addressed in a loud voice to be understood. Sometimes, teenage boys still have to be addressed that way.

"On the Party Line"- Also of 1915 vintage, this song was written about the difficulties of rural telephone service. I don't think party lines have been around since the 1980s, but I still know of rural areas that can get dial-up but nothing else. And there are still some very isolated pockets in North America where there is no phone service at all.

"Hello Central, Give Me No Man's Land"- From 1917 this song was about a little girl trying to call her Daddy who was off fighting in World War I. While she wouldn't go through "central " today, well , at this very moment 89 years on, there are, sadly, still little girls who miss their Daddies who are off at war.

"Hanging On The Telephone"- Offered by Blondie and the Nerves, this song details these emotional points:

> I'm in the phone booth,
> it's the one across the
> hall - If you don't
> answer, I'll just ring it
> off the wall
> I know he's there, but I
> just had to call
> Don't leave me hanging
> on the telephone



In these days when almost everyone has a mobile, who uses phone booths anymore?

"Memphis"- by Chuck Berry. A Dad tries to get "long distance information" to connect him to Memphis "411" operator. Presumably connected, Chuck is trying to furnish the locale of where the person whose number he is trying to determine, lives:

> Her home is on the
> Southside,
> High upon a ridge
> Just a half a mile
> From the Mississippi
> bridge.

With the last name, it might have been possible when the song first came out (1958 or so) to get a local directory assistance operator to be able to pinpoint a number by those general directions. Yet since most directory assistance services are outsourced to remote operators in distant cities, there is no difference between "long distance information" and local directory assistance.

"Rocky Top"-

> Wish that I was on Ole
> Rocky Top,
> Down in the Tennessee
> Hills.
> Ain't no smoggy smoke
> on Rocky Top,
> Ain't no telephone bills.

Part of this song still holds up. The lyrics imply that phone service is unavailable up on Rocky Top. I'm sure you can get it now, and the phone company will be happy to bill ya? But DSL and VoIP? I'm sure they are not available yet. Incidentally, with the increasing acid rain and air pollution of the Smoky Mountains in the more than 30 years since this song was written, there is, sadly plenty of smoggy smoke up there.

"Operator"- by Jim Croce- He's trying to get the operator to help him dial a call to his ex, who "is now living in L.A. with a guy named Ray," He can't dial the number for the tears in his eyes. Listen, that whole scene I just described still happens. But one line from the song: "you can keep the dime"- well, Jimmy died in 1973, when pay phones were a dime.

"Here's A Quarter, Call Someone Who Cares"- The angry early 1980s country song by Travis Tritt He told his cheating ex to go ! The emotions are still relevant but not the money. Same principle- she would probably use her cell, and it has been at least a decade since there have been 25 cent pay phone stations.

"Telephone Line"- You probably remember the song by the Electric Light Orchestra. He wants her to pick up the telephone so he can have a conversation and find out where he stands with her. Although that's never happened to me personally (yea, right), a portion of the lyrics go:

> Ok. So no one's answering
> Well can't you just let it
> ring a little longer
> longer longer oh oh
> I'll just sit tight through
> shadows of the night
> Let it ring for evermore

So she has no voice mail? Well, few people did in the mid 1970s, when this song came out. And not even everyone had an answering machine.So, what about today's telephony? Will we ever see songs about Skype ?

Questions

1. Why did the author get the idea for the article ?
2. What was the author's conclusion ?
3. Name the differences in telephone communications pointed out in each song.
4. Did you know of any of these songs ?
5. Did you find this article interesting ?
6. Do you know of any other songs about telephones ?

Activity Two - Now let's listen to another old classic song about **Telephones**...

Hello This Is Joanie by Paul Evans... Listen and then answer the questions.

1/ Re-tell the story in your own words according to what you understood.
2/ What does her answer phone message say?
3/ Write your own answer phone messages.



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAZR4b5d8ZQ

Activity Three - This time follow the lyrics and listen to the song.

How Come You Don't Call Me Anymore ? (Prince/Alicia Keys)

I keep your picture beside my bed
And I still remember everything U said
I always thought our love was so right,
I guess I was wrong
I always thought U'd be by my side
mama, now U're gone

What I wanna know, baby
If what we had was good
How come U don't call me anymore?

I still light the fire on a rainy night
I still like it better when U're holding me tight
Everybody said, everybody said that we should never part, ooh yeah
(I always said that we were kinda cute 2gether myself)
Tell me baby, baby, baby, why, why'd U wanna go and break my heart?

All I wanna know, baby
If what we had was good
How come U don't call me anymore,?
Why don't U call me girl?

Sometimes it feels like I'm gonna die
If U don't call me mama, girl U gotta try
Down on my knees, beggin' U please, please! ... oh yeah

Why can't U call me sometime, baby?
It's just one lousy dime, baby
Why can't U call me sometime?
Why on Earth can't U just pick up the phone, yeah?
U know I don't like 2 be alone
Why, why must U torture me baby?
Why U gotta treat me so bad?

1/ Can you find any opposites in the song?
2/ Why does he refer to a 'dime'?
3/ Tell the story of this song as you understood it.



Activity Four – Lady GaGa Has a lot to say about Telephones…

- Watch the video.
- Tell the story…
- With your partner invent what is going to happen next

Use the FUTURE tense (will/going to).

You might need to use some of these sequencing words :

firstly… secondly… thirdly…
furthermore… finally
next…then
and then…
also… lastly
in the first place…
additionally… lastly

Activity Five – Tell the story… Use the PAST TENSES and some sequencing words.

- Now throw the dice /look at the images and tell the story.

- If you make a mistake in the past tense someone from the opposing team can ring the bell.