

www.**Breaking News English**.com

Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

The Breaking News English.com Resource Book

"1,000 Ideas & Activities For Language Teachers"

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/book.html>

Man gets 218-trillion-dollar phone bill

URL: http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0708/070813-phone_bill.html

Contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
Listening Gap Fill	6
After Reading / Listening	7
Student Survey	8
Discussion	9
Language Work	10
Writing	11
Homework	12
Answers	13

13th August, 2007

THE ARTICLE

Man gets 218-trillion-dollar phone bill

A Malaysian man got the surprise of his life when he picked up his post and received a \$218 trillion phone bill, the "New Straits Times" reported. He nearly fainted when he read he was ordered to pay up within 10 days or face legal proceedings. Yahaya Wahab said he disconnected his late father's cell phone line earlier this year and had paid his \$23 bill to close the account. There seems to have been a glitch in Telekom Malaysia's accounts as they sent Mr Wahab a bill for 806,400,000,000,000.01 Malaysian ringgit. That is around 17 times the GDP of the USA, give or take a billion dollars or two. Worryingly for Mr Wahab is the fact that there isn't enough money in the entire world to pay for the phone bill.

Mr Wahab was prepared to fight the telecom giant: "If the company wants to seek legal action as mentioned in the letter, I'm ready to face it.... In fact, I can't wait to face it," he said. He was unsure whether the bill was a genuine mistake or whether his father's phone line had been used illegally after his death. The latter case is unlikely as it would take millions of lifetimes of non-stop calls to generate such a high bill. Reports say a Malaysia Telekom official, who declined to be identified, said the company was aware of Yahaya's case and would address it. She did not provide further details as she was not authorized to speak to the media. This case may give heart to telephone subscribers worldwide to challenge the high phone charges they have to pay.

WARM-UPS

1. PHONE BILLS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about phone bills. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

Malaysia / surprises / fainting / legal proceedings / cell phones / glitches / trillions of dollars / mistakes / addressing mistakes / the media / phone charges

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. CHARGES: In pairs / groups, talk about these charges. Are they reasonable / good value?

- mobile phones
- Internet connections
- English lessons
- gas and electricity
- haircuts
- movie tickets
- taxi fares
- dental fees

4. SURPRISES OF YOUR LIFE: In pairs / groups, role play what you would do in each of these situations:

- You receive a mobile phone bill for \$2,000,000
- You suddenly find out you have five secret brothers and sisters
- Your best friend has been training to go to the Moon
- Your favourite actor / singer knocks on your door and invites you to dinner
- You wake up one morning and have forgotten all of your English
- You find an old painting in your house worth \$20,000,000

5. CELL PHONE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with cell phones. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. QUICK DEBATE: Students A think mobile phone charges are very reasonably priced. Students B think the opposite. Change partners often. Share your findings.

7. GLITCHES: In pairs / groups, talk about the mistakes these companies / organizations make. Which make you angriest?

- mobile phone companies
- banks
- supermarkets
- gas and electricity companies
- your government
- hospitals
- travel agents
- other _____

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. A man got a phone bill for \$218 trillion. | T / F |
| b. The man passed out due to shock and spent a night in hospital. | T / F |
| c. The telephone bill is many times greater than America's GDP. | T / F |
| d. There is not enough money in the world to be able to pay the bill. | T / F |
| e. The man is afraid of facing the telecom company in court. | T / F |
| f. It is possible the phone line may have been used illegally. | T / F |
| g. A high ranking telecom official spoke on television about the bill. | T / F |
| h. This case has encouraged millions to challenge their phone bills. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. surprise | a. passed out |
| 2. fainted | b. refused |
| 3. face | c. whole |
| 4. glitch | d. cause |
| 5. entire | e. egg on |
| 6. genuine | f. deal with |
| 7. generate | g. mistake |
| 8. declined | h. come up against |
| 9. address | i. shock |
| 10. give heart to | j. bona fide |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. A Malaysian man got the surprise | a. accounts |
| 2. pay up within 10 days or face | b. was a genuine mistake |
| 3. a glitch in Telekom Malaysia's | c. heart to telephone subscribers |
| 4. around 17 times the | d. non-stop calls |
| 5. give or take a billion dollars | e. of his life |
| 6. Mr Wahab was prepared to | f. GDP of the USA |
| 7. He was unsure whether the bill | g. who declined to be identified |
| 8. millions of lifetimes of | h. or two |
| 9. a Malaysia Telekom official, | i. fight the telecom giant |
| 10. This case may give | j. legal proceedings |

Man gets 218-trillion-dollar phone bill – 13th August, 2007

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Man gets 218-trillion-dollar phone bill

A Malaysian man got the _____ of his life when he picked up his post and received a \$218 trillion phone bill, the "New Straits Times" reported. He nearly _____ when he read he was ordered to pay up within 10 days or _____ legal proceedings. Yahaya Wahab said he disconnected his _____ father's cell phone line earlier this year and had paid his \$23 bill to close the _____. There seems to have been a glitch in Telekom Malaysia's accounts as they sent Mr Wahab a bill for 806,400,000,000,000.01 Malaysian ringgit. That is _____ 17 times the GDP of the USA, give or take a billion dollars or two. Worryingly for Mr Wahab is the _____ that there isn't enough money in the _____ world to pay for the phone bill.

entire
surprise
fact
late
fainted
account
around
face

Mr Wahab was _____ to fight the telecom giant: "If the company wants to seek legal _____ as mentioned in the letter, I'm ready to face it... In fact, I can't wait to face it," he said. He was unsure whether the bill was a genuine mistake or _____ his father's phone line had been used illegally after his death. The _____ case is unlikely as it would take millions of lifetimes of non-stop calls to generate such a high bill. Reports say a Malaysia Telekom official, who declined to be identified, said the company was aware of Yahaya's case and would _____ it. She did not provide further details as she was not _____ to speak to the media. This case may give _____ to telephone subscribers worldwide to _____ the high phone charges they have to pay.

address
action
challenge
latter
prepared
authorized
heart
whether

Man gets 218-trillion-dollar phone bill – 13th August, 2007

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Man gets 218-trillion-dollar phone bill

A Malaysian man got _____ when he picked up his post and received a \$218 trillion phone bill, the "New Straits Times" reported. He nearly fainted when he read _____ within 10 days or face legal proceedings. Yahaya Wahab said he disconnected _____ line earlier this year and had paid his \$23 bill to close the account. There _____ in Telekom Malaysia's accounts as they sent Mr Wahab a bill for 806,400,000,000,000.01 Malaysian ringgit. That _____ of the USA, give or take a billion dollars or two. Worryingly for Mr Wahab is _____ enough money in the entire world to pay for the phone bill.

Mr Wahab was prepared to fight the telecom giant: "If the company wants to seek legal action _____, I'm ready to face it.... In fact, I can't wait to face it," he said. He _____ was a genuine mistake or whether his father's phone line had been used illegally after his death. _____ as it would take millions of lifetimes of non-stop calls to generate such a high bill. Reports say a Malaysia Telekom official, _____, said the company was aware of Yahaya's case and would address it. She did not provide further details as she was _____ the media. This case may give heart to telephone subscribers worldwide to challenge the high phone charges they have to pay.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'phone' and 'bill'.

phone	bill
--------------	-------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• life• ordered• late• glitch• give or take• entire	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• seek• face it• genuine• generate• address• media
--	---

Man gets 218-trillion-dollar phone bill – 13th August, 2007

STUDENT PHONE BILL SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about the PHONE BILL in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1	STUDENT 2	STUDENT 3
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

Find this and similar lessons at <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com>

Man gets 218-trillion-dollar phone bill – 13th August, 2007

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) When have you received a surprise of your life?
- c) What do you think when you pick up your telephone bill?
- d) Do you think mobile phone charges are reasonable?
- e) What would you do if you received a \$218 trillion phone bill?
- f) What do you think Telekom Malaysia officials should do about the phone bill?
- g) How much money do you think there is in the world?
- h) Do you use your mobile phone too much?
- i) Do you think Mr Wahab should sue Telekom Malaysia for damages?
- j) Have you ever fainted or come close to fainting?



STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Would you look forward to facing the telecom giant in court?
- c) Do you think it's possible the phone line was illegally used?
- d) Do other people tell you your phone bills are too high?
- e) Could you live without your mobile phone?
- f) What do you think future mobile phones will be able to do?
- g) If you were the Telekom Malaysia CEO, what would you say to the media?
- h) What does your phone mean to you?
- i) Would you like to challenge your phone company about its charges?
- j) Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a) What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b) Was there a question you didn't like?
- c) Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d) What did you like talking about?
- e) Which was the most difficult question?

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

Man gets 218-trillion-dollar phone bill

A Malaysian man got the surprise of his (1) _____ when he picked up his post and received a \$218 trillion phone bill, the "New Straits Times" reported. He nearly (2) _____ when he read he was ordered to pay (3) _____ within 10 days or face legal proceedings. Yahaya Wahab said he disconnected his (4) _____ father's cell phone line earlier this year and had paid his \$23 bill to close the (5) _____. There seems to have been a glitch in Telekom Malaysia's accounts as they sent Mr Wahab a bill for 806,400,000,000,000.01 Malaysian ringgit. That is around 17 times the GDP of the USA, give or (6) _____ a billion dollars or two. Worryingly for Mr Wahab is the fact that there isn't enough money in the entire world to pay for the phone bill.

Mr Wahab was prepared to fight the telecom giant: "If the company wants to seek (7) _____ action as mentioned in the letter, I'm ready to face it... In fact, I can't wait to face it," he said. He was unsure whether the bill was a genuine mistake or whether his father's phone line (8) _____ been used illegally after his death. The (9) _____ case is unlikely as it would take millions of lifetimes of non-stop calls to generate such a high bill. Reports say a Malaysia Telekom official, who declined to be (10) _____, said the company was aware of Yahaya's case and would address it. She did not provide (11) _____ details as she was not authorized to speak to the media. This case may give (12) _____ to telephone subscribers worldwide to challenge the high phone charges they have to pay.

- | | | | | |
|-----|----------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|
| 1. | (a) life | (b) living | (c) live | (d) lives |
| 2. | (a) fainted | (b) feint | (c) faints | (d) fainted |
| 3. | (a) by | (b) down | (c) up | (d) with |
| 4. | (a) early | (b) late | (c) died | (d) death |
| 5. | (a) account | (b) bill | (c) payment | (d) company |
| 6. | (a) gave | (b) given | (c) take | (d) took |
| 7. | (a) lawyer | (b) law | (c) legality | (d) legal |
| 8. | (a) is | (b) had | (c) have | (d) was |
| 9. | (a) late | (b) later | (c) latter | (d) letter |
| 10. | (a) identified | (b) identity | (c) identification | (d) ID |
| 11. | (a) father | (b) further | (c) farther | (d) furthest |
| 12. | (a) lungs | (b) stomach | (c) liver | (d) heart |

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information about mobile phone companies around the world. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. MOBILE PHONE POSTER: Make a poster about the history of the telephone. Include a section on its future. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE: Write a magazine article about how mobile phones affect our lives. Include imaginary interviews with people who think mobile phones are good and bad.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the boss of Malaysia Telekom. Ask him/her three questions about Mr Wahab's phone bill. Give him/her three suggestions about how to apologize to Mr Wahab. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

Man gets 218-trillion-dollar phone bill – 13th August, 2007

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. T d. T e. F f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. surprise | a. shock |
| 2. fainted | b. passed out |
| 3. face | c. come up against |
| 4. glitch | d. mistake |
| 5. entire | e. whole |
| 6. genuine | f. bona fide |
| 7. generate | g. cause |
| 8. declined | h. refused |
| 9. address | i. deal with |
| 10. give heart to | j. egg on |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. A Malaysian man got the surprise | a. of his life |
| 2. pay up within 10 days or face | b. legal proceedings |
| 3. a glitch in Telekom Malaysia's | c. accounts |
| 4. around 17 times the | d. GDP of the USA |
| 5. give or take a billion dollars | e. or two |
| 6. Mr Wahab was prepared to | f. fight the telecom giant |
| 7. He was unsure whether the bill | g. was a genuine mistake |
| 8. millions of lifetimes of | h. non-stop calls |
| 9. a Malaysia Telekom official, | i. who declined to be identified |
| 10. This case may give | j. heart to telephone subscribers |

GAP FILL:

Man gets 218-trillion-dollar phone bill

A Malaysian man got the **surprise** of his life when he picked up his post and received a \$218 trillion phone bill, the "New Straits Times" reported. He nearly **fainted** when he read he was ordered to pay up within 10 days or **face** legal proceedings. Yahaya Wahab said he disconnected his **late** father's cell phone line earlier this year and had paid his \$23 bill to close the **account**. There seems to have been a glitch in Telekom Malaysia's accounts as they sent Mr Wahab a bill for 806,400,000,000,000.01 Malaysian ringgit. That is **around** 17 times the GDP of the USA, give or take a billion dollars or two. Worryingly for Mr Wahab is the **fact** that there isn't enough money in the **entire** world to pay for the phone bill.

Mr Wahab was **prepared** to fight the telecom giant: "If the company wants to seek legal **action** as mentioned in the letter, I'm ready to face it... In fact, I can't wait to face it," he said. He was unsure whether the bill was a genuine mistake or **whether** his father's phone line had been used illegally after his death. The **latter** case is unlikely as it would take millions of lifetimes of non-stop calls to generate such a high bill. Reports say a Malaysia Telekom official, who declined to be identified, said the company was aware of Yahaya's case and would **address** it. She did not provide further details as she was not **authorized** to speak to the media. This case may give **heart** to telephone subscribers worldwide to **challenge** the high phone charges they have to pay.

LANGUAGE WORK

1 - a 2 - d 3 - c 4 - b 5 - a 6 - c 7 - d 8 - b 9 - c 10 - a 11 - b 12 - d