

Listener Interview 2: Jonathan from Costa Rica

In this special episode of The A to Z English Podcast, we talk with Jonathan from Costa Rica, a dedicated English student and an active member of our Whatsapp group. (Link here: <https://forms.gle/zKCS8y1t9jwv2KTn7>)

Website Link: <https://atozenglishpodcast.com/?p=1739>

It's a great conversation, so you won't want to miss it!

Share your thoughts about today's interview in our Whatsapp group or tell us if you think you have something interesting to talk about. Perhaps you could be our next guest on the podcast!

If you could take a minute and complete a short survey about the podcast, we would be very appreciative. You can find the survey here: <https://forms.gle/HHNnnqU6U8W3DodK8>

We would love to hear your feedback and suggestions for future episodes. Intro/Outro Music by Eaters: <https://freemusicarchive.org/music/eaters/the-astronomers-office/agents-in-coffee-shops/>

Full Transcript: Jonathan from Costa Rica

Kevin: Welcome to an A to Z English listener interview. Today we're talking with Jonathan Gutierrez who is in Costa Rica and is one of our listeners. And he's going to tell us today about his English learning experience using A to Z English and all of the other sources that he did. So Jonathan, nice to see you. it's night time there right?

Jonathan: Okay, it's nice to see you guys. So um thank you for having me here.

Kevin: Oh you're welcome. it's great to have you on the show.

Jack: Yeah thanks for coming and I appreciate it.

Kevin: Yeah it's already evening there. Did you have your dinner tonight?

Jonathan: Uh not yet. I just arrived at home a few minutes ago.

Kevin: Yeah?

Jonathan: I was working today, so I just arrived at home maybe 10 or 15 minutes ago. But it's okay.

Kevin: Well thank you for finding time to join us then for us it's Monday daytime of course time zones are funny, so Jonathan you're in Costa Rica. I've never been to Costa Rica though I have had a couple of friends that went there. Actually one of my good friends from university, he and his uh girlfriend at the time, now wife, they went to Costa Rica many years ago, maybe almost 20 years ago and they were teaching English for six months or a year, so I know English education is quite big in Costa Rica. How, where or when did you first start learning English? Was it in schools or did you have a tutor or just the internet or where did you start?

Jonathan: Yeah I started when I in high school. Okay so I'm learning a few things in high school. Maybe I don't uh that I feel for example um I love the idiom or stuff like that. Sure maybe a couple years ago that I started to return again to learning English and I joined what's the room with Robin Shaw? So I started my new challenge. I changed my mind because I want um to get a bilingual job and I think I start to practice a little bit more. I forgot all the rules and English grammars. I love vocabulary so it was a little bit insane you know. Maybe not because I forgot so a lot of things um so it was something new for me. Let's start again. They start with uh maybe kids stuff um and it was pretty good. Robin helped me a lot.

Kevin: I'm curious. if you said you started again because you forgot everything, I actually I know Costa Rica is a Spanish-speaking country and I used to speak a little bit of Spanish. I studied Spanish in university. But like you I stopped using it and I totally forgot everything once you started to study again. Was it easier than the first time? Did you start to remember things?

Jonathan: Yeah it's quite something funny because when I'm trying to learn again um I remember oh I remember this but how can we use everything. So I forgot for example um singular verbs, plural, past tense and stuff like that. Yeah so it started again. I practiced a lot um every day and yeah I found a bunch of friends and I tried to do my best every day to learn English and my one of my goals was get bilingual because I am native speaker Spanish speaker all right good yeah. it was a big challenge you know. it was pretty awesome. I was excited to learn again English, so I decided to start again and practice and practice every day.

Jack: That's great! Yeah do you use English in your job right now?

Jonathan: Yes I've been working in a call center for around five months oh nice and is for um I am customer service agent for us company so it's something new for me and I'm taking calls every day for...

Jack: So are the people that calling you are they they're Americans then?

Jonathan: Yes.

Kevin: And I know speaking another language over the phone can sometimes be more difficult than speaking together with a person because you can't see them. You don't know what their facial expressions or what their body is doing. What things have been the hardest for you doing a phone job where you're only listening to people speaking English and Americans have many different styles of English. Some are very fast. Some are very slow. What was what's the hardest thing for you in in your job?

Jonathan: All right um I guess that's the listening stuff because when the customer speaks.

Kevin: They start to speak and start to speak uh faster right?

Jonathan: Faster and you need to get all the information in a few seconds and trying to avoid.

Kevin: Do you mean trying um

Jonathan: Yeah trying I need to improve a lot my listening skills to avoid this kind of situation because it's a customer service job I mean right we need to focus on listening and try to get the best message with the customer and assist the customer and sometimes we can hear um maybe i'll set customers and we need to okay slow down, take it easy and assist the customer.

Kevin: Well that sounds like our podcast would be helpful for listening skills. Then so I'm hopeful that we are helping you. There that's great yeah what was the...

Jack: Uh could you could you give us an example of maybe like a very challenging phone call or a uh experience that you've had at the call center? Is there one memorable experience?

Jonathan: Yeah we got a lot of accents from us so maybe for example when I try to speak uh when a customer uh he got access from example for Texas or um it's so hard to understand but I try to do my best and when decide to speak it faster and faster, it's hard to understand. But I always do my best every day.

Jack: Yeah so like a southern Texas accent would be hard to understand but like in eastern in the east uh people speak quite quickly in New York and yeah Massachusetts in that area yeah people speak very fast, very quickly.

Jonathan: You got it uh by the way um well our customers are from the east coast uh Massachusetts, Boston, New York and New Jersey yeah and Philadelphia um and I find that listening also can sometimes be more difficult than speaking because there's so many ways to say the same thing and one person says it this way, another person says it a different way and you know one way to say it and so you're correct you know how to do it but they use a different or a different way and so it can be very confusing. It's like oh I know what that means I know what you're saying but I don't know that way of saying it. Yeah all this comes with more and more practice.

Kevin: Yeah exactly in the second part is the most important trying to explain the situation with the customer because it's a technical vocabulary so you need to explain some things from to someone that never uses uh technical vocabulary. That's really interesting. You need me to focus uh in something easy right to say to another person that's really interesting because then you are listening to an american a native speaker and you're speaking back to them and you're using words that they don't know so you know more English in some ways than they do. It's just that technical language. What a unique experience to know more English than a native speaker but having to change it for them to understand.

Jonathan: Yeah it's a challenge because every day you need to focus on trying to explain yourself something easy about technical vocabulary so maybe it's easy, maybe sometimes it's uh difficult because you need to guess what the customer needs and sometimes it's hard because the customer is trying to explain something and you need to all right. Did you need uh this? You need this all right. I got it and this is the result.

Jack: So uh you so you need to practice um your English and you use uh Shaw English and you listen to the A to Z English Podcast but um at your work do you also speak English to your co-workers, your colleagues. Do you practice even though you can both of you speak Spanish as a first language? Do you ever communicate in English with your colleagues just for practice?

Jonathan: Yes a few things we need to uh speak English with another uh co-workers or maybe when you need to target another department, it's always speaking English and we always needs to be focused in speaking English together and it's more easy to end of the day for the end of the day. Yeah so when you go to work you basically switch your mind to English. You just say when I'm at work I'm using English and then when I get home I use Spanish.

Jack: Is that right?

Jonathan: Yeah but it's funny because for me I try to get involved um always in English environment so when I arrive at home I turn on my tv and find um series on Netflix and in English and or are you going to when i'm going to work i'm going to listen to music or listen to your podcast on my cell phone so I trying to always um thinking English, do something in English.

Kevin: Cool! That's awesome! Yeah that's more and more practice. So of all of those things that you do the last question I like to ask people that we talk to is if you could give a tip to other listeners, what one thing do you think would be the most useful to practice English? Or what do you do that you think is the most useful?

Jonathan: All right for me um I guess um you need to practice every day. It's not my magical poison you know or something like that but the first thing you need to change your mind, uh you need to start to focus in English uh think in English. Uh do exercise practice speak with friends uh maybe international friends is the best way because you never need to speak in another language, just holding in English because if I have a friend here, I can speak Spanish. But for example, if I got a friend on in Malaysia and another person doesn't know anything about the Spanish so you need to focus almost in English.

Jack: That's a nice tip!

Kevin: Nice! Well Malaysia is good. We talked to Mei Fong last week, so maybe if you talk to her, then you can practice as well. Yeah but that's a great tip getting your mind around English that's yeah a great thing. Just practice, practice, practice.

Jonathan: Yeah a lot of practice and uh one thing, it's helped me a lot, is this shadowing technique.

Kevin: Uh shadowing uh yeah watching videos on YouTube and practice is a bit aloud and yeah if you can't practice with a friend, you can still do something alone. Just listen and repeat and listen, repeat it does help. It helps you sound more natural in the language that's really fantastic.

Kevin: You sound like you work really hard at your English and we're talking to you here, so it's having good results.

Jack: Good job! Absolutely. Yeah thanks a lot Jonathan. We really appreciate it.

Kevin: Yeah Jonathan. Thanks for sharing your story with us. It's very cool and now you've got to get some dinner. It's late there. You must be very hungry.

Jonathan: Yeah a little bit.

Kevin: Nice well thank you for coming and talking to us.

Jonathan: Thanks to you guys. I really appreciate it.

Jack: It's our pleasure.

Kevin: Yyeah have a great evening.

Jonathan: Same to you and take care and I hope I'll see you soon again.

Kevin: All right thank you.

Jack: Thanks Jonathan bye bye.

Jonathan: See ya.