

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



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Episode #204

Brexit: Part 2

22nd Oct, 2021

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:11] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:21] I'm Alastair Budge, and today is part two of our three part mini-series on Brexit. In Part One, which was one of our member-only episodes, we covered the history of Britain's complicated relationship with Europe.

[00:00:37] In Part three, which will be another member-only one and is coming out next week, we'll talk about the [aftermath](#)¹ of the Brexit vote, what has actually happened since and how has it compared to the predictions made by both those who were for and against Brexit.

[00:00:55] And in today's episode, part two, we are going to cover the vote itself.

¹ the period that follows an important event and the results of it



Brexit: Part 2

[00:01:01] We'll talk about the [run up](#)² to the vote, why the UK held a referendum on EU membership in the first place, the campaigns that were run both for and against, how people voted, and for what reasons, and why it was that the Leave vote that proved [victorious](#)³.

[00:01:20] OK then, the Brexit vote. If you listened to the last episode, you will remember that Britain has had a long, close, and complicated relationship with Europe for the past [two millennia](#)⁴.

[00:01:36] Britain had been part of the European Community, the [predecessor](#)⁵ to the EU, since 1973.

[00:01:44] Relations hadn't always been [smooth](#)⁶, but it was considered by at least those in power in Britain to have been a relationship of [mutual benefit](#)⁷.

[00:01:54] So when it was announced that the UK was to hold a referendum on EU membership, it wasn't considered by most people to be such [a big deal](#)⁸.

² the period of time just before an important event

³ being the winner

⁴ a period of two thousand years

⁵ something that has been followed by something else

⁶ having no difficulties

⁷ some advantage shared by all who were involved

⁸ important



Brexit: Part 2

[00:02:06] Indeed, it wasn't the first time that the UK had held a referendum on membership of the European Union - there was a referendum on the European Community in 1975, and 67% of people in the UK voted to remain.

[00:02:24] Up until the more recent referendum vote was announced, which was only in 2015, a year before the actual referendum, the EU was a relatively minor⁹ issue for most people in the UK.

[00:02:40] So, how did the country go from here to being consumed¹⁰ and divided¹¹ over EU membership?

[00:02:48] And how did almost every commentator and person in power, be that the British Prime Minister David Cameron or the then US President Barack Obama, get it so badly wrong?

[00:03:05] Let's start by talking about why the UK even held a Brexit referendum in the first place.

⁹ having little importance

¹⁰ very much affected

¹¹ being in a state of disagreement



Brexit: Part 2

[00:03:13] Throughout history, as we heard about in the previous episode, Britain had a [slightly¹² sceptical¹³](#) attitude towards Europe. It enjoyed the benefits of closer [ties¹⁴](#) with Europe, but was never completely European.

[00:03:29] Many people in Britain were deeply [sceptical](#) about closer [ties](#) with Europe, as they believed that this would require Britain to give up control, to lose control over its own destiny.

[00:03:42] Despite the UK joining the EEC, the [precursor¹⁵](#) to the EU in 1973, and then Britons voting by a large [margin¹⁶](#) to remain in the EEC in 1975, these Eurosceptic feelings never completely went away.

[00:04:02] For many years it was mainly a technical question among right-wing politicians, but in the early 21st century, and especially the decade before the Brexit vote, these feelings [crept¹⁷](#) closer and closer into the [public sphere¹⁸](#).

¹² a little

¹³ doubting

¹⁴ connection

¹⁵ the organisation that came before and led to

¹⁶ amount

¹⁷ moved slowly

¹⁸ an open discussion in which political opinions are expressed



Brexit: Part 2

[00:04:20] There were an increasing number of anti-Europe political groups, the main populist one being the UK Independent Party or UKIP, for short.

[00:04:33] It was led by one of the most controversial and [divisive](#)¹⁹ politicians in the country – a populist, anti-immigration and anti-EU campaigner and member of the European Parliament called Nigel Farage.

[00:04:49] Like him or [loathe](#)²⁰ him, [he drew the crowds](#)²¹, he was popular, and seen as much more approachable than normal politicians.

[00:04:59] Farage would often be photographed in a pub with a pint of British beer, wearing British [Barbour](#)²² jackets, smoking cigarettes, and behaving in a way that wasn't typical for politicians.

[00:05:15] This approach was hugely successful.

[00:05:19] UKIP continued to grow. In 2009 it received 16.5% of the votes in the European Parliament Elections, then it received 3.9 million votes, which was a 12.6% share in the UK 2015 General election, and it was clear that its message was [appealing](#)²³ to a certain part of the UK population.

¹⁹ causing disagreement between people

²⁰ hate

²¹ he was popular

²² a waterproof jacket, associated with the British countryside

²³ attractive



Brexit: Part 2

[00:05:45] After David Cameron became Prime Minister in 2010, he thought he could [kill two birds with one stone](#)²⁴ by offering a referendum on the UK's membership of the EU.

[00:05:59] Firstly, it would [placate](#)²⁵ the Eurosceptic element of his own party, the Conservative party, and [strengthen](#)²⁶ Cameron's position as leader of the party.

[00:06:11] It would also attract more right-wing voters who would otherwise vote for UKIP.

[00:06:18] Plus, for most people, or so Cameron thought, EU membership is an unimportant, simply bureaucratic part of their lives.

[00:06:30] Surveys done the years before the Brexit vote was announced suggested that only 1% of people in Britain actually thought EU membership was an important factor, and the last time the government had asked the British people for their views on Europe in the 1975 referendum, 67% had said they wanted to remain.

[00:06:54] What's more, the British people had voted with the government on every single referendum vote, and David Cameron had recently won the 2010 general election and the referendum on Scottish independence had also [gone his way](#)²⁷.

²⁴ succeed in achieving two things in a single action

²⁵ make someone stop feeling angry, appease

²⁶ make something stronger

²⁷ been favourable to him



Brexit: Part 2

[00:07:12] So, when the Conservatives were up for re-election in 2015, Cameron decided to make a referendum on EU membership part of his [manifesto](#)²⁸.

[00:07:23] Vote Conservative, he said, and we will hold a referendum.

[00:07:28] It was a [gamble](#)²⁹, but one he seemed confident would [go his way](#)³⁰.

[00:07:34] It would end up costing him his political career, and be described as "[indescribably](#)³¹ selfish [recklessness](#)³²."

[00:07:43] Now, let's move on to the vote itself.

[00:07:47] After [pledging](#)³³ to hold a referendum on EU membership, [the stage was set](#)³⁴ for an electoral campaign.

[00:07:55] But the campaign on EU membership was unlike any normal political campaign.

[00:08:02] For starters, the campaigns weren't divided along party lines.

²⁸ a statement or declaration of the beliefs and policies of a political party

²⁹ something that involved risk, done in the hope to achieve success

³⁰ be favourable to him

³¹ in a way that is too extreme to describe

³² lack of care or caution

³³ formally promising

³⁴ conditions have been made right



Brexit: Part 2

[00:08:08] Because he was confident that Remain would win and therefore his position would be **strengthened**³⁵, Cameron allowed Conservative MPs to decide for themselves whether to support Brexit or not.

[00:08:23] Many chose to go against Cameron, joining the Leave campaign, the campaign to exit the EU.

[00:08:31] They were also joined by politicians from Labour, the Liberal Democrats and UKIP.

[00:08:37] And the Remain campaign also had people from across **the political spectrum**³⁶, many of whom were there somewhat **reluctantly**³⁷.

[00:08:47] Not least the leader of the Conservatives, David Cameron, and the leader of Labour, Jeremy Corbyn.

[00:08:54] Both had expressed Eurosceptic views in the past, and both were fierce political enemies and clearly disliked each other, so it was not particularly convincing.

[00:09:08] For someone like Jeremy Corbyn, who also thought that the Remain campaign was likely to win, there was little value in forming an **alliance**³⁸ with his

³⁵ made stronger

³⁶ the different political opinions or viewpoints

³⁷ unwillingly, with hesitation

³⁸ an agreement to work together because of shared interests or goals



[mortal enemy](#)³⁹, David Cameron - he might have wanted Remain to win, but he didn't want to make David Cameron look good.

[00:09:29] And when it came to the main messaging of the Remain camp, they didn't tend to mention any of the benefits of EU membership, but instead focussed on the unnecessary risks of leaving the EU.

[00:09:45] Leaving the EU would be a jump into the darkness, [leaping into the unknown](#)⁴⁰, and a choice that would make everyone poorer.

[00:09:55] Bankers, economists and politicians did [projections](#)⁴¹ of what the cost of leaving the EU would be.

[00:10:03] The UK Treasury, essentially the Ministry of Finance, even provided a real number of what Brexit would cost the average household in the UK every single year. £4,300, which was around €6,000 at the time.

[00:10:22] The overall message was, "yes, the EU might not be perfect, but it's not so bad, and voting to leave means risking everything and you'll probably end up a lot poorer".

³⁹ main political opponent and one he did not like

⁴⁰ being involved in a situation from which you don't know what to expect

⁴¹ calculations or guesses



Brexit: Part 2

[00:10:36] It's easy to say this with the benefit of [hindsight](#)⁴², but this message simply wasn't sufficiently convincing to much of the UK population.

[00:10:47] The Leave campaign, on the other hand, was significantly better organised, and had a much better understanding of what people actually wanted and cared about.

[00:10:59] Instead of trying to scare people into a decision, its key messages were a mixture of emotional and practical.

[00:11:08] And ultimately, it all came down to a simple word: control.

[00:11:14] At almost any time anyone from the Leave campaign was talking about Brexit, everything revolved around the idea of taking back control.

[00:11:25] Taking back control of British borders.

[00:11:28] Taking back control of decisions within the government.

[00:11:31] Taking back control of where British taxes are spent.

[00:11:36] They didn't really compete on the argument of whether or not Brexit would make the UK poorer, instead putting all the focus on [self-sovereignty](#)⁴³ and almost suggesting or at least admitting that it was better to be independent and a little bit poorer than controlled by Europe.

⁴² the ability to understand something only after it has happened

⁴³ the power to control their own government



Brexit: Part 2

[00:11:58] The Leave campaign knew that this idea of self-control was very important to British voters, and used it effectively, especially when combined with something else that British people have an almost **unbreakable**⁴⁴ love for: The National Health Service, the NHS.

[00:12:19] The Leave campaign made spending on the NHS a **vital**⁴⁵ part of its campaign, even painting a bus with the message that the UK sends £350 million a week to the EU, and that we can spend that money on the NHS instead.

[00:12:38] Now, that number was proved to be incorrect, it was a great **exaggeration**⁴⁶ of the real amount, but the actual number almost didn't matter - the point was that if the UK could take back control of its finances then the quality of its **treasured**⁴⁷ health service would improve.

[00:12:59] The Leave campaign also very cleverly, and partially **accurately**⁴⁸, linked spending on the NHS to the rise of immigration from Europe, especially Eastern Europe.

[00:13:11] Millions of people had come to the UK from Europe putting increasing pressure on the NHS. If we can limit the levels of immigration and spend an extra 350

⁴⁴ impossible to break

⁴⁵ very important

⁴⁶ the act of representing something as larger than it really is

⁴⁷ highly valued

⁴⁸ in a way that was exact or correct



Brexit: Part 2

million pounds a week on the NHS, then the quality of care in the country will increase for British people, so the argument went.

[00:13:34] Ultimately, the messaging of the Leave campaign [triumphed⁴⁹](#), it [resonated⁵⁰](#) with a majority of voters, and was enough to convince 17,410,742 people, 52% of the voters, to put a big tick in the “yes” box to leave the European Union.

[00:13:56] Ever since the day of the vote, on June 23rd 2016, commentators have been asking themselves the reasons why.

[00:14:05] We'll explore the major ones shortly, but before we do that it's important to understand how the vote tended to be split across regions and demographics.

[00:14:18] To state the obvious, these are [generalisations⁵¹](#), but are useful to give you an idea of some of the differences.

[00:14:26] If you voted to Remain you might well be a member of a university town – Oxford, Bristol, Cambridge or York, for example, or a multicultural city.

[00:14:38] London, with its highly educated and multicultural population, voted Remain.

[00:14:45] If you were Scottish you were highly likely to vote Remain.

⁴⁹ was a great success

⁵⁰ received a sympathetic or agreeing response from

⁵¹ general statements which don't apply to every situation



Brexit: Part 2

[00:14:49] If you were young and well educated then the **likelihood**⁵² was that you would vote Remain.

[00:14:55] Indeed, as a general rule, the older you were the more likely you were to vote Leave, and the more education you had received, the more likely you were to vote Remain.

[00:15:07] Leavers, people who voted Leave, were initially **characterised**⁵³ as being mainly so called “left behinds” – in other words people who had not benefited from rises in wealth or, more broadly, globalisation.

[00:15:24] Often these people viewed immigrants as making it more likely that the **indigenous**⁵⁴ Brits’ **wages**⁵⁵ would be **held back**⁵⁶ in real terms because of the large numbers of immigrants who were prepared to work for less.

[00:15:39] These people were most likely to have supported UKIP and to hold what many from the educated, **city-dwelling**⁵⁷, metropolitan elite would regard as “politically incorrect” or socially unprogressive views.

⁵² probability

⁵³ described

⁵⁴ originating in Great Britain, native

⁵⁵ the money earned by an employee

⁵⁶ stopped from moving forward

⁵⁷ living in the city



Brexit: Part 2

[00:15:55] By contrast, surveys show that a large group of socially conservative older voters, alarmed at the [pace](#)⁵⁸ of change in society, also voted for Brexit.

[00:16:08] Although they may have shared many of the views of UKIP supporters they, for fear of being thought racist and [inappropriate](#)⁵⁹, kept these views to themselves.

[00:16:20] These people were often most motivated and energised by the [sovereignty](#)⁶⁰ issue – the sense that Britain’s status as an independent nation with the [capacity](#)⁶¹ to make its own laws had been [undermined](#)⁶² by its membership of the EU.

[00:16:37] Combined with all this was an [erosion](#)⁶³ of trust in the political class, and in [so-called](#)⁶⁴ “experts”.

⁵⁸ the speed at which something happens

⁵⁹ not suitable or proper in the circumstances

⁶⁰ the power of a country to control its own government

⁶¹ ability or power

⁶² made less powerful, less likely to succeed

⁶³ slow destruction of something

⁶⁴ as some people call them without actually being true



Brexit: Part 2

[00:16:46] In the [lead up](#)⁶⁵ to the Brexit campaign, the Conservative politician Michel Gove, who was himself the [epitome](#)⁶⁶ of the political class, said “I think the people of this country have had enough of experts”.

[00:17:00] For many people who voted Brexit, they simply didn't trust politicians to improve their lives.

[00:17:08] From the [bailing out](#)⁶⁷ of the banks and bankers after the Financial Crisis through to the Expenses Scandal where it was revealed that politicians were using public money as their own [pocket money](#)⁶⁸, there was simply a huge [reduction](#)⁶⁹ of trust in those in power.

[00:17:26] Politicians and bankers were people who lived far away, [inevitably](#)⁷⁰ down in London, spending your money, making decisions about your country and not doing anything to improve your life.

[00:17:39] And if you thought British politicians were bad, wait until you hear about European MPs, members of the European parliament.

⁶⁵ point that led to

⁶⁶ the typical or perfect example

⁶⁷ withdrawal from, abandonment

⁶⁸ an amount of money one carries to spend as they choose

⁶⁹ the amount by which something is made less

⁷⁰ in a way that is certain to happen



Brexit: Part 2

[00:17:48] Nigel Farage, the leader of UKIP was himself a member of the European parliament, and he told stories about how [out of touch](#)⁷¹ and unnecessary [bureaucrats](#)⁷² in Brussels were.

[00:18:02] The picture he painted was of [overpaid](#)⁷³ [bureaucrats](#) in Brussels deciding what shape a banana should be - and he knew, because he had been one of them!

[00:18:14] What's more, these EU politicians had done nothing to stop the immigration crisis, so not only were they [vastly](#)⁷⁴ [overpaid](#) but they were also not doing anything that was helpful to Europe.

[00:18:27] [Let's be rid of them](#)⁷⁵, the Leave campaign said.

[00:18:31] A vote to Leave is a vote for taking back control, it's a vote to free ourselves from Brussels, to manage our own lives, our own finances, our own borders, and our own destinies.

[00:18:45] It's a powerful message, and one that was powerful enough for 52% of voters to agree with.

⁷¹ unable to understand the concerns of others

⁷² officials in government departments who are more concerned about administrative details than people's concerns

⁷³ paid too much

⁷⁴ to a great extent or degree

⁷⁵ Let's no longer have them or be bothered by them



[00:18:53] Ultimately, the story of the Brexit vote is one of a vote against the status quo, against the [norm⁷⁶](#), against the elites, against traditional politicians, against [out of touch bureaucrats](#), and a vote for change.

[00:19:09] Time will only tell the true impact of that change.

[00:19:16] OK then, that is it for today's episode on the Brexit vote.

[00:19:21] As a reminder, this was part two of our three-part series on Brexit.

[00:19:27] In part one we talked about the relationship between Britain and Europe throughout history, and in part three we'll talk about what has happened since the Brexit vote, and some of the theories about what a Brexit Britain might look like in the future.

[00:19:43] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:19:48] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

⁷⁶ the accepted way of doing things



Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Aftermath	the period that follows an important event and the results of it
Run up	the period of time just before an important event
Victorious	being the winner
Two millennia	a period of two thousand years
Predecessor	something that has been followed by something else
Smooth	having no difficulties
Mutual benefit	some advantage shared by all who were involved
A big deal	important
Minor	having little importance
Consumed	very much affected
Divided	being in a state of disagreement
Slightly	a little



Brexit: Part 2

Sceptical	doubting
Ties	connection
Precursor	the organisation that came before and led to
Margin	amount
Crept	moved slowly
Public sphere	an open discussion in which political opinions are expressed
Divisive	causing disagreement between people
Loathe	hate
He drew the crowds	he was popular
Barbour	a waterproof jacket, associated with the British countryside
Appealing	attractive
Kill two birds with one stone	succeed in achieving two things in a single action
Placate	make someone stop feeling angry, appease
Strengthen	make something stronger
Gone his way	been favourable to him



Brexit: Part 2

Manifesto	a statement or declaration of the beliefs and policies of a political party
Gamble	something that involved risk, done in the hope to achieve success
Go his way	be favourable to him
Indescribably	in a way that is too extreme to describe
Recklessness	lack of care or caution
Pledging	formally promising
The stage was set	conditions have been made right
Strengthened	made stronger
The political spectrum	the different political opinions or viewpoints
Reluctantly	unwillingly, with hesitation
Alliance	an agreement to work together because of shared interests or goals
Mortal enemy	main political opponent and one he did not like
Leaping into the unknown	being involved in a situation from which you don't know what to expect



Brexit: Part 2

Projections	calculations or guesses
Hindsight	the ability to understand something only after it has happened
Self-sovereignty	the power to control their own government
Unbreakable	impossible to break
Vital	very important
Exaggeration	the act of representing something as larger than it really is
Treasured	highly valued
Accurately	in a way that was exact or correct
Triumphed	was a great success
Resonated	received a sympathetic or agreeing response from
Generalisations	general statements which don't apply to every situation
Likelihood	probability
Characterised	described
Indigenous	originating in Great Britain, native
Wages	the money earned by an employee



Brexit: Part 2

Held back	stopped from moving forward
City-dwelling	living in the city
Pace	the speed at which something happens
Inappropriate	not suitable or proper in the circumstances
Sovereignty	the power of a country to control its own government
Capacity	ability or power
Undermined	made less powerful, less likely to succeed
Erosion	slow destruction of something
So-called	as some people call them without actually being true
Lead up	point that led to
Epitome	the typical or perfect example
Bailing out	withdrawal from, abandonment
Pocket money	an amount of money one carries to spend as they choose
Reduction	the amount by which something is made less
Inevitably	in a way that is certain to happen



Brexit: Part 2

Out of touch unable to understand the concerns of others

Bureaucrats officials in government departments who are more concerned about
administrative details than people's concerns

Overpaid paid too much

Vastly to a great extent or degree

Let's be rid of them Let's no longer have them or be bothered by them

Norm the accepted way of doing things

We'd love to get your feedback on this episode.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

Let us know in the forum community.leonardoenglish.com

