

St Augustine's Centre, Halifax

English for Life in the UK

Podcast: Series 2 Preview

Oct 2020

Mark Hello and welcome to a special episode of the podcast, **English for Life in the UK**. This is a preview episode for Series 2 of this podcast. For those of you that are new to the podcast, this will tell you a bit about who we are, what we do on the podcast and how you can make best use of it. For those who've listened before, this is a reminder and will tell you a bit about what's coming next.

So Series 1 will continue to be available through all the normal podcast sites and through our website. But we are about to embark on Series 2 and I discuss that in this episode with Christine and Sue and we're also joined, on this episode, by two of our students - Arsalan and Gul, who will tell you a bit about how they have made use of the podcast.

(Music)

Christine So Mark, how long have we been doing this podcast for?

Mark Well, I think it's getting on for a year, now, since we first started it.

Christine It must be, mustn't it?

Mark Yes, we've done 33 episodes I think. Erm - we've had the odd week where we haven't done one, so yes, it's about a year now that we've been doing this.

Christine About a year - and of course, when we started, it was a follow-up from our face-to-face class, because we taught English for Life in the UK as a class, in ... at St Augustine's Centre.

Mark That's right - but more recently, certainly since the lock-down¹, this has become an on-line podcast, which we do remotely and ... but we've kept it going through all that

¹ lock-down = a short way of referring to the Government restrictions on movement and socialising since the advent of the Corona virus pandemic, which may also be referred to as Covid-19.

time. And the number of listeners we've had has been going up and up, and so we decided that what we ought to do is to try to just reflect a bit on what we've done so far and then how we might build on that, in the future. So this episode is intended to let people know who haven't connected with the podcast before, what it's about and what we do, but also, [for] those people who have listened previously: what we're planning to do next.

Christine Great! Great! So - what do we then Mark? (Laughing)

Mark Well, we've chosen subjects to talk about which have often come from the *Official Government Handbook*² which is for those people who eventually want to become British citizens - and the handbook is covers the areas that the "Citizenship Test" covers, which anyone who wants to be a British citizen will have to do, but we don't just do those subjects and we've also included other things that are in the news at the time - that kind of thing.

What would you say, Christine, was the kind of style that we've used?

Christine Well - tend to have a conversation really. Two or three of us will talk about the subject and we'll talk about what we know and what we're interested in.

Mark Yes - one of the important things is that we've tried to include different voices. So, I have a London accent, you have a Scottish accent. Sheena, who's regularly one of our contributors, is from Yorkshire, as is John, but we've also interviewed other people with different voices. I suppose the important thing - the important idea behind that is that for people who are learning a language, they need to be able to listen to different voices, using that language, talking about different subjects and doing it in a natural, everyday way, and that's what we've tried to do.

Christine Yes - so we're not trying t... we're not a language lesson - we're not trying to be a language lesson - we're trying to ... our aim is to give people practice in understanding

² There are 2 official Government books. 'Life in the U.K. A guide for New Residents' and 'Life in the United Kingdom: Official Study Guide. They cover the same topics but the first one is more detailed. They are available to buy from The Stationary Office, www.tsoshop.co.uk or you can find them in most libraries.

- that listening is the foundation skill of any language, really - listening and understanding.

(5 minutes:02 seconds)

Mark Yes - I think that's right.

Christine But we do, quite often, we also give some language points, at the end of the podcast.

Mark Yes, yes - and it's our intention to carry on in that kind of style, going forward. So we will start a ... what we're calling Series 2 of the podcast. So, we're now saying we've completed Series 1 - we'll move on to Series 2. It will be a similar style, but we are going to focus some of the next few lessons around a number of the subjects in the *Official Government Handbook* which we haven't covered so far, but we will then go on and cover some of the same subjects again, but to come at it from a different angle - maybe to include some different voices and discuss some different topics and issues that arise from that, as we move forward.

Christine Yes - we don't try - I think it's important to say - we don't try to be the *Official Guide* to English in the UK. We say our opinions and we discuss things.

Mark Yes - and it's important to say those opinions are our own, personal opinions, they're not those of the St Augustine's Centre, which is where we all volunteer or work and ... but it is our personal views that we use in the podcast.

Christine Perhaps it would be good - Mark, there might be people listening to this, who don't know what the St Augustine's Centre is. Perhaps it would be helpful to explain.

Mark OK. So we are based in Halifax, in Yorkshire, in the North of England. We are a charity and we focus on supporting and providing advice, and sanctuary, as well, for anybody who is in real need. But in the recent years - the last ten years or so - we've particularly focussed on supporting and helping asylum seekers, refugees and recent migrants to this country. Because the area around where we work, there are a lot of people who are in that situation and obviously helping them to learn English, and to know more about life in this country, is an important part of that support.

We've got with us today, Sue - and Sue is one of the staff at the Centre. Sue - would you like to introduce yourself and just say a little bit about what you do and how that fits in with the podcast?

(7:57)

Sue Yes. Hello, I'm Sue - I work for St Augustine's on a part-time basis - I'm the English Language Programme Co-ordinator at St Augustine's. So that means my job is to organise our English classes, and to work with our team of brilliant volunteers - we've got at least 30 volunteers working with us. Some of them are ex-teachers - some of them have come from an education background, some of them are just interested in working with people who are learning English. So we provide a range of classes each week: at the moment, we've got three beginners' classes and three intermediate classes. And they're all slightly different - working with the different skills and interests of our volunteers - and trying to meet the different needs of our students. We've got at least 70 students working with us at the moment. From all over the world, speaking all different first languages. And it's great to be able to offer them such a range of different ways to develop their English and the podcast fits really well into that range of things that we offer.

Christine Yes - so which students would you say benefit most from the podcast? What level is it aimed at?

Sue I think it's aimed at students who've got a bit of English already. So they can understand, they can follow the podcast - so it would be intermediate students, rather than beginners.

Mark I think we've always said that students, listeners shouldn't need to understand everything that's in an episode, but as long as they can understand the majority of it, then they'll get benefit from continuing to listen.

Sue Yes - and I think it's good to be able to listen to different people speaking. It's good, sometimes, just to let the language kind of wash over you. Just listen to it once through and then listen to it again, and try and pick out the bits that you don't

understand, and maybe use the transcript to help. If you read something, you can pick out any new vocabulary and look it up, to help understanding.

Christine And that's really helpful with pronunciation as well. If you read the transcript, while you're listening to the podcast,

Sue Yeah - definitely! And listening to the way people speak. If you are studying from a textbook, you get a very formal take on what English is like, whereas if you listen to native speakers speaking English, we don't speak like the textbooks are written.

Christine We don't, do we? (Laughing)

Mark Definitely not! Maybe we should just explain about the transcript: so after each episode - after we publish it - a few days' later - we put on our website, a transcript - a written record of that episode - and sometimes, with illustrations as well, where the illustrations we think would help people. So you can both listen to the podcast, and then you can also listen and, at the same time, follow it, by reading the transcript and there's a lot of evidence that that's a very effective way to improve your language skills improve your English.

So, over the next few weeks - we are going to do - amongst the subjects we are going to talk about, something that's in the *Guide* about British values - what are the things that are important as values, in Britain, and discuss whether we really think they *are* British values. We'll talk a bit about responsibilities and rights and the process of becoming a citizen: what you have to do. We'll talk a bit about the United Kingdom and how it's made up of the different countries and we'll start talking a bit about some history of the UK as well, and we'll also fit in some topical issues, one of which will be the USA presidential elections because they're coming up in a couple of weeks' time, so we'll probably do an episode around that, as well.

(12:23')

Christine Great - I would like to remind people that they can communicate with us directly by sending an email - to the **English for Life in the UK** email and the email address is:

englishforlifeintheuk@gmail.com

Very straightforward. "English For ..." spelt F - O - R.

Mark Yes - thanks for that Christine. And also we should tell people the website where they can find the transcripts and also the links to all the episodes and that is:

www.staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk

Christine I'll spell the St Augustine's, Halifax: that's

S-T-A-U-G-U-S-T-I-N-E-S-C-E-N-T-R-E-H-A-L-I-F-A-X

So, www.staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk

(Music) (13:59)

Mark Before we finish we thought you might like to hear from two students who have been making use of the podcast so far. First of all, you'll hear from Arsalan, and then from Gul.

Arsalan - thank you very much for joining us - would you tell our listeners who you are and where you're from?

Arsalan Hello everyone, my name is Arsalan, I'm from Iran.

Mark That's great - and how long have you been in the UK?

Arsalan I have been about one year in the UK.

Mark About one year - that's great. Now Arsalan, I know that you have listened to some of the podcast episodes: would you tell us something about how you think the episodes can help people to improve their English?

Arsalan I think ... it is my opinion and my experience, when everybody who wants to learn new language, I think we need to learn four skills - reading, writing, listening and speaking. And above all, I think is listening - and I think the podcast can help us about the [with] listening because we can detect different accents and we can listen to different subjects and we can learn more different words.

Mark That's brilliant. Thank you Arsalan, that's certainly our hope that we are able to do that.

What about - have you learnt some new things about the United Kingdom and about life here, from the podcasts?

Arsalan Yes - of course. I learnt more things about the UK. For example, I know about British history and British culture, for example. I know about the British sport. I know, in 1966, the British National (Football) Team winning in the World Cup and I know about the British Empire and Norman Conquest. I think those things I learnt.

Mark That's brilliant, that's brilliant - thanks very much Arsalan. What are your .. tell us a little bit about your hopes for your future in the UK.

Arsalan OK. I want to improve my language skills - my English language skills - and I want to study civil engineering at University, and I hope - I hope and I would like to get married and have a family in the UK.

Mark That's wonderful. And would you like to become a British citizen at some stage?

Arsalan I think that it's what any asylum seeker or refugee in the UK wants - to be a citizen in the UK.

Mark That's great. Listen, thank you very much Arsalan.

OK - so, Gul - thank you very much for joining me. Would you like to tell our listeners who you are and where you're from?

Gul Yeah [Yes] - I'm Gul, I'm from Kazakhstan and actually my profession is journalism, so now, I'm so happy to join with your podcast.

Mark That's great, thank you, Gul. And how long have you been in this country?

Gul It will be near [nearly] for a year - from new year, from January, - I am in the UK, so.

Mark Right, that's great, thank you. And Gul, I know you have listened to some episodes of the podcast.

Gul Yeah [Yes] -

Mark Would you say how do you think the podcast can help people who want to improve their English?

Gul Actually, the podcast is brilliant - I love this podcast, really. Every topic is different. There ... most interesting for me was the British Empire - it's a big topic and a lot of information, a lot of new things, a lot of historical words and when I get another topic like [the] British Fashion Industry, it is more modern - it is so interesting to hear, to learn. To have the interest for language: I think this is very important.

(Music) (19:44)

Mark So that's it for this preview episode. My thanks to Arsalan and Gul for sharing their experiences of the podcast so far. Don't forget if you want to listen to all the episodes in Series 1: you can get these through our website, or through your usual podcast sites that's Apple, or Spotify, or Google, or Anchor. We'll be back very soon with the first episode of Series 2 and we look forward to you joining us then. Goodbye for now.

(Music) (20:44) end.