



Clover English

PODCAST PDF GUIDE
BREXIT & IRELAND

POLITICAL VOCAB
USING PREDICTIONS

TRANSCRIPT



“Brexit and Ireland.. Brexit and Ireland... Oh my God, where to even begin?”

Hi I’m Kerry and welcome to this episode of the Clover English podcast. The podcast dedicated to helping you improve your English while learning about Irish culture. There was a little delay in getting this out to you because I was anxiously waiting for my new microphone.

So I hope you’ll notice a nice improvement in sound quality. Today I’m going to tackle a very complicated topic: how does Brexit affect Ireland? First of all It’s important to note that much of this debate is still speculative, meaning we are predicting what will happen and nothing is yet **set in stone**. We’ll be looking at language for discussing politics, language for making predictions and also we’ll cover some important geographical and historical points to aide your understanding of the situation in relation to Brexit.

Remember that these podcasts come with accompanying PDF guides and I’m offering the first few of these for free. So they have the transcript, vocabulary explanations as well as extra vocab and grammar information. And in this one I’ve also included some videos that are related to Brexit and the issues in Ireland which I really encourage you to check out. Okay, they’re on YouTube so, very easy to check those out. [It’s] just to improve your listening skills a little bit more and... yeah just to get some more exposure. So, let’s get started.

Notes:

Set in Stone: something permanent or 100% decided

First of all I want to look at a few useful words and their meaning before we get right into the main discussion: I also want to highlight the word “discussion”. A lot of students, particularly Spanish students, in my experience, think that discussion means argument “discusión, no?” eem no. A discussion for us is more like a chat, like a debate where we exchange ideas. It has nothing to do with an argument. An argument is “una discusión.” So this is a discussion, not an argument, so try not to get confused with that.

So first of all a customs union. This is a phrase that comes up a lot in relation to Brexit, to Ireland and yeah, to the European Union in general. So customs itself is like if you go to the airport and you have something to declare, say you have a lot of cigarettes, sometimes they do it with a lot of cigarettes and you have to say “yes I have these cigarettes in my backpack/in my suitcase.” Or you have a lot of money, you’re travelling with a lot of money you have to go to the customs office at the airport and declare your goods. So that’s customs.

So a customs Union is a type of trade deal that countries share to remove barriers to trade. So it’s what we have here in the European Union, we’re all in the same customs union which means it’s easier for us to trade with other countries within the European Union. Which brings me to tariffs.

Tariffs: a tariff is a cost or a charge imposed on something. For example, if countries want to trade and they don’t belong to the same customs union they might have to pay tariffs in order to trade together. Okay, so just like a little charge, well little, I don’t think they’re very little...It’s something that they have to pay in order to trade with other countries.

Another thing we a lot in relation to the Brexit debate is hard/soft border. So a border is the barrier between two countries. For example, Spain and Portugal share a border, as do Spain and France. Now with relation to Brexit and Ireland we speak a lot about the border between the North so Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland.

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A hard border would mean a type of control at the border. An example of a hard border between two countries would be the USA and Mexico. A perfect example of a very hard border. A soft border is a type of open border that we have within the European Union, they're very open. So, now that we've seen that vocabulary, let's **dive right in**. It seems that everyone and their granny has an opinion about Brexit. It sent **shockwaves** throughout Europe and raised a very important question: how will the UK's departure from the EU affect its closest neighbour?

There is no other European country that is going to be as affected as much by Brexit (apart from the UK..) as Ireland.

I recently did a little **survey** on Instagram to see if people understood the difference between Ireland, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom. Many of you answered correctly, so great, but quite a few of you were rather confused so let's clear that up quickly. The Republic of Ireland was made an independent country in 1921 after the War of Independence with Great Britain. However, not all of Ireland was included in this new state. Six counties in the Northern region of Ulster remained in the United Kingdom and became known as Northern Ireland.

To this day, Northern Ireland is still a part of the United Kingdom along with Scotland, England and Wales. As many of you may know, the situation in Northern Ireland was and continues to be complicated. Citizens of Northern Ireland are entitled to both Irish and British citizenship as, around half of the population continue to identify as being Irish, while approximately the other half identify as being British.

Notes:

Dive right in: get started with something especially with enthusiasm

Shockwaves: an event that causes a commotion or shock

Survey: a collection of facts or opinions about a certain topic

Currently there is no border between the two Ireland's. People are free to trade and travel freely between the two countries and many do so on a regular basis. Around 30,000 people cross the border every day, so 30,000 people cross that border everyday and even some buildings and homes are situated on both sides of the border. So you can have one building or one home that actually is between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

So this brings me to my first all-important-question about Brexit and Ireland: how will this border be affected when the UK officially **withdraws** from the UK? Sorry, when the UK officially withdraws from the EU I don't think the UK is going to withdraw from the UK... The open border between the two Ireland's is not only practical for trade reasons, having an open border facilitates trade, but it's also highly important as a means to help maintain peace in Northern Ireland. So another quick history lesson here, very quick. From around 1969 to 2004 Northern Ireland experienced a violent, turbulent period of conflict known as "The Troubles".

In a nutshell, it was an armed conflict over the political status of Northern Ireland with the paramilitary group the IRA fighting for the state's independence from Britain and the British army and other unionist paramilitaries fighting to maintain the country in the United Kingdom.

The conflict more or less came to an end with the signing of the peace agreement known as The Good Friday agreement. This agreement is talked about a lot in the Brexit debate. So with that we attained the elimination of a land border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland it was an important aspect of this peace agreement and it's one which is threatened by Brexit. After Brexit, Northern Ireland will be the only country in the United Kingdom to share a border with the European Union, that being the border with the Republic of Ireland. The main question this poses is how will the Irish-Northern Irish border remain open, without controls or checks, after Brexit? And if checks and controls are put in place; how will this affect the lives of the 30,000 people who cross the border every day? What will be the implications for the peace process in Northern Ireland?

Notes:

Withdraw: leave (formal) or to remove oneself from something

In a nutshell: an expression used to mean "in summary"

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The border has become a key issue in the Brexit debate. One proposed method to avoid what's known as a "hard" border would be the introduction of a "back-stop". This is another word that just comes up constantly in the Brexit debate: backstop, backstop, backstop. The back-stop would involve Northern Ireland staying in the EU customs union which would avoid trade goods being checked at the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, allowing for free trade. However, this is **deemed** unacceptable by various parties in British politics, particularly the DUP; a pro-British unionist party in Northern Ireland who fear that the backstop arrangement would threaten the union with the rest of the UK. The new PM Boris Johnson has said he will oppose the backstop claiming that it is "undemocratic". However, the Irish prime minister, or Taoiseach, as he's known, has said that Ireland supports the backstop measure and they will "**stand their ground**" over the backstop as the risk of the return of a hard border to the island of Ireland is "a very real risk" to security, to trade...

Notes:

Deem: consider (formal)

Stand your ground: defend your position

CHECK OUT THIS ARTICLE
FROM THE BBC ABOUT THE
BACK-STOP

In the transcript I've linked to [Leo Varadkar's speech](#) in a press conference with US vice-president Mike Pence, so check that out. It's short, I think it's like 3 minutes, and it also has English subtitles to help you follow along more easily. Many fear that the return of a hard border won't just affect trade, but it will **put a spanner in** the Northern Irish peace process.

It's important to note that Northern Ireland voted to remain in the European Union, along with Scotland, and that a shared European identity is important to helping Irish nationalists feel more represented in the British-owned Northern Ireland. Now, their sense of European identity is being threatened by Brexit and many feel that leaving the EU is something which is being imposed on them by the British state. Many fear that this friction will prompt a return to violence in the country and many say it may already be happening as there have been outbursts of sporadic violence in Northern Ireland over the past few months. One episode of violence even led to the death of the prominent young journalist Lyra McKee in April this year who was shot during a night of **riots** in Derry.

Check out the [interviews of people living along the border](#) which I've linked in the PDF guide. Just to see how it can really affect people on a very personal level. There's some farmers on there, business owners who are speaking about this issue that they have living so close to the border and having their businesses between the two countries.

Apart from peace-keeping concerns, another area that looks set to deeply affect Ireland is agriculture and the food sector in general. Irish beef, by the way beef is just the meat of the cow, has made its home in the United Kingdom. Every Sunday families sit down to and enjoy a good portion of Irish produced beef, it's very popular in the UK. In fact, beef exports generate 2.5 billion euros a year, not bad. So how might Brexit affect this successful Irish industry in the UK?

Notes:

Put a spanner in something: create difficulties

Riot: violent street protest

Roast Dinner: traditional British and Irish meal of mashed potato, roasted meat and vegetables

TRANSCRIPT



Above all it has the potential to damage the Irish beef industry if Britain leaves the EU customs union, which looks likely. This means the UK, despite its citizens showing a preference for Irish beef, would be free to make trade deals with other countries, such as Brazil, to obtain its beef. Furthermore, without being in the same customs union, the UK can impose tariffs on Irish beef making it more expensive for Irish suppliers to export to the UK. This would be a huge loss to the Irish beef industry because the UK is actually the highest paying market for Irish beef in Europe. Ireland could, in theory, focus its efforts on other EU countries, for example, it already exports to Germany and Italy. However, Irish beef is quite different to continental bull-beef and many Europeans simply won't **take to** Irish beef.

Apart from this, there's another problem with exporting the beef: the further it travels the shorter the meat's shelf-life is. The shelf life is how long a product can last on the market. So when you have that little date that says "best before" or "eat before" that's the kind of shelf life. One major benefit of exporting to the UK is that the shelf-life of the beef is longer because the distance travelled is shorter. And even if Ireland continues to export its beef to the UK the time it takes in transportation might naturally increase due to customs controls which would have to be introduced in the UK if they leave the customs union.

So the forecast is quite **grim** when it comes to the Irish beef industry post-Brexit, especially in the event of a no-deal Brexit. Now we've only really just **scratched the surface** in relation to the possible effects Brexit may have on the island of Ireland, but I think we'll call it a day here.

Notes:

Take to Something/someone: like something or someone

Grim: depressing

Scratch the Surface: to only be getting started

This is a massive topic and, you know, if I did a podcast for seven hours it would still would only be like... the introduction. So we'll call it a day there. Don't forget to go to my website and download the PDF guide which has the transcript, extra vocabulary, grammar explanations related to predicting (since all of us this very theoretical and nothing is set in stone yet), extra sources to listen to and even an extra article entitled: what have Irish mushrooms got to do with Brexit? The answer might surprise you...

Please subscribe to the podcast and share it on social media if you've enjoyed it and follow me on [Twitter](#) & [Instagram](#) for updates and extra help improving your English. And I will see you next time.

EXTRA VOCAB: POLITICS



Here is some extra vocabulary for discussing politics that didn't come up in the podcast:

Coalition: alliance of two or more political parties who form a government when there is no clear majority after an election

Coup d'état: Sudden, often violent, change of government when a group, such as the military, takes control.

Dictatorship: opposite of a democracy. A form of government with a single individual who has normally taken power by force and exercises an oppressive amount of political power

Grassroots: ordinary people in society, normally used with nouns like "campaign" or "group". For example, "a feminist grassroots campaign led to the liberalization of abortion laws" (meaning it was organized by the people not the government).

Landslide victory: to win a clear majority

Left wing and Right Wing: political ideologies. If someone is right wing they believe in strong immigration laws & capitalist economic policies. Whereas left wing people believe in a generous welfare state and free public services.

EXTRA VOCAB: POLITICS



Poll: a vote at an election or a survey of public opinion

Protest [noun and verb]: when ordinary people come together publicly to show their opposition to government policy.

Welfare/Benefits: public funds paid to people in need in lieu of a salary. For example “He receives welfare [benefits] because he is too sick to work”

ANOTHER REFERENDUM?



There is currently a grassroots campaign in Britain to have another referendum on Brexit. The campaigners have organized many protests, particularly outside Westminster, the British parliament.

They say that voters were lied to by right wing political groups, particularly UKIP, the Brexit party. However, many claim that having another referendum would be undemocratic and that the government must carry out the will of the public.

Voter turnout for the Brexit referendum was 72.2% and given the problems that Brexit is causing in the country, it's perhaps not unreasonable to assume that that number could be just as high or higher for a second referendum.

WHAT HAS BREXIT GOT TO DO WITH IRISH MUSHROOMS?



Mushrooms are a big deal in Ireland. And being a mushroom farmer truly is a labour of love. Mushroom farming is very labour intensive as the mushrooms are very delicate and must be picked by hand, it's certainly not a job for everyone.

In Britain, less and less people became interested in this type of work, meaning production declined. However, as Ireland was weaker economically, we picked up the slack, meaning we began to fill a gap in production. Irish producers also did a better job than their British counterparts. British mushrooms were sent off to supermarkets unwashed and unsorted, whereas Irish mushrooms were sent in much better condition.

“[They were] all beautifully sized and heads facing up, all white and clean...the supermarkets said they loved the Irish mushrooms,” said Gerry O’Reilly, Chairman of IFA’s mushroom sector.

It didn’t take long for the Irish producers to become leaders in the sector in the UK. Today, 60% of the UK mushroom sector is Irish-owned. Ireland is also the largest producer of mushrooms in the world per capita. O’Reilly’s farm alone produces 50 tonnes of mushrooms per week and all of it goes to the UK.

Following the referendum result, sterling (the British currency) experienced a drop which deeply worried mushroom producers in Ireland, who are particularly vulnerable to changes in sterling. The strength of the sterling at the beginning of year helped compensate for the drop in value following the referendum. However, O’Reilly commented that “two weeks on, three weeks, five weeks...we were saying ‘we’re not going to make it’ it’s getting worse and worse.”

Thankfully, major supermarkets like Tesco and Sainsbury’s raised the prices they paid to the mushroom producers just before Christmas to match the exchange rate.



Another potential problem could be that the UK will revive its own mushroom sector, making them less dependent on Irish mushrooms. However, mushroom farming is heavily dependent on foreign labour, mostly from Eastern Europe, and as the UK wishes to reduce the free movement of European citizens in the country, it seems unlikely that they will find the domestic manpower they would need to revive their own mushroom industry.

The future of the Irish mushroom industry could be in grave danger post-Brexit and only time will tell if this prosperous industry will survive the storm.

“TWO WEEKS ON, THREE WEEKS, FIVE WEEKS...WE WERE SAYING ‘WE’RE NOT GOING TO MAKE IT’ IT’S GETTING WORSE AND WORSE.”

GRAMMAR: MODAL VERBS AND MAKING PREDICTIONS



MAY, MIGHT AND COULD

We use these modal verbs to speak about chances & possibilities. And remember that they are followed by the infinitive without to:

I might go to London in the summer
I may go running
I could catch the train at 14:30

There isn't really a difference in meaning between these three modal verbs, however "may" sounds more formal. Remember that "can" isn't normally used to speak about chances/possibilities:

"It can rain tomorrow" is best avoided
"It might/may/could rain tomorrow" is preferred.

QUESTIONS

The structure changes when we want to ask a question about possibility. 'May' can't be used and 'might' in a question is quite formal and unnatural. To ask a question about possibility we can simply say:

"Do you think it'll rain tomorrow?"
"Is it likely to rain tomorrow?" (more formal)

Or we can use an indirect question and then the modal verb:

"Do you think you might go to Capri this summer?"

We can also use "could" in a question:

"Could Brexit cause problems in the Irish beef industry?"

MODALS CONTINUED



PAST TENSE

What if we want to use this structure in the past tense? Then we must use the modal verb + have + past participle. This is the same structure we use when speaking about something that was possible in the past but did not happen.

“The protesters could have been injured when things turned violent” (possible but did not happen)

“I’m not sure what I saw last night. It might have been a cat” (expressing a doubt/prediction about the past)