



Clover English

PODCAST PDF GUIDE

IRISH OR BRITISH? THE
NORTHERN IRISH PROBLEM

THE ISSUE OF NATIONALITY IN
NORTHERN IRELAND

TRANSCRIPT



Hi everyone and welcome to the Clover English Podcast, the podcast dedicated to helping you improve your English while teaching you about Irish culture. I'm your host Kerry and today I'll be speaking about a topic that's very close to my heart related to my nationality and to Northern Ireland.

Before we get into it I just want to say that I've been on a little hiatus (a little break) because I just had a baby. Baby Maire was born 30 November and thankfully she's very good and sleeps well so I can start getting back to my normal work. Thank you so much to everyone who sent me messages via my social media channels congratulating me on her birth that was very sweet of you, thank you very much.

You can follow me both on Instagram (Search Clover English podcast) and Twitter (@clover_english). I would also like to recommend that you download my new free guide "How to understand real spoken English". Okay, this is for anyone who wants to improve their listening skills. For anyone who is afraid of having conversations in English or for people who understand, for example the news in English, they understand maybe their teacher, but they struggle to understand real English on the street with their colleagues...whatever it may be. I'll leave the link to download it in the show notes.

Okay, so let's get started with today's show.

Today's episode will be a bit more personal than other episodes that I've done as I'll be speaking about the complicated relationship between Northern Ireland and questions of national identity. This is a very controversial issue in Northern Ireland and requires quite a bit of explanation to fully understand. I'll be looking at the reasons why Northern Ireland became a separate country once the Republic of Ireland got independence from Great Britain, the bloody sectarian conflict that Northern Ireland suffered for around thirty years and finally how all this history has impacted questions of national identity in Northern Ireland.

"Where are you from?" That seems like a simple enough question, doesn't it? "Where are you from?" However, it's a question that I almost **dread** answering...

Simply because being from Northern Ireland means that almost every time you tell someone you're from there you usually end up giving them a history lesson or engaging in some type of political debate...

But why?

NOTES

Dread: fear something or be reluctant to do something

The Republic of Ireland gained full independence from Great Britain following the Anglo-Irish war and also the Irish Civil War which ended in 1923. However, Northern Ireland remained part of the newly established United Kingdom. This includes six counties of the Ulster Province (Fermanagh, Armagh, Tyrone, Down, Antrim and Derry). A county, by the way, is like a region. So there are these six regions of Ulster that belong to the United Kingdom and not the Republic of Ireland.

So why did Northern Ireland not gain independence from Britain but the rest of Ireland did?

In a nutshell, it was due, in great part, to demographics. The Republic of Ireland was comprised of mainly Irish-identifying Catholics who did not identify as being British, but rather they saw Britain as an oppressive power in their country. This was certainly true as Irish Catholics were routinely discriminated against under British rule. However, in the north of the country the story was a little different.

Due to the colonization practices that took place there, the north was populated with more Protestant pro-British people. This meant that during the last Irish struggle for independence, which began in 1916, many in the north supported Great Britain and the union they had with them.

That's not to say that the north didn't and doesn't have many who identify as being both Irish and Catholic, but in the beginning these were outnumbered by those who identified as Protestant and British and they also tended to hold less power in society. So, following the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War two new states **came into being**: the fully independent Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, which formed one of the four countries of the United Kingdom.

The north of the country was partitioned, which means that a new border was established marking the difference between these two new countries: The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

So, in Northern Ireland we were left with a state which was described by one of its founders as "a Protestant state for a Protestant people." This left a very **bitter** Irish Catholic minority who supported independence from Britain and who felt abandoned by the new Irish Republic. This significant Irish Catholic minority would also suffer more discrimination under this new government and it would eventually lead to the conflict known as "The Troubles".

Now I won't go into too much detail about "The Troubles" here because I'd like to do other episodes on it but I'll give you an **overview**. "The Troubles" was a period of conflict in Northern Ireland which began **roughly** in 1968 and ended more or less with the signing of the Good Friday peace agreement in 1998. It was a period of extreme **turmoil** and violence in Northern Ireland which saw the Irish Republic Army (or the IRA) fighting a **guerrilla** war against the British army in an attempt to join with the Republic of Ireland and gain independence from Great Britain.

But it wasn't just the IRA versus the British army. The violence **spilled over** into every aspect of life in Northern

NOTES

In a nutshell: the same as saying "to summarize"

Come into being: start existing

Bitter: resentful, angry about

Overview: a summary

Roughly: a way to approximate it means "more or less" (pronunciation tip: the "gh" here is pronounced like an F)

Turmoil: a state of great confusion/disturbance/trouble

Guerrilla war: small, mobile groups of irregular soldiers (not belonging to an official army)

Spill over: spread

TRANSCRIPT



Ireland and there was a lot of violence between Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods.

So, I don't want to **bombard** you with history but I do feel that this context is too important to ignore because it created a situation whereby national identity became extremely important and even dangerous. Saying that you were from a Protestant neighbourhood or having a very Irish name could have put you at serious risk depending on who you were talking to.

So, we have a situation where those who grew up in Protestant neighbourhoods and families generally identify as British and, **conversely**, those who grew up in Catholic neighbourhoods and families generally identify as Irish.

However, this actually isn't the case for me. I grew up in a very pro-British, Protestant and anti-Irish neighbourhood yet today I identify as Irish instead of British even though as a child and preteen I would have said that I was British. Why? Well, it's quite hard to answer really.

I think it began when I first left Northern Ireland to go to London with my brother back when I was about fifteen. I felt like I was going to my country's capital that it was this huge, strange place but essentially I was not really leaving my own country. However, that wasn't what I experienced when I actually got there.

Firstly everyone we spoke to referred to me as Irish and where I lived as Ireland. This was a bit of a shock to me as I'd always identified as British and that I lived in the UK but I could see that for many of the Londoners that I encountered this wasn't how they saw it. I think it's when I first became disillusioned with my British identity and began to question whether I really felt at home in this wider "United Kingdom."

Furthermore, as a got older I became more and more influenced by socialism and turned against concepts such as imperial power and monarchies which of course, the British empire is one of them. I became more and more attracted to the idea of the Republic that was just across the border. I also developed a **healthy** interest in things like folklore, Irish history and traditional Irish music and I began to feel more at home in pubs that celebrated these aspects of Irish culture. The older I got the less British I felt basically.

As people born in Northern Ireland have the right to dual citizenship (both Irish and British citizenship) I decided to get an Irish passport when my old British one **was up for** renewal. It felt right to have a document that officially recognized the nationality that I identified with. However, that's not to say that us northerners feel totally at home in the Republic of Ireland either as many people still see us as more like distant cousins rather than brothers or sisters.

So, us Northern Ireland people are officially both Irish and British but not quite... I like to say we are Irish or British with an asterisk*. Sometimes you don't really feel one or the other, we're just a little bit different. It's a very complicated issue and causes a lot of confusion for people. I said earlier that I sometimes dread telling people where I'm from because I basically have to explain all this to them because they start asking questions and it's difficult to answer them without going into a kind of... like history lesson (and when it's the 1000th time that you've explained it you start to get a little tired of explaining it...).

Even knowing which country to say you're from is a political statement sometimes. If, like me, you say "I'm from

NOTES

Bombard: if you "bombard" someone with something you kind of attack them with it and overwhelm them

Conversely: connector word to introduce a contrast

I'd always...: here I'm using the past perfect structure (I had always..) to show that this was a posterior action

Healthy: in this context it means that I had a strong interest in these topics

Be up for renewal..: this collocation means "it was time to renew my passport"

Ireland," it's a bit like saying you don't recognize the British sovereignty of the country (I'm not saying that's the case for me but for many it can be). And if you say "the UK" you're saying that you do recognize this sovereignty and you're perhaps happy with it. Some people don't even like using the term "Northern Ireland" because they don't recognize it as a legitimate state and prefer saying "The North of Ireland". So, yeah it can get quite complicated!

The classic response that I get when I say I'm from Ireland, and then I say I'm from Belfast, is usually someone saying "Oooh okay, you're from NORTHERN Ireland," which always kind of **bothers** me like "Yes I know I'm from Northern Ireland, but thank you for reminding me...Thank God you were here..." Yeah that happens a lot!

Nowadays, I'm very happy to say questions of national identity are becoming less important in Northern Ireland. This is reflected also in how the people of Northern Ireland are voting with traditional pro-UK or pro-independence parties losing votes in favour of more progressive parties don't necessarily identify with these issues. It's a trend that I hope continues in the future as I believe it's a sign of progress within the country.

So, to resume

Northern Ireland is officially part of the United Kingdom but its citizens have the right to dual citizenship due to the fact that many also identify as Irish. We gained this right in 1998 with the signing of the Good Friday peace agreement, which more or less ended the conflict in Northern Ireland.

As a result of this dual citizenship we can have both an Irish and British passport

The conflict known as The Troubles really polarized society in Northern Ireland along sectarian and political lines and made questions of national identity a serious issue in the country but thankfully this divide is becoming less and less important in modern day Northern Ireland.

I hope that clears up the whole "Am I Irish or British?" question which many people have asked me. And to finish up I'll give you this week's idiom!

This week's idiom is something I literally said last night to my husband which is "we'll cross that bridge when we come to it."

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," this means that you will deal with something in the future IF it happens. For example, I've just had a baby as I said before and we're planning on going to Ireland with her in February and I'm quite nervous about going on a plane with her. So I say to my husband for example; "I'm just nervous that she's going to spend the whole journey crying!"

He could then tell me "we'll cross that bridge when we come to it," meaning we will deal with the problem of her crying IF that problem arises in the future, but there's **no point in** worrying about it now.

I hope that's clear! And that idiom one more time is; "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," and of course you can also **switch out** the subject and say "I'll cross that bridge when I come to it," or "you" etc.

So, that's all for today folks! Thanks for listening and don't forget to download the PDF guide for this episode which you can find in the show notes it comes with the transcript, vocabulary explanations and I'll also be

NOTES

Bother: annoy

No point in: if there is no point in doing something, or something doesn't have a point it is useless

Switch out: change one thing for another

TRANSCRIPT



looking at connector words for making your...either your writing or speech in English more fluid and...yeah just generally better just to connect your ideas and thoughts together. Okay, so make sure to download that PDF guide

And also if you're interested in improving your listening skills and stop shying away from having conversations in English, then you definitely want to check out my free guide "How to Understand REAL Spoken English." The link is, of course, in the show notes.

Have a great Christmas everyone and I'll see you in the new year!

TIME FOR IRISH UNITY?



Brexit has raised some serious questions in Northern Ireland about the country's future with the UK. Northern Ireland voted against leaving the European Union (along with Scotland). However, as the UK as a whole voted in favour of leaving the EU both Northern Ireland and Scotland will leave. This has **fostered** resentment in Northern Ireland by those who voted against Brexit and fear the consequences of leaving the EU. Furthermore, many Irish nationalists see it as a way of rupturing their relationship with the Republic of Ireland.

Many, including the main Irish nationalist party Sinn Féin, have called for a border poll.

WHAT IS A BORDER POLL?

A border poll in Northern Ireland would mean a referendum over whether or not the country should re-join with the rest of Ireland or continue being part of the United Kingdom. Joining once again with the Republic of Ireland and officially leaving the UK may be the only way that Northern Ireland could stay within the EU, however is it the best option?

Leo Varadkar the Taoiseach (Irish for Prime Minister) of Ireland has **ruled out** having this border poll which he called "defeated and divisive." He also **pointed out** that for the first time in history Unionists (parties supporting the union with the UK) no longer hold an overall majority, but this isn't enough to **warrant** a border poll because nationalists (parties supporting a united Ireland) don't hold a majority either.

He also stated the importance of recognizing and respecting those who identify as British within the country.

"WE HAVE TO LEARN FROM OUR HISTORY AND WE HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE A MILLION PEOPLE ON THIS ISLAND WHO ARE BRITISH AND ARE UNIONISTS AND WE NEED TO RESPECT THAT AND MAKE SURE THAT THEY ARE PART OF THE FUTURE AND THAT THEY ARE ACCOMMODATED AND THAT THEY FEEL PART OF THE FUTURE."

Former Taoiseach John Bruton shares Varadkar's opinion. In a book about the future of Northern Ireland "Laying it on the Line: The Border and Brexit," Bruton said that he doesn't believe Irish united is a "deeply realistic" proposition at present.

"I don't think we have faced up to all the implications of this. I think it's still at the level of sentiment. There are financial implications, implications regarding security."

It's clear that a vote over Northern Ireland's future will be truly divisive and it is a decision that should not be taken lightly...

NOTES

Foster: promote the growth or development of something

Rule out: reject/deny something

Point Out: highlight something/draw attention to something

Warrant: justify

GRAMMAR: CONNECTORS



WHAT ARE CONNECTORS?

Connectors help make our speech more fluid because they...well CONNECT our ideas together. Using correct connectors in both your writing and speech is extremely important for communicating your message clearly and effectively.

We're going to divide our connectors by function: introducing an idea, focusing on an idea, contrasting ideas, comparing similar ideas, showing a connection between ideas, paraphrasing, adding ideas, and summarizing ideas. Let's go!



INTRODUCING AN IDEA

To start off...

First of all...

Firstly...

I'd like to start by... ("I'd like to start by highlighting the importance of brushing your teeth regularly to maintain good oral hygiene.")

FOCUSING

With reference to... (This structure is usually followed by a noun. For example; "With reference to your letter of 10 March 2018, I am pleased to tell you that the problem has been resolved.)

Regarding... (usually followed by a noun. For example; "Regarding your son's behaviour I have noticed some big improvements lately.")

As regards...

NEW SUBJECT

Turning now to...

Now I'll move on to...

Now let's look at...

CONTRASTING IDEAS/SHOWING A COUNTER-ARGUMENT

However...

Nevertheless/Nonetheless ... ("He was a good student, nevertheless he still failed his final exam.")

Despite... ("Despite feeling ill, Peter still went on skiing.")

Yet... ("Ireland is trying to reduce its carbon foot-

print, yet it still depends heavily on fossil fuels.")

In spite of... ("In spite of trying to reduce its carbon footprint, Ireland still depends heavily on fossil fuels.")

NOTICE THE POSITION OF EACH CONNECTOR AND HOW IT'S USED IN A SENTENCE! FOR EXAMPLE, IN SPITE OF AND DESPITE COME AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SENTENCE AND ARE BOTH FOLLOWED BY THE GERUND FORM OF THE VERB

COMPARING SIMILAR IDEAS

Similarly...

In the same way...

Just as... ("Just as some children have imaginary friends, others make up stories and pretend that they are real.")

SHOWING A CONNECTION BETWEEN IDEAS

Consequently...

Therefore...

As a result... ("Marjo raised a lot of money for the children's charity. As a result they sent her a letter of thanks.")

So... ("It was way too cold in John's house so we had to turn on the heating.")

PARAPHRASING

Paraphrasing means we rephrase something or say the same thing in a different way usually to make our point clearer or to emphasise it.

In other words...

That is to say... (“We may be human, but that doesn’t make us different from similar species. That is to say, we share many of the same instincts as other animals.”)

Let me put it this way...

ADDING IDEAS

Furthermore...

Moreover... (“I prefer buying local produce from the fruit and veg market, it’s tastier than the produce in the super-market. Moreover, it’s more ecological.”)

In addition...

Also...

What’s more...

SUMMARIZING & CONCLUDING

To sum up...

In conclusion...

Finally... (Finally, I’d like to thank all my colleagues from their support during this difficult time.”)

Lastly...