

Transcript

INTRODUCTION

00:00 Hello everyone and welcome back to The English with Rhys Podcast.

It has been too long; a very, very, very long time since the last episode. So, what's the reason for that? I do have some reasons, or perhaps they're excuses, but I guess I've been busier than I used to be.

So, I became a dad a little under a year ago, and that has of course taken up a lot of my time. And then different projects with work have also kept me busy.

But I've always missed doing the podcast and I think the thing that stopped me doing it the most is that I didn't really know what the podcast should be, right?

Should I be here teaching you guys vocabulary and grammar? Should I be giving you listening exercises? And the truth is, I wasn't really sure.

I already have videos that handle listening, and reading, and vocabulary, and
01:00 grammar, and so on. So, I always thought, you know, how should the podcast be different? That was the difficult part.

And because I didn't know how to move forwards, it kept me back. I froze. I think I always do that. If I don't know what to do differently, I stop or I just continue doing what I am doing.

If you look at the past few English with Rhys podcast episodes, you might notice that they're not the same sort of format. They don't follow the same structure. Sometimes I have a guest, sometimes I'm explicitly teaching you words and meanings and giving new examples, and then sometimes I just tell a story. So, you can see why this was a little bit difficult for me.

02:00 But then I read a book, right? It's called 'Think Again' by Adam Grant. This is not a sponsor. It's not an ad. It's just a book I read that helped me. And the point of Think Again is to think again, of course; to think of things in a different way. Sort of like pretending that you don't know anything about it, and then starting again and seeing what you can think differently.

So today, I'm going to share what I've been rethinking, I'm going to tell you what I've learned from the book, and I'm also going to teach you some English phrases for talking about changing your mind.

This podcast episode is one part of a whole podcast course. So, every episode is a lesson in the course on my website, englishwithrhys.com. And if you sign up there, you will find that we already have nine lessons available for this course. And once this video is up and live, there will be a tenth.

03:00 And it's not just the podcast course. Actually, there are courses for every kind of video that I make. So, there's a course about all the short videos, there's a course about English in the Wild, there's a course about those videos where I read an article.

So, there's really something for everyone, and every video is in a lesson. And there are over 600 English with Rhys videos now, which is just crazy to say. So, I've put my blood, sweat, and tears into making these courses for you.

So, if you want to check them out, the link's in the description.

MAIN PART

So, I think most people get attached to being right. People don't like to be wrong. Once you have made your opinion, it's kind of hard to change it, isn't it? You don't want to change it because then you have to say, "I was wrong". But that's not necessarily a bad thing. Let me give you an example.

04:00 In January, I started the Conversation Club for English with Rhys members. So, that was a group where anyone can join into conversations. There are structures, topics. I made many, many, many lessons plans for these and, strangely, I only got a couple of students who came to the class, and I never really understood why. I felt like the Conversation Club is affordable and high quality. So, I never really understood what the problem was.

So, I kind of thought, well, I'll keep going because eventually I'll figure this out, or eventually, more students will join and notice. And I kept going, and I kept going, and I kept going. And we got into September, nine months later, and I had two students. Okay, it had never really gotten to more than four students total.

05:00 So, I'd been trying and trying for nine months to make this work. So, that's hours and hours of my time, five hours teaching a week plus planning for every class.

And instead of teaching my one-on-one classes or working on videos, I just kept trying with this idea. And the truth is, it just didn't work.

I still don't really know why. Maybe students are not interested. Maybe the time wasn't right. I still don't really know. But what I do know is it didn't work.

So eventually, I read this book, Think Again, and I decided to think again about the Conversation Club and about my business, let's say. And I guess I realised Conversation Club doesn't work. I've tried many ways. I've made ads and nothing's changing. It's best that I close the Conversation Club and use this time to focus on my private classes, and my videos and podcasts. And that's what I've been doing.

06:00 So, I think this is English with Rhys going in a new direction, or maybe an old direction again, and just trying something new and seeing what works. I know that people do really enjoy my English videos and podcasts. So, why don't I lean into that and keep moving that way? So, that's what I've been doing. But it took nine months to learn from my mistake, or to think again.

I think everybody has their own "Conversation Club", something that they chose to do long ago and now they continue to do even if it's not working or they don't believe it anymore. Like an opinion.

Perhaps you had a strong opinion about something many years ago and you told everyone this opinion, but now secretly inside you don't actually believe that opinion anymore. But still, it's like you made that opinion and it wasn't just your opinion. It became part of you, part of your identity.

07:00 So, when somebody disagrees with that opinion, you feel like they're not just attacking the idea, they are attacking you. And that feels personal. That's how we get into arguments about things that don't really matter.

So, in the book, Adam Grant talks about three kinds of people. They are preachers, they are politicians, and they are scientists. And I think we can all be all of these people depending on the conversation. So, let's go back to that argument about an opinion.

If you are a preacher, you try to get the other people to also agree with your opinion. You try to convert them to your way of thinking.

A politician has to defend, right? Somebody is attacking your idea and you feel like you have to be strong and fight against that, and protect your idea.

08:00 But then there's the scientist, and the scientist kind of wants to be wrong. When somebody disagrees with them, they want to know why. Maybe there's something they didn't know before. The scientist realises that, every time they change their mind, they have learned something new. And that's really what we should all be doing, even if it's a bit difficult sometimes.

So, Adam Grant calls this "the joy of being wrong". And it sounds a little bit strange at first, "the joy of being wrong". Why would you enjoy being wrong? But actually, the joy comes from learning something new. So, it's about seeing things in a different way.

If you always believed something and someone else tells you that that's wrong, and they give you the evidence, you shouldn't fight that. You should maybe look into the evidence if you like, but that should change your mind. We should always change our opinions and improve them based on new evidence, right?

So, this idea really struck a chord with me about the Conversation Club, right? I
09:00 think I was being a preacher a lot of the time because I was trying to get people to agree that this is a good idea. You know, friends, but also students, of course.

And then I became a bit of a politician, really. I was defending. The Conversation Club wasn't working but I just kept on telling myself it will work. This is a good product. I'm doing nothing wrong and so I get very defensive, I suppose. But that wasn't the right way.

And eventually I read the book. I became a scientist. I looked at the evidence, right? No students, no interest. And I realized something is wrong. And it got me closer to the truth that people are just not interested in the Conversation Club. I didn't know why, but I knew that that was true.

And I think it's the same for students, right, learning English. You can be a preacher. Sometimes you can try to convince other people that the words you
10:00 chose are better than the words that they chose.

You can become a politician. Defensive. Of course, when you learn anything, you make mistakes. Maybe you made an English mistake before and somebody noticed, but you felt defensive. So, you kind of made up reasons for why your

mistake wasn't a mistake, why it was true. I think we've all been in this situation at some point.

But of course, the best learners think like scientists. They make a mistake in class, another student tells them about the mistake, and this scientist student, they think about it, and they realise, "Yes, I was wrong. Thank you very much. I learned something new. That's a good feeling".

I think that's what we should all strive for, to become like scientists. I'm not perfect, but it's what I am striving for, too.

11:00 So, being smart isn't about being right all the time. It's about being willing to change your mind when you get new evidence, right? We are always learning. Nobody's perfect. Nobody knows everything. Even the experts have blind spots.

So, one of the biggest examples in the book is about this group of firefighters in 1949. There was a fire in the wild, and all of these firefighters went out there to fight the fire. There were fifteen of them in total.

Now, the problem is that the wildfire got worse and worse, and it suddenly became obvious that the firefighters couldn't fight it. So, all they could do was run. And they had to run uphill, quite a steep hill, to get away from the fire.

And think: These firefighters, they're carrying all of this heavy equipment, and
12:00 they're trying to get up the hill. But it's slow-going and the fire is faster than they are. The fire is going to get them, and they know it.

Twelve out of fifteen of these firefighters died in the fire. Three survived. Two of them made it to the top of the hill, but one of them didn't.

This firefighter stopped, okay? He saw all his other friends going up the hill and kind of wasting their time in a way, because that fire is going to reach them before they reach the top of the hill. He had a different idea.

He decided to start lighting matches and making a new fire. He made a ring of fire all around him. The other firefighters looked at him like, "This guy's crazy. What is he doing? Maybe the fear of the fire has made him go crazy". But this firefighter wasn't crazy.

13:00 He's lighting his matches. He's making a ring of fire. And then that fire burns down, and the grass around him is all burned. And he gets down. He covers himself. And the big fire, the wildfire, goes straight around him and over him. But in his little pocket around the fire or within the fire, he was safe, and he survived.

And this idea didn't come naturally to the other firefighters. The way they think of fire is that, you know, fire is bad. We need to fight fire. So, why would you use fire as a way to fight fire? It doesn't make any sense.

The firefighter who survived thought about fire again. He thought about it in a new way. It was kind of like forgetting everything you know about fire and starting again. And he was able to think, "A fire burns things and those areas have no fuel left. So, when the new fire comes, it will have no fuel, no way to burn that area".

14:00 And so, he is one of only three out of fifteen firefighters who survived that day. I think it's a wonderful story, tragic of course, but a wonderful story to help us see the value of thinking again.

IN CONCLUSION

So, for me, this episode of the podcast was all about rethinking the podcast.

Like I said, I don't know what it was supposed to be really. Was it about teaching grammar? Was it about teaching vocabulary? Was it listening comprehension? I wasn't sure. I tried everything, lots of different ways, and it never really sat right with me. never really felt like this is what it should be.

But now I feel like I have decided, and I think what the podcast is is a place for interesting stories in English, things that I find intriguing, things that have really hooked me recently.

15:00 And then for you, as a learner, that's great listening practice. You're learning through curiosity. Hopefully, you're interested in the things I'm talking about and that gets you to listen more closely. And in turn, that's a way for you to pick up new vocabulary, new phrases, pronunciation, grammar. Just in a more natural way.

I already have videos to teach grammar explicitly like, "This is what the grammar is. This is how you make it". The podcast is not that place. The podcast is a little bit more relaxed, I suppose.

It still takes a lot of research, a lot of effort to make, but it's hitting in a different way. It's getting the learner, you, to learn through curiosity. I think that's wonderful.

And of course, we can always get more out of the podcast with The Podcast
16:00 Course. So, like I say, we're not really focusing on explicitly teaching vocabulary and grammar, and pronunciation, like that. Not in the podcast episode, but The Podcast Course uses these podcast episodes to teach more.

So, we will focus on words, and phrases, and vocabulary, and grammar, and so on. So, if you are interested in getting more out of the podcast, go to the link in the description and check it out for yourself.

Before we finish, let's go over a few of the most useful phrases from today's episode.

The first one is 'to keep going'. You'll hear this a lot in English. It just means, 'don't stop'. For example, "Even when I wasn't sure what to do with the podcast, I kept going". It's simple but it's really powerful, especially when you're learning something like a language.

17:00 The next phrase is 'a way of thinking'. This one's really useful because it helps you describe how someone sees the world. For example, "Adam Grant talks about a new way of thinking; one where being wrong is actually good". So, if you change your way of thinking, you change how you understand the world.

Then we have 'change your mind'. It means you had one opinion before, but now you have a new one. For example, "I changed my mind about what this podcast should be". It's one of the most common expressions in English, so it's a good one to start using.

Now, a slightly more advanced one is 'to lean into' something. It means 'to accept or even enjoy something instead of avoiding it'. So, you could say, "At first I was nervous about making mistakes, but I decided to lean into them, to learn from them instead".

18:00 And finally, 'strike a chord'. When something strikes a chord, it means it really connects with you, or makes you feel something strongly. For example, "The idea that being wrong is part of learning really struck a chord with me".

So, leave a comment telling me about a time that you thought again. A time where you realised that you made a mistake or had the wrong idea, and you changed it. I'd love to hear that. Try to use some of the phrases from this podcast if you can, and I'll jump into the comments and help you perfect your English.

Lastly, I just want to thank my Dedicated Members. That's Deisy and Alina. And if you want to be a Dedicated Member, you can use that same link in the description.

I'll see you later.