

Transcript

INTRODUCTION

00:00 Hello and welcome back to the English with Rhys podcast. My name is Rhys. I'm a master's level English teacher from the UK with more than 10 years of experience and I'm here to help you level up your English.

In today's episode, I want to talk about the water around us. That's going to make sense in just a second. And afterwards, we're going to look at some key phrases from this episode.

I did not write a script for this episode because I wanted you to hear what native English sounds like, what it really sounds like, not how I wrote it down and thought about it and changed it, how it naturally comes out. Because if you're in the real world and you meet an English speaker, that's what you're going to get. So, you have to prepare for it.

MAIN PART

01:00 I want to talk about an idea. An idea that I've been thinking about a lot recently. I think in my recent videos, you may have noticed a pattern or a trend. And to explain it, I think I should use an analogy.

There are these two fish. These two fish are swimming along in the ocean. And then this older fish comes along and he says, "Hey boys, how's the water?". The

two fish kept swimming along and the one says to the other, "What the hell is water?".

Okay? And if we bring that into the real world, now what we're trying to say is there are things going on around us what feel normal to us and they're so normal that they are invisible. We don't see them. We don't think about them.

So recently I've been talking about technology and how technology shapes us at the moment. That's one way in which we have this water that we don't think about. We've also spoken about how language changes the way we see and think. If you remember back, we talked about how colours are seen differently by different people around the world. And we've also talked about things like memes, which are everyday life for a lot of people, too.

So, when we go broader with this, wider, we can start to think about all the other things that shape us. I think the most obvious one would be the air around us, right? It seems really simple, kind of silly, but when you really think about it, what is in the air that we breathe? Right?

If you're in the city or the countryside, you'll have a totally different answer, right? I live in a small city, so my air is probably more polluted than somebody who lives in the countryside, but less polluted than somebody who lives in like London, right? So, what are those pollutants doing to my mind? Right? There is a lot of evidence that we are losing our attention spans and even losing IQ points because of the pollution in the air.

And on top of that, we have things like the temperature. Does living in a colder climate change the way that you act and behave and feel compared to a warm climate? You know, in the UK, we have these seasons that are big contrasts of each other. The winter can be freezing cold. We can go down to 0°C, even lower. And the sun is just covered up for months every year.

So, right now it's winter in the UK. And when all the clouds are in the sky and you can't see the sun, we say it's overcast. And in the UK, it is overcast for like most of the winter. And it has such an effect on people that we have a name for it, Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD, right? Which is kind of funny because it makes people feel sad and depressed. So having the sun in your life actually does affect how you feel.

04:00 So, that's just one example. And while we're on that subject, what you see around you changes things, too. If you live in the city, we sometimes call it a concrete jungle. It highlights that there is no green space, no grass, and things like that. But if you live in the countryside, you have access to all of these things. And a lot of research has gone into showing that we need nature. We actually do feel better when we are in nature.

So, city vs countryside, that's a real big difference in the way that people live and experience their lives. It's not something we always think about, though.

And then we have the interior of your home or wherever you are. If you're in a room right now and it's cluttered and messy, then you might find it difficult to concentrate.

05:00 How can you do your homework or do your work or study or whatever it is when you're surrounded by all this mess? It's a lot harder than if you have an empty space or a clean, nice, organized space.

Not everyone has the option. You know, some people's homes are cluttered because they don't have big homes, right? That's not their fault. But it does affect your mood nonetheless.

If you listened to my minimalism podcast, then you'll know exactly what I'm getting at here.

Another one that I'm thinking a lot about at the moment is food. In fact, I'm writing another podcast episode about food and how that's changed over time. You know, how people used to eat a lot more fresh food, wholesome ingredients, vegetables, fruits, but now we eat a lot of ultra-processed foods.

06:00 You know, crisps, and cakes, and milkshakes, and pop, and things like that. I think these items don't just affect your body; they affect your brain. You know, it could be the way they are processed, the way we break them down and build them back up like some kinds of crisps or even the additives or the preservatives, the emulsifiers and those things in the ingredients that you don't recognise because they're not food.

I think they probably have an effect on the way we behave, too. They certainly have an effect on the way we feel. People who have a worse diet generally have a lower mood, right?

And then there's things like the country you're in, the economy, right? If you're in a poorer place where it's difficult for people to afford food and things like that, that's going to be a very stressful experience, right? And it's never ending, more or less. And that stress is going to affect everything in your life.

And then on the other end of the spectrum, I think something we don't always think about is these richer countries, like the UK where I'm from, can also be difficult. Probably not as difficult, but for example, you know, I left the UK quite a few years ago because it was too expensive. I was working full-time and couldn't
07:00 afford rent, right?

So that's just an example of how the economy can change things.

And then you have things like religion. Religion teaches you what's right and wrong. It sort of shapes the way you're supposed to live your life. It gives you this idea of what a good life is or should be. And that idea will change depending on the religion. So, wherever you're born, whatever the dominant religion is there will shape the way you feel. You know, the UK is a Christian country, so maybe that affects the way I think a good life should be.

And it doesn't matter if you're not religious or you changed religion. It's the religion of your country. What's in the culture? The culture is very important. The culture changes so much about you.

Traditions, for example, you can think about weddings and funerals, but also
08:00 holidays like Christmas, Chinese New Year, things like that, and how they affect you.

In the UK, Christmas is a huge deal, right? As we come up to December, people are spending all their money, even getting into debt to pay for Christmas. Or, they're getting very excited about Christmas and they go to a lot of events which means a lot of economic activity in the country which means everything becomes more expensive again.

So, everything that happens changes things. Other people's actions affect you, right? Everything that goes on in the world is all connected.

It's all this water around you. It's inescapable, but it's invisible, right? This is the weird thing about it. It's all happening to us. And we're doing it. We're feeling it. We're believing it. But we're not seeing it or thinking about it. I think that's really interesting, really hard to sort of understand.

09:00 So, I've been thinking a bit about how do you become like a pure human who isn't affected by the things around you? What if we took all of that away and we were just a pure human? What would that look like?

I thought one way could be maybe moving into nature, no electricity, no internet, finding your own food, spending time next to a lake. You know, I'm thinking of Henry David Thoreau's Walden, right? Where he went out to live next to a lake called Walden for, I think, two years and he became a lot more peaceful.

But at the same time, even living in that environment shapes you in some way. Like we said, if you're surrounded by nature all the time, you're going to feel

happier. Or when the winter comes around, probably a lot more miserable than somebody in their home that's heated, right?

We can never get to pure human. But I think we can still see this invisible water
10:00 around us. And the way to do that is by experiencing other things. All about experience.

For me, I was very lucky. You know, English is my first language, I enjoy teaching English, and I've learned a lot about it, I've studied it. And that gives me the choice to live in other countries, and that's something I have done in the past. Very different countries, in fact, from the UK. I've lived in Thailand and China. I've worked in Bulgaria, Italy, Austria, you know, they're all a little bit different and it helped me to see what's different about the UK actually.

So, growing up here, it just felt normal, right? I don't know what's different about the UK. I've always been here. But when you go abroad, you see how other people live, how they think about the UK.

I didn't know much about the terrible things the UK did in the past. I didn't know much. I knew a little bit, but when I moved abroad, yeah, I learned a lot because
11:00 other people know about it, right? That's just one example.

Or another, silly example, Christmas again. In the UK, we wear these paper crowns like a little king or queen when we eat our Christmas lunch. That's not a thing anywhere else, you know, that's something I didn't know was weird until I had it pointed out to me.

So, yeah, lots of things like this. As I say, I was very lucky. I could do it through living abroad, travelling. Not everyone has that choice, but you do still have ways to see this water by seeing other things like by reading, by watching TV even.

You know, in the UK, American TV is very very popular so I know a lot about America and, in turn, that shows me what's different here in my own country, right?

That's just one example but I think reading will help you do it even more because
12:00 you kind of get into someone's mind as you're reading their book.

So, that's just what I wanted to talk about today. It's a lot of ideas. I get that. And I think that I'll be making more and more videos that help us see that water in the future. I think it's so fascinating.

I think it's really important to question the things around you. Don't just accept everything as normal. Ask yourself, "Why?" and then, "Do I agree with it?". I think that's really important. Yeah.

So, I guess a bit of a hodgepodge video. A few ideas floating around that I've stuck together. But I do want to come back to that metaphor because once I discovered it, everything just clicked into place for me. I suddenly understood why I was thinking about all of these different random things that don't seem connected. Actually, there was a connection. So, I'll just tell it one more time.

13:00 Two fish are swimming in the ocean. An older fish comes along and he says, "How's the water, boys?". The two fish keep swimming and the one fish says to the other, "What the hell is water?".

IN CONCLUSION

Now, let's take a look at some of those phrases from today.

The first one is "what I'm getting at" or "what I'm getting at here". This is an idiomatic expression and it means "what I really mean" or "the main point I'm trying to explain". This is extremely common in spoken English. It is very native. Earlier I said, "If you listen to my minimalism podcast, then you'll know exactly
14:00 what I'm getting at here". Or another example, "Sorry I'm not explaining it well. What I'm getting at is that we need a break".

Our next phrase is "shape the way someone thinks" or "shape the way that someone sees things". This is a collocation. So, it doesn't have to be this way. But generally speaking, this is how we use the phrase. It means to strongly influence how someone thinks or understands the world. Earlier I said that I've been talking about how technology shapes us at the moment. Or another example, "Social media shapes the way young people see themselves".

Our next phrase is "to go broader" or "go wider". It means to look at a topic in a more general or big picture way. This is a phrase we're not usually taught in
15:00 textbooks, but is used in everyday natural spoken English. So, it's a very important one to know. Earlier I said, "So, when we go broader with this, we can

start to think about all the other things that shape us". Or another example, "Let's go broader and talk about society, not just one country".

Our next phrase is "On the other end of the spectrum". This is an idiomatic phrase. You can't really change this one. It means "the complete opposite situation". Earlier, I spoke about living in a poor country and then I said, "on the other end of the spectrum", and then I spoke about living in a richer country. So we're kind of going to the two extreme sides. "Some people sleep in huge mansions while on the other end of the spectrum some people sleep on the street".

16:00 And our final phrase for this episode is "come around". This has a few meanings, but we used it today to mean "arrive or happen again". We often use it with times and seasons and other regular events. Earlier I said, "Or when the winter comes around". You could also say, "When exam season comes around, everyone gets stressed".

If you enjoyed this episode and you would like to learn more from the podcast, you can do so in the podcast course. There's a link in the description.

I'd also love to see some of your comments. So, what is in the water around you that you've noticed and maybe even changed? I'd love to hear your thoughts. I think talking about it will help other people, including me, see the water around us. I think that's really important, as I've said.

17:00 Before I go, I'd love to thank my dedicated members. That's Alina, Anna, Deisy, and Marcella. And if you would like to become a dedicated member and get a free conversation class with me every month, there's also a link in the description.

I'll see you later.

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