

The British English Language Podcast



By Amy Louise Fox

Episode 2 - Perfectionism

Hey everyone ! Welcome to episode two of The British English Language Podcast ! This podcast has been created specifically for intermediate level English language students to help you to improve your comprehension of the English language with a native from the UK. You can find the text of each podcast episode on my website - www.britishenglishlanguage.com. This is a free service and each transcription is available as a PDF printable version. I recommend that you listen to each podcast episode a second time, whilst reading the transcription, in order to help further your understanding and improve your vocabulary.

My name is Amy, I was born and grew up in England, and I've had an interest in languages since studying French and German at school. A few years after graduating from university I travelled to South America where I fell in love with Spanish so decided to put my energy into mastering this language. I'd never studied Spanish

before beginning my travels, so the only way I learnt was through immersion, i.e. learning by living in South America, integrating myself within the culture and spending as much time as possible with natives. This meant that my Spanish learning journey has been very long and very difficult. I wish so much that I'd have had the idea to listen to Spanish language podcasts at the beginning of my process as I think it would have made a big difference in the speed of my progress, as well as my confidence.

I hope very much that these podcasts will be helpful to you in your learning processes, and I hope that you'll find the different topics I discuss interesting so that improving your skills can be enjoyable too.

Episode 2 - Perfectionism

If I had to choose I would say that Psychology is my favourite subject to study. My free time is often spent watching YouTube content on different psychology based themes as I love to learn about the human psyche and, in particular, the roots of human behaviours and unhealthy patterns.

I felt inspired to talk about this episode's theme - perfectionism - whilst I was editing the first episode of this podcast - what is Great Britain ? That podcast episode is the very first I've created in my life, so the process, from start to finish, was completely new to me. I'm using a podcast app, recommended to me by a friend but, when it came to editing the episode, I ran into a few difficulties which seemed to be caused by faults in the app software itself. I'm not one to usually blame my tools for mistakes but, in this case, I really couldn't see what I was doing wrong. Parts of the episode would be mysteriously cut out and put somewhere else every time I saved a new and edited version. It was so frustrating ! It meant that the editing process took so much longer than it needed to, and it also meant that something about me was brought to my attention again. I consider myself to have some traits of perfectionism. To be honest these traits have never really bothered me much until recently. I think it became more obvious when I was making videos for my YouTube channel. I noticed that I absolutely couldn't and wouldn't finish or upload a video until it was perfect within my standards. This meant that I would spend many many hours and many days, sometimes weeks, filming and editing just one video lasting only ten minutes. Some videos I would film three times because I wasn't happy with the first two versions. To be honest, eventually it took the enjoyment out of making videos completely. It just seemed like such hard work. However I really couldn't seem to conquer that need for perfection. By the way, the verb 'to conquer' means to gain victory over, or to beat, for example in a battle. In English we would often say we have conquered our fears which would mean that we've confronted our fears and we are no longer afraid.

I guess, looking back, it makes sense why my perfectionism came to the surface during this particular project. My YouTube videos could potentially be seen by the whole world. I was exposing myself to the population of the entire planet ! And that

was so intimidating to me ! So, in realising this, I suppose the need to be perfect is enhanced when there are other people involved. Meaning that to someone who's a perfectionist, it really matters what other people think of them. I can relate to this personally. My perfectionism is also demonstrated when I'm cleaning. It takes me much longer to clean a space than I've noticed it takes others to clean the same space. And I think this works on two levels - one is that I don't want to do a bad job because I don't want to be seen as incompetent or lazy or unclean, for example. And, on another level, I want others to have a good experience and benefit from whatever it is I've just cleaned.

Anyway, I decided, for the sake of this episode, to do some research online about perfectionism. At first the results were quite distressing ! When you type the word 'perfectionism' into Google, the first page is full of all the negative qualities of perfectionism. I'll give you some examples of some of the first phrases that come up on Google -

- The dangerous downsides of perfectionism.
- Perfectionism - symptoms, treatment and prevention.
- Perfectionism is a mental health risk.
- Are perfectionists narcissists ?
- Are perfectionists controlling ?

Here is how Wikipedia defines perfectionism: Perfectionism is a broad personality style, characterised by a person's concern with striving for flawlessness and perfection and is accompanied by critical self-evaluations and concerns regarding others' evaluations. This definition uses slightly more neutral language, but it is clear that perfectionism is not ideal and can have very negative consequences.

I know however that, with anything, wherever there are negatives, there are always positive aspects too. Sometimes they might not be so obvious though. And because this initial Google search made me feel pretty bad about my perfectionist traits, I decided to figure out what some of the positive qualities of perfectionism might be. By the way, when we use the phrase 'figure out' it means to discover the answer to something, for example figuring out a maths equation.

So, these are some of the positive qualities of perfectionism that I came up with -

- A perfectionist generally performs well and with polished end results.
- As I mentioned before, it's not just about caring what other people think of me, it's about caring that other people have the best experience I can possibly give them. So it's about wanting the best for others as well as yourself.
- Professional work with high standards and strong attention to detail.
- And, I think if I could choose, I would choose to have high standards over low standards.
- The focus is on quality, rather than quantity and care is taken over the end result, or the end product.
- A perfectionist possesses high levels of conscientiousness.

So, in conclusion, perfectionism is a double edged sword. On one hand, it can motivate you to perform at a high level and deliver top quality work. On the other hand, it can cause you unnecessary anxiety and slow you down.

Going back to the beginning of this episode, really, deciding to discuss this particular theme of perfectionism serves another purpose too. After uploading my previous podcast episode live to Spotify, as well as other podcast platforms, I listened to the live version and, to my disappointment, I realised that there were two mistakes which I had missed in the final edit. In one point during that episode, yet again, two sentences had mysteriously moved to another point, meaning that that entire paragraph is slightly jumbled and doesn't make total sense ! I thought that it was important to point this out to you because it could be very confusing for students and the last thing I want to do is confuse you ! Can you spot where the mistakes were ? Bear in mind that the transcription contains the original text where the content makes perfect sense ;)

Thank you so much for listening to this second episode on The British English Language Podcast ! I'd be really interested to know if any of you relate to this episode's theme and consider yourselves a perfectionist ? If so, how does it affect you in your day to day life ? Or maybe you know a perfectionist in your family or perhaps your partner is a perfectionist ? What are some of the positive qualities that you recognise in this personality trait ? If you'd like to get in touch then please visit my website at www.britishenglishlanguage.com and send me a message via the contact form. Thank you once again for joining me, I hope you enjoyed this episode and I look forward to seeing you at the next one !