

Hamburg, City of Water – Transcript

Hello my lovely learners! My *Story Builders* course is now open. If you want to sign up straight away, go to EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Build. Let's get to work!

[intro]

Welcome to Easy Stories in English, the podcast that will take your English from OK to Good, and from Good to Great.

I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's episode is a conversation about my trip to Hamburg, conquering my fears, smoking bans and my new course *Story Builders*! More about that later. As always, you can find a transcript of the episode at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com, and you can find the link to that in the description.

I want to start today's episode by asking a question. How did you find last week's episode with regards to speed?

Now, if you heard me say, 'How did you find last week's episode?' and your first thought was, 'Well, I found it on my podcast app.' Or, 'I found it on EasyStoriesInEnglish.com', then this section is for you. This expression, **how did you find**, can literally mean where did you discover, where did you find, but usually in English when we say how did you find something, like 'how did you find the concert?' 'How did you find London?' 'How did you find the food?' We're actually asking, what did you think of it? What was your experience of it?

I've noticed that a lot of learners make this mistake. When I ask them, 'How did you find the restaurant?' they say, 'Oh, I read about it online,' when actually I want to know, was the food good? Was the service good? Was it loud? Was it expensive? And so on.

So how do we know what meaning is being used? Well, if we want to ask literally, 'Where did you find this?' we would usually say, find out about something. How did you find out about the restaurant? How did you find out about last week's episode of the podcast? How did you find out about the coolest places to go in London? Well, maybe I should do an episode on that topic so you can find out all about that.

Of course, you can also say discover. How did you discover this restaurant? Or hear about. Where did you hear about this place? Where did you hear about Easy Stories in English? Maybe a friend told you. And how did you find it? Hopefully you find it fantastic, or I'm not doing a good job.

So, once again, when I ask the question, 'How did you find last week's episode with regards to speed?' what I'm really asking is, did I talk too quickly in last week's episode? Did I talk too slowly in last week's episode? And actually, it's not last week's episode. It's the episode from two weeks ago, because I don't always do an episode every week, but I did have a streak of about 11 weeks.

So a **streak** is when you do something every single day for a long time. Maybe you have an English learning streak. Maybe you've studied English every day for a hundred days in a row. Then you would have a 100 day English learning streak. That would be really cool, by the way.

But yes, I had an 11 week streak, I think, of doing a podcast every week, but last week there was no podcast. But two weeks ago there was the episode The Pumpkin Jug and I really made an effort to talk slowly and clearly because sometimes, even when the episodes are for beginners, I forget, and I talk really fast and crazy. Because that's what I'm like! I'm a

grrrr, I'm a big energy monster! Waaah! Yes, so, how did you find last week's episode? Leave a comment.

My Trip to Hamburg

So, as you heard in the introduction to the episode, I recently took a trip to Hamburg. Hamburg is the second largest city in Germany, and I went to Hamburg for a week with my family. Specifically, I went with my parents, my brother and his three kids, and my sister and her daughter. All of the children were below the age of eight. So as you can probably imagine, there was a lot of childcare duties. We had to do a lot of work looking after the children because children of those ages have a lot of energy, even more energy than me if you can imagine such a thing! Oh, I know.

So why did we go to Hamburg? Well, I have some German relatives, I have some German family, so we were going to a family party, but we decided to spend the first half of the week at the family party and then to have a few days just doing family stuff with the immediate family, so the people I mentioned before.

So the first half of the week took place in the **leafy suburb** of Ahrensburg. So leafy, we usually use to talk about parts of a city or a town. It literally means there are lots of leaves, as in there are lots of trees and greenery. And a suburb is an area on the outside of a city where mainly there are just houses. Literally suburb, below the city.

So we spent the first half of the week in the leafy suburb of Ahrensburg, which is outside Hamburg. The family party was absolutely lovely. We had fantastic weather, so we could just sit in the garden all day. And as I said, it was very leafy. The family party was also, I think, um, particularly German.

Now, I don't want to generalise too much about culture, and this may just be more what my family likes to do, but we did spend a long time eating. My relative had ordered some caterers. So caterers are people who prepare food for parties. So we had loads of food. And then at 4pm came the thing that seems to always happen in Germany, which is Kaffee und Kuchen, coffee and cake.

Yes, at around that time in the afternoon, you have a slice of cake and a cup of coffee. It's not too different from the way we have tea and biscuits in the UK. But because this was a party, there was a lot of kaffee and a lot of kuchen. I think there was something like seven cakes in total, and some of the cakes were eiskuchen, or ice cream cakes.

So cakes that you keep in the freezer, uh, and then they're really lovely on a hot summer's day because they're nice and cold. It's kind of funny, we don't have ice cream cakes that often now in the UK. They were quite popular I think in the 90s and noughties. The noughties are the 2000s. Um, but they feel a bit too dated now, but they're just not as popular as they used to be. I mean, we also don't get that long summers in the UK, so we have fewer opportunities to eat ice cream cake.

So, what about sightseeing? Well, one thing that we had to go and do in Hamburg is the number one tourist attraction, which is Miniatur Wunderland, which you could translate to Miniature Wonderland.

In this case, miniature means very small, but specifically it refers to a small figure. Miniatur Wunderland is the largest **model railway** in the world.

So what is a model railway? Well, a model railway is when you take a train system and you make a small miniature or model version. So it's not a real sized train, it's a train that you can hold in your hand, but it still runs on train tracks, and you can build a whole section of the train system.

So building model railways is a hobby, and in fact it's a very nerdy hobby. So a **nerd**, N E R D, is someone who is very passionate about particular technical subjects. Back in the day, if you really liked computers, people would say you were a computer nerd. Although these days most people are on their phones all the time, so a lot of us have become more nerdy than in the past.

But it's safe to say that playing with and building model railways is still a pretty nerdy hobby. It's not popular with most people. And some people who are really serious about it have a whole room in their house, usually in the basement, where they build gigantic model railways. Usually they have a big table with hills and landscape and trees and then the train tracks. Maybe they even dress up like a train conductor and they have a timetable for their trains. It's really one of those hobbies that can become incredibly nerdy and take up a lot of time.

But when I say that Miniatur Wunderland is the world's largest model railway, that doesn't really do it justice. To do something justice means to give something the respect it deserves. And really saying it's a model railway doesn't do it justice, because it's not just trains. They have models of huge landscapes and huge **cityscapes**.

So a landscape is like the countryside, and then a cityscape is the panorama, the view of a city. For example, if you stand in certain places in London, you can see all the famous buildings next to each other, and you can call that a cityscape. And Miniatur Wunderland is a huge collection of landscapes and cityscapes from around the world, with planes, trains, and automobiles, transport of all kinds, as well as models of people, artwork, and so on. Oh, and famous buildings, of course.

Currently, they have models of central Germany, Austria, Hamburg, parts of America, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Rio de Janeiro, Patagonia. That's not all of it. And they're always building more. They haven't built any of the UK yet, but I believe they're going to start construction in a few years. And honestly, I really hope they do London. I would love that.

Not only do they have these brilliant cityscapes with an amazing level of detail, but they're also interactive. So, around the models are buttons that you can press, and when you press a button, something happens with one of the models, and you have to look carefully and see what it is.

For example, there's a zoo, and you press the button, and the hippo's mouth opens. A hippo is short for hippopotamus, which is a very large water mammal. Or maybe you press a button and a footballer scores a goal. There's even a section where they have the Lindt chocolate factory, and when you press a button, the people in the factory make a bar of chocolate, wrap it up, and it comes out, and you can eat it. Isn't that amazing? There's a real functioning chocolate factory in this model world.

As part of our visit, we also did a **VR** experience. VR stands for **virtual reality**. So virtual reality is when you put on a headset, a pair of goggles that show you a world. So it's kind of like a video game, but instead of using a controller with buttons, you control the character with your body. So when you move your body, your character in the virtual reality world also moves. So it's a much more direct form of playing a game.

Now I admit, I was a bit sceptical about the VR experience. When you're sceptical about something, you don't want to believe it's true or it's good. I was sceptical because I've heard that VR can give you headaches and motion sickness, which is when the quick movements make you feel sick. And also, I just think it's one of those new technologies that's maybe a bit, um, unnecessary.

But we did this VR experience where you walk through the world of Miniatur Wunderland as one of the models, and I have to say, it was my first time trying VR, and I liked it. It was good. It was pretty good. It wasn't life changing, but it was good.

So, is Miniatur Wunderland worth going to? Absolutely. It is the biggest tourist attraction in Hamburg for a reason. Now, did I get absolutely **overwhelmed** and have to sit in the cafe for a long time? Yes.

When you get overwhelmed, everything is too much for you and you can't deal with it anymore. It's like, too loud, too bright, too many people, too many children, too much to look at. I got overwhelmed and I had to go and sit in the cafe. And this is actually the second time I've been to Miniatur Wunderland. I went early in 2023, the last time I was in Hamburg, and I had the same experience. Both times I got completely overwhelmed and I wasn't even able to go and see most of the cityscapes.

It's a shame because it's such a cool place, like it's so interesting. You want to really spend hours and see all the tiny details. You could go back again and again and still find new things to look at. But it's just so busy. And so overwhelming. Now, from what I've heard, if you go very early in the morning, or very late at night, you can avoid this problem.

And they do have very good opening hours. You can go as early as 7 in the morning, and some nights they are open until 1am. So there's not going to be many kids around at that time. So if I go again, I will absolutely go at like 10pm or something and hopefully by that time it will be a bit more chill, a bit more relaxed.

Also if you're thinking, 'Wow, I'd like to go there!' Book your tickets early. The tickets sell out very quickly and trying to get a ticket last minute can be really difficult. And as I said, if you want to go at a particular time when it's not going to be so busy, it's really worth booking your tickets in advance.

So I'll be honest, I don't really know if Miniatur Wunderland is the biggest tourist attraction in Hamburg. I assume it is. But if it isn't, the second thing we went to do probably is. And that is the Elbphilharmonie.

So the Elbphilharmonie is a concert hall that sits on the river Elbe, which runs through the city of Hamburg. So originally there was a church there called Kaiserspeicher, which was built in 1875. But it was damaged in World War II and **demolished** in 1963.

When a building is demolished, it is destroyed. Usually people demolish a building because they are going to build something new there or a building might get demolished because it's unsafe or very ugly or nobody is using it. So in 1966 Kaispeicher A was built to replace the Kaiserspeicher. But Kaispeicher A was not a church, but rather a warehouse.

So a warehouse is a building that's used to store wares. So wares are things that are going to be sold. So it's a place where you keep items that will be traded or sold. And although it was designed by, I think, a famous architect, it wasn't particularly beautiful. It was a square brick warehouse. By the standards of warehouses, I would say it looked pretty nice, but it wasn't exactly a beautiful example of architecture.

However, what's interesting is the Elbphilharmonie, this concert hall, was built on top of that building. And I really like this. Rather than demolishing the building, they decided to build on top of whatever was there. In this case, what was there was a square brick building. And what they built on top of it was glass.

So the Elbphilharmonie is this very interesting glass building. It's kind of wavy. Think of waves at the beach. The top of it has these peaks, these points. If you think of looking at a hilly landscape, a place with lots of hills. That's kind of what the roof of the Elbphilharmonie looks like. But of course, it's made of glass, so it's a very unique look.

Not only this, but the windows on the side of the building **bulge out**. So when something bulges out, it kind of sticks out in a round way. And with all of these windows that bulge out and these wavy patterns, it creates really interesting light.

When you walk past the Elbphilharmonie, the light kind of catches in very interesting ways on the windows, which makes it look a lot nicer than many tall glass buildings. I imagine the reasoning behind this was to make people think of water. Because indeed Hamburg is a city of water. It is a port city, which means it is a place where ships come in and leave from, and it is a mixture of the river Elbe, canals, and two artificial lakes, the Außenalster and the Binnenalster.

So when you go into the Elbphilharmonie, you have to get over the warehouse bit, which I believe is now accommodation, I believe people now live there. You go up these really big, beautiful escalators with all of this interesting kind of light and colour on the walls and then you arrive at the glass part of the building.

From there you can go out onto the balcony and get amazing views of the River Elbe, of Hamburg and of all the surrounding landscape. And of course, it's a concert hall, so there are also large spaces for concerts. We didn't go for any concerts. We just went to see the building, but it was more than worth it, I would say. It's a really beautiful building, a really interesting example of modern architecture, and a really lovely way of preserving the history, but also kind of moving towards the future.

So overall, I had a lovely time in Hamburg. It felt really good to get out of London and be somewhere else for a while. Yes, there was a lot of childcare involved, but I had such a nice time with my family and I got to connect more with my nieces and nephews, who I maybe hadn't spent that much time with before because of COVID and life and everything else.

I kind of realised while I was there that being childless and single, not having any children and not having a romantic partner in some ways is a **privilege**. A privilege is a way in which you have an advantage over other people, and I think in some ways I'm quite privileged to be childless and single because it means I have way more freedom when it comes to how I spend my time, but also it meant in a situation like this, I could help out a lot with logistics.

So logistics is basically just how everything works. And with this holiday, there were quite a lot of logistics because of having so many young children. For example, we had to rent a nine person vehicle. We had to get a nine person car to be able to travel around for the first half of the week because we were in the suburbs where there isn't such good public transport. So I was able to help a lot with making food, going shopping, looking after the kids, packing stuff into the car, and so on.

Hamburg is a really lovely historical city with beautiful **cobbled** streets. Cobbled streets are streets that have that kind of old stone where instead of being wide and flat there are lots of small round pieces of stone. We have many cobbled streets in historical towns in the UK.

I was also really impressed by the metro in Hamburg, so the underground train system. It's very clean, it's very efficient, it's much cheaper than London's metro, but most strikingly, I guess, the thing that I noticed the most was how little advertising there was.

Now the London Underground is the most advertised-on underground system in the world, I believe. I might not have that statistic completely correct, but when you go into a train station in Hamburg, an underground train station, there are just a few screens with advertisements on them. And then there are other screens that have the weather, the news, fun facts for kids, and so on.

So overall, it's a lot more for the people, I guess, a lot more civic, a lot more kind of public property than feeling like it's all privately owned. And that was nice because generally

in the UK, a lot of our public infrastructure, like travel infrastructure, is very old. And the bits that do work well, like the London transport system, are often very dirty, uh, loud, just like that noise you heard from a motorbike. And they are just plastered with advertisements, they're covered with advertisements. And I don't really like that.

I also had a bit of a shock when I landed back in the UK because there was a fire in the Blackwall Tunnel. So the Blackwall Tunnel is a car tunnel in East London. And in fact, it's pretty much the only car tunnel in East London, which causes problems because whenever it's closed, it causes traffic to grow all around the area. And in this case, a van caught on fire and completely burned down, so the Blackwall Tunnel was closed for a long time.

So I was at a train station waiting for my bus. I waited almost an hour for my bus. And then when I got on the bus, we were sat in traffic for about 30 minutes, just not moving. So in the end, I decided to walk. I walked about 75 minutes home with my suitcase in the hot weather. And everywhere I went, pretty much, there was congestion. Congestion is traffic that is just not moving. So, it was a bit of a rude awakening. A rude awakening is a big sudden shock that kind of wakes you up. And it was definitely a rude awakening to land back in the UK and have this huge logistical issue.

Now, I will say, that is the worst transport experience I've had in London. So it was just very bad luck that it happened just after I got back from Germany. But yeah, that was not a nice way to come home after the holidays.

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And now back to your usual episode of Easy Stories in English.

Conquering My Fears

After getting back from Germany, I did not **rest on my laurels**.

So 'rest on your laurels' is an expression that means to be lazy and just relax because people have told you something good about yourself in the past. So in Ancient Rome and Ancient Greece, when people won a competition, they put a crown of laurel around their head. So laurel is a kind of tree. So these crowns of laurels came to represent victory and being talented. So that's why we say 'rest on your laurels' to mean to just sit back and rest on your past achievements but not doing anything new.

I did not rest on my laurels because I decided to conquer a fear, I decided to defeat one of my fears so I would no longer be afraid of it.

So what fear was I conquering? It's going to sound silly, but I wanted to conquer my fear of handing out CVs.

So, to hand out means to give out, to distribute, and **CV** is short for **Curriculum Vitae**. In America, they don't say CV or Curriculum Vitae, they say *résumé*. So a CV, or a *résumé*, is basically a piece of paper that you use when you apply for a job. Your CV is basically a summary of you, your skills and contact details. So it has your name, your contact details, where you've worked before, what skills you learned, and then references. So people you worked for before who can tell the new employer whether you're good to work with or bad to work with. If you think someone will give you a bad reference, you probably shouldn't put them on your CV, obviously.

So first I'll tell you why I was handing out CVs and then I'll tell you why I was afraid of handing out CVs and why I decided it was so important to conquer this fear.

So I've been trying to get a part time job to make some extra money. Don't worry, I'm not quitting the podcast. This is just something on the side. Ideally, I'd like to work in a gay pub because I think that would be fun. Basically, with my current work, because I do the podcast and I teach online, I spend a lot of time in my room, sitting in front of a computer. So I wanted a job where I could be on my feet, and socialising.

I read online that although these days most people apply for jobs by emailing their CV or doing an online application, actually bar and pub work is one of the few industries where it

still makes sense to hand in your CV in person. This is because it's less about how much experience you have. Obviously, experience is still useful, but it's more about being able to talk to the customers and be a friendly person. So if you go in person and talk to the manager, they can quickly get an idea of whether you're suitable to work as a bartender, as someone who serves drinks.

The key characteristic that they're looking for is someone who is **bubbly**. So bubbly, it doesn't refer to literal bubbles. Bubbly means someone whose personality is bright, open, happy. They like to talk to people. They like to joke a lot. Being bubbly is quite a British characteristic, I would say. Although I think in America, they take customer service to a whole new level. In America, to work as a bartender or in a cafe, you have to be super duper bubbly. You have to be so bubbly. So my goal in handing out CVs was to show off my bubbiness.

But, having said that, after writing my CV, I kept putting off actually handing it out. When you put something off, there's something you need to do, but you keep saying, 'Oh, I'll do it tomorrow. I'll do it next week. Oh, I'll do it later.' You keep putting it off. You keep procrastinating. And I realised I was putting it off out of fear.

You see, I hadn't handed out CVs in this way for about 15 years, and I realised that what I was really afraid of was **rejection**. Rejection is when you ask someone to accept you and they say no. So the most common type of rejection that we talk about is romantic rejection. Maybe you ask someone on a date and they say no, but there's also academic rejection. Maybe you apply for a university and you don't get accepted. And in this case, it's job rejection.

So I'm fine with most types of rejection. I've experienced enough romantic rejection and academic rejection that I don't get too hurt by them. But job rejection is still something that feels very personal to me. And I realised that if you go in person and they're just not interested, or you hand in the CV in person and talk to them and feel like you have a good connection, and then they never contact you, that's another kind of rejection.

Of course, you also experience rejection applying for jobs online. And I would actually say that that kind of rejection is worse because most of the time you email an application or you fill out a form on a website and you hear nothing. So even worse than rejection, it's just silence.

But you'll be happy to hear that I conquered my fear and some fruits are starting to grow. So a week or so ago, I pounded the pavement. When you pound the pavement, it means you're walking around a lot in a city. I pounded the pavement and handed out lots of CVs. And as I'm recording this, it is Monday the 16th of September, and two days ago, I had a **trial shift**.

So a shift is a period of time that you work in a place, maybe you work an eight hour shift, a five hour shift, and so on. And then a trial is when you are trying something. So for certain jobs such as bartending or cafe work, you often do a trial shift. You work for a few hours, they explain things to you, and they see if you're suitable for the job. And I did a two hour trial shift at a bar in Soho, which is the gay district in London. So as you can probably imagine, it was a gay bar.

And I think it went well. I forgot to say before, but I've actually never worked in a bar before, but I thought it would be a fun and sociable job and easier to get than other jobs where you have to have a certain amount of experience.

I think it went well partly because the manager was Venezuelan, so I was able to talk to him in Spanish and kind of, um, get that personal connection there. But also, I just tried really hard and focused a lot, and it seems to have paid off. It seems like that worked,

because someone said to me like, oh, have you really never worked in a bar before? Like, you're doing really well, so. Maybe they were just being nice. I don't know. Maybe by the time you listen to this, I will already have that job. I think I will hear soon, maybe tomorrow, so we'll see.

So I've kind of embraced this attitude of conquering my fears. Ever since I moved to London last year, because when I moved to London, I was very afraid of a lot of things. I hadn't lived independently in a long time. I had had these really bad health problems, I'd just gone through a bad breakup, actually two bad breakups, I'd lived with bad housemates before, so I was afraid that it just wasn't going to be possible.

But when I moved to London, although it was very, very difficult at first, I gradually was able to conquer those fears one by one. I was able to make enough money to live independently, I was able to find a good housemate and a place to live, and I didn't get completely overwhelmed. And then once I had conquered those fears and kind of grown as a person, I realised other things that I really, really wanted to try.

For example, a few months ago, I started doing stand up comedy, which was very much a **bucket list** item. So a bucket list, I don't know where this term comes from, but a bucket list is a list of things that you have to do before you die. So, stand up comedy was a bucket list item for me. I knew that if I didn't try it, I would regret it on my deathbed. Dramatic, I know, but true. So I tried it and I loved it.

And again, conquering that fear helped me grow so much as a person. What I found was all of these experiences made me more resilient. Because yes, moving to London. was very stressful at first, and doing stand up comedy was stressful at first. Even handing out CVs was stressful at first. But when you do it, you either fail or you succeed. And usually, when you fail, it's not as bad as you thought, and it gives you an idea of what to do next. And when you succeed, you realise, hey, I can do this. I'm much stronger than I realised. And you become more **resilient**.

So, resilience is the ability to withstand difficulties. The ability to face difficult problems, difficult emotions, and not get overwhelmed. To stand up strong, even after you get knocked down.

And I'm not the only one who thinks this. So there is a YouTuber called HealthyGamerGG, who is a psychologist, but he makes really helpful videos to give motivation and self improvement. So as you can probably tell from his username, he originally made videos for gamers, but I would say his content is really useful for everyone.

So he has this video called Your Identity Dooms You to Failure, which I will link below, which is really useful for thinking about this topic. Basically, the idea is that when we tell ourselves, 'I can't do this thing, it's impossible for me to do this thing.' For example, 'I can't go and hand out CVs. I'm not that kind of person.' It shapes our reality. It literally makes a world where we can't do those things.

So what he recommends is writing a list of all the things that you think are impossible for you and then find the easiest one and just do that. Like maybe you say, I can never go for a run, right? I can't go running. I'm not that sort of person. And then you go for a run. When you overcome that thing that you said was impossible, it literally changes the world. Because your body believed that it was impossible for you to do that. You created this world where it was impossible. And then you did the impossible. And now your body understands, Oh, I'm more than that. I'm a different person. Like you literally recreate yourself and recreate your world.

And I've definitely felt this since moving to London. I feel like I've just been doing this again and again, conquering these fears. Sometimes they're big fears, sometimes they're

small fears, but every time I do it, I do literally feel like I've changed as a person and I've created a new world, you know, and it's really, an empowering feeling. It's a feeling of being stronger, of being more resilient.

I seriously recommend you watch this video. HealthyGamerGG's videos are a bit higher level maybe, sometimes, but he speaks very slowly and very clearly. He explains himself really well, so it's really useful for learners as well.

Goodbody News – Smoking Bans

You're listening to Goodbody News.

If you're wondering what, what that was, what those sounds refer to, basically on Radio 4, which is one of the radio stations in the UK, they play those beeps about once an hour, usually before a news broadcast. And the beeps are to symbolise, to kind of represent Big Ben, the big clock in Westminster in central London where the Houses of Parliament are. So each beep represents an hour of the clock. Obviously, I don't know when you're listening or watching this episode. So, uh, I just chose a random number of beeps.

So what I want to talk about today isn't strictly like breaking news. It's not like really, really recent news, but it is something that's being discussed in the UK at the moment. And that is a potential smoking **ban**.

So smoking is a bad habit that hopefully you don't do for your health. And a ban is when you make something illegal. If you ban something, then people can't do it anymore.

Now, the current Labour government is considering banning almost all outdoor smoking in the UK. This new ban would stop people from smoking in pub gardens, outside restaurants, and outside hospitals and sports grounds.

It's worth noting that it's already very difficult to smoke around many buildings in the UK. For example, many offices and university campuses have very small designated smoking areas, like these are the only places where you are allowed to smoke, and often they're very out of the way. When something is out of the way, you have to travel a long time to get there.

So, of course, this is not the first smoking ban that the UK has experienced. Indoor smoking in workplaces was banned in the UK in 2007. So, I was born in 1993 and apparently before 2007, a lot of pubs and restaurants still had smoking areas. But I have to say, I've never seen someone smoke in a pub or a restaurant. Or if I did, I just don't remember it. By the time I was growing up, it was already pretty uncommon, I would say.

And actually, if you compare the UK with other European countries, we are already one of the countries that smokes the least. We had just 12 percent of smokers in the population in 2020, which you can compare with the highest smokers: Greece with 42% and Bulgaria with 38%. So it's pretty safe to say that the past smoking ban was effective. It certainly did a good job of making smoking less common in the UK, although it's also worth noting that cigarettes are incredibly expensive in the UK compared to other countries.

They also banned flavoured cigarettes in 2020. So the most common type of flavoured cigarette is menthols, which are mint flavoured cigarettes. And the reasoning behind this was that these flavoured cigarettes make smoking easier, more attractive to young people, and they make it easier for young people to start smoking. And I kind of agree, because I started smoking menthols. I smoked a bit when I was at university, but I couldn't handle normal cigarettes, so I went for menthols instead.

And of course, as in, I think, almost everywhere now, if you buy a packet of cigarettes in the UK, it will have fairly plain packaging, and it will have large pictures of the effects of smoking. So for example, it will show you the lungs, which are the organs that take in air,

and they'll be all diseased and horrible, and it will have an explanation of how smoking can kill you.

So this new proposed outdoor smoking ban could be on top of another ban that was already proposed by the last government. So the last government proposed a **phased ban**.

So when you do something in phases, you do it a bit at a time. And what this phased ban would do would be to raise the legal age at which you can buy cigarettes by one year every year. So right now you have to be 18 to buy cigarettes, and if the phased ban came into effect, next year it would be 19, then 20, 21, 22 and so on. Essentially, this would mean that people born after a certain year would never be legally able to buy cigarettes. So, it would effectively end smoking, or traditional smoking, in the UK.

Now this phased ban kind of got a bit lost in the news because there was an election, so I don't know if the new government wants to push both of them or just one of them.

It's worth noting that New Zealand introduced a phased ban in this but then they repealed it. So when you repeal a law, you take away a law. You stop a law from working. They repealed their ban in 2023 in order to fund tax cuts. So in order to save money to spend on lowering taxes.

Now, I think funding tax cuts is a bit of a stupid idea in the first place. If you have to fund tax cuts, then doesn't that kind of prove that the taxes were necessary in the first place? But that's just my opinion. And actually, the opinion of many other people. There were many politicians, members of the public and health professionals who were very angry that the New Zealand government repealed their phased smoking ban.

So if you live in a country where smoking is very common still, this might all sound a bit crazy to you or surprising, but this is not even the most extreme example of these bans.

So 80% of Uruguayans, so citizens of Uruguay, voted to make all public space smoking illegal. So smoking anywhere in public was made illegal with an 80% vote in Uruguay, and two thirds of smokers voted for this.

So that shows that actually a lot of smokers are in favour of smoking bans. And that makes sense because a lot of smokers know that smoking is bad for their health. It's bad for their wallet. But many people find it hard to quit because it's addictive. So I guess they support a ban because then if someone forces them to quit, it's easier.

Some people in the UK, however, are calling this an example of the **nanny state**. So this is a phrase that gets thrown about quite a bit in British politics. So a nanny is someone who looks after children instead of their parents. In the old days, rich people often hired a nanny to raise their children while they worked or did whatever it is that rich people do. And the traditional idea of a nanny in the UK is an old woman who is very strict and controlling. Therefore, we have the expression the nanny state, which is the idea of a state, a government that controls everyone and is very strict like a nanny.

So the Conservative Member of Parliament, the Conservative politician Esther McVey, tweeted about the proposed smoking ban with the poem First They Came. You've probably heard this poem before. It starts: First they came for the socialists and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist.

So this is obviously a poem about the situation in World War II in Germany in relation to the Holocaust. Um, and I'm being quite careful about the way I phrase this because I know that certain expressions can get censored on YouTube or I don't know. It's obviously a very touchy, sensitive topic. But basically, this politician was implying a comparison between the new smoking ban, that's the outdoor smoking ban, and the persecution of Jewish people during the Holocaust in World War II. So, that's pretty ridiculous, isn't it?

Pretty much the only people who have legitimate criticisms of this new proposed smoking ban are pub owners, or publicans, people who own pubs because a lot of people like to smoke in pub gardens. The pub industry was already hit really hard during COVID. They lost a lot of money. Many pubs shut down during COVID. So this ban could make things worse for them again.

So, what are my thoughts on both proposed smoking bans, the phased ban and the outdoor smoking ban? Um, I broadly think they're both good ideas, but I do think they're kind of missing the larger picture, which is **vaping**.

Vaping, or smoking electronic cigarettes, is getting more and more popular among youths. among young people. Many people start vaping in order to quit smoking and then just get addicted to vaping instead. Now, people say that vaping isn't as harmful because it doesn't have all of the cancerous chemicals that cigarettes have, but you are still becoming addicted to nicotine and we don't know the long term health consequences of vaping. We might find out in 20 or 30 years that vaping a lot is really bad for your lungs.

That's pretty much what happened with cigarettes. You know, at first, doctors were recommending cigarettes, right? You can find advertisements about doctors smoking cigarettes.

You know, if you were to follow a busy doctor as he makes his daily round of calls, you'd find yourself having a mighty busy time keeping up with him.

Time out, for many men of medicine, usually means just long enough to enjoy a cigarette. And because they know what a pleasure it is to smoke a mild, good tasting cigarette, they're particular about the brand they choose. In a repeated national survey, doctors in all branches of medicine, doctors in all parts of the country were asked, 'What cigarette do you smoke, doctor?'

Once again, the brand named most was Camel. Yes, according to this repeated nationwide survey, more doctors smoke Camels than any other cigarette. Why not change to Camels for the next 30 days and see what a difference it makes in your smoking enjoyment. See how Camels agree with your throat. See how mild and good tasting a cigarette can be.

So it's a bit worrying. And these vape companies are very evil, to be honest, in the way that they target young people. They have fun flavours like bubble gum and candy and ice cream to really appeal to young people. And vaping has come about so quickly that the law has really struggled to keep up. The laws haven't quite dealt with the problem of vaping.

On a personal level, I do hate it when I'm out in public and someone is smoking on the street and I have to inhale their **second-hand smoke**. So when someone is smoking near you, and you inhale, breathe in the smoke, we call that second-hand smoke. I don't like that, and it's very bad for people. Children in particular suffer a lot from second-hand smoke. So I guess if you are around people who are smoking a lot, then that could really be a problem.

Now, I don't know if this is that much of an issue because, again, smoking is not that popular in the UK compared to other countries. But I suppose the new ban would discourage, for example, parents sitting in a pub garden with their children and smoking cigarettes and letting their children inhale the second-hand smoke.

Of course, this ban wouldn't prevent people from smoking in their homes, but many people live in rented accommodation. And usually if you rent, there is a clause in your contract, there's a line in your contract that says you're not allowed to smoke indoors. And in most rented accommodation, if you smoke indoors, the smoke alarm will go boop, boop, boop, boop, boop, and the landlord will not be happy.

So I'm really curious to hear all of your thoughts on this. Do you smoke? What are the laws around smoking like in your country? Do you see a lot of young people vaping? What do you think of vaping in general?

I did have quite a culture shock when I was in Hamburg, because I was standing on a train platform. In the UK, I think it's illegal to smoke on any train platform full stop, but it's not in Germany. And I saw someone smoke a cigarette and then just toss it away. They just threw it onto the ground like it was nothing. And you don't really see that very much in the UK anymore. Or when you do see it, it's usually on the streets or outside a pub or a restaurant.

So yes, please do share your thoughts, leave a comment. You can even write an email to me at Ariel@EasyStoriesInEnglish.com. And let me know what you think about smoking. If you listen on Spotify, I actually will add a poll. So a poll is where you can vote for an option. This is a new feature that Spotify added. And you can go vote in the poll. So that's a fun way we can see what we all think of the smoking bans.

You've been listening to Goodbody News.

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