
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Debating veganism



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Dan

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Dan and joining me is Rob.

Rob

Hello.

Dan

Here at BBC Learning English, we're always discussing diets.

Rob

I am on a 'see-food' diet. When I see food, I just have to eat it!

Dan

I suppose there's no chance of converting you to a vegan diet, is there? That seems to be the most talked about food **fad** at the moment – a **fad** is something that is popular but only for a short time.

Rob

Of course, veganism – that's not eating or using any products that come from animals – may be more than a fad. It could be a lifestyle that improves our health and the planet. And it could be here to stay. But personally, me becoming a vegan would take some persuading.

Dan

I'm sure it would. And in this programme we'll be discussing the debate about veganism and how it's sometimes difficult to change people's minds. But first a question to answer. We've mentioned what a vegan eats but what about a lacto-ovo-vegetarian? Which one of these items can they eat? Is it:

- a) pork
- b) fish or
- c) cheese?

Rob

I'll say b) they can eat fish.

Dan

Well, you'll have to wait until the end of the programme to find out. But now back to veganism. According to some national surveys, there are now around 3.5 million full-time vegans in the UK... and the number is growing!

Rob

And what was recently a radical lifestyle choice is slowly moving into the **mainstream** – or has become accepted by most people as normal.

Dan

Advocates of veganism say their healthy lifestyle would also free up space and resources for growing food and it would help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Rob

Yeah, but come on Dan. Having a meat-free diet means you might not get all the nutrients you need.

Dan

Well, this is all part of the debate, Rob. There's always two sides to an argument and it's something that's been discussed on BBC Radio 4's Farming Today programme. They spoke to Dr Jutta Tobias Mortlock, a senior lecturer in organisational psychology at London's City University, who explained why views about veganism are so **polarised** – that 'means causing people to divide into two groups with opposing views'.

Dr Jutta Tobias Mortlock

This issue touches on personal **beliefs**, and beliefs always trump facts and so, often when we talk about beliefs, we're touching on important values. Values are the things that guide our opinion over what's right versus what's wrong. And so whenever people argue over whether it's right or wrong to eat meat, they are in fact not debating the facts around this issue, they're actually debating the beliefs about what's moral or **immoral** about this.

Dan

So it seems in the whole debate about veganism we are basing our views on **beliefs**. A **belief** is something we feel is true or real. Our beliefs are based on our values – those are the things we think are right and wrong.

Rob

And when we argue over the rights and wrongs of veganism, we base it on our values – not hard facts. We talk about our view on what is **immoral** – so what society thinks is wrong or not acceptable. But basically, there is no right or wrong answer.

Dan

That's why we need facts, Rob.

Rob

So Dan, what can I do if I want to win you over to becoming an omnivore, like me?

Dan

According to Dr Jutta, there are two main routes to winning someone over: a direct, fact-based approach or a 'peripheral route', which might be more effective. Let's hear her explain how it works.

Dr Jutta Tobias Mortlock

If I'm working with you and I'm trying to get you to come round to my side, I might not focus on the central facts. I might focus on the **peripheral** stuff around how I'm constructing my argument. I'd look for ways of how they overlap as people, like what do they have in common? And that's a way to debate an issue such as this controversial one in a way to get people to feel connected to each

other and to actually feel that they value each other as **decent** human beings.

Rob

Interesting! This is a more subtle way of winning an argument. She says we should focus on the **peripheral** stuff – these are the things that are not as important as the main argument but are connected to it.

Dan

So we could say we're looking for common ground – things that both sides agree on or at least understand. Dr Jutta talked about making both sides feel connected. And it's a good point. Even if you don't want to be a vegan, you should respect someone's choice to be one.

Rob

Yes, it's all about valuing someone as a **decent** human being. **Decent** means 'good and having good moral standards'. Like us, Dan!

Dan

Well, they're wise words, Rob! Of course, it would be morally wrong – immoral – not to give you the answer to our quiz question. Earlier I asked which one of these items can a lacto-ovo-vegetarian eat.

Rob

I said b) fish.

Dan

Sorry, no – that's something they can't eat – but they can eat cheese. A lacto-ovo-vegetarian is a person who eats vegetables, eggs, and dairy products but does not eat meat.

Rob

No meat! No steak! How can they enjoy eating?!

Dan

Rob, remember as a decent human beings, we respect all views here.

Rob

Just joking – but now I'm deadly serious about reviewing some of the vocabulary we've discussed today.

Dan

OK. Our first word was **fad**. A **fad** is something that is popular but only for a short time.

Rob

Next, we mentioned **mainstream**. Something that is mainstream has become accepted by most people as normal.

Dan

Then we had **polarised** – that describes a situation that causes people to divide into two groups with opposing views.

Rob

A **belief** is something we feel is true or real. And **immoral** describes something that society thinks is wrong or not acceptable.

Dan

We also mentioned **peripheral**, which relates to things that are not as important as the main argument, but are connected to it. It also means 'situated on the edge'.

Rob

And finally, **decent** means 'good or good enough'.

Dan

Don't forget you can learn more English with us on our website at bbclearningenglish.com.

Rob

Bye for now.

Dan

Goodbye.

VOCABULARY

fad

something that is popular but only for a short time

mainstream

something that has become accepted by most people as normal

polarised

a situation that causes people to divide into two groups with opposing views

immoral

something that society thinks is wrong or not acceptable

peripheral

relates to things that are not as important as the main argument but are connected to it / situated on the edge

decent

good or good enough