



926. Oral Storytelling Traditions and the Mental Health Benefits of Listening to Podcasts 🌞🎧

Episode Overview

In this episode I will, mostly, be...

- Reading out some articles about the tradition of mass oral communication, human psychology and listening to podcasts and considering what the connection is between these three things.

and...

- Explaining and highlighting some vocabulary, especially different ways of talking about communication.
So, plenty of lovely, useful vocab on this diverse subject.

The language style in this episode is a mix of general and

academic English. It's exactly the kind of thing that could come up in an IELTS reading or listening paper. The overall topics being history, psychology, culture and communication.

This might end up being quite a long and deep episode, so strap in, buckle up and make sure you have some water and snacks available.

First of all, let me explain how I came up with the idea for this episode.

Introduction

As an avid podcast listener myself (as well as podcast maker), I was thinking the other day about how listening to podcasts could be good for your mental health, and how a lot of my listeners in comments mention that listening to my podcast doesn't just help with their English but also with their general state of mind too.

A lot of people tell me that listening to these episodes makes them feel comforted, reassured, not distracted by racing thoughts or anxiety, that it is a way to stay calm and focused, and also that it helps them to fall asleep! (not sure how I feel about the last bit).

As a podcast listener myself I completely understand, because this is how I feel about listening to *my* favourite shows as well (This includes *The Adam Buxton Podcast* and *Kermode & Mayo's Take*)

There is something very comforting about listening to your favourite podcast, especially the audio versions - where you are free to listen while doing something else like commuting or

housework, or you can just close your eyes and let your imagination take over.

This made me wonder and speculate about whether there is something innately reassuring and healthy about listening to podcasts.

And I think there is, and I was speculating that this must somehow fit in with old oral storytelling traditions which go back thousands and thousands of years, and how our minds have been shaped by this tradition of listening to others talk - especially the ancient traditions of oral storytelling, which are so much older than any written literature, and I thought about how crucial this must have been to human development, and that surely this is a very important thing for humans to do - to listen to the voices of others, collectively, and this was probably our first form of transmitting information and teaching or learning, before reading and writing, and before so many other forms of communication except probably music, and therefore it must be so deeply-rooted in us, must be so profoundly part of who we are as humans that perhaps listening to others talk can fill a sort of need that many of us have in our lives somehow, where our brains are attuned to learning in that way and to connecting with others, our common culture and our collective human experience.

Just that. That's more or less what I was thinking the other day, all expressed in one extremely long sentence.

But this all made me think that perhaps podcasts fulfil this function somehow and this might account for why they are so popular.

Podcasts are interesting because listening to one is a very intimate experience. We usually do it alone and often with headphones on, creating a very close and personal feeling. But it is also an experience that creates a feeling of connection - to the podcaster but also to the other members of the audience or community. Most successful podcasts manage to build a sense of community so that when you listen, you feel part of something. So it is a communal experience while simultaneously being a very solitary and intimate experience.

Using my podcast as an example, I know that many of my listeners find particular comfort in listening to my episodes, which is great. As I said before, people write this in comments and tell me in emails, and I've had various emails which specifically mentioned this - about how the podcast has not only helped them with their English but has comforted them at a difficult time, and has even helped to mend their brains.

One listener talked about how my podcast helped her recover from brain surgery and of course there was the example of Iñaki from episode 799, who found that my podcast helped him to recover from the extreme mental anguish, anxiety and confusion that he experienced following a particularly bad reaction to a general anaesthetic in hospital.

He seemed to wake up early from his general anaesthetic after a routine surgery, and he experienced a sort of very bad trip (which I understand can be a common reaction to general anaesthetic). Iñaki described huge levels of anxiety, paranoia, disorientation and even visual and auditory hallucinations. He felt convinced that he was going to die and that the people around him were lying to him.

But, when his girlfriend suggested that he listen to my podcast, this is, amazingly what helped him to calm down and gain a sense of mental comfort and wellbeing during his ordeal. You can listen to his story in episode 799.

And I have to say that for me, doing these episodes has been very therapeutic as well.

So, I was thinking about all of that, and what I wanted was some kind of article to summarise and put into words all these thoughts that were swirling around in my head. I couldn't find anything that really summed it all up as I was thinking about it, and in my curiosity I asked ChatGPT a few questions about it all.

Now, I know that there is still pushback from some people when you mention that you've used ChatGPT to do something, because of various reasons.

People can see it as a form of cheating - but I'm not cheating in an exam here or anything. Some people are sceptical about it and want us to avoid relying on it too much. I understand that, but as an English teacher it can be a very useful tool because it can provide quick and efficient samples of English on any given topic, in any style, and what I wanted, when I was thinking about this particular episode of LEP - was a sort of simulated set of articles which would flesh out the vague ideas that I had in my head.

I wanted to see some texts which put into words all the things I was thinking about the power of podcasting and how it is connected to ancient forms of human communication, and therefore human psychology.

I just wanted some coherent texts on this subject which I could use as the basis of a new podcast episode, and as a source of vocabulary to teach my listeners, and generative AI is particularly good at doing things like this - writing quick articles and texts, which contain a lot of frequently used English, in the right style. It's the perfect assistant for English teachers for this reason - it generates English in context.

So I asked ChatGPT a few questions in order to generate some texts, a bit like a series of articles on different aspects of this subject. Of course, amazingly, it did it, instantly.

I thought the texts that were created were very interesting, and they did put into words the things I was thinking, and so I've decided to read them out and use them as the basis for this episode.

So, let's do that.

I'll add my comments while I read and will explain any bits of language which I think are worth explaining.

There will be **vocabulary** summaries after each text.

You will see some vocabulary **highlighted in yellow on the PDF** if you look at it (normally that's how seeing things works, right? You see things, when you look at them).

The bits highlighted in yellow- these are the words and phrases which I will be clarifying, helping you to notice and pick up.

For **speaking** and **pronunciation** you could also practise shadowing me while I read these texts. That means repeating what I say, either at the same time I say it, or you can pause the episode after each sentence and then repeat like that. You can look at the texts to make sure you are saying what you think you are saying.

You can find a **PDF** for this on the episode page, and there is also a link in the description in the podcast app where you are listening to this, or on YouTube.

Now, let's begin with the first prompt which I put into ChatGPT (4).

1. The History of Oral Communication

Prompt 1

What examples of collective oral communication can you give from history, showing that it was the first form of mass communication?

By 'collective oral communication' I was thinking of things like - travelling storytellers who would visit towns and talk to groups of people, or town criers who would deliver the news by standing in the centre of a town and shout out the news to everyone, or even just stories that get handed down from person to person over generations - every big human myth and legend, story tropes - all the typical tropes and archetypes we find in every big film or book - or all the narratives which we use to understand our lives and cultures, or just the story types that have always been entertaining.

Response

Collective Oral Communication In History

Collective oral communication has played a foundational role in human history, serving as the first form of mass communication.

Before the advent of writing, print, or electronic media, societies relied on spoken words to transmit information, culture, and values across large groups. Here are some significant historical examples that illustrate how collective oral communication functioned as the first form of mass communication.

1. Oral Storytelling Traditions

- **Ancient Epics and Myths**

In many ancient cultures, stories were passed down orally before they were ever written. For instance, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, attributed to Homer, were part of the oral tradition of ancient Greece long before they were transcribed. Similarly, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* in India, and *The Epic of Gilgamesh* in Mesopotamia, were initially conveyed through oral storytelling. These stories were not only entertaining but also served as a way to transmit cultural values, history, and collective identity.

- **African Griots**

Griots are West African storytellers, historians, and musicians who have preserved the history and culture of their people through oral tradition for centuries. They recount genealogies, historical events, and cultural stories, ensuring that the knowledge is passed down through generations. This oral tradition played a critical role in

maintaining social cohesion and continuity within communities.

2. Public Speeches and Oratory

- **Athenian Democracy**

In ancient Athens, public speaking was central to the functioning of democracy. Citizens would gather in public spaces, like the *Pnyx*, to listen to orators debate issues of public policy, law, and justice. These speeches, delivered to large audiences, were a form of mass communication that influenced public opinion and political decisions. Famous orators like Pericles and Demosthenes used their rhetorical skills to persuade and mobilize the masses.

- **Roman Senate and Fora**

In ancient Rome, the Senate and public forums (fora) were places where speeches were delivered to large audiences. Leaders, politicians, and philosophers would address the public on matters of state, law, and military campaigns. Cicero, one of Rome's greatest orators, used public speeches to sway the opinions of the Roman people and the Senate, showcasing the power of collective oral communication in shaping society.

3. Religious Sermons and Teachings

- **Jesus's Sermons**

The teachings of Jesus Christ were spread through oral communication before they were written down in the Gospels. Sermons like the *Sermon on the Mount* were delivered to large crowds and had a profound impact on the

early Christian community. This oral **dissemination** of religious teachings played a key role in the spread of Christianity across the Roman Empire.

- **Islamic Preaching**

The Quran was **revealed** to the Prophet Muhammad orally, and he **recited** it to his followers. His sermons and teachings were also **delivered** orally and memorized by his companions. The practice of oral **recitation** remains central in Islamic traditions, where sermons (Khutbah) during Friday prayers and religious festivals continue to be important forms of collective oral communication.

4. Rituals and Ceremonial Chants

- **Indigenous Oral Traditions**

Many **indigenous** cultures around the world, including Native American, Aboriginal Australian, and Māori cultures, rely on oral traditions to pass down myths, laws, and cultural practices. These are often **shared** during ceremonies, rituals, and communal gatherings, where stories and chants are recited to the entire community, ensuring that the collective memory and cultural identity are preserved.

- **Vedic Chants**

In ancient India, the Vedas (**sacred** texts) were **transmitted** orally for centuries before being written down. Vedic **chanting**, a highly specialized form of oral communication, involved **precise recitation of verses** during rituals and ceremonies. These chants were memorized and passed

down through generations, serving as a means of mass communication within the religious community.

5. **Town Criers** and Public Announcements

- **Medieval Europe**

Before the **widespread** use of **the printing press**, town criers were responsible for **disseminating** information to the public. These individuals would walk through towns, loudly **proclaiming royal decrees**, news, and public announcements. This was a vital form of mass communication, as it ensured that even those who were **illiterate** could receive important information.

- **African Drum Communication**

In various African cultures, drums were used to send messages across long distances. Drum patterns **communicated** specific messages that could be understood by those familiar with the system. This form of oral communication allowed leaders **to relay messages** to large groups of people over vast areas, serving as a form of mass communication.

6. **Theatrical Performances and Public Entertainment**

- **Greek and Roman Theatre:** In ancient Greece and Rome, theatrical performances were not just entertainment but also a means of communicating societal values, political ideas, and moral lessons to large audiences. Plays by writers like Sophocles, Aristophanes, and Plautus were performed in open-air theaters, where hundreds or even thousands of

people would gather. These performances were a collective experience that shaped **public discourse** and cultural norms.

- **Medieval Mystery and Morality Plays**

During the Middle Ages, mystery and morality plays were performed in public spaces, often as part of religious festivals. These plays communicated biblical stories and moral lessons to the masses, serving both educational and religious purposes. The oral performance of these plays was a powerful way to reach large audiences who may not have had access to written texts.

7. Epic Poems and Bardic Traditions

- **The Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf***

Before it was written down, *Beowulf* was part of the oral tradition of the Anglo-Saxons. **Bards**, or *scops*, would **recite** the poem in the **mead halls** of kings, entertaining and educating the audience with tales of heroism, loyalty, and honour. This tradition of oral poetry was a way to communicate shared values and history to large groups.

- **Celtic Bards**

In Celtic cultures, bards were professional poets and storytellers who preserved and communicated the history and legends of their people. Through their **recitations** of epic poems, genealogies, and stories, bards played a crucial role in maintaining cultural continuity and educating the masses.

Conclusion

These examples demonstrate that collective oral communication was the first form of mass communication in human history.

Through storytelling, public speaking, religious teachings, rituals, and performances, early societies were able to transmit information, culture, and values to large groups of people. This tradition **laid the groundwork** for later forms of mass communication, such as written texts, print media, and digital platforms, and continues to influence modern communication practices, including podcasts.

Vocabulary Summary

- Collective oral communication has **played a foundational role** in human history
- **serving as** the first form of mass communication.

"**Serves as**" suggests that something has a certain role or function.

More examples of “serve as”

Body language serves as the first form of communication between strangers.

(Here, body language performs the function of first communication between strangers.)

Education serves as a tool for social mobility.

(Education performs the function of helping people improve their social status.)

The garage serves as a storage space during the winter.

(The garage temporarily acts as a place to store things during winter.)

This meeting will serve as a platform for discussing future plans.

(The meeting functions as a forum or opportunity for discussion.)

The statue serves as a reminder of the city's rich history.

(The statue performs the role of reminding people of the city's history.)

In many cultures, storytelling serves as a way to pass down traditions.

(Storytelling functions as a means of transmitting traditions.)

- Before **the advent of** writing, print, or electronic media, societies relied on spoken words
- to **transmit** information
- historical examples that **illustrate** how collective oral communication functioned
- stories were **passed down** orally
- the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* in India, and *The Epic of Gilgamesh* in Mesopotamia, were initially **conveyed** through oral storytelling.
- They **recount genealogies**, historical events, and cultural stories
- These speeches, **delivered** to large audiences, were a form of mass communication
- Leaders, politicians, and philosophers would **address** the public on matters of state, law, and military campaigns.

- The teachings of Jesus Christ were **spread** through oral communication
- **Sermons** like the *Sermon on the Mount* **were delivered** to large crowds
- This oral **dissemination** of religious teachings played a key role in the spread of Christianity
- The Quran was **revealed** to the Prophet Muhammad orally, and he **recited** it to his followers.
- His sermons and teachings were also **delivered** orally and memorized by his companions.
- These are often **shared** during ceremonies, rituals, and communal gatherings,
- In ancient India, the Vedas (**sacred** texts) were **transmitted** orally for centuries before being written down.
- Vedic **chanting**, a highly specialized form of oral communication, involved **precise recitation of verses** during rituals and ceremonies.
- **town criers** were responsible for **disseminating** information to the public.
- These individuals would walk through towns, loudly **proclaiming** **royal decrees**,
- This form of oral communication allowed leaders **to relay** **messages** to large groups

Vocabulary Categorised

Let's categorise some of that vocabulary. This can help to collect it all together in your mind.

It's also worth considering collocations here. Notice how these words tend to go with certain other words.

Also, style. The tone of these texts is academic and so a lot of the words are more formal than words like "say, speak, tell".

Words that mean "to communicate, to speak"

- To **transmit** information
- To **pass down** stories
- To **convey** stories and myths
- To **recount** events / stories
- To **deliver** a speech / a sermon
- To **address** an audience / a crowd / the public
- To **spread** teachings / stories / rumours
- To **disseminate** knowledge / teachings
- To **reveal** information / the truth
- To **recite** texts / verses
- To **share** ideas / stories
- To **chant** verses / mantras
- To **proclaim** decrees (officially announce new laws)
- To **cry** / to **shout** / to **scream**
- To **relay** messages (from one person to another)
- To **impart** moral lessons (formal, *tell*)

Things that people communicate to others

- **Genealogies**
- **Sermons**
- **Sacred texts**

- Precise recitation of **verses**
- **Royal decrees**

2. Collective Oral Communication and Human Psychology

Prompt 2

What is the importance of the tradition of collective oral communication - one person speaking aloud to a group - in human psychology?

I was wondering if listening to people speak can be good for our mental health because it taps into a profound human connection to the spoken word.

Response

Collective Oral Communication and Human Psychological and Social Development

The tradition of collective oral communication—where one person speaks aloud to a group—has been **a cornerstone** of human social and psychological development for thousands of years. This practice has **profound** importance in human psychology, influencing everything from **social cohesion** to **emotional**

processing. Here are the key psychological aspects and benefits associated with this tradition:

1. Social Bonding and Cohesion

- **Shared Experiences**

When a group listens to a speaker together, they share a common experience. This creates a sense of **unity** and **belonging**, which is **crucial** for social **bonding**. Whether it's a story, a ritual, or a speech, the collective experience **reinforces** group identity and **strengthens** social **ties**.

- **Cultural Transmission**

Oral communication is a primary way through which cultural **norms**, **values**, and traditions are passed down through generations. This not only **preserves** the culture but also **ensures** that individuals within the group understand and **adhere to** shared social expectations, **fostering** a strong sense of community.

2. Emotional Regulation and Collective Catharsis

- **Emotional Expression**

Collective oral communication often **involves** the sharing of emotions, whether through stories, rituals, or speeches. This allows for a **communal** processing of emotions, helping individuals feel understood and **validated** within the group. For example, in **mourning rituals** or storytelling sessions that involve **hardship**, the group can collectively express and process **grief**, fear, or joy.

- **Catharsis**

When a speaker **articulates** emotions that **resonate** with the

audience, it can lead to a release of **pent-up** feelings. This collective catharsis can be **therapeutic**, helping the group to **cope with** shared experiences, such as **trauma**, **loss**, or even joy and celebration.

3. **Cognitive Development and Learning**

- **Knowledge Transmission**

Historically, oral communication was the primary **means** of passing down knowledge, from practical skills to **moral** lessons. The **group setting** allowed for **repetition**, **reinforcement**, and discussion, which are key **components** of learning. Listening to stories, speeches, or teachings in a group setting engages cognitive processes like memory, attention, and critical thinking.

- **Moral and Ethical Learning**

Through collective oral traditions, such as **parables** or **folk tales**, groups often **impart** moral and ethical lessons. These narratives **shape** the values of the group, teaching individuals about right and wrong in a way that is more **impactful** when shared collectively.

4. **Identity Formation and Group Norms**

- **Shared Identity**

Oral communication often involves narratives that define who "we" are as a group—whether it's a family, tribe, or nation. By participating in these collective experiences, individuals **internalize** the identity and norms of the group, shaping their **sense of self in relation to** others.

- **Role Modeling**

Speakers in these settings often **serve as role models**. By sharing their experiences, **wisdom**, or leadership, they help shape the behavior and attitudes of the group. This is particularly **evident** in storytelling traditions where heroes or leaders **exemplify** the values that the group **holds dear**.

5. Ritual and Tradition

- **Sense of Continuity**

Collective oral communication is often **embedded in** rituals that **mark** significant life events—birth, death, marriage, or **coming of age**. These rituals provide a sense of **continuity** and structure, helping individuals understand their place in **the larger cycle of life**. The repeated, **communal** nature of these rituals also reinforces the **stability** and **resilience** of the group.

- **Psychological Comfort**

The **predictability** and **familiarity** of rituals involving collective oral communication can provide psychological comfort. Knowing what to expect in these settings reduces anxiety and creates a safe space for emotional expression and processing.

6. Persuasion and Influence

- **Shaping Beliefs and Behaviors**

Collective oral communication, especially in the form of speeches or sermons, has been a powerful tool for **persuasion** throughout history. Leaders, religious figures, and **orators** use this platform to influence the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of their audience. This is effective because the

shared experience **heightens** the emotional impact and can lead to a greater **alignment** with the speaker's message.

- **Collective Action**

By **rallying** a group **around a common cause** or belief, collective oral communication can inspire **collective action**. This has been key in social movements, religious **revivals**, and political campaigns, where the spoken word can **mobilize** people to act together for a shared goal.

7. Psychological Safety and Trust

- **Creating Safe Spaces**

In many cultures, collective oral communication is structured in a way that creates psychological safety. For example, in traditional storytelling circles, group discussions or self-help groups, there are often established **norms** of respect and listening. This creates a safe environment where individuals feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and emotions without fear of judgement.

- **Building Trust**

When one person speaks to a group, especially in a trusted role (like a leader or elder), it can reinforce trust within the group. The act of listening collectively to a respected voice can **strengthen bonds** of trust, both between the speaker and the audience and among the group members themselves.

8. Rituals and Collective Memory

- **Cementing Shared History**

Collective oral communication often reinforces collective memory by retelling important historical events or shared

stories. This helps **cement** a common understanding of the past, which is crucial for the group's identity and continuity.

- **Psychological Anchoring**

For individuals, being part of a collective memory can provide a psychological **anchor**, **grounding** them in the group's history and providing a sense of **stability** and **belonging**.

9. Engagement with the Subconscious

- **Myth and Archetype**

Many oral traditions involve myths, legends, and **archetypal** stories that resonate with the **subconscious** mind. These narratives **tap into** deep, **universal** themes and emotions, offering a way for individuals to engage with complex psychological concepts in a way that feels **intuitive** and meaningful. For example, the hero's journey in many traditional stories can **mirror** an individual's personal struggles and growth, providing **psychological insights** through **symbolic storytelling**.

In summary, the tradition of collective oral communication plays a vital role in human psychology by fostering social cohesion, facilitating emotional processing, transmitting knowledge, and shaping identities. The power of one person speaking to a group lies not just in the content of the message but in the shared experience of receiving that message together, which strengthens bonds, builds trust, and anchors individuals in their social and cultural contexts.

Vocabulary List for Response 2

- a cornerstone of human social and psychological development
- This practice has profound importance in human psychology
- influencing everything from social cohesion to emotional processing
- This creates a sense of unity and belonging, which is crucial for social bonding
- the collective experience reinforces group identity and strengthens social ties
- Cultural Transmission
- cultural norms, values, and traditions are passed down through generations
- This not only preserves the culture but also ensures that individuals within the group understand and adhere to shared social expectations, fostering a strong sense of community.
- Emotional Regulation and Collective Catharsis
- Collective oral communication often involves the sharing of emotions
- This allows for a communal processing of emotions
- helping individuals feel understood and validated within the group
- For example, in mourning rituals or storytelling sessions that involve hardship
- the group can collectively express and process grief
- Catharsis
- When a speaker articulates emotions that resonate with the audience
- it can lead to a release of pent-up feelings
- This collective catharsis can be therapeutic
- helping the group to cope with shared experiences
- such as trauma, loss,

- Historically, oral communication was the primary **means** of passing down knowledge
- from practical skills to **moral** lessons

Feel free to look up the other highlighted vocabulary in this list by using any of the following online dictionaries

- <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/>
 - <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>
 - <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>
 - <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/>
-
- The **group setting** allowed for **repetition**, **reinforcement**, and discussion
 - which are key **components** of learning
 - Through collective oral traditions, such as **parables** or **folk tales**
 - groups often **impart** moral and ethical lessons
 - These narratives **shape** the values of the group
 - in a way that is more **impactful** when shared collectively
 - individuals **internalize** the identity and norms of the group
 - shaping their **sense of self in relation to** others
 - Speakers in these settings often **serve as role models**.
 - By sharing their experiences, **wisdom**, or leadership
 - This is particularly **evident** in storytelling traditions
 - where heroes or leaders **exemplify** the values that the group **holds dear**.
 - Collective oral communication is often **embedded in** rituals that **mark** significant life events

- birth, death, marriage, or coming of age.
- These rituals provide a sense of continuity and structure
- helping individuals understand their place in the larger cycle of life.
- The repeated, communal nature of these rituals also reinforces the stability and resilience of the group.
- The predictability and familiarity of rituals involving collective oral communication
- Collective oral communication has been a powerful tool for persuasion throughout history
- Leaders, religious figures, and orators use this platform
- the shared experience heightens the emotional impact
- and can lead to a greater alignment with the speaker's message
- By rallying a group around a common cause or belief,
- collective oral communication can inspire collective action.
- This has been key in social movements, religious revivals, and political campaigns
- the spoken word can mobilize people to act together for a shared goal
- in traditional storytelling circles, group discussions or self-help groups, there are often established norms of respect and listening
- The act of listening collectively to a respected voice can strengthen bonds of trust
- Cementing Shared History
- This helps cement a common understanding of the past
- For individuals, being part of a collective memory can provide a psychological anchor, grounding them in the group's history and providing a sense of stability and belonging.
- Many oral traditions involve myths, legends, and archetypal stories that resonate with the subconscious mind

- These narratives **tap into** deep, **universal** themes and emotions, offering a way for individuals to engage with complex psychological concepts
- in a way that feels **intuitive** and meaningful
- For example, the hero's journey in many traditional stories can **mirror** an individual's personal struggles and growth
- providing **psychological insights** through **symbolic storytelling**.

3. The Psychological Benefits of Listening to Podcasts

Prompt 3

How does this relate to the mental health benefits of listening to podcasts?

Vocabulary

There's no need for a vocabulary review for the rest of this episode as a lot of the words are repeated from the previous responses. But I encourage you to notice words and phrases which we saw before.

In order to save time here, I've taken the article which ChatGPT produced and condensed it into one paragraph.

Reponse

Podcasts provide mental health benefits similar to those of collective oral communication by fulfilling essential psychological needs such as connection, emotional regulation, cognitive stimulation, empathy, identity formation, and emotional comfort.

They create virtual communities that reduce loneliness, offer emotional catharsis through shared experiences, stimulate learning and mental engagement, and foster empathy by exposing listeners to diverse perspectives.

Additionally, podcasts encourage self-reflection, provide a sense of psychological safety through familiarity, preserve cultural narratives, and inspire personal growth, ultimately enhancing well-being in much the same way traditional storytelling has done for centuries.

4. The Mental Health Benefits of LEP

Prompt 4

This is where my ego might have got the better of me and I wanted this all to be concluded with specific reference to my podcast.

So, please forgive another moment of self-indulgence!

Can you give examples of this with specific reference to Luke's English Podcast, as a case study?

I was also curious to see how much ChatGPT knows about the 'lore' of LEP.

What will it say? Will it be correct? Does ChatGPT listen to LEP and does it listen until the ends of episodes? How much will it get wrong about my podcast?

It's also interesting for me to get some perspective on my work and see what its overall impact is.

The Psychological Benefits of Collective Oral Communication Exemplified by Luke's English Podcast

Luke's English Podcast is a great example of how modern podcasting carries forward the benefits of traditional collective oral communication, offering significant mental health benefits to its listeners.

Let's explore how this podcast serves as a case study by connecting its content and format with the key psychological principles behind collective oral communication.

1. Social Bonding and Virtual Community Building

- **Luke's English Podcast:** Luke Thompson, the host, has built a strong community around his podcast. Through regular interactions with listeners, responding to their questions, and sharing listener stories, Luke fosters a sense of connection. His listeners often feel part of a global community of English learners, which helps reduce feelings of isolation.

- **Example:** Luke often reads out listener emails or comments in his episodes, creating a two-way communication channel. For many listeners, hearing their own or others' experiences shared on the podcast strengthens their connection to the community. This mirrors the social bonding that happens in traditional group settings, where sharing experiences builds a sense of belonging.

2. Emotional Regulation and Catharsis

- **Luke's English Podcast:** Luke frequently discusses topics that resonate emotionally with his listeners, such as the struggles and successes of learning French. His candid and often humorous take on these challenges allows listeners to process their own frustrations and anxieties.
 - **Example:** In episodes where Luke talks about his own language learning experiences or addresses common fears among learners, such as the fear of making mistakes, listeners often experience emotional release. The lighthearted yet empathetic tone of the podcast helps listeners feel understood and provides a form of catharsis, similar to how collective storytelling allows for shared emotional processing.

3. Cognitive Stimulation and Learning

- **Luke's English Podcast:** The primary focus of the podcast is to teach English in an engaging way. Each episode requires active listening and cognitive engagement, as Luke explores language topics, explains nuances, and shares cultural insights. This continuous mental engagement is beneficial for

cognitive health.

- **Example:** In episodes where Luke breaks down complex grammar points or explores idiomatic expressions, listeners are cognitively stimulated. The process of understanding and applying this information parallels the cognitive benefits of learning through traditional oral communication, where stories and teachings are absorbed and reflected upon collectively.

4. Empathy and Perspective-Taking

- **Luke's English Podcast:** Through storytelling and interviews, Luke exposes his listeners to a variety of perspectives. Whether discussing his own life experiences or interviewing guests from different cultural backgrounds, the podcast fosters empathy and broadens listeners' worldviews.
 - **Example:** In episodes where Luke interviews guests or discusses his experiences living in France or Japan, listeners are invited to see the world from different perspectives. This promotes empathy, much like traditional storytelling, where hearing others' experiences enhances understanding and connection.

5. Identity Formation and Personal Growth

- **Luke's English Podcast:** For many listeners, especially those learning English, the podcast plays a significant role in shaping their identity as language learners and global citizens. Luke's encouragement and relatable stories help listeners navigate their own learning journeys and personal growth.

- **Example:** Luke often shares his own struggles and triumphs with language learning, which helps listeners reflect on their own experiences. This not only validates their challenges but also encourages them to see themselves as part of a broader learning community, much like how traditional collective communication reinforces group identity and personal roles within the community. Also, being a LEPster should give listeners the sense they are part of a community with shared reference points. Attending live podcast recordings or LEP meetups can emphasise this feeling for listeners.

6. Emotional Comfort and Psychological Safety

- **Luke's English Podcast:** Luke's consistent tone, friendly demeanor, and predictable format provide listeners with a sense of comfort and psychological safety. Regular listeners know what to expect, which creates a safe and calming environment for them.
 - **Example:** The informal, conversational style of the podcast makes listeners feel like they are having a chat with a friend, which can be very comforting, especially when compared to the strict and punishing environments in which they learned English in childhood. This sense of familiarity and routine is akin to the comfort provided by traditional rituals or storytelling sessions, where the predictable structure creates a safe space for emotional expression.

7. Collective Memory and Continuity

- **Luke's English Podcast:** While the podcast is focused on language learning, it also preserves and shares cultural knowledge, especially related to British culture. This helps listeners connect with a collective memory of language and culture, providing a sense of continuity.
 - **Example:** Episodes that explore British cultural practices, history, or social norms help listeners connect with a broader cultural narrative. For many international listeners, this deepens their understanding of English-speaking cultures, much like traditional storytelling that preserves collective memory and cultural identity. Ultimately, getting a deeper understanding of another cultural group helps us to understand that we are all basically the same and there are always reasons behind behaviours and customs which at first might seem strange or nonsensical.

8. Persuasion and Positive Influence

- **Luke's English Podcast:** Luke frequently encourages positive behaviors, such as perseverance in language learning, open-mindedness, curiosity and “being excellent to each other”. His positive influence helps listeners adopt healthier attitudes and behaviors, contributing to their overall mental well-being.
 - **Example:** In episodes where Luke discusses the importance of not giving up or embracing mistakes as part of the learning process, listeners are inspired to adopt a growth mindset. This mirrors the persuasive power of traditional speeches or storytelling, where the

speaker's words can inspire collective or individual change.

Additional point

I also wanted comments about the benefits of listening to spontaneous speech, which is something I often wonder about - like I did in episode 923 recently.

I prompted ChatGPT with this

How can listening to spontaneous speech benefit mental health? Include references to the fact that spontaneous speaking allows the listener to attune to the speaker's real-time mental processes, increasing the sense of connection.

And ChatGPT said

Listening to spontaneous speech can benefit mental health by fostering a deeper sense of connection between the listener and the speaker. Unlike scripted content, spontaneous speech reveals the speaker's real-time mental processes, including pauses, self-corrections, and genuine emotional expressions, which allows listeners to attune to the speaker's thoughts as they unfold. This creates an authentic, human connection that reduces feelings of isolation and promotes empathy. Additionally, the unpredictability of spontaneous conversation can stimulate cognitive engagement, keeping the mind active and attentive.

Hearing someone think out loud also provides a comforting sense of presence and relatability, reinforcing the listener's sense of belonging and emotional well-being, particularly in podcasts where hosts share personal stories, reflections, and unscripted dialogue.

Conclusion: Luke's English Podcast as a Modern Oral Tradition

Luke's English Podcast exemplifies how modern podcasting can replicate the psychological benefits of traditional collective oral communication. Through his engaging storytelling, educational content, and community-building efforts, Luke creates a space where listeners can connect, learn, and grow—both linguistically and emotionally. The podcast serves as a powerful tool for mental health, providing listeners with the social connection, emotional support, cognitive stimulation, and identity reinforcement that are hallmarks of collective oral traditions.

In essence, Luke's English Podcast is a modern continuation of the ancient practice of one person speaking to a group, offering all the psychological benefits that come with shared oral communication, but in a format that fits today's digital world.

So, just in case you had any doubts as to the benefits of listening to this podcast, as well as helping you with your English in many ways, it can also create a sense of social continuity, regulate your emotions, give a feeling of catharsis, stimulate your mind, encourage empathy, help you form and grow your identity, give you a feeling of comfort and reassurance, improve your memory and other cognitive processes, and generally make you a healthier and better human being, and all of that is backed up by traditions, customs and rituals which

go back thousands of years into ancient human history.

You're welcome!

Spontaneous / spontaneity

Certificate & Medal Award

