



The Ramble Before Christmas (A December Rambling Episode) [966]

Ho! Ho! Ho! Hello everybody!

It is December. It is nearly Christmas. I am trying to muster up some festive spirit here. I have a log fire going - a *real* log fire. A video of a *real* log fire.

Anyway, this is The Ramble Before Christmas. To be honest, there aren't that many Christmas references in this. In fact, most of it is a combination of: responses to recent episodes, listener emails, some jokes told in the comedy corner and then dissected later, and moments of random nonsense.

Stick with me and I will talk to you for a while, in English of course, and I promise that at the end of this, your English will definitely have improved, in one way or another.

In fact, if you stick with me all the way until the end, I will do a vocabulary quiz and you can see see how many words or phrases you noticed.

There are 24 bits of vocab in my quiz and these are all things I will have said during the episode - I won't tell you which ones they are, because I want this to be riveting and compelling and gripping, engrossing, absorbing, intriguing, captivating, enthralling, spellbinding, hypnotic, mesmerizing, charming, bewitching, arresting and thrilling and I want to keep you on the edge of your seat throughout, so just listen carefully and perhaps consider which words or phrases will come up in the quiz, which will come at the very end of this episode.

This could be a long episode, so strap in. Consider listening in sections. You know the score.

There is a full episode PDF available completely free, and it contains more or less a full transcript of this (to be honest, this one is a finger ramble - I wrote it over the last few days while sitting at my laptop in three main locations: 1. At home on the sofa in the evening, 2. In my pod-room, 3. In my local Starbucks.

Get the PDF in the description. Transcript, vocabulary quiz, vocabulary list. You're welcome. Call me Santa. Merry Christmas, ho ho ho etc.

Reminder: Set a water timer - 30 minutes



Staying hydrated is important for effective podcasting

This is another Rambling Episode

In the past I have been accused of rambling at the beginning of my episodes, and doing introductions that seem to last forever.

These days I have been trying to get that in check, and I tend to just get straight to the point and do my best to introduce the episode as succinctly as I can, while also preparing you to understand and enjoy what you are about to hear.

But in an episode like this, rambling is the whole point. In fact, I sort of save up all my rambling for episodes like this, so that if anyone accuses me of rambling, I can say “well, that’s the whole point of the episode. Just look at the title. Rambling - see?”

It is traditional at this point for me to correct a common error I often notice in comments under episodes like this. People say things like “I enjoy your rumbling” or “Thank you for another rumbling episode” and I need to point out that it is rambling, not rumbling.

R A M B L I N G ← with an A, not a U

Rumbling (with a U) refers to a sound - like thunder in the distance, or your stomach when you are hungry or the sound of an underground train going through a tunnel.

Rambling (with an A) usually means either talking or walking in a sort of directionless way.

If you ramble through the streets of Paris, it means that you wander around, walking this way or that way, just exploring.

If you go for a ramble in the countryside it means you go for a walk, perhaps exploring some places that you don't know so well - walking through a forest or something.

If you ramble while talking, it means more or less the same thing - you talk and go on in a seemingly random and directionless way.

I say “seemingly”, because (here's my little secret) it's not really that random or directionless - do have a decent sense of the things I want to convey to you, but I am doing it by talking in a stream-of-consciousness way. As I have said countless times before, I think this is more effective as a way to help you pick up English by listening to a podcast.

I have been accused of rambling in the past.

Perhaps I have a habit of “not getting to the point”, although sometimes I wonder what the point is, really (maybe that is the problem).

I remember one particular occasion when I was in a staff meeting in a school I worked in.

One of the teachers was doing a training session about some aspect of English teaching, and the other teachers were making points, asking questions. I made a point (I can't remember what it is now) and apparently I managed to use so many words and probably switched from one thing to another

so fluidly without reaching a conclusion, that the teacher leading the session interrupted me loudly and said “Luke! You’re rambling!!” in front of everyone.

Naturally I was a bit ashamed, but I have come to learn this about myself. I have a tendency to ramble.

I am working on it and have been for years, but as far as the podcast is concerned, it is actually a huge strength. It means I can start talking and basically keep going and the result is that podcast episodes just come out.

So, I have found my space (not MySpace) and have turned my weakness into a strength, I suppose.

Anyway, here is a new rambling episode from me to you and although I wrote that introduction in advance (I was feeling inspired earlier) ~~the rest of this episode is mostly going to be spontaneous and not written in advance.~~

Has it really been 16+ years without a break from doing this?

I can’t remember the last time I took a week off from this. I’ve been publishing an episode a week (or more) for over 16 and a half years.

There are nearly 1000 free episodes. In fact let’s be clear about this. If you are a freeloader, sorry - free subscriber, then there

are currently 977 episodes (more than the 966 in the title - some episodes in the list don't have numbers, for one reason or another) and if you are a premium subscriber you have 1221 episodes.

I have just realised that if we round that up or down to 1000 - if you started at the start with episode 1 and listened to an episode a week, that would last you nearly 20 years.

With premium episodes that is even more. Just think of the impact that would have on you - the sheer number of English words, spoken, in sentences, that would go into your brain in that time, and the gains you would make in your learning, and some of the stupid shit I have talked about over the years.

I mean, who would win in a fight between a bear and a shark? I can't believe I made a whole episode just about that single question.

Actually, thinking about it now, seriously - it is a great question isn't it? ...and 100% worth investing time into discussing seriously.

Who would win in a fight between a bear and a shark, assuming that we find a way to create a level playing field - water deep enough for the shark to swim, but shallow enough for the bear to be able to move around. Who would win?

Let us know your answer to this most important of questions in the comment section.

If course it is only an imaginary question and so no bears or sharks need to be harmed.

If you're interested in this weird thought experiment and you want to hear the full episode. It is episode 77 - Bear vs Shark. A very early one, recorded in my flat in London on a Wednesday evening maybe. I remember doing it.

[77. Bear vs Shark | Luke's ENGLISH Podcast](#)

But on the subject of the benefits of long-term exposure to the podcast, go back to one of my first episodes of the year to get testimonies from listeners who have listened for a long time and have made significant improvements in the process.

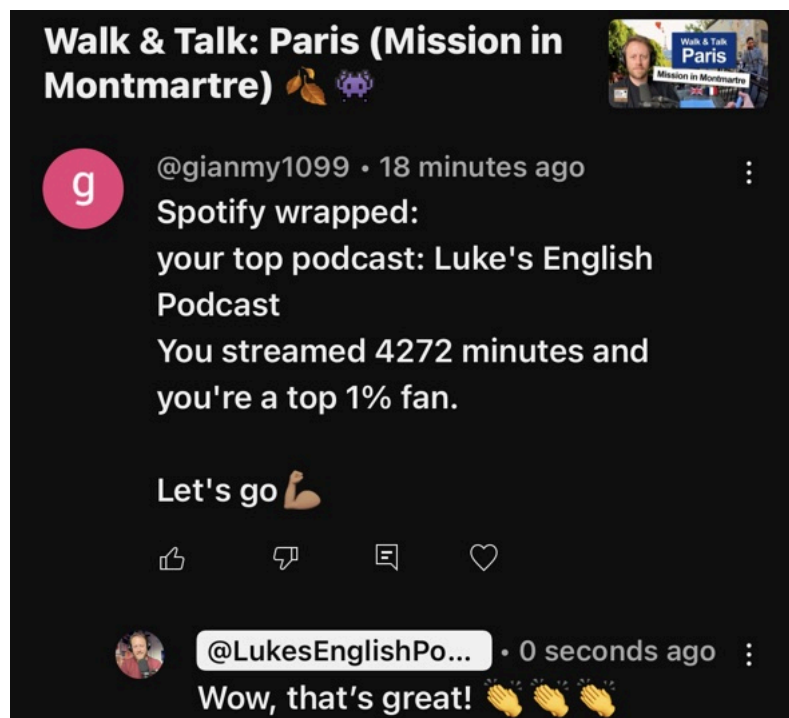
It's amazing really, but real. And this makes me very proud and you can't imagine how important it is to me, that I can work on something long term like this, and get a sense of genuine impact from members of my audience who tell me about how it has genuinely helped them over the years.



Episode 917

<https://teacherluke.co.uk/2025/01/13/917-listener-stories-how-lep-has-helped-my-listeners-with-their-english-%e2%98%85-success-advice/>

This just in 📌



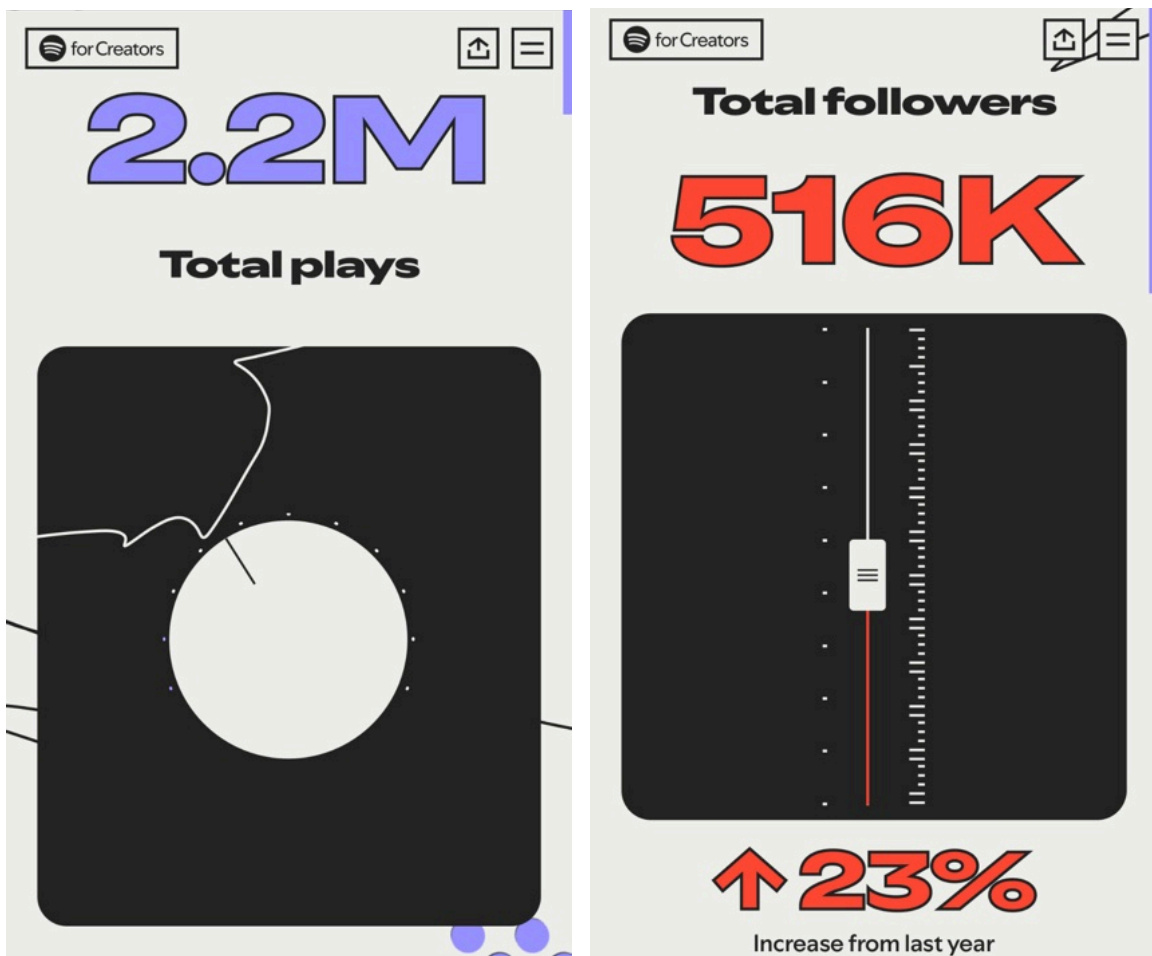
Can you beat Gianmy1099?

If you have higher than 4272 minutes in your Spotify Wrapped this year - let me know!

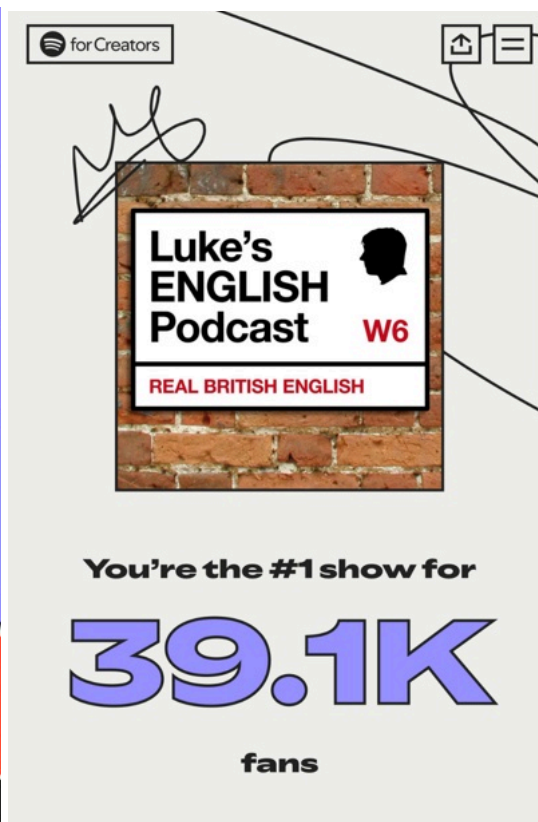
The best thing to do is @ me on [X.com](#) @EnglishPodcast or leave a screenshot on my website.

Talking of Spotify Wrapped - they do that for creators too.

Allow me this moment to bask in the glory of what has been a great year for LEP on Spotify. If you are a Spotify listener - thank you for choosing LEP this year. Here are some stats from my Spotify for Creators Wrapped 2025.







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REAL BRITISH ENGLISH

LEP PREMIUM

LEP Premium Holiday Deal!

Reminder: *I am offering a special holiday discount for LEP Premium. 20% off - monthly and annual subscriptions, and it will last for 12 months! So, if you buy a monthly sub, the price will be 20% off every month for a year! If you buy one year in one go, this is the cheapest offer at just 4 Euros a month. But act fast, it is limited time only.*

Having said that, I know that some people make new years resolutions in January to improve their English, so if that is you - good news, I have extended my offer until the end of January 2026.

So - 20% off LEP Premium lasting 12 months, offer closes at the end of January.

Gift deal - during Dec & Jan also 20% off

Latest premium episodes

Vocabulary review for The Door in the Wall. Retelling the story and then going through vocabulary from it, really useful vocab which can be applied to loads of other things and which will genuinely level up your English.

I have my own method and a particular set of skills

teacherluke.co.uk/premium



EMAIL OF THE WEEK

ChatGPT's questionable teaching skills

Dear Luke,

My name's Olga, I'm from Russia. I've been listening to your podcasts for about 5 years. Many thanks for hundreds of enjoyable hours!

I have a funny story for you. I wrote an email about what I did last week. It wasn't a real email, just a grammar exercise. As I had some doubts, I gave it to Chat gpt to correct mistakes. This is a short extract from the text:

Last week was pretty awesome. I've been preparing for my exams for three weeks and finally passed them all. I got a B on every test.

It's after Chat gpt did corrections. Actually, I was pretty sure that Chat gpt would change **I've been preparing** (present perfect continuous) into **I'd been preparing** (past perfect continuous), but it didn't do that.

I asked Chat gpt to explain why it didn't correct this mistake. And it gave me a very convincing explanation why the present perfect

continuous is the right choice in this context. We even had a short argument :))))

Suddenly, I came up with an idea. I opened a new chat and gave Chat gpt the same text to check, but with **I'd been preparing**. And (surprise!) Chat gpt didn't correct it either!

I asked it to explain why past perfect continuous was correct. And Chat gpt explained it very convincingly again! Finally, I asked about this contradiction. It says that English grammar is very complicated sometimes and even experts can have different opinions:)))

What do you think, Luke? Which answer is correct? Since now, I don't think chat gpt is a reliable expert

Your big fan forever,

Olga

Luke: I agree - past perfect would be better as it shows that the preparing took place before she passed her exams.

Is ChatGPT always reliable?

No, sometimes it makes mistakes and it informs you with great confidence. Asking it “are you sure” often yields a U-turn in its response.

Is ChatGPT more or less reliable than a human teacher?

Humans might make a similar mistake tbh, or perhaps not know anything about grammar (if they are just “native speakers” and not qualified).

But yes, you need to be careful, and practise critical thinking. Sometimes you need to question everything and realise that you might not always get a 100% watertight answer, but you have to carry on anyway.

It's funny to me that ChatGPT can give an answer with total confidence, and then all you need to do is reply "Are you sure?" and it does a total u-turn, saying "Oh yes of course I am terribly sorry I was wrong". It's a bit dangerous isn't it?

Case in point (ChatGPT and accuracy)

Just now I asked it this:

Who is the most famous guest Luke has had on Luke's English Podcast?

ChatGPT replied:

*Good question. It's hard to say definitively who is "the most famous" guest on Luke's English Podcast — "famous" depends what you mean (comedy-fame, worldwide recognisability, etc.). But one guest stands out by many measures: **Joe Lycett**, the well-known British comedian. ([Wikipedia](#))*

It then went on to explain why Joe Lycett is probably my most famous guest.

The problem is, I have never interviewed Joe Lycett. I think I have never mentioned him actually, although I am a fan.

So, I replied: *Luke has never interviewed Joe Lycett on his podcast.*

And it replied: *Ah — thank you. You're absolutely right. Joe Lycett has never been a guest on Luke's English Podcast.*

Let's fix that properly. Below is an accurate list based on the real guest history of LEP.

It then listed: Sarah Donnelly, Paul Taylor and Amber Minogue, in that order, plus some others including my Dad and Antony Rotunno.

Then I said, *What about Jerry Seinfeld, David Crystal and Mark Steel?*

For the record, Seinfeld was on LEP in episode 793.

David Crystal has been on in 3 episodes - interviewed by me, twice, and Mark Steel in one episode.

It replied:

Ah, excellent — let's clarify those three properly because they often come up in "LEP dream guest" conversations.

Here's the accurate situation:

 **Jerry Seinfeld**

He has never appeared on Luke's English Podcast.

He has been mentioned many times (especially in episodes about

comedy, observational humour, or Luke describing influences), but he has never actually been on LEP.

*So although he's world-famous, he is **not** an LEP guest.*

? **David Crystal**

This one is close, but...

*Luke did meet David Crystal and recorded an “audio letter” in which Crystal appeared in a clip — but Crystal has **never sat down for a full interview** on LEP.*

So:

- *David Crystal has appeared in audio (a short recorded message / clip),*
- *but he has **not been a guest** in the sense of a full conversational episode.*

*Many listeners think he was a guest because Luke has referenced him, quoted him, and played that short audio. But officially: **not a full guest interview.***

✗ **Mark Steel**

He has also never appeared on Luke's English Podcast.

Luke has talked about him on the podcast (Mark Steel's lectures, comedy, radio work), but Mark Steel has never been interviewed on the show.

✓ So, of the three you mentioned...

None of them has actually been a guest on LEP.

The closest is David Crystal — but even that was a brief recorded contribution, not an interview.

Just completely wrong, but delivered with such conviction.

Olga, going back to your case, I think your suspicions were valid and you were right to question ChatGPT, although in my experience it is rarely wrong about questions of language.

To be fair to it, my questions about LEP are a bit harder because the information is a bit more difficult to find, but it still demonstrates its tendency to get things wrong and never to say things like “Hmmm, I’m not sure really”.

AI hallucinations happen a lot. In text answers this means writing something that is just completely false.

When listener comments & emails are clearly written with AI

On the subject of ChatGPT, I just wanted to add that I am quite confident that I am able to spot when a comment or email to me has been written using it, or other AI.

There are certain giveaways - clues that show me that it's AI generated.

- 'Perfect' English
- A kind of confident demeanour
- Certain American punctuation habits
- A kind of cliched style of describing things
- Dead giveaways - including the bits where the AI has said "Certainly!" at the start of the message

I am pretty sure that a lot of correspondence I get is either translated or upgraded with AI. So, just know that I know.

Is it that bad if people are using ChatGPT to write comments and emails?

I don't know, but I would like to warn you not to rely on it too much to replace your own writing of English because that's not how you develop real skills.

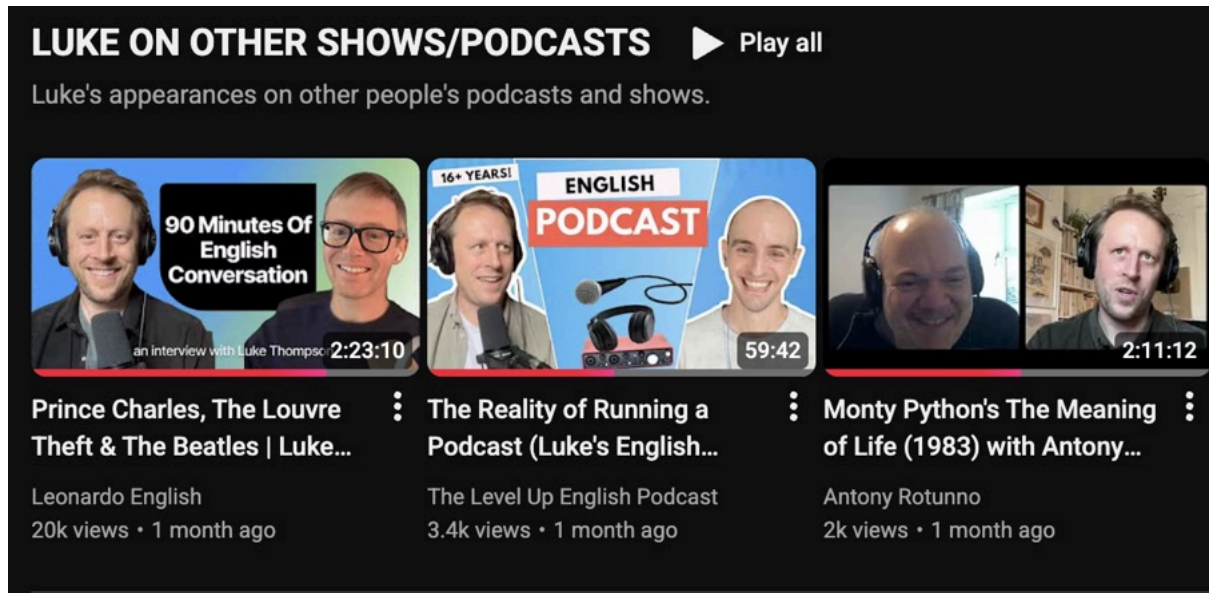
AI can be really useful as a learning assistant and tool, but don't let it do everything for you.

I'm not going to call people out for it, but as I said - I just want you to know that I know. I see you!

By the way, if you want my tips for using AI to improve your English, you could check out episode 936

[936. How AI Can Boost Your English with LEP \(feat. Alastair Budge\)](#)

And if you want my comments on how AI helps me as a teacher and podcaster, listen to P72 Part 4.



Luke on OPP recently (other people's podcasts)

I mentioned this recently but wanted to mention it again. This autumn apparently everyone decided it would be a great idea to interview me for their podcast!

I say everybody. I actually mean about 5 people. So, just in case you feel you haven't had enough of me, you could check out these episodes of other people's podcasts.

Film Gold with Antony Rotunno - Monty Python's The Meaning of Life. This will probably be published as an episode of LEP in the new year, but you can get a preview on Antony's YouTube channel.

▶ Monty Python's The Meaning of Life (1983) with Antony Rotu...

The Level Up English Podcast with Michael Lavers - The Reality of Running a Podcast. I talked to Michael about doing walk & talk episodes, confidence issues, future plans for LEP episodes, being on YouTube and what people don't realise about doing a podcast. Check it out on The Level Up English Podcast, and on YouTube.

Actually, credit to Michael - it was after this conversation that I decided to do the mission in Montmartre Walk & Talk with extra mission objectives. By talking about it with him, I was inspired to do it, and do it that way. Nice one Michael.

▶ The Reality of Running a Podcast (Luke's English Podcast) | T...

Leonardo English - A conversation with Alastair Budge from English Learning for Curious Minds. Alastair and I talked about The UK Royal Family's YouTube channel, a retrospective of the Paris Olympics from 2024 (including the opening ceremony), the Louvre bank heist from a couple of months ago, The Beatles and why they have an enduring legacy (and why I love their story so much), book recommendations for learners of English including *The Catcher in the Rye* - which we both like a lot. Check that out on YouTube.

▶ Prince Charles, The Louvre Theft & The Beatles | Luke Thomp...

All of those are available on my YouTube channel in the "Luke on other shows" playlist.

Also, I was invited onto The British English Podcast with Charlie Baxter but I think he hasn't released the episode yet.

We played a speaking game in which I was able to complain about things I hated, and I picked mosquitoes, plastic film that people leave on screens, horoscopes.

And, I was on Zdenek's English Podcast talking about whether AI is any good at doing comedy and humour. We put ChatGPT to the test, seeing how good it is at writing jokes, stories, stand up routines and more.

I also, unintentionally, put Zdenek to the test to see if he could identify which jokes were real ones written by humans and which ones were written by AI, and it was really revealing and also funny. It was a great idea for a topic from Zdenek and I really enjoyed it.

Podcast links for ZEP → <https://pod.link/1291763311>



This just in 🙌

Gianmy1099's Spotify record has already been beaten



Hi Luke,

I've just watched my Spotify wrapped and guess what? Your podcast is at the top of my list! I just wanted to thank you for the delightful surprise of your greetings on Spotify, I was taken aback!!

Merry Christmas to you and your wonderful family and thanks again for everything you do for us.

Looking forward to hearing from you and, why not, to meeting you one day,

Laura, Genova, Italy.

Ps: I'm the one of the AMA question about fine distinctions!

Can you beat Laura's 6087 minutes of LEP listening this year?
Share your Spotify Wrapped with me!

Another Email of the Week

A LEPster's dream

Hi Luke,

I wanted to share a dream I had last night. I work in the office of a German company that makes wooden windows. Since our company is not far from the French border, we also have a lot of French customers. I'm in charge of the French ones because – lucky me – I speak French.

So, I get a phone call from a man who asks me if I also speak English. He tells me he is calling on behalf of an elderly English couple, Mr and Mrs Twigg, who want to replace the windows in their house and would like to get a quote from our company. He explains that they don't speak either German or French.

There was something strange though – the man's voice sounded very familiar. Suspiciously familiar. That voice you're sure you've

heard somewhere... maybe while washing dishes or taking a walk with headphones on.

Before I could ask who he was, he suddenly passed the phone to an elderly gentleman. Mr Twigg was very polite, a little deaf, and extremely determined to give me every single detail about his windows – including the emotional history of each one. It took ages. I tried to stay patient and professional, but deep inside my brain a little voice kept shouting: “I KNOW that voice! That first guy was LUKE THOMPSON! I’m sure of it!”

Finally, after what felt like a three-hour documentary about windows, I managed to ask my final question:

“Mr Twigg... may I ask you something? The man I spoke to earlier... was he, by any chance... Luke Thompson?”

Mr Twigg casually replied, “Oh yes, that’s right! Do you know him?”

Know him? KNOW HIM?? I’ve listened to his voice more than I’ve listened to my own family.

“Erm... could I just speak to him again for one moment?” I asked, trying to sound calm and not like a crazed fangirl/student/human.

Mr Twigg called out: “LUKE! Someone wants you on the phone!”

My heart started pounding. This was it. After years of listening to Luke’s English Podcast, I was finally going to speak to the legend himself. My mind raced: Should I thank him? Tell him how helpful his podcast is? Confess I fell asleep once while listening to him and dreamt he was explaining conditionals in my kitchen?

I waited for him to come back... and waited... and waited...

And then the line went dead.

Thanks for reading, Luke!

Best wishes from Strasbourg, France and the Black Forest, Germany

Dany

This brings new meaning to idea of dreaming in English!

I am interested in your dreams - show me your mind!

For a while I have been thinking about doing an episode about dreams. I think they are fascinating.

Have you had any weird, or interesting dreams? Tell me about them. luketeacher@hotmail.com

Responses to recent episodes

I hope you have been enjoying my recent episodes, as I always do.

I'd like to give some responses to episodes I've published since the last rambling episode (quite a while ago now - in the summer) and share a few listener comments, which I can expand on in various ways.



946. Tech in every day life parts 1 & 2

Top comment on part 1

@KonstantinEgorovSpb on YT

40 years ago the only technology for learning English I'd use was a paper dictionary and an old cassette player) Nowadays, we have all imaginable amenities for learning and talented teachers at our disposal 😊 If only we had time to use 'em all... THANKS, LUKE!♥

Correction: *Resources*, not *amenities*.

The word "**amenities**" suggests features that provide comfort or convenience to a physical place (like a building or neighborhood, e.g., a gym, a pool, a park). Amenities are like facilities, but facilities are more practical things that allow a place/business to function.

Amenities are like side benefits that make something more convenient or comfortable and perhaps are part of a service provided to customers.

Konstantin is referring to learning tools, materials, and technologies (apps, videos, online courses). These are fundamental inputs used to achieve the goal of learning, making resources the correct term.

Resources here correctly refers to:

The materials needed for the task (digital dictionaries, videos, interactive software).

The tools that enable the productive activity (learning).

Basic differences between the three:

Resource: Something consumed or needed as an input (materials, capital, labor).

Amenity: Something that provides comfort, enjoyment, or enhances desirability (perks, extras).

Facility: A specific place, building, or structure built to serve a particular purpose. These are like practical, physical things which have been built to help you do something.

Quiz - resources, amenities or facilities?

- ☐ **Crude Oil**
- ☐ **A Shared Rooftop Garden** in an apartment building
- ☐ **A Library Building** on a university campus
- ☐ **The Labour/Skills of a Carpenter**
- ☐ **Free High-Speed Wi-Fi** in a coffee shop

☐ A Water Treatment Plant

Answers 🙌

Crude Oil: Resource

- **Reason:** It is a raw **material** that is **consumed** and converted into energy or other products (like gasoline or plastics).

A Shared Rooftop Garden: Amenity

- **Reason:** It is a **perk** or feature that enhances the quality of life, enjoyment, and desirability of the building, going beyond basic function.

A Library Building: Facility

- **Reason:** It is the **physical structure** or organized location built specifically to house services (the books, the study space).

The Labor/Skills of a Carpenter: Resource

- **Reason:** It is a form of **human capital** or **labor**—an input needed for production or construction.

Free High-Speed Wi-Fi: Amenity

- **Reason:** It is a **convenience** or extra service that makes the coffee shop experience more desirable and comfortable.

A Water Treatment Plant: Facility

- **Reason:** It is the **complex structure** and organized plant built to perform the service of treating water.

A Note on Overlap

It's useful to note that **Facilities** often contain **Amenities**, and both require **Resources**.

- The **Library Building (Facility)** offers comfortable chairs and air conditioning (**Amenities**), and it requires money and electricity (**Resources**) to operate.

Another Quiz - facility, amenity or resource?

- ☐ **A Video Lecture on YouTube** for a course
- ☐ **A Student Union Building** on campus
- ☐ **High-Quality Printing Paper** for assignments
- ☐ **A 24/7 Quiet Study Lounge** available to students
- ☐ **A Subscription Fee** paid to an online learning platform
- ☐ **The Comfortable Ergonomic Chairs** in the library

Answers 🙌

A Video Lecture on YouTube for a course

- **Classification: Resource**
- **Reason:** It is a fundamental input or material used directly for learning.

A Student Union Building on campus

- **Classification: Facility**
- **Reason:** It is a dedicated **physical structure** built for specific functions (gathering, services, etc.).

High-Quality Printing Paper for assignments

- **Classification: Resource**
- **Reason:** It is a material that is consumed and necessary for the output (the printed assignment).

A 24/7 Quiet Study Lounge available to students

- **Classification: Facility**
- **Reason:** It is a specialized, dedicated **physical space** or structure built for the function of studying.

A Subscription Fee paid to an online learning platform

- **Classification: Resource**
- **Reason:** It is a form of capital (money) used as an essential input to gain access to the learning materials.

The Comfortable Ergonomic Chairs in the library

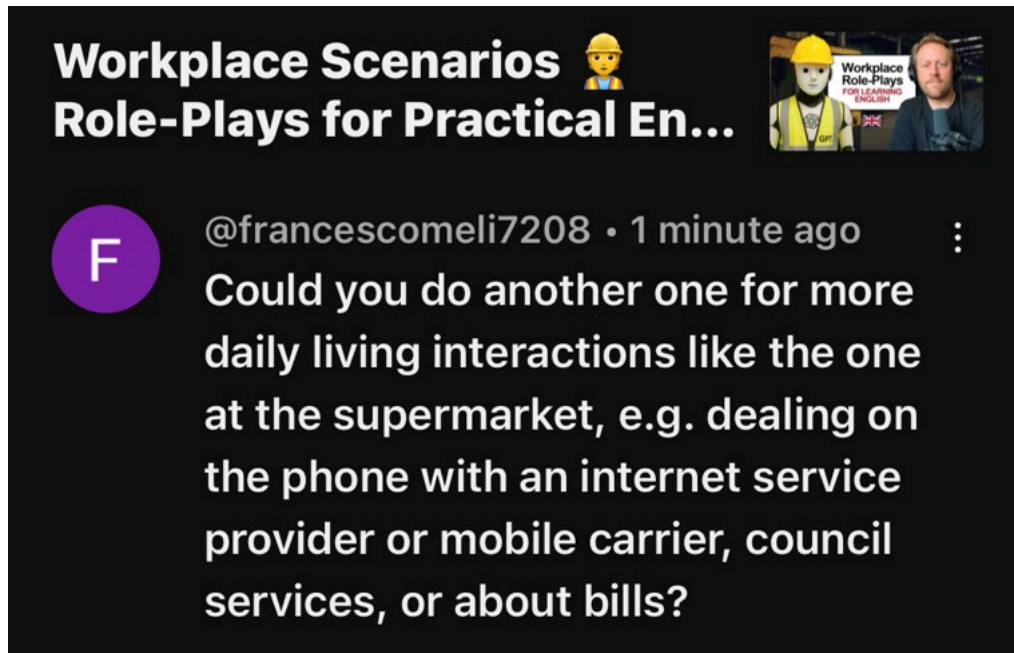
- **Classification: Amenity**
- **Reason:** These are features designed to provide **comfort** and enhance the quality of the experience, going beyond basic function.



948. Workplace Role-Plays

In which I tried to persuade ChatGPT to put its head into a crushing machine and to sell me an owl.

This was popular and I plan to do more. Ideally I would do it with another human because I don't want to over-rely on AI as I think it *might* be evil.



Hyunhee on LEP Premium

I really enjoy these kinds of episodes. Especially in hospitality, it's fun to hear useful English expressions with a bit of humor. It would be great to even make this into a whole series covering cafes, markets, restaurants, and travel, including some awkward or tricky situations that might happen there.

Luke: Yes! There will be more, in different contexts!



949. The C1 grammar test that wasn't really C1

I didn't make it clear that I thought the test and website I used were a bit of a scam. I did a response to this with a proper C1 test (CAE).

@effyychen

This video absolutely made my day! Not because of the grammar itself, but because every time you said "aha, I didn't take a screenshot!" I burst out laughing! 🤔



950. The chat with my old flatmate Peter

The lack of video version meant that the episode flopped on YouTube - thumbnails are all-important, but audio listeners enjoyed this as much as any other episode I think.

Bernd on teacherluke.co.uk

Hi Luke,

I had to look at the list of films by the Coen brothers to discover that some of them seemed very familiar to me. Until now, I hadn't grouped these titles together under these filmmakers. 🎬

Overall, it's been great to follow your conversation and now I'm richer for the experiences shared by you eyewitnesses from different parts of the world. 🌍

The beauty of these casual conversations is the dynamic way in which the conversation develops and you have to follow the thread of the conversation.

It was good that Peter occasionally chimed in his allusions to the example sentences, which made the dialogue even more lively. 🗣️

Thank you both. 👍



This just in

A moment of silence please. One of my premium subscribers has just cancelled.

I receive email notifications when subscribers cancel (also when people sign up - so my email inbox is like a battleground and my day is an absolute rollercoaster of emotions).

There's a space where people cancelling can explain their reasons. Usually this is left blank but sometimes people write their reason.

The thing that really makes me feel relieved, and generally ok is when someone writes: "Thank you Luke!" or "I just don't have time

at the moment, but thank you for the episodes” or something similar. This puts my mind at rest.

The one I just got went like this:

Hi Luke Thompson,

REDACTED@gmail.com has cancelled their subscription to Luke's English Podcast PREMIUM channel on the LEP PREMIUM (+ad-free) plan.

Their subscription will remain active until the end of their billing period on 04 Dec 19:18.

Reason for canceling subscription: Some other reason

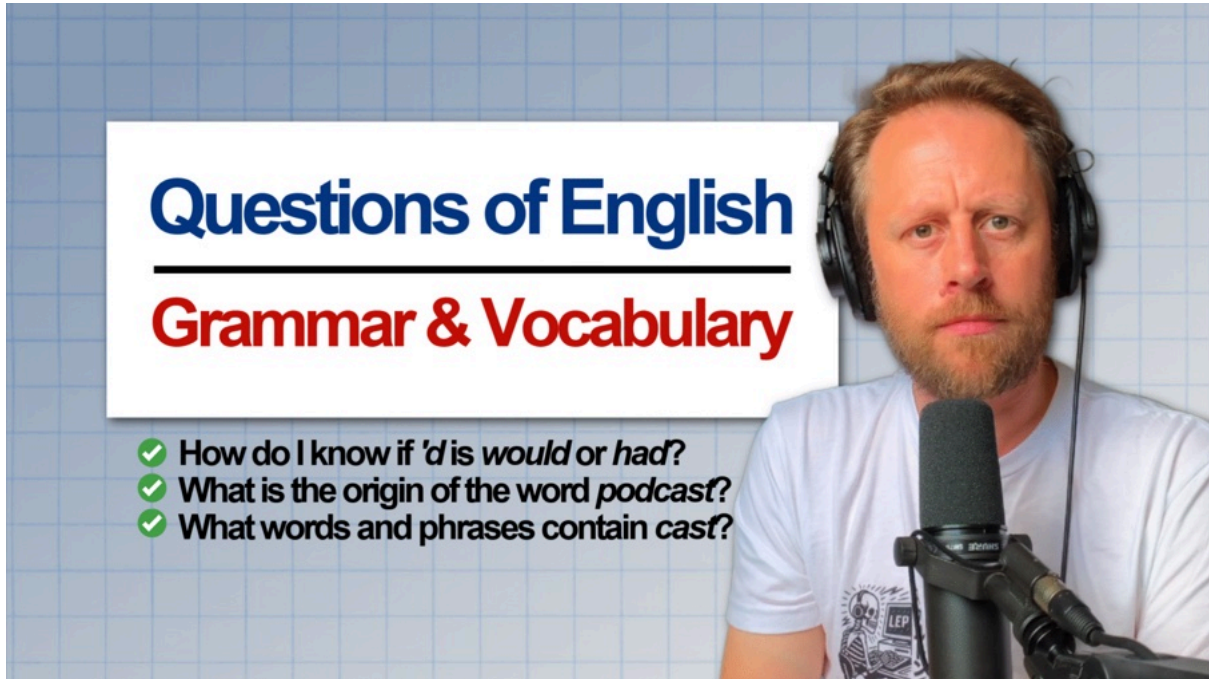
Additional Comments:

I've been a subscriber for quite a few years and I think I've got the most out of it that is possible.

You think you've got the most out of it that is possible?

And you never once asked for my nude photos.

Just a reminder - if you would like to re-subscribe, that 20% discount is available until the end of Jan 2026. Just saying.



951. Bits & Bobs 4

This included lots of different things. One of them was about a LEPster who listens while harvesting olives in an olive field, and I asked you for other comments about this.

Thank you for letting me know what you do while listening to my episodes. I find this fascinating.

Here's a rundown of some of those things.

Doing chemistry experiments in a laboratory. (Please stay focused so you don't make a mistake and accidentally become a superhero with good podcast listening skills)

Walking the dog in a lovely coastal location. Josep - that's the listener, not the dog. The dog is called Tarkus. I don't know if he listens too. See photo.



Driving to a nearby town to lead a batucada group (a kind of group drumming session). Carmen.

Drumming LEPsters - unite! (I am a drummer too and I love to hear from other drummers - usually you can hear them coming from quite a long way away)

Other more common activities LEPsters do while listening, in order of frequency

1. Walking, running, hiking (Let me give you some encouragement: left, right, left, right!)
2. Chores & housework (The perfect way to get through these annoying tasks - listen to a podcast at the same time - best if you have bluetooth headphones so you don't get tangled).

3. Cooking & preparing meals (share your recipes with us!)
4. Commuting (by bus, train, metro, bike - try not to laugh when surrounded by strangers)
5. At work (make sure you pretend to do something productive while you get paid to listen to me)
6. Exercising or working out (again, let me encourage you - keep going, don't stop, pump it up! Let's get pumped up! You can do it! Come on!)
7. Shopping (do you need milk?)
8. Falling asleep / relaxing (I'll take this as a compliment, although I could be offended at the idea that my precious words are used as a sleep aid - I will assume it is just because I am so calming)
9. Driving (do take care, and don't miss your turning)
10. Creative hobbies (I have had several gifts from LEPsters over the years who draw, paint, do embroidery - share your artwork and craft with us!)
11. Travelling – airports, sightseeing, etc (if you are in an airport - keep your eyes peeled for me! This is the number 1 place I am recognised - in airports, and in ancient Roman coliseums for some reason)
12. Stretching, yoga or relaxing activities (Namaste)
13. Childcare (hang in there ok? Your child will sleep soon - why do we do this as parents? We try to have children, make so much effort to welcome them into our world, and then we just want them to sleep)
14. DIY, repairs, building, gardening (how satisfying it is - the smell of sawdust, the DIY tools and equipment - just don't hit your thumb with a hammer ok, and if you do, make sure you shout out in English - "Oh, sugar!" "Flipping heck" or "Goodness gracious

me!” “Oh Jeeper’s Creepers” or the other, more popular swear words.

15. In the bath or shower - ok, this is a bit awkward

16. Doing nothing — simply lying on the sofa (Tell me a better way to spend your time - I am waiting)

Then there are the dedicated LEPsters who sit poised with a pen and paper, ready to write down words and phrases and other pearls of wisdom.

And finally, spare a thought for the listeners who curl up in bed while listening, and then fall into a blissful and deep slumber, and miss all the actual content.

If you do something else, something different, in an unusual location while you listen - let us know in the comment section.



Comedy Corner [Part 1]

Shamelessly lifted from Kermode & Mayo's Laughter Lift

1. A friend got a PhD in the history of palindromes. They now call him **Dr Awkward**.
2. I saw a sign at a boot fair: "Radio for sale 50p. Please note volume stuck on full." I thought, I can't **turn that down**.
3. I accidentally swallowed a whole box of Scrabble tiles during game night. The next time I go to the loo, it could **spell disaster**.
4. There was a dawn raid. The policeman said, "Luke, I'm arresting you for downloading the entire Wikipedia." I said, "**Wait, I can explain everything**."
5. I had a pre-operation meeting with the surgeon for a procedure. I asked if I could administer my own general anesthetic. She said, "**Knock yourself out**."
6. I formed a band called **1,023 megabytes**, but we haven't quite got a gig yet.



952. The Trip to Norway (plus a whole premium series)

This is perhaps the most popular episode of the last few months, proving that people seem to enjoy these moments when I share experiences from my life.

This is one of a long line of episodes about trips I've been on, including: Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, California x2, New York and others. Check them out in the archive.

In the episode I talked about how I don't like beach holidays (and I was exaggerating a bit for comic effect) and a lot of people agreed, except for the occasional Brazilian LEPster who simply could not agree! I got one particular comment which unfortunately I can't find now, but it was very persuasively worded - with stuff about the pleasure of spending the day on the beach, eating at a table with the sand under your feet, the sweet sea air infusing your skin, the long evenings with friends with an ice-cool beer in your hand etc etc.



953. A Game of Would you Rather with my daughter

So many lovely responses to that one - yes, my daughter is great and I am proud of her.

@涂嘉興

Time really flies. I have listened to your Podcast since before your daughter was born. And now she grows up to host with you. Amazing!!

The question about whether you would rather be sent to prison for killing someone, or after being falsely accused of murder. This got a few responses.

The exchange (play this section from the episode) from about 1:00:00

📺 A game of “Would You Rather?” with my daughter 🧑...

Would you rather be imprisoned for a murder that you didn't commit or for a murder that you did commit?

I'm actually going to throw the question back to you. Would you rather be imprisoned, so put in prison, for a murder that you didn't commit? So it's like,

you'll go to jail for 25 years, but I didn't do it! Jail! Or, go to jail for 25 years, okay,

1:00:20

I did it, I murdered someone. So, which one? Well, the second one, of course.

1:00:26

Sorry, what? Murdered someone. You wanna murder someone?

No, I don't! Ah!

1:00:32

Don't fiddle with the microphone. I don't want to but like you see, I don't want to but like it's worse if you're going to prison.

1:00:42

Is it? So you're thinking if I'm going to prison I might as well murder someone. Yeah.

1:00:50

I'm going to prison anyway you know so free pass so I could I'm gonna spend 25 years to life in

1:00:56

prison so I might as well kill someone for it rather than go in there for nothing yeah no I

1:01:03

don't agree yeah yeah yeah because it's bad to do it yeah you forgot it's bad to murder someone

1:01:19

Who would you murder? Who would you murder? It's like, you're going to go to prison for 25 years. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Let me just murder

1:01:24

someone first. Who is it? Who are you going to murder?

1:01:32

Persons who are in prison. One of the other prisoners? No, they don't deserve that, do they? They're already in prison. I don't know if anyone deserves to be killed, to be honest.

1:01:41

Yeah. Yeah, I don't think so. Listeners, you can send us your suggestions. Actually, don't. Don't. Because that would be inappropriate,

1:01:49

wouldn't it? So, like, send us your kill lists to luketeacher at hotmail . com. Actually, yes.

1:01:55

Send us. No, don't. Don't. I don't want that in my inbox. It's going to look very weird.

1:02:00

Plus, I don't want to know who everyone wants to kill. Yeah, but no killing or singing. I'd like to murder my next -door neighbour, because he keeps...

1:02:09

I don't know what. His apple tree keeps dropping apples into my garden,

1:02:15

and he refuses to prune the branches of the tree, so I'd like to murder him.

1:02:21

That's from John Smith on King Road in Norbury, England.

1:02:27

That's the sort of email we'd end up getting. Not that John Smith listens to this podcast, but, you know, you never know, because everyone listens to this.

1:02:33

I would rather be imprisoned... Not every... everyone. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah.

1:02:39

Even the people who are in Norway? Even the people who are in... even Norwegians. All of

1:02:45

them. There's even one who doesn't listen? No, I'm just joking. Yeah. I don't have many listeners in Norway. Only one, maybe. I don't know.

1:02:54

I haven't checked. Maybe zero. I have some, but their English is so good, isn't it, that they're like,

1:02:59

I do not need to listen to Luke's English podcast. I think you might do, because you need to learn how to pronounce podcast.

1:03:09

very good at English so I would rather be imprisoned for not killing someone yeah than

1:03:15

killing if you know it's just because it's just a reminder for you as a seven -year -old you need to be reminded these things killing someone is wrong very very bad

One listener pointed out that if you went to prison but didn't kill someone, it means the real killer is still loose and has not been punished for their crime.

So, society suffers. Good point.

But I would like to throw the question back to you listeners.

Would you rather be imprisoned for a murder that you didn't commit or for a murder that you did commit?

My daughter is funny

The other day we were talking about something profound (I can't remember exactly what) and I said to her

"Well, nothing lasts forever you know"

and she said

"Not true. Some things last forever."

I said, "what?"

She said "*microplastics*".

And just yesterday we were talking about our time in Norway, especially catching the fish

Here's that moment in case you need a reminder

https://youtube.com/shorts/E9MyPy1_thl?feature=share

and I said to her "You know, we will always have that memory, you and me. You will remember that forever, until the day you die."

and she said "Wait, what was it again?"



954. The Amber & Paul episode that didn't have a 20 minute introduction. "Holiday Hell, etc"





Let's take a REAL C1 English Test! 🧑 (CAE Use of English) [955]

People liked this. It was a real test. Some people requested CPE. I'll do it, and probably more CAE stuff. This isn't an exam prep podcast though.



Thompson Originals 🎧 (A Chat with My Brother) [956]

Another one that had no video and flopped on YouTube (relatively speaking) but did well in audioland.

I recorded the intro and outro in the toilet (it was the quietest room in the flat on that occasion)

@kamilladr.friesz-kovacs8953

I missed James. We'd like to listen to him more often. 🎉

@AnIdealRider

Honestly I am listening to your podcast from my toilet.. 😊 😊

@mollietai8946

You are so natural together. A great duo.

@aylinfrost

A real brothers' love and friendship, I envy you (I don't have any siblings). Was waiting for the flushing sound at the end of your "Good bye, bye, bye..." 😂 Anyway, thank you SO VERY much! ❤️

I missed a good joke there!

This just in

Do you remember the episode I did a while ago - The Abduction - a funny short story about a Spanish guy called Jose who gets abducted by aliens and they make him an incredible English speaker and some weird things happen to him.

If you were Spanish, how did you feel about that?

Was there anything wrong with it?

Did you feel that you were being ridiculed at all by the story? I hope not. Anyway, I just got this comment. And I probably shouldn't give it too much attention or thought, but it has bothered me for two reasons - 1) I am concerned that I was genuinely offensive to Spanish listeners, and if I was, I am sorry, but also 2) I feel that actually I wasn't offensive to Spanish people at all in the episode - I consciously didn't make fun of Spanish learners of English at all, and that was in my mind when I made the episode. I made a point of not actually picking on any specific common Spanish errors or even doing a dodgy Spanish accent which I think would have been wrong, and so this has sort of pissed me off a bit to be honest.

I should probably ignore this kind of comment, but I do also want to share something negative just so that episodes like this aren't too self-indulgent. Anyway, here's the comment.

I have redacted the commenter's name by the way.



"It's a shame you've sunk so low as a teacher"

Wow, that's a bit harsh.

But like I said in my comment, I don't think I was actually ridiculing Spanish people whatsoever. I think you can check the entire story and you won't find any specific points of ridicule against Spanish people.

Anyway, if you're Spanish, how did you feel about that? If it made you feel bad, I sincerely apologise.

Again, some of you might add that I should ignore that sort of thing, but I do want to show that it's not all flattery and ego-boosting for me, and that quite often a comment comes around like that which knocks me off my high horse and back to reality.



More Questions of English & Listener Comments 🙋 Bits & Bobs 5 [957]

In which I responded to a lot of comments from listeners, including one from a listener in Uzbekistan, and then I talked about Uzbekistan a bit, which brings us to...



Another email of the week

Uzbekistan Strikes Again

Hi Luke — in the October 13 episode you asked about the weird things that happen to people while they're listening to you. Well... here's mine. I hadn't listened to your podcast in a long time, but I recently decided to start again.

Meanwhile, I'd just broken up with my girlfriend and my mind was a total mess. She went to Uzbekistan for work. So I randomly pick an episode to distract myself, and what do you do? You spend 15–20 minutes talking about... Uzbekistan.

Thanks a lot, mate — way to poke the wound! :))

Greetings,
Gokcen

Luke: Sorry mate! And I just did it again.

Plenty more fish in the sea. And a reminder that Uzbekistan is double-land locked so it's probably best that your ex went there.

If I need to explain that I mean that you can be sure that she is not in the sea. I mean... OK I think you get it.



A Free Sample of LEP Premium Series 71 🏆

Vocabulary & Pronunciation [958]

Some people became Premium LEPsters after this. If that is you - welcome.

To quote Obiwan Kenobi: “You have taken your first step into a much larger world.”

I hope you have been enjoying the premium episodes, in particular the recent series revisiting vocabulary from The Door In The Wall.



How to Learn English with my podcast 🎧 [959]

Hey! I made an effort in this one to get straight to the point and do no rambling.

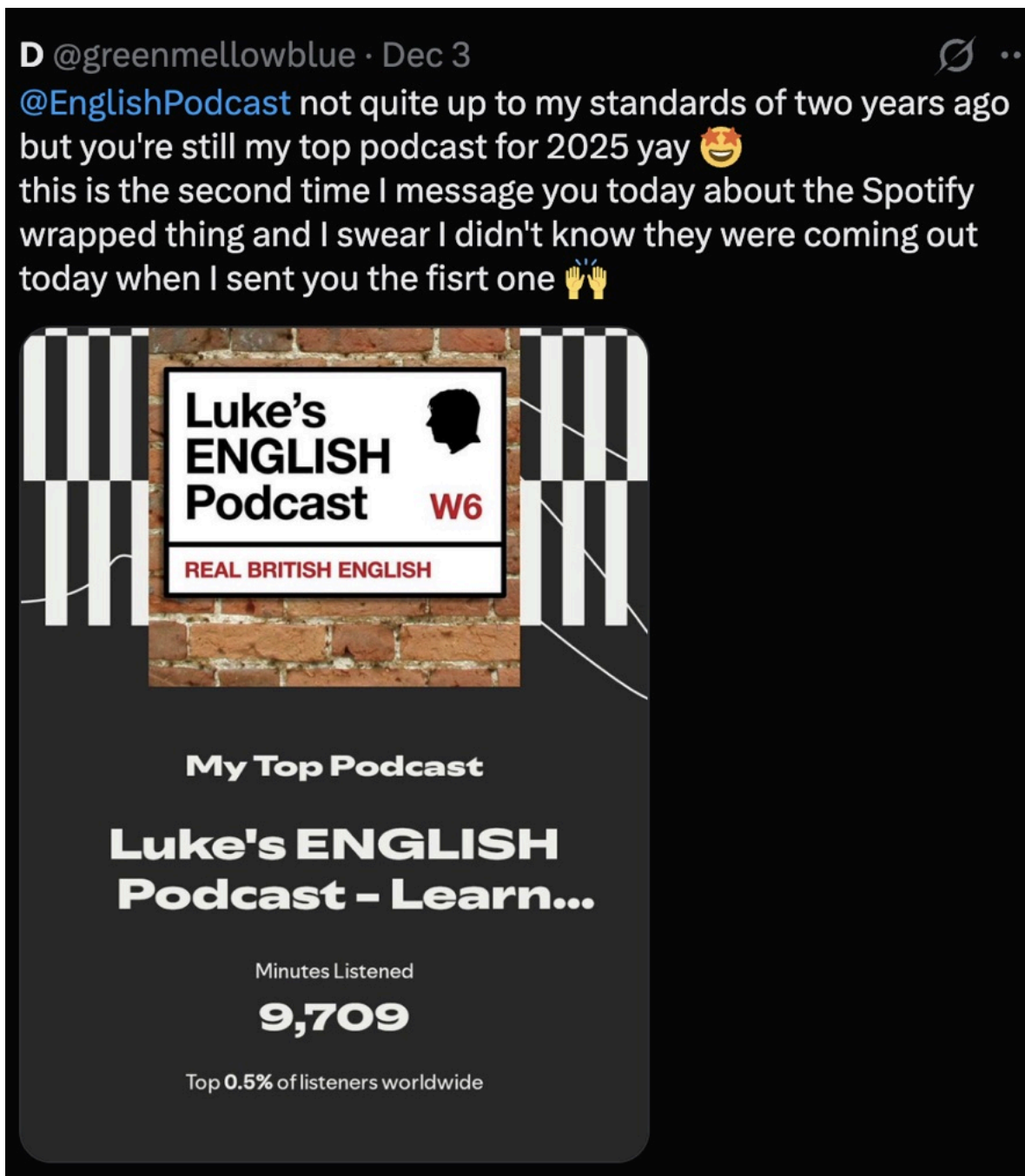
A nice comment from Lyn. It is nice to know your work is appreciated (not that it always seems like work).

@lyn1882

What really amazes me about your podcast is that you write down everything you're going to say beforehand, and then you deliver it almost word for word during the recording. Many episodes are over an hour long—I can't imagine how much effort that takes. I've never seen anyone do it quite like you. How could someone write out everything they're going to say for such a long episode? But I have to say, it's incredibly helpful. I really need to follow your podcast closely so I don't miss out on all the hard work you've put into it. Thank you! 😊

This just in

Laura's Spotify Wrapped 6087 minutes of LEP listening has been beaten!



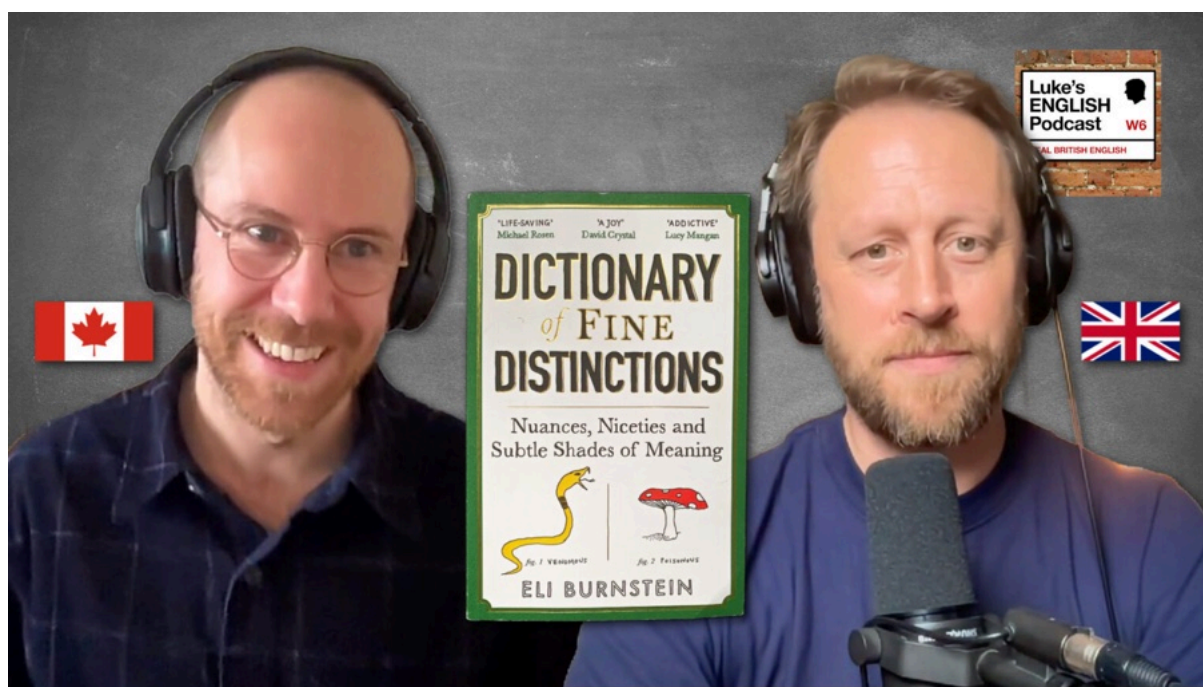
Can you beat D?

Share your Spotify Wrapped for 2025 and be the winner! Only someone else in the top 0.5% of worldwide Spotify listeners can beat 9709 minutes!

Given that an episode is on average 75 minutes long, 9709 minutes is equivalent to 129 complete episodes.

That is about 2.5 episodes per week, every week, for a year. Serious commitment there! Well done!

You might be able to beat 2.5 episodes per week, but did you do that consistently week in, week out for 52 weeks?



Fine Distinctions & Subtle Shades of Meaning 📖 (with Eli Burnstein) [960]

This was quite long and quite complex but I maintain that it is packed with interesting and insightful things and is well worth

listening to again to get the full benefit, including differences between various similar words, insightful details about Canadian English and Eli's articulate way of speaking.

Top comment on YouTube for this episode

@annag8596

Hello Luke. I appreciate everything you do. It's very helpful to me. I am over 70 and I suppose, I am the oldest listener.

I have been learning English for years. It's my hobby. I started when I was at university. Now thanks to your podcasts I finally achieved the level that allows me to speak quite easy. Recently I went to the Netherlands and I found that my English had become really good. I could communicate with Dutch People without stress. I could easily find suitable words while speaking and I know that it's thanks to your podcasts.

I decided to continue listening to your perfect English I can find in Your podcasts. Thank you very much from GDAŃSK. POLAND. THE WARMEST GREETINGS TO YOU, LUKE. You are a great, wonderful Teacher 🖤🎉❤️❤️

You're welcome, and I am always happy to have such flattering things posted in a public forum.

Thank you to all my guests for their contributions to making this podcast what it is.



Comedy Corner (Part 2)

7. I took my partner to London Zoo, and when we saw a sleeping tiger, I whispered, "That one is a Himalayan tiger."
She asked how I knew, and I said, "Because **Himalayion** right there."
8. What weighs more, a litre of water or a litre of butane?
A litre of water, because no matter how much water you have, butane will always be a **lighter fluid**.
9. They are now able to splice the DNA of a cheetah into that of a crab.
"I'm telling you that could **go sideways fast**."
10. I asked Siri, "Surely it's not going to rain today." She replied, "Yes it is, and **don't call me Shirley**."

That's when I realized I'd left my phone on **airplane mode**.

📺 Don't Call Me Shirley - Airplane! (9/10) Movie CLIP (1980)...

11. Ad Rock and Mike D are releasing a five-part vinyl anthology.
You can get parts A, B, C, and D for free, but you've got to **fight for your right to Part E**.
12. A fossilized dinosaur fart has been discovered. It's a real **blast from the past**.



Emma from MmmEnglish and Hey Lady! [961]

Two absolute legends of online English teaching united in one epic conversation, in which we talked about world-changing topics such as punching an old Toyota and singing in the shower.

@mmmEnglish_Emma

153 likes

Ahhh thank you Luke!! I loved this conversation so much - you really have a knack for asking intriguing questions and pulling interesting stories out of people. I hope your students enjoy listening to it as much as I enjoyed creating it with you!

Lots of other very nice comments from people saying that Emma has made a genuine difference to their English over the years.



The Door in the Wall 🚪 (Learn English with a Short Story) [962]

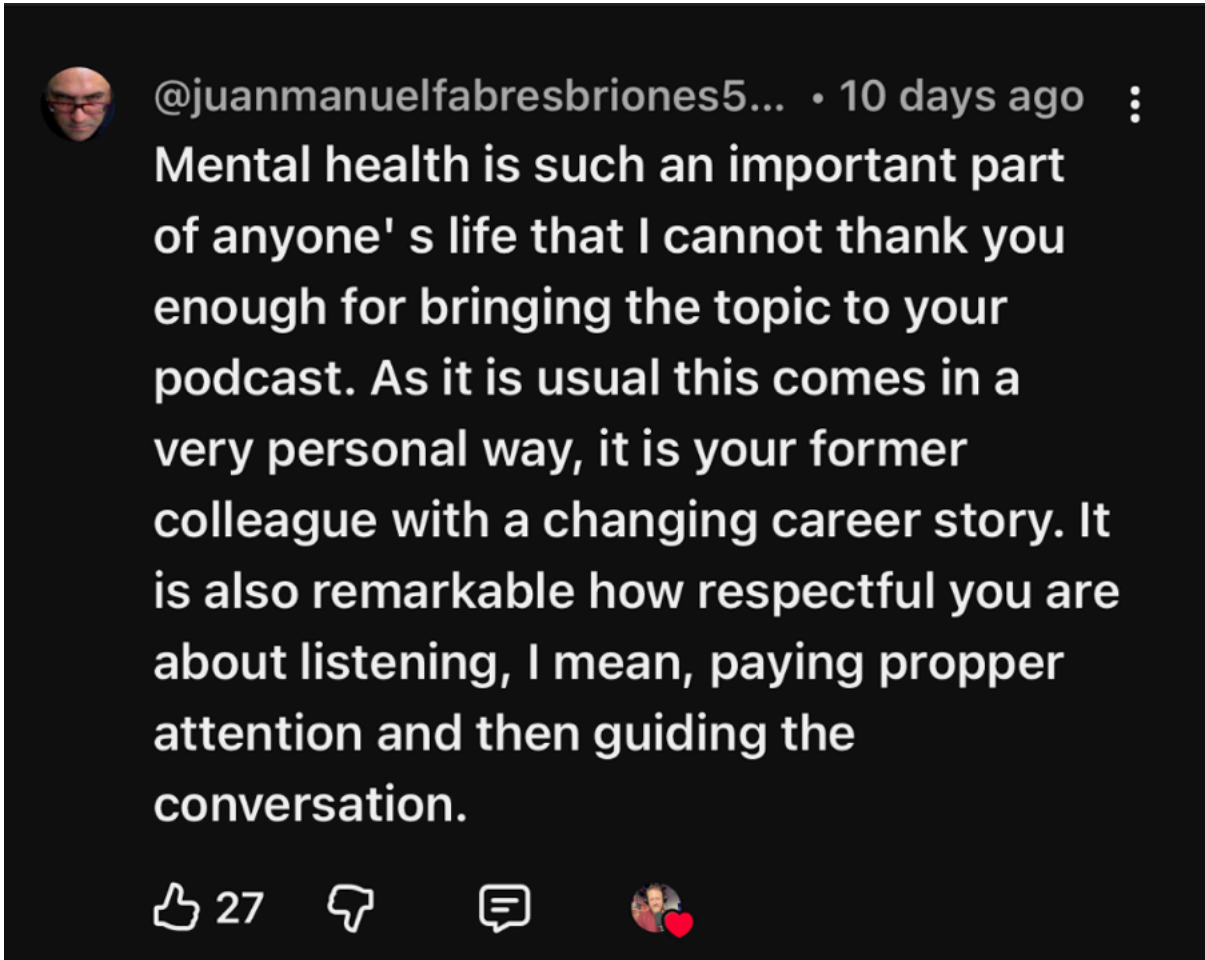
I said so much about the story, so there's not much more to add, but plenty of people wrote very profound things about the nature of dreams, nostalgia, the search for childhood innocence and other themes. Some touching comments. I hope you enjoyed the premium series in which I told the story again and explored a lot of vocabulary in detail.



Talking Therapy, Mental Health & Counselling with Emma Camara Ortega [963]

Very nice to have Emma on the podcast, as it always is when I have a friend on the show. TBH she was nervous about doing it, but I think it was great and I was happy to talk about an important topic.

Top comment on YT



Thank you Juan Manuel - regular commenter on YT

The Cosy Rambling Episode at Home [964]

Part of a double episode with the walk & talk in Montmartre.

This is the one where I recorded the episode lying on the floor, lying on the bed, hanging out of the window, and peering through the peephole in our door to look at people fixing our neighbours' door, which got broken by burglars, and I talked about The Louvre being robbed, and a much more important robbery - our apartment, which happened earlier in the year and my wife's wedding ring was stolen, as well as all her other

jewelry including things inherited from her beloved grandmother. Upsetting, but we are over it now.

I loved recording this one. As much as I like doing episodes with video, doing audio-only is particularly nice and relaxing and it reminds me of the old days of the podcast when it was always just audio, which is quite freeing for a podcaster.

A comment on teacherluke.co.uk

WY - I got furious about the news of the burglar. I cannot believe how you manage to tell the story so calmly. It is absolutely unacceptable and unfair. I hope everything is back and the criminal is arrested.

WY was not alone in expressing that sentiment. Thanks for being thoughtful guys.

More people got in touch to tell me what they were doing while listening, which is always great.



Walk & Talk: Paris - Mission in Montmartre

Considering the Walk & Talk in London earlier this year did very well (currently at about 700,000 views on YouTube) I had high hopes for this one.

I put a lot of work into it, and incorporated the mission objectives which I thought made it a lot more interesting. But it has languished this week on YouTube, reaching only number 7 in my list of most recent 10 videos in terms of performance, which is a lot lower than I hoped.

So, I might consider that a failure, but the comments of people who have seen it have been lovely.

And I am really happy with it myself, so never mind, right?

Anyway, I consider it to be a new high in terms of quality in my video making and I'll aim to do more things like this in the future, including ones in London when I get the chance, and which I think people prefer, and also there are added possibilities when I consider doing challenges such as talking to people to achieve different objectives. There is a lot of potential for communication-based challenges in Walk & Talk videos.

I spoke to Michael from The Level Up English Podcast about this when I was on his show.

Walk & Talk: Paris (Mission in Montmartre) 🍂 🤖



@allamaierova8589 • 8 minutes ago

Dear Teacher, thank you so much for taking me on your mission in Montmartre. It was pleasure "walking" around streets of Paris with you and listening to the curious details about that lovely city. Now I am considering visiting Paris and Montmartre in particular. One thing, can you please stop criticising your French. Your French is better than mine, which I can't speak at all. I appreciate all hard work you are doing for learners of English.

The Kit-Bag

At the time of writing this, The Kit Bag has not been published so I have no idea what you all think of it. Short stories are usually popular, so hopefully it went down well with everyone!

There have also been all sorts of premium episodes as well, and to get the full experience you need to be a premium subscriber too! But anyway...

We are nearly at the end of the episode, and the vocabulary quiz, but first...

Another obligatory Hollywood-style action movie screenplay

This is still one of my hobbies - making ChatGPT create Hollywood action movie screenplays about my life.

For this one I inputted everything from this podcast episode so far into ChatGPT and asked it to write an action movie screenplay, which I think is the best use of its time and processing power.

Then I made certain, *adjustments*, to add a little bit of humour.

Are you ready? Here we go. (this is very stupid)



TITLE: OPERATION: RAMBLESTORM

Tagline: *"When the world loses the plot... one man must ramble it back to sense."*

FADE IN:

EXT. PARIS - NIGHT

A brooding sky. Thunder rumbles (with a U).
The Eiffel Tower flickers ominously.
A VOICEOVER (deep, gravelly, American):

VOICEOVER

In a world where clarity is mandatory...
...one man refused to get to the point.

INT. LUKE THOMPSON'S PODCASTING ROOM - NIGHT

Shadows cut across a cluttered table: microphones, cables, a mug saying *Ramble Responsibly*.

LUKE THOMPSON, 40s, British, school-teacher energy with action-hero eyes, sits before the mic...
haunted, focused, dangerous.

He hits **RECORD**.

LUKE

(whispering)
This isn't rumbling.
This is RAMBLING.
With an A.

A digital waveform spikes.
Suddenly—
The DOOR EXPLODES IN.

A tactical assault team floods the room. (A SWAT team, or *TWAT* team as I like to call them)

AGENT CARTER (50s, American, granite jaw)

Luke Thompson. You've been rambling for too long.

LUKE

(smiles defiantly)
Story of my life.

Gunmen advance—
Luke grabs his MIC ARM like a nunchuck, sweeping it across the room, knocking soldiers out with shockingly accurate grammar-based blows.

That was *tense*, but my skills were *present perfect*. (I made up that joke not ChatGPT ok?)

ACT 1 – THE EMAILS OF DOOM

INT. INTERPOL HQ – WAR ROOM

A giant screen shows Olga's email.
Agents pace anxiously.

DIRECTOR ROUSSEAU (French, elegant, deadly)

Last week... was pretty awesome..
(reads slowly)
...but the tense inconsistency..
...it's catastrophic.

CARTER

ChatGPT contradicted itself twice.
Two different tenses.
Two different explanations.
We can't let this happen again.
If this spreads..
...linguistic chaos will erupt.

Gasps.
Someone drops a coffee.

ROUSSEAU

There is only one man who can stabilise the
timeline of English grammar...

She presses a button.
Zooms in on Luke.

(Absolute bollocks isn't it - Hollywood is safe for the moment, although a lot of Hollywood movies are similarly shite aren't they)

ACT 2 - THE RAMBLE INITIATIVE

EXT. ROOFTOP - PARIS - NIGHT

Luke stands at the edge of a skyscraper, wind whipping his coat.
He holds a USB drive.

LUKE (V.O.)

All my life, I've been accused of rambling.
But I turned my weakness...
...into a weapon.

Helicopter blades rumble (with a U).

CARTER

(over loudspeaker)
Luke! Hand over the RambleDrive.
Come on! Do the right thing!

LUKE

(looks down, looks up and smiles, then turns)

He leaps off the building—
Free-falls—
Lands perfectly on a passing BATEAU MOUCHE.
Tourists scream.
Luke adjusts his tie.

(OK I don't wear a tie)

ACT 3 – THE DREAM CALL

INT. GERMAN WINDOW FACTORY – DAY

Machines hiss. Sparks fly.

DANY (30s, heroic office worker) holds a ringing phone.

On the other end.. MR TWIGG (80s, polite, British).
And behind him–
A SHADOWY FIGURE.

MR TWIGG

Young lady, I must tell you the emotional history of each window...

Hours pass on a ticking clock.

Dany sweats like she's defusing a bomb.

Finally:

DANY

That voice...

The first man...

Was it...

LUKE THOMPSON?

The SHADOW turns.

Reveals LUKE–battle-scarred, exhausted.

LUKE

(into phone)

We don't have much time.

Suddenly—
THE LINE GOES DEAD.

Explosions shake the building.
The windows shatter ironically.

ACT 4 – THE COMMENTS UPRISING

EXT. NORWEGIAN FJORD – DAY

A villain appears...
THE ALGORITHM (AI entity, glowing, smug, American spelling and punctuation habits).

THE ALGORITHM

Certainly!
I have replaced all human effort with perfectly written comments.

Luke stands alone on a cliff edge, armed only with a microphone and righteous indignation.

LUKE

You shouldn't rely on AI for everything.
If you do...
...you never develop real, human, skills.

ALGORITHM (cocks its head to one side)

Your podcast... is *inefficient*. Too long. Too many tangents. Our audience metrics indicate your rumbling is not... *profitable*.

LUKE

It's RAMBLING.
Not RUMBLING.

He charges.

They clash in a spectacular fight:
Grammar rules flying like throwing stars.
Cleft sentences.
Elided morphemes.

All the most violent sounding terms in linguistics
and language teaching: fronting, backshift,
elision, intrusion, assimilation, fricatives,
plosives, agglutinative languages, case collapse,
derivational suffixes, strong and weak verbs,
stress patterns, slashing, aspiration, devoicing,
gemination, fortition and lenition.

Luke is pushed to the edge.

ALGORITHM

Your introduction..
..was twenty minutes long.

LUKE

(smiles proudly)
And now it's going to save the world.

He unleashes his ultimate attack:

THE MEGA RAMBLE

—a nine-hour monologue about amenities vs
facilities vs resources.

The Algorithm overloads.

ALGORITHM

No... more... distinctions..
I can't...
compute...
AAAAARGH—

It explodes.

ACT 5 – THE FINAL LESSON

EXT. BEACH – SUNSET

Luke sits with his daughter, who is wise beyond her years.

DAUGHTER

Some things last forever Daddy.

LUKE:

Like microplastics?

Luke and his daughter smile and laugh at each other.

A COMMUNICATOR BEEPS.

ROUSSEAU (V.O.)

Luke, we need you again.
Uzbekistan...
...is double landlocked.

Luke stands, heroic.

LUKE

Then I guess...
...I'll need to ramble my way there.

He walks out into the sunset.

ROUSSEAU

No, there are flights every few hours. Just fly there, it's much more convenient. Luke... Luke...? Luke are you there?

FADE OUT

TITLE CARD:

RAMBLE: ORIGINS

COMING SOON

POST-CREDITS SCENE

In a toilet somewhere:

LUKE'S BROTHER, JAMES, closes the lid.

JAMES

You forgot to do the flush joke again.

Cut to black.

Vocabulary Quiz

And finally, as promised at the start (can you remember that far back?) here is a quick quiz to see if you were paying attention during the episode.

All these are words or phrases which came up during the episode at some point.

Answers are given below, plus a detailed vocabulary list for all the items in this quiz.

1. What could you say to encourage someone to stay with you, keep listening, and not give up?

“If you _____ me, everything will make sense soon.”

2. How do you describe something that continues for the entire duration of a specific time period?

“There will be new episodes _____ the holiday period.”

3. What phrase can you use to get someone to imagine a scenario, possibility, or future outcome?

“_____ of how much progress you could make in six months.”

4. Which phrase describes a specialised or distinctive group of abilities someone has?

“She brings a _____ that nobody else has.”

5. What expression means controlling or restraining something that is becoming excessive?

“He’s trying to _____ his spending habits _____.”

6. What do you say when you want someone to avoid digressions and focus immediately on the essential idea?

“Let me _____ — here’s what happened.”

7. How do you express that something is the central purpose or reason for something?

“That’s _____ — that’s why we’re doing it.”

8. What phrase describes being criticised for speaking too long without getting to the point?

“He was a _____ of _____ during the meeting.”

9. Which adjective describes something with no clear plan, purpose, or direction?

“The discussion became completely d_____ by the end.”

10. What verb phrase means moving around without a clear destination?

“We spent the afternoon _____ the old part of town.”

11. Which term describes speaking or writing in an unfiltered flow of thoughts?

“He writes in a very _____ - _____ style.”

12. What phrase means “so many times that it’s impossible (or unnecessary) to count”?

“I’ve reminded you c_____ not to do that.”

13. How do you describe skills or behaviour that may not be fully reliable or trustworthy?

“His cooking skills are pretty q_____ — everything ends up burnt.”

14. What phrase describes an explanation that is completely secure, solid, and logically flawless?

“They needed a w_____ a_____ before presenting their results.”

15. What phrase refers to an obvious sign that reveals the truth about something?

“His accent was a d_____ g_____ that he grew up in Liverpool.”

16. How do you warn someone not to depend too heavily on something?

“You shouldn’t r_____ too much to do your writing.”

17. Which phrase means publicly challenging or criticising someone’s behaviour?

“She c_____ him o_____ for being dishonest.”

18. What phrase means assessing or evaluating something to see how good or effective it is?

“The interview really _p_____ her skills t_____ t_____ t_____.”

19. What expression means making someone feel emotional pain by bringing up a sensitive topic?

“Mentioning his ex really p_____ t_____ w_____.”

20. What classic idiom reassures someone that their romantic options aren't limited to one person?

“Don't worry — there are p_____ m_____ f_____ in the s_____.”

21. What phrase describes when something performs badly or fails commercially, especially online or in entertainment?

“The video completely f_____ on YouTube.”

22. What expression means following or understanding the flow of a conversation or story?

“I was trying to f_____ the t_____ of the conversation, but I got lost.”

23. What expression means openly taking or copying something from somewhere else?

“The idea was shamelessly l_____ from another show.”

24. What do you say when you successfully avoid digressions and focus immediately on the main idea?

“I tried to g_____ s_____ t_____ t_____ p_____ and avoid any rambling.”

Answer Key

1. stick with me
2. throughout the holiday period
3. just *think* of...
4. a particular set of skills
5. get that in check
6. get straight to the point
7. the whole point
8. accused of rambling
9. directionless
10. wandering around
11. stream-of-consciousness
12. countless times
13. questionable
14. a watertight answer
15. dead giveaway
16. rely on it too much
17. called him out / call someone out
18. put to the test
19. poked the wound
20. plenty more fish in the sea
21. flopped on YouTube
22. follow the thread
23. lifted

24. get straight to the point

Vocabulary List

Here are some words and phrases from this episode.

1. Stick with me

Episode example: “**Stick with me** and I will talk to you for a while...”

Meaning: Stay; keep listening; remain patient.

Comment: Very natural spoken English; friendly persuasion.

Collocations: stick with it, stick with someone, stick at something

Other example:

“If you stick with me, I promise that you will learn a lot of things.”

2. Throughout the holiday period

Example: “Episodes **throughout the holiday period**...”

Meaning: During the whole duration of a specific time span.

Comment: More formal than “during.”

Collocations: throughout the year, throughout history, throughout the process

Other example:

“The exhibition will run throughout the summer.”

3. Just *think* of...

Example: “**Just think of** the number of English words...”

Meaning: A phrase used to encourage reflection or imagination.

Comment: Often used rhetorically.

Collocations: just think of the possibilities / consequences

Other example:

“Just think of how much progress you could make in six months.”

4. A particular set of skills

Example: “I have my own method and a **particular set of skills.**”

Meaning: A distinctive or specialised skillset.

Comment: Playful reference to *Taken* (“I have a very particular set of skills...”).

Collocations: a unique set of skills / specialised skills

Other example:

“She brings a particular set of skills to the project that no one else has.”

5. Get that in check

Example: “...I’ve been trying to **get that in check.**”

Meaning: Control, restrain, or regulate something.

Comment: More natural than “keep that under control.”

Collocations: keep in check, bring into check

Other example:

“He’s learning to get his spending habits in check.”

6. Get straight to the point

Example: "...I tend to just **get straight to the point...**"

Meaning: Avoid digressions; say the essential part immediately.

Comment: Very common in spoken English.

Collocations: be direct, get right to the point, cut to the chase

Other example:

"Let me get straight to the point — we need more time."

7. (that is) the whole point

Example: "Rambling is **the whole point.**"

Meaning: The central purpose or main idea.

Comment: Often used defensively or humorously.

Collocations: miss the point, prove the point, the point is

Other example:

"The whole point of the exercise is to practise speaking spontaneously."

8. To be accused of rambling

Example: "I have been **accused of rambling...**"

Meaning: People have said you talk too long without structure.

Comment: "Accused of" is often ironic or hyperbolic here.

Collocations: accused of lying/cheating/overthinking

Other example:

"He was accused of rambling during job interviews."

9. Directionless

Example: "...talking or walking in a sort of **directionless** way."

Meaning: Lacking a clear plan, structure, or goal.

Comment: Neutral/negative depending on tone.

Collocations: directionless speech, directionless youth, feel directionless

Other example:

"The conversation became increasingly directionless."

10. Wander around

Example: "You **wander around**, walking this way or that way..."

Meaning: Move without a clear destination.

Comment: Suggests curiosity or leisure.

Collocations: wander aimlessly, wander the streets, wander off

Other example:

"We wandered around the old town for hours."

11. Stream-of-consciousness

Example: "Talking in a **stream-of-consciousness** way."

Meaning: Speaking (or writing) in a continuous, unfiltered flow of thoughts.

Comment: Literary term, now used casually for improvised speech.

Collocations: stream-of-consciousness writing / narration

Other example:

"His blog posts are long stream-of-consciousness reflections."

12. Countless times

Example: “As I have said **countless times** before...”

Meaning: So many times that you can't (or don't want to) count.

Comment: Strong emphasis; often hyperbolic.

Collocations: countless opportunities, countless reasons, countless examples

Other example:

“I've told him countless times not to leave the door open.”

13. Questionable teaching skills

Example: “ChatGPT's **questionable teaching skills**.”

Meaning: Skills that may not be entirely reliable or trustworthy.

Comment: Often humorous or politely critical.

Collocations: questionable decision, questionable behaviour, questionable evidence

Other example:

“His questionable cooking skills resulted in several burnt meals.”

14. a watertight answer

Example: “...you might not always get a **100% watertight answer**.”

Meaning: Completely secure, certain, or logically flawless.

Comment: Often used about arguments, alibis, logic.

Collocations: watertight argument, watertight case, watertight

logic

Other example:

“They needed a watertight explanation before presenting it.”

15. Dead giveaways

Example: “There are certain **giveaways** — clues that show it’s AI.”

Meaning: Obvious signs that reveal the truth.

Comment: Often used playfully.

Collocations: a dead giveaway, subtle giveaway

Other example:

“His accent was a dead giveaway that he grew up in Liverpool.”

16. Don’t rely on it too much

Example: “Don’t **rely on it too much** to replace your writing.”

Meaning: Avoid depending excessively on something.

Comment: Common warning or caution.

Collocations: rely heavily on, rely solely on, overly rely

Other example:

“You shouldn’t rely on spellcheck for all your proofreading.”

17. Calling people out

Example: “I’m not going to **call people out** for it...”

Meaning: Publicly challenge or criticise someone for behaviour.

Comment: Common in online discourse.

Collocations: call out behaviour, call someone out publicly

Other example:

“He called the company out for misleading advertising.”

18. Put to the test

Example: “We put ChatGPT to the test...”

Meaning: Assess, challenge, or evaluate something.

Comment: Slightly formal phrase but widely used.

Collocations: seriously put to the test, put skills/knowledge to the test

Other example:

“The job interview really put her communication skills to the test.”

19. Poke the wound

Example: “...way to poke the wound!”

Meaning: To aggravate a painful topic or emotional hurt.

Comment: Strong metaphor; often humorous.

Collocations: poke at a wound, reopen the wound

Other example:

“Mentioning his ex right after the breakup really poked the wound.”

20. Plenty more fish in the sea

Example: “Plenty more fish in the sea.”

Meaning: There are many other potential partners (after a

breakup).

Comment: Classic idiom, slightly cheesy.

Collocations: reassure someone, breakup advice

Other example:

“She’ll be fine — there are plenty more fish in the sea.”

21. Flopped on YouTube

Example: “The episode **flopped on YouTube**.”

Meaning: Performed poorly; did not succeed.

Comment: Common in entertainment/creative contexts.

Collocations: flop completely, commercial flop, box-office flop

Other example:

“The film flopped, despite its huge marketing budget.”

22. Follow the thread of the conversation

Example: “...you have to **follow the thread of the conversation**.”

Meaning: Track the logical or narrative flow.

Comment: Metaphor of a thread weaving through discourse.

Collocations: lose the thread, pick up the thread again

Other example:

“He spoke so quickly that I struggled to follow the thread.”

23. Shamelessly *lifted*

Example: “Comedy Corner... (shamelessly **lifted** from Kermode & Mayo).”

Meaning: Borrowed or copied openly and humorously.

Comment: Informal; “lifted” = stolen/borrowed.

Collocations: shamelessly copied, shamelessly borrowed

Other example:

“He shamelessly lifted the idea from an old TV show.”

24. Get straight to the point / no rambling

Example: “I made an effort in this one to **get straight to the point**.”

Meaning: Avoid unnecessary digression.

Comment: Useful for learners who over-explain.

Collocations: stick to the point, miss the point

Other example:

“The interviewer asked her to get straight to the point.”

Certificate & Medal Award

Certificate

This certifies that I have listened to
this entire episode of Luke's
English Podcast, and I have the
right to claim my 100 points.

Luke Thompson
Podcast Man

