

Podcast talk: Knowledge-making through voice, circulation, and listening

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Abstract

This article argues that podcasting should be understood not merely as a means of disseminating knowledge, but as a knowledge-making practice in its own right. Drawing on theories of broadcast talk, mediated address, and communication as dissemination, it develops the concept of podcast talk to examine how podcasts organise knowledge through voice, sequence, intimacy, circulation, and listening. Rather than presenting a bounded empirical case study, the article synthesises existing podcast scholarship on narrative nonfiction, independent podcasting, journalism, counterpublics, intimacy, host authority, and listening contexts. It identifies three ways podcasting produces knowledge. First, by circulating voices and accounts through platforms and publics. Second, by reshaping expertise and authority through vocal presence, lived experience, and relational trust. Third, by making knowledge meaningful through embodied, affective listening encounters. At the same time, the article treats podcasting as an ambivalent epistemic form, whose intimacy and authority can also intensify misplaced trust, misinformation, and unequal visibility. Podcasting moves knowledge off the page by making communicative form central to knowledge-making practice.

Keywords

podcasting, podcast studies, podcast talk, broadcast talk, knowledge-making, mediated address, podcast listening, epistemic practice, voice

Introduction

Podcasting is often described as a way of disseminating knowledge. In this framing, podcasts are useful because they make information more accessible and engaging in everyday listening contexts. They carry ideas beyond the page. This understanding is not wrong. Podcasts do circulate knowledge, sometimes

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very effectively. But it is incomplete because it assumes that knowledge is produced elsewhere and then moved through podcasting as a secondary communicative channel. It leaves intact a hierarchy in which written forms remain the privileged site of knowledge-making, while podcasting is treated as an informal or accessible supplement. This hierarchy is historically peculiar. Long before knowledge was routinely fixed in writing, it was made and shared through speech, story, repetition, and listening.

This article challenges that hierarchy by arguing that podcasting should be understood as a knowledge-making practice in its own right. Podcasts do not simply communicate ideas that have already been fully formed elsewhere. They shape how knowledge is voiced, organised, trusted, circulated, and encountered. Their significance for knowledge lies not only in content, but in communicative form. Podcasting produces knowledge through talk, and through the sonic, relational, and temporal conditions under which talk becomes meaningful to listeners.

However, to describe podcasting as knowledge-making is not to claim that podcasts necessarily produce reliable or verified knowledge. The term names a communicative process rather than a guarantee of veracity. Podcasts organise claims, testimony, and experience in ways that can make them credible, memorable, and socially consequential. This is why podcasting's knowledge-making force is ambivalent. The same conditions that support careful explanation, testimony, and counterpublic knowledge can also support gossip, misinformation, and misplaced trust.

This article uses knowledge in a broad communicative sense. It refers not only to factual information or propositional claims but also to testimony, interpretation, lived experience, public memory, situated understanding, and counterpublic discourse. To call podcasting epistemic is not to suggest that podcasts are automatically reliable or that spoken audio is more authentic than writing. It is to explore how claims, experiences, and accounts come to be voiced, circulated, authorised, trusted, contested, and made meaningful through podcast form.

The article develops this argument through the concept of podcast talk. Building on [Scannell's \(1991, 2000\)](#) account of broadcast talk and mediated address, and [Peters' \(1999\)](#) theorisation of communication as dissemination, it treats talk not as spontaneous residue around more formal knowledge, but as an organised communicative form. Podcast talk extends broadcast talk, but it also reorganises it through platform circulation, mobile and time-shifted listening, niche publics, and the recurrent intimacy of host-listener relationships. Podcasts are publicly distributed yet often encountered privately. They are structurally one-to-many but are often experienced as conversational and personally addressed. These tensions make podcasting a particularly important site for examining how knowledge becomes public, credible, and meaningful through mediated speech.

The article also contributes by bringing together a substantial body of podcast content, form, and listening analysis. Rather than presenting a bounded case study of a single podcast or corpus, it synthesises previous research on narrative nonfiction podcasting, independent podcasting, journalistic podcasting, counterpublic podcasting, podcast intimacy, host qualities, listening contexts, and podcast circulation. This allows the article to function as both a conceptual intervention and a review of how podcast studies has analysed the communicative forms through which podcasts produce meaning. Across these studies, podcasting appears as a medium, industry, platform, and pedagogical tool, as well as a knowledge-making practice.

The article's examples are drawn primarily from Anglophone podcast studies and Western digital media contexts, although it includes [Alalmay's \(2025\)](#) analysis of the Arabic-language Saudi podcast *Waddah*. The article therefore does not claim that podcasting's knowledge-making dynamics operate identically across all linguistic, cultural, or infrastructural contexts. Rather, it develops a conceptual vocabulary that can be tested, revised, and extended through further work on non-English-language, non-Western, Indigenous, diasporic, and differently platformed podcast cultures.

The article proceeds as follows. It first establishes a theoretical framework through broadcast talk, mediated address, and dissemination, before explaining the article's conceptual approach and use of podcast studies as illustrative analysis. It then develops podcast talk as a contemporary reconfiguration of broadcast talk and identifies three ways podcasting produces knowledge through circulation, authority, and listening encounter. The discussion considers the broader implications of understanding podcasting as knowledge-making through communicative form, before the conclusion outlines the article's contribution and future research directions. The article's central claim is that podcasting moves knowledge off the page not by abandoning rigour, but by showing that rigour can also be enacted through voice, relation, situatedness, and careful listening.

Theoretical framework: Broadcast talk, address, and listening

This article is grounded in communication theory that frames talk not as incidental to mediated communication, but as one of its primary organising forms. Scannell's term for this phenomenon is 'broadcast talk' (1991). Across Scannell's work on broadcast talk (1991) and 'for-anyone-as-someone' structures (2000), Scannell and Cardiff's history of British broadcasting (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991), and Peters' theorisation of communication as dissemination (Peters, 1999), mediated speech is understood to be structured, crafted, relational, and socially consequential.

Broadcast talk provides the historical framework for this article's central thesis: that podcasting is an epistemic practice, a way knowledge is organised, shaped, and encountered through talk. Before expanding on that argument, three related propositions need establishing. First, talk in mediated contexts is organised, structured, and socially patterned. Second, mediated address shapes how listeners experience public speech as personally meaningful. Third, communication across distance is never simply transmission. It is marked by absence, uncertainty, and the conditions of reception. Together, these propositions provide the conceptual basis for a contemporary re-configuration of broadcast talk as podcast talk.

Talk as organised communicative form

Scannell's (1991) argument emerges from the straightforward premise that broadcasting is, in large part, organised talk. Radio and television distribute information while also arranging and presenting speech in recognisable forms, roles, sequences, and occasions. Consequently, broadcast talk is not 'just conversation' that is transmitted to an audience via technical means. It is talk shaped by institutional settings, production conditions, temporal constraints, and an orientation toward listeners or viewers who are not physically present.

This matters because mediated talk is often treated as spontaneous, casual, and secondary to more formal modes of knowledge. Yet broadcast studies demonstrate that mediated talk is highly structured. Interviews, news bulletins, phone-ins, panel discussions, documentary narration, and educational broadcasts all organise speech differently. They allocate roles, manage turn-taking and topic movement, and make speech intelligible for absent audiences. Broadcast talk is therefore a hybrid form. It draws on the recognisable textures of ordinary conversation while remaining shaped by institutional and communicative constraints (Peters, 1999; Scannell, 1991; Scannell and Cardiff, 1991).

Scannell and Cardiff's (1991) historical account of British broadcasting provides an important foundation for this discussion. Forms of broadcast talk did not arrive fully formed. They had to be invented, refined, professionalised, and normalised. Early broadcasters had to work out how to speak to unseen listeners, how formal or conversational to sound, and how to make public speech

appropriate for domestic listening. The development of broadcast talk was therefore a social and institutional story about how mediated speech became listenable, authoritative, and ordinary.

The concept of broadcast talk is central to the notion of podcast talk because it challenges the assumption that talk is a natural or unmediated communicative form. Broadcast talk came to feel natural only through repetition, convention, and professional practice. Diction, tone, authority, pacing, and appropriateness became socially recognisable as features of 'good' broadcasting. What later appeared effortless was therefore the outcome of sustained development and organisation. This is especially important for thinking about podcasting, where *conversationality* is often mistaken for the absence of form. Podcast talk consists of (and depends on) recognisable conventions, even when it is presented as informal, intimate, or improvised. Another crucial element of broadcast talk is *listenability* (Scannell, 1991). Talk must be intelligible to those who cannot interrupt, ask for clarification, or negotiate meaning in real time. Talk designed for absent listeners must therefore anticipate possible confusion, orient the listener, and produce coherence as it unfolds. This does not mean that broadcast talk is always simple or reductive. Rather, it means that mediated speech must be organised in ways that make it followable under particular listening conditions (Scannell, 1991). Knowledge in such contexts depends on accuracy, sequencing, pacing, framing, and orientation.

Podcast talk produces knowledge through how claims are developed, qualified, and made consequential over time. Equally important is how those claims are voiced and performed through communicative cues such as pacing, tone, and emphasis, which shape how listeners encounter and interpret them. Broadcast talk provides the conceptual vocabulary for recognising that these features are not decorative. They are part of the communicative structure through which mediated speech becomes meaningful, intelligible, and credible (Scannell, 1991).

Broadcast talk also carries a public dimension (Scannell, 1991). It makes speech socially accountable. Hosts, interviewees, callers, experts, and presenters are positioned within formats that require explanation, justification, and responsiveness. Even apparently conversational talk is organised by the presence of an intended listening audience. This is another important bridge to podcasting. Podcasts often sound like private conversations, but they are rarely only conversations between participants. They are arranged for listeners. Their apparent informality remains shaped by an orientation toward an absent but anticipated audience.

Mediated address and the experience of communication

If broadcast talk explains how mediated speech is organised, Scannell's later work on 'for-anyone-as-someone' structures explains how this speech is experienced (2000). The central problem is how public communication can address an anonymous audience while still being experienced as personally meaningful. Broadcasting speaks to anyone, but it does so in a way that allows each listener or viewer to experience the address as being directed to them as someone.

This formulation is crucial to this article because it helps explain how mediated conversation can be simultaneously public and intimate. Broadcast talk is available to an indefinite audience, yet it enters the particular circumstances of everyday life: the home, the car, the kitchen, the bedroom, and the commute. The listener is not personally known to the speaker, but the form of address can still produce a sense of recognition or personal orientation. Public communication becomes liveable because it is organised as if it were socially available to individual listeners. These dynamics provide an important foundation for understanding podcast talk, which extends and intensifies many of the same communicative relations.

'For-anyone-as-someone' is one of the main theoretical foundations for understanding podcasting as a knowledge-producing form. Podcasts are distributed publicly, often globally, but are usually encountered privately, bodily, and within everyday routines. The podcast listener is one among many, but the experience of listening often feels singular. Scannell's framework therefore helps explain why podcast knowledge can feel simultaneously general and specific, public and private, and impersonal and intimate. Podcasting intensifies the 'for-anyone-as-someone' structure through time-shifted listening, niche address, platform subscription, and vocal proximity.

Mediated address also complicates conventional distinctions between authority and intimacy. A speaker's credibility is shaped by institutional position, formal expertise, tone, continuity, recognisability, and social availability. Scannell's notion of the 'available self' is useful here (2000). A mediated person emerges as a socially recognisable presence made available through attributes, style, voice, manner, and repeated forms of appearance. The significance of the available self is not simply interpersonal. It helps explain how authority, trust, and credibility are organised through mediated communication.

This matters for podcasting because podcast authority often depends on the patterned availability of a voice. Listeners come to know hosts through recurring habits of speech, performance, and interaction. This does not necessarily make podcast knowledge less rigorous. Rather, it suggests that credibility in audio can be relationally organised. A podcast host may become trustworthy through what they claim and through how they repeatedly enact explanation, curiosity, care, or accountability.

Mediated address also constructs a public/private interface (Scannell, 2000). Broadcasting historically had to enter domestic space without violating it. It had to sound public enough to carry authority, but familiar enough to be received within everyday life. This required new conventions of tone and address. In podcasting, this interface becomes even more pronounced. Podcasting often places a voice directly in the ear, generating a heightened sense of proximity while remaining a public, recorded, and scalable medium. The intimacy listeners experience is not a departure from mediation, but one of its effects. It emerges through the communicative and technological conditions of podcasting itself. This is why intimacy must be treated as consequential for how claims become persuasive, trusted, followed, or resisted. However, intimate communication is not automatically better or more truthful. Rather, it changes the communicative conditions under which knowledge claims are encountered.

Scannell's attention to everyday life is also significant (1991). Broadcasting matters because it transmits events or information and becomes woven into ordinary routines. Programmes recur, voices become familiar, and media time intersects with lived time. Podcasting alters the temporal structure of this relation because it is usually on demand, not scheduled. However, it does not abandon routine. Listeners build podcasts into repeated practices: commuting, walking, cooking, cleaning, sleeping, exercising, or working. In this sense, podcast listening continues the broadcast relation between media and everyday life while reorganising it around personal timing and portable listening.

Communication as dissemination

Peters' (1999) account of communication as dissemination provides a broader philosophical frame for broadcast talk because it challenges the idea that ideal communication means perfect dialogue or mutual understanding. He emphasises the distance, asymmetry, and uncertainty that characterise mediated communication. Communication often involves sending words outward without knowing exactly who will receive them, when they will be received, or how they will be interpreted.

Peters' (1999) observations clarify something fundamental about broadcasting and podcasting. Mediated speech is communication across separation. It speaks from one location and is heard in another. It is not supported by the ordinary feedback loops of face-to-face conversation. There is no immediate

repair, no shared physical situation, and no guarantee of mutual understanding. Broadcast talk responds to this problem by simulating forms of co-presence, including direct address, conversational tone, familiar voices, repeated formats, and invitations to imagine a shared communicative situation.

Peters' distinction between dialogue and dissemination is particularly useful because it resists the assumption that one-way communication is fundamentally inferior (1999). Dissemination is not failed dialogue. It is a different communicative condition. Writing, recording, and broadcasting all involve forms of communication that travel beyond the immediate scene of production. Their meanings are not fixed at the point of transmission but emerge through reception, interpretation, context, and time. This matters because podcasting retains the disseminative character of broadcasting while often being experienced as intimate and conversational. A podcast is usually recorded without knowing precisely who will listen. It may be downloaded years later, encountered out of sequence, replayed, shared, archived, clipped, or listened to in contexts never imagined by its producers. Yet podcasting often produces a strong sense of conversational presence. Its knowledge-generating capabilities depend partly on this tension. Podcasting is structurally one-to-many, but phenomenologically intimate.

Peters also helps frame the uncertainty of communication as a condition to be acknowledged, not a flaw (1999). Speakers cannot fully control how listeners interpret their words. Listeners bring their own contexts, assumptions, attachments, and routines to the encounter. This has particular importance for podcasting, where durable host-listener relationships may form without reciprocity. The host does not know the listener, but the listener may come to feel that they know the host. Such asymmetry can support care, trust, and attention, but it can also produce misrecognition, parasocial relationships, or misplaced authority. This also keeps the argument from becoming celebratory, as not all podcasts disseminate credible knowledge. The same structures of intimacy, repetition, and listener orientation that can support careful explanation may also amplify weak claims, misinformation, or charismatic authority. Peters' (1999) account of dissemination therefore helps keep the argument descriptive and analytical.

Taken together, Scannell (1991, 2000), Scannell and Cardiff (1991), and Peters (1999) provide the framework for the discussion to follow. Scannell and Cardiff show that mediated talk is historically produced, not natural. Scannell shows how broadcast talk is organised for absent listeners and how public address can be experienced personally. Peters shows that communication across distance is marked by uncertainty, asymmetry, and reception. After outlining the article's approach, the discussion turns to podcast talk as a contemporary configuration of organised talk, mediated address, and disseminated listening through which knowledge is produced.

Approach: Analysis through podcasts

This article is a conceptual intervention rather than a bounded empirical study. Its aim is to develop a theoretical account of podcast talk as an epistemic practice, supported by illustrative examples drawn primarily from existing podcast scholarship. The project is grounded in broadcast studies traditions associated with Scannell (1991, 2000) and Peters (1999), in which communicative forms are theorised through close attention to address, temporality, listener orientation, and the social organisation of media.

The article's examples are drawn primarily from Anglophone podcast studies and Western digital media contexts, with only limited attention to other settings. The article therefore does not claim that podcasting's knowledge-making dynamics operate identically across all linguistic, cultural, or infrastructural contexts. Rather, it develops a conceptual vocabulary that should be tested and extended through further work on non-English-language, non-Western, and differently platformed podcast cultures.

Illustrative examples are woven throughout the analysis to show how these communicative dynamics operate across diverse podcast forms. They are not treated as a representative corpus, nor subjected to formal coding or systematic textual analysis. Instead, they function as conceptual

demonstrations, making visible how podcasting organises intimacy, credibility, circulation, authority, and listening. In this sense, the article conducts analysis through podcasts rather than a bounded analysis of podcast texts.

The illustrative scholarship was selected through thematic sampling rather than systematic review. Sources were included because they examine podcasting at the level of communicative form, including voice, address, circulation, authority, intimacy, listening, counterpublic formation, or platformed distribution. The selection is therefore purposive rather than exhaustive. This article brings together studies that make visible the communicative dynamics through which podcasting operates as a knowledge-making practice.

This approach reflects the project's central aim, which is not to produce descriptive findings about individual podcast texts, but to theorise podcasting as a distinctive communicative form (Jarrett, 2009; Spinelli and Dann, 2019). A methodology centred on bounded case studies would narrow the project's contribution to the interpretation of specific texts and limit attention to the broader communicative logics that characterise podcasting as a medium. By contrast, a theoretically driven approach supported through distributed illustrative analysis allows the article to engage

Table 1. Main illustrative examples discussed in the article.

Podcast/example	Brief description	Source
People Movers and Human/Ordinary	Independent Australian nonfiction podcasts used to examine narrative voice, trust, vulnerability, and producer-audience relations	Jorgensen (2021)
Waddah	Arabic-language Saudi podcast used to illustrate ritualised openings, closings, and formatted podcast conversation	Alalmay (2025)
Song Exploder	Music podcast used to show how intimacy can be produced through editorial restraint and sonic staging	Clarke and Bjork (2023)
The Joe Rogan Experience	Conversational podcast used to illustrate how familiarity, scale, and platform distribution can amplify contested or misleading claims	Bond (2022); Colbjørnsen (2024)
Black Podcast Networks/ Podcast 'Chitlin' Circuit'	Black podcasting networks used to examine counterpublic circulation, cultural authority, and Black sociality	Florini (2015)
The Food Truck Scholar Podcast	Interview-based podcast with Black food truck owners used to discuss community knowledge, voice, and scholarly return	Smith (2022)
Picturing Home	Podcast project on migration, home, and belonging used to examine listening publics and podcasting as a boundary object	Cory and Boothby (2021)
YIKES	Climate justice podcast used to examine activist authority, care, uncertainty, and difficult knowledge	Driver (2023)
S-Town	Narrative nonfiction podcast used to examine storylistening, sonic immersion, and the ethics of intimate listening	Waldmann (2020)
Boners of the Heart	Conversational comedy podcast used to examine pandemic listening, mediated company, and affective agency	Robson (2021)

podcasting at the level of form, practice, and mediated address while remaining grounded in concrete communicative examples.

The main illustrative examples discussed in the article are summarised below [Table 1](#).

From broadcast talk to podcast talk

Scannell and Peters provide the foundational vocabulary for mediated talk, address, and dissemination, but podcasting also needs to be understood through more recent work on mediated intimacy, parasocial host-listener relations, and platformed audio. Contemporary podcast scholarship extends this framework by showing how recurrent voices, headphones, host familiarity, imagined listeners, platform visibility, and listening routines reshape the conditions under which mediated speech becomes credible and socially consequential ([Berry, 2024](#); [Heiselberg and Have, 2023](#); [Robson, 2021](#); [Schlütz and Hedder, 2022](#); [Sharon and John, 2019](#); [Sullivan, 2024](#)).

Early podcast studies often framed the medium as similar to broadcasting ([Berry, 2006](#); [Menduni, 2007](#); [Sterne et al., 2008](#)). But podcasting is not simply radio on demand. [Jarrett's Private Talk in the Public Sphere: Podcasting as Broadcast Talk \(2009\)](#) challenged the idea that podcasting marked a clean break from broadcast talk. For Jarrett, podcasting does not simply invert the hierarchy between professional media voices and ordinary speakers. Rather, it carries forward many of the forms, roles, and legitimating practices of broadcasting, while also introducing more informal, everyday, and privately inflected modes of speech. Podcast talk therefore emerges as a hybrid form that is less institutionally bounded than radio, but still shaped by broadcast conventions of address, authority, and audience formation.

This section treats Jarrett's argument as a historical and conceptual bridge between broadcast studies and podcast studies. Her work established an important continuity, in that podcasts inherit broadcast talk's one-to-many structure, its reliance on hostly authority, and its techniques for producing intimacy across distance. But podcasting has changed considerably since [Jarrett's \(2009\)](#) article was published. Nearly two decades later, podcasting has moved from a relatively niche, download-based audio form into a mainstream digital medium embedded in everyday media use. Around the time of Jarrett's article, podcasting was still closely associated with technologically confident early adopters, independent production, and public-radio-adjacent forms of audio ([Spinelli and Dann, 2019](#)). Since then, the medium has become easier to access, more culturally visible, and more institutionally diverse, expanding across journalism, comedy, politics, sport, education, wellness, fiction, true crime, celebrity interviews, and branded content. More recently, podcasting has also become increasingly hybrid, as video podcasts and social media clips reshape how shows are discovered, circulated, and consumed ([Berry, 2024](#)).

These changes do not make Jarrett's argument obsolete. Rather, they make it more important to revisit. Podcasting's expansion has intensified the questions her work raised about the relation between podcasting and broadcast talk. Podcasts now operate within a more professionalised and platformed media environment shaped by major distributors, advertising and subscription models, and increasingly sophisticated audience analytics ([Sullivan, 2024](#)). Platformisation and the convergence of audio, video, and social media increasingly shape how podcasts are produced, circulated, monetised, and made visible ([Berry, 2024](#); [Colbjørnsen, 2024](#); [Kammer and Sejersen, 2025](#); [Sullivan, 2019, 2024](#)). At the same time, podcasting still depends heavily on voice, address, seriality, and listener routine. The podcast scholarship examined here suggests that podcasting extends broadcast talk not by abandoning its forms, but by relocating them within new temporal, technological, and affective arrangements. What changes is not simply who gets to speak, but how

talk comes to feel like knowledge: situated, intimate, repeatable, shareable, and made meaningful through the relation between voice, listener, platform, and public.

The first way this reconfiguration becomes visible is through podcast conversationality. Podcast talk often derives its appeal from sounding informal, spontaneous, or loosely structured. But this informality should not be mistaken for the absence of form. Like broadcast talk, podcast talk is arranged for listeners who are not physically present. Hosts guide the listener through topics, transitions, guests, and stakes, while decisions about format, editing, pacing, vocal performance, and imagined audience shape even the most casual-sounding conversation (Copeland, 2018; Jorgensen, 2021).

Recent podcast studies make this organisation visible across different kinds of shows. Jorgensen's (2021) account of narrative voice in independent Australian nonfiction podcasts shows that voice involves how the narrator listens, manages perspective, and presents truth to the audience. In *People Movers* and *Human/Ordinary*, trust is shaped through vocal style, self-reflection, and the producer's audible relation to interviewees. Heiselberg and Have's (2023) listener study similarly suggests that podcast hosts are judged not only by what they know, but by how they sustain attention, structure talk, and project personality. The host becomes part of the communicative form through which content is made listenable.

This organisation is also evident in studies of podcast structure and production practice. Jaggi and Mehendale's (2023) work on journalistic podcasting shows that podcast topics are selected for 'discussability' and 'shelf life', suggesting that podcast conversation is shaped before recording begins by judgements about what can sustain explanation over time. Alalmay's (2025) analysis of openings and closings in the *Waddah* podcast shows that even the boundaries of podcast conversation are ritualised and strategically formatted, orienting listeners through greetings, invocations, introductions, episode framing, and leave-taking. In a different context, Berg's (2021, 2022) work on independent podcasting treats conversation and interview as default podcast grammars, repeatable forms through which personal experience, cultural knowledge, and community address are organised.

Podcast conversationality is therefore a mediated practice that uses the textures of conversation to produce speech that feels open while remaining crafted (Suteja, 2021). This matters because podcast knowledge depends on followability. Claims must be sequenced, voiced, framed, and made available to absent listeners who cannot interrupt, ask for clarification, or negotiate meaning in real time. Podcast talk is therefore organised in anticipation of attention that must be guided across distance, time, and context.

This listener orientation intensifies Scannell's (2000) 'for-anyone-as-someone' structure. A podcast may be publicly distributed and available to anyone, but its address is often received as if it were directed to the listener personally. Podcast intimacy is therefore not a departure from mediation, but one of its effects. It is produced through vocal proximity, recurrence, address, editing, and sonic staging. Spinelli and Dann (2019) emphasise the intimacy of headphone listening, while Clarke and Bjork's (2023) analysis of *Song Exploder* shows how intimacy can be produced through editorial restraint rather than host disclosure. In both cases, intimacy is mediated and produced.

Yet this intimacy remains asymmetrical. The listener may come to know the host, narrator, guest, or recurring format, but that recognition is not reciprocated in the same way. Sharon and John's (2019) account of *Invisibilia* shows how the imagined podcast listener is constructed through ideals, assumptions, data, feedback, and self-projection rather than direct knowledge of an actual audience. This does not make podcast address false. It shows that podcast intimacy is a communicative achievement. Public speech is made to feel private, recurrent, and personally available. That

achievement is central to podcasting's knowledge-producing power, because knowledge is encountered as information voiced by someone who seems familiar, situated, and socially near.

This is where trust becomes central. If podcast knowledge is encountered through voice, recurrence, intimacy, and social availability, then credibility does not rest only on formal expertise or institutional authority. It is also shaped through repeated performances of care and accountability. [Jorgensen's \(2021\)](#) work on narrative voice and trust shows how independent podcast producers build credibility through vocal style, transparency, and their audible relation to lived experience. Similarly, [Heiselberg and Have's \(2023\)](#) listener study suggests that hosts are valued not only as information providers, but as personalities whose communicative style sustains attention and connection.

Yet trust is an ambivalent condition of credibility. It can support attention, care, explanation, and openness to unfamiliar perspectives, but it can also attach authority to the wrong things. A familiar voice, confessional style, recurring presence, or sense of companionship may make a podcast feel credible before its claims have been adequately justified. The controversy surrounding *The Joe Rogan Experience* and COVID-19 misinformation illustrates this dynamic at scale. Criticism of the show centred not only on the presence of misleading health claims, but on Spotify's role in distributing a trusted, highly familiar podcast voice through a major platform during a public-health crisis ([Bond, 2022](#)). [Colbjørnsen's \(2024\)](#) analysis of the Rogan/Spotify controversy extends this point by showing that the case was also a problem of platformisation, in which podcasting, music streaming, health information, publishing logics, and platform governance collided. The issue, then, was not simply whether one host made unreliable claims, but how a platformed podcast ecosystem could amplify those claims through scale, familiarity, monetisation, and institutional ambiguity. [Schlütz and Hedder's \(2022\)](#) work on parasocial relationships is also important because it shows that host-listener bonds can have persuasive effects, while [Heiselberg and Have \(2023\)](#) found that this persuasive capacity carries particular responsibility in a medium with relatively low barriers to entry.

Podcasting's knowledge-making significance therefore lies in changing the communicative conditions under which knowledge claims become credible, meaningful, and consequential. Podcast talk can invite careful listening and relational trust, but it can also make authority feel personal before it has been earned. Having established podcast talk as a reconfiguration of broadcast talk, the next section introduces the three ways podcasting produces knowledge. It does so through circulation, through the reshaping of expertise and authority, and through listening as an encounter with knowledge.

Three ways podcasting produces knowledge

This section examines how podcasting produces knowledge, utilising illustrative examples drawn primarily from existing podcast scholarship. It treats podcasts as social, sonic, and relational forms through which knowledge is made, circulated, authorised, and encountered. Podcast knowledge is shaped by what is said, how voices travel, who is heard as credible, and how listeners attend to speech, sound, intimacy, and affect.

The section has three parts. First, it considers circulation, showing how podcasts move through platforms, archives, communities, listener networks, and counterpublic spaces. Second, it examines how podcasting reshapes expertise and authority by making credibility audible through voice, lived experience, and relational forms of trust. Third, it turns to listening itself, arguing that podcast knowledge is produced through temporal, embodied, and affective encounters with voice. Together,

these subsections show that podcasting is a medium through which knowledge becomes public, credible, and meaningful.

Knowledge in circulation

The first way podcasting produces knowledge is through circulation. Podcast knowledge is not fixed during the recording or contained entirely within the content of an episode. It becomes meaningful as episodes move through platforms and social networks and are taken up within communities and later acts of response (Cory and Boothby, 2021; Florini, 2015; Smith, 2022; Vrikki and Malik, 2019). In this sense, circulation is a condition through which podcast knowledge becomes durable, recognisable, shareable, and public.

This is especially clear in studies of podcasting as counterpublic media. Florini's (2015) account of Black podcast networks, sometimes described through the language of the podcast 'Chitlin' Circuit', shows how knowledge circulates through informal affiliation, cross-promotion, and overlapping networks of podcasters and listeners. These podcasts form circuits of Black sociality and cultural knowledge sustained through shared cultural references, political concerns, and everyday experience. Circulation here is social and relational. That is, knowledge travels through networks of familiarity, recommendation, participation, and return.

Vrikki and Malik's (2019) work on young Black and Asian UK podcasters positions podcasting as a space for subaltern counterpublics. The article argues that podcasts allow marginalised speakers to circulate counter-discourses about race, identity, culture, politics, and everyday life outside the constraints of mainstream media representation. The significance of podcasting here lies in how intimate conversations between friends move into public circulation, carrying lived experience, anti-racist critique, humour, disagreement, and community knowledge into wider listening publics. This movement from private talk to public address echoes Jarrett's (2009) work on podcasting as broadcast talk, but with a stronger emphasis on how circulation can support alternative publics and counter-discursive knowledge.

Podcast circulation can also make knowledge more accountable to the communities from which it emerges. Smith's (2022) discussion of *The Food Truck Scholar Podcast* shows how the show circulates participants' voices, stories, businesses, and expertise before, alongside, and beyond written scholarship. For Smith, podcasting allows Black food truck owners to speak in their own voices and to benefit from the visibility produced by the podcast itself. Circulation therefore becomes a form of return, as knowledge moves from participant to researcher to journal article and back into public, community, and entrepreneurial networks.

Cory and Boothby's (2021) account of *Picturing Home* similarly frames podcasting as a boundary object through which different publics can gather around questions of migration, home, and belonging. *Picturing Home* functions as a public archive and repository, but also as a site of translation between participants, researchers, community organisations, academic audiences, and other listeners. Its value lies less in mass reach than in the creation of small, attentive listening publics. In this sense, podcast knowledge circulates by travelling widely and by becoming available for return, reinterpretation, disagreement, memory, and use across different social worlds.

These examples show that podcast circulation should not be reduced to measures of scale, access, or platform availability. Circulation is bound up with knowledge because it shapes where knowledge goes, who can encounter it, how it is recognised, and what forms of public life it can

enter. Podcasts can archive voices, convene publics, sustain counterpublic networks, and return knowledge to communities in ways that exceed one-way dissemination (Cory and Boothby, 2021; Florini, 2015; Smith, 2022; Vrikki and Malik, 2019). At the same time, circulation remains uneven. Platform visibility, social inequalities, institutional support, and commercial infrastructure all shape which podcasts are found, shared, and recognised (Florini, 2015; Smith, 2022; Vrikki and Malik, 2019). Podcasting can widen the circulation of knowledge, but it does not circulate all knowledge equally.

Reshaping expertise and authority

The second way podcasting produces knowledge is by reshaping expertise and authority. If circulation affects where podcast knowledge travels, authority concerns who is heard as credible, and under what communicative conditions. Podcasting does not remove expertise, but it does alter how expertise is voiced, performed, recognised, and trusted (Jorgensen, 2021; Smith, 2022; Vrikki and Malik, 2019). Authority may still come from formal credentials or institutional affiliation, but podcasting also allows credibility to develop through lived experience, cultural familiarity, and the listener's accumulated sense of who is speaking (Florini, 2015; Jorgensen, 2021; Smith, 2022).

This shift is especially clear in Jorgensen's (2021) work on narrative voice and trust in Australian independent podcasting. Independent podcast producers cannot always rely on the inherited authority of established media institutions, so trust must be built through the techniques of podcast narration itself. Jorgensen identifies first-person narration, authenticity, empathy, and emotional truth as fundamental ways narrative voice produces credibility. Authority here does not depend on the removal of subjectivity. It is often produced through the careful disclosure of perspective, the audible presence of the narrator, and the sense that the producer is listening, responding, and positioning themselves transparently in relation to the story. Podcast expertise is performed through voice, pacing, intimacy, vulnerability, and narrative care.

This does not mean that podcast authority is only a matter of individual personality or listener psychology. It is also cultural and communal. Florini's (2015) analysis of Black podcasting shows how authority can emerge through Black vernaculars, humour, shared references, political commentary, and culturally specific modes of informal talk. In these podcasts, credibility is not produced through the polished neutrality associated with conventional broadcast authority. It is produced through recognisable forms of Black sociality, including talk that evokes barbershops, beauty shops, churches, family gatherings, and friendship networks (Florini, 2015). The authority of such podcasts depends on cultural competence and shared social knowledge. Listeners assess claims while recognising voices, rhythms, references, and ways of speaking that mainstream media often marginalises or sanitises.

These questions of authority are also questions of voice. Smith's (2022) account of *The Food Truck Scholar Podcast* is useful here because it shows how expectations around 'professional', 'neutral', or 'collegiate' speech can police who is heard as knowledgeable. Smith's discussion of African American English, Southern accent, hesitation, and informal speech makes clear that podcast authority is never only about content. It is also shaped by listening norms that make some voices sound credible while marking others as excessive, informal, or out of place.

Driver's (2023) analysis of the climate justice podcast *YIKES* offers another model of podcast authority. The podcast does not present climate knowledge as detached scientific explanation alone, but as something worked through relationally, affectively, and politically. Its hosts draw authority from activist involvement and friendship, while openly working through uncertainty, emotion, and

exhaustion. This matters because expertise is not weakened by vulnerability here. Rather, vulnerability becomes part of how difficult knowledge is made credible and liveable. *YIKES* suggests that podcasting can produce authority through process, as hosts think aloud, revise their positions, and invite listeners into ongoing collective learning.

The counterpublic stakes of podcast authority are also central to [Vrikki and Malik's \(2019\)](#) work on young Black and Asian UK podcasters. Their participants use podcasting to discuss race, identity, politics, and everyday life from positions often marginalised in dominant media. Authority emerges through friendship, lived experience, and the ability to define problems in one's own terms. Yet this authority remains unevenly supported. [Vrikki and Malik \(2019\)](#) stress that podcasting is still shaped by platform visibility, unpaid labour, algorithmic discoverability, and unequal creative industries. Podcasting can open space for counterpublic expertise, but it does not dissolve the structures that decide which voices gain recognition.

Knowledge as listening encounter

The third way podcasting produces knowledge is through listening. If circulation concerns where podcast knowledge travels, and authority concerns who is heard as credible, listening concerns how knowledge is encountered. Podcast knowledge does not arrive as a static text to be scanned or skimmed all at once. It unfolds through voice and sound over time, within the listener's own situation ([Cory and Boothby, 2021](#); [Harrison et al., 2023](#); [Waldmann, 2020](#)). This makes podcast listening more than reception. It is an encounter in which knowledge is shaped through attention, feeling, memory, and reflection.

[Waldmann's \(2020\)](#) analysis of *S-Town* is relevant here because it frames narrative podcasting as 'storylistening' rather than storytelling alone. In *S-Town*, knowledge is produced through reported information and through close attention to voice, music, pauses, silence, recorded interviews, sound effects, fading, and the audible conditions of production. The listener is drawn into a nonfiction story that depends on sonic immersion and interpretive participation. Meaning emerges through what is said and through how voices hesitate, how scenes are paced, how atmosphere is built, and how the listener becomes positioned within the narrative. At the same time, Waldmann's account also shows the ethical ambivalence of listening. The intimacy of *S-Town* can invite empathy and attention, but it also raises the ethical problem of listening to another person's life as a narrative crafted for entertainment. The listener may feel drawn into understanding the central figure while also being entertained by a story built around vulnerability, suffering, and death.

[Cory and Boothby's \(2021\)](#) work on *Picturing Home* develops a different model of listening encounter. Drawing on the idea of listening publics, they treat listening as active, relational, and political rather than passive. In their account, podcasting allows participants and listeners to return to voices, stories, and memories of migration, home, and belonging. Listening becomes part of knowledge production because it creates space for resonance, recognition, disagreement, and delayed response. A story heard in one context may call up another listener's memory, feeling, or sense of place. Podcast knowledge therefore emerges from what a speaker says and from what listeners bring to the voice, including their memories, associations, experiences, and sense of place.

[Driver's \(2023\)](#) analysis of the climate justice podcast *YIKES* shows how listening can also make difficult knowledge bearable. The podcast addresses climate crisis and social injustice alongside the exhaustion and uncertainty of activist life, working through these subjects with friendship, care, humour, and open-ended conversation. Its slow and meandering style is not incidental to its knowledge-making. The style is purposeful, giving listeners a way to stay with overwhelming

subjects without reducing them to detached explanation or urgent instruction. Knowledge is held within a caring intimate counterpublic, where listeners are invited to think, feel, revise, and remain politically engaged without being forced into certainty.

Florini's (2015) account of Black podcasting similarly shows how podcast listening can create a portable social world. Through mobile listening, vernacular speech, and humour, Black podcasts can evoke familiar social spaces such as barbershops, churches, and conversations among friends. This matters because claims about race, politics, and everyday life are encountered within a cultural environment shaped by recognition, belonging, and shared reference. Listening becomes a way of entering, carrying, and returning to a community of talk.

Robson's (2021) work on pandemic podcast listening makes the emotional qualities of listening encounters especially clear. During periods of isolation, familiar podcast voices offered listeners mediated companionship and continuity. In her account of listening to *Boners of the Heart* during a COVID-19 lockdown, podcast listening becomes a form of affective agency through which disrupted social and emotional life could be negotiated. This does not mean that podcast knowledge is only emotional or therapeutic. Rather, it shows that what listeners learn, trust, or absorb is shaped by the conditions under which listening feels possible, sustaining, or socially meaningful.

Podcasting therefore produces knowledge as a listening encounter. Its knowledge-producing force lies both in claims, facts, and arguments, and in the temporal and embodied experience of staying with voices. Listening can generate recognition, memory, empathy, discomfort, disagreement, care, and trust. It can also produce ethical risk, selective intimacy, over-identification, or voyeuristic pleasure. This is why podcasting cannot be understood simply as spoken content distributed online. It is a form in which knowledge becomes meaningful through the act of listening itself.

Discussion

This article has challenged the assumption that podcasting merely disseminates knowledge produced elsewhere. Across the podcast scholarship examined, podcasting emerges as a communicative form through which knowledge is voiced, circulated, authorised, encountered, and made meaningful through talk. Its contribution is therefore not only to argue that podcasts can carry knowledge, but to show that podcasting changes the conditions under which claims, testimony, experience, and expertise become public, credible, and consequential.

For journalism studies, this means that podcasting cannot be understood simply as journalism in audio form. Podcast journalism may report, investigate, explain, or analyse, but it also builds authority through voice, recurrence, intimacy, narrative sequence, and host-listener familiarity. Credibility remains tied to verification, evidence, and editorial accountability, but it is also shaped by the communicative form through which reporting becomes listenable, trustworthy, and socially available. Podcasting therefore complicates any sharp distinction between journalistic authority and conversational address. A podcast may produce public knowledge through reporting, but also through the host's recurring presence, the pacing of explanation, the staging of uncertainty, and the listener's accumulated sense of who is speaking.

For media literacy, the article suggests that podcast credibility cannot be assessed only by checking isolated claims. Listeners also need ways of recognising how intimacy, repetition, host familiarity, and platform visibility can make claims feel credible before they have been verified. Podcast literacy therefore involves attention to communicative form. It requires asking who is speaking, what evidence is offered, how authority and uncertainty are handled, and how the listener is invited to trust. This is especially important because podcasting often makes public speech feel

private, personal, and socially close. Those qualities can support careful explanation and counterpublic testimony, but they can also make weak claims feel persuasive.

For platform governance, treating podcasting as knowledge-making shifts attention from content moderation alone to the infrastructures that amplify, monetise, recommend, and legitimise podcast voices. Podcasts become socially consequential not only because hosts speak, but because platforms make some voices discoverable, profitable, repeatable, and scalable. This is especially important where health, politics, identity, or public expertise are at stake. The issue is not simply whether a podcast contains true or false claims, but how platform systems help particular claims acquire authority, familiarity, and reach. Podcasting's knowledge-making force is therefore inseparable from the platform conditions through which voices are distributed, promoted, commercialised, and made visible.

These implications return the article to its theoretical starting point. Scannell's work on broadcast talk and mediated address shows that public speech is organised for absent listeners, while Peters' account of dissemination clarifies the uncertainty and asymmetry involved in communicating across distance (Peters, 1999; Scannell, 1991, 2000). Podcasting inherits these conditions, but reorganises them through platform distribution, mobile listening, seriality, vocal proximity, and recurrent host-listener relations. Podcast talk is a contemporary form of mediated address in which public speech is often experienced as private, relational, and personally available. This is why communicative form matters. Claims do not become meaningful only because they are accurate or informative. They become meaningful through voice, timing, relation, context, and the listener's accumulated experience of listening.

The three modes discussed in the previous section show how this knowledge-making form operates. Circulation shapes how podcast knowledge becomes public, authority shapes who is heard as credible, and listening shapes how knowledge is encountered and made meaningful. Together, these modes suggest that podcasting should be understood as a knowledge-making practice rather than a vessel for knowledge transfer.

This has particular importance for public scholarship, community knowledge, and underrepresented voices. Podcasts can make space for forms of expertise that are often marginalised by academic, journalistic, or institutional norms. They can return knowledge to communities, sustain alternative publics, and give voice to lived experiences in ways that knowledge on a page may not. In this sense, podcasting can move knowledge off the page not by abandoning rigour, but by showing that rigour can also be enacted through voice, accountability, situatedness, and careful listening.

At the same time, podcasting's knowledge-making force is ambivalent. The same forms that support testimony, counterpublic voice, care, and public explanation can also support misinformation, misplaced trust, voyeurism, and unequal visibility. Intimacy is not evidence. Familiarity is not verification. A recurring voice may invite trust before that trust has been earned. Podcasting can support more plural forms of knowledge, but it does not guarantee them.

The broader contribution of this article is to insist that communicative form matters to knowledge. Podcasting does not merely 'add sound' to ideas that already exist elsewhere. It changes the conditions under which ideas are made public, credible, and liveable. To understand podcasting as knowledge-making is therefore to take talk seriously. Talk is not an informal residue around real knowledge. It is one of the ways knowledge is organised in social life. Podcasting's significance lies in this capacity to turn mediated talk into a site of circulation, authority, and encounter.

Conclusion

This article has argued that podcasting is a communicative form through which knowledge is produced, shaped, authorised, circulated, and encountered. Its central argument is that podcasting's epistemic significance lies in talk itself. Voice, pacing, intimacy, sequence, repetition, circulation, and listening are not secondary features added to content. They are part of the conditions through which podcast knowledge becomes public, credible, and meaningful.

The argument was developed by aligning key broadcast studies with recent podcast research. This approach is necessarily selective, and it does not replace the need for bounded empirical studies of particular podcasts, genres, platforms, or listening communities. The intent here is to make visible a broader pattern across podcast studies. Read together, analyses of podcast form, content, intimacy, authority, circulation, and listening show that podcasting cannot be adequately understood as an information container or distribution channel. It is better understood as a knowledge-making practice organised through mediated talk.

Because the article draws primarily on Anglophone podcast studies and Western digital media contexts, further research is needed on how podcast talk operates across non-English-language, non-Western, Indigenous, diasporic, and differently platformed podcast cultures. Such work may extend the framework developed here, but may also revise it by showing how voice, authority, circulation, and listening are organised differently under other cultural, linguistic, political, and infrastructural conditions.

Other avenues for further research emerge from this argument. More work is needed on how podcast knowledge is shaped by platform recommendation, video podcasting, algorithmic visibility, monetisation, and social media circulation. Further research might also examine how listeners evaluate credibility in podcasts, how podcast intimacy contributes to misinformation and disinformation, and how podcast knowledge operates across different languages, cultures, genres, and counterpublics.

The usefulness of this research is therefore both conceptual and practical. For podcast studies, media scholars, educators, public communicators, community researchers, and podcast producers, it offers a vocabulary for taking podcasting seriously as knowledge-making. Podcasting matters because it shows that knowledge does not only live on the page. It is also made through voices, relations, publics, and acts of listening.

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