

The podcast

Definition:

Podcasting or podcast is a method used when publishing sound- or video files on the internet. Originally the word is a contraction of the words 'ipod' and 'broadcasting', but later the term 'pod' has changed its meaning to 'personal on demand', so that 'podcasting' means 'personal on demand-casting'. The medium won its popularity towards the end of 2004.¹

Podcasts come in many genres, ranging from completely authentic documentaries to fully fictional stories, but with a variety of mixes between fact and fiction in between the two extremities. This theoretical overview deals with a suggestion as to a genre, which can contain the whole spectrum:

The narrative podcast.²

Terms to be used when analyzing the narrative podcast as a genre:

Seriality (form)

Podcasts may be structured in two different ways: as a serial or as episodes.

The podcast serial is a longer narrative divided up into more parts with a dominating linear chronology. This form demands that you listen to the chapters in chronological order to get the full experience.

The episodic podcast consists of a number of more or less isolated and closed episodes which do not follow a bigger, continuous storyline.

Different types of narratives

A podcast may fall under more than one of the three types of narratives below, but one should be selected as primary category based on your observations and analysis.

a) The detective story.

This type of narrative focuses on a more or less concrete mystery which the podcast investigates. During the episodes, the narrator tries to solve the riddle and end up with the answer, which may be either un- or resolved. To solve the riddle/mystery one piece at a time is the goal in the detective story and this is done within the frame of the podcast. The narrator is usually ignorant about the answers to the riddle and slowly gains more

¹ Translated from <https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcasting>

² Jensen, Daniel Stolzenbach m.fl. "Den narrative podcast- et bud på en genredimension med udgangspunkt i DR Podcast. Roskilde Universitet, 2016.

knowledge together with the audience, but information may also be held back by the narrator to affect the narrative.

b) The personal narrative.

The goal of the personal narrative is not to solve a riddle and reach a specific goal. Instead, it is to focus on the experiences and feelings of the participant(s) in the podcast. The goal becomes to create identification and sympathy. It is built on the idea that all people have a story to tell. Typically, focus is on one person into whose life we gain a deep insight. Alternatively, the personal narrative may be about the narrator him-/herself – a memoir. This is a quite emotional type of narrative.

c) The thematic narrative.

Functions quite like a regular/traditional documentary where the story is carried forward by a journalistic investigation of a topic more than curiosity as to a person/personal story. This means that the focus is more abstract (as opposed to concrete in a above), because it is a topic which relates to reality. This may result in the lack of a resolved ending because the topic will continue to unfold beyond the narrative of the podcast – in society. This means that this type seeks more objective claims about reality.

Elements and structure

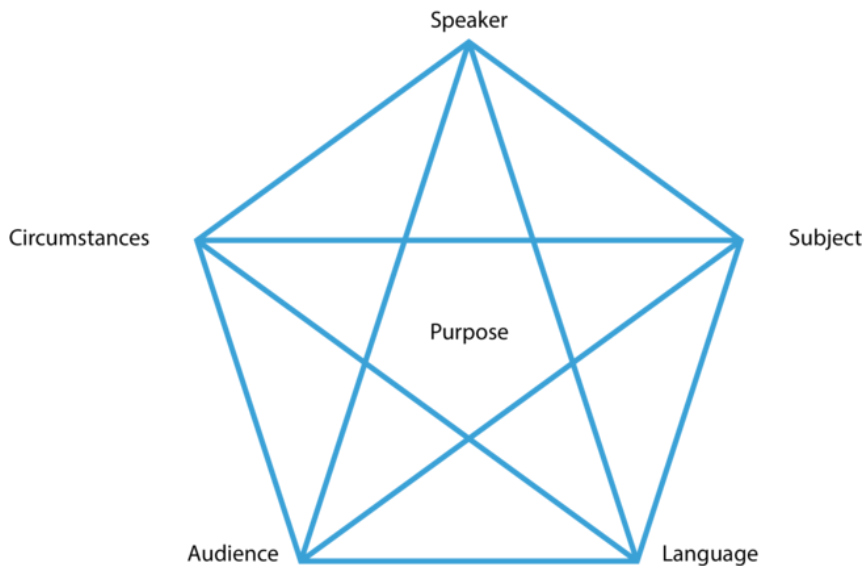
A podcast consists of various elements to make the story come together. It can be a mix of different elements such as archive material and interviews to support a story. To mix it up and make listening more interesting different musical elements can be added.

Examples

- Jingle
- Presentation of concept/topic
- Presentation of host(s) and/or guest(s)
- Background knowledge
- Archive material
- Interviews
- A story
- Monologue
- Music
- Sounds

The Rhetorical Pentagon

Cicero was a Roman politician who lived from 106-43 B.C.. He has had a great influence on the development of rhetoric (the art of speaking). Cicero invented 5 important elements of rhetoric: speaker, audience, subject, circumstances and language. Together these elements can form a



rhetorical pentagram. As the lines in the diamond indicate, all features of the rhetorical pentagram are interdependent and therefore influence each other.

When using the rhetorical pentagram, you can ask yourself some of the following questions:

1. **Speaker:** (The person giving the speech)
 - Who is the speaker (name, gender, profession)?
 - Is the speaker known/famous or not known to the audience?
 - What is the role of the speaker?
 - Does the speaker have credibility?
2. **Circumstances:** (The circumstances of the speech)
 - Where is the speech being held?
 - When?
 - Why is the speech performed?
3. **Language:** (Which language is used?)
 - Does the speaker use a complicated or simple language?
 - Does the speaker use the three modes of persuasion?
 - Does the speaker use other rhetorical devices?
 - Does the language correspond to the audience, the circumstances and the topic?
4. **Subject:** (What is the subject of the speech?)
 - Is the subject a well-known topic for the audience?
 - Is the subject controversial, emotional, logical?
 - Is the subject difficult for the audience to comprehend?
5. **Audience:** (Who is the intended audience?)
 - Is the intended audience people who know about the subject beforehand?

- What is the primary age group, occupation etc. of the audience?

The narrator

To a large extent, it is the narrator of the podcast who carries the story forward by his/her personality. Therefore it is essential that the listener is comfortable in the company of the narrator. Two different types of narrators can be found.

1. The self-involved narrator

In the narrative podcast, the narrator often works as a fundamental part of the concrete story line and the narrator's own thoughts and feelings are in play which makes the relationship with the narrator hyper-intimate.

2. The showing narrator

The showing narrator is concerned with showing the listener a reality which he/she is not directly part of him-/herself. The relationship with the narrator is not as intimate and the narrator's role is more as a function than a part in the story

The narrator's personality

No matter the type of narrator, the personality of the narrator is important. The narrator's way of telling the story influences the listener and makes him/her take in the story in a certain way. Tools used by the narrator to influence the listener are: choice of words, his/her way of expression, and his/her voice. These are relevant to consider when characterizing the narrator.

Sound in the podcast

When analyzing the sound image of the podcast (which is an auditive medium and should be treated as that), it can be useful to divide it up into three levels of sound: the primary, the secondary and the tertiary sound, which together create an three-dimensional auditive room.

The primary is the sound that we cannot avoid focusing on (e.g. the voice speaking). **The secondary** is the context of the primary (e.g. a coffee cup being placed on the table). **The tertiary** is the distant background noise (e.g. cars driving by outside the room).

Music may also be relevant to comment on/analyze. It can be used to *structure* the podcast or parts of it or it can *add an extra meaning* to the podcast or parts of the podcast.

Sound:

- **Diegetic sound** refers to sound which is part of the film such as dialogue, music the characters can hear and real sounds in the film.

- **Non-diegetic sound** refers to sounds which are not part of the film such as voice-over, music or sound effects the characters cannot hear. These sounds may add to the atmosphere of the film.
- **Contrapuntal sound** refers to sounds in direct contrast to the images of a film. An example of the use of contrapuntal sound can be found in the film *Good Morning Vietnam* where the song *What a Wonderful World* by Louis Armstrong is played while people are getting killed and bombed.

Language Low or High Style³

Every communication situation, either written or verbal, uses a certain style of language and it is important that the sender/author of the text has considered which style to use. Style refers to the characteristics of, for example, the language used, the words used and the way sentences are constructed in verbal communication or a written document.

Style of language can be divided into two subgroups:

High/formal style	Low/informal style
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer sentences. • Correct grammar. • Varied vocabulary. • Use of subordinate clauses. • Varied sentence structure. • Few repetitions. • Third person use. • Neutral tone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short sentences. • Mainly main clauses. • Less varied vocabulary. • Repetitions. • Use of fillers. • Alternate and incorrect spelling and grammar. • Little variation in sentence structure. • Contractions (such as <i>I'll</i>, <i>you'd</i>, <i>ain't</i>, <i>won't</i>). • First person use. • Personal tone (the use of <i>we</i> and <i>I</i>).

³ The English Handbook

Rhetorical devices⁴

Terminology	Function and purpose	Example
Alliteration	Repetition of beginning sounds or beginning consonants in two or more words.	"Our celebration of initiative and enterprise; our insistence on hard work and personal responsibility, are constants in our character ."
Anaphora	Several sentences in a row that begin with the same word or phrase.	" That's why we do this. That's what politics can be. That's why elections matter."
Pathetic fallacy/Personification	When non-human things are given human characteristics.	"Oreo: Milk's favorite cookie."
Irony	When you say the opposite of what you really mean.	Arnold Schwarzenegger: "What a greeting. Wow. This is like winning an Oscar – as if I would know."
Metaphor	When a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable, but helps explain an idea or make a comparison.	"Life is a rollercoaster." "She has a heart of stone."
Voice	The <u>passive voice</u> can be used to remove focus from the person to the action. In rhetoric, it is therefore important to be aware of whether the speaker uses passive or active verbs.	Passive: Women are being forced into prostitution. Active: A <u>patriarchal</u> society forces women into prostitution.
Pronouns	In rhetoric, pronouns help create identities (<i>us</i> vs. <i>them</i>).	"This doesn't mean we should isolate ourselves and refuse to seek an understanding with them . I intend to do everything I can to persuade them of our peaceful intent [...]"

⁴ Do it, write!

References/quotes	The <u>sender</u> uses explicit references and/or quotes, e.g. to strengthen their argumentation.	Barack Obama: "His time here, Frederick Douglass said, defined him not as a color but as a man. And it strengthened the non-violent campaign he would return home to wage."
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Modes of persuasion

Pathos:

- A speaker uses pathos when he/she tries to persuade the audience by referring to emotions.
- A speaker can appeal to different kinds of emotions such as sympathy, hate, caring emotions, disgust.
- These emotions can be expressed through the use of words, the way the speaker uses his/her voice and non-verbal communication such as hand gestures and facial expressions.

Logos:

- A speaker uses logos when he/she tries to persuade an audience by referring to something rational and logical such as statistics, numbers and facts.
- Logos can also be expressed through the use of words and the way the speaker uses his/her voice.

Ethos:

- A speaker uses ethos when persuading an audience by means of his/her own character. The intent is to appear credible. This can be done through:
- Profession - a professor of economics has ethos when he/she talks about economics but not if he/she talks about fashion.
- Choice of words used in order to convince the listener.
- Non-verbal communication such as facial expressions

Speech and spoken language

Most of a podcast will typically consist of spoken words. One can distinguish between **spontaneous speech**, which happens naturally, and **planned speech**, which is written down or prepared in advance.

- **Spontaneous speech** is typically found in podcast interviews and conversations, but also in interludes where the narrator researches while reflecting on what is happening. This type of speech usually has the characteristics of informal spoken language.
- **Planned speech** is often found in the podcast's introduction or in the ongoing narration throughout the episode. Here, the language is used to provide an overview of the story or create transitions to the next segment. This requires more structured speech, often leaning

toward written language, perhaps using longer sentences and rhetorical devices and imagery. However, the general tendency is for producers to let spoken language dominate because it is simple and creates a stronger sense of presence. Even when reading from a script, producers often strive to make it sound as if it is being spoken freely.

Suspense and Narrative Progression

To create suspense and progression in a podcast, a wide range of classic techniques can be used—many of which are also familiar from the world of fiction. These include **conflicts**, where the central characters struggle to resolve or overcome obstacles; **cues (foreshadowing)**, which can be either guiding or misleading; **set-up/pay-off**, where information—such as sounds—is introduced in the story (*set-up*) and only later gains its full significance (*pay-off*); and **surprise and suspense**, where we as listeners are either just as unaware of what will happen as the characters in the story or know something they do not—creating tension as we anticipate their reaction. Additionally, there is **delayed suspense**, where small side stories are inserted into the narrative to postpone the resolution of the central conflict.

Beyond these suspense-building techniques, there are also **obstacles and complications** that make it difficult for a character to reach their goal. These could be **setbacks** in their struggle, **unexpected surprises** that suddenly appear, and of course, the **cliffhanger**—a climactic rise in tension at the end of an episode that compels us to listen to the next one to find out what happens.

How the story anchors⁵ reality

A significant amount of the current podcasts are very strongly anchored in a factual reality. Only very few can be categorized as pure fiction and even those have strong factual conventions.⁶ It may be useful to consider the level of reality in the podcast as a point on a line with the two extremities being fact and fiction (see below). Where to place the podcast you are working with, must be based on a close analysis of the content and form of the analysis.



Examples of relevant elements to look for:

Content: real persons/places/historic dates/events etc. Use the internet to confirm/disprove.

Form: documentary traits, natural sound, interviews etc.

⁵ forankrer

⁶ Fakta koder. Codes in content or form which point to it being realistic/factual.