TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 212

Viral English: Parasocial — When a Creator Feels Like a Friend

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

61 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

Martin, have you ever watched a creator so often that their voice feels familiar?

Yes, sometimes I recognise the way they speak before I even see the screen.

You might hear people describe a connection like that as parasocial.

Welcome to Viral English, from Your English Toolbox.

Today we are exploring the phrase parasocial relationship.

It appears in conversations about creators, celebrities, and fictional characters.

Before we explain it, imagine you watch a creator every week.

You know their stories, their favourite films, and their usual jokes.

Does that automatically mean you are close personal friends?

Not necessarily.

A parasocial relationship is a sense of connection someone feels with a public figure or character they do not know personally.

It is often described as one-sided.

That means the follower may know a lot about the creator, while the creator does not know that particular follower in the same personal way.

The word is not new, and the idea did not begin with social media.

People have discussed connections with performers and fictional characters for many years.

But the word is useful today when people talk about videos, podcasts, and online communities.

Let us say the phrase slowly.

Parasocial relationship.

Now listen in a sentence.

She feels a parasocial connection with a writer she has followed for years.

That sentence describes her sense of connection, not a confirmed personal friendship.

Our first related phrase is feel connected to someone.

You might feel connected to a creator because their stories are meaningful to you.

The phrase does not by itself tell us whether the connection is mutual.

Our second phrase is one-sided relationship.

One-sided means the involvement or knowledge is not shared equally by both sides.

For example, a listener may recognise a presenter's voice while the presenter has never met that listener.

That does not mean listening to a podcast is a bad thing.

Enjoying someone's work, learning from it, or feeling comforted by it is not automatically a problem.

And simply being a fan does not necessarily mean someone has a parasocial relationship.

The phrase becomes useful when we want to describe the feeling of a personal connection that is not a mutual friendship.

We can also use more everyday language.

For example, I feel as if I know that creator, even though we have never met.

Or, their videos feel familiar to me.

There is another useful distinction in the word mutual.

Mutual means shared by both people or sides.

If two friends know and support each other, their friendship can be mutual.

In a parasocial connection, the feeling of knowing someone is generally not shared in the same personal way.

Online interaction can be more complicated than this example, so pay attention to the actual situation.

Our goal is to understand the language, not to label every listener or creator.

Everyday sentences may be clearer than using a technical word in every conversation.

Consider one more example from a familiar setting.

A listener hears the same radio host every morning on the way to work.

Over time, the host's voice and stories may become part of the listener's daily routine.

The listener might feel that the host is familiar and comforting.

That feeling can be meaningful, even if the host does not know the listener personally.

The word parasocial describes the kind of connection, rather than telling us whether the listener is right or wrong.

When a writer uses the word critically, look at the surrounding sentence to understand the point they are making.

Now let us practise.

Someone enjoys a musician's songs but knows almost nothing about the musician's life.

Can we automatically say that they have a parasocial relationship?

No, enjoying the music alone does not establish that.

Here is another example.

A viewer feels personally close to a creator they watch often, although the creator does not know them personally.

What phrase might describe that connection?

A parasocial relationship, or a parasocial connection.

The context matters, and we should avoid using the word to judge someone too quickly.

On our website, you can review the meaning, examples, and usage notes for this expression.

The link is in the episode description.

Thanks for joining us for Viral English.

See you next time.