

Subject Name & Code:

ENGLISH FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION- BE02R00021

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PBL Assignment 8:

Section A – Based on Podcast: BBC Learning English - The English We Speak / *Keep someone on their toes*

Q.1 Summarise the central theme of the talk *Keep someone on their toes*.

The podcast explains the idiomatic expression “**to keep someone on their toes.**” The central theme is that this phrase means to keep someone alert, attentive, and ready to act, often by creating a situation where they cannot become too relaxed or complacent. It originates from the physical stance of being on the balls of your feet, ready to move quickly—as in sports or dance. In professional and everyday contexts, it describes maintaining a state of mild, productive pressure to ensure continued high performance, adaptability, and vigilance. Examples given include a manager introducing surprise tasks to keep a team sharp, or a teacher using pop quizzes to ensure students keep up with readings.

Q.2 Identify the accent and pronunciation features noticed.

The podcast is presented in **Standard Southern British English (Received Pronunciation or RP)**.

Notable pronunciation features include:

- **Non-rhoticity:** The ‘r’ at the end of words (like “toes”) is not pronounced.
 - **Vowel sounds:** Distinct vowel quality, such as the long /əʊ/ in “toes” and the short /ɒ/ in “not.”
 - **Clarity and pacing:** Speech is clear, well-paced, and articulate, with careful enunciation of consonant clusters, making it an excellent model for learners.
 - **Connected speech:** Natural use of linking and weak forms in phrases like “keep *them* on their toes” (where “them” may sound more like “əm”).
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Q.3 Explain how podcast listening improves:

1) Vocabulary: Podcasts like this explicitly teach idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, and contextual vocabulary. Hearing words and phrases used in realistic dialogues or explanations helps in understanding nuance, collocation, and appropriate usage, far beyond memorising word lists.

2) Listening comprehension: Regular exposure to native speech patterns, varying accents, and natural pacing trains the ear to process spoken English in real time. It improves the ability to distinguish sounds, understand connected speech, and follow extended explanations or narratives—skills critical for academic lectures, meetings, and technical discussions.

Section B – Based on Podcast: BBC Learning English - The English We Speak / *Step into the shoes***Q.1 Summarise the central theme of the talk *Step into the shoes*.**

The podcast explains the idiom “**step into someone’s shoes**” (sometimes “fill someone’s shoes”). The central theme is empathy and perspective-taking: it means to imagine yourself in another person’s situation, to understand their experiences, responsibilities, or challenges. The phrase suggests temporarily taking on another’s role or responsibilities, often to appreciate what they do or to prepare for replacing them. Examples might include a junior engineer stepping into a project lead’s role during their absence, or trying to understand a client’s constraints by mentally adopting their viewpoint.

Q.2 Identify the accent and pronunciation features noticed.

Again, the accent is **Standard Southern British English (RP)**, with similar features:

- **Clear consonant articulation:** Precise ‘t’ and ‘d’ sounds, e.g., in “step,” “shoes.”
 - **Vowel distinction:** Clear difference between short vowels (e.g., /ɪ/ in “into”) and long vowels (e.g., /u:/ in “shoes”).
 - **Stress and intonation:** Emphasis on key words (“step,” “shoes”) to convey meaning, with a natural, conversational rise and fall in intonation to maintain listener engagement.
 - **Linking:** Smooth connection between words, such as “step into” sounding like “step-in-to.”
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Q.3 Explain how podcast listening improves:

1) Vocabulary: Such podcasts expand functional and figurative vocabulary. Learning idioms like “step into someone’s shoes” enriches expressive ability and cultural literacy, which is vital for nuanced communication in collaborative and multicultural professional environments.

2) Listening comprehension: Repeated listening to structured, educational podcasts builds confidence in extracting main ideas, details, and implied meanings from spoken content. It also familiarises listeners with common rhetorical patterns (definition, example, explanation) used in instructional and professional spoken English.