

How I improved my English SPEAKING with podcasts

Hi everyone! Welcome back to the Simple English Podcast. I'm your host, Lisa, and today we're diving into a topic that I think will really help many of you. We all know that speaking English can be one of the hardest parts of learning a new language. I remember when I first started learning English. I could understand a lot, but speaking confidently – that was a real challenge.

Let me ask you: have you ever felt nervous speaking English even though you've studied it for years? I've been there, too, but one thing that changed everything for me was – believe it or not – podcasts! Yes, podcasts helped me improve my English speaking in ways I never imagined, and today I'm going to share exactly how that happened and give you some tips on how you can use podcasts to boost your speaking skills too!

So whether you're just starting or you've been learning English for a while, stay tuned because this episode is packed with practical advice that can take your speaking to the next level! All right, let's dive into the story of how podcasts helped me speak English better!

When I first started learning I had the same problem many people have: I understood English pretty well, but when it was time to speak, I froze. I didn't know how to say what I was thinking, or I was afraid I'd make mistakes. That's when I started looking for different ways to practice speaking.

I had already been listening to podcasts to improve my listening skills. One of my favorite shows was a podcast about daily English conversations. I loved listening to native speakers chat in a natural way, but one day I realized: why not use this as a speaking tool too? Here's what I did that made a huge difference:

One: shadowing technique

First, I started using a method called shadowing. While listening to the podcast, I would repeat what the speakers were saying – almost like I was having the conversation with them. For example, I'd listen to a simple dialogue about ordering food at a restaurant. After hearing it once or twice, I'd pause and repeat the phrases out loud. It was like having a conversation partner who never got tired of me practicing. This helped me get comfortable with how English sounds and it trained my mouth to form the words correctly.

Two: mimicking the tone and pace

One thing that surprised me was how much speaking is about rhythm and tone, not just words. Podcasts helped me understand that when you listen to native speakers you notice how they emphasize certain words, how their voices go up and down in a sentence, and how they pause naturally. I started mimicking these patterns when I spoke. For instance, when a podcast host would tell a story, I'd listen to how they emphasized key points, and then I'd try to imitate that slowly. My speaking started to sound more natural and less robotic.

Three: speaking in context

Another big change came when I began focusing on context instead of just learning random words. I practiced using phrases I heard in real conversations from the podcasts. For example, after listening to a podcast about giving directions, I practiced speaking those phrases with friends, or even to myself. When I needed to give directions later, the words came out much more naturally because I had already spoken them during my practice sessions.

Four: creating my own speaking challenges

A fun way I practiced was by setting myself little challenges based on the podcasts I listen to. For instance, I challenge myself to retell the podcast episode in my own words. This was so useful! It helped me take what I heard and make it my own, building my confidence to express ideas in English. One time, after listening to a podcast about a weekend trip, I spent 5 minutes explaining to my friend what the episode was about. It felt like I was training myself to *think* in English, not just translate from my native language.

Five: consistency is key

One of the best things about using podcasts is that they fit into my daily routine. I didn't have to sit down for hours to practice speaking. I'd listen during my morning walk or when I was cooking and repeat phrases out loud. This consistency helped me build my speaking skills little by little, every day.

Fun Fact

Here's a fun fact! Did you know that the technique of shadowing which I mentioned earlier is used by professional language learners and even diplomats? They use this method to quickly get used to the sound and flow of new languages. Shadowing isn't just for beginners, it's a technique that helps anyone, no matter their level, to sound more like a native speaker. I found this out after doing it for a few weeks and it really encouraged me to keep going.

So that's how podcasts helped me improve my English speaking. It wasn't overnight but with consistent practice I went from being nervous about speaking to feeling much more confident.

Track 2

Task 0 k, p. 80

The **key takeaways** here are:

- use podcasts to shadow and repeat conversations
- focus on how native speakers sound and try to imitate their rhythm and tone
- practice speaking in context, not just with random words
- challenge yourself to retell what you hear in podcasts
- and, most importantly, be consistent! – A little practice every day adds up.

I hope my experience has given you some useful ideas on how *you* can improve your English speaking, too. Remember: it's okay to make mistakes! It's all part of the learning process. The most important thing is to keep practicing and have fun with it.

Now it's time to learn some **important vocabulary** related to the topic.

First word is “shadowing”. – It means a language learning technique where you listen and repeat speech. Example: “I used the shadowing technique while listening to podcasts to improve my English speaking skills.”

Next word is “mimic”. – It means to copy or imitate someone's speech or actions. Example: “I mimicked the podcast host's tone and pace to sound more like a native speaker.”

Next word is “intonation”. – It means the rise and fall of the voice in speaking which affects meaning and emotion. Example: “By practicing with podcasts I learned how to use proper intonation to make my English sound more natural.”

Next word is “pronunciation”. – It means the way in which a word is spoken or pronounced. Example: “I focused on improving my pronunciation by repeating words I heard in podcasts.”

Next word is “rhythm”. – It means the natural flow or beat in speech often connected to stress and timing of words. Example: “I practice the rhythm of English speech by copying the conversational style of podcast hosts.”

Next word is “consistent”. – It means regular and steady over time without significant changes. Example: “I made consistent practice a habit by listening to podcasts every morning.

Next word is “context”. – It means the circumstances or situation in which a word or phrase is used which helps in understanding its meaning. Example: “By listening to podcasts I learned how to use new vocabulary in the right context.”

Next word is “confidence”. – It means a feeling of self-assurance or belief in one's abilities. Example: “Speaking out loud while listening to podcasts helped me gain confidence in my English speaking skills.”

The last word is “emphasize”. – It means to give special importance to something when speaking. Example: “I learned how to emphasize keywords by listening to how the podcast speakers did it.”

Thank you for listening to our episode of the Simple English Podcast! I hope you learned something new and helpful today. Please give us a like and subscribe for a video like this. Share it with your friends and let us know what you think in the comments section below. We'll be back with more interesting discussions soon!

Track 3

Task 2 a, p. 34

Unpleasant design

Roman Mars: This is *99% Invisible*. I'm Roman Mars.

Around the corner from her office in beautiful downtown Oakland, California is DeLauer's Newsstand. It has been there since 1907. For the people who live and work downtown, it is central to our existence. Everyone goes there to buy drinks, little packs of fruit-flavored cigarillos, and occasionally even a newspaper. But about eight months ago, it became clear that even though DeLauer's wants a bunch of people *inside* the store buying things, they didn't want a bunch of people *outside* their store. So DeLauer's started playing really loud classical music. And although a fair number of people are still hanging out in front of the place, the owner says it's not nearly as many as before.

Fasil Lemme: So, a big change. It was a mess. They were just playing dice on the street. But now it helps us a lot. Even the customers are telling us they see the change on the street here.

Roman Mars: That is referred to as unpleasant design. Selena Savić is co-author of the research project about such designs.

Selena Savić: Unpleasant design has been here since we started designing public space or cities ages ago, really.

Roman Mars: Unpleasant designs are meant to exert a kind of social control in public by targeting people who spend a lot of time in public spaces. And the designs often end up pushing these so-called 'undesirable people' out of one space and into another.

Music is only *one* method for deterring teens from public space. In 2009, the Nottinghamshire house estates in England installed pink lighting to keep kids from congregating.

Selena Savić: Pink lights, which would emphasize the skin blemishes on teenagers, should result in teenagers not hanging out there. That's one of my favorite examples.

Roman Mars: Mine too, although there's not a lot of evidence that proves how effective it is. Pink lighting that preys on teenagers' insecurities is funny and kind of devious, if a little farfetched.

Selena Savić: Lights are one of the original forms of public social control. For example, there was a bridge in a small town in Bosnia ...

Roman Mars: Specifically in the casbah of Višegrad Bosnia in the early 1900s.

Selena Savić: ... where the Austrian government who kind of annexed the country at that time decided to implement street lighting and that was very unpleasant to the locals, and the locals would destroy the light every night and the government would reinstall it every morning. Because they felt that the light is something unpleasant for free expression in public space. That's something we have forgotten completely. These days we think of streetlights as deterring criminal activity.

Roman Mars: But besides music and light, there are also these little studs, the angry looking spikes. They made the news in 2014 when they were installed in London in the concrete floor of a small alcove by the entrance to an apartment building, meant to stop people from sitting or lying there. And one thing that makes unpleasant designs like spikes and similar features especially frustrating is that they're just *there*. They're not moving, there's no arguing with them.

Selena Savić: If you have a policeman who prohibits people from sleeping in a park, I think there is still some possible negotiation, and I think that's good. That's what society is about, the ongoing negotiation and ongoing change. But when we start using things that are immutable and unchangeable, like metal spikes, there is nothing that's going to change until they rust. I think that's the most important criteria for calling something 'unpleasant design'. It is something that you cannot negotiate with.

Roman Mars: But let's turn to Savić's masterpiece of unpleasant design: the Camden Bench.

Selena Savić: Basically, it is a design solution to 22, I think, antisocial behavior problems. The only thing it does not deter is sitting.

Roman Mars: The Camden Bench, commissioned by Camden London Borough Council, is a strange, angular, sculpted solid lump of concrete with rounded edges and slopes in unexpected places. A critic named Frank Swain called it "the perfect anti-object". 'Anti-sleeping' because the shape makes it uncomfortable to sleep on, 'anti-drug dealing' because there are no slots or crevices

in which to hide drugs, 'anti-theft' because the recesses near the ground allow people to store bags behind their legs and away from would-be criminals etc. And all those goals are pretty noble, but Selena Savić finds this litany of anti-measures demoralizing.

Selena Savić: It discourages 22 things. It encourages two: sitting and sitting together. When we expect people to do bad things to the bench before we think of anything good that people might do to this bench, I think that's a very sad approach to public space. I think it is very problematic when we start excluding people by design.

Roman Mars: The reason we need a critical theory of unpleasant design is so we can recognize what is taking place in our public spaces.

Selena Savić: There will always be people who believe this is a good way and people who think it's terrible. And this is what we wanted to achieve with this book, to start a debate. But, in the end, we say, we're really the observers.

Roman Mars: And now you're an observer too. It's important to be aware of the decisions that are being made for you, because most likely unpleasant design is put there to make things more pleasant for someone just like you!

Track 3 (Key)

Task 2 a, p. 34 (Key)

The speaker said that the newsstand "For the people who live and work downtown [...] is central to our existence", so **item 0** is answer A "important for people in the area". It is not B as you can only buy drinks but not consume them there. It's not C as it is over a century old. It isn't D as the speaker says people only occasionally buy a newspaper.

This just answers **item 1**. The correct answer is D. The speaker just said that "the customers are telling us they see the change". It's not A because people played dice before they started playing classical music. It's not B, as there is actually no mention of the store getting more attention. It is not C – the "mess" that is talked about also happened before the music.

The correct answer for **item 2** is C because Selena Savić says that unpleasant design has been here "since we started designing in public space of cities ages ago, really", so it has been around for a long time. It's not A, what is mentioned to be moving around a city are the so-called 'undesired people'. It's not B as the only kind of control mentioned is a social one, but there's nothing about over-crowding. It's not D, although there is talk about social control in public – there is nothing there to suggest that these designs are extremely important for providing stability.

So here you just heard the answer to **item 3** which is D because "kind of devious" means that it seems to be mean. It's not A because the speaker only mentions that blemishes are more visible, but there is no mention of this improving anyone's health. It's not B as in fact we learn that "there's not a lot of evidence to prove how effective it is" meaning that how well the pink lights worked is unclear. It's not C as "congregating" here only refers to them meeting and not to a religious congregation.

The true statement that was made about the streetlights in Bosnia which you need for **item 4** is that they "interfered with unrestricted speech" – answer D because the speaker said that "light is

something unpleasant for free expression". It's not A because the idea that streetlights deter criminal activity is present today, but this is not said about the early 1900s. It's not B because although they were introduced in the 1900s and historically speaking this might be true, there is no mention of this in the recording. It's not C because the streetlights did not *need* to be put up every night. What is said is that they were destroyed each night, so they were put up again the next day.

Here **item 5** has just been answered. It is option B because "set in stone" means that it is very much an unchangeable thing, which is what an unpleasant design's most important criterium is, namely "It is something that you cannot negotiate with". It's not A: the police is mentioned, but not in connection with unpleasant design, rather as an alternative to unpleasant design that you might still be able to negotiate with. It's not C as unpleasant design is described as "immutable and unchangeable", so it does not change form. It's not D because while the speaker says that society is all about the "ongoing negotiation and ongoing change", unpleasant design is said to be the exact opposite, namely unchangeable.

Here you've heard what is to be said about the Camden Bench, which is what **item 6** asks about. The correct answer is D "has a surprising shape", because the speaker says that it "sloped in unexpected places", thus it has a surprising shape. It's not A, as it wasn't produced in Camden; it was commissioned by the local council, meaning that they paid for someone to produce it for them. It's not B because that would mean it has some kind of therapeutic power that makes people behave better. This is not the case; the speaker only mentions that it has features that make certain actions impossible, or at least much harder. It's not C because that was never the bench's name, "anti-object" is what a critic called it.

For **item 7** you need to give the reason why Selena Savić doesn't like the Camden Bench. The correct answer is A "ignores that good things can happen in a shared space" because she says that the first thought is that something bad might happen rather than thinking of "anything good that people might do to this bench". It's not B, as she doesn't call for more design features to prevent bad behaviour. It's not C because that isn't true about the Camden Bench; the Camden Bench is designed with the assumption that people might misuse the bench in various ways. It's not D; the speaker does say that it is "a very sad approach to public spaces", but there is no mention of it making people actually unhappy.

The **final item** in this listening asks you to identify the book's intention and the correct answer is A "get a discussion going" because the speaker says that what they wanted to achieve with this book was "to start a debate". It's not B; the listeners are referred to at the very end, but what is said about them is that unpleasant designs are created with these people in mind – not that the aim of the book is to improve their lives. It's not C as there is no mention of any historic beginnings or a timeline of the development of unpleasant designs. It's not D, as the speaker only says that people will have divided opinions, but does not say that the book will give criteria to decide which opinion is the right one.

Living apart together (LAT)

Jen: Does distance really make the heart grow fonder? A growing number of couples who are choosing to live apart together, also known as LAT, seem to think so. These couples are in a committed relationship but live or sleep separately. Isn't that right, Vicki? You did some research on that when you wrote your last book.

Vicki: Right, Jen. In the last few years, the percentage of married couples who decided to live apart grew by more than 40 percent. That's according to *Scripps News'* analysis of census data. The trend has also mainly been driven by older women. New research from a UK-household study suggests that older couples who decided to live apart together have better mental health. It's also the most likely type of relationship for the over-60s crowd with those couples opting ten times more for LAT situations than for marriage.

Jen: We also heard from a member of our text club who writes, "I've seen a lot more of this in my mother's generation. She's in her seventies. Both my mum and my aunt are extraordinarily hesitant to enter into a serious relationship because they say that men their age want a nurse and a purse. They do date, but they have both sworn up and down that they won't share their space with a man permanently again." And I guess that makes sense, but, Logan, you study behavioural science. From your point of view, why do you think this idea of LAT appeals particularly to older couples?

Logan: This has been such an interesting trend to watch. So, in my work on the later daters, where we followed daters who were 55 plus, I found that a lot of people were very set in their ways, especially around things like how their house runs, what goes where and what is done how. One of the people is named Nate and he's really clean. And on a date, a woman said, "Well, what if I leave out my dishes before we go on a date?" And he said, "No, that just couldn't happen." And so, living apart together is a great fit for someone like that.

Jen: Well, we're talking about a portion of people who are bucking the norm of living together, but perhaps it's worth examining that relationship standard altogether, Vicki. Why is moving in together a de facto relationship step, particularly for those in the West?

Vicki: We see things that, quote unquote, should look a certain way, right? You meet someone, you fall in love, you become a couple, you move in together, you maybe put a ring on it, there's kids, a house, a minivan, and life just looks that way. And so, we don't have a lot of role models of alternative ways of living, but this actually has existed throughout history and in places all around the world. So, it's not really a new concept. It's just that it's attractive to boomers. One sociologist called it "the gender revolution continuing into old age". Kind of a nod to the fact that baby-boomer women have been on the forefront of restructuring family life in the past few decades. It's kind of catching on with people who want to keep their independence.

Jen: Well, Logan, I wonder how that distance from the sort of day-to-day domestic challenges that we face when we're living together, how that might change the dynamics of a relationship?

Logan: So, what happened? I've noticed this in my own life: when I'm alone and I have ten tasks to do in the house, I just sort of barrel through them and I don't think about it. But if I have my partner or husband in the household, I'm wondering, "well, why isn't he doing five of them? Why did he pick those three and not those seven or why do I feel like I'm doing the

bulk of the work?” And a lot of it is sort of like, “Why do they never do that?” You build up those resentments or irritations, the day-to-day irritations. You're taking those out of the equation when you have a LAT relationship.

Jen: Vicki, for those who are reevaluating their relationship now, how might living apart be beneficial?

Vicki: Well, if you've been in a long-term relationship with someone, you get into a rut, and often you are just occupying the same space, but you're not engaging. And when you are living apart from a loved one in order to keep your relationship alive, you have to be very intentional about what you're doing, when you're doing it, how you're doing it. And it means putting a lot more effort into your romantic relationship. This is a way that really forces you to keep your relationship exciting, and you have to work out problems in a different way.

Track 4 (Key)

Task 2 b, p. 36 (Key)

That was the number you needed for **item 0**, in the words before the speaker talks about “married couples who decide to live apart” which is “wed LAT couples” and that the percentage has grown which is the same as “increase”.

Item 1 asks about a benefit for elderly people in LAT, which the speaker talks about as they mention data from older women, and what their research has shown is that they have better mental health.

Here you just heard the information you need for **item 2**. The example given here talks about women in their 70s. So men the same age are “men in their 70s”. What is said about these men is that they want two things in a woman. One is for them to be financially independent, which is expressed by them having their “purse”; and the other aspect is what item 2 asks about: men are looking for women who are willing to take care of them in their old age, which is expressed by the word “nurse”.

Logan here has used the term “later daters” – so this is the right place to find the answer for **item 3**. Also, you need information about that group *in general* – so the example later does *not* provide the correct answer. Them being “unflexible” is expressed by the phrase “a lot of people were set in their ways”. So you need to know this phrase to answer the question. What they are so set in is “how their house runs, what goes where and what is done how”.

The information for where you will get your answer to **item 4** is in the presenter’s *question* about why moving in together is so common in Western relationships. For your answer you need the reason for this, which has just been given: it is the fact that there aren’t many role models for them to base their life on.

Item 5 asks about the beginning of LAT, which is referred to in the recording as “it’s not really a new concept” and “the gender revolution continuing into old age”, and this is linked to “baby-boomer women”.

Item 6 asks about Logan’s feelings during household chores. The chores are mentioned here as “tasks”. The feelings Logan experiences are given very clearly here, namely “resentment” and “irritation”.

The final **item number 7** asks about how people need to act, which in the recording is put into the words “when you are living apart from a loved one in order to keep your relationship alive you have to ...”. And the speaker has just described this way of behaving as “have to be very intentional” and “putting a lot more effort into ...”. The final sentence of this recording does not give an answer to item 7, as it doesn’t talk about how *partners* in a LAT relationship need to act.

Track 5

Task 2 c, p. 37

Why US malls are dying

In the 1990s, the former Eastern Bloc was a beautiful, wealthy, inspiring place left behind by the dying, retreating Russian Empire. Suppose you wanted to do some shopping; where would you go? Oh, I know, those beautiful Soviet shopping centres seen by many on those Soviet retro themed media pages! Erm, no, sorry I can’t keep a straight face there. No, of course, you went where the rest of society went – to dismal outdoor markets selling vegetables, knockoff clothing, homemade food, preserves and so on. It was chaotic, dirty, loud, often taking place on random sidewalks. You called it a shopping centre because you did not have a word for it. Yet, that wasn’t a mall, full of western stores you’d never even heard about.

The shopping mall was the ultimate symbol of 1990s Western prosperity, and it wasn't long before they spread throughout Europe, including the former Eastern Bloc. Today's malls in places like Budapest, Prague or Warsaw are basically indistinguishable from their modern American counterparts, except for one crucial thing: malls in Europe are thriving while in the US they are slowly dying out. People often say it's because of Amazon and online retailers. But Europe has those, too. Is it a purchasing power issue? But how? America is the richest country on the planet.

And so, I've identified three actual key reasons which we will go through now. Purchasing power is one factor to consider. Malls are only alive as long as they have customers who can afford to buy their stuff and, in the US, this isn't the case everywhere. Entire regions lost their well-paying jobs as industries went offshore. As high-paying jobs left, so did many people. Those who stick around are considerably poorer and often can’t keep many of the malls alive. This didn’t really happen in Europe where governments regulate the market. It's like a “state capitalist free market” and it seems to be working pretty well. Thus, European economies aren't subject to the same types of shocks the US economy is. With very few exceptions European purchasing power has been rising across the board, even in Eastern Europe. This increase has been more geographically even compared to the US, so there aren't any black holes like the American Rust Belt, or such enormous unaffordable urban areas like on the west coast.

Moving on, American malls are special in the sense that there are so many of them. Copious amounts of commercial space were built in the form of enclosed malls, outdoor malls, lifestyle centres and so on. Consequently, there is a lot more commercial space per capita than in Europe; a lot more, like ten times more, than in Germany. This is because European regulations that govern building new commercial space are far more stringent than in the US. The large number of US malls also means they are of lower quality and often mass-produced. There are several malls, like the former Metro Center Mall in Phoenix Arizona, which are falling apart because of the cheap materials that were used.

Finally, bad urban planning is an issue I barely hear anyone talk about when it comes to dying malls. Looking at Palladium Mall in the centre of Prague, there's a tram stop right next to it, a metro station, and it's a corner away from Masaryk, the commuter rail station. Palladium is very

easy and convenient to get to. “So what”, you might say. In the US, malls have ample parking space, and they are also easy to get to by car. Sure, but that's part of the problem. Core-centric US cities are more spread out, which means the mall will be farther away from you. Now then – you want to buy an item; say you want to find a birthday gift for your aunt – do you then get in your car, drive down to the mall, get through a traffic jam, trudge across the parking lot, look for a gift and then do the same process on the way back home? And then companies like Amazon come along and say, ‘Hey buddy, we can save you all that effort!’

This is why many American malls are either dead or dying. In the end it all comes down to policy, as well as economic and urban planning.

Track 5 (Key)

Task 2 c, p. 37 (Key)

The speaker says that they can’t “keep a straight face” which means they have to laugh about what has just been said because it’s not true. So, **item 0** expressed that the photos give an unrealistic picture.

You just heard the information for **item 1**. The fact that they were placed on random sidewalks, means the speaker is talking about street vendors. These are described as being called the ‘shopping centre’ as there was no other word for it.

The speaker here has just talked about both Eastern European and American malls and mentions they are extremely similar, yet there is one important aspect in which they differ. So, the correct sentence ending for **item 2** is “differ in one important aspect”.

This part talks about some areas of the US, mentioning that they are poorer than they used to be. The reason that is given is that “companies went offshore” which means that they moved away. Therefore, **item 3** is “have to cut down because companies left”.

For item 4 you’re looking for information about many and large areas of Europe. Here you’ve just heard the speaker mention that almost everywhere in Europe purchasing power has increased, which means that people have more money to spend. So, **item 4** is “have more income to spend”.

This passage here discussed why there aren’t as many malls in Europe as there are in the US. The speaker just said that this is due to more stringent regulations which means stricter rules when building a new structure. So, **item 5** is B.

“Falling apart because of cheap material” is the sentence that gives you the information to answer **item 6**. The word “former” in the recording means that it no longer exists. The “cheap material” mentioned in the recording means that these malls weren’t built properly, which is reflected in answer E as “poorly constructed”.

Prague is a town in the Czech Republic. So as soon as you hear this, you must get your information for the second sentence half. The fact that it is located close to public transport means it can be reached very easily, which makes **item 7** match sentence part I.

The final **item 8** asks you to find the information about online shopping. The speaker talked about the various time intensive steps a regular mall visit requires and then put in contrast that Amazon

makes things easier. Therefore item 8 must be answered by D, as the point made here is all about comfort and convenience.

Track 6

Task 2 d, p. 38

Keep or abolish the British monarchy?

Speaker 1: I'm in favour of keeping the monarchy, because it helps Canada – it's a symbol of cultural unity. Whatever country you're from, whoever you love, whether you were born here or abroad, we are all loyal to the Crown and as such it unites us.

The monarchy also makes Canada more stable. It is a referee for our democracy. A good example of this is a British Columbia election a couple of years ago in which there was no clear majority, so the Lieutenant Governor, who is a representative of the monarch, considered the matter, went to other legal councils in the community and eventually decided to ask another leader to see if he could actually form a government. That's a way in which the monarchy can actually safeguard the results of elections.

Speaker 2: So, as a historian looking back at the 20th century, I have to say that it seems that a constitutional monarchy is a fantastic way to prevent tyranny. The United Kingdom is surrounded by places which didn't have this check on power and thus allowed their entire governments to be put in the hands of one guy who then proceeded to do terrible things. History is pretty clear that there is a deep, dark part in almost all of us that craves a “strong man,” a powerful person in a fancy hat in a shiny palace who seems to know what they're doing. And if you don't have one of these people, you find one. Russia did it, France did it, and the Americans absolutely do it.

Speaker 3: When it comes to this generation in particular, young people are interested in the values of fairness and in the values of representation. Whatever way you slice it, the monarchy is neither a fair nor a representative institution.

There have been attempts by the royal family to reduce some of the mystery, invite the media in, and show the public what they really do. And what they've revealed themselves to be is a group of some very weird people. And I think that the more that social media, 24-hour news, tabloid press intrusion gets us to see who they are, how they are as individuals – which is people who have been made, in many cases, deeply unhappy by the institution that they were born into –, the less people are inclined to support the monarchy, either as a political national institution or just a kind of, you know, old-school celebrity that they can secretly enjoy.

Speaker 4: At a time when all we keep hearing about is the cost-of-living crisis and our bills rising, the thought of the monarchy costing us over 100 million pounds last year seems insane. When it comes to money, critics have called for more transparency and clarity with regard to the royal family. The Queen was a source of British soft power and diplomatic influence throughout her reign, making countless state visits and foreign tours that brought benefits for national security, influence, and trade. A 2017 report said that the monarchy generated an estimated 150 million pounds worth of trade for the UK each year, so overall a clear plus.

Speaker 5: So what if Britain finally got rid of the monarchy? I mean, this would be the craziest news story to ever hit the media, and who really knows what would happen? First of all, though, since they are part of the Commonwealth of Nations, all other 14 nations would have to agree and

abolish the monarchy, to remove it completely. However, looking at recent news and events, that doesn't seem like it would be an issue. Now that that's done, what happens next? Next would be a decision from Parliament. In theory they could decide on a new family to rule the UK, but nobody would be crazy enough to do that. So, they would organise a similar form of government like other countries have – with a constitutional head of state with limited constitutional powers, no political powers. And there we have it: finally, democratic top to bottom, like so many other European countries have been for decades.

Track 6 (Key)

Task 2 d, p. 38 (Key)

Speaker 1 here introduces the idea that the Crown – meaning the monarchy – is the same for everyone, no matter what their background is. They explain that it is something that ties them together as a kind of “cultural unity” which means that the monarchy is part of everyone's identity which is expressed as “a shared identity for the population”. So, item 0 is I.

In the past few sentences, speaker 1 here has explained how the monarchy works within a democracy and that it is the monarchy's job in a way to make sure democracy can work the way it should. So, item 1 is K. There are several parts where you can hear that this is the correct answer. One of them is that the monarchy “is a referee for our democracy”, also the example about the election in British Columbia serves to explain this. Also, at the end of that example the speaker says that this is “a way in which the monarchy can actually safeguard the results of elections”, again expressing that the monarchy makes sure that democratic processes work as they should.

Speaker 2 here has given the information needed to match sentence D with 2 or 3. The phrase “other nations” refers to the UK being “surrounded by places” where things went wrong – the aspect of things going wrong is expressed by the speaker as “do terrible things”. The role a monarch plays in this is given by the bit that says that other places “didn't have this check on powers”. The “this” here refers to what the speaker said before about constitutional monarchies being a fantastic way to prevent tyranny.

Having heard this part, you now know that sentence G is true for speaker 2. The speaker explains that the vast majority “crave a strong man”. “To crave” means to want something very strongly. The phrase “strong man” is equivalent to “someone to look up to”.

Speaker 3 here mentions two values that “young people” are interested in. The following sentence goes on to explain that these values are not ones that the monarchy has, saying that it is “neither a fair nor a representative institution”. Therefore item 4 or 5 is F.

The speaker here talks about many members of the royal family as being “deeply unhappy” which is the same as “troubled”. The aspect of them losing backing is given shortly after this with the phrase that fewer “people are inclined to support the monarchy”. So, the other correct answer for speaker 3 is C.

Sentence H is one that you should not use. The reason is that only speaker 3 mentions the media, however, they only talk about how the general public now sees the members as individual humans. There is no mention of whether or not these people should have political powers in connection with any type of media.

Speaker 4 has just mentioned something that makes sentence B match with them. They said that “critics have called for” which is a way of saying they have demanded something. That something that they want is more “transparency and clarity” “when it comes to money”, which means that people are interested in the royal family’s finances.

Speaker 4 here talks about money again, but this time about the fact that the royal family leaves “overall a clear plus”, which means that “financially, it makes sense to keep the royal family” as sentence E states.

Speaker 5 has just talked about “all other 14 nations” needing to “agree” which is a way of cooperating, in order to “abolish the monarchy to remove it completely”. So, item 8 or 9 is J which says that several countries need to cooperate to end the British monarchy.

Here speaker 5 talks about what steps would happen if the UK stopped being a monarchy. At the end of their plan, they say that it would then become fully democratic, “like so many other European countries have been for decades”, which means that this system of being fully democratic has been in use for many years, so it has been well-established, making L the correct answer.

Item A is an answer you should not use for any speaker or item. Speaker 5 says something similar, but not exactly what sentence A states. Statement A says that the transition could be done the way it was done in different countries. Speaker 5, however, does not talk about that process being done similarly to any other country. Speaker 5 talks about having a democratic system that is similar to other systems within Europe.