



GLOSSARY

to bang – to make a loud noise by hitting two objects, especially metal objects, against each other

* If you ever run into a bear in the woods, try banging things to make a loud noise to scare it away.

pots and pans – metal containers with handles used to cook on a stove, with or without lids (tops; covers)

* Why do you need so many different pots and pans when you don't often cook?

audition – a tryout; an interview for an acting, singing, or performing role where one displays one's skills or talents in front of the director or other people who will decide who is selected for a show or opportunity

* Have you decided which song you'll sing for the audition next week?

to rehearse – to practice, especially to practice a speech or performance

* Rehearsing in front of a mirror is a good start, but try rehearsing in front of friends or family members so that you can see their reaction.

up for – being considered for; under consideration for; a contender or candidate for

* Did you hear that Jenna is up for the new marketing manager position?

part – a role played by an actor

* Wayne had the leading part in the high school play last year.

to learn (one's) lines – to memorize the things that one must say on stage, or for a film or television filming, especially while acting

* Would you please help me learn my lines by reading this script aloud with me?

to improvise – to act or perform while thinking of what one will say and do at that moment, without previous preparation and without written instructions or a plan

* When the couch on stage collapsed, the actors had to improvise to make it seem like an intentional part of the show.

(number)-course – a meal with a certain number of dishes, plates, or types of food, usually served one after another

* They served a delicious three-course meal of soup, pasta, and dessert.



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to stay in character – to continue to act in the role one has been assigned, without becoming distracted and appearing as oneself

* Issac is such a great comedian that the other actors struggle to stay in character, because they're tempted to laugh at his jokes.

to stretch (one's) acting chops – to accept and perform a challenging role as an actor, a role that can improve one's acting skills and become a better performer

* If Kyle accepts that role, he'll be stretching his acting chops because he has never had to learn to speak with a foreign accent for a role before.

to get into the head of (someone) – to fully understand someone and be able to think and behave like him or her

* The detective is known for getting into the head of criminals and anticipating their next move.

to project – to project one's voice; to speak loudly and clearly so that one can be heard and understood, especially in a large room

* The microphones aren't working tonight, so the singers are going to have to project really well.

to emote – to show emotions or feelings, especially while acting

* Her face is so expressive and she's able to emote joy, anger, or fear without saying a word.

commercial – an advertisement shown on TV or broadcast on radio

* Those commercials are silly. They make it look like drinking their brand of soda will suddenly make us popular and wealthy.

bit part – a very small, unimportant acting role

* Vicky's first acting job was a bit part in a movie, but she has accepted many bigger roles since then.

there are no small parts, only small actors – a phrase used to mean that no parts or roles are unimportant, and a talented actor can demonstrate his or her skills even in the least important roles, improving the quality of the overall performance

* Kelly was really disappointed to be a tree in the school play, but she felt better when her teacher said, "Remember, there are no small parts, only small actors."



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Elizabeth cooking in the kitchen?
 - a) Because she has accepted a new role as a 1950s housewife.
 - b) Because she is trying to get a role as a 1950s housewife.
 - c) Because she plans to write a book about a 1950s housewife.

 2. What is 10-course breakfast?
 - a) A breakfast with 10 different types of foods.
 - b) A breakfast made with 10 ingredients.
 - c) A breakfast that cost 10 dollars.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

up for

The phrase “up for,” in this podcast, means being considered for or under consideration for: “It’s an honor to be up for the award, but it will probably be given to someone else.” The phrase “up for sale” means available for purchase: “They’re going to put their home up for sale in the spring.” The phrase “up for it” means interested and ready to do something: “We’re planning to go on a long kayak adventure next weekend. Are you up for it?” The phrase “up to here” is used to express frustration: “I’ve had it up to here with your complaints!” Finally, the phrase “something is up” means that there is a problem, but one isn’t sure what it is: “Heather hasn’t been in school for over two weeks. Something is up.”

to project

In this podcast, the verb “to project” means to speak loudly and clearly so that one can be heard and understood, especially in a large room: “Make sure you project during the presentation so that everyone can hear you.” When talking about calculations, “to project” means to forecast, or to make an educated guess about the amount or level of something in the future: “We’re pretty good at projecting sales for the next six months, but beyond that, there are too many variables.” The verb “to project” sometimes means to stick out from another surface: “Quentin often hits his hip against this part of the kitchen counter, which projects out from the corner.”



CULTURE NOTE

How Casting Calls Work

“Casting calls” are used in the process of selecting the “cast” (the group of actors, singers, dancers, and other performers) who will perform in a play, movie, or TV show. Usually “aspiring” (hoping and wanting to have or do something, and working toward it) actors perform a short “monologue” (an acting performance in which only one person speaks; not a dialogue) or singers sing a short song in front of a “panel” (a group of people who judge something) that might include the director, producer, or other “executives” (people with decision-making power in an organization or business).

“Open casting,” sometimes known as “cattle calls,” describes casting calls that are “open to the public” so that anyone can attend, audition, and try to get a role in the production. Other productions allow people to audition “by invitation only” (only if they have received an invitation).

In most cases, the people who audition do not receive “immediate” (right away) “feedback” (information about how well or poorly one has performed). After a few hours or a few days, the “casting director” (the person who is responsible for selecting actors) might start making “callbacks,” which are invitations for their favorite actors to return to continue auditioning. At that point, the actors might be asked to read from the script for the production, instead of performing an unrelated monologue.

Eventually, the casting director makes his or her decision and posts a “casting list” (a full list of all the people who will play a role in a production, as well as their “respective” (belonging to each person) roles).

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – b; 2 – a



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 1,023 – Learning to Act.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 1,023. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at ESLPod.com. When you do, you can become a member of ESL Podcast – and after that, download the Learning Guide for this episode. Are you on Twitter? Hey, so are we! You can follow us at @eslpod.

This dialogue is between Richard and Elizabeth about acting – the ability, which I do not have, to performing in a play, a movie, or a television show, or a podcast. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Richard: It's 6:30 a.m. on Saturday morning. Why are you banging those pots and pans?

Elizabeth: I have an audition coming up and I'm rehearsing.

Richard: By banging pots and pans?

Elizabeth: I'm up for a part as a 1950s housewife. I need to learn my lines and be prepared to improvise. That's why I'm cooking you a 10-course breakfast. I want to practice staying in character.

Richard: I don't really want a 10-course breakfast, but if it helps you with your audition...

Elizabeth: It will. I have to stretch my acting chops and really get into the head of the character.

Richard: Right. Whatever you say.

Elizabeth: "Yes, dear. Your breakfast will be ready and waiting when you want it." Did I project enough? Did I emote enough?

Richard: You were great. What kind of acting job is this?



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Elizabeth: It's a small one.

Richard: In a film?

Elizabeth: No.

Richard: In a TV show?

Elizabeth: Not exactly.

Richard: What is it?

Elizabeth: It's a commercial. It's only a bit part, but you know what they say:
"There are no small parts, only small actors!"

[end of dialogue]

Richard begins this dialogue by asking Elizabeth something. He says first, "It's 6:30 a.m. on Saturday morning. Why are you banging those pots and pans?" "Pots and pans" are things that you use to cook. You might boil some water in a "pot" (pot) and fry some eggs in a "pan" (pan). The question Richard has for Elizabeth is why she is banging pots and pans. "To bang" (bang) here means to make a loud noise with. Because pots and pans are big and often made of metal, if you move them around and hit them against other things, they may make a lot of noise.

Elizabeth says, "I have an audition coming up and I'm rehearsing." An "audition" (audition) is also sometimes called a "tryout" (tryout). What you do on an audition is go in front of the director of a play or a movie or a television show, and you typically will act a little bit of the movie or part of some scene – some dialogue that will show the person if you can act or not and if you are the person who would be best for this particular part. A "part" (part) here just means one of the characters in the play or the movie or the TV show.

So, here in Los Angeles, for example, there are auditions every day, in some part the city, for television shows and movies. People go to these – actors and actresses go to these – auditions to try to get into the movie, to be part of the play or part of the television show. Sometimes it's just to be part of a commercial, an advertisement, but whatever it is, you usually have to go on an audition. Notice that phrasal verb "to go on." You can "go on" a trip, and you could "go on" an audition.



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Elizabeth is going on an audition, and so she's rehearsing. "To rehearse" (rehearse) means to practice, especially to practice either a speech or a performance that you are going to be giving in a play or some other dramatic setting. Richard asks Elizabeth why she is banging pots and pans as part of her rehearsing, and she says, "I'm up for a part as a 1950s housewife." We already explained what a "part" is when we're talking about plays and movies. It's the character in the play or the movie or TV show.

"To be up for" means to be under consideration for – one of the people that the people who are making the movie are considering, are thinking about. You have a good chance of getting it, or at least a chance of getting it. Elizabeth is "up for a part as a 1950s housewife." The word "housewife" (housewife) – one word – describes a woman who stays at home and takes care of the house and the children. Nowadays, of course, many women, at least in the United States, work in addition perhaps to having a family.

Elizabeth says, "I need to learn my lines and be prepared to improvise." Your "lines" (lines) are the words that you have to say in the movie or play. "To learn your lines," then, means to memorize the words that you have to say. Elizabeth is also preparing "to improvise." "To improvise" (improvise) is to act or perform without having a prepared script, without having basically any lines prepared for you. You simply have to make it up as you go along.

"Improvisation" is very popular nowadays in comedy. There are a lot of comedic actors, comedians, who do what we call "improv" (improv), which is short for "improvisation," which comes from the verb "to improvise" – to make something up as you go along without having planned it before.

Elizabeth says, "That's why I'm cooking you a 10-course breakfast. I want to practice staying in character." Elizabeth is cooking Richard a "10-course (course) breakfast." A "course," when we're talking about a meal, is a part of a meal. So, if you go to a nice restaurant, you may have a three-course meal. The first course may be a salad or a bowl of soup. The second course may be a piece of chicken or fish. The third course may be some vegetable or perhaps a dessert, something sweet. That would be a "three-course meal."

Elizabeth is preparing Richard a "10-course breakfast," which is quite unusual. No one that I know eats 10 different things for breakfast. Elizabeth says that she wants "to practice staying in character." "To be in character" means to be acting like the person in the play or the movie. So, "to stay in character" means to



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continue acting like the person in the movie even though you're not filming the movie right now, even though you're not part of the play or the production.

This is a common technique by some actors. It's a method which is sometimes called "method acting," in which the actor continues to act like the person in the movie or play even though they are at home with their wife and children. There are some actors who are very famous for this particular technique or approach. Daniel Day-Lewis, for example, the great Irish actor, is famous for staying in character when he's making a movie – acting like the character, like the person in the movie, even when he's not in front of the camera, even when they are not filming.

Richard says, "I don't really want a 10-course breakfast, but if it helps with your audition..." Richard is saying well, you don't have to cook me a 10-course breakfast, but I'll eat it if it will help you. Elizabeth says, "It will" – it will help her. She says, "I have to stretch my acting chops and really get into the head of the character."

Your "acting chops" (chops) are your acting abilities. "To stretch (stretch) your acting chops" is to expand and improve them, to make them work in situations in which you are not normally using them. The verb "to stretch" usually means to make something longer, but here it's used to mean to improve or expand. Elizabeth is trying to "get into the head of the character" that she is perhaps playing or going to play in this performance. "To get into the head (head) of" someone means to really understand that person, to understand how that person thinks.

One of the most important things for someone who is selling something to you, someone who is marketing a product or service, is to "get into the head" or "get inside the head" of the person who's buying that product or who might buy that product. This is something that actors also try to do. Richard says, "Right. Whatever you say." Richard isn't really all that concerned with Elizabeth's logic or reasoning here.

Elizabeth responds to Richard, now in character – she's acting like the housewife from the 1950s. She says, "Yes, dear." "Dear" (dear) is a word that you would use with someone with whom you are in love. It's a word you might use with your wife or your husband. It's a little bit old-fashioned. In fact, that's why Elizabeth is using it. She's trying to sound like someone from the 1950s. And, of course, the expression, "Yes, dear" is meant to give you the idea that the wife will agree with whatever the husband says. That's the idea that Elizabeth is trying to convey here, or get us to understand.



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She says, “Your breakfast will be ready and waiting when you want it.” Elizabeth then asks Richard, “Did I project enough? Did I emote enough?” “To project” (project) is to speak loudly and clearly. “To emote” (emote) is to show emotions or feelings when you’re acting. Elizabeth is asking Richard if she did a good job saying the sentences, “Yes, dear. Your breakfast will be ready and waiting when you want it.”

Richard says, “You were great. What kind of acting job is this?” Elizabeth says, “It’s a small one.” The acting job that she’s trying to get is not something that is very important or big. Richard asks, “In a film?” Elizabeth says, “No.” “In a TV show?” Elizabeth says, “Not exactly.” Richard then says, “What is it?” What kind of role is this? What kind of part is this? Elizabeth says, “It’s a commercial” – it’s an advertisement. She says, “It’s only a bit part,” meaning it’s only a small part, “but you know what they say: ‘There are no small parts, only small actors!’”

The expression “you know what they say” is used when you are going to use some common expression or common saying or popular expression. The popular expression that is used in acting sometimes is, “There are no small parts, only small actors.” The idea behind the expression is that it’s not important how big a role or part you have in a performance. A talented actor can demonstrate his or her skills even in a small role and can improve the quality of the performance.

So, Elizabeth is going to be playing, perhaps, in a commercial. But remember, here in Los Angeles, there are thousands of actors and actresses trying to get jobs, and so even a job in a commercial is better than a job working at a café or a restaurant, which is where most actors and actresses work here in L.A.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

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[end of dialogue]

The person who writes the lines for our little dramatic performances each episode is the one and only Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you, Lucy.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again right here on ESL Podcast.

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