



ESL Podcast 166 – A Marriage Proposal I

GLOSSARY

to get up the nerve – to have the courage to do something

* I can't get up the nerve to fly in an airplane for the first time.

to marry – to make someone your husband or wife

* Dae and Maria decided to marry after dating for three years.

the one – the person you want to marry, or to have a serious relationship with

* She dated a lot of people before deciding that Ben was the one.

engagement ring – a ring, usually only for the woman, when two people get engaged (promise to marry)

* He gave her the engagement ring and put it on her finger. How romantic!

saleswoman – a female worker in a store

* The saleswoman was helping someone else so I had to wait in line.

to find the right time – to choose the right moment or opportunity to do something

* The key to getting a raise at work is finding the right time to ask your boss.

to pop the question – to ask someone to marry you

* Instead of waiting for her boyfriend to pop the question, she asked him to marry her instead.

romantic – something that makes someone think of love

* The book had a lot of romantic parts that would never happen in real life.

to propose; proposal – to ask someone to marry you; the act of asking someone to marry you

* Should I propose in a letter? No, I think proposals should be done in person.

out of the question – impossible

* Spending that much money for a car is out of the question for me right now.



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poem – a form of literature which often has a rhythm or beat, like music

* Walt Whitman wrote many poems about America.

to serenade – when a man sings romantically to a woman, usually standing outside of her house

* I like the part in the movie when the men are serenading the women at sunset.

to call the police – to make a telephone call to the police department to report a problem

* Our party was so noisy, the neighbors called the police!

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. In the story, the man:

- a) doesn't know how to propose to his girlfriend.
- b) plans to take her to Paris to propose to her.
- c) wants the police to help him propose to his girlfriend.

2. When the man shopped for the engagement ring:

- a) he saw the ring he wanted to buy right away.
- b) he couldn't believe the prices.
- c) he took a long time to decide.



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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

get up the nerve

To “get up the nerve” in this podcast means to have courage: “If he can get up the nerve to ask her out on a date, I’m sure she’ll say ‘yes.’” We also use a similar phrase—“to get on someone’s nerves”—to mean something very different. To get on someone’s nerves means to bother or irritate them: “He talks too much and gets on my nerves,” or “Doesn’t it get on your nerves when she ignores you?”

romantic

The adjective “romantic” means to show love: “Giving me a love letter was very romantic.” It is usually used in a positive way, but it can also be used in a negative one to mean someone who is not practical: “She has too many romantic ideas about life and has a hard time deciding on a career.”

CULTURE NOTE

Fifty years ago in the United States, it was common for young people to marry when they graduated from high school or soon after finishing college. In the past 20 years, however, both men and women have waited until they are older before getting married. One of the reasons for this change is that more women are now working in full-time jobs. These women are interested in waiting longer before getting married and having children. Many men and women do not marry until their late 20s and early 30s, especially those who go to college.

Traditionally, it is the man who proposes to or asks a woman to marry him. This is still probably true for most people in United States. It was also common many years ago for a man to ask “permission” to marry a woman from her father or parents. This is not very common anymore, however.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 166, “A Marriage Proposal (Part I).”

This is English as a Second Language podcast episode 166. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

A Podcast Learning Guide for today's podcast, with a complete transcript, vocabulary definitions, cultural information, tips on learning English, and much more is available at our website. Go to eslpod.com and click on “Learning Guides” for more information.

Today's podcast is called “A Marriage Proposal (Part I).” We're going to hear about a man who wants to marry a woman and how he is going to ask her. Let's get started!

<start of story>

I've been trying to get up the nerve to ask my girlfriend to marry me. We have been dating for almost a year, and I think she's the one. I went shopping for engagement rings and really hated the experience. I wasn't sure what kind of ring she'd like and it took me a long time to decide. Finally, with the help of the saleswoman, I picked one.

So, I've got the ring, now I've just got to find the right time to pop the question. I needed to think for a romantic way to propose. I've watched enough romantic movies with my girlfriend to know that the proposal has to be something special. I thought about taking her on a trip to Paris and asking her in the “city of love,” but I spent all of my money on the ring, so that's out of the question. I thought about writing her a love poem and proposing in the poem, but I'm a terrible writer. I thought about serenading her outside the window, but with my voice, I'm sure the neighbors would call the police.

I don't know what to do. How do I ask her to marry me?

<end of story>



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Today's podcast is about a man who wants to propose to his girlfriend. The verb to “propose” here means to ask someone to marry you. And the noun is a “proposal.” We can also use the verb “propose” for other things, of course. To “propose” something is to recommend or put something forward, or to give someone an idea and ask if they will accept it or not. But here, it is to ask someone to marry you. And, of course, traditionally, a man would ask the woman if she would marry him.

Well, the man in this story says that he's been trying “to get up the nerve” to ask my girlfriend – his girlfriend...not my girlfriend! Better be careful...to ask his girlfriend to marry him. The expression, “to get up the nerve” means to get the confidence, to be confident. If you are scared about something or you don't want to do something, you may need to get up your nerve; that means you need to say to yourself, “Okay, I'm ready” and not be afraid, not be scared, to have confidence. Well, he's trying to get up the nerve to ask the girlfriend to marry him, to be his wife.

He says that, “We've been dating for almost a year” - we have been dating, we have been romantically involved with each other. Of course, to “date” means to be romantically interested and involved in someone else. They've been dating for a year and “I think,” he says, “she's the one.” When we say “she's the one” or “he's the one” (like the number 1), we mean this is the one for me, this is my perfect person, this is the person I should marry.

So, the man goes shopping for “engagement rings.” An “engagement” is a noun and it means the promise that two people have to marry each other. So, when a man proposes or asks a woman to marry him, they get engaged. The verb is “to get engaged,” and to get engaged which means now they are planning on getting married, but they're not married yet. They may get married in five months or in six months or maybe even in a year. But, during that time, they are engaged and that time is called their “engagement.” Well, an engagement ring then, is not the same as a wedding ring; it's a ring that a woman would wear to indicate that they are married, or they are going to get married, but they are not married yet. So, an engagement ring... not everyone gets an engagement ring, but it's common.

So, this poor guy goes shopping for engagement rings, one for his, what we would call (after he gets engaged), the woman is called the “fiancée.” My fiancée



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is the woman that I'm going to marry. My girlfriend would say, "my fiancé," is the man I'm going to marry. So, "fiancée" is the person that you are planning on marrying. In this case, he has to buy a ring for his fiancée, and he says he wasn't sure what kind of ring his girlfriend would like. And it took him a long time to decide or a long time "to make up his mind." "To make up your mind" means to decide. Finally, with the help of the saleswoman - a "saleswoman," all one word, is, of course, the person who is selling the rings, the person who is helping you at the jewelry store where you would go to buy a ring, a jewelry store. With the help of the saleswoman, he picked one or he selected one.

"Now," he says, "I've got the ring." Now, I've just got to or just have "to find the right time to pop the question." "Find the right time" means to find the right opportunity, the right moment. To "pop the question" means to ask someone to marry you. Notice that we say to "pop the question," we don't say what question, because the question is always the same: "Will you marry me?" And we always use that expression "to pop the question" when someone is asking someone else to marry them. It's only used for marriage, you don't pop the question about going on a trip. We only use that expression for two people who are going to be married, usually the man, traditionally, will pop the question to the woman.

He says in the story that he needs to think of a romantic way to propose. A "romantic" means, of course, well, it comes from the noun "romance" and the idea is that it is something that is very loving towards...you do something very loving towards the other person. You do something that, usually the woman, will find to be very special, something that sends her a special message. These are things that are romantic. He's trying to think of a romantic way to propose, to ask his girlfriend to marry him. He says "he's watched enough romantic movies with my girlfriend to know that the proposal has to be something special." It means he's watched many movies, so many movies, that he understands that the time that he asks his girlfriend to marry him has to be a very special time. He has to make it a special time. Well, he says he thought about taking his girlfriend to Paris, France, and asking her to marry him in the "city of love." Paris, of course, at least in the United States, Paris is considered one of the most romantic cities in the world, and many people consider that. Paris is a beautiful city. So, that's considered very romantic, to go to Paris.

And the man in the story says that, unfortunately, he spent all of his money on the ring. He doesn't have any money to go to Paris, so that's "out of the



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question.” To be “out of the question” means that it isn't possible; there is no possibility of doing that. If your son or daughter asks you to borrow the car; they want to borrow the car from you. And you say, “That's out of the question,” means there's absolutely no possibility that that is going to happen.

The man says he thought about writing his girlfriend a love poem. A “poem,” of course, is a type of literature. We sometimes call it “verse”:

Roses are red,
Violets are blue.
The sky is beautiful
And so are you!

Isn't that nice? The traditional poem, romantic poem begins with: “Roses are red...(“rose” of course, a type of flower)...Violets are blue (again, a different type of flower). And then, you have to rhyme something with the word “blue.” Well, that would be a love poem, but not a serious love poem, because that's sort of a joke to say “Roses are red, violets are blue. I believe in myself and so do you.” I don't know...something that you would say that would rhyme with “blue.” Well, this love poem is one idea that he has to propose to her, to propose to her in a love poem. Unfortunately, he's a terrible writer. “Terrible” – in other words, he's a very bad writer.

He thought about serenading his girlfriend. To “serenade” is the verb. He thought about serenading her outside her window. To serenade means to sing to someone and the traditional way would be to go to a woman's house and stand outside of her bedroom window and have a guitar or someone with you who can play a musical instrument, and you would sing to her something that was lovely and beautiful. Unfortunately, the man in the story says, “With my voice, I'm sure the neighbors would call the police.” The expression here “with my voice” means when we are talking about “my voice.” “Considering my voice, I'm sure the neighbors would call the police” because his voice was so bad, the neighbors would complain about his singing, and so they would call the police and have the police officers come to the house.

So, the man ends the story by saying, “I don't know what to do. How do I ask her to marry me?” Well, to find out, you have to come back and listen to Part II of this story.

Now let's listen to the story at a native rate of speech.



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<end of story>

The script for the podcast today was written by our own Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you, Lucy. Come back next time on our next podcast to find out what happens to this poor guy.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

English as a Second Language Podcast is written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan. This podcast is copyright 2006.