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## ESL Podcast 482 – Talking About Architecture

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### GLOSSARY

**structure** – a building or something else that has been built by humans

\* The Space Needle is probably the best-known structure in Seattle, Washington.

**architecture** – the art and science of designing and creating buildings

\* Donald studied architecture as a young man, and he designed many office buildings in Tustin.

**bay window** – a large window that pushes out through the wall of a building, creating an area at the bottom of the window where one can sit, often to enjoy the view or read a book

\* Their dog always jumps onto the bay window to look outside.

**column** – a tall piece of a building that reaches from the floor to the ceiling and supports the weight of the roof or any upper floors

\* Traditional Greek architecture uses a lot of columns.

**beam** – a long piece of a building that reaches across the room from one wall to another along the ceiling

\* There was a big earthquake here, but fortunately, none of the beams fell down.

**dome** – a round roof on a building

\* The state capitol building has a beautiful dome with a statue on top.

**cornice** – decorative plaster or wood that is placed inside a building at the top of a wall, near the ceiling

\* Many older homes in this area have beautiful cornices, but most of the new construction has only plain, flat walls.

**skylight** – a window in the ceiling that is designed to let light in

\* If we had a skylight in this room, we wouldn't have to turn on the lights during the day.

**facade** – the front of a building; the way that a building appears from the street

\* Some movies show streets with many buildings, but they're only facades that were created by the movie producers.

**balance** – equilibrium; a combination of two or more things in equal amounts, or in amounts that make sense, so that one thing does not overpower another

\* Her new book is a good balance of serious reporting and light humor.



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**symmetry** – something being the same on both sides; balanced

\* The scientists did a study and learned that faces with high symmetry are considered to be more beautiful than faces with less symmetry.

**style** – type; kind; one particular way of being or doing something

\* They can't agree on which style of couch they want to buy.

**monument** – a building or statue that is built to make people remember an important person or event from history

\* How many monuments have been built for the people who died in World War II?

**ingenuity** – creativity; an ability to think of new things and design or create them

\* Becca showed a lot of ingenuity by coming up with a good solution to a problem.

**story** – one floor in a building; one level in a building

\* Our office is on the 17<sup>th</sup> story, so we have great views of the city.

**balcony** – a flat area outside of a window or door on an upper floor, so that people can stand on it and be outside, but not actually leave the building

\* On sunny days, they like to read the newspaper and drink coffee on the balcony outside their bedroom window.

**to remodel** – to change a building so that it is better, more modern, or larger

\* They're going to remodel their home, adding one bathroom and making the kitchen bigger.

**to bring (something) up to date** – to make something more modern; to make something that is old become more appropriate for current times

\* It's time to bring your haircut up to date. That hairstyle hasn't been popular since the 1960s!



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these would you see by looking upward?
    - a) A bay window.
    - b) Cornices.
    - c) A facade.
  
  2. What is Pinda going to do on the balcony?
    - a) Read about the history of the building.
    - b) Buy some dates to eat there.
    - c) Imagine how the building could be changed.
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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **beam**

The word “beam,” in this podcast, means a long piece of a building that reaches across the room from one wall to another along the ceiling: “Their living room had dark beams across the ceiling, so they painted them white to make the room seem lighter.” A “beam” is also a ray or line of light: “We used the flashlight beam to find our way down the path at night.” Or, “Beams of sunlight shone on the hillside.” A “beam” is also a very happy smile: “The child opened the gift with a beam of joy.” A “balance beam” is the long, thin piece of equipment used in gymnastics on which a person walks or does other exercises and tries not to fall off: “Do you know how to jump backwards and do turns on a balance beam?”

#### **balance**

In this podcast, the word “balance” means equilibrium, or a combination of two or more things so that one thing does not overpower another: “The company wants to have a good balance between sales growth and good customer service.” When speaking about a person, “balance” is one’s ability to remain standing and not fall to one side: “He drank so much alcohol that he lost his balance and fell down when he tried to walk.” Finally, the phrase “to hang in the balance” means that one doesn’t know whether something will be good or bad, or successful or unsuccessful: “The doctors said that her life was hanging in the balance, but that they would do everything possible to try to save her.”



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**CULTURE NOTE**

Born in the state of Wisconsin in 1867, Frank Lloyd Wright was a famous American architect who designed over 1,000 museums, office buildings, hotels, schools, churches, and other buildings. He became well-known for a style called “organic architecture,” where buildings should “blend” (mix; combine) with the natural environment around them.

One of his most famous buildings is a home known as “Falling Water” in Pennsylvania. He built the home almost on top of a “waterfall” (an area where water from a river or stream falls down over rocks, making a loud noise and usually looking very beautiful). The home looks a little bit like a waterfall itself, so it blends into the “surroundings” (the area around a place).

He is also famous for his “prairie house” designs of homes that seem to blend with the “prairies” (large, flat areas of land covered with grass) around Chicago. Prairie houses have low roofs, flat “skylines” (the line that one sees when looking at a building’s roof against the sky), and “open floor plans” (a building interior with few walls and many large spaces).

Frank Lloyd Wright also designed the Guggenheim Museum in New York City. The building has an unusual “spiral” (with circles of increasing size) design and on the inside it is a little bit like a “seashell” (the hard piece that many small oceanic animals live in for protection). Museum visitors can start at the top of the building and slowly walk down the spiral to see all the artwork.

In 1991, Frank Lloyd Wright was “honored” (awarded; recognized) as “the greatest American architect ‘of all time’ (ever)” by the American Institute of Architects.

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



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 482: Talking About Architecture.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 482. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com). Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode, which will give you all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, comprehension questions, cultural notes, and a complete transcript of everything we say on this episode.

This episode is a dialogue between Iktinos and Pinda; they're going to be talking about "architecture," the way that we make buildings, including a lot of very common vocabulary to talk about buildings and houses. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Iktinos: I can't believe we're in one of the world's most famous structures. Look at this architecture!

Pinda: Yeah, great, another old building. I'm going to sit in that bay window and rest my feet while you walk around.

Iktinos: Come on, come with me. Just look at these columns and beams. They're over 2,000 years old!

Pinda: Right, they're old. Everything we've seen these past two weeks has been old. What's so special about this?

Iktinos: Are you trying to tell me that you don't think this dome is impressive? It's one of the largest in the world. Look at those cornices and skylights. I've never seen anything like them.

Pinda: This building has a good facade, with nice balance and symmetry, but I'm so tired of looking at the same style of building, one after another. Aren't we going to see anything else today?

Iktinos: We are seeing some of the most important monuments to human ingenuity.



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Pinda: You're right, but I'm too tired to walk up and down all three stories. You go. I'll stay here on this balcony.

Iktinos: What are you going to do here?

Pinda: I'm going to think about how I'd remodel the building to bring it up to date.

Iktinos: You're hopeless!

[end of dialogue]

The dialogue begins with Iktinos saying, "I can't believe we're in one of the world's most famous structures." A "structure" is a building or something that was made by human beings, something to work in or live in. These are all considered structures: a house, a building are examples. Iktinos says, "Look at this architecture!" "Architecture" is the art and science of designing and creating new buildings. There are many different types of architecture; historically, you can find many different varieties throughout the world.

Pinda says, "Yeah, great, another old building." Pinda is not very excited about architecture. She says, "I'm going to sit in that bay window and rest my feet while you walk around." A "bay window" is a large window that pushes out through the wall of a building; it creates an area where you can sit. Normally, it's like a semicircle that goes out from the side of the building to the outside. It's a window, but it's a window where you can sit down on and look out or look in, depending on what's more interesting.

Pinda is going to rest for a while. Iktinos says, however, "Come on, come with me. Just look at these columns and beams," he says. A "column" is a large piece of a building that goes from the floor to the ceiling. Usually, it's like a big, round tube; it's circular. It can be used to support the ceiling – support the top part of the building or the floor of the building above you. Often a column is used, however, for decoration purposes; it looks nice. The most famous example of columns would be, perhaps, the Parthenon in Athens, the great temple on top of the Acropolis in Athens that is surrounded by columns. And, of course, there are many columns in various buildings throughout the world, especially in Western and European architecture. A "beam" is a long piece of the building that goes from one side of the ceiling to the other. So, a column is vertical; a beam is horizontal, it goes from one side of the room to the other. Again, it's used to help support the roof or the upper floor of the building. The word "beam" has several



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different meanings, so take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Iktinos says that the columns and beams are over 2,000 years old. Pinda says, “Yeah, right, they’re old. Everything we’ve seen these past two weeks has been old. What’s so special about this?” Iktinos says, “Are you trying to tell me that you don’t think this dome is impressive?” A “dome” (dome) is a round roof of a building. For example, if you go to Rome in Italy, you can see the roof of the Basilica of St. Peter in Vatican City. There are domes, for example, in many capitol buildings, such as in our capital of Washington, D.C.; there’s a dome on top of our Capitol Building. There are domes in many different kinds of government and religious buildings throughout the world. Iktinos is saying to Pinda, “don’t you think this dome is impressive,” meaning it’s something that you would admire, something that you would like. The expression “are you trying to tell me” is usually one where we are expressing to the person our disbelief; we can’t believe that this person doesn’t agree with us or is saying this thing.

Iktinos says that the dome is one of the largest in the world. Then he says, “Look at those cornices and skylights.” A “cornice” (cornice) is plaster, a type of building material, or wood that’s put inside of a building usually right next to the ceiling, the top of a room, and it is very fancy – it is very decorated. A “skylight” is a window in the ceiling that allows light to come into the room. You can only have a skylight, of course, if the ceiling is the roof of the building, or near the roof of the building. Iktinos says, “I’ve never seen anything like them.”

Pinda says, “This building has a good facade, with nice balance and symmetry, but I’m so tired of looking at the same style of building, one after another.” A “facade” (spelled facade) is the front of the building; it’s the way that the building appears from the street. Sometimes the front of the building can look very impressive – very large, but the rest of the building is not. We use this word “facade” also to mean the perhaps false impression that people give. They look like they’re happy, but they’re not really happy; their happy face is a facade. In architecture, the “facade” is the front of the building.

Pinda says that the building has a good facade with nice balance and symmetry. “Balance” is when you have two things that are in equal amounts or that are in amounts that seem to make sense. They don’t have one much more than the other, or one that seems to dominate the other. So balance is – can be equality, equilibrium, but it can also just mean that the proportions that you see you seem right, they seem correct. “Symmetry” means something is the same on both sides. It’s similar to “balance,” but it is specifically something that is identical, that is the same on two sides.



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Pinda says, “I’m so tired of looking at the same style (or the same type) of building, one after another.” She asks, “Aren’t we going to see anything else today?” Iktinos says, “We are seeing some of the most important monuments to human ingenuity.” A “monument” is something, normally, that makes you remember something; it could be a building, it could be a statue. It allows you to remember some important person or some important event in history. “Ingenuity” means creativity, the ability to think of new things and create new things.

Pinda says, “You’re right, but I’m too tired to walk up and down all three stories.” A “story” is a floor of the building; it’s a level of the building. This building has three stories, so it has three levels. It has the first or ground floor, the second floor, and the third floor. Pinda and Iktinos are tourists, and Pinda is now tired of walking. Pinda says, “You go (you go ahead). I’ll stay here on the balcony.” A “balcony” is a flat area outside of a window or a door that is on an upper floor. You can stand on it and look outside, or simply sit in a chair and be outside of the building. If you are familiar with the famous Shakespeare play Romeo and Juliet, there is a well-known scene – a well-known part of the play where Juliet is in her house and usually, when you watch the play, it shows her on a balcony. She’s on the balcony looking for Romeo; Romeo, of course, is down below and starts to talk to Juliet. It’s such a famous scene that some houses actually have what’s called a Juliet balcony. A Juliet balcony, however, is very small; it’s a small rectangle where one person can barely stand. It’s not a large extension on the side of the house.

Iktinos asks, “What are you going to do here?” Pinda says, “I’m going to think about how I’d remodel the building and bring it up to date.” “To remodel” means to change a building so that it is better, perhaps more modern or larger. “To bring (something) up to date” means to make something more modern, more current, more appropriate for the time that we live in now. Pinda is saying that she’s going to think about how she can change this building – remodel it to bring it up to date. Of course, Iktinos doesn’t like this idea at all; he says, “You’re hopeless!” meaning there’s nothing I can say or do that would change your opinion; you have such a wrong opinion that I’m not going to bother arguing with you.

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

[start of dialogue]

Iktinos: I can’t believe we’re in one of the world’s most famous structures. Look at this architecture!





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Pinda: You're right, but I'm too tired to walk up and down all three stories. You go. I'll stay here on this balcony.

Iktinos: What are you going to do here?

Pinda: I'm going to think about how I'd remodel the building to bring it up to date.

Iktinos: You're hopeless!

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by someone with great ingenuity, our own Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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