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## TOPICS

Singing in the Rain; the Federal Reserve; among versus between; of no use

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## GLOSSARY

**musical** – a movie or play that includes songs performed by the characters in the movie or play, and generally also includes dancing

\* Ted has never liked musicals because he doesn't like a lot of singing and dancing in films.

**silent film** – a film produced before there was technology to have any sound or spoken dialogue

\* Many silent films included musical accompaniment that made it more exciting and entertaining to watch.

**talking picture** – a film made with recorded sound and was introduced in the 1920s in the United States

\* The sound on some of the early talking pictures was not very good compared to modern standards.

**leading lady** – an actress who plays the main character in a play or movie

\* In the early days of her career, she played small roles. It was only after the age of 40 that she became a leading lady in the theater.

**to dub** – in television shows and movies, to place a recorded voice of a second person over the voice of the first, so that it appears that the actor or performer is speaking or singing in that second voice

\* I'm glad this French film is dubbed in English. My French isn't very good and I wouldn't be able to understand most of it otherwise.

**exclusive** – having permission to do or have something that no one else has; allowing only certain people to attend, use, or join

\* The store claimed that this was an exclusive offer, but we found out that everyone in the neighborhood was given the same offer.

**branch** – a division or subdivision of a business; a smaller official part of a larger business

\* Let's go to the branch of the bank near my house to cash that check.



**board of directors** – a group of advisors who oversee the policies and decisions for an organization or business

\* The board of directors wouldn't listen to the employee's complaints and told the employees that there was nothing they could do.

**turbulent** – in a state of disorder and chaos with a lot of change; not controlled or calm

\* The 1860s were a turbulent time in the U.S. because of the Civil War.

**to stave off** – to prevent something from happening; to slow the progress of something, especially if it is likely to happen anyway in the end

\* Here, eat this apple to stave off hunger until I can get you home for a real meal.

**criticism** – negative things said or written about something; saying or writing about things that one considers imperfect

\* Each president has faced criticism about how he handles war and national defense.

**accountability** – responsibility; for a person or an organization to be expected or required to explain its actions and decisions

\* Without accountability, how will we know if our employees are doing their work?

**among** – in or surrounded by; something that a group of people do together or that happens within a group of people

\* Can you see the red flower among all of those white ones?

**between** – common to or shared by; in comparison of two things; choosing one over the other; from one place or thing to another

\* Mark and Mike are twins and I can't tell the difference between them.

**of no use** – useless; something that will not help or that does not work

\* It's of no use trying to get this car to work. We have no gas!



## **WHAT INSIDERS KNOW**

### **The TV Show Glee**

Dance in American movies is not uncommon, but dance on American television is more “rare” (unique; not common). There have been shows that feature music and dance, such as the popular 1980s TV show Fame, which was set, or took place, in a special high school for the performing arts, for students studying how to play instruments, act, dance, and sing.

Recently, another TV show featuring music and dance has become popular in the U.S. Glee is a show with comedy and drama that, like Fame, takes place in a high school. In this show, however, the focus is on the school’s glee club. A “glee club” is an “extracurricular” (after regular school hours) student group, usually led by one of the teachers, formed to sing and perform short songs. Originally, glee clubs only sang songs, but today, many glee clubs also dance and perform more “elaborate” (involving many carefully arranged parts) “routines,” or acts or performances.

One of funny “elements” (parts; characteristics) of the show Glee is the “covers” of popular songs the students perform. “Covers” are recordings or performances of songs that were originally recorded or performed by someone else. The show takes current hit songs or songs that are well-known rock and pop hits, and turn them into school-style performances. Seeing these student “versions” (interpretations) of these songs are a “highlight” (outstanding part; very interesting part) of the show.

While Glee has an “ensemble cast” (with many important roles, not just one or two main roles), two of the “key” (most important) characters are Will Schuester, the high school Spanish teacher, who becomes the director of the glee club, and his “arch-nemesis” (main enemy) Sue Sylvester, the “coach” (leader) of the high school’s “cheerleading squad” (group of students who cheer and perform during school athletic events). Coach Sylvester doesn’t want the glee club to be successful and does her best to “sabotage” (do something that will cause failure) it at every opportunity.



## **COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 258.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 258. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

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On this Café, we're going to talk about a famous musical comedy that is considered one of the best American musicals ever made: Singing in the Rain. We'll talk about what a musical is in a moment. We're also going to talk about something that is very important in the U.S. economy, and that is our central banking system called the Federal Reserve. Let's get started.

This Café begins with a look at the famous "hit" (hit) or very popular musical and movie, Singing in the Rain. Written and produced or made in 1952, Singing in the Rain is an American comedy, something that is supposed be funny, starring, or having as actors and actresses, some of the most famous stars of that decade: Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds. To this day, Gene Kelly remains what we would call a household name, meaning many people know it, everyone knows Gene Kelly. He became a household name because of this movie, in particular one dance routine – one dance performance he performed in this movie; we'll talk about that in a moment.

A "musical" (musical) is a movie or play that includes a number of songs performed by the characters in the movie or play. It also generally includes what we would call "choreographed" dances, or dances where everyone's movement is planned ahead of time. The person who plans the moves is called the "choreographer." You may have heard of some of the more famous English musicals – that is, musicals in the English language. They would include Cats, The Phantom of the Opera, Les Miserables, Oklahoma, The Music Man, more recently things like Mama Mia and Grease. These are all musicals that typically begin as plays; often they begin in New York City in the famous Broadway theater district. But in general, a musical is any play or movie that includes singing of songs as part of the movie.



Musicals are very popular in high schools, believe it or not. Most American high schools have some sort of play or musical at the end of each school year, and they will often do one of these famous musicals. When I was in school we did Fiddler on the Roof, The Wizard of Oz, and I forget what the other two were. I was never in the musical, surprisingly. I was, however, part of the lighting crew, the people who were in charge of turning the lights on and off. That's as close as I came to becoming a musical star.

Singing in the Rain, getting back to that, tells the story of two popular film stars, who are transitioning, or moving, to the new form of movies, what were originally called talking pictures. The original films that were made back in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had no sound. Eventually they developed sound technology for the movies, and the silent movies, which had no actual speaking, but typically had music and the words – the dialogue was on the screen, sort of like subtitles or captions. Silent films stopped being made, really, in the 1920s, and after that talking pictures, which we now simply call movies, began. The silent pictures had a lot of dancing, so there was that tradition in the movies of dancing. Singing in the Rain explores the way the change from silent films to talking pictures affected actors' careers, and it's also a romantic love story. Of course, most musicals have some sort of love story – some romance in them.

In the movie, the main character, named Don Lockwood, is an actor in silent films. He doesn't like his leading lady, Lina Lamont. A "leading lady" is an actress, a woman, who plays the main character in a play or movie. The man is called the "leading man." Don Lockwood doesn't like his leading lady, but their movie studio, the company that makes movies "portrays," or shows them as a romantic couple to increase their popularity with fans – with the people. Although Don strongly dislikes Lina, she is convinced that they are actually in love. She's very sad when Don begins to fall in love with another actress named Kathy Selden. Although Kathy has not had a main role in any of the films, Don believes that she has great talent as an actress.

Don and Lina are working together on their first talking picture, The Dancing Cavalier. A "cavalier" is an old word for a gentleman, someone of the royal court perhaps. Well, in this movie – and remember, the movie is in the movie Singing in the Rain; we're talking about Singing in the Rain, which is about another movie. The movie that they are making is called The Dancing Cavalier, and it outlines the difficulties of creating a talking picture, and with a lot of comedy – a lot of humor highlights, or shows, the biggest difficulty for many silent movie



stars. If you have a bad voice you can't go from the silent to the talking pictures, and Lina has a terrible voice. To solve this problem, Lina's voice is dubbed with Kathy's. To "dub" (dub) something is to copy material from one recording onto another. Sometimes famous rock musicians, when they go on television, will do what we call lip-syncing; they will pretend they are singing, but the actual voice is coming from a recording. Dubbing is taking a different voice and putting it in there, and that's what was happening in the movie The Dancing Cavalier. In the film, Kathy's voice was recorded and this recording was played in place of, or instead of, Lina's voice. In other words the audience, the people watching the movie, see Lina but they're hearing Kathy.

When Lina learns that Kathy's voice is being used in place of hers, meaning they didn't tell her first, she is "furious" (furious), extremely mad, extremely angry. She tries to ruin – she tries to end the relationship – the romantic relationship between Don the actor and Kathy the other actress. Lina threatens, she says she's going to do something bad, she threatens to sue the movie studio, and she makes outrageous demands. "Outrageous" is unreasonable, something that is not considered fair or just. She makes outrageous demands in order to continue working as an actress. Well in the end, you can probably guess, Kathy and Don continue their romance and together their careers take off – that is, become very successful.

I mentioned that there's a famous scene – a famous part of this movie that most Americans have seen even if they have not seen the entire movie. This scene later came to be known as the *Umbrella Scene*. An "umbrella" (umbrella) is what you use to keep the rain off of you, to protect you from the rain. In the scene, the character Don, who is played by the real actor Gene Kelly, performs or sings and dances to the title song, the song after which the movie is named, Singing in the Rain. And while he's singing and dancing he's also twirling his umbrella. To "twirl" (twirl) means to move the umbrella in circles. He's also dancing and what we would call splashing through puddles. To "splash" means to make water move. A "puddle" (puddle) is a small amount of water on the ground. Well, he dances through these puddles and he gets completely soaked (soaked). To be "soaked" means to be very wet. In order for the rain and the splashing to show up better on film, the makers of Singing in the Rain mixed a little bit of milk with the water to make it show up better, so you could see it better. It took three days to film this scene, which is probably no more than five to seven minutes long, and during the shoot, Gene Kelly was sick with a high temperature – a high fever. I say the "shoot" (shoot), by that I mean the session of filming; the part of that film would be called the shoot when you actually are doing the filming of the scene.



You may have heard of the song Singing in the Rain. Since I was not allowed to sing in my high school musicals, I'm going to sing now to a much larger audience: you, our listeners. You will, I think, recognize the song, despite my bad singing! The song begins, "I'm singing in the rain, just singing in the rain. What a glorious feeling." "Glorious" here means wonderful. "What a glorious feeling, I'm happy again. One, two, three, four...*I'm singing in the rain, just singing in the rain. What a glorious feeling, I'm happy again.* I won't torture you any more, I will not hurt your ears more than I have to, but that is the title song – that is, the song that is the same as the title of the movie, Singing in the Rain.

The movie was nominated, or proposed for a couple of different awards, including the Best Original Music, and in 1989 the U.S. Library of Congress, which is sort of the government library – official federal library, said that the film was "culturally and historically significant" and placed, or put the film on the National Film Registry. A "registry" (registry) is a list – an official list of something, and this would be a list of some of the most important films in American history, and Singing in the Rain is certainly one of those. If you have a chance to see the movie, if you haven't, I think you'll enjoy it. You can just watch the video on YouTube of that one song, Singing in the Rain. Just put in "Gene (Gene) Kelly (Kelly) Singing in the Rain."

Now we're going to move on to our second topic, a little more serious – no singing, and that is the United States Federal Reserve. "Federal" means national in this case. The Federal Reserve is sort of our national bank; it's the what we would call central banking system in the U.S. The Federal Reserve is sometimes simply called the Fed (Fed). The Fed is a government organization, but it is considered independent of the main government, although some people say it isn't really independent. It's not like a normal bank that tries to make a profit – tries to make more money than it spends.

The Fed has the exclusive ability to lend the government money and to introduce paper currency into circulation. A couple of words there: first "exclusive." When we say something is "exclusive," we mean no one else can do it, they're the only group that can do this, or organization. They have the exclusive ability to lend the government money. That is, the government can borrow money from the Federal Reserve. They're also in charge of making the money; they print the dollar bills, 5-dollar bills, 10-dollar bills, 20-dollar bills, 50-dollar bills, and 100-dollar bills. Those are the only currently circulating U.S. bills. You will find some older paper money from many years ago that is 500 or 1,000 dollars, but





nowadays they only make up to – that is, not above 100 dollars. The Federal Reserve has this exclusive ability to make money. You can't decide to start printing your own money, especially if it looks like the Federal Reserve's money. That would be called counterfeiting. To "counterfeit" (counterfeit) means to copy or duplicate something to try to make people believe it is the original. So, a counterfeit dollar bill would be a dollar bill that you made on your computer and printed, but is not a real one. You want people, however, to accept it as real. The government now – the U.S. government has many different ways of trying to prevent that, many security features in the new printed money.

Getting back to the Federal Reserve in general, the Federal Reserve is sort of a bank for the other banks. When the other banks need money, they go to the Federal Reserve. There are four main responsibilities of the Fed. First, it's responsible for influencing the general economic conditions in order to have what we would call stable prices. That is, prices that don't increase by inflation; that's an increase in prices, or decrease, that's called deflation. Secondly, the Fed is responsible for regulating, watching over other banks to make sure they follow the rules. The Fed also maintains the general stability of the financial system to make sure that we don't have an economic disaster, although some people say we are ready did. The Fed is also responsible for providing certain financial services to the government and to other foreign institutions, foreign banks outside the U.S.

The Federal Reserve is divided into different districts, or areas of the country; there are 12 districts. There are a total of 25 branches in those districts. A "branch" (branch) here means a division or a part of a larger company or organization. A "branch" is also what you see on a tree; the branches go out from the main part of the tree. Each branch has its own group of leaders; we call those leaders the "board of directors," typically they are economists. Each district has its own headquarters – its own offices. You can find those in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Richmond (Virginia), Atlanta (Georgia), Chicago, St. Louis (Missouri), Minneapolis, Kansas City, Dallas, and San Francisco.

The Federal Reserve was first started in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after some very turbulent economic times. "Turbulent" (turbulent) here means rough, not stable, where you have a lot of difficulties, a lot of what we might call disorder, where things are not running smoothly. The Federal Reserve was created to prevent these sorts of major crises, although, as I say, it doesn't eliminate them as we have seen recently. The Federal Reserve tries to "stave





off,” or prevent, things like inflation, where the prices start going up too fast. To “stave (stave) off (off)” is a phrasal verb meaning to prevent. One of the major causes of inflation is that the government prints too much money. Often the government starts spending too much money and so it prints a lot of money to pay its bills, but it prints too much money and suddenly the money itself is not worth as much because there is more of it, and this causes prices to rise because since more people have money – the paper money – more people can afford to buy things. But, when people start buying things, and everyone wants to buy the same things, the prices go up.

Recently because of the economic crises of 2008 and 9 and 10, probably 11, there have been a lot of people who have criticized the Federal Reserve. We might say they’re under a lot of criticism. To be “under criticism” means that people are saying negative things about you or your organization; they are talking about what is wrong with it. Other people want the Fed to be more accountable. “Accountable” or “accountability” refers to the Federal Reserve being able to show what it is doing and why it is doing, to be able to justify its decisions. Remember that the Federal Reserve, however, is supposed to be independent; some people want to remove some of that independence. I’m not sure if they will be successful. The Federal Reserve is certainly one of the most powerful and important organizations in the United States since it has a big influence on our economy.

Now let’s answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from two people: Thiago (Thiago) in Brazil and Luis (Luis) in Florida, originally from Venezuela. Both of them emailed – separately – to ask about the difference between “among” (among) and “between.” Well, these words can be used to mean the same thing. We’re talking about a group of people or things that a group of people share – that is, they have in common. It used to be, or in fact some people still say that “between” should only be used when you are talking about two people or things, and “among” should only be used when you’re talking about three or more. So you would say “between the two brothers,” but “among the three sisters.” However, this is a traditional rule that is not followed that much anymore, even in formal English, but you might run across it. To “run across” something is to see it even if you’re not looking for it. You might run across some books that say that.

In addition to this meaning of something that a group of people do together or that two or more people share or have in common, the word “between” can also



be used as a way of comparing different things: “I have to choose between the black coat and the white coat.” “Between” can also be used to talk about from one place to another, or the time and space that separates things. For example: “How many airplane flights (or trips) are there between Los Angeles and Chicago?” Or we could say “There are six weeks between my birthday and Carlos’.” “Between” can also mean combined together: “Between the two of us we have only 10 dollars.” I have 5 dollars, you have 5 dollars; between us we only have 10 dollars.

Jacky (Jacky), originally from China now living in Australia, wants to know the meaning of the expression “of no use,” if someone says “this book is of no use.” Well basically, the person is saying that it doesn’t help or that it doesn’t work, it doesn’t function the way it’s supposed to. You could also say “useless.” Many dictionaries are of no use when it comes to understanding idioms, or idiomatic expressions where there are several words involved.

You might also hear people say “it’s no use” or “there’s no use,” and what follows is typically an “ing” form of a verb. For example: “There’s no use looking for your glasses here, they are back at your apartment.” Or, “There’s no use studying for the test tomorrow, we don’t have time.” It means the same as “of no use,” but it’s used more as an expression to talk about an action that is not useful. “It’s no use talking to the beautiful girl in the corner, she’s already married.” Remember that gentleman!

Remember also that you can email us if you have a question or comment. Our email address is [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto:eslpod@eslpod.com).

From Los Angeles, California, I’m Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on the English Café.

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