GLOSSARY

to install – to place a new program on a computer so that it is ready to use
* Can you help me install this new anti-virus program?

operating system – the software that runs a computer, supporting all basic functions
* Are you familiar with the Apple operating system, or only Windows?

desktop – the main screen that one sees when turning on a computer, from which other programs can be selected and used
* Why are you saving all your documents on the desktop? Don't you know how to create folders?

menu bar – a list of available programs or options within a computer program from which one can select
* Where's the button on this menu bar for checking spelling?

application – a program that allows a computer to do something, especially on a smart phone
* With this new application, I can check into my flight and find out whether the flight has been delayed or canceled.

user interface – what a person sees and hears and where he or she has to click or touch to interact with a computer program
* The new user interface is so intuitive and simple that even a child can use it.

to revamp – to redo and improve in some way; to revise
* Let's revamp the old presentation to include new figures for this new potential client.

customized – designed, created, or changed to meet the needs of a particular person; with settings or features adapted to meet one person's preferences
* The company sells customized t-shirts, pencils, and coffee mugs with the purchaser's name.

setting – a speed, color, size, function, or some other feature that can be established and adjusted by the user to better meet his or her needs and preferences
* Can you help me change the language settings so that the program will check my spelling in German?

to start over – to begin again; to restart something
* I didn't really understand your explanation of how to operate this machine. Can you start over?

to navigate – to move through something; to find and follow a path from where one is to where one wants to go
* It's so much easier to navigate with a GPS device than with a printed map.

icon – a small symbol that represents a thing or action on a computer screen
* See that small printer? That's the icon for printing, so clicking it will send the document to your printer.

multitasking – the practice of doing more than one thing at once, especially to get more work done more quickly, making better use of one's time
* As working parents, June and Michael multitask each morning to get ready for work and to get their three children ready for school.

to minimize – to make something smaller, especially to make a computer program disappear from the screen, so that only a small part of it is seen on the screen
* Can you minimize the web browser so that we can focus on the spreadsheet?

to maximize – to make something bigger, especially to make a computer program fill the entire screen
* Please maximize the word processor and then increase the font size so that we can all read the text.

search me – a phrase used to express that one does not have the answer to a question, or does not have the solution to some problem
* A: Where can I find the files on the Jackson case?
  B: Search me. Ask the new law clerk.

to restore – to reinstate; to return something to how it was earlier, before certain changes or adjustments were made
* They want to restore this building so that it looks more like it did in the 1800s.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Vanessa mean when she asks, "Where is the menu bar?"
a) She wants to see the menu for the restaurant.
b) She wants to know where she can buy an alcoholic drink.
c) She wants to see a list of programs or options.

2. What does Reza mean when he says, "You'll have to start over"?
a) She will need to go back to school and take computer classes.
b) She will need to teach herself how to use her computer again.
c) She will need to restart her computer to erase the changes.

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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to install
The verb "to install," in this podcast, means to place a new program on a computer so that it is ready to use: "How long did it take you to install the translation software?" The verb "to install" can also mean to connect a peripheral device to a computer or another electronic device: "Was it difficult to install the new scanner?" The phrase "to install (someone)" can mean to put someone in an important job, especially with a ceremony: "Should we have a ceremony to install the new Chairman of the Board?" Finally, when talking about art, an "installation" is an exhibit of one artist's work, especially including lights, sound, or moving pieces: "The museum has a new installation that shows the artist's interpretation of a thunderstorm."

search me
In this podcast, the phrase "search me" is used to express that one does not have the answer to a question, or does not have the solution to some problem: "I asked Blake if he knew where Carl was, but he just said, 'Search me.'" A "search warrant" is a document that officially gives the police or investigators permission to enter a building and look for something: "The police can't come into your apartment without a search warrant." A "search party" is a group of rescuers who look for someone who is lost or missing: "The search party has already covered a large section of the forest, but they had to stop due to bad weather." Finally, "soul-searching" means carefully thinking about something, especially whether one should do something, examining one's thoughts, feelings, and values: "After a bad divorce with his first wife, James did a lot of soul-searching before deciding to ask Meghan to marry him."

CULTURE NOTE

Types of Tech Support

Many companies offer "tech support" (technical support; assistance in using products or services correctly) to their customers, especially to those who have purchased computers, phones, cameras, or other technology-based "devices" (small machines). Sometimes basic tech support is included in the price of the product, but in other cases, the tech support must be purchased separately.

One common type of tech support is "live chat support." In this service, the user goes to a website and opens an "instant messaging session" (a window where two people can exchange typed messages to communicate) with a "support specialist" (a person whose job is to provide tech support to customers). The customer describes the problem, and the support specialist provides simple instructions to "troubleshoot" (identify the problem and find a solution).

For more complex problems, "remote PC support" is a common type of tech support. With "remote PC support," the support specialist "temporarily" (for a short period of time) "takes control of" (has the ability to control) the computer, and the customer can see what the specialist is doing by watching the screen. This way, the support specialist can explore the computer settings and make technical changes as needed, without having to explain the details to the customer.

"Nowadays" (now; in modern times), some companies are "turning to" (beginning to have or use) "crowdsourced tech support" in which customers provide advice and guidance to other customers. Website "forums" and "message boards" (websites that allow people to exchange messages, and keep those messages on the website into the future) let customers ask questions and receive answers from other customers, as well as support specialists paid by the company. Customers can search these websites to find out whether their questions have already been "addressed" (answered; responded to).

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

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 1,084 – Learning a New Operating System.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 1,084. 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. Become a member of ESL Podcast. When you do, you can download the Learning Guide for our current episodes.

This episode is a dialogue between Vanessa and Reza about learning a new kind of computer software. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Vanessa: [gasps] What happened to my computer overnight? This can't be my computer.

Reza: It is. The tech guys installed a new operating system on all of the computers after hours.

Vanessa: But my desktop looks completely different. Where is the menu bar? I don't know how to open any of my applications.

Reza: You'll have to get used to a completely different user interface. It's been completely revamped.

Vanessa: But I had the old operating system customized with special settings.

Reza: Well, those settings are gone. You'll have to start over.

Vanessa: I don't even know where to begin.

Reza: With this new operating system, you're supposed to navigate around using those icons. They're supposed to make multitasking easier by allowing you to minimize and maximize applications more quickly.

Vanessa: How can that be when I don't know what any of the icons represent?

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Reza: Search me. Here's one of the tech guys now. You can ask him all your questions.

Vanessa: I only have one.

Reza: Only one?

Vanessa: Yes. Can he restore my old operating system?

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Vanessa surprised at something. She says, "What happened to my computer overnight?" "This can't be my computer," she says. Reza says, "It is. The tech guys installed a new operating system on all of the computers after hours." So, Vanessa and Reza work for a company. The company has people, as many companies do, who take care of the technical aspects – including the maintenance and service – of the computers.

Sometimes these people are called the "IT personnel" – the IT workers, "IT" standing for "information technology" – but more informally, people may refer to them simply as the "tech crew" or the "tech guys." Notice the use of the word "guys" (guys) here. "Guys" can mean both men and women when you're not really sure, although many times it's used just to describe men. But anyway, Reza is saying that the tech guys installed, or put in, a new operating system.

An "operating system" is the software that runs the whole computer. The two big operating systems are the one by Apple Computer and the one by the makers of Windows. There are of course other operating systems as well, such as Linux and a few others. Reza says that the tech guys installed this new operating system "after hours." The term "after hours" refers to the hours that come after the end of the work day. So, if the business normally closes at five, "after hours" would be anything after five o'clock.

Vanessa says, "But my desktop looks completely different." Your "desktop" (desktop) on your computer is the main screen that you see typically when you turn your computer on. Vanessa says, "Where's the menu bar?" The "menu (menu) bar (bar)" is a list of the programs that you have on your computer that is often found either on the bottom, the side, or the top of the computer screen. The menu bar can also refer to the specific options you have within a given computer program.

Vanessa says, "I don't know how to open any of my applications." Your "applications" are your programs. "Applications" is just another word for a piece of computer software. Nowadays, it's become popular to refer to these simply as "apps" (apps), although some people use "apps" to refer to computer software on a phone or a tablet versus on a full-sized computer, I guess we could call it.

Reza says, "You'll have to get used to a completely different user interface." The "user (user) interface (interface)" is the thing that a person sees when he's looking at the computer screen. Every computer program has an interface. The word "interface" usually refers to something that connects one thing to another or the point at which two different kinds of systems come together.

Now of course, computer programs are written in a special language that the average person doesn't understand, and so rather than working in that computer language, the computer operating system has ways of making the running of the programs – the way you operate the programs – much easier for the person who is using the program. We would call that person the "user." So, the "user interface" is what the person using the program sees and manipulates when using a particular computer program.

Reza says that the operating system has been "completely revamped." The verb "to revamp" (revamp) means to redo and revise something, usually to improve it. A company might revamp its website – it might change its website and improve it. Usually when you revamp something, you're making major or large changes to something.

Vanessa is not happy with this new operating system. She says, "I had the old operating system customized with special settings." "To customize" (customize) means to design or create something so that it is particularly useful for one person or for one sort of thing. "To customize your computer" would be to change your computer in such a way that it works exactly the way you want it to work. Another person might make it work a different way and might customize it to his or her particular preferences.

The "settings" (settings) of a computer program are the features that are adjusted or can be changed by the individual user. So, for example, if you have a tablet, such as the Kindle or an iPad, you might – when you get old like me – want to adjust the size of the letters so that the letters are bigger and are easier to read. This is one of the settings that you can change on a tablet. Settings are used in many different kinds of computer programs so that you can change things so that the computer program works in the way you want it to work.

Reza says, "Well, those settings are gone. You'll have to start over." The phrasal verb "to start over" means to begin again – to do something from the beginning, if you will. If someone is telling you a story, and you don't really understand the story and you want the person to begin at the beginning once more, you could say to the person, "Could you start over?" Could you tell me the story from the beginning? Reza is telling Vanessa that she'll have to start over when it comes to customizing the settings of her favorite computer applications.

Vanessa says, "I don't even know where to begin." Reza says, "With this new operating system, you're supposed to navigate around using these icons." "To navigate" (navigate) means to find a path or a way from where you are now to where you want to go. If you're in your car, you navigate in order to arrive at the place where you are driving to. When we're talking about computer applications, "to navigate" refers to the process of actually using the program to get done the things you want to get done.

Reza says that you're supposed to navigate in this new operating system using these "icons." An "icon" (icon) in a computer operating system is a small symbol that represents some action or, in many cases, the program that you want to use. In order to open a program, you often click on or double-click on an icon in order to open the program. On your phone or tablet, you may use your finger and "tap" (tap) on the icon in order to open the program.

Reza continues, "They're," meaning the icons, "supposed to make multitasking easier by allowing you to minimize and maximize applications more quickly." "To multitask" (multitask) means to do more than one thing at a time. Many psychologists now say that true multitasking is almost impossible. You have to be paying attention to either one thing or the other.

Some people say that it is, in fact, very inefficient to multitask, but people do it anyway, especially those stupid people who drive and try to text at the same time, or talk on the phone while driving, which is another thing that really bothers me because it has been found to be very dangerous. But people are stupid, and what can you do about that, right? Anyway, what was I saying? Ah, yes, our dialogue.

Reza is talking about making things easier to "minimize" (minimize) and "maximize" (maximize). "Minimize" and "maximize" are verb forms of the nouns "minimum" and "maximum." "To minimize" means to make something smaller, as small as possible. On your computer, to minimize the program would be to make it small so that you can't see it anymore on your screen. "To maximize" would

mean to make the program bigger in the sense that you see it on your screen in a larger size.

Vanessa says, "How can that be when I don't know what any of these icons represent?" When she says, "How can that be?" she's saying how is it possible that the icons are supposed to make it easy for me when I don't even know what the icons represent (what the icons are supposed to mean)?

Reza doesn't really know either. He uses a common expression that we would have in informal conversation, which is "Search me." "Search me" is a phrase we use when you don't have an answer for the question either. When someone says, "I don't know how to do this. Do you?" And the person says, "Search me," the person means that he doesn't understand or he doesn't have the answer either.

Reza says, "Here's one of the tech guys now" (one of the IT guys is obviously entering the room) "You can ask him all your questions." Vanessa says, "I only have one." Reza says, "Only one?" meaning "You only have one question?" Vanessa says, "Yes. Can he restore my old operating system?" "To restore" (restore) means to return something to how it was before. "To restore a computer application" would be to bring it back to the way it was before you changed it, or perhaps even before you accidentally erased it.

Vanessa wants her old operating system back, and we – which is all of us who deal with computers – know that sometimes new operating systems can be somewhat confusing because things are done differently.

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

[start of dialogue]

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Vanessa: I only have one.

Reza: Only one?

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[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter helps you navigate through the difficult obstacles that you might find in improving your English. I speak, of course, of the wonderful Dr. Lucy Tse.

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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