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The ESOL Ambassador



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The ESOL Ambassador is a tri-annual publication of the Sylvania ESOL Department. Essays are written by students at all levels of the program and submitted for publication by ESOL instructors.

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*Special thanks to all ESOL
instructors who contributed
student work.*



ESOL Level 1 Students Write About Their Families

My Son Alex

This is my son Alex. He lives in Tigard. He is 34 years old. He works at Fred Meyer. Alex is a middle child. He is average weight. He has dark brown straight hair and brown eyes. He also has big muscles. In his free time, Alex walks the dog, plays tennis, and spends time with his son. He also likes to draw and paint. Alex is a kind, generous person. He is a little shy. In this picture, Alex is with me.

Alex is a good son.

Written by: Vilay Richardson

My Daughter Nikta

This is my daughter Nikta. She lives in Tigard. She and I live together. She is 30 years old. She has finished a course of study from a university in Persia. She is a computer engineer. Right now Nikta works at Atmosera Company. This week she is the top bonus receiver for all of her company. Nikta is a happy girl and she is very exact. Nikta has very good friends. Her friends like her very much. I am glad that she is my daughter.

Written by: Mahdi Majidi Tabrizi



My Children

These are my children. Their names are Team and Phay. They live in my house in Thailand. My son is 16 and my daughter is 11 years old. They are students and they don't work. Team is very tall and Phay is short. My son's hair is black and short. My daughter's hair is black and long. In their free time, Team likes to play soccer and watch TV and movies. Phay likes to spend time with her friends, and watch TV and movies. One year ago, I went back to Thailand and they were happy to see me.

Written by: Thitiphan Braxton

My Mother Yu Fuye

This is my mother Yu Fuye. She lives in China. She is 48 years old. She works at a clothing company. She is a manager. She is short and average weight. She has brown hair and black eyes. In her free time, my mother likes reading and watching TV. She also likes to travel, same as me. She looks very kind. She is sometimes awkward. I love my mom. I feel she loves me more.

Written by: Kathy (Tingting) Song



My Husband Naij

My husband's name is Naij. He lives in Beaverton. He is 50 years old. He is a little heavy. He is very tall. He has gray, brown, wavy hair and brown eyes. He has a mustache and a beard. He is an engineer. He works at a store. Naij spends time with his friends. He is kind and outgoing.

Written by: Ashwaq Albattat

My Younger Brother

I have a younger brother. His name is Ahmed. He lives in Turkey and he is married. He has one child, a son. His son's name is Michael. His wife's name is Grace.

Written by: Ali Ali

ESOL Level 2 Students Write About Their Daily Routines

On Mondays, I go to school at Portland Community College. I always get up at 5:45 in the morning. I brush my teeth and wash my face. Then I get dressed and I put on my makeup. I usually make many chicken breast sandwiches for my family. I eat breakfast and drink coffee while watching the weather forecast on the TV. Then I leave the house by 6:50 because I usually walk 30 minutes to the bus stop. I take the bus at 7:30 to go to my English class from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. After that, I come back home and I have lunch quickly. I do my homework and I wash my family's clothes. When that is over, I water the vegetables in my backyard. I cook dinner and I have dinner with my family at 6:30. I don't drink coffee at night because I can't sleep. Then I always take a shower and I check email and look at the internet. It's my most relaxing time and I go to bed at 11:00.

Written by: Keiko Ota

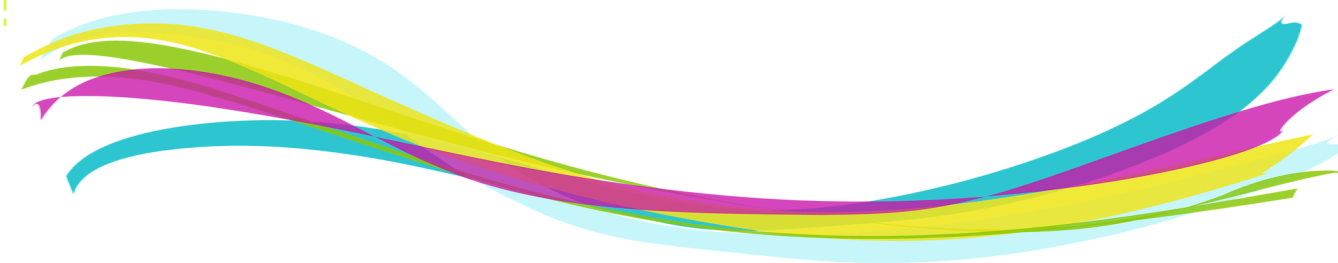


At 3:30 a.m. I get up. Then I make breakfast and lunch for my husband. After that, I drink coffee at 6:00 a.m. I don't like early breakfast. After that I brush my teeth. Next, I take a shower. After that, I eat breakfast, eggs and orange juice. Then I get dressed. At 7:50 a.m. I go to school. I walk half a mile to the bus station. I study from 9:00 to 11:50 am. After that, I go home at 12:15 pm. There isn't a bus before that. I arrive home at 2:30 p.m. Then I make my lunch. After that, I do my homework at 4:00 pm. Then I eat my lunch. Next, I do laundry. I can't later because it is noisy. Then I cook dinner for my family. After that, I clean my apartment at 6:30 p.m. Then I watch TV with my family. Finally I go to bed at 11:00 pm. I go to sleep early.

Written by: Teresa Villa-Rios

At 6:45, I get up and take a shower. Then I get dressed and eat my breakfast. I don't drink coffee because I don't like it. I rather prepare tea. Then I brush my teeth and my hair. After that, we go downtown and drop my niece off at the elementary school. Then I take the shuttle to PCC Sylvania. Sometimes I don't take the shuttle because I'm late, so I have to take the bus. Then I go to my class and go to the conversation group. Sometimes I pick my niece up but sometimes I don't. Sometimes my brother in law picks us up, but sometimes I don't go downtown with him. Then we go home and eat lunch. I do my homework, exercise and watch movies. I don't watch the news on TV because I watch it on the internet. Then we eat dinner and we brush our teeth. Finally, we go to bed to sleep.

Written by: Gabriela Diaz



An ESOL Level 3 Student Writes About People in his Country

The Typical Palestinian

I am from Palestine. Palestine isn't a large country. It's south of Jordan and Lebanon. When Palestinian people meet, they kiss each other and shake each other's hand. But not everyone, only the family and friends. If they don't know each other, they only say 'Hi.'

The main meal is in the afternoon, usually at 2:30. They have to eat in their grandfather's home. Usually we eat rice with chicken, and the women cook the food.

People in Palestine always play soccer on Friday. On the weekend, we play cards and watch TV. We watch soccer games.

One of our favorite activities is going to the park. We bring food and listen to music. About 20% of Palestinians don't like to go to our activities.

Written by: Mohammed Elhaj

These ESOL Level 3 Students Write About Their Favorite People

My favorite person is my father. He is 80 years old. He has 5 children. I am the youngest child. He is always a hardworking person. He used to work 55 years for us. He doesn't work anymore. When I was a child, he usually called me "Pumpul." I sometimes heard him, something like old time. He likes to sing. My brothers like to sing, too. We often sing together. Also, my father and my brothers play the "Baglama." It is a traditional Turkish musical instrument. He is my dad. I always love him.

Written by: Pinar Kaya



My favorite people are my kids. They always make me very happy and usually help me with my English. Even though they drive me crazy and are very loud, I still love them. They sometimes like to go on walks or go to the park. They also love telling me about their day. We often go shopping. We also enjoy eating out. We always sit and watch TV. They don't often listen but they are very good kids. I love all my kids.

Written by: Nissan Darwish

My wife always cooks for me when I come back home. She usually calls me when I take my lunch break. She always goes to Samba with my daughter. My son sometimes plays soccer with me but he likes basketball. My daughters hardly ever like to do their homework. They always go to bed early. My wife never calls in sick to her employer and she often makes cake for everybody. And she never makes bad food. She usually doesn't like to go to running.

Written by: Anselmo Hernandez

My favorite person is Sandri Castillo. She is my girlfriend. She usually wakes up very early in the morning. She very rarely eats breakfast outside the house. Sandri always goes to the gym in the morning. She often takes three or four showers a day. She always has a beautiful smile. Sandri often cooks something delicious. She always likes to go to the cinema. She never gets in the pool. She doesn't like to buy restaurant food. She does not like elevators. Sandri hardly ever cries when she faces adversity. She hardly ever likes scary movies, and always screams in every scene. She will always be with me.

Written by: Luis Tay Rosal



ESOL Level 4 Students Write About Their Favorite Places

My Hometown Wuxi

My hometown Wuxi is a beautiful city with about five million people. It is a great place to live and visit. First of all, the transportation is very convenient in Wuxi. It is close to Suzhou and Shanghai, so we just need 15 minutes and 30 minutes to go to Suzhou and Shanghai by high-speed rail. If you want to visit Wuxi, airplane is also a good choice. Sunan Shuofang International Airport is located in Wuxi. In Wuxi, you can take the bus, or you can take the subway to any place where you want to go. The next reason is that the weather in Wuxi is very good with four distinctive seasons. The climate is mild and humid. There is neither a long rainy season nor a long dry season, and it is also not very hot in summer and not very cold in winter. Good weather is helpful for people to live. Finally, the food is really delicious in my hometown Wuxi. There is a lot of famous food in China, like small steamed buns, juicy spare ribs, and hairy crab. By the way, Wuxi's mother river Taihu Lake has lots of kinds of fish, and the most famous are called the "Three Whites of Taihu Lake." The three whites are whitefish, whiteshrimp, and whitebait. They are my favorite food. This is my hometown Wuxi, a peaceful and elegant city. If you go to China in the future, welcome to visit my hometown Wuxi. I'm sure you will like it as much as I do.

Written by: Hannah (Xihua) Qian

Guangzhou – My Hometown

Guangzhou, my hometown, is an interesting place to visit in China. First, every year there are many tourists going to Guangzhou to visit. There are many places to go. For example, you can take the Pearl River Night Cruise. you can take walks and go hiking in the Beiyun Mountain. You can experience the wonderful view around Guangzhou at the top of the Canto Tower (Guangzhou TV Tower). Second, in my hometown of Guangzhou, there is a place called “Food Paradise.” There are good restaurants in Food Paradise. If you come to Guangzhou, you must try our food such as Dim Sum, noodles, and sweet and sour fried fish. My favorite food is Dim Sum. If you like Dim Sum, you should try egg tart, BBQ pork bun, shrimp dumplings, spring rolls, etc. In conclusion, I like my hometown because it's a very beautiful modern city and has delicious food. My hometown is a great city to visit.

Written by: Maggie Yan



My Favorite Place for Vacation

I love to visit Lake Baikal in my country. It is my best place. When I lived in Russia, I traveled to Lake Baikal twice a year, in the winter and in the summer. Now, I can't travel to Lake Baikal so often because it is very expensive and far. I like to visit Lake Baikal at different seasons. I like hiking. I like skiing. I really like to travel on Lake Baikal by ship. Lake Baikal is the largest freshwater lake in the world. Lake Baikal is located in southern Siberia. The average depth is 744 meters. There are beautiful kinds of nature parks. The water in the lake has a different color at different times of the year. In the summer it has a beautiful dark blue color, and in the spring and in the fall, it has a dark green color. It is a very interesting fact. The winter is very long and cold in Siberia, so the lake is covered with ice in the winter. The depth of the ice can be up to 2 meters. The ice is very clean and transparent. Many people like to drive on the ice by cars. It is very fun and a little scary. Around the lake there are many mineral hot springs. They don't freeze in the winter. Lake Baikal is a very interesting place for tourism in different times of the year.

Written by: Klavdiia Golovnykh

Lake Oswego

Lake Oswego is my favorite place to live. First, the weather is great, so I always enjoy swimming outdoors. It has refreshing air, and it is sunny but not hot. Second, the education is excellent because of the good schools. The schools offer many clubs and activities like track, volleyball, and architecture design. Finally, it is not busy, and it has quiet neighborhoods. I can do many activities like hiking, walking and bike riding. So, that is why I like to live in Lake Oswego.

Written by: Farah Msary



ESOL Level 4 Student Write About Important Moments

One of the most important things in my life are my kids, so in this case I want to talk about the birth of my first child. On November 14, 1999 I went to a regular appointment for my pregnancy at the Virginia Garcia Clinic in Hillsboro, OR. When the doctor examined me, he notified us that we couldn't go home because my body was ready for the birth of my son. My husband and I were surprised because I was eight months pregnant. We weren't ready. It was just a regular appointment. I didn't feel bad, but my doctor said that my body was ready to do it. My husband and I talked to the doctor because the appointment was so early, and we didn't eat any breakfast. We went to go outside to eat some breakfast. Finally I went to the hospital, and my husband returned to the house to bring everything for the baby. I stayed at the hospital for three days with pain, but finally my baby was born on November 17, at 2:45 am. At this point all the suffering was gone. All the family was happy. My husband and I are proud of my son. This is the reason why one of the most important dates in my life is November 17, 1999 because my first child was born.

Written by: Maria Raquel Arteaga De La Cruz

The Last Hug from My Family

The last hug from my family was the saddest and happiest moment in my life. This happened on November 3rd, 2014 at the international airport of my country, Venezuela when I was 30 years old. I was in my family's home, and I was rearranging my suitcases. After that, I went to the airport with my mom, grandmother, aunt, sister, cousins, step grandfather and my uncle. We ate our last meal and took pictures together. I didn't have too much time to say goodbye to my family, so we hugged, cried, kissed, and then I had to check in, but I had to go back for one last hug and kiss from them again. I saw them for last time while I was in the line for my flight. This travel was a difficult decision because it was the first time I left my family, but I had two very strong reasons. First, I was facing political oppression, and I fell in depression because of the political problems my country was facing, so I decided to travel to a new place to improve my mental health. Second, my life goal was to get value for my degree in tourism so to study English was my challenge, and I thought to spend one year at ELS in Portland. I still remember when I took that flight, and I had mixed feelings. I was happy, nostalgic, afraid and excited at the same time. A goodbye is always difficult even if it is a positive motive. It is never easy to achieve your goals, but everything happens for a reason. If I could repeat that goodbye to my family, that hug would be longer. I would like to return in time to do and share much more with them. I miss my family so much.

Written by: Gleimy Rodriguez



ESOL Level 5 Students Write About Important People

My Grandpa Niannong Qin

My grandpa Niannong Qin really influences me a lot. He told me the stories of his childhood when I was a kid. He was born in Shanghai in 1922. He is a son of a landlord and a owner of a steamship company. During the Kuomintang period, he studied at a religious school and was a boy scout. This is very new and interesting for me who grow up in in the People's Republic of China. He is a knowledgeable person. He taught himself English and Japanese, and he knows a lot of geography and biology. We affectionately call him an encyclopedia. Grandpa loves music very much. He plays the accordion and harmonica. He collected vinyl records of classical music. He taught my uncle, aunt, and my dad to play accordion and harmonica. They played instruments after dinner every week. I love my grandpa forever.

What an interesting man he is!

Written by: Keyin Qin



My Sweet Mother

That person who taught me to be who I am and has a heart the size of the world is my mother. First, I can't think of my mother and not remember about her kindness with the world and the people. She always worries about others first and taught me about empathy and how important this is to our life and evolution. She also taught me about the importance of working hard and winning a place in the world. And that is why I am here, because she always supports my crazy ideas and always encourages me to be mature, even if I had to travel so far away from her and learn by myself my mistakes. And that's why I consider her my best friend, and my best inspiration.

Written by: Mariane Mittestainer

My Uncle

I admire my uncle Pyotr because he is a hero for me. From his childhood he was brave, so he chose the military pilot's profession. He served in the Soviet Air Force in the Far East, and he fought against the Japanese military planes in August, 1945. He was principled, so he was not afraid to criticize his commanders. Other pilots liked and respected him for it, but some commanders were angry with him. They demobilized him from the Air Force one month before the 25th anniversary of his service to reduce his pension and benefits. He was an honest and fair man. When he worked later as a mechanic at the factory near Kiev, the workers elected him to be trade union leader. Unlike most Soviet trade union leaders, he actively defended the rights of workers, so the managers hated him. When he died, the Directorate refused to participate in the funeral, and the workers, with his relatives, buried him without any support of his management. I have many reasons to be proud of my uncle.

Written by: Leonid Sapozhnikov



An Important Person in My Family

My whole family was important to me, but my mother is the best person in my life. First, my mother is a strong mom because she worked hard to make me a person that I want to be after my father death. My mother worked ten hours every day to make my life comfortable. Second, my mother is my adviser. She taught me how to be happy in every good or bad situation, to treat all people equal, and to thank God for all I have in my life. Third, she is my best teacher because I learned from her face and from all movements during our life. That is why I love her, and she is my most important person.

Written by: Mewael Mhtsentu

Interview with cover artist Xiaohong Liu, an ESOL Level 3 student at PCC Sylvania campus:

Where are you from?

I am from Wuhan, China.

Why did you move to the US?

I married an America man.

Why are you studying ESOL at PCC?

I want to learn to speak and read English better. As my English improves I will be able to learn more about the United States and become more active in my community. This will help me meet more people, and, also find more opportunities for friendships and employment.

How long have you been making art?

I liked to paint when I was very young. While working in China I didn't have time to paint. About 4 years ago I married an American, retired from my career, moved to the USA, and started painting again.

Why did you begin your artwork?

I just love painting. I also have a sister who is an accomplished painter living in France.

What are you favorite things to paint, and why?

Flowers, birds, and fish. I like to paint beautiful things in nature.

What would you like to do in the future in the US?

First, I would like to continue to improve my skills as a watercolor artist. Secondly, I want to continue to improve my English language skills, and lastly, find a job where I can take advantage of my love for art and my paintings.



ESOL Level 6

Heart of Memories

Where is the heart? Every person treasures a place of his own, a place where beautiful memories are embedded, and through its door one walks into the future. There is nothing as sweet as home. Home is a place where all of us were born, where we learn the first steps of our lives, and had peaceful lives. It is where we love to live because we have our belongings in it, our toys that we have grown up with, our childhood memories, and many more things. Even if we move to another house, we still have these things which will remind us of other homes that we have lived in.

My home is in Iran. Because that is where I am originally from. I was born in Yazd, in the center of Iran. It has about one million kind and friendly people. They are very hospitable. Every day, the early morning breeze brings calm and joy; it feels like spring in the summer, fall or winter. There are many places to see. It is the first historical, ancient city and UNESCO has added the historical texture of Yazd in central Iran to its list of world heritage sites. Venice, Italy and Yazd are sister cities. It is also the largest inhabited adobe city in the world. It has the tallest adobe wind-tower or wind-catcher in the world. It is about 34 meters and works as a traditional air conditioner, which annually attracts thousands of domestic and foreign tourists visiting Iran. It was built in a very pleasant and great garden of about 70000 meters. It is located on a building with red, yellow, blue and green colored glass. A long pool in the shade of the cypress trees leads to the main entrance. On the way to the mansion, there are beautiful grapes and pomegranate trees behind those tall trees. Every viewer visits this beautiful Persian garden, they enjoy the friendly and peaceful atmosphere and to see its unique wind tower. The architecture is unique and incredible.

There are many different handicrafts in Yazd, Such as silk textures (Termeh), copper and silver dishes, sweets, carpets and ceramics. Termeh is originally known as a sort of hand woven colorful textile which is woven from natural silk and wool fiber with special patterns, mainly paisley. Weaving Termeh is a sensitive, careful and time-consuming process; a good weaver can produce only (10-12 inches) in a day. The colors used in Termeh are red, light red, green, blue and black like colorful flowers and gems. The harmony between colors is very soulful and amazing. The silk textures are used for the design of desks, cushions, and clothes and many handicrafts.

The copper market is very visible. Learning how to make copper dishes is very interesting. You can hear the sound of knocking on a sheet of copper filling the space. The flames of small furnaces

are very dramatic and attract the viewer's attention.

Baklava is the famous sweet. It is very tasty and reminds you of a good sweet taste. When you eat it with tea or coffee in the afternoon beside your dear friends and family or alone when you watch beautiful nature or study a book, you will feel amazing. It brings out the real taste of crispy sweet pastry that is full of pistachios, almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cardamom and honey. Rose water syrup makes it more fragrant.. If you close your eyes you will feel the branch of aromatic rose beside your cup of tea.

As a result, Yazd is an interesting place to travel for those who like historical and ancient places. No matter how far, when we talk about home, so many memories come to our minds. These memories are our essence and our strength to continue on.

Written by: Fahimeh Kalantari



My Best Friend

I think every person has best friends. But not everyone has the best friend, who has never told him any words, and still will be the best buddy forever. Do you know those? I am talking about our pets: dogs, cats, hamsters, rabbits, fishes and many different kinds of creatures are congenial for some individuals. They bring a lot of fun in our life, give us all their love, friendship and joy and only want that we would be with them and take care of them. They never betray us and play false; they will always provide fellowship. My best friends name is Taya, and she is a cat.

She appeared in my life suddenly. It was a snowy winter day 7 years ago, when my friends presented me the little, lovable, warm, fluffy lump with the big, expressive, green eyes. It was the cute, grey, bashful kitten. She looked at me like she knew me long ago, and she jumped in my hands at once. She was already named, and I liked her name right away. Upon arriving home, she was a little scared. She crouched her feet and could not move. After a few minutes, she started to sniff every corner of the flat and learned new smells. She was curious, inquisitive and watchful, like a newborn baby. She quickly recognized her place in the bathroom, and did not stain any place in the flat. She became a new member of the family.

From the first days when she began growing up, she felt that she was the hostess and the main person of the home. I bought a cozy pet lodge with a few stories for her where she was happy laying on top and watching everything from above. She was agile, very playful and frisky. Once in a while, she

turned into a little beast, jumping from the floor to the table, from table to the furniture, from the furniture to the TV and returning back the same way, it was hilarious. Most of the time Taya was a very tender and quiet kitty. She woke me up in the morning, nuzzled my face; she snuggled and slept with me at night and sometimes decided that walking down my body is a good idea. When I fed her, she heard how I had opened a can, and she was running to the kitchen, her tail wagging as she looked forward to when I would give her the favorite delicacy. I liked when she laid down on my legs, and cuddled; I was petting her, and she was purring. She was happy when I returned home from work, hearing how I was unlocking the door and greeting me in her melodious, pleasant and loud voice; I missed this huggable little kitty too. She brought in my life new emotion and feelings.

My friendly kitty moved with me to the USA; it was a long trip and very stressful for her. On the departure day, she was nervous and aggressive, and I was very worried, how I could handle with this goosey in the airplane. When we drove to the airport, she was so scared, just like when she first came to my home. All the flight she did not eat anything, even ignoring any water. She was frightened, helpless and aghast. When I needed to walk through the metal detector I had to keep her in my hands. She clung to me with all her claws, like she would never let me go, possibly she thought that I wanted to leave her somewhere. I so proud of this little, faithful hero handled that challenge.

Time and circumstances divide us from close friends and family for different reasons, however our little friends may stay with us, no matter where we go and what changes come in to our life. Some people think that our pets are just animals. They cannot speak, think, worry, sympathize, love, understand – the feelings that make humans from homo sapiens. In my opinion, they have feelings even more than some individuals, and scientific research shows evidence of that. They can perceive your mood and sentiment, they can treat your disease, they so sensitive and can be wise and patient. And now my best friend lies down in my legs, watching on the computer and, I think, she understands that I writing something about her and she totally approves that topic.

Written by: Svitlana Grimes



Our First Day

Nicholas Charles Sparks, an American romance novelist, said, “The first time you fall in love, it changes you forever and no matter how hard you try, that feeling just never goes away,” and it is right. Although three years have passed, I still remember every detail for the first time that my husband and I met.

My husband crossed 2.780 kilometers from Michigan to Oregon after one month that we knew each other via Facebook, and that day was a beautiful spring. During that time, many colorful flowers bloomed in every corner of Portland. It made the city we dated in almost turning red, and white for roses and cherry blossoms. There was also light rain, so many fragile petals that fell on the road were wet and crushed when people stepped on them. Besides, the good aroma of rain and flowers made the air incredibly fresh.

The first time I met him, I was impressed with the pleasant greeted. When he texted me that he was in the front of my house on a Friday night in April, I was excited as a kid ready for an amazing gift from Santa Claus. After I put on a black dress, a pair of leggings, a long brown coat, and black shoes, I heard the knock. I quickly ran to the door and opened it immediately. I remembered that he was wearing a blue shirt, cream pants, and a pair of classic light blue shoes. He stood near the door about five foot-steps. We greeted and smiled. Simultaneously, he stepped closer to me and gently handed me a big porcelain vase of twenty-three roses, red and white. It was my age and my favorite color, so I was amazed and happy. When I took the jar from him by my tiny both hands, I felt his hands were slightly trembling. At the same time, my fingers touched his hands even though I did not intentionally. For a moment, I closed my eyes to smell the nice fragrance of the roses. When I opened my eyes, I saw his face as red as a tomato. I knew that he was shy, and we giggled.

We went to a small bar, and our love relationship began there. It was an attractive lounge inside the old university. We sat on a gray couch covered with two smooth cushions, and it was on the petty balcony next to the huge outdoor heater. That night, we looked at millions of bright stars in the dark sky while sharing some funny stories with each other. We sipped some strawberry - red - wine mixed with lemon juice, which was sour, and sugary. Moreover, the mild wind blended with the soft music made the atmosphere more romantic. Suddenly, he nervously grabbed my little hand with his cold hands as ice and said, “If our distance is a thousand steps, you just take the first step. I will take ninety - nine steps left toward you. Could you take the first step? I promise that I will never let you down.” At that moment, my heart beat faster, and my soul perfectly warm. I also held his hands tightly for a while. Finally, my answer was our wedding on the same date and month after that year.

The wonderful season, the gift of gorgeous flowers, and the loving words that we shared in the interesting place are the pretty reasons why I cannot forget the first day that my husband and I met. Even though the time flies, our first date was a sweet memory and will remain in my heart forever.

Written by: Tram Nguyen



ESOL Level 7

Education System in Ukraine and the USA

Do you know which country is in the top 10 for foreign student enrollment? If your answer is the USA, then you are right. The total number of foreign students in the USA is more than 1,044,000. How do I know that? It is because I am one of those lucky students. If you ask me if I know the difference between the education system in the USA and my mother country, Ukraine, I will tell you that I do. There are big differences between the two education systems based on primary school, secondary school, college and university.

First, let's start with the differences between elementary and secondary schools in both countries. In the USA, usually students attend school for 12 years. Around the age of six, children begin primary school education. They attend five or six years and then go to secondary school. Secondary school consists of two programs: middle school and high school. Usually, they are located in different buildings. An academic year begins in August or September and continues through May or June. The academic year in many schools is composed of two terms (semesters) or three terms (trimesters). In the USA, sometimes kids can study at home. This is called "home school." In Ukraine, pupils attend school for 11 years. Primary and secondary education are divided into three levels: first-young (1st - 4th grades), second – middle (5th - 9th grades) and third – senior (10th - 11th grades). Around the age of 6, children begin school. The academic year always starts on the 1st of September and finishes at the end of May. Furthermore, a year of school is composed of four semesters. Normally, there is only one building for school, which covers 1st to 11th grades. In the last 18 years, secondary school grades use a 12-scoring scale.

Second, after high school many students study in colleges. College is popular as a type of higher education. In the USA, college education is different than in Ukraine. There are several types of colleges: state college is supported by a state or local government; private college is privately run, and pri-

-vate tuition is higher than in a state college; community college is usually a two-year college; and an institute of technology is a school that provides at least four years of study in science and technology. The first two years of study will require the student to take classes to achieve general knowledge. Each course is typically worth 3 to 5 credits. A full-time program is 12-15 credit hours (4 or 5 courses per term). Also, in the USA a student can apply for financial aid and scholarships each term. On the other hand, Ukraine has fewer types of colleges: vocational education college is 2 - 4year colleges, and is supported by government. Students can study there after their 9th or 11th grade of high school; technical college provides up to 4 years of study in technology. After that, college students can transfer to the second year of university. The academic year is composed of two semesters. In Ukraine, colleges do not have a credit hour system. Usually, students have around 5-6 different subjects in one semester. Similarly, in the USA, the first two years of study will require a student to take classes in order to achieve general knowledge. Students can apply for financial aid and scholarships for all 2 or 4 years; as result, students have to pass all exams with good standing to keep their financial aid throughout the terms.

Third, university is the place to get a higher level of education. In the USA, a student from a college or university graduates with a Bachelor's Degree. Then, a student can continue to study and get a Master's Degree in two years or less. To gain admission, students have to take the GRE (graduate record examination). Certain other programs require specific standardized tests, such as the LSAT for law school, the GRE or GMAT for business school, and the MCAT for medical school. For a Master's Degree, a student must prepare a long research paper called "a master or thesis project." Some students may prepare directly for a doctorate. It may take three or more years to earn a PhD degree. At the end of their study, students must write a dissertation. In Ukraine, students can get a Bachelor's Degree just after 4 years of university. Just like in the USA, students can continue to study 2 more years to get a Master's Degree. Therefore, students must take the GRE before entering a Master's program. A student who passes it with the highest score can get financial aid and scholarships for both 2 years of studying. After getting a Master's Degree in Ukraine, the first level of postgraduate education is "Aspirantura." This degree is equivalent to the PhD in the USA and it takes around 3 years to complete the study. At the end of their study, the student must write a dissertation.

Finally, after all the comparison, I can see exactly, that the education and credit hour system in the USA are different than in Ukraine. In 2015, I received my Master's degree in Ukraine after spending a decent amount of time and effort to pursue it. Now, knowing that I am living in the USA, I decided to go back to school even though the process is hard. All due to the belief that I can do it again.

Written by: Valentyna Sapizhinska

ESOL Level 8

Types of Plagiarism

According to the Josephson Institute's Juvenile Ethics Center, which surveyed 43,000 high school students in public and private schools, "One in three high school students admitted using the Internet to plagiarize an assignment." Plagiarism is an issue that happens in classrooms more often than people in general think. Unfortunately, plagiarism has increased since the internet and advanced technology, but the tools to identify it have also advanced. However, do students know they are plagiarizing? According to Kristin Brabec, who is an Education manager at Turnitin, students only recognize that they use four types of plagiarism, but in reality there are ten types of plagiarism that students use in a classroom, and these can be categorized into three large groups, which are intentional, unintentional and low effort.

Intentional plagiarism occurs when the student does the plagiarism with the intention of not doing the homework on their own. In this group there are 4 types of plagiarism. For example, when the student copies the task 100% from the internet, they copy and paste the information completely without citing it. In other cases, the student may copy the information, but only change a few words, in which the plagiarism would be 99%. However, some students change the keywords of the information to make the information look different, which is still 90% of plagiarism. The last one is to copy several texts and place them together in a paragraph. The texts are not cited. The students think that mixing the information will make the plagiarism not be noticed, but it can be noticed because in some cases the information does not match or it can be contradicted. In these four cases it can be concluded that the student has no interest in carrying out investigation, analysis or search of the text.

Involuntary plagiarism occurs when the student cites the source, uses the information but an error occurs. The error can be grammar, quotation or paraphrase. In this group there are four types of plagiarism as well. Some examples of these cases are when the student is investigating and looking for information from different sources and sticking them together, but the problem is that the student does not know how to write where one source ends and the other begins. Another case of plagiarism is when students have information but when they cite, they do it incorrectly. Students must learn to quote correctly. On the other hand, the case is presented where the student puts several sentences or people's information, but quotes them incorrectly. The student may combine sources but not cite all of them. The last one is where the student is trying to paraphrase a text and citing it, but the student does not know yet to paraphrase correctly and the text ends up with plagiarism. These types of plagiarism are not in-

-tentional but are considered plagiarism.

Low-effort plagiarism is a special group, where students copy and cite but the text comes out at the end without an analysis or thought of the student. This is the case where more students plagiarize. In this group there are the last two types of plagiarism. The two cases are when the student quotes and cites the information but without thinking or analyzing, and the other is to combine texts and cite them, but without analyzing them as well. An example of these two cases is when the student writes a text using quotes and cities from someone, he/she added the cited correctly and the quotation, but the student does not analyze this information, so he/she does not put his/her viewpoint. The student limits himself to using information from someone in his text. For the students this does not seem like plagiarism, but it is. Why? Copying in the paragraph only information or ideas about another person as an argument in a homework can be considered a special type of plagiarism. Since the objective of using quotes or information is to use it as a basis or support, but not as a whole, because students who do not analyze the quotes are failing the goal of the homework. It means that a paragraph should not only have information of another person, but it must also contain personal thinking, information or own analysis.

Demotivation is one of the reasons in common when a student plagiarizes. The student does not want to do the homework, because they think that homework is not interesting or important. This is a problem that can be solved by restructured the education model to a structure that give students motivation to do their homework. According to Duckworth, who is a expert in education, grit is the answer to make the student to do their assignments. Grit is motivation “passion, perseverance” to do something until the end. For example, students can work hard on assignments, homework or projects that they want to do if they have the motivation to do it.

In conclusion, there are ten types of plagiarism, but these can be categorized into three groups which are intentional, unintentional and low effort. Each school can define and have its own policies about plagiarism. That is, plagiarism can be defined in different ways but the consequences can be the same. The repercussions of plagiarism can accompany people in the future, and it can damage their records or their annotations. Motivation is the key to reducing plagiarism in classrooms. Students and teachers must work hand in hand to achieve a perfect dynamic between class work and motivation.

Written by: Silvia Juliana Pombo



This term, ESOL Reading 7 students read a novel called “The Distance Between Us,” and they had the opportunity to meet the author, Reyna Grande. She talked about her book, read fragments of her new memoir, signed books and chatted with the students. Her two sisters, Mago and Betty were there, too! Here are the students’ impressions of the meeting:

The night before Friday I didn’t sleep. I was just thinking about Reyna. I didn’t know that Mago and Betty would come as well. It was a surprise! I was thinking how I was going to see her face to face. I was so embarrassed to know about her life and excited at the same time to see her. Her speech was full of skills, kindness, and she was strong . She didn’t show any negative impacts. She was in a good mood. She talked about her life with her siblings, and how they struggled with their parents , and how all the negatives things they passed thru from their parents , finally at the end they became positive . The most interesting part to me was when she realized that she had to forgive her father even if he treated them so badly. I know at the end he refused to sign the papers for her to go to continue the school , Reyna thought to many ways because she had some skills of course she decided to go to see her teacher Diana. She helped her a lot until she graduated. She gave me a good picture that everything is possible. She didn’t quit the school like the others, and now she is trying to help the members of the family to go to school. In her graduation, everybody came. The friends, the parents, the friends -- everyone was there, and they had a wonderful party. I was so happy to see Mago and Betty as they are still together, and still good friends. It’s a good thing that they keep supporting each other. She expressed her feelings in order to heal the heart, and share with us about her experiences in life.

Written by: Madeleine Musigwa



At first I was excited to meet with her as a writer but when I was in front of her and she started to share her new book with us, all of her thoughts and emotions, more than thoughts and more than a book it is like to hear my own experience. As Reyna, as me everywhere are children who go through and who continue to go through the same problem. I still remember every word she said to us in the conference. I just would like to say, "thanks for writing this book, thanks for writing your history and that of many of us." Also, thanks for inspiring me to continue with my dreams. Now I can only think that if you could, I can also do it. Thanks to Reyna Grande for this lesson of life and for sharing her life with all of us.

Written by: Kimberly Reyes

I will never forget the day when I met a writer for first time in United States. Her name is Reyna Grande, and she's from Mexico. "The Distance Between Us", one of her books, tells her own childhood and teenager history, and I really like this book because I have been in some similar situations. My parents followed the famous "American dream" which more than a dream is a way how to break families. Moreover, how to change daughters' and sons' futures. My favorite part at the meeting was when she read a fragment of her new book to us. The woman who lived that story, and the woman who wrote that book is the same woman who is reading a fragment of the book, a fragment of her life, for us, the audience at the auditorium.

Written by: Rodrigo Rodrigues

They were real!! I really wanted hug them while I am reading a book, "The Distance Between Us." I worried about their mental health because of their unhappy childhood. However, they were stronger than I thought. Reyna said she only tries to remember positive side of her Papi, and she wants to write a new story on a blank paper with her Mami. Also, they are still working together and rely on each other.

Written by: Soyoung Jung

For me Reyna is a nice person, educated and with a good sense of humor. When she told us about her family life, he did it with a lot of humility. We see that there are difficult and hard moments for her, but she has a positive attitude towards life and fights for her dreams.

Written by: John Pabon

All the time with Reyna and her sister was amazing. She is a great speaker and her English is perfect. All the time when she was talking was very emotional and professional at the same time. But my favorite part was when I met Mago! All the time when I was reading the book and I saw how strong she is, and how she thought about the siblings all the time, and she never forgot her mission to be a good “mom.” I always want to give her a hug and that day, seconds before I left, I had the courage and asked her for a hug and she was so kind and smiled at me and said “yes.” I gave her a hug and told her how she is an amazing sister and how she inspired me to try to be a better sister. I really loved it.

Written by: Tatiane Clark

The lecture ended and I was unable to ask her my two questions. Then she began to sign her book and before she signed, I asked her the first question. I told her that I found her smile in most of her pictures, despite her suffering when she was kid. I asked her what the smile means, and if this was one of the reasons for her success in her life? She wrote to me "I smile when I in nervous." She is great woman. I asked her what helped her build her character. She said the only thing that helped her was to read and read several kinds of books. I asked her if she had read "The 1001 Arabian nights," She said, “of course. It is a useful, enjoyable book; this book is from ancient Arabic heritage and was translated to many languages.” This was a short meeting I did with her, but her answers were fun. She is a great woman, and she deserves all respect.

Written by: Khudhair Mahmood

Meeting Reyna Grande the author of “The Distance Between Us” in person was a great opportunity for me to actually make a connection with the whole story. Getting to know the characters of the story helped me not only understand it better but also feel the exciting emotion in the story. Her life experience was somehow similar to my personal experience. She talked about her father, and how he was not very supportive of her, but she is very forgivable that she only talked about his good characteristics. She left me with tears in my eyes and helped me to understand people all over the world who have struggles in life. She inspired us to write about our personal stories, and she is a great example that how one day a personal story can turn into a great book.

Written by: Farah Mohammadi

This was one of my interesting meeting I have ever had. Reyna Grande is a good example of humiliation and pride to this country and to her own country. Even though she had a hard childhood, she made the cut and gives us a good sample of no matter where you come from, or what the difficulties you've faced, you can overcome these obstacles and will be the person that you dreamed about. At the meeting, we had a blast!!! We took pictures with Reyna, Mago, and Betty.

Written by: Abdelkarim Naciri

The most interesting part and impressive part was that when Reyna told us about her achievement in life from an ESOL student to public writer. She did not get much support from her parents for her education, but she became such a successful women today. I think it's really interesting to hear that story because it gave me more hope and motivation for the future to pursue my dreams.

Written by: Sumavatei Kem



