

Your ARC newsletter by and for ESL, multicultural, international students, Californians, and, well, anybody really...



The Parrot

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Inside This Issue

Exploring the Power of Communication: A Conversation Between Professor and Student



Many students consider majoring in Communication, but what truly defines its value? In this exclusive interview, Asila Sadiqi sits down with Professor Alexander Paez, a respected educator in the field, to uncover the impact of communication studies and his own inspiring journey. Unlike previous interviews, this discussion is a personal exchange between student and professor, one that even inspired Asila to change her major. If you're curious about

Communication as a field, read on and connect with the wisdom of Professor Paez.

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Leaving to Begin Again

Daniia Aliudinova - ESL 325

Would you like to contribute to *The Parrot*?

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Immigration is always a life-changing experience, often marked by both challenges and hopes for a better future. Kao Kalia Yang's memoir, *The Latecomer*, tells the story of her Hmong family's forced migration from Laos due to war and political persecution. After spending years in refugee camps, they eventually settled in the United States. Their experience reflects the struggles of many immigrant families, including my own. My husband, my two children, and I are first-generation immigrants who left Russia in 2022 due to political reasons, particularly our

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1. Scan the QR code below with your phone, or click on English as a Second Language (ESL) Assessment if you are on a computer.
2. Read all the information, and then scroll to the bottom of the page to choose if you want an in-person or an online ESL Assessment session.
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People and Books Which Mold Us

If we talk about a person's literacy, we likely turn to the past to look at the path of their formation as a literate person. As for me, I ask a similar question — what shaped me as a person? What from my past influenced me so that I could confidently say that I am a literate person? I was born and raised in a small town, not far from the capital of Russia, Moscow city. Our town was (and remains now) a scientific town of physicists and researchers. As you can probably guess, it is almost impossible to live in such a town and be an illiterate person. But if this could happen, it would be a shame compared to the many highly educated people living next to you. Therefore, education in our town has been the object of increased attention from the town government and the community. At the time of my school age, since the town was small, there were only three schools. My school was located across the street from my house. As literate individuals, we are molded by the people who we closely communicate with and the books we read.

I suppose no one will argue with me that the first person to instill in a child the basic concepts of literacy is his or her mother. This was the case in my early childhood. My mom was a literate and intelligent person despite her simple background. She worked as a secretary assistant to the head of one of the research departments of a scientific institute. From my youngest age she taught me to read. My native language is Russian; nevertheless, at the age of five I could read not only Russian words on stores, posters, in books, but also foreign words written in

Latin letters, although I did not understand their meaning. My mother used to say: "Learn English letters, it may be useful in the future." Only now do I realize how prescient she was. The fact that she instilled in me an interest in foreign words, an interest in reading fairy tales of different nations, and reading from an early age, served as the basis on which my further formation as a literate and intelligent person was built. When I was old enough to go



to first grade, my mother gave the opportunity to continue my education to my first teacher Mrs. Margarita Pimenova. She was a moderately strict but fair teacher. Once, when I was in second grade, I did not behave very well in the class. Then the teacher took me to a neighboring class as punishment. I didn't know the other class's teacher or the students there. It was a shock to me. I was so ashamed of being punished in this way that I decided to show that I was not a bad student. I

became involved in that class work and even earned a good grade. I believe that this "punishment" served me well and brought out some of the best in me. Otherwise, I would not remember this incident after all these years. In class, we read a lot, wrote a lot, and developed beautiful handwriting. I was the student in the class who read the fastest in terms of words per minute. Then I loved reading books even more.

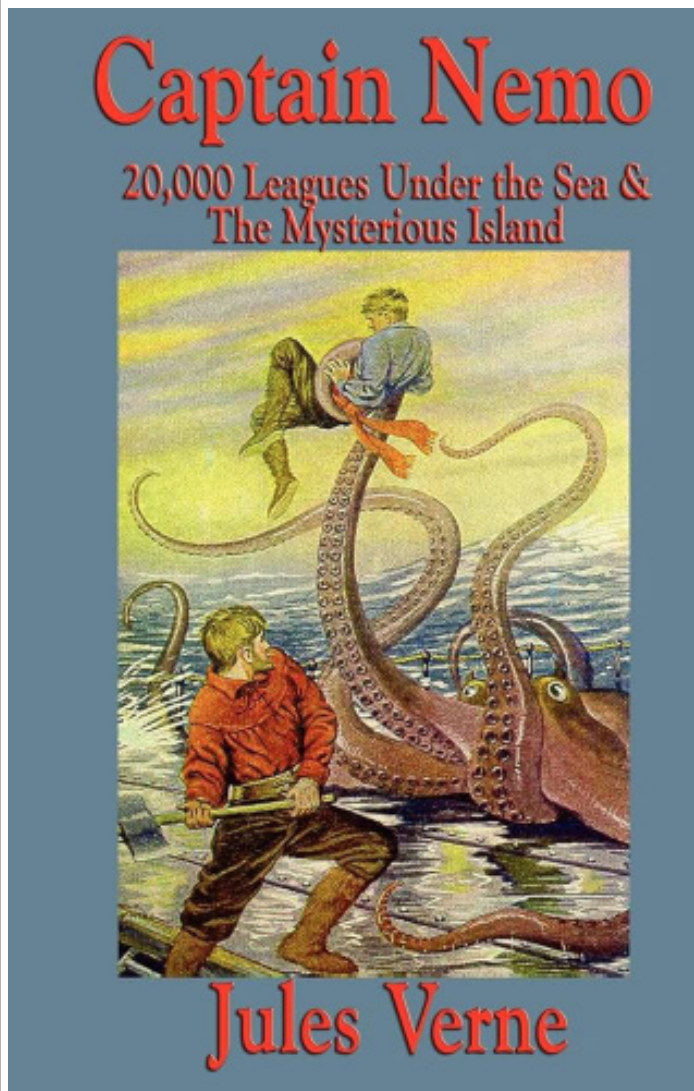
Every summer, during school vacations, I used to visit my grandmother in the village. It was a small village, but it had its own good library. I liked to go there and look for some interesting books to read in my free time, which any student

has plenty of in the summer. One beautiful summer I was lucky enough to read the book "The Wizard of Emerald City" by A. Volkov, based on "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" by L. Frank Baum. A little later I learned that the author who adapted this book for Russian-speaking readers wrote five more books, turning this fairy tale story into a series of books. Reading this series inspired me to read more interesting books. One day, digging through the bookcase at my grandmother's house, I found an old, somewhat shabby book. "What could possibly be interesting about this old junk?" I thought. But a little

for a long time without stopping. Do you think that was enough for me? No. Subsequently, over several years, I reread this book more than ten times. It took me mentally to a distant island, where I experienced together with the characters all the challenges and trials. This antique book, I could say, taught me the good qualities that the characters had.

I still remember the knowledge of the lessons my mother and my first teacher taught me. It helped me so much when I was enrolled in the University of Nuclear Power Engineering. My knowledge and my skills, my journey of developing my literacy molded me into what I turned out to be at that point. It became the apotheosis or quintessence of what I had previously acquired. After graduating from this institution, I have not lost my love for reading, writing, and knowledge. I strive to shape myself further. Going to college here in America helps me to qualify for a higher level of earning, to have a new level of job. It raises me to another level in the eyes of other people and even in my own eyes.

The people who surrounded me from childhood and instilled in me reading and writing skills, together with the books I loved to read, shaped me as a person. Through them, I felt a love for my mother tongue. I knew that literacy is not just the technical ability to read and write, but also the ability to think, to reflect, and to understand complex things in knowing the world. First my mother, and then my first teacher, through literacy taught me how to properly communicate with the world, with society, with people. This is very precious in my eyes. Now, having this invaluable store of knowledge, I can not only use it in my daily life, but also share it with others and teach it to my children and grandchildren. Literacy is a priceless gift that we can pass on from generation to generation.



later I realized that I had made a mistake in judging this book's unsightly appearance. It was an old, 1949 edition of "The Mysterious Island of Captain Nemo" by Jules Verne. I started reading and read

Dmitrii Mishin - ESL 325
Narrative Essay

Achieving Success

What are the causes of great success? Everyone wants to know the answer to this question because everyone wants to be successful. I also thought about this and came to the conclusion that there are several main reasons. The personality, environment that provides moral support, and initial opportunities are main causes of great success.

The biggest cause of success is the personality. No resources or opportunities can make a person successful if he is lazy, irresponsible, and doesn't want to learn anything. However, when a person has a strong character, he or she is able to achieve a lot in life. For me, persistence, responsibility, curiosity, and flexibility are the main features of a person with a strong character. People with these character traits are ready to work for many years, start over after failures, be accountable for their decisions, learn new information, and adapt to a changing world. And all this leads them to success. Indeed, one's personality or character is the main reason for achieving success.



Another important reason for success, in my opinion, is a person's close environment, which provides moral support. Usually, the closest environment is family, but sometimes friends, mentors, teachers or coaches also play an important role in achieving success. Close environment influences the formation of character, especially in childhood. The moral support from loved ones is very important for a person to learn not to give up. There are many examples of how family support and love have led to success for people who were ready to give up. One such example is Nic Vujicic. He was born without limbs and attempted suicide several times as a teenager, but the moral support of his

family, their love and faith led him to great success. He is now a husband, father, motivational speaker and author. Indeed, a close environment capable of providing deep moral support is one of the main factors in achieving success.

Initial opportunities, especially financial ones, also play a role in achieving success. I recently saw a video about a group of young people and a speaker. They had to run 100 meters to the box with a prize. At first, they stood on one line, but later everyone who had a place to live, did not worry about food and bills, received a good education, and could afford private tutors could take a step forward. As a result, some students remained standing on the line, while others went far ahead. It was clear that it would be much easier for those in front to reach the prize. This example illustrates well the importance of initial opportunities in achieving success. The level of development of the country in which a person lives, the financial opportunities of his family, useful connections – all these are important for achieving success.

In conclusion, we all want to know the causes of great success. We study and analyze a lot of information to form our opinion on this matter. In my opinion, there are several main reasons for great success: a person's personality, a close environment that provides moral support and motivation, and initial opportunities, such as living in a developed country, or a rich family. I came to this conclusion by reading biographies of successful people and thinking about the reasons for their success.

**Hanna Konstantynova - ESL 315
Opinion Essay**

My Interesting Jobs

My interesting jobs are a mailman, a clothing designer, and a nurse. A mail man is interesting for me because I like to communicate with people. In my country, I worked in a post office. I got people magazines, newspapers, and money. A nurse is interesting for me because I like to help people who are sick. I also worked a nurse in a hospital in my country. It was a good time, but I was very unhappy when I saw people who had a surgery. I liked to help them in their life

when they were in the hospital. I like the job at a clothing designer, too. It is an interesting job for me because I like to make beautiful clothes. I like to look when people wear nice clothes. My dream is to achieve this job in the U.S. I can't find clothes that I like, and I want to make clothes for other people, too. They are interesting jobs for me because I can help somebody and make them happy.

Nadiia Kiporuk - ESL 37
Descriptive Paragraph

My Favorite Dish: *Bolani*

Bolani is my favorite food. *Bolani* is a beloved Afghan street food that many people enjoy for its delicious taste. Today, I would like to introduce a delicious and popular Afghan dish called *bolani*. It is famous in Afghanistan. Many people in Afghanistan love it. You can find *bolani* sellers to

all areas of my country. They make it fresh and tasty, amazing especially when served with yogurt and hot sauce.

Bolani is made from fresh dough and a green vegetable call Gandana (garlic chive)



in Afghanistan. Potatoes and pumpkins are also commonly used. It is usually filled with onions, salt, potatoes, pumpkins, or Gandana (garlic chive), which are the main ingredients.

Making *bolani* is very simple. You flatten out the dough, fill it with your chosen vegetables, and fry it in hot oil. After about two minutes of frying, it is ready to serve. Adding yogurt and hot sauce make it even more delicious. One time my mom made extra *bolani* and we ate it with our neighbors. It was so fun because we are so close to each other. When I eat *bolani*, I remember happy times with my family when I was child, and I made *bolani* with my family. We all helped in the kitchen, and it was a great time. Now, when I make *bolani*, I still feel happy like before. Indeed, during Ramadan, we make *bolani* almost every evening as an appetizer because I love it, and it's my favorite food.

Sonya Sadati - ESL 47
Descriptive Paragraph

My Favorite Food: *Kabuli Pulao*

I like many foods from my country Afghanistan, but I think *Kabuli Pulao* is exceptionally good, so it is my favorite. *Kabuli Pulao* is a very



important food in our country because *Kabuli Pulao* is one of the traditional dishes of our country. The ingredients are lamb meat, rice, carrot, raisin, almonds, oil, onion, salt and turmeric. This food is medium sweet, and has a very good smell. *Kabuli Pulao* is white

and yellow, but this food size is like rice. When we want to make it, first we put oil into the pot, then we fry the meat on the oil and add onion and salt, and then fry again. Then we add water after 30 minutes, add the rice, carrot, raisin, almonds. We also add cumin, and let it steep for 15 minutes. My mother makes this food very delicious. Once, when I was 15 years old, my mother cooked *Kabuli Pulao*. Then my aunt came in our home, and she says, wow, this is a very delicious food. We eat it at lunch, and sometimes at dinner. We often eat this food two or three times a week. It is a very expensive food. We feel strong. Indeed, *Kabuli Pulao* is a really delicious food, and I love it.

Fazila B. - ESL 47
Descriptive Paragraph

My Favorite Food: *Sarmale with Grape Leaves*

In my home country, Moldova, there are many delicious dishes, but my favorite is *sarmale* with grape leaves. *Sarmale* is a traditional dish enjoyed across many countries in Eastern Europe, but in Moldova, it's a symbol of warmth and hospitality. It consists of seasoned meat (often pork or beef) mixed with rice, herbs, and spices, wrapped tightly in grape leaves, then simmered slowly in a



tomato-based sauce. The grape leaves add a distinct flavor to the dish, making it both tangy and savory. *Sarmale* is traditionally served with a generous dollop of sour cream. The price of this dish can vary depending on the region and restaurant, but it typically costs between \$8 and \$20 per serving at most places. What makes *sarmale* with grape leaves my favorite food is the way it connects me to the traditions and memories of my childhood. One time, I came to my grandmother's house, and as soon as I walked in, the delicious aroma of *sarmale* filled the air. She was busy in the kitchen carefully wrapping the grape leaves with her experienced hands. I told her, "Grandma, I also want to learn how to cook *sarmale*". Her eyes lit up with joy, and she matted the chair next to her, saying, "Come, my dear, let me teach you the secret to make them just right". That day I learned more than just a recipe; I learned a piece of family tradition that I could carry with me forever. Growing up in Moldova, I remember how *sarmale* would often be prepared for

special occasions like holidays or family gatherings. The smell of the simmering not would fl the house, and everyone would gather around the table, eager to enjoy this delicious meal. It was a time to connect with loved ones and savor something that had been done with care and attention. Indeed, *sarmale* with

grape leaves is much more than just my favorite food; it is a symbol of Moldovan culture, family and tradition.

Zinaida K. - ESL 47
Descriptive Paragraph



The Grateful Gull: My Gratitude



What are you grateful for? Many people are grateful for a good job, their home, and opportunity to travel. Everyone has their own priorities. I feel a lot of gratitude for three special things in my life. My car, my city Moscow, and my ability to study English.

First of all, I really need my car. I can drive to different places. For example, I can drive to a shop, a bank, and the college. Also, my car is very comfortable. I can put all the things I need in it. I can use my car when I go to travel. I'm not afraid of the bad weather because my car protects me from the rain. Last year I was able to make some money with the help of my car. In addition, owning a car gives me many advantages, such as mobility, comfort and the ability to get a lot done. I like my car because it is a very useful thing. I am especially thankful for it.

Second, my favorite city is Moscow because there were many memories, events, and happiness of my life there. Also this city is big and beautiful. I met my husband in this city. Then we got married. After that, my children were born. There are many historical places, theaters, and museums in Moscow that we often visited with our children. My friends and my family live there. Moscow is a special place in my life. I feel deep gratitude to the city of Moscow for my wedding, the birth of my children, and many good friends.

Last of all, the ability to learn a foreign language is necessary. And I always wanted to learn English because I like it and it is an international language. When I travel, I meet a lot of interesting people, and in order to communicate with them, I need to speak English well. Besides, I should know

the language of the country I am going to live in. After all, knowing English, I will feel comfortable because I will be able to understand other people and express my feelings. I will be able to share my stories with



people and learn something new from them. And most importantly, I need to find a good job. But English is difficult for me, and yet I do not give up. I try and my ability to learn

the language improves every day. I want to give thanks for my ability to learn English.

In conclusion, all these things are very important and essential to me. I am sincerely thankful to them for everything they give me.

Svetlana Selvasyuk - ESL 47
Opinion Essay



The Grateful Gull: I Am Thankful



Life is full of many blessings that bring joy and comfort, even in the smallest ways they make our lives easier. Being thankful reminds us to appreciate them. I am especially thankful for my car, my mother's home, and my cooking. These three things provide me with love, knowledge and peaceful space to relax.

First, I am thankful for my car. My car is one of the things that I am deeply thankful for. My car is very important to me because, with my car, I can travel, come to college, go shopping, and take my kids to school, doctors' appointments, and the park. When I travel with my car, I feel safe and comfortable. I am very lucky to have a good car because I don't have to wait for another form of public transportation like a bus or taxi. My car saves my time and energy.

Additionally, having my own car gives me the freedom to go wherever I want without depending on others. It's also a convenient way for me to carry my shopping bags and other things. Finally, owning a car has allowed me to help my family more easily by providing transportation for them too.

Secondly, I am thankful for my mother's home. My mother's home is one of the most important and special places for me. In my mother's house, I feel joy and comfort because this is where I grew up. When I go to my mother's house I feel like little girl again, and I remember the times when my dad and mom would play with me. I feel very happy to have good parents and a place where I can go to relax with my siblings. Moreover, my mother's home is where I feel safe and loved. It is a peaceful place where I can unwind after a busy day. In addition, the memories of my family make me feel even more grateful every time I visit.

Last, I am grateful for my ability to cook. Cooking is one of my important abilities. I can prepare delicious meals and dinners for my family and friends. My husband and my kids like my cooking and I enjoy making food for them.



Cooking helps me try new recipes and expand my skills in the kitchen. Also, I can make healthy meals for my kids, ensuring they eat nutritious food. It is fun to bake cakes and cookies for special days like birthdays and holidays. Furthermore, cooking allows me to express my love for my family by preparing meals that make them happy.

Indeed, I feel deeply thankful for my car, my mother's home, and my abilities to cook. These blessings make my life better, and I will continue to cherish them every day.

Nabila Rustami - ESL 47
Opinion Essay

Hobby Corner: Knitting

Many people around the world have different hobbies. Some enjoy reading, fishing, painting, hiking, or modeling. Do you have any hobbies like these? I do. I like to spend my free time in a useful and enjoyable way. Many interesting hobbies make me happy, such as listening to music, painting by numbers, and planting. However, in my life, I have three favorites: running, knitting, and cooking.

First, when I am running, I can listen to myself. This is a new hobby for me; I started running last spring. My sister-in-law invited me to join her. At first, it was so hard for me because I had to run, but I couldn't do it. In my whole life, I had never run, and I always told my friends: "I will never run!" or "I don't like running; it's not for me!" After two weeks, I changed my opinion about running, and I started to enjoy this hobby. I woke up at 4:30 a.m. every Tuesday and Thursday, drove to a beautiful location, and ran. It became very important for me because I could think about my life, my family, and my life in America. Also, I had the opportunity to speak with God. I could talk to Him about everything that was worrying me. Now, I cannot run because it is very dark outside, and the weather is not good for running. I am waiting for spring, and I hope I will be able to run again. Indeed, running is a very important hobby for me, and it makes me happier and gives me a wonderful opportunity to speak with God.

My second favorite hobby is knitting. I think that for left-handed people, knitting is a

big challenge. When I was learning to knit, my toes curled because it was so hard for me and my hands. I dreamed of making beautiful, knitted things by myself. Now, I can knit, and I am a little bit proud of myself. Many people say that knitting gives them relaxation and makes them calm. But for me, it is not easy or relaxing. I want to finish quickly without interruptions from my family.



When I need to complete a row, they ask me about dinner or something else. After that, I become angry. Usually, I can only knit when my family goes to sleep. My specialty is warm socks. It feels like holding a hedgehog in your hands and turning it around. I have knitted a winter hat, scarves, socks, and a cocoon for my newborn baby daughter. In America, I don't have much time for knitting, but last fall, I completed a blanket for myself. Now, when I sit in an armchair, I can cover my legs with my blanket and drink hot tea or coffee. In short, knitting gives me cozy things, helps me relax, and allows me to spend

my time usefully.

Lastly, cooking is one of my favorite hobbies. Many people, especially women, learn to cook when they are young. I was not one of them. When I was going to get married, I honestly told my future husband and mother-in-law that I couldn't cook anything. After that, I wanted to learn how to easily prepare dinner for my family. I watched many cooking shows and practiced what I learned. Over time, I started to understand what I could do in my kitchen and which ingredients could make tasty meals. My grandma used to make amazing dishes from dough, and I also



wanted to cook like her. Now, I cook very well—at least, that’s what my family and friends say! Cooking helps me improve my skills. Sometimes, my mother-in-law even asks me for advice when she can’t decide what to make. We often laugh about my cooking skills before marriage. I like to try new recipes, but my family prefers traditional food over unusual dishes. When I am cooking, I can think, reflect, and listen to myself. In brief, cooking not only helps me be a good wife but also gives me the chance to improve my skills.

In conclusion, my favorite hobbies are very special to me and enrich my life. Indeed, I am glad that I have time to enjoy my hobbies and make my free time meaningful and enjoyable.

***Olena Ivaniuk - ESL 47
Narrative Essay***

The Art of Macarons

My name is Dana. I am from Ukraine and have been living in America for two years. I’m currently in my second semester at American River College. I have a wonderful family—my husband and four children. I also love spending time with my family—taking walks by the ocean and hiking in the mountains

I love baking, even though I don’t really like sweets myself. I’ve always been fascinated by macarons, but I was afraid to



start making them. A year ago, when my youngest daughter was about a year old, I finally decided to give it a try. I bought a few courses, experimented a lot, and now my macarons turn out delicious!

I’ve tried about ten flavors, and my favorites are Latte, Dubai Chocolate, and Lemon Cheesecake. My husband loves Coconut, and my son’s favorite is Pistachio-Raspberry.

At first, baking macarons was very difficult, and I

think beginners will also find it challenging. But now, I truly enjoy the process! For me, it's an art.

I run pages on Instagram and TikTok (@dana_baking), and also Facebook, YouTube (Dana Rusina, @dana_baking), where I share my baking. People often order macarons for birthdays, weddings, and other celebrations—or simply to enjoy with coffee or tea. They are truly delicious!

Macaron facts:

Macaron vs. Macaroon: Macarons are French cookies with two meringue biscuits and sweet buttercream. Macaroons are coconut-and-egg desserts.

History: Macarons became the almond meringue sandwich we know today in the early 20th century, thanks to Ladurée in Paris.

Famous Locations: Ladurée in Paris is a famous place to enjoy macarons.

Variety: Macarons come in many flavors, from raspberry and chocolate to matcha and foie gras.

National Macaron Day: March 20th is celebrated as National Macaron Day in France, with free samples at participating shops.

Source: <https://www.cordobleu.edu/malaysia/all-you-ever-need-to-know-about-macaron/en>



**Dana Rusina - ESL 47
Narrative Essay**

One-Minute Interview

What's your favorite summer destination?

"My favorite summer destination is Miami, Florida. The weather is always perfect and there's always some fun party at the beach." - Carlos Martinez



"My favorite summer destination is Lake Tahoe. Me and my family always rent a cabin and we swim in the lake all day long." - Marissa Gager

"My favorite summer place is San Francisco, because even though it is hot everywhere in California, it is always cool and breezy in the Bay Area." - Jolene



Interviewer: Manny



Would you like to
contribute to *The Parrot*?

If you want to share your work, art,
opinion, or anything else with
The Parrot, please email us at
TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu. We would be
happy to hear from you and will try to
respond ASAP.

The Parrot welcomes all ESL student
matters!





Spelling Bee Buzzes!



Are you a good speller? Many people say no because English spelling is very difficult. That's probably why the "spelling bee" was invented. Have you ever heard of a "spelling bee"? It's about spelling hard



Winners received medals.

words and has nothing to do with bees. In this case, the spellers were ESL students in Los Rios. On Friday, April 11, Folsom Lake Community College hosted this special spelling contest for ESL students of all levels. None of the students had ever done this before. A spelling competition like this is not common in other languages because most languages have regular, more predictable spelling compared to English. English spelling is crazy, and it takes a lot of work to become a good speller. In fact, Americans recognize that it is so hard to be an excellent speller that there are spelling bees at schools across the country, and the [Scripps National Spelling Bee is celebrating its 100th year in 2025](#). It is a unique part of American culture.

For each level, students were given 100 words to study in advance, and Professor Spencer Eckman from FLC was the moderator and judge. He randomly drew a word from an envelope, said the word, and then used it in a sample sentence. Then the student had to spell the word letter by letter into a microphone in front of an audience of about 50 people. Some of the students were extra nervous because they could not think about the spelling by writing the words on paper. If a competitor spelled a word incor-

rectly, the judge rang a bell, and the student had to sit down.

One brave student represented American River College. Samiullah Shirzad from Professor Patrick Hoggan's ESL 47 class



Professor Eckmans draws a word.

participated with a group of nine competitors in his level. This was the largest group of the competition. The words at this level



ARC student Samiullah Shirzad competed in his first spelling bee.

included: *message, normal, record, extraordinary, mystery, wood, decorate, allow, communicate, cell, produce, connect, quit*, and others. After five rounds for the 40-level students, one student won by spelling *percent*. Some of the tricky words that eliminated students were *quit,*

realize, store, mystery, modern, harvest, and quantity. Mr. Shirzad didn't win his level, but he received a certificate for competing. He said it was a good experience and was grateful for the chance to try something new and to have an opportunity (one of the words on the spelling list!) to practice English.

Reported by Patrick Hoggan

CalWORKs Family Resource Night

On March 27, 2025, my family and I attended the CalWORKs Family Resource Night hosted by the CalWORKs Department at American River College. This annual event is designed to give CalWORKs students and members of the Parent-to-Parent (P2P) program an overview of the many services and resources available to them.

Around 50 students attended with their families, including children, creating a warm and welcoming community atmosphere. The evening began with informative presentations, first by the CalWORKs team, followed by another presentation about the P2P program. Both presentations did a great job outlining the benefits, services, and eligibility requirements for current and future members. It was clear and helpful, especially for those looking to understand how to make the most of what the department offers.

Meanwhile, the kids had a blast playing with games and toys provided at different department tables set up around the

room. It was great to see them engaged and happy while the adults learned more about these valuable support programs.

At the end of the presentations, attendees had the chance to ask questions and connect directly with the staff and greet each other to make friends, something I

found really helpful. After that, we all enjoyed a delicious dinner with desserts, making it not only a resourceful night but also a genuinely fun one for the whole family.

Overall, my wife, our two-year-old child, and I had a wonderful time. The presentations were informative, the environment was supportive, and

our child had a great time playing. We left with a much clearer understanding of both CalWORKs and the Parent-to-Parent program, and we're grateful to be part of such a thoughtful and student-focused community.



Parrot Staff Writer: Sayed Edres Sadiqi



The Secret Language of Fruit Code

Have you ever wondered what a PLU code is and why it appears on fruit barcodes? Let's learn how to read these codes and choose better fruit.

PLU: Price Look-up

Four-digit codes:

Starting with **3** or **4** is the most common fruit code for conventional produce. This means synthetic fertilizers and/or pesticides might have been used by the farmers growing the produce.

*These are safe to eat, but you should wash thoroughly.



Five-digit codes:

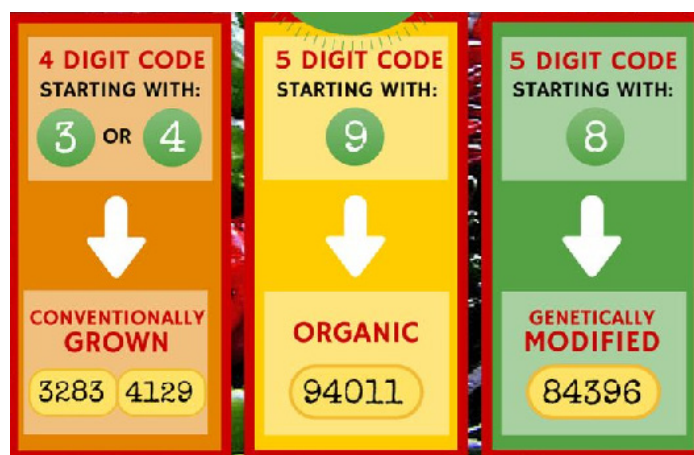
Starting with **9**: These signify that the produce was grown organically in a natural way.

Starting with **8**: These indicate that the produce is genetically modified (GMO).

Starting with **3**: These signify that the produce was irradiated (electronically pasteurized).

Why PLU Codes Matter

Understanding PLU codes can help you make more informed choices about the fruits and vegetables you buy. By knowing whether produce is conventionally grown, organically grown, or genetically modified, you can select items that align with your preferences and values.



Tips for Remembering PLU Codes

"8 you hate": Avoid genetically modified produce.

"9 is fine": Choose organic produce.

Example Codes

4011: Conventionally grown banana.

94011: Organically grown banana.

84011: Genetically modified banana.

* By using these codes, you can become a savvy shopper and make better choices for your health and the environment.

Source: <https://www.eatingwell.com/article/8044090/how-to-decipher-plu-codes-on-fresh-produce/>

Continued from page 1

Thank you so much for this opportunity, Professor Paez. I'm excited to have this conversation with you because you have been a major inspiration in my decision to switch my major to Communication. Many students know you, but I would love for you to introduce yourself and share a bit about your background.

Absolutely! My name is Alexander Paez, and I'm a full-time faculty member in the Communication Department at American River College. I'm part of the Language and Communications Division, and my journey to teaching has been anything but traditional.

I'm a first-generation student, something that's shaped who I am as an educator. My father is from Cuba, and my mother is from Colombia. Growing up, my family didn't speak much English, and education was always a big deal in our household. I started my academic journey at San Francisco State University, where I earned my bachelor's degree in Radio and Television Broadcasting. Interestingly, that's under "Communications" with an 'S,' which is more about media production. What I do

now teaching Communication is about human interaction and the way we connect with one another.

Before becoming a professor, I spent nearly 14 years working in investment banking, eventually becoming an Assistant Vice President.

But teaching was always in the back of my mind. Friends and family would often tell me, "Alex, you

would be a great teacher." And I'd think about it, but then I'd get caught up in work.

In 2014, I had a big turning point. I decided to leave my banking career and move to Stockton. I applied for graduate school at the University of the Pacific, and when I got in, I was almost 15 years older than many of my classmates. It was a huge adjustment going from a

full-time career to being a student again. I remember filling out the FAFSA form in my late 30s, thinking, "Wow, I'm really starting over."

Graduate school has intense 500 pages of reading every week for two years! But it was also an incredible experience. Learning about the theories and concepts of communication felt like unlocking a new world. When I finally earned my master's degree in 2018, it was an emotional moment. I had achieved something that once felt like just a dream. I

remember sitting in my office at the bank years earlier, staring out the window at the LA mountains, thinking, "What if I were teaching right now?" And then, suddenly, I was.

I started at American River College as an assistant professor after a Zoom interview. I was

coaching speech and debate at the time, which had always been a passion of mine. When ARC offered me the position, I knew I was in the right place. And here I am, years later, incredibly grateful to be doing what I love helping students like you find their own paths in Communication.



“I remember sitting in my office at the bank years earlier, staring out the window at the LA mountains, thinking, “What if I were teaching right now?” And then, suddenly, I was.”

That's such an inspiring journey. Thank you

for sharing your story, Professor Paez. It really shows that it's never too late to pursue what you're passionate about!

Have you ever been misunderstood by family, friends, students, or colleagues? How did you handle it?

Oh, absolutely, in all those areas. Misunderstandings happen because, even with communication techniques, not every approach works for every situation or person. With students, for example, I might think an assignment is clear, but if they don't understand, I have to step back, listen, and adjust how I explain it. The same goes for family or friends; being a communication expert doesn't mean conflicts magically disappear. Sometimes, it's about accepting that people see things differently and focusing on understanding their perspective rather than just pushing my own. Listening first always helps.

As a communication professional, do you think we should change our techniques depending on the situation, or is listening actively enough?

That's a great question. The beauty of human interaction lies in the diversity of personalities, backgrounds, and cultural influences. I teach intercultural communication, and one of the key lessons is that understanding other cultures helps us better connect with a wider range of people. It's always a mix. There are fundamental communication techniques, but they aren't one-size-fits-all. Different cultures, personalities, and contexts require adjustments. When speaking with a student who's struggling with coursework, I approach it differently than if they're facing personal challenges outside of class. The key is adaptability, shifting your strategy to meet the moment. But at the core of it all? Listen first, then respond thoughtfully. That's the foundation of effective communication.

So, your advice to students, particularly those majoring in communication, is to listen carefully and adapt?

Absolutely. Listen first, then respond. Whether in an academic or non-academic setting, active listening enhances communication effectiveness. Students should absorb theories and concepts, then develop their own techniques and style. The more you listen, the better you communicate.

If you weren't in the field of communication, what other subject or career path would you have pursued?

Without a doubt performance studies and theater. I love acting and the stage. It's closely related to what I do now, but with a stronger emphasis on performance and storytelling.

That's interesting! Outside of communication and public speaking, what are your hobbies or interests?

I have a deep love for swing dancing. Many years ago, a friend introduced me to it, and I instantly fell in love with it. I have been dancing for over 31 years and still stay connected with the dance community in both Southern California and Sacramento.

That's very cool! Lastly, I want to say that you have been an inspiration to me. I changed my major because of your class, and I hope to make you proud one day. If you imagine me succeeding in this field, how do you see my future?

First, I'm already proud of you. You have embraced this field with passion and dedication. I imagine you thriving perhaps as a professor, sharing your journey and inspiring others just as you have been inspired. But ultimately, your future is in your hands. The fact that you have taken this step shows you are already on the right path, and I have no doubt you'll succeed in whatever direction you choose.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to interview you! We appreciate your time.

Interviewer: Asila Sadiqi

Granny Noetal

Welcome to the Granny Noetal Column! Our student staff is pleased to share valuable tips and advice to support you on your academic journey at ARC.

Dear Granny,

I always have trouble focusing when I study. I get distracted by my phone, my thoughts, or things around me. No matter how much I try, I can't concentrate for long periods. Do you have any advice on how I can stay focused and study better?



Thanks,

Easily Distracted Student

Dear Easily Distracted Student,

Thanks for reaching out about your concern. I understand that staying focused while studying can be difficult, especially with so many distractions around us. However, don't worry! There are ways to improve your concentration and make studying easier.

First, try to create a dedicated study space that is quiet and free from distractions. If possible, keep your phone in another room or use apps that block notifications while you study. Sometimes, even small things like background noise can make it harder to focus, so using soft instrumental music or white noise might help.

Another tip is to use the Pomodoro Technique, which means studying for 25 minutes and then taking a 5-minute break. Short study sessions can make it easier to stay focused without feeling overwhelmed.

It also helps to set small goals for each study session. Instead of saying, "I need to study for 3 hours," try something more specific like, "I will finish reading this chapter" or "I will practice 10 vocabu-

lary words." This makes studying feel more manageable.

Lastly, remember to take care of yourself! A good night's sleep, a healthy meal, and short exercise breaks can improve focus and help you retain more information.

I hope these tips help you stay on track with your studies! Keep practicing these techniques, and over time, focusing will become easier. If you have any other concerns, feel free to write back.

Thanks,

Granny Noetal

Dear Readers,

I hope you found my advice to the student's question helpful. I am thankful for the information and experience a student shared with us. If you need some advice, please share your question with me at:

Granny Noetal

TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu



Parents' Misconception "Magical Fruit"

There was a time when I flashed back to a memory and laughed at myself. Everyone might have experienced a parent's misconception when you believed what they said without logical reasoning. It usually happens when you are a kid because you tend to believe everything your parents tell you. I experienced a hilarious story about a magical fruit when I was 4 or 5 years old. I still remember it well. Let me tell you about my mother's misconception about a magical fruit: lychee.

When we were kids, I believe we all loved to eat chewing gum because it has a fabulous flavor. I loved to eat tropical-flavored chewing gum when I was a kid. I asked my mom to give me some every other day. My mom saw how much I loved those pieces of gum and was lying on my bed to eat them. She warned me, "If you eat chewing gum while lying down on your bed and accidentally swallow it, the chewing gum will melt in your stomach. Then, it will wrap around your stomach until you die." As a kid, I didn't pay much attention to it, as I was confident I wouldn't swallow it. One afternoon, I accidentally swallowed two pieces of chewing gum while chewing them. I tried so hard to throw up the gum, but I couldn't. My mom's voice kept coming back to my head; my whole body was shaking; my heart rate went through the roof. I cried like there was no tomorrow. I looked for my mom for help, but she was out. I was so disappointed and thought I was dying soon. I lay down on my stomach, cried nonstop, and waited for death to come. When my mom came home and asked me what happened, I told her, "I'm dying soon because I swallowed the chewing gum. I didn't listen to you, and I can't live anymore." I can't remember her face at that time, but I think she might have held her laugh.



She left the room and came back with some lychees in her hands. It was the first time I saw lychee fruit. My mom told me, "Okay! Now you understand why you should have listened to me from the beginning about the chewing gum, right?" I nodded my head and looked at her. She continued, "This is lychee, a magical fruit. If you eat this fruit, it will save you. It will come down to your stomach and make the gum disappear." I clearly remember seeing a shining light around the lychee as I thought it was a magical fruit that could save lives. I ate a lot of lychees as I believed they would keep me alive. It was like a lighthouse in the middle of the sea during

a storm. It was also the first time I ate lychee. My mom made me think it was a magical fruit. I continued to eat chewing gum with the confidence that I wouldn't die if I accidentally swallowed one. Why? Because I had a magical fruit to save my life.

"Two wrongs don't make a right." My mom told me two lies, which didn't change my bad habit of chewing gum. It's a funny story from my life, but I wish she had told me the truth. That way, I could understand more about how chewing gum too much is bad for my health rather than believing in the gum wrapping around my stomach and the magical fruit. Sometimes, parents' misconceptions can cause confusion for kids. In the end, this funny and somewhat absurd memory remains a cherished part of my childhood. It reminds me of the innocence and gullibility that come with being a kid, and the loving yet imperfect ways parents try to protect and guide us. It's a story I can laugh about now, but it also serves as a valuable lesson in the importance of truth and understanding.

Parrot Staff Writer: Snow Le

Top 10 2024 Movies

These films represent a diverse range of genres and storytelling, reflecting the dynamic landscape of American cinema in 2024.

1. *Inside Out 2*

The sequel to Pixar's beloved animated film, this installment continues to explore the emotions inside Riley's mind as she navigates new challenges in her teenage years. It became the highest-grossing film of 2024, earning over \$652 million domestically.



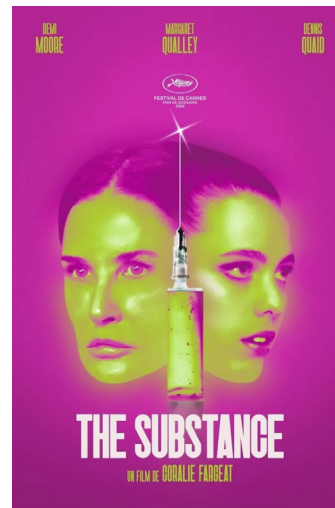
3. *A Real Pain*

Directed by Jesse Eisenberg, this drama-comedy features two American cousins traveling through Poland, offering a blend of humor and emotional depth. Kieran Culkin's performance was particularly noted for its excellence.



4. *The Substance*

A satirical horror film starring Demi Moore, it delves into themes of beauty and aging, offering a sharp critique of societal standards. The film was recognized for its daring narrative and Moore's compelling performance.



elling performance.

5. *Challengers*

Directed by Luca Guadagnino, this film redefines tennis dynamics, offering a fresh perspective on sport. It was praised

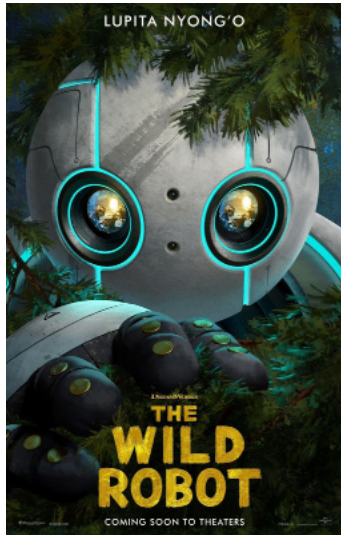


2. *Dune: Part Two*

Directed by Denis Villeneuve, this epic science fiction film continues the adaptation of Frank Herbert's novel, following Paul Atreides' journey amid interstellar politics and warfare. The film was

praised for its visual grandeur and storytelling.

for its innovative storytelling and engaging performances.



6. *The Wild Robot*

An animated feature that tells the story of a robot stranded on an island, learning to adapt and survive. The film was lauded for its heartwarming narrative and stunning animation.

7. *A Complete Unknown*

Starring Timothée Chalamet, this film explores the early life of a renowned musician, delving into his rise to fame and personal struggles. Chalamet's portrayal received widespread acclaim.



8. *Wicked*

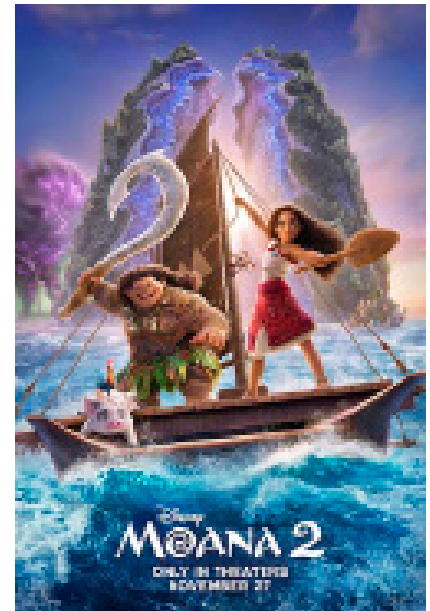
A cinematic adaptation of the popular Broadway musical, this film explores the untold story of the witches of Oz. It achieved significant box office success, grossing over \$473 mil-



lion domestically

9. *Moana 2*

The sequel to Disney's animated hit, this film follows Moana on new adventures across the seas. It resonated with audiences, earning over \$460 million in domestic box office sales.



10. *Beetlejuice*

Directed by Tim Burton, this sequel brings back the beloved characters in a new, whimsical adventure. The film was a commercial success, with a domestic gross of approxi-



mately \$294 million.



English Conversation Group

Fridays 5:00-6:00 | North Natomas library

Want to practice speaking English? Join our friendly group!

All languages and levels welcome. No registration. Meet new people and share experiences. This is not a class; it's more a social group for practicing.

Check "Events" for more locations and times at www.saclibrary.org.

Topics:

- Everyday life & things to do
- American culture
- News, pop culture
- Other...You help decide!

Groups are led by a trained facilitator. We hope to see you there!

Continued from page 1

disagreement with the government's actions toward Ukraine, corruption, injustice, lawlessness, and hierarchy. The political climate had become increasingly repressive, with persecution of those who voiced opinions different from the government's. Staying in Russia meant facing a future where freedom of thought and personal safety were at risk. Like Yang's family, we had to abandon our homeland, personal belongings, and loved ones. However, unlike Yang's family, our journey was not solely about survival but also about seeking justice, dignity, and a future where we could live without fear of repression. Although my family's immigration journey shares similarities with Yang's family's in terms of forced displacement, emotional hardships, and starting over in a foreign land, it also differs in terms of the historical context, level of preparedness, and language barriers.

Like Yang's family, my family experienced the emotional and physical challenges of leaving behind a familiar life and restarting in an unfamiliar country. One of the most significant similarities between our experiences is the feeling of forced displacement. Just as Yang's family had to flee Laos because of war and persecution, my family was also compelled to leave Russia due to political oppression. The government's actions toward Ukraine, such as armed invasion into the

territory of another state and initiation of military action, propaganda, increasing restrictions on freedom of speech, and the persecution of opposition voices made it dangerous for us to remain. We decided to leave because we could not live in a country where expressing different opinions could lead to imprisonment or worse, and because we were seeking better opportunities for ourselves and our children.

Another similarity is the leaving of items and the memories associated with them. In *The Latecomer*, Yang describes how her family had to abandon their home and most of their possessions, including sentimental items like photographs. For example, she recalls, "Many of their belongings, their wealth, and their keepsakes had been forsaken in the three years of flight and homelessness" (Yang 17); "In the shallow hole, she placed all the pictures

of her brothers, her mother, herself . . . One day she would find the pictures again" (Yang 37). Similarly, my family left behind nearly all our belongings, including photo albums filled with memories of our past. I remember the moment of deciding which few items could fit into our limited luggage, knowing everything else would remain behind. The inability to take cherished items with us created a deep sense of discon-



nection from our former lives. Although material possessions can be replaced, the emotional value attached to them cannot. Separation from loved ones was another painful reality. Yang's family had to part with relatives in Laos, uncertain if they would ever reunite. For instance, Yang describes her mother's emotional separation from her own mother, writing, "Her mother had walked away from the clearing to get some water from a nearby mountain stream. She wanted to go say good-bye to her, but my father said the dark could not wait any longer. She thought that they would visit again, so she did not stamp her foot, shout for her mother to stop, run after her and hold her close. She just stood beside my father and watched as her mother, an old woman with a water pail on her back, her left hand on her hip, walked away, into the darkness of the Laotian jungle. . . . She never saw her mother again" (Yang 19). My family faced a similar situation, saying goodbye to our old parents, relatives, and close friends, knowing that we might never see some of them again. While modern technology allows us to stay in touch, video calls and messages can never replace the warmth of being physically close to loved ones. The pain of this separation remains one of the hardest aspects of our immigration journey. My mother joined us, thank God, two years later.

Although our families share similar struggles of immigration and emotional stress, our experiences also differ in many respects, especially since we immigrated in different time

periods and had different levels of preparation and adaptation. One of the key differences is the historical and political context. Unlike Yang's family, who immigrated in the 1980s as part of the Hmong refugee crisis following the Vietnam War, my family moved in 2022, at a time when international mobility and access to information were more advanced. Yang's family endured years in refugee camps before reaching the U.S., struggling with poverty and a lack of basic necessities. For example, Yang describes how her family had to search for food in the refugee camps. In contrast, my family was able to leave Russia without experiencing the same level of hardship in transit. While our departure was sudden and emotionally difficult, we did not have to endure the extreme physical suffering that Yang's family faced before arriving in a new country. Although we did not come to America directly from Russia, we first traveled through other

countries, such as Turkey, where we faced difficulties. For example, even though we had plane tickets and had completed early check-in, we were initially not allowed to board the plane. The airline claimed the flight was overbooked and that there were no available seats. It was a stressful situation, but we felt somewhat relieved knowing that we were not the only ones experiencing this issue. In the end, after making everyone nervous, the airline staff finally let all the passengers board the airplane. However, they separated families and assigned everyone to different seats. As a result, our long flight across the ocean was even more difficult, as we had to travel without the support of sitting next to our loved ones.



Another key difference is the level of preparedness for immigration. Yang's family arrived in the U.S. with little knowledge of what to expect, struggling to find stability in an unfamiliar world. In contrast, my family's immigration happened in 2022, during a time when information, technology, and international travel were more accessible, making the process somewhat smoother. Unlike Yang's family, who had little knowledge of what life in America would be like, my family had access to the internet, allowing us to research and prepare before our move. My children, who were 15 and 19 years old at the time, could gather information, understand cultural expectations, and mentally adjust before arriving in a new country. They studied English, American culture, and history as part of their school curriculum. They also had the opportunity to visit many European cities. This level of preparedness made our transition smoother compared to the transition of Yang's family, who had to navigate an unfamiliar world without prior knowledge or resources. Having access to information gives us a sense of control in an unpredictable situation. Additionally, we had some financial savings, which provided a small sense of security in the early months. While starting over was still difficult, having a basic understanding of what awaited us made the transition slightly easier. Language barriers and adaptation also set our experiences apart. For Yang's family, learning English was one of the greatest challenges, making communication and integration difficult. They had to learn it from scratch while struggling with cultural adaptation. As Hmong speakers, they entered a society where their native language was nearly unknown, leading to isolation and struggles in education and employment. In contrast, my family did not face this issue, as we were already proficient in English before immigrating. This significantly eased our integration process, allowing us to navigate daily life, education, and employment opportunities

more easily. Speaking in a new language every day, understanding different accents, and expressing thoughts clearly were still struggles. Nevertheless, compared to Yang's family, my language barrier was less severe, giving me an advantage in adjusting to the new environment. These differences highlight how immigration experience can be shaped not only by personal circumstances but also by external factors such as historical context, access to information, and prior preparation.

Immigration is a journey filled with both struggle and resilience. While my family's immigration journey and that of Kao Kalia Yang's family share common themes of displacement, loss, and adaptation, our experiences differ significantly due to the historical context, level of preparedness, and language challenges. Despite these differences, the emotional weight of leaving behind a homeland and stepping into the unknown remains a shared reality for all immigrants, and the conditions of each journey shape the path toward rebuilding a new life. This view captures the essence of both our stories—the search for a place to live authentically and safely. Eventually, immigration is not just about moving to a new country; it is about navigating losses, resilience, and the hope for a better future. No matter the circumstances, stepping into the unknown requires courage and sacrifice, as every immigrant seeks to create a new home in an unfamiliar land. Both Yang's story and my own remind us of the sacrifices made in search of a better future. Despite our different paths, we share the experience of straddling two worlds, the homeland of our memory and the new country we now call home.

Daniia Aliaudinova - ESL 325
Opinion Essay

Volunteer Opportunity



Help for Refugee Children



Starting Point is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting newly arrived refugee children in the greater Sacramento area.

The organization strives to give them a warm welcome by providing basic necessities and programs as they begin their new lives in the U.S. They do things like meet refugee families with children at the airport, give them welcome baskets, and provide basic ESL and computer lessons, and they have even started a very popular soccer team for the kids. Visit the website and click on [REQUEST HELP](#).

Starting Point is directed by Vickee Moy, a professor of English as a Second Language in Sacramento. She launched Starting Point in June 2017 after being deeply touched by her refugee students' stories about their lives in their native countries and about their new lives in the U.S. Starting Point is one way she hopes to honor and

remember their incredible stories and beautiful lessons about perseverance, strength, hope, and humanity.

As a child of immigrants, Vickee feels a connection with new arrivals and is passionate about helping them begin successful lives in their new country. Along with her husband and three sons, she is excited to reach out to this growing community of newcomers.

<https://www.startingpointworld.com/>

Want to Help?

There are several ways that you can help Starting Point to help children. You can put together a welcome basket, assemble a backpack with supplies, help buy shoes, assist with lessons and program development for SPARK (Summer Program for Arts, Recreation and Knowledge), or even coach and support a soccer team!

Donations to Starting Point are tax deductible. Please visit the [Starting Point Volunteer](#) Page for more information.

The Swallow's Silverquill

When words fail, I listen to *Sing Like Madonna*.

Lately, I've realized that words don't exactly fail me. It's more like journaling has taken on a new form. I'm obsessed with driving – road trips are my escape, a chance to let go of pressures and unlock creativity. My mind switches into full regeneration mode, writing in my head. Pen and paper? Who needs them? Sure, the brain isn't the most reliable storage for thoughts, but the freedom it offers is magnetic. I can't help leaning into it.

Most of my ideas – sentence structures, storylines, everything that ends up on paper later – come to me when I'm behind the wheel. I turn up the volume on Spotify, drowning out the noise, and it's just me, my car, my music, and my thoughts. It's like journaling, but in my head. I process everything as it comes, no paper required.

A few weeks ago, my Spotify app introduced me to a song that quickly became my anthem – [Sing Like Madonna](#), by Sebastian Schub. This track is more than music. It's his manifesto of desires and dreams, those hidden things we're often too scared to voice. It pulls me into a feeling of freedom and self-expression that no other song quite does lately. Now, it's on repeat – my soundtrack, my invisible chronicle, playing through my mornings, afternoons, and nights.

Sebastian's lyrics hit hard: "I wanna sing

like Madonna, I wanna dance like a queen." It's about opening yourself up to your deepest dreams, letting them walk right into your world. For me, journaling shifted from simply writing down the events of my day to imagining what I want for the future – the things I might have been too cautious or unsure to do before. Lines like "Don't want to look at the stars, I want them looking at me" – they hit me, like a monologue from my own mind, challenging me to dream bigger, live louder.

And then there's this line: "I wanna move like Freddie and kiss the sun." It's not just about Freddie Mercury – the frontman of Queen (one of my favorite bands!) – and his electrifying stage presence. It's about capturing that same energy, that same boldness, in my writing. Like Freddie with his iconic moves, I want my words to

have that same raw power, that ability to shock, to electrify. It's a reminder to live fully, to create with no limits.

Even now, as I write this, I'm listening to *Sing Like Madonna*, letting it fuel my thoughts and give rhythm to my writing. It's a spark that ignites the words in my daily journaling. As you read these lines, I hope you can feel that same energy – the same freedom to express and dream bigger!



Chirrup 'till next time!

Written by the quill of *Sofia Kovalko*



Movie Review

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs



Last weekend, I had the opportunity to see the live-action adaptation of the beloved Disney classic *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. As a fan of the original animated film, I was both excited and skeptical about how the live-action version would turn out. I'm happy to report that the movie exceeded my expectations in many ways, while also having

some minor flaws.

The film's storyline remains faithful to the original, with some clever additions and expansions that add depth and complexity to the characters. Rachel Zegler shines as Snow White, bringing a youthful energy and charm to the role. Her chemistry with the CGI dwarfs is undeniable, and she brings a sense of vulnerability and determination to the character.

The dwarfs, though being added with CGI later on due to some controversies, are equally impressive. Each dwarf has a distinct personality, and they bring a lot of humor and heart to the film. From Doc's cleverness to Grumpy's gruff exterior and soft center, each character is well-developed and memorable, and though they're CGI characters, they kind of grow into you.



The film's visuals are stunning, with breathtaking scenery and impressive production design. The cinematography is top-notch, capturing the beauty of the forest and the dwarfs' cottage in a way that feels both magical and real. The special effects are seamless, blending fantasy and reality in a way that's both convincing and enchanting.

The film's soundtrack is another highlight, featuring new songs and arrangements that pay homage to the original while also feeling fresh and modern. The score is equally impressive, perfectly capturing the



mood and atmosphere of each scene.

While the film is really well put, there are a few areas where it falls short. Some of the supporting characters, such as the Huntsman, feel a bit underdeveloped and lack the depth and complexity of the main characters. Additionally, some of the pacing feels a bit rushed, with certain scenes feeling a bit abrupt or convenient.

Overall, even though the movie isn't doing good in the box office due to the well-known controversies (mainly with the main actress, Rachel Zegler) the live-action *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is a delightful adaptation, and while it may not be perfect, the film's strengths far outweigh its weaknesses, making it a must-see for fans of the original film.

Parrot Staff Writer: Manny



Scan QR Code

Zoom Hours

Thursday

11:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Friday

8:00 AM to 2:00 PM

ESL Center Spring 2025

On Campus in the LRC

Monday	9:00 to 4:45
Tuesday	9:00 to 4:45
Wednesday	9:00 to 4:45
Thursday	9:00 to 4:45
Friday	Closed

The ESL Center helps all multilingual students with their classes and questions. We speak Ukrainian, Farsi, Dari, Pashto, Russian, Spanish, and more. Come see us!



Ask
Questions

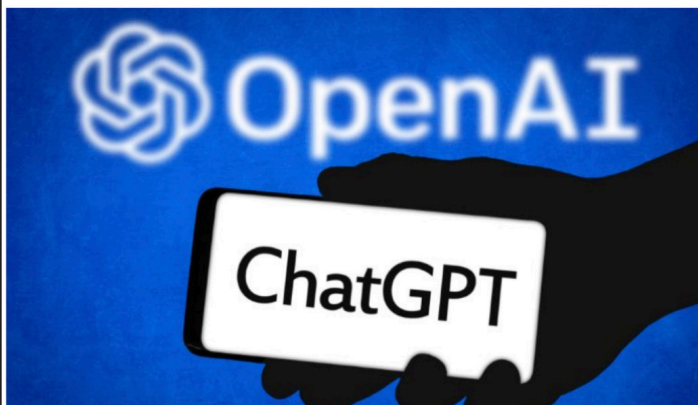
Get
Help

App Review

ChatGPT — A Perspective Shift

Artificial Intelligence has brought a revolutionary change to the tech world, and to our daily lives. It wasn't too long ago that I first heard about ChatGPT. Like many others, especially in academic spaces, I initially had a negative impression. There was a common belief among students and educators that tools like ChatGPT would make people overly reliant on AI, leading to less effort and less learning.

But over time, as I started exploring ChatGPT and other AI platforms, my perspective began to shift. I realized that, like any resource, AI can be used both positively and negatively. It's not the tool itself that defines the outcome, but how we choose to use it.



At first, I thought ChatGPT was just another short cut, something students might use to get through assignments, quizzes, or even exams. That changed when I enrolled in ENGWR 301, where our professor encouraged us to use ChatGPT as a tool to deepen

our understanding of course material. Using it alongside other class resources helped me engage with the content in a completely new way. It didn't replace my learning, it enhanced it.

ChatGPT



Now, I see ChatGPT and similar platforms as powerful tools for growth. They make complex ideas easier to grasp, help streamline tasks, and offer new ways of thinking. Of course, as with anything, it depends on the user. AI can be misused, but it can also open doors to better understanding, creativity, and personal development.

In the end, it's not about fearing the technology, it's about learning how to use it wisely.

Sources:

1. <https://localo.com/marketing-dictionary/what-is-chat-gpt>

2. <https://www.ui42.com/dictionary/chat-gpt>

Parrot Staff Writer: Sayed Edres Sadiqi

**Have a tooth problem?
Need help?
No dental insurance?**

Here are some resources:

WellSpace Health: 916-737-5555

One Community Health: 916-443-3299

Refugee Health Clinic: 916-874-9227

Elica Health Centers: 855-354-2242

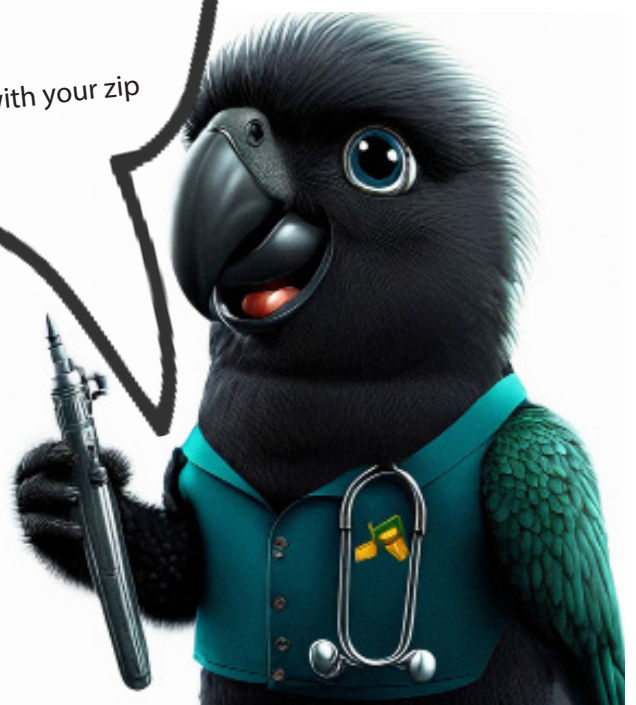
California Northstate University: 916-686-8914 (Dentistry school)

Sacramento District dental Society: 916-446-1211

Emergency Dental Sacramento: 916-318-0911 (open on week-ends
and accept walk-ins).

**Some of these places may require a fee. Call for information about
cost.**

You can also look on <https://cityhub.findhelp.com/> with your zip
code.



The Voice of a Silenced Generation: Remembering *Afghan Star*

For as long as I can remember, I've had a deep love and passion for music. I've always enjoyed listening to it, and I've always dreamed of learning to play musical instruments. But unfortunately, I was separated from that dream early on. I was just in first grade when the Taliban first took over the Afghan government. Alongside countless other bans, they declared music, whether listening to it or playing it, *haram*. Anything related to music was strictly forbidden, and anyone caught could face serious punishment. That dream of mine, to connect with music, was shut down before it even had a chance to begin.



It wasn't until the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, when the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was established, that people began to reclaim basic freedoms, like freedom of speech, education for girls, and yes, the ability to listen to or play music. It was a time of hope.

Then, in 2005, something incredible happened. TOLO TV, based in Kabul, launched a singing competition called *Afghan Star*, a televised show similar to *American Idol*. At the time, it was bold and revolutionary. I was thrilled to see people from all across Afghanistan finally given the platform to share their voices and talents. It wasn't just a show, it was a movement.

My entire family, and even our extended family and friends, would gather weekly to watch each new episode. *Afghan Star* quickly became a national sensation. Season after season, it grew in popularity, and the winners of the show became

household names. Some even went on to perform internationally, representing Afghan talent on global stages.

Sadly, the show was shut down again in 2021 when the Taliban returned to power. It felt like history repeating itself, another silencing of creative expression. Still, I hold onto hope. I believe that someday, *Afghan Star* will return, and young artists in Afghanistan will once again have a space to dream and be heard.

As for me, I never had the chance to pursue music at a young age. By the time the ban was lifted, life had already taken me in different directions. But my love for music never faded. I eventually joined a local music institute and began learning to play the *Tabla*, a classical Indian drum. Even now, I play at friends' gatherings from time to time, and I still listen to music almost every day.

Music is the fuel of my soul. It energizes me, heals me, and inspires me, and I'll continue listening and playing for the rest of my life.

The below link is a direct YouTube link for one episode of the Afghan Stars performance:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=re4wlNwjnQM>

Sources:

1. <https://filmmakermagazine.com/6170-afghan-star/>
2. <https://wadsam.com/entertainment/12th-edition-afghan-star-groundbreaking-232/>
3. <https://features.kodoom.com/en/videos/afghan-star-popular-afghan-tv-talent-show/v/6025/>

Parrot Staff Writer: Sayed Edres Sadiqi

Explore California

Blue Ridge Trail

There's a hidden gem of a trail at Lake Berryessa, called the Blue Ridge Trail, that I wanted to try, but no one prepared me for the adventure that awaited me there.

Initially, I thought it would be a leisurely stroll along a dirt road, surrounded by beautiful trees and offering some nice views. However, the reality was far more challenging – the trail is a steep hike that ascends from the bottom of the hill all the way to the top! And when I say steep, I mean seriously steep!

It took me roughly an hour and a half to reach the summit, and I was rushing – and I mean really rushing – because I arrived at the trailhead around 6 pm, underestimating the hike's duration. Despite the chaos and the soreness in my legs by the time I reached the top, the breathtaking view made every step worth it. In fact, the experience has been the highlight of my spring so far.

The photo I share above was taken with my Nikon Zf and my new Viltrox 16mm lens, which was

the inspiration behind this adventure. I wanted to capture some stunning landscape photos, and I'm thrilled with how they turned out. The Viltrox 16mm

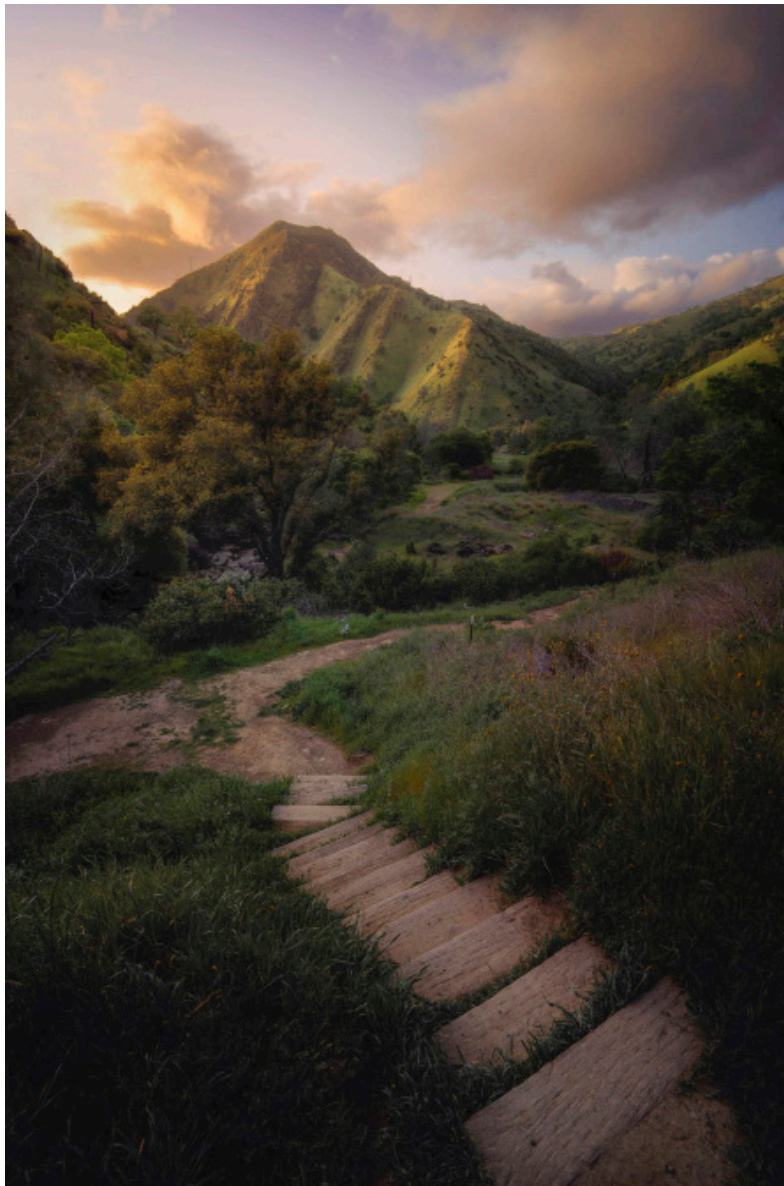
lens delivered exceptional results, and I'm excited to continue exploring its capabilities.

If you're planning to tackle the Blue Ridge Trail, be sure to:

1. Start early: Give yourself plenty of time to complete the hike before the sun sets.
2. Bring plenty of water: Stay hydrated throughout your journey.
3. Wear comfortable shoes: The steep terrain demands sturdy footwear.
4. Be prepared for a challenge: This trail is not for the faint of heart, but the views are well worth the effort.

Overall, the Blue Ridge Trail is a must-do for any hiking enthusiast (or nature

photographers, like me) looking for a thrilling adventure with breathtaking views.



Parrot Staff Writer: Manny

Music Review

Celine Dion: "I Love You"

The first time I heard Celine Dion's "I Love You," I felt an immediate emotional connection, it brought me back to the early days of my first romantic relationship. The melody, the softness of her voice, and the emotion woven into every line instantly pulled me into a wave of nostalgia. It reminded me of the moment I met the love of my life for the first time, those shy glances, the unspoken feelings, and yes, even the regret of time lost when I didn't express my love soon enough.

While my personal story doesn't perfectly match the lyrics of the song, the emotional core resonates deeply with me.

There's a certain universal quality to the way Celine sings about love — quietly, yet with power — that touches something within many of us who've ever loved, longed, or lost.

One of the things I truly appreciate about this song is how softly it's sung. I've always been drawn to music that carries emotional weight through gentle delivery. "I Love You" doesn't shout its message; it lets it unfold gradually, like a story whispered into your heart. It paints a complete emotional picture, taking the listener through a journey, one of love, vulnerability, and memory.



Celine Dion is known for her powerful ballads, but there's something especially intimate about this song. It's not just about romantic love, it's also about reflection, timing, and the bittersweet nature of memory. Every time I listen to it, I'm reminded of moments that shaped who I am, moments filled with love, hope, and even a bit of sadness.

For me, "I Love You" is more than just a beautiful song, it's a time capsule. It carries echoes of the past while still feeling timeless. And in a world that moves so fast, I think it's rare and special to find music that helps you pause, feel,

and remember.

[Click here to hear the song and view the lyrics.](#)

Sources:

1. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=839620600203979>

Parrot Staff Writer: Sayed Edres Sadiqi

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Askhb-lac@arc.losrios.edu

***Dokhte Afghan* by Shahla Zaland: A Song That Truly Speaks to Me**

I really love the poem used in [*Dokhte Afghan*](#), a song by Shahla Zaland. The way it's written and composed reflects the struggles of Afghan women who live under oppression, deprivation, and constant pressure with no rights to raise their voices. The lyrics carry so much pain and truth, and every time I listen to it, I can feel the deep emotions and pain behind the words.

What makes this song even more personal to me is that the poem was written by Nadia Anjuman, a poet from Herat, Afghanistan, where I was born and raised. Her tragic story is heart-breaking and adds more weight to the song's message. She was a phenomenal poet of contemporary time

who was killed by her husband in a case of domestic violence. Knowing this makes the song even more powerful

because it's not just words; it's the reality of so many Afghan women.

The way Shahla Zaland sings this song brings out all the emotions in the poem. It's sad, but at the same time, it carries a strong message. Every time I hear it, it reminds me of the struggles Afghan women face and how their voices deserve to be heard. Listening to this song pushes my mind back to all the struggles my mom and sisters had to go through that I witnessed with my own eyes for their basic human rights and



Shahla Zaland

how being a woman or girl is hard in Afghanistan.



Nadia Anjuman

The way Shahla Zaland sings this song makes the emotions in the poem feel even stronger. It's

heartbreaking, but at the same time, it carries a powerful message. Every time I listen to it, I think about the struggles Afghan women go through just to have basic rights. It takes me back to everything I've seen my mom and sisters face, the challenges, the unfairness, and how hard it is to be a woman in Afghanistan. This song isn't just music for me, it's something I deeply connect with. It tells a story that needs to be told, and that's why it means so much to me.

Sources:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-QvzEI4OvMs>
2. <https://soundcloud.com/user262602842/sets/shahla-zaland-dokhte-afghan>
3. <https://revistaacrobata.com.br/florianomartin/traducao/3-poemas-de-nadia-anjuman/>

Parrot Staff Writer: Sayed Edres Sadiqi

Out of the Cage

Parent to Parent Program at ARC

Being a student and parent brings unique challenges that only another parent truly understands.

At American River College, a special resource called Parent to Parent (P2P), in partnership with the Mentor Collective, enhances the students' experience by connecting CalWORKs students with a mentor from within the program. Students are paired with someone invested in their success--a person ready to listen, inspire, help navigate challenges, and recognize opportunities.

Additionally, P2P mentors serve as a critical part of a student's success team by serving as a proxy for your dedicated counselors and the CalWORKs program. Mentor Collective's online platform provides training and resources for students' mentors and makes it easy for mentors and mentees to connect.

To enroll in P2P, scan the QR code or call: (916) 484-8059



Mentee Registration



QUESTIONS/COMMENTS?

Student Editors: **Tuyet Le, Emmanuel Madrid, Mohammed El mrani, Sayed Edres Sadiqi, Asila Sadiqi, and Sofia Kovalko.**

Faculty Advisors: **Patrick Hoggan and David Evans**

Please let us know what we can do to improve *The Parrot*. We appreciate any and all feedback you are willing to give us. Contact us at TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu.

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