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American River College

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# The Parrot



ISSUE #196  
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Your ARC newsletter by and for ESL, multicultural, international students, Californians, and, well, anybody really...



## INTERVIEW WITH MAYRA MIRELES-TIJERO

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

**"There is no limit to how many times you can change your major."**

At American River College, Mayra Mireles-Tijero breaks down the pressure students feel to have it all figured out from day one. In this interview, Mayra shares real advice on how to explore, adapt, and make the most of student's college experience -- no matter how many times you switch gears!

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## WHO SHOULD TAKE CONTROL OF MISINFORMATION?

BY ALEXANDER KASIANOV, ESL 325

Many people trust social media to stay informed about what is happening around the world, but how can anyone depend on platforms that regularly promote false stories?

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# VILLAGE VS CITY

BY VALENTYNA VELYCHKO, ESL 47

## COMPARISON ESSAY

Every person living on this planet has their own place where they live their life. Most people do not choose their place of residence, but live in the country or city where they were born. Some people change their place of residence. They choose a country, city, or village, where they think it will be better for them to live. In the spring of 2018, my family and I came to the United States. Before moving to America, we lived in Ukraine in the village of Tutovychi. I want to compare life in the village and life in the city.

Living in the village is quiet and peaceful, there are few cars driving on the roads, and the village doesn't have big buildings. The village has beautiful nature and lots of green trees and the grass is also green there. There are different types of trees growing in Ukraine, for example apples, peaches, and cherries. There are also coniferous trees such as pine and spruce. The air in the village is fresh because it has a lot of different trees. In contrast, Sacramento has many large buildings, and the roads in the city are very crowded with a lot of cars driving. There are also parks in the city with many beautiful green trees and pretty bushes and flowers. However, the air is not that fresh because of car exhaust, factories, and construction.

In my village Tutovychi, there's a school named Tutovychi Comprehensive School, where children study from kindergarten to 11 grade all together. The village also has a hospital, a post office, several shops, two churches, library, and pharmacy. There are no colleges and universities in the village. On the other hand, Sacramento has many schools that are divided into elementary, middle, and high schools. There are also many hospitals such as Sutter Medical Center and UC Davis Medical Center. Sacramento has a lot of colleges and universities including Sacramento City College and American River College. There are many banks in the city. However, in the village Tytovich there are none.

Work is important in a person's life. Many people change their place of residence for jobs. There isn't much work in the village where we lived before we came to America. The main jobs that

people worked are in the hospital, in the stores, and the post office. Most people are engaged in agriculture. They grow vegetables and fruits, like carrots, apples, and cucumbers, then they take it to the city named Sarny to sell it. People in the village keep animals such as cows, goats, and pigs.

In comparison, Sacramento has more jobs to work. Instead of working in the hospitals, and stores, most people work in offices. They deliver food and service taxis. Sacramento has many entertainment centers such as Sky Zone and Ice Skating. That is why many people work in Sacramento cities. Many people work in theaters, cinemas, and fitness centers. These types of jobs you can't find in the village of Tutovychi. In the village, people work hard to earn money. Likewise, in the city people have to work hard to get money.

In conclusion, both city and village life offer unique benefits. Cities provide more jobs and opportunities, while a village offers peaceful environment and more connected. Personally, I grew up in the village and really like it there, but in the city there is always something new to see and try, and it's better for my children to get their education, and have good jobs in the future.



# AN ORDINARY DAY TURNED DISASTER

BY MURSAL SAFI, ESL 47

## NARRATIVE ESSAY

Have you ever felt the earth tremble, and know that nothing would ever be the same again? It was June 3, 2015, in Afghanistan, and the day began like any other until the ground reminded us how fast everything can change. In a second, the earth proved how quickly normal can turn to nightmare. It was the most terrifying moment of my life, and I honestly thought I was going to die.

The day started like any other. It was around noon. My family and I were at home. I came from school at 12 pm. My father and brother sat in the living room watching TV. My mother was in the kitchen making delicious food, and I made the table for lunch. We were having lunch together talking and laughing. The weather was sunny and hot outside. Suddenly, I felt a strange vibration under my feet. At first, I thought it might be just the passing of a truck. But then the walls shook, the floor started to move like waves, and the furniture started moving. Everyone was screaming and trying to move, but we didn't know where to go. I couldn't imagine that the ground could break into pieces. I will never forget the fear in my parents' eyes.

After that, the earthquake grew stronger. I felt like everything was falling apart around us. Walls cracked and dishes crashed to the floor. We tried to stand and run to the front door, but it was almost impossible to move. Outside we could hear our neighbors yelling, their voices full of fear. At last, we got outside and stood together in the middle of our

yard. I remember our car was parked in the garage, and it was thrown back and forth like a toy. I will never forget that sight. My father grabbed my little sister and told us to stay together. My family held onto each other, crying and praying for the shaking to stop. I kept thinking this was the end, and we might not survive. I had never been so scared.

Finally, the shaking finally stopped, but we were too frightened to move right away. We ran outside quickly. The street was full of people: some were crying, some silent in shock, others were holding their children. I looked around and saw cracks in walls, and some houses were badly damaged and had broken windows. Thankfully, our house only had a little crack and was still standing, but other homes were not so lucky. I felt thankful to be alive. Later, we heard on the news that many people had died or were injured in different areas. That night, no one in our neighborhood wanted to sleep inside. We stayed outside, sleeping under blankets on the ground. I couldn't sleep all night because we were afraid that another earthquake could happen.

In conclusion, the 2015 earthquake was the most frightening experience I have ever had. Since that day, I have realized how quickly everything can change in just a few seconds. Now, I pay closer attention, appreciate life more, and stay prepared for anything.





# THE MORNING CANDLES

BY NAJWA ALMASRI, ESL 350

## POETRY

I love the candles in my house  
The candle cup glances at me every morning  
Waiting for me to light it up  
The smell of lavender flowers and vanilla  
A warm embrace  
A tall sleek glass with a smooth base  
Smells amazing every morning  
It gets me wondering  
How the candle does not sell out  
This candle holds a memory  
Stories told  
Summers shine and winters flow  
It holds a graceful form  
A warm tireless art  
The glass reflects sunshine and rainfall  
A sturdy glass  
That never fails to reflect memories  
Relaxing with a vibrant dream  
While sensing the smell of lavender and vanilla  
Hearing the ocean waves  
While tasting a flavorful chocolate cake  
Drinking an iced coffee  
Amazed by the vibe  
And lying down in a vibrant dream  
While feeling relaxed and calm

# MY FAVORITE SEASON

BY LIUDMYLA PESHKO, ESL 47

## OPINION ESSAY

Do you like winter as much as I do? Most people like summer or spring. Some people like fall. Which season is better? Winter is my favorite season for several reasons.

Winter is my special season because I like winter's weather. It is my first reason. First of all, I really like frost. It is very beautiful. For example, frost covers the trees, and it is like Christmas decorations. It looks so amazing! I like to walk in the park or forest to watch wonderful frost.

Moreover, I always take beautiful photos and share them with other people. Next, I like rain. Rain and snow, like best friends, often come together. Rain also waters all trees and flowers and makes them fresh. For instance, wet weather is better for my garden. I think my garden likes winter like I do. Moreover, sometimes winter has a shower. I really like this time because it is the best time to sleep. Since my childhood, I like to sleep with rain's music. In addition, I also like walking with an umbrella. Lastly, I like winter's fresh air. The air is also cool and humid. It is good for my body. Indeed, winter has frost, rain, snow, and fresh air; therefore, I like it.

My favorite season is winter because I have my birthday in December. First, when I was a child, I had a lot of gifts on my birthday. For example, once my parents bought me a tricycle. It was amazing. I rode in my house because outdoor was a lot of snow. Next, I have a special tradition to give presents to my kids on my birthday. For instance, for this year I have Legos for them. In addition, I like cake. I always bake a big honey cake for my family. Moreover, my birthday is the best day for me because I

always have a lot of blessings on my phone from my friends. Indeed, my birthday is in December, so I really like winter.

Christmas is the most popular holiday in the world, and it is a very special day for me; therefore, I really like winter. First of all, Christmas has amazing decorations. For example, people decorate their houses. Christmas decoration is like winter's suit for my house. I always cut a lot of different snow-



flakes and decorate my windows. It is my special thing in winter. Moreover, my husband always brings a fresh Christmas tree and we decorate it together. Usually, we attach candies on the tree. In addition, my kids hope to find presents under the Christmas tree on Christmas. Second, I really like Christmas songs. I always listen to these wonderful songs in my car, in my house, and in the store. For example, in my country, children sing Christmas songs for their

neighbors and family and say, "Merry Christmas!" Moreover, once we visited my brother on Christmas in the hospital, and we sang amazing Christmas songs. It was memorable. Last of all, Christmas is the birthday of Jesus Christ. It is the main reason why I like winter. Christmas is the hope to salvation that God gave us through the birth of his Son. Moreover, Jesus is the best gift from God to me in winter, and it is a special reason why I like wintertime. Indeed, Christmas is the best holiday for me.

In conclusion, cool weather, my birthday, and Christmas are three reasons why I like winter. I think every season has a lot of advantages. It is good to find amazing things in every season and be happy. I can find advantages in every season, so I feel happy.

# A WINTER IN GOD'S HANDS

BY GALINA SHEVCHENKO, ESL 47

## NARRATIVE ESSAY

It was January 2008, and I was expecting my fourth child - my sweet little daughter, Ruth. That winter brought heavy snow, and bitter frosts lasting until almost the end of March. We lived in Syrdarya, a small town without even a hospital. A few days before my due date, we traveled to Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, where our parents lived. Soon after, on that long-awaited day, God blessed us with our daughter's birth. The Tashkent maternity hospital was warm, but eventually, it was time to go home. Just before we left, my husband's father, Nikolay, raised his hands to Heaven and prayed to the Living God, entrusting our family into His hands. To this day, I remember his prayer vividly.

The snowy, slippery road home took nearly two hours. Minutes after arriving, we realized the house was freezing - the city's gas supply had been cut off. The heating pipes and radiators had burst from the extreme cold. Even the water in the kettle had turned to ice. Our breath formed clouds of steam in

the frigid air. I couldn't feed Ruth properly; the cold was so intense that there was no warm place to sit. Yet I clung to my father's prayer: we were in God's hands. With schools closed, our older children stayed with us as we returned to Tashkent for shelter.

My husband and his friends worked tirelessly to repair the pipes and installed electric heaters to warm at least one room. Later, when we moved back, our entire family lived in that single room - cooking, eating, and sleeping there together. That winter, some people froze to death outdoors or even in their own homes. But by God's grace, He gave us the strength to endure. When spring finally came, our neighbors marveled that we had survived with a newborn in such brutal conditions.

Since then I don't like winter very much. My daughter Ruth has grown up; she is already 17 years old. We often remember that winter time and always thank God for His care.



# ME: THEN & NOW

BY NATALIYA GALATYR, ESL 315

## COMPARISON AND CONTRAST ESSAY



Over the last ten years, a lot has changed in me. A lot has happened to me and in my life, and this has done its job. I have not changed

dramatically, but some of my character traits have changed. So I can highlight three main changes in myself: I became more tolerant, I stopped worrying about other people's opinions, and I began to value my time more. These changes didn't happen overnight but slowly grew as I faced different situations in my life. Let me explain each of these in more detail.

First of all, I became more tolerant. Unlike me ten years ago, I stopped worrying about many things that I can't change. For example, I can't change people around me and their habits. Now I just don't react to their behavior or what I don't like about them. I can't change them, so I accept them as they are. My reaction to some behavior of others today is completely different. Although before I often reacted and got irritated with others, now I try to understand their perspective before judging them. I've learned that everyone has their own experiences and reasons behind their actions. Tolerance for me is being open and patient with differences, whether they be opinions, behavior, reactions, culture, or just a way of life. I used to often start arguing if

someone thought differently from me. Now, instead of arguing, I try to listen to the other point of view. This does not mean that I agree with everything, but I have learned to respect everyone's right to have their own opinion. This change has helped me build better relationships with others. Tolerance has made my life calmer because I no longer waste my energy trying to change others. Instead, I focus on understanding and acceptance.

Secondly, I stopped worrying about what other people would say or think about me. Ten years ago, I would have thought a lot about my decisions, for example, about what to wear. Today, I am free from any kind of thoughts about what people will think of me. I dress the way I like. This change also affected my behavior--I am no longer afraid to be myself. I don't care what other people think of me. It helps me to be who I am. This confidence has allowed me to express myself more openly and honestly.

Finally, I began to value my time more. Before, I didn't realize that time was running out and there might not be enough time for something. For example, I could spend a lot of time on meaningless conversations with someone. Now I not only choose who to talk to, but also what to talk about. I realize that time just goes away and never comes back. I have to manage my time correctly. That's why today I plan my time carefully and fill it with things that are really important and necessary to me.

To sum it up, I can say that I have changed a lot over the last ten years--I have become much more tolerant, I have stopped depending on other people's opinions, and I have learned to value time. Of course, I still have things to work on, but even these changes have helped me to live more consciously.



# ODE TO MY GADGET

BY OLEKSANDRA ZACHYNSKA, ESL 350

## POETRY

*O greatest invention of mankind,  
which does not allow me to sleep peacefully,  
which keeps my eyes open at 2 a.m.,  
which has tied me to itself forever with the web of the Internet,  
stronger than family ties,  
which has stolen my freedom to be “out of touch”,*

*I simply cannot imagine how I lived before without you?*

*Previously, I freely moved through the vastness of the universe  
unrecognizable,  
but now I have gained apparent freedom  
and move through the vastness of the Internet marked with a name  
and avatar.*

*My youth was spent in free movement without any identification,  
My maturity is spent under the momentary control of where I am,  
how I am, and who I am with.*

*Have I gained freedom?*

*Have I gained the opportunity to dive into the depths of knowledge?*

*Have I gained more?*

*Or perhaps I have lost more?*

## OPINION ESSAY

## MY LIFE

BY ASIA MOHAMMADI, ESL 47



Do you want to know what I am grateful for? I came to America in 2021. I am very grateful for my education, my favorite place in Sacramento, and my ability to work.

First of all, I am grateful that currently, I have the right to continue my education in Sacramento. For example, I am a student at American River College. I am learning English there. When I was in Afghanistan, it was my dream to learn English. Furthermore, my major is paralegal studies. Once I improve my English, I am planning to take some classes for my major. Besides that, I always wanted to have an American professor. Also, I want to write different types of essays and publish to the college websites. In addition, I want to be a lawyer in American. Before I came to United States, it was my dream to be a student here. Indeed, I am thankful to study at American River College, to obtain my dream, so I am grateful that I can improve my education.

Second, my favorite place is Sacramento. I am thankful that I live in Sacramento. I was born and raised in Afghanistan, but I have been living here since 2021. My life has completely changed since I moved here. I moved to the United States, and

now I live in Sacramento, California. I am very grateful here because my life has changed more than Afghanistan. Living in Sacramento has given me safety, and opportunities that I never had before. I am grateful that I have the right to drive and solve my problems. I am really grateful that I can improve my education and that I have opportunities.



I am very grateful to have the ability to work. I can work and make money and support my parents in Afghanistan. Because Afghanistan is not in a good economic situation, and we can support our families. When I can work, I buy everything for myself. For example, I can buy a phone, food, car and everything. I also can go to different states easily for vacation. I can work and make money, and I can follow my dreams. When

I work, I can always support my life in the best way possible. Also, when we don't have economic problems, we will have a happy life. I have very grateful to have this ability in my life.

In conclusion, living in Sacramento, has completely changed my life. I am grateful for education and new opportunities, and I can follow my dream and help my family.

## OPINION ESSAY

## MY BLESSINGS

BY HANNA SEMENCHUK, ESL 47

THE GRATEFUL GULL

What are you grateful for? Today is a time to reflect on this and thank God for all the blessings in your life. I have many things for which I am thankful. The most important of them are the USA, my diary book, and diligence.

First of all, I'm grateful for the USA, this country is a big blessing for my family. As we know, America is a country of immi-

grants. Most of people come here to fulfill their dreams, as they say, "The American Dream". Everyone has different dreams because we have not the same needs. Some people are looking for financial stability, while others are looking for religious freedom. Some people need freedom to develop and study, while others need a peaceful sky. As for me, two years ago I with my family came to America from Ukraine.

For us it was not an easy decision because we didn't have any relatives and friends here. But there was a war in Ukraine, and we looked for safety. For my family it was an unknown country, but we knew that it would be a good place for our children. This country gave us a lot of support, and we can live a normal life and make plans for the future. My husband has a good job, I study in the American River College, my children study in American schools, we live in the house, have cars, and many other things which this country gave to us. I, unlike my husband,

never dreamed of living in the USA. I really miss Ukraine, and I wish to go back to safe country. But today we are here, and we are blessed. Indeed, the USA is a great blessing for which I will always give thanks to God.

Second, my diary is one of the blessings for which I am grateful. I think almost all young girls have

such a notebook where they write their dreams, thoughts, or letters. I started to write my diary when I was 15 years old. It was not a usual diary like most people have. I wrote letters to Jesus Christ. I wrote to Him every day, I said what was bad or good in this day. Sometimes I wrote about my dreams, my troubles, and my feelings. For example, when I was 18 years, I was in love with a guy. I asked Jesus to help me to be with the boy. One month later I wrote Jesus with tears about

this boy because he loved another girl but not me. And it was a deep pain for me because it was my first love. Today when I read these letters, I can see how God loves me because this boy doesn't have a good life today. But I have a wonderful husband and children. This diary is like a treasure for me. I still have it and sometimes read some letters to my daughter. I want to teach her to trust God in every day in her life. Really, I feel deeply grateful for my old diary. In conclusion, it helps me to go through



different moments in my life with a great hope in God.

Last of all I'm grateful for my diligence. It is a very useful ability for everyone. This ability helps you to have a good result in job, studies, communication with people, and even in family. For example, when I was a small girl and studied in the elementary school in Ukraine, I had great problems with English. My teacher told my mom to change the school because this school was for children with deep English studying. My mom didn't do that, but she told me if I want to stay in this school, I must study hard and be diligent. In my 10 years, I started to practice diligence, and it gave good results. I began to read books in English, write new words in a copybook and learn them. Then I liked to translate worship from English to Ukrainian. All of this I did on my

summer holidays. When I went back to school, my English teacher was shocked. She thought that we took tutoring lessons. But it was just my diligence. In training, this skill always helps me not to stop if I don't understand some things, or if I am not able to do it, I remember what my mom said, "You must have diligence." I have five children, and four of them attend different American schools. When we came to the USA, they didn't speak any English at all. But they started making efforts and persistently studied at home. As a result, they speak English now and help me. These are the fruits of diligence. Indeed, I'm grateful for any ability to be a diligent woman and teach this to my children.

In conclusion, for all that I have today I thank God especially for the USA, my old diary, and diligence.

## RISKS IN MY LIFE

BY KAROLINA YAKOVCHUK, ESL 37

### OPINION

Every day in our own life, we take risks. There are different risks, sometimes, they may be dangerous or difficult, but all of them help us grow. I have three risks that I try not to take for my safety. First, I try to not text while driving. It is a very serious risk because people risk their lives because of me. Sometimes while driving when someone texts me, I think if I need to answer now, or maybe it will be better if I stop and then answer. It is very dangerous to use a phone while driving. I decided not to do this. I am responsible for my life and for other lives. Second, it is risky to move to a new place. I don't want to move to a new city. Here in Sacramento, I have so many friends, and my whole family lives here, so I don't want to move to a new place. Also, I am going to find a new house, a new job, and new friends. Third, use social media like Instagram or Snapchat. Social media is everywhere. Everybody uses it, so the Internet has many dangerous people. I have to be careful with people and keep my social media close. In conclusion, I can say that life is a big risk. I have to be smart and careful.



## OPINION ESSAY

## DRAWING

BY VITA HOT, ESL 47

## HOBBY CORNER

Drawing is my favorite hobby, after all it allows me to express myself creatively, relax my mind and constantly improve the skills that I really enjoy. From drawing simple shapes to creating detailed works of art, drawing has always been a source of joy and satisfaction for me. Whether I use pencils or paints, drawing offers endless possibilities to bring my imagination to life.

One of the reasons I love drawing is its ability to express my emotions and thoughts in visual form. Sometimes words aren't enough to convey how I feel, but through art, I can communicate ideas and stories that are personal and meaningful. For example, a drawing of a serene landscape might reflect a sense of calm, while a more abstract piece might capture complex emotions. This process of turning thoughts into visual feels incredibly rewarding.

Additionally, drawing is a great way to unwind and find peace in a busy world. Whenever I pick up a sketchbook, I lose track of time as I focus on the lines, shapes, and colors. It's a form of recharging. Even

when I'm stressed, spending just a few minutes drawing completely clears my mind and recharges my energy. This makes drawing not only a creative outlet, but also an important part of my self-care.



Another aspect that draws me to this hobby is the constant opportunity to learn and grow. There is always something new to explore, whether it's mastering perspective, experimenting with shading techniques, or studying anatomy to improve my figure drawings. Each new project pushes me to become better, and it's exciting to see my progress over time. This sense of

achievement motivates me to keep challenging myself.

In conclusion, drawing is more than just

a pastime for me – it's a way to express myself, find relaxation, and continue learning. It brings joy to my life and helps me connect with my inner creativity. No matter where life takes me, I know drawing will remain a cherished hobby and an integral part of who I am.





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contribute to *The Parrot*?**

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# SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS MUST TAKE GREATER RESPONSIBILITY IN CONTROLLING MISINFORMATION

ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

BY ALEXANDER KASIANOV, ESL 325

Continued from page 1

Misinformation on social media is far too common, and it is a danger to society. According to a 2021 Pew Research Center survey, nearly 60% of Americans often come across untrue or misleading news on platforms such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*. This is not just annoying. It causes real harm. During the COVID-19 pandemic, misinformation worsened public health issues by creating confusion about vaccines and safety measures. While some argue that social media should remain a completely open space for free expression, unchecked freedom allows harmful content to really grow. P.W. Singer and Emerson T. Brooking, in *LikeWar: The Weaponization of Social Media*, explain how false stories on social media are designed to be more attractive and influential than truth-based content (104). These platforms must adopt stricter content regulations, reform harmful algorithm practices, and learn from effective international policies to better protect users and rebuild public trust.

Social media is now one of the main ways people, especially young adults, get their news. This makes it crucial to understand how false content spreads. Peter Pomerantsev, in his book *This Is Not Propaganda*, argues that modern misinformation does not rely on censorship. Instead, it overwhelms people with conflicting and emotional stories that make them unsure about what is real (17). During the 2014 Odessa fire in Ukraine, for example, so many contradictory reports spread online that people ended up choosing whichever version aligned with their personal bias (7). Tech publications such as *Wired* and *TechCrunch* have reported that algorithms on platforms like *Instagram* and *YouTube*

often boost shocking or emotional posts to drive engagement. This helps misinformation spread faster than facts. Even worse, people often share these posts without verifying the source. These trends highlight the need for algorithm reform, so social media companies will prioritize truth and reliability instead of clicks and outrage.

Opponents of stronger regulation argue that restricting content might violate free speech rights. This concern is understandable. Free expression is a key part of democracy, and it is important not to silence legitimate voices. However, allowing false and dangerous information to spread without limits can be even more harmful. Disinformation leads to political instability, public health risks, and even violence. Quinn Baron, a digital communications expert at the University of Chicago Law School, explains that disinformation “compromises free speech by tainting the public debate” (Balancing). In reality, people cannot make informed decisions if the information around them is manipulated or false. So, instead of protecting freedom, misinformation damages the quality of speech and public dialogue. Sensible and well-designed rules are necessary. They help platforms support genuine discussion while limiting content that spreads lies or hate.

Germany has already shown how strong regulation can work. In 2017, the country passed the Network Enforcement Act, also known as NetzDG, which requires social media companies to remove hate speech and fake news within 24 hours or face fines of up to €50 million (Initiatives). This law made a noticeable difference. In 2018 alone, *Facebook*



deleted or blocked 362 posts under this regulation (*Facebook*). More recently, the European Union has moved forward with the Digital Services Act, a law that similarly aims to hold platforms accountable for removing harmful content. These types of laws show that it is possible to protect public safety and truth without destroying the right to speak freely. When platforms face real consequences, they take action. The NetzDG law proves that smart regulation can balance safety with speech.



In conclusion, social media companies must be held responsible for the information shared on their platforms. False content affects public health, politics, and individual beliefs. Social media has grown into a powerful source of information, but as this essay has shown, platforms right away need stricter control over misinformation to protect public safety and the health of our democracy. From the 2021 Pew Research Center survey to the COVID-19 crisis, the evidence is clear: false news is not just a small issue; it is dangerous and causes a lot of trouble. While critics argue that regulation might hurt free speech, responsible moderation helps protect it by stopping lies from poisoning public conversation. The NetzDG law in Germany proves tech companies will do something if they

know there will be real penalties. These policies do not destroy speech; they protect the value of truth. Personally, I care about this issue because misinformation affects real people, including my friends and family. It makes everyday decisions harder, and trust in society weaker. That is why platforms must prioritize truth and safety over profits. Because if social media keeps choosing profit over truth, the real world is what ends up paying the price. Misinformation is not just a digital problem—it impacts real people in the real world. By making platforms more accountable, we can build a healthier online environment. Trust, truth, and transparency should be the priorities, not just clicks. If these ideals die online, do not be surprised when the world offline falls apart.

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## COMPLETE VS. FINISHED: AN ESL PERSPECTIVE

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

### JOKE

An ESL student once asked his native English-speaking friend, "What's the difference between complete and finished?"

The friend, known for his sense of humor, replied thoughtfully:

"Well, let me put it this way. If you marry a kind and supportive partner, you are complete. If you marry a difficult and disagreeable one, you are finished. But if you marry someone who enjoys shopping more than anything else, you are completely finished."

Language can be tricky, but humor always helps make things clear!

## THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS (2006)

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

### MOVIE REVIEW

WILL SMITH



*The Pursuit of Happyness* is a powerful movie based on the true story of Chris Gardner, a man who never gave up on his dream, even during the hardest times. In the movie, Chris is a salesman who struggles to make money. He loses his job, his apartment, and ends up living in shelters with his young son. Life becomes very difficult, but Chris continues to fight for a better future.

He applies for an unpaid internship at a big company where only one person will get a full-time job. While working without pay, Chris also has to take care of his son and study for a big test. He is tired, poor, and sometimes sad, but he never quits.

In the end, all his hard work pays off. He gets the job and starts a new life. His story is a great example of hope, strength, and success.

This movie is perfect for ESL students because it uses real-life English and emotional conversations. You can learn useful words like *dream*, *struggle*, *failure*, and *success*. It also teaches a big life lesson: even when things are difficult, you must keep going.

After watching, ask yourself: What is my dream? What am I doing to achieve it? Chris teaches us that dreams are not easy, but they are possible. One of the most powerful quotes in the movie is:

"You got a dream, you gotta protect it."

If you ever feel tired or want to give up, watch this movie. It will give you the motivation to keep learning, keep trying, and keep believing in yourself.

SHAB SHEER MUSIC AND POETRY NIGHT

## FINDING MY SOUL IN POETRY AND MUSIC

BY ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

One of the most meaningful discoveries I have made as an Afghan immigrant is that even when you are far from home, you can still find your soul in familiar melodies and ancient verses. For me, that place of soul-connection is *Shab Sheer* Music and Poetry Night hosted monthly by Immigrant Integration & Empowerment (II&E) in Sacramento. As someone who deeply loves poetry, music, and the spiritual peace they bring, attending this gathering is more than a hobby: it's a healing ritual.

Every time I walk into *Shab Sheer*, I feel like I'm returning to something sacred, something that speaks directly to my heart. Whether it's listening to a soulful Rubab performance or hearing the passionate recitation of Rumi's poems or other great poetry in Dari or Pashto, I find peace that is hard to describe in words. In those moments, I feel whole. I feel seen.

This event isn't just about entertainment. It's about cultural revival and emotional connection. Designed especially for Afghan, Pashto, and Dari/Farsi-speaking communities, *Shab Sheer* brings together people of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate what many of us feared we had lost during the journey of immigration: our voice, our rhythm, and our identity.

Each night includes not just performances, but also educational insights into the roots of

our poetic and musical traditions. We learn about the mystical philosophy behind classical Afghan music, the deeper meanings of a ghazal (a kind of singing), or the way rhythm reflects the heartbeat of our stories. These teachings remind me of why I fell in love with poetry in the first place: because it holds pain and joy in the same line and somehow turns them into beauty.

There's also a mental health aspect to this space that's often unspoken but deeply felt. In a world where many immigrants are silently carrying trauma, this night offers a gentle space to express grief, longing, and hope without judgment. People sing about separation, resilience, and dreams, and in doing so, they invite others to do the same. This shared vulnerability feels like collective healing.



What moves me the most is the bridge *Shab Sheer* builds between generations. I've watched second-generation youth translate and perform Hafez, Ansari, Rahman Baba, and Rumi in English, while elders explain metaphors from traditional poetry in Dari and Pashto. It's a conversation between the past and the future, and it's beautiful. For me personally, this event has become a form of emotional and spiritual self-care. It reminds me that being Afghan is not just a nationality: it's a way of feeling, remembering, and belonging. Poetry and music are the threads that connect us to who we are, no matter how far we have traveled.

That's why I try to participate in *Shab Sheer* as often as I can. It's where my soul rests. It's where I can breathe freely. And it's where, for a few magical hours, we are not strangers in a foreign land: we are poets, we are dreamers, and we are home.

## MAYRA MIRELES-TIJERO, COUNSELOR AT AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGE

### INTERVIEW

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

Continued from page 1

**Thank you, Mayra, for giving *The Parrot* the opportunity to have an interview with you. I would love to start the interview by getting to know you a little bit. Can you please introduce yourself and tell us about your background and what inspired you to become a counselor at American River College?**

Yes, thank you. I am happy to be here with you. I will start with a little background. I was born in Ceres, California, over in the Central Valley. Spanish was my first language; my parents only spoke Spanish. So, that was what I grew up with. I am the youngest of four siblings. I have two sisters and a brother who is a little bit older than me. Now, I am married, and I have three children. Three daughters: one of them just started Sac State this year, a junior in high school, and a nine-year-old. So, I have all ages at home.

Now about my educational background. After high school, I went to UC Davis, where my goal was to be a teacher. However, I got a job as a teaching assistant early on and I realized that teaching is not for me. So, I got a different job at a community college in Woodland, and I really loved it there. It was a good environment, I saw what the counselors did, and I really admired that. It seemed like a good fit for me. I went from wanting to be a teacher to still wanting to be in education but not a teacher, a counselor. That is how I picked this career. I went to Sac State in order to get my counseling master's degree. Then years later, I ended up here at American River Col-

lege.

**Thank you very much, you mentioned that your first language was Spanish. Most of the students who are *The Parrot Newsletter* readers are ESL students and second-language learners. It is great for our students to have your perspective as a bilingual counselor.**

**How long have you been working as a counselor, and what do you find most rewarding about your role as counselor?**

I have been here at ARC for eight years and before that I worked with a high school program and at a university over in Turlock, at Stanislaus State. I have been in a couple of different departments on campus but the most here. I really enjoy working with

students, creating partnerships, and I find it an honor to be part of a student's academic journey. I enjoy discussing goals, making plans, reworking plans if needed, because some things don't work the way we want them to. I really enjoy helping people know opportunities, know resources, understand requirements, and plan to ultimately get to that plan. It is real-

“

It seemed like a good fit for me. I went from wanting to be a teacher to still wanting to be in education but not a teacher, a counselor.

”

ly a rewarding job.

**Thank you very much. I am sure you have a huge part in students' academic success. As a student, I really appreciate that. Now my question is, how does counseling contribute to a student's academic success and overall well-being?**

I believe that students need support in many areas of life and in college, and counselors are one piece



of the support in addition to the support at home or other resources. Counselors are one way that we can help, support and inform students about the options and requirements and then work together to create a plan. Everybody comes in with a different background, different experiences and different home life, so, here at counseling, we are here to help students to look at the big picture about what is going on in their life and what they want to do here and then put it all together to make a good plan and to make it realistic and doable.

See a counselor  
every semester!

**Thank you very much, I also came from a totally different system of education to ARC, and I have the experience of facing the challenges that you just explained. Counseling was something new to me and has been so helpful to keep me on the path of successful education journey. I believe counseling is a great help for students to be successful.**

**As you mentioned earlier that you have been 8 years at ARC so far, what are some common challenges that students face when they come to you for counseling?**



Well, I see lots of challenges. A few of those are balancing school, work, and family. Sometimes

students want to be full-time and take 12 units, and they are working full-time and also have family responsibilities and other responsibilities. Sometimes they need to adjust the academic units and what is going on in their life. This is what I talk a lot about with students when they come to me. Another question that I get a lot is, "When should I start my major classes?" especially from ESL students.

There is not a straightforward answer that works for everybody. So, this is what we need to talk about: How you are doing and how are your classes, what are your goals and what is your comfort level

taking the regular English classes? Finally, we come to a conclusion on when is a good time for you to take your major classes or to transition out of the ESL classes. Sometimes students find it challenging to communicate with an instructor, and it is very important, and I help the student to find ways to communicate with their instructor to make sure they are understanding material or getting the help they need. Furthermore, another thing is I get students looking for resources. We offer a lot here at ARC outside of classes like help with basic needs, like [Beaver Cares](#), financial aid. A lot of the time, I get students asking me these questions. What else does ARC have that can help them while they are students here?

**Thank you very much for explaining thoroughly. Some of the students have the concern about the number of times they can change their major while they are student at ARC. Are they limited?**

There is no limit to how many times you can change your major. The college does not restrict you on how many times you can change your major; however, at some point you want to pick a major to make sure the classes you are taking go towards it. If you change your major often, it can take you longer to reach your goal and take more units to reach your goal. You also want to be careful not to exceed the maximum amount of units that financial aid allows.

**Thank you very much and now, how do you assist students in choosing the right major or career**

**path?**

One thing that I hear a lot is that we have a lot of choices here at ARC, which for some students is good, while for some others it can be confusing having too many choices. I also get the question of, "Can you tell me what major I should choose?" And I tell them, "Well, I can't choose for you because I am not doing the work, but we can explore some options together." I think it is very important to put some thought into what you are interested in, what you are good at, what your values are, what kind of lifestyle you want to have. Those are the things that I help students think about and look at to explore what might be a good fit for them. It is not an easy answer, sometimes even it takes a couple of appointments to get to that but ultimately, I help students brainstorm ideas, think about things that might be a good fit, and then direct students to how to get more information about those fields, so then they can choose. I think it is best to take a little bit of time to look at the opportunities and do some research and think about your life and then make a decision. That takes time sometimes. It is not usually a quick decision for those students that are not sure.

If you are unsure of your major, talk to your counselor about taking some General Education courses (after you are at a comfortable ESL level to take English classes). General Education courses can help you explore fields that you may be interested in.

**What are your top three tips for students to stay on track and graduate on time?**

I would say that it is important to see a counselor every semester. At some point, make a comprehensive education plan. That is a plan where you plan out all the classes you need to be done with your goal. We don't typically do that early in the ESL levels,

but a little bit later, when you are ready to start taking your major classes, we can do that. Next, I would say, you need to always communicate with your instructors if there is any challenge or anything, and then, we have great [HomeBases](#) that are very helpful. It is very important to always connect with the HomeBase for anything you need. If you run into a challenge and you want to get help to overcome that challenge, a good starting point would be the HomeBase, and they can direct you to what you need.

**Yes, thank you for sharing great tips for students, and I think HomeBases are really a great starting point to find solutions for any challenges that students may face.**

**Now we are getting to the personal side of the questions, and I would love to know what your hobbies are or what you love to do when you have free time.**

You know, at this point of my life, I enjoy having no schedule, I enjoy having a day off without having a schedule or taking time off

when my kids have time off, spending time with my family--my husband and kids are very important for me. We like to travel. We also like to take small trips like go to Disneyland, other places nearby. I like to go outdoors. I live in an area where it is easy to go on a hike or walk, so it is very nice to do. Then I love to do paper crafts like cards, scrapbooking. That is a lot of fun for me, and I have been doing this for years.

**Great, thank you very much for sharing your hobbies with us. Next, what advice would you give to new students to help them make the most of their college experience?**

Alright, for the new students, especially for the ESL students, many times our education system is different than their home country education systems. So, it's important to ask questions, get information.

Reaching out to the HomeBases or to counseling is a good way to get help. Then, I would say, when you are ready, get experience in the field you are interested in, if you can. You want to know as early as you can if what you are studying is what you are going to enjoy. Getting experience would be very helpful for that. We have a [work experience office and career center](#) that can help with that. Of course, I would say for the new students to see a counselor for academic planning and resources. When you see a counselor, you can bring a friend if you need translating. We also have other translation services that we can use, but some people feel more comfortable bringing a family member or a friend for the translation purpose. Give yourself the opportunity to learn the system. Sometimes it takes a little bit to get used to college here. Take your time for that. Ask questions at all points.

**Thank you very much for the great advice. As a last question, I would like to ask, is there anything important that we did not cover that you want to**

**share with students.**

I would say, in your appointment with counselor, discuss all of your goals, current and future goals. The more information we have about your interests and goals, the better we can help you make decisions. Furthermore, sometimes you can ask your professor or counselor about how they got to their role if it is something you are interested in. When you are doing some career exploration, you are welcome to ask people that are in jobs that you are interested in:

How did you get here? What was your path to get into your career? I think that is a good way to learn sometimes.

**Counselor Mayra, thank you very much for giving *The Parrot* the time to have an interview with you, and thank you so much for sharing lots of valuable information with our students. I appreciate your time.**

Thank you, Edres.

## SELLOU: A SWEET MEMORY IN EVERY SPOON

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

Have you ever tasted something so familiar, so full of flavor and feeling, that it takes you straight back to your childhood? For me, that sweet is *sellou*, or as some call it, *sfouf*. If you're Moroccan, you probably know exactly what I'm talking about. And if you've never tried it, let me take you on a little trip through my memory, and my stomach!

*Sellou* isn't just a dessert. It's the VIP guest at every Moroccan celebration. You'll see it

### PARROT FODDER



standing proudly on the table during Ramadan, Eid, weddings, and even when a new



baby is born. If you walk into a room and spot a big glass bowl piled high with a golden-brown mountain of powder topped with almonds... You already know: something important is happening.

I remember being a kid and smelling that warm, roasted scent coming from the kitchen. That's how you know *sellou* is being made. And of course, that smell was my signal to sneak into the kitchen like a ninja. I'd try to dip my fingers into the bowl while pretending to look for a glass of water. My mom would catch me with my cheeks full and say, "Mohammed! That's for the guests!" But by then it was too late. I was already on my second spoonful.

Let's talk about the ingredients. *Sellou* is made with roasted flour, ground almonds, sesame seeds, honey, butter, cinnamon, and sometimes anise. It sounds simple, but the result? Magical. There's no oven involved, just a lot of stirring, mixing, and arm workouts. And

honestly, every family has their own secret version. Some add extra nuts; some keep it light. Some shape it into little pyramids. Others just serve it in a giant bowl and let everyone dig in with spoons, like treasure hunters.

My favorite version? The one my aunt makes. She packs it tight, presses a roasted almond right in the middle, and then wraps each piece like it's gold. One time, I unwrapped three pieces in a row when no one was looking and blamed it on my cousin. Sorry, Omar.



And then there's the *sellou* and milk combo. If you know, you know. A spoon of *sellou*, a sip of milk, it's like a sleepy-time power-up. Perfect for long Ramadan nights when you need just enough energy to stay awake but not enough to run around the block.

What's funny is that as a child, I had no idea what was actually in it. I thought it was made of magic and almond dust. And to be honest, I still kind of believe that.



# THE PROMISED NEVERLAND

BY SNOW LE, PARROT STAFF WRITER

## MOVIE REVIEW



A couple of years ago, I watched an anime movie on Netflix called *The Promised Neverland*. At first, I misread the title as *The Promised Netherland*, thinking it was a fantasy film. But just ten minutes in, I was shocked to see a terrifying monster appear on screen and realized this was something other than a typical

fantasy movie. I paused the movie, double-checked the title, and realized it was *Neverland*, not *Netherland*. Intrigued by the mystery, I decided to keep watching.

The story follows three intelligent orphaned children who have lived in an orphanage since birth. They seem to live a happy life under the care of a kind and gentle foster mother. Everything appears perfect—until one day, a young girl is adopted by an unknown family. The children are sad to see her go, but one of the smart girls secretly follows her to return a forgotten teddy bear. What she discovers is horrifying: the girl is dead—and even more disturbing, her brain has been removed and preserved in a jar. The children at the orphanage are not being adopted into loving families; they are being raised as food for monsters. These creatures consume the brains of the most intelligent children to sustain their own lives and enhance their intelligence. The orphanage, which once seemed like a safe and joyful place, is actually a farm. And the sweet, caring foster mother? She is the feeder—tasked with nurturing the children, ensur-

ing they are healthy, well-educated, and emotionally stable, all to prepare them for eventual harvest.

Terrified, Emma runs back and shares what she saw with her two closest friends. From that moment on, the three begin to plan their escape from the nightmare they once called home. The movie is filled with suspenseful twists and emotional highs and lows. I couldn't stop watching—it kept surprising me at every turn.

The *Promised Neverland* blends action, intelligence, and psychological horror in a way that's both thrilling and deeply emotional. It made me feel everything from fear and shock to sadness and hope. It's brilliant how the children, despite knowing so little about the outside world, use their intelligence and courage to fight for freedom and a better future.

The series has two seasons, and both are absolutely worth watching. If you enjoy psychological thrillers, emotional storytelling, and clever plot twists, this is a must-watch. I loved it from the very beginning. Writing this review brought all the scenes from the movie flooding back into my mind. I could easily retell the entire story, but I don't want to spoil it for you. This is a story you need to experience for yourself. Take a short adventure into a race for survival, and let the mystery unfold before your eyes. You won't regret it.



# CONFUSING WORDS IN ENGLISH

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

## GRAMMAR

English is a fun language, but sometimes, it can be confusing too! One reason is that many English words look or sound similar, but they don't mean the same thing. As English learners, we often mix them up without even realizing it. Don't worry! In this article, we'll look at a few common pairs of confusing words and learn how to use them with clear examples. There's even a short quiz at the end, just for fun!

Let's start with **say** and **tell**. These two verbs both involve speaking, but we use them differently. "Say" is used when we speak words in general: She said "hello." But we don't say "She said me hello." That's incorrect. On the other hand, "tell" is used when we speak to someone: *She told me a story.* So here's a tip: use "say" + something, and "tell" + someone.

Next, we have **fun** and **funny**. They look similar, but they don't mean the same thing. "Fun" means something you enjoy, like *the party was fun!* But "funny" means something that makes you laugh: *That movie was funny!* So remember: riding a roller coaster is fun; hearing a joke is funny.

Another tricky pair is **remember** and **remind**. "Remember" is when your brain brings back a memory by itself: *I remembered your birthday!* But "remind" is when someone or something helps you not forget: *Can you remind me to bring my laptop?* So if you do it yourself, it's "remember." If someone helps you, it's "remind."

Now let's look at three words that all involve your eyes: **look**, **see**, and **watch**. "Look" means to direct your eyes at something on purpose: *Look at the sky!* "See" is what your eyes do naturally, like *Did you see that bird?* "Watch" is when you look at something that moves, usually for a while, like *We watched a movie.* So: look at art, see a rainbow, watch a football game.

Learning these small differences will help you sound more natural and confident in English. And don't worry, mistakes are part of the learning process. Keep practicing, and you'll get better every day!

1. She (**said** / **told**) me she was tired.
2. That comedian was really (**fun** / **funny**)!
3. Please (**remember** / **remind**) me to bring my laptop.
4. I (**saw** / **watched**) a dog chase its tail.
5. He always (**says** / **tells**) jokes at lunch.

Okay, ready to test your skills?  
Try this short quiz! Choose the correct word for each sentence.

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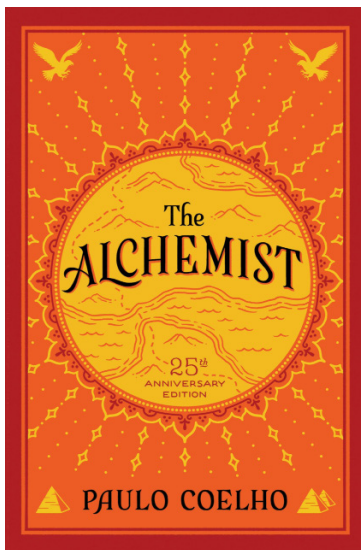
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## THE ALCHEMIST BY PAULO COELHO: WHAT'S YOUR PERSONAL LEGEND?

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

### BOOK REVIEW



Have you ever felt that there's something more out there waiting for you, something you were meant to do? If so, *The Alchemist* might be the book you didn't know you needed.

I first read *The Alchemist* eight years ago in Arabic, when I was still living in Morocco (and I reread it in English last year as well). I discovered it after watching

a cultural television report that praised the book's message and global popularity. I was curious about why so many people around the world were moved by it. Once I started reading, I quickly understood why; its message felt personal and powerful, even in translation.

This inspiring novel follows Santiago, a young shepherd from Spain, who has a recurring dream about finding treasure near the Egyptian pyramids. But as he sets off on his journey, he discovers that the real treasure isn't just gold or jewels, it's learning to follow your heart, to listen to the signs around you, and to never give up on your Personal Legend (that's what the book calls your true purpose in life).

Let's pause for a moment: Have you ever had a dream or goal that felt too big, too far away, or too scary? What if the journey itself was just as important as reaching the goal? That's exactly what *The Alchemist* teaches. Santiago meets many characters on his way, like the Englishman, who reads books but forgets to live; the crystal merchant, who is afraid of change; and the wise alchemist, who shows

Santiago how to trust in life and in himself. Each person represents a part of us: our fears, our hopes, our doubts.

What's wonderful about this book for English learners is how simple yet meaningful the language is. You don't need to be an advanced speaker to understand the story, but you might find yourself thinking deeply about your own life after every chapter.

Here's a famous quote from the book: "When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it." Sounds magical, right? But what if it's true?

This is a story that makes you stop, think, and even smile at how the world works. Whether you're learning English, starting a new life chapter, or just feeling stuck, *The Alchemist* gently reminds you: you're on your own journey, and it matters.

The story's themes of following your dreams, listening to your heart, and learning from the journey, are universal. ESL students may find a personal connection in Santiago's desire to go beyond the familiar and reach something greater. Like Santiago, many language learners are on their own personal journeys, full of challenges but also full of possibilities.

What makes *The Alchemist* even more powerful is that you can read it more than once and discover something new each time. It's not just a book for advanced readers or literature classes; it's a story for anyone who believes in growth and purpose.

So here's your question: What is your Personal Legend, and are you ready to chase it?



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# HOW I BUILT MY CREDIT SCORE: A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

## INSIGHT

BY SNOW LE, PARROT STAFF WRITER

**Disclaimer:** This article is based on one person's personal experience and is intended for informational purposes only. It should not be considered financial advice or used as a substitute for professional credit guidance.

When I first arrived in the United States from Vietnam, I didn't know much about credit scores. I soon learned that a credit score is an important measure of a person's financial reliability—whether they can manage debt responsibly and make payments on time.

I often heard people talk about banks and bad credit scores, but since I had never used a credit card in my home country, it was difficult for me to understand the importance of credit. That changed when I decided I wanted to buy a car. I didn't have enough money to pay for it upfront, so I began researching how to get a loan—and that's when I discovered how crucial a credit score is.

Lenders rely heavily on your credit score to determine whether you're trustworthy enough to borrow money. To me, it felt like building a reputation or character in a new place. I needed at least a fair credit score to qualify for a car loan.

I started by opening a secured credit card at the bank where I had a checking account. At first, I was

confused—why did I need to deposit money just to get a credit card? The bank explained that because I had no credit history, the deposit served as a form of security. As I used the card and paid it off on time, I began building my credit.

An agent at the bank gave me helpful advice: always pay off your balance in full and on time. If you let your balance grow, you might forget to pay it and end up with interest charges or penalties. I followed this advice and paid off my card immediately after each use.

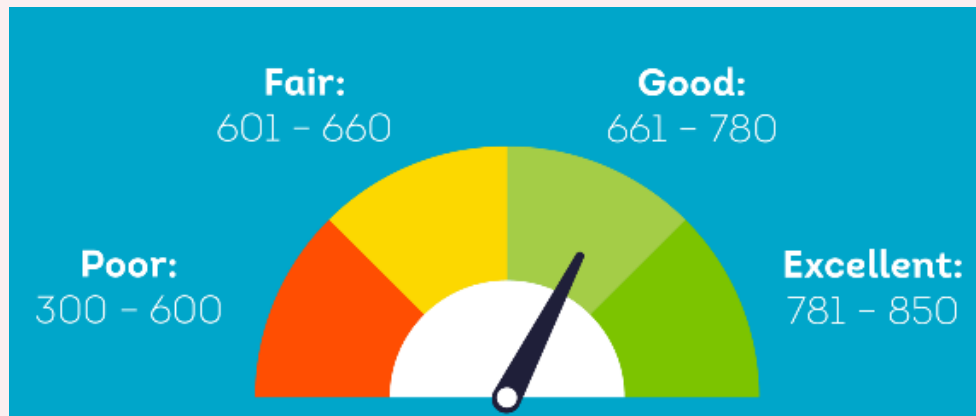
After a few months, the bank refunded my deposit and upgraded my secured card to a regular credit

card. That was a sign they trusted my ability to manage debt. But I learned that one credit card alone wasn't enough to build a strong credit

score. I went from a score of 0 to 650 in just a few months.

When it was finally time to buy my car, I was surprised to find that my credit score was still too low to get a good interest rate. I ended up paying 8.9% interest, while people with better credit scores were paying only 4%. To improve my score and reduce the interest I paid, I made extra payments on my car loan each month.

Over time, I learned more strategies to build and



maintain my credit:

- Open more credit cards and use them at least twice a year.
- Don't close credit cards from reputable banks or creditors.
- Use each card for specific purposes—groceries, gas, dining, utilities, etc.—to stay organized.
- Always pay off your balance on time.
- Check the credibility of any lender before applying for a card.

- Monitor your credit score regularly to avoid fraud or errors.

I use the Credit Karma app to check my credit score weekly. On four occasions, I found derogatory marks on my report—debts that weren't mine, likely due to people with the same name. I filed disputes with the credit bureaus and had those marks removed.

After years of building my credit, I was finally able to get a great deal on a car loan with a lower interest rate than the market average. Maintaining a good credit score is essential, especially if you plan to make big purchases like a home in the future.

## SIKANDAR

BY ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

### MOVIE REVIEW

***A powerful experience made unforgettable by family.***

One of my favorite hobbies is watching movies. It helps me relax, escape, and reflect. Recently, I had the joy of watching *Sikandar*, a new Indian movie starring Salman Khan, with my brother. It wasn't just about seeing a film; it was about sharing a special moment with someone I love. The experience became more meaningful because it was something we were both looking forward to. I had been waiting eagerly for this movie, and watching it together made that anticipation worth it.

*Sikandar* is more than just a typical action movie. Salman Khan brings his signature charisma and strength to the screen, but there's also heart and depth in this story. It has everything: intensity, emotion, suspense, and a message that stays with you. The film blends powerful visuals with a moving storyline that highlights themes of justice, resilience, and loyalty. I found myself not only enjoying the plot but also being emotionally drawn into the characters' journeys.

What made it unforgettable, though, was who I watched it with. Life gets busy, and some-

times we forget how healing and joyful it can be to spend time with family doing something simple—like watching a movie. Sharing laughter, gasps, and excitement during *Sikandar* reminded me of how important those connections are.

I truly encourage everyone to take a moment and watch this movie not just for the action or the star power of Salman Khan, but because it's the kind of film that brings people together. Make a little time to sit with your loved ones, watch a good movie, and create memories. *Sikandar* gave me that, and I'm grateful for it.



# I’LL SLEEP ON IT

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

WORDS OF A FEATHER

I want to share a funny story from my English learning journey. A couple of semesters ago, I took a class called Communication 301. It was a fantastic course, and I learned a lot from it. One of our assignments was to prepare and deliver an informative speech in front of the class and the professor.

To start, we had to choose a topic for our speech. I came up with a list of ideas and stayed after class to discuss them with my professor. I explained that I wasn’t sure which topic would be the best fit. He glanced at my list, looked up at me, and said, “I’ll sleep on it and let you know in our next class.”

Now, as a second-language speaker, I tend to translate things literally, word for word. So, when I heard him say, “I’ll sleep on it,” I froze. In my head, I was like, “Sleep... on it?” A bunch of wild scenarios started rushing through my mind. Was he going to put my list of topics under his pillow and sleep on it to magically pick one in a dream? Was this some kind of special method where he’d dream the right topic? Or maybe, just maybe, he didn’t like my list and needed a nap?

I was too confused to ask what he meant, so I just nodded and said, “Okay.” That night, I kept thinking about it and imagined all kinds of strange situations involving my topic list and his pillow. I couldn’t stop replaying it in my head.

Our next class wasn’t until four days later, so I had plenty of time to overthink. Eventually, I did what I should have done right away: I Googled it. And sure enough, “I’ll sleep on it” is just an English idiom that means, I’ll think about it overnight. I laughed so hard when I read that. There was no pillow, no nap, and definitely no dream-based topic selection strategy! Since then, whenever I hear someone say, “I’ll sleep on it,” I can’t help but smile. That moment reminded me just how quirky and amusing language can be, especially for ESL learners like me.

A quick tip for ESL students: If a native speaker says, “I’ll sleep on it,” don’t bring them a pillow. Just give them time to think it over.

Here are a few simple ESL-style phrases and how a native or more advanced speaker might express the same idea:

	Basic English	Advanced English
1	I am very happy.	I’m over the moon.
2	I am angry.	I’m furious.
3	I don’t like it.	I’m not a fan of it.
4	I am very excited.	I’m thrilled.
5	I made a mistake.	I messed up.
6	It is easy.	It’s a piece of cake.
7	It is difficult.	It’s a tough nut to crack.
8	I don’t care.	It doesn’t bother me.
9	I understand you.	I get what you mean.
10	I am scared.	I’m freaking out.



**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

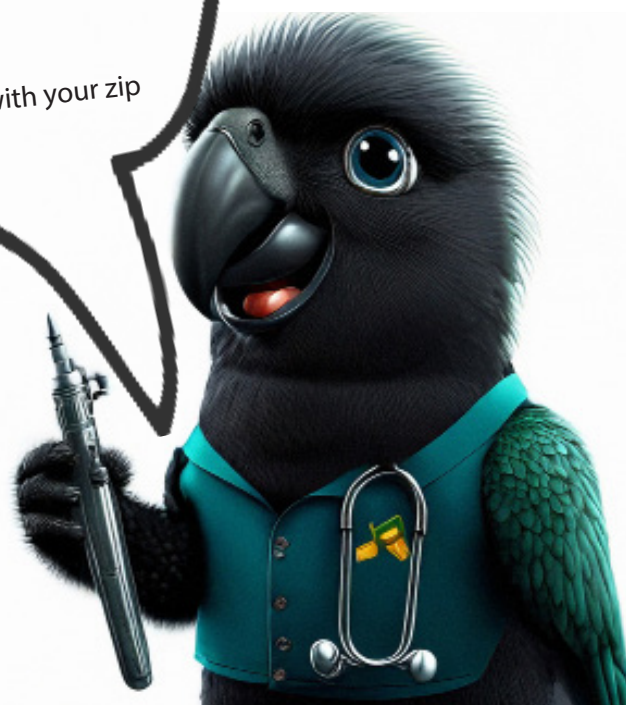
California Northstate University: 916-686-8914 (Dentistry School)

Sacramento District Dental Society: 916-446-1211

Emergency Dental Sacramento: 916-318-0911 (open on week-ends and accepts 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.



# LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION HOMEBASE

## HOURS

- ✓ Monday-Thursday  
8-5pm
- ✓ Friday 8-4:30pm

## SERVICES

- ✓ Workshops & Orientation
- ✓ Support Resources & Referrals
- ✓ Counseling Appointments
- ✓ Snacks, Study Space, Lounge Area, Fun Events

### Included Majors

- ASL-English Interpreting
- Communication
- Deaf Culture and American Sign Language Studies
- English
- English as a Second Language
- Journalism
- World Languages

Located in the Portable Village Room 613B

Contact Us



(916)484-8974



Askhb-lac@arc.losrios.edu

## A CULTURAL JOURNEY THROUGH MOROCCO'S MUSICAL DIVERSITY

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

### CULTURE

Morocco is known for its beautiful landscapes, delicious food, and colorful traditions, but one of its richest treasures is music. From the north to the south, each region in Morocco has its own unique musical style. These sounds tell stories, share history, and bring people together. Let's take a journey through the rhythms and melodies of Moroccan culture.



#### Gnawa – The Spiritual Pulse of the South

Step into the streets of Marrakech or Essaouira, and you might hear the deep, hypnotic beat of *Gnawa* music calling out through the air. This powerful sound, with its roots in West African spiritual traditions, was brought to Morocco centuries ago and has become one of the country's most moving art forms. *Gnawa* music isn't just something you listen to—it's something you feel. The musicians, often dressed in bright robes and swinging their heads to the rhythm, play metal castanets (*qraqeb*) and the *guembri*, a low, earthy-sounding bass lute. The songs speak of healing, freedom, and connection to the divine. If you ever get the chance to attend a *Lila* ceremony, you'll witness music used as spiritual therapy—guiding people into deep trance and inner peace. *Gnawa* is more than music—it's a living ritual, a bridge between earth and spirit.

#### Andalusi – The Elegant Echo of the North

Walk through Fez, Tetouan, or Chefchaouen, and your ears may catch the graceful notes of Andalusí music

drifting from a cultural center, courtyard, or open festival. Born in the courts of medieval Muslim Spain (Al-Andalus), this classical genre made its way to Morocco over 700 years ago—and it still sounds as refined and poetic today. Andalusí music is a musical conversation between melody and poetry. It's performed using instruments like the oud, violin, and the delicate-sounding qanun, with each performance unfolding like a story. These elegant songs often explore love, beauty, spirituality, and longing, using classical Arabic poetry. If you enjoy music that makes you feel smarter and calmer at the same time, Andalusí is for you. It's the soul of Morocco's scholarly and artistic heritage, dressed in sound.



#### Amazigh (Berber) Music – The Voice of the Mountains

Now imagine yourself high in the Atlas Mountains or deep in an Amazigh village during a wedding celebration. The drums start. The flutes answer. And then the voices rise—men and women standing shoulder to shoulder in a big, moving circle. This is Ahidous, and it's just one of the many vibrant expressions of Amazigh music. The Amazigh people, Morocco's original inhabitants, have used music for centuries to share their language, values, and way of life. With traditional instruments like bendir drums and wooden flutes, they sing in Tamazight, telling stories of nature, love, strength, and togetherness. This music is not just played—it's lived. You clap, you dance, you sing—it's for everyone. Amazigh music brings people together and makes the mountains echo with joy.





## 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](http://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!**



# MY FIRST ADVOCACY EXPERIENCE IN THE U.S.

A JOURNEY OF HOPE AND RESILIENSE

BY ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

## SPOTLIGHT

In spring 2025, participating in the advocacy to protect the governmental funding for the CRDP (California Reducing Disparities Project) this past May was one of the most powerful and emotional experiences of my life especially as it was my first time speaking up in front of legislative committees and the Senate in the United States.

As someone who deeply values community wellness and mental health equity, this experience felt both meaningful and heavy. When we heard that the Governor proposed cuts to the CRDP funds, I felt fear not for myself, but for the countless individuals and families who rely on these vital services. I worried about the people in our community who would be left behind if we lost this support. But I also felt a deep sense of responsibility to speak up for them, and for the future we believe in.

Standing in a formal space like that, so different from anything I had experienced before, I felt both embraced and nervous. I was learning advocacy strategy in a new country, in a new system, and using my voice in a space that once felt unreachable. But the unity and passion of the 35 nonprofit organizations that came together

reminded me: when we rise together, we are stronger.

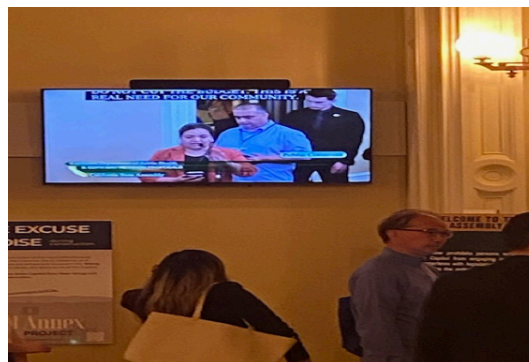
And we did it! The legislature approved the Budget Bill with the CRDP funding restored. Hearing the words **"WE DID IT!"** and seeing the results of our collective effort was truly a *fantastic* and unforgettable moment. The joy, the relief, and the hope were overwhelming. It felt like all the stress, the late-night preparations, and the fear of "what if" melted into a deep sense of accomplishment.

We are still waiting to hear if the Governor will use his line-item veto by June 30, 2025—but no matter what happens next, this experience has taught me something priceless: *advocacy works*. Your voice matters. Our community matters.

To anyone who is new to advocacy, who is scared or unsure, please don't give up. Keep speaking up, keep showing up, and keep believing. Even when it's hard, even when it feels like the odds are against you, it's worth it.

The results come, and they bring change, healing, and strength.

Let's keep pushing forward together to build our community!



## 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.



## PEER SUPPORT EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE

BY ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

### SPOTLIGHT

Attending the 29th Annual Peer Empowerment Conference hosted by Cal Voices was truly a powerful and inspiring experience. As someone working in the mental health field, I have always believed in the importance of peer support, and this event reminded me just how valuable and meaningful our work can be.

Peer support counseling is not just a service, it's a lifeline rooted in compassion, shared experience, and resilience. At the conference, I felt deeply connected to others who carry the same mission: to uplift our communities through empathy, lived experience, and hope. Listening to passionate speakers and advocates reinforced the idea that healing doesn't happen in isolation, it happens in community, through understanding, and by walking alongside one another.

Personally, I've grown so much from being involved in peer work. Every conversation and every shared story become a learning moment, and this conference gave me even more tools and insights to take back to my community. It felt like a beautiful reminder of why I love what I do and why I chose this path.

On a lighter note, at the end of the day, they had a raffle drawing, and to my surprise, I won a \$50 gift card and a Starbucks glass! It was such a fun and memorable way to wrap up a day full of purpose, learning, and connection.

I left the conference feeling even more motivated and proud to be part of a movement that centers humanity, recovery, and dignity. Peer support truly transforms lives, and I'm honored to be part of it.



# LOST IN TRANSLATION

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

In one of my cybersecurity lectures, the instructor was explaining different types of attacks. He said, "Today we'll cover spoofing." I paused. I had never heard that word before, so I quickly typed it into Google Translate. The result in Arabic was something like "انتحال" but I wasn't convinced.

Then I remembered the English word "spoof" from comedy shows. In that context, a "spoof" is a funny imitation or parody, like someone pretending to be a celebrity in a costume. So, I sat there imagining hackers wearing disguises and fake mustaches, sneaking into servers like in a cartoon.

I even whispered to my classmate, "So... hackers dress up?" He gave me a strange look and said, "No, man. Spoofing is when a hacker pretends to be someone else digitally, like faking an email address or an IP."

That was my aha moment\*. In cybersecurity, "spoofing" isn't about comedy or costumes. It's a serious attack method that tricks a system into trusting the wrong identity.

From that day, I understood the importance of learning the meaning based on context, not just translation alone. Some words have different meanings in technical fields, and relying only on Google Translate can lead to hilarious (and sometimes embarrassing) confusion.

Now, when I see a strange term, I don't rush to translate it. I try to read the full sentence, check examples, or ask a classmate or instructor. Language is powerful—but if used the wrong way, even your firewall might seem like it's on fire!

\*In this context, "aha moment" means a moment of sudden realization or understanding, when something confusing suddenly becomes clear.

## WORDS THAT DON'T TRANSLATE WELL

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI,  
PARROT STAFF WRITER

Have you ever tried to translate a word from your native language into English, and the person listening just looked confused? You open your mouth, try to explain it... and then you just smile and say, "Never mind." That's because some words just don't like to travel! They get lost in translation. In Arabic, we have rich and emotional expressions, but when we try to say them in English, they sometimes sound strange, funny, or just wrong. Let's look at a few examples to understand why this happens and how we can deal with it.

Let's start with the king of confusion: "inshallah" (إن شاء الله). It means "if God wills," but that's not all. Sometimes it means "yes." Sometimes "no." Sometimes it means, "I hope not, but I'm trying to be polite." Try translating that!

Then there's "شدّ حيلك" (shidd haylak), "Pull your rope!" This sounds like something you say on a pirate ship, but it actually means "Be strong," "Do your best," or "Hang in there." So if

someone is stressed before an exam and you say, "Don't worry, just pull your rope," expect a confused look.

Another classic is "رجع بخفي حنين" (raja'a bikhuffay hunayn), which literally means "He came back with Hunayn's sandals." What it really means is "He came back with nothing" or "He failed." In English, you might hear: "I didn't get the job... I came back with Hunayn's shoes." And the listener will wonder, "Who's Hunayn?"

Let's not forget "دمه خفيف" (dammahu khafif), "His blood is light." In Arabic, it's a compliment! It means someone is funny and pleasant. But say that in English, "You'll love my friend, his blood is so light", and people might get worried about his health.

So why do these expressions sound so strange in English? Because language is more than just words. It carries culture, history, emotion, and sometimes, it just doesn't fit neatly into another language.

As English learners, we don't need to stop using these expressions. Instead, we should learn how to explain them with meaning, not just words. Instead of saying "His blood is light," say "He's fun to be around." Instead of "Pull your rope," try "Hang in there!"



## 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



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