



Spring 2026
American River College

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The Parrot

ISSUE #203
SPRING 2026

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



EL CENTRO PEER MENTOR: MARZIA SHARIFI

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

Marzia Sharifi, a Pre-Health major at ARC and Peer Mentor at El Centro, shares her journey as an immigrant student and her commitment to supporting others through education, healthcare, and campus leadership.

Can you start by introduc- *Continue on page 22*

VISUAL DECEPTION

BY ELIZABETH KRAVTSOVA, ESLL 320



Can we always trust what we see? In Visual Deception, Elizabeth Kravtsova investigates how simple visuals can trick the eye and shape the mind. Developed for ESLL 320 in Fall 2025, the project highlights the hidden power of images and encourages viewers to question their perception. The presentation invites us to look twice -- and think deeper -- about the world around us.

Elizabeth Pet Photographer

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Got a Funny ESL Story? Pick up ARC Gifts!
See page 3 for details.

FUNNY STORIES

LEARNING ENGLISH

The Parrot is happy to share the following true stories from ESL students who responded to last month's invitation to share a funny story about learning English. They will each receive a small back pack and some cool ARC swag! Our thanks to each of them for sharing their stories. Enjoy a laugh or two or three!

One day in my ESL class, the teacher asked us to write about our favorite food. I wanted to write "I like chicken," but I accidentally wrote "I like kitchen." The whole class laughed, and the teacher said, "Well, at least you like your kitchen too!" I felt a little embarrassed, but it was very funny. Now I always check my spelling carefully.

–Shabnam Salehzai, ESLL 41

ASKING AND GIVING ADVICE

Hello, classmates! I am a student at ARC and I have a problem. Whenever I have a presentation, no matter how much I practice, I get very stressed and forget what I want to say when I'm presenting to the professor. Can you give me some advice? What should I do to reduce my stress?

- Fakhria M, ESLG 51

Hi Fakhria! I understand your problem because I also get nervous before presentations. I'd like to give you a few suggestions that might help reduce your stress.

First, you should practice with a friend instead of practicing alone. When someone listens to you, it feels more like a real presentation, and this can help you feel more confident.

Also, you don't have to memorize every single word. When we try to remember exact sentences, we usually get more stressed. It's better to learn the main ideas and speak naturally.

Another idea is that you might prefer to write short notes and look at them if you forget something. This can help you stay organized during your presentation.

Finally, try to focus on your breathing before you begin. Taking a few slow breaths can calm your mind and reduce anxiety.

I hope these ideas help you feel more comfortable during your next presentation!

–Anastasiia V, ESLG 51

Got a Funny ESL Story? Pick up ARC Gifts!

The Parrot wants to hear from **YOU**—students, staff, faculty, and administrators!

Tell us about a funny or memorable moment you've had while learning or teaching English.

Send your story to TheParrot@arc.losrios.edu.



As a **BIG** thank-you, receive a gift from *The Parrot*



PRESENTS:

LIFT YOUR VOICE

CALLING ALL POETS, MUSICIANS, AND PERFORMERS!

SIGN UP TO SHOW YOUR TALENT BY FEB. 9TH!



WHILE WE VALUE THE ARTISTIC CREATIVITY AND FREEDOM OF OUR STUDENTS, PLEASE ENSURE SUBMISSIONS FOR THIS EVENT ARE IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE COLLEGE'S STUDENTS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.



EVENT DATE:
FEB. 18TH
12- 3 PM



MY LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER IMMIGRATION

COMPARE & CONTRAST
ESSAY

BY NATALIA ZABABURINA, ESL 55

Have you ever had moments in your life that changed everything before and after? Some people experience a serious event that changes them completely. Today, wars around the world change the lives of many people. Emigrating to the United States changed my life. Now I can clearly see that my life is divided into two parts: before moving to America and after arriving here. Although both stages of my life brought important experiences, they also differ in many ways. There are several similarities between my life before emigration and my life now, but there are also many differences.

First of all, even though emigration changed my life completely, there are several similarities between my life in Russia and my life in America. In both places my family has always been the center of my life. For example, in Russia, my parents and friends lived close to me, and we spent a lot of time together. We went to an overnight camp, visited nearby cities, and spent summers by the rivers and lakes. In the winter, we went on the snow, sledged, and celebrated the holidays together. Similarly, in America, my family continues to be my main source of support and motivation. Moreover, we also met new friends who became like a new family for us here. Another similarity is that I have always tried to create a stable and comfortable life for my children. For example, in Russia, I had my own sewing studio and worked hard to provide for them. They went to a good

school and had many hobbies. As an example, they studied at the art studio. Also, my son went to judo club, and my daughter took dance, vocal, theater, and guitar classes. Likewise, in America my husband and I continue working, studying, and doing everything we can to build a good future for our kids and family. Indeed, although life changed, my family and our hobbies stayed the same and helped me adapt to a new country and feel more comfortable.

However, my life before and after emigration is very different in many ways. In Russia, my life was stable, comfortable, and predictable. For instance, I had a nice home, a business, a car. In contrast, when I arrived in America, everything changed because I had no relatives here, no documents, no language, and no stability. In addition, in Russia I felt confident in my job and everyday life, while in America I had to start everything from zero: study English, find work, understand a new culture, and go through the stress of immigration paperwork.

Even with all the good things I had before moving, something important for me was missing. I found it here. Therefore, the next major difference for me is emotional state and my inner world. Before moving, God was near me but not inside my heart. I lived well, but spiritually I felt empty. On the other hand, after coming to America, I felt God's presence much more strongly, and my priorities changed completely. These differences show how deeply emigration



transformed my life. I feel more confident now because God is in my heart. My values and priorities have changed. Serving God and helping people became very important to me and my family. Here, with Him, I feel peace because I know He understands my needs better than I do and gives me more than I deserve. In summary, there were several differences in my life before and after emigration and all of them contrast helped me find God, grow, become stronger, and understand myself better.

In conclusion, my life before and after emigration is like two very different worlds. My past in Russia formed me and gave me stability, but my present and future in America are helping me grow in new ways. Although both periods share important similarities, such as my family, my hard work, and hobbies; the differences, like my faith in God, are much greater and have changed me forever. I am grateful to God for every stage of my life and for His constant presence as I continue building my new life in America.

MY PURPOSE OF IMMIGRATION

Fresha Amarkhil, ESL 37

OPINION ESSAY

My family and I immigrated to the U.S. for some main reasons. First, we immigrated to save our lives and futures because the situation in our country was very bad. It was difficult to think about a bright future and live without fear. For example, every day we worried about our safety and our children's lives. Here in the United States we live with freedom and safety.

Second, fortunately, there are many educational and job opportunities in the U.S. These opportunities help us to build our careers. In our country since 2021, women have to stay at home and they are not allowed to be in society. But in the U.S., there is equality between men and women. I can be an active and independent woman in this society. Now, I am

able to study, work, and make decisions for my life.

Third, the future of our children was very important to us. In this country, they have the chance to follow their dreams and become successful in the future. In this way, they can go to school safely and choose their future they like. Unfortunately we didn't have this opportunity in our country.

In conclusion, all immigrants have an aim to come to a new country, and I am one of them. My family and I are very happy to be in the United States, which is called the land of opportunities. We are grateful to have this chance to follow our goals and achieve them in the future.

Strength through Chaos

BY ORANAOUS AMIRY, ESL 350

NARRATIVE ESSAY

When the ground shook in Herat, Amiry watched her city tremble and her home crack, confronting fear, uncertainty, and the fragility of life. From the upheaval in Afghanistan to the challenge of starting over in the U.S., she discovers resilience, courage, and an inner strength she never knew she had. "Finding Strength Through Chaos" is a powerful true story of survival, hope, and the remarkable ability to rebuild oneself against all odds.

Finding Strength Through Chaos

Sometimes chaos isn't your enemy; it's the mirror that shows you how strong you've become. Life in Herat, Afghanistan, was heavy and difficult under the Taliban's control. Even though my life was full of fear, loss, and change, I turned all that chaos into strength and became a stronger and more confident version of myself.



Before my life took a sharp turn, I lived in Herat, a city with a long history, warm people, and endless beauty. I remember the smell of fresh bread from our neighbor's bakery every morning and the sound of children running to school with laughter. But when the Taliban took control, everything changed. The streets fell silent, fear re-

placed laughter, and hope was fading. Even when people smiled, their eyes didn't follow. My heart carried a constant weight, yet I still tried to find small moments of happiness, dancing for fun at home, drinking tea with my family, or watching the sunset from our yard. But deep inside, something always felt ready to break. Then came the day that truly did break everything.

It was a normal October morning in 2023, one of those calm mornings when you can almost forget your worries. I had just finished cleaning the house and was ready to relax with my favorite movie and some snacks. Suddenly, the floor began to tremble. At first, I thought it was a bomb, something too common in Afghanistan, but the trembling didn't stop. The ground quivered beneath my feet, dishes crashed, and windows shattered. My heart raced. I screamed, "Earthquake, earthquake, get out!" My family and I ran outside as the ground continued to shake. It felt alive, angry, and endless. That night, no one in Herat slept indoors. We lay in a tent in our yard, listening to the aftershocks that came every few minutes. Even the smallest vibration made our hearts jump. For almost a month, no one dared to return to their homes. People cooked, prayed, and slept outside. The city looked like a massive campsite of broken souls. Many houses had cracks in the walls; ours too. The kitchen tiles were broken, and most of the dishes were shattered. In the villages, things were far worse. Entire mud houses had collapsed. Around 4,000 people died, buried beneath the homes they had built with their own hands. Days turned into weeks of fear. Each time we tried to go back inside to get clothes or food, another tremor sent us running out again. I realized then how fragile life could be; one moment you're drinking tea, and the next, you're running for your life barefoot through dust and broken

glass.

During the earthquake, my family and I decided to leave Herat. The fear, the damage, and the uncertainty pushed us toward a new beginning. We traveled to Kabul to start our process of moving to the United States. Leaving home felt like losing a piece of myself. I looked back from the car window with tears in my eyes and a broken heart, staring at my loved ones and our home, and whispering softly, "Will I ever come back?" In Kabul, things weren't easy either. We were supposed to fly to Germany in November 2023 for an interview, but it was canceled, and we had to wait months with no clear answer. I felt stuck between two worlds, one destroyed, the other still out of reach. Finally, in February 2024, we flew to Qatar. But even that trip was full of trouble; my brother's birth date was written incorrectly on his ticket, and my dad accidentally left our passport folder at airport security. For an hour, we thought we might lose everything. I remember sitting in the waiting area, trembling, and wondering how much more one heart could take.

Eventually, we arrived in the United States on 29 February 2024, a date I will never forget. Everything looked bright and calm, yet inside me was a storm. I missed Herat, even its chaos. Life here was peaceful, but that peace felt strange. Everything was new: the language, the culture, and even the food. Slowly, I began to comfort myself with food.

Eating became my way to escape homesickness, without realizing how much I was consuming. When I finally stepped on the scale, I froze; it showed that I was fifteen kilograms overweight. It



was another kind of shock, not from the ground this time, but from the scale. That day, I remembered the earthquake again, how it had shaken everything apart, and how I had rebuilt. I told myself, if an earthquake couldn't break me, this won't either. I decided to take control. In May 2024, I started exercising seriously for the first time in my life. The first week was tough, and I wanted to

quit many times, but I kept telling myself, "You've survived worse." Slowly, my body began to change, and my breathing became easier. By June, I had lost weight, but more importantly, I had found my strength again.

When I look in the mirror, I feel proud of myself; I don't just see a girl who lost weight; I see a survivor, and someone who turned fear into power. My journey taught me something powerful: sometimes the world shakes you not to destroy you, but to wake you up. Herat's earthquake shook my world, but maybe I needed that shake to find my balance again. The ground once moved beneath my feet, but now, even when life trembles, I stand tall. Through every tremor and every tear, I learned that chaos doesn't end you; it transforms you. So, if someone asks how I found strength through chaos, I'll simply smile and say, "The earthquake shook my home, but the scale shook my soul!"

CHARACTERISTICS THAT HELP US OVERCOME DIFFICULTIES

MARIIA KANIUKA, ESL 55

COMPARE & CONTRAST
ESSAY

Do you know how important it is to have good characteristics in order to overcome difficulties? Every person faces challenges in life, but those who have strong and positive qualities are better able to handle them. Good characteristics help us stay calm, find solutions, and continue moving forward even when life becomes hard. In my opinion, there are three important characteristics a person needs in order to overcome difficulties: patience, determination, and hope.

One of the most important characteristics a person needs in order to overcome difficulties is patience. When people face challenges, patience helps them stay calm and think clearly instead of making quick decisions. For example, a patient person does not rush to conclusions but takes time to understand the problem and find the best solution. Patience is also very important in the family, because it helps to overcome problems together and build a happy relationship. From my own experience, I know that when my husband and I face hard situations, being patient helps us solve problems and keep peace. In addition, patience teaches people to wait for results and expect success right away. For example, when people work hard toward their goals, they often don't see progress, but patience helps them keep going to believe that success will come with time. These three examples show that patience is not only an important quality for overcoming difficulties, but also a way to build

peace and strength inside ourselves.

Another important characteristic that helps people overcome difficulties is determination. Determination gives people the strength to keep going even when life is full of challenges. First, determination helped me personally when I moved to a new country. It was not easy to start a new life and study in a different language, but my determination gave me the courage to continue and not give up. Because of this quality, I was able to enter college. Second, determination helps people achieve success in life. Determined people work hard for their goals and do not stop when they face problems. They understand that success takes time and effort, and they try until they reach what they want. Finally, determination helps people overcome fear and shyness. When someone

is determined, they believe in themselves and are not afraid to take action. This characteristic gives people confidence to try new things, even if they feel nervous or uncertain. In conclusion, determination is a powerful characteristic that helps people reach success, face new challenges bravely, and continue moving forward in difficult times.

The third important characteristic that helps people overcome difficulties is hope. Hope gives people believe that every problem can be solved and that better days will come. It helps them



stay positive and not lose motivation when life feels hard. First, hope gives people strength to move forward even in difficult times. When people believe that things can get better, they find the energy to keep going and not give up. Second, hope helps people think about the future and make plans. For example, in the short story "The Most Important Day" by Helen Keller (p. 22), she shows great hope for the future. Even though she was blind and deaf, she believed in a better future and studied hard. It shows how important it is to think positively about the future. Finally, hope inspires and gives strength to other people. When someone has hope, it spreads to those around them and helps others stay positive too. A hopeful person can encourage their family and friends not to give up during hard times. In conclusion, hope makes us stronger, and when our

thoughts are focused on positive things, what once seemed impossible becomes possible.

In conclusion, patience, determination, and hope are important characteristics a person needs in order to overcome difficulties in life. These three characteristics help people stay calm, strong, and positive even in the hardest moments. Patience teaches us to control our emotions and wait for the right time. Determination gives us the strength to keep moving forward and never give up. Hope makes us stronger, and when our thoughts are focused on positive things, what once seemed impossible becomes possible. Together, these three characteristics make us stronger and help us face the difficulties of life more easily.

CHARACTER TRAITS

BY INNA KLYMCHUK, ESL 47

DESCRIPTIVE
PARAGRAPH

My son Kosta is a nice boy, but, like all people, he has positive and negative character traits. First of all, he is friendly. He has a lot of friends always and everywhere. Sometimes I think he has something special on his face, like the light of friendship. Next, his positive character trait is confidence. Before doing something difficult, he looks at me and says, "Mom, I'll do it." He looks so confident that I believe him. Unfortunately, my son has one (probably more) negative character trait. He is lazy, like most teenagers. He doesn't like to read books because they are long. It's faster to watch a movie. This breaks my heart. If he reads more, it will give him more possibilities. I love my son, and I love each of his character traits. Each character trait is very important because it can describe a person better.

DIFFICULT LIFE OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

BY LILIIA YERMOLAIEVA, ESL 47

OPINION ESSAY

A lot of children in the world are immigrants. This way is difficult for every child because it is a new life for them. I have several reasons to think why the life is difficult for immigrant children.

First of all, when a family moves to a new country, they think about new schools for children. It is like a new adventure. Often it is like new stress for children. For example, when we moved to the USA, my children were afraid to go to school. They didn't know the new language. They didn't have any friends. They didn't understand teachers and classmates. They were shy and felt insecure. The education system in America is different than the education system in Ukraine. Therefore, it was difficult and incomprehensible for the children. Immigrant children start to learn new language, and it is difficult for them. They meet new classmates and new teachers. They build new lives. Their life is like a clean piece of paper. To sum up, a new school in a new country is one of the reasons why life is difficult for immigrant children.

Second, life for immigrant children is difficult because they make new friends. Every child had friends in their home country. They grew up, played, and studied together. But when life changes, children make new friends in the new country. For example, my children missed their friends from Ukraine very much. They still talk on the cellphone

and hope to meet them in the future. Many children come from different countries. They have different cultures, different languages, and different problems. They help each other to build new friendships. They inspire each other to build a new life in foreign countries. It has many advantages, but it is difficult for every child. In conclusion, making new friends in a new country is difficult for children.



Lastly, life for immigrant children is difficult because there are many new places. They are no familiar streets or parks that they had before. Everything around them feels strange and foreign. But it has many advantages. There are new places to travel with family and friends. They can discover new places and travel a lot. They can go to the ocean or mountains.

They discover new cities and new countries or states. It is not easy, but it is really exciting. Children have new experiences and become more confident. But they can't go back to their homes in their home country. Finally, life for immigrant children is difficult because they have many new places.

Indeed, life for immigrant children is difficult because they study in a new school, they make new friends, and they have many new places. Therefore, I think every child needs some support and help in their difficult immigrant life.

COMIC STRIP

BY ANTONINA HLUSHNIUK, ESLG 41

My friends and I can communicate with each other via the internet.



My parents could get the news only through radio, television or newspapers.



20 years ago I couldn't buy groceries online, so I had to go to the store every time.



Surprises in America

Liliia Kholod ESL 47

OPINION ESSAY

Moving to another country is one of the biggest decisions a person can make. I wanted a better life for my family, but I did not know much about America. When I moved to America, I was excited and surprised by three things: educational opportunities, personal freedom, and the chance for a better life.

First, educational opportunities are very strong in America. Education is very important to me and my future. In the United States, colleges and universities offer many programs and support for students. I can choose classes that match my goals and interests. Teachers encourage students to think independently and ask questions. America also offers ESL programs for people who do not know the English language. This support makes studying less stressful, so it is very helpful for me. Therefore, America gives me a strong foundation for success. I was surprised that some education is free because in my country education is a very expensive service. Indeed, education in the United States opens many doors, and I am very happy to have this opportunity.

Second, another surprise for me is personal freedom and equal opportunities. In the United States, people are encouraged to express their opinions. I feel respected regardless of my background. People are judged more by their effort than by where they come from. Because of this, I feel motivated

to work hard and improve my life. America values responsibility and independence. I can make my own choices and learn from my experiences. This freedom helps me grow as a person. Therefore, living in America allows me to build confidence and self-respect, which surprised me. Indeed, personal freedom makes life more meaningful.



Third, I was surprised by the many opportunities for work and career growth. People who work hard can improve their lives over time. America has a strong economy, and there are many paths to success. I can set goals and work toward them step by step. Life is not easy, but effort is often rewarded. America gives me the chance to dream big and take responsibility for my future. Therefore, I believe America is a place where dreams can become reality. I saw this when I moved here. Indeed, it inspires hope and ambition.

In conclusion, when I first came to America, I noticed three things that surprised me: education, freedom, and opportunity. For me, these things are a big surprise because in my country everything is different. Every day, I admire this country more and more.

OPINION ESSAY

GERDAN

BY TAMARA PIVTORAK, ESL 47

Parrot Palette

Most people have a hobby that brings them joy. My hobby is making gerdans. Have you ever heard the word “*gerdan*”? These are women’s beaded neck ornaments that are similar to embroidery, and I really love making them in my free time. There are several reasons why this activity is important and enjoyable for me.



First of all, making necklaces calms me down. When I work with beads, I forget about everyday problems. I focus only on weaving. My thoughts became calm. Slow hand movements help me relax. I feel peace inside of my body. This hobby helps me relieve stress. Even after a hard day, I feel better. I like silence while working. Therefore, this activity is truly useful for my mood.

Next, my hobby gives me the opportunity to be creative. I choose the colors of the beads myself. I

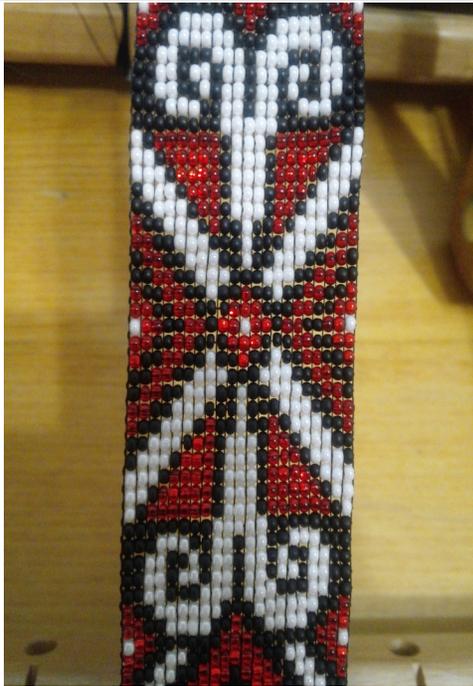
think about patterns and shapes. There are many samples on the Internet, but I use them as a plot. During work I make some changes. I like to try new color combinations. Each piece of jewelry is special. No two necklaces are the same. I feel happy when I see finished work. Definitely, it helps me express myself.

Finally, an important part of my hobby is making gifts for people. I enjoy giving necklaces to my relatives and friends. I make jewelry with love and care. I am thinking about the person for whom I am making them. I choose colors that they like. People are happy with such gifts. They really value hand-made work. It makes me immensely happy. I feel



their sincere gratitude. Moreover, my hobby helps to make others happy.

Indeed, making *gerdans* is a special hobby for me.



It calms me down, helps me be creative, and gives me joy; therefore, I extremely love this activity and plan to do it in the future.



MY HOME COUNTRY

SERHII SAVEHUK, ESL 47

OPINION ESSAY

Why do people leave their homes and immigrate to foreign countries? I guess, in search of a better life. Every immigrant has a few things that he misses in a foreign country. For me, relatives, friends, and my Ukrainian house are things what I miss in my home country.

First, I miss my relatives so much, who stayed in Ukraine. This is my grandma and my cousins. My granny was for me like my mother. She raised me through my childhood. My cousins also mean a lot to me. Because of the war, we scattered to foreign countries. We miss each other, although we keep in touch by phone. We will all be able to see each other around the table. It was extremely difficult to leave them and move to another country. It will be wonderful to see each other after many years. Indeed, I think my family in Ukraine is the main thing that I miss.

Next, my friends who stayed in Ukraine are very important for me. I miss them very much. They always supported me in my life. They helped me in difficult situations. They never let me down. We spent a lot of time together. We have common interests, such as fishing, hiking, and playing soccer. Now, many of my

friends are in the military. They are defending my country in the fight with the aggressor. I always pray to God for helping them. Indeed, my friends are very dear to me, and I can't wait to see them again.

Finally, the third thing that I miss is my home in Ukraine. My home has many memories from my childhood. It is very important to me because I was born there, grew up, got married, and my children grew up there. It is a very cozy home. I loved spending time at my home with my friends. We all met there for celebrations. Right now, nobody lives in my house. My house is waiting for me when I come back. Sometimes I look at old pictures of my house, and I feel warm inside. Indeed, my Ukrainian house is a very important thing in my life.

In conclusion, the things that I really miss about my home country are my relatives, my friends, and my Ukrainian house. I really miss them, and I can't wait to see them again.



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 Noetal,

I'm currently in the beginner ESL classes at ARC, working on my reading, writing, grammar, and listening. While I'm making progress in class and turning in assignments on time, I'm still struggling to actually speak to people in everyday situations. I feel really shy and nervous about making mistakes when I talk to others, and it's holding me back from improving my speaking skills. Is there anything I can do to get better at communicating without feeling so scared?

Sincerely,
A Nervous ESL Student

Dear Nervous ESL Student,

Thank you for sharing your story! It's completely normal to feel shy about speaking a new language in public. Many immigrant and ESL students go through the same thing. The good news is there's a wonderful resource right here at ARC that can help you practice.

In the Learning Resource Center (LRC) building, we have an ESL Lab where you can spend a bit of extra time, even enrolling for a unit or two if you'd like. It's a great space where you can interact with other students, get guidance from instructors and tutors, and most importantly, practice your English in a supportive environment. By chatting with fellow ESL learners and friendly faces there, you'll build your confidence and find that speaking becomes much less intimidating over time.



Remember, everyone there is learning too, and it's a judgment-free zone. The more you practice in real-life situations, the easier it gets. So, take advantage of that lab; it might just be the key to boosting your speaking confidence!

Best of luck and keep practicing!

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



EDIBLE BOUQUET

BY DIANA TKACHENKO, ESL 47

HOBBY CORNER

Do you like giving bouquets? In my opinion, flower bouquets can be a waste of money, even though they are beautiful. Therefore, I found a new kind of bouquet, and it is now my favorite hobby. These bouquets usually look beautiful, but you can also eat them. This is my story about how I started my hobby, the kinds of edible bouquets I made, and how I used money from it.

First, I started my hobby in Ukraine before I had my daughters. That idea came to us from the USA, when I never even imagined I would live in America. Mom told me that in the USA there is a



company that makes chocolate-covered strawberries, and it's very popular for gifts. I liked that idea. Since childhood, I have loved giving original gifts, especially handmade ones. My best friend had a birthday, and I made my first original bouquet for her. It was a big bouquet with berries such as strawberries and raspberries. It was hard to make, and it was even harder to bring it to the party. But it was totally worth it. She really liked it and was thrilled. This bouquet really stood out among the other gifts. Indeed, it was the beginning of my hobby, and that's

how I started giving such bouquets to my friends and family, and later to friends of friends.

Second, I made different kinds of bouquets. They included fruits, vegetables, sausage, cheese, candy, and much more. In the end, I combined edible products with some non-edible items, flowers, or whatever the person would give, and I somehow added them creatively into the bouquet. To make this, I used lots of wooden skewers, tape, hot glue, some pretty packaging, and a variety of decorations. For men, I made bouquets with sausage, cheese, vegetables, or candies in black, red, blue and green colors. For children, these were usually candies in a single color, or multicolored, sometimes even including balloons and toys. I made the most variety of bouquets for women. There were so many different options for them. Indeed, I enjoyed creating new kinds of bouquets each time, mixing sweet and savory edible and non-edible items. It was a very creative process for me.

Finally, it turned into a hobby that brings in money. Other people started ordering bouquets from me and paying for them. This was especially for people living in other countries who wanted to celebrate the holidays with their loved ones. It was also very popular on Mother's Day. I made all kinds of bouquets and one year, I spent the whole night making them. My balcony was full of bouquets, and I was tired but happy. After I delivered all the orders, I went to bed, and that's how I spent my Mother's Day. Indeed, I got my little business, which grew as a hobby.

In conclusion, I am very glad that I had my favorite hobbies, that I was able to make different kinds of bouquets, and that I could earn money from it while making people happy. And in my opinion, any gift is special, even if it's only one flower or one candy, but it's really important to find your favorite hobby.



**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!

READING FOR BEGINNERS

ASKING FOR HELP IN COLLEGE

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

When I started college, I felt scared to ask for help. I thought I had to do everything by myself. Sometimes I did not understand my homework, but I did not ask questions.

One day, I did not finish an assignment. I did not understand the instructions. I felt stressed and worried. After class, I decided to talk to my professor.

I went to the professor's office hours. I felt nervous, but the professor was kind. She listened to me and explained the homework again. She also told me about the tutoring center.

Later, I went to the tutoring center. The tutor helped me step by step. The homework became easier to understand. I felt better and more confident.

Now, I ask for help when I need it. I talk to my professors, tutors, and counselors. College is hard, but asking for help makes it easier. Asking for help does not mean you are weak. It means you want to learn.



Photo created by ChatGPT AI.

Can you answer these questions?

1. How did the writer feel at the beginning of college?

- A. Happy
- B. Angry
- C. Scared
- D. Excited

2. Why did the writer feel stressed?

- A. He was late to class.
- B. He did not understand the homework.
- C. He lost his book.
- D. He missed the bus.

3. Who did the writer talk to after class?

- A. A friend
- B. A tutor
- C. A counselor
- D. A professor

4. Where did the writer go to get more help?

- A. The library
- B. The tutoring center

- C. The gym
- D. The cafeteria

5. How did the tutor help the writer?

- A. By giving answers
- B. By explaining step by step
- C. By doing the homework
- D. By canceling the class

6. How does the writer feel now?

- A. Confused
- B. Afraid
- C. Confident
- D. Tired

7. What is the main idea of the story?

- A. College is too hard.
- B. Asking for help is bad.
- C. Asking for help is helpful.
- D. Tutors are better than teachers.



The Susan Pezone Memorial ESL Scholarship



The Susan Pezone Memorial ESL Scholarship

Thanks to the generous donations of the family and friends of Professor Susan Pezone, the ESL Department at American River College has established a **\$500** scholarship to honor the memory of Professor Susan Pezone, a dear ESL colleague, who passed away in Fall 2020. Professor Pezone was a wonderful teacher, colleague, and writer, who is sorely missed.

Requirements:

This scholarship will be awarded to one ARC ESL student who has the same **love of learning and writing** that Professor Pezone showed in her teaching and in her own writing, with preference going to students who have already completed a **minimum of 24 units in ESL at ARC before the start of the Spring 2026 semester.**

Timeline:

The application time period for the Spring 2026 scholarship will be in March (from 3/01/26 - 3/31/26), and the scholarship winners will be announced in late April or May 2026.

Application: Please see the next issue of *The Parrot* or ask your ESL professors for a link to the application. The link will not be available until then.

"I love words though they sometimes get the better of me. Being a writer has always been my dream. For me, writing is kind of like studying a language. I know I'll never master it, but it doesn't matter because it's so much fun along the way." --Susan Pezone in A Collection of River Rock Writing: Sacramento (page 65)



Fall 2025



Student Health & Wellness Center
 Located Between Student Center and Community Rooms

Learn More About Your LOS RIOS STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES

available to currently enrolled students!

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Talk it Out

Our vision is to **empower** students with the knowledge, skills and resources to support their **physical and mental wellness**, so they may **achieve** their educational and life goals.



Peer Support: Safe, **anonymous, peer-to-peer** platform 24/7, ability to filter to find their global community



Therapy and Advocacy: Meet with a Student Health and Wellness Center (SHWC) therapist or advocate, **in person or virtually**.



Online Therapy: Talk to an online licensed therapist during the day, **evenings, and weekends**.



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FREE Mental Health Services

WHAT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT WORKS BEST FOR YOU?

	Los Rios SHWC	BetterMynd
In-person appointments	✓	✗
Available during traditional hours	✓	✓
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Ability to select therapist based on demographics, identities, lived experiences, and specialties	✓	✓

If therapy isn't the right choice for you, maybe peer support is. Access 24/7 online peer support through **Togetherall**.

FREE Physical Health Services

- Health and illness assessments
- First aid for minor injuries and illness
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- Narcan and fentanyl testing strips
- Pregnancy testing
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- Condoms (male and female) and lubricant
- Flu A/B testing
- Flu vaccine
- Strep throat testing
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- Immunizations/titers*
- TB skin test*

*Low Cost



For more information and to make an appointment, scan here!

Pick up your **FREE Party Safe Toolkits** at your Student Health and Wellness Center!

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 - Fentanyl Test Strip
 - Drink Cover
 - Drink Spike Test Strip
- *Currently enrolled students



INTERVIEW: MARZIA SHARIFI

BY EDRES SAYED SADIQLI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

INTERVIEW

Continued from page 1

ing yourself? Please share your name, major, and how long you have been a student at American River College.

My name is Marzia Sharifi, and I am a Pre-Health major at American River College. I have been a student at ARC for several years, and during this time I have also served as a Peer Mentor at El Centro, where I support and guide fellow students.

What inspired you to pursue your current major, and what are your educational or career goals after completing your studies at ARC?

I was inspired to pursue a Pre-Health major because I have a strong desire to help others and make a positive impact in my community. After completing my Pre-Health coursework at American River College, my goal is to enter the ARC Nursing Program and earn my nursing degree, so I can build a career in healthcare and provide compassionate, culturally responsive care.

Can you tell me about your educational journey as an immigrant student? Where did your academic path begin, and what brought you to American River College?

My educational journey began outside of the United States. As an immigrant student, continuing my education in a new country required adapting to a different language, culture, and

academic system. I chose American River College because of its diverse and supportive environment, which helped me feel welcomed and encouraged to continue pursuing my goals.

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced when starting college as an immigrant student?

Some of the biggest challenges I faced included language barriers, building self-confidence, and learning how to navigate the college system. Understanding academic requirements, deadlines, and campus resources was challenging at first.

How did you overcome these challenges, and who or what supported you the most along the way?

I overcame these challenges by staying committed to my goals and seeking support when I needed it. Counselors, instructors, and campus programs, especially El Centro, provided guidance, encouragement, and a sense of belonging that helped me move forward with

confidence.

How did you first learn about El Centro, and what motivated you to apply for a student employee position there?

I first learned about El Centro through campus involvement and conversations with other



students. I was motivated to apply for a student employee position as a Peer Mentor because I wanted to support students who may be facing similar challenges and contribute to a space that promotes inclusion, support, and empowerment.

What types of services, programs, and resources does El Centro provide to students?

El Centro offers academic support, mentoring, workshops, leadership opportunities, cultural and educational events, and a welcoming community space. These services are designed to help students succeed academically while also feeling connected and supported.

How do these services specifically support Hispanic, Latinx, Chicanx, and immigrant students?

El Centro provides culturally responsive services that recognize and respect students' identities and experiences.

The center creates an inclusive environment where Hispanic, Latinx, Chicanx, immigrant students and all other students feel valued and supported both academically and personally.

Based on your experience, how can immigrant students benefit the most from El Centro's programs, events, and community space?

Immigrant students can benefit the most by actively participating in El Centro's programs and events, building relationships with peers and mentors, and using available resources. Engagement helps students feel more confident, informed, and connected to the campus community.

Outside of school and work, what hobbies or interests help you relax, stay motivated, or maintain balance?

Outside of school and work, I enjoy spending time with family, staying active through sports, and participating in cultural activities. These interests help me maintain balance, manage stress, and stay motivated.

How has working at El Centro influenced your confidence, leadership skills, or sense of belonging at American River College?

Working at El Centro as a Peer Mentor has

strengthened my confidence and leadership skills while deepening my sense of belonging at ARC. Supporting other students has been both meaningful and empowering, and it has reinforced my commitment to helping others succeed.



El Centro provides culturally responsive services that recognize and respect students' identities and experiences.



What advice would you give to new immigrant students who may feel scared, overwhelmed, or unsure about starting college?

I would encourage new immigrant students to believe in themselves and not hesitate to ask for help. College can feel overwhelming at first, but there are many supportive people and resources available. You are not alone, and your experiences and background are strengths.

Marzia Sharifi, thank you so much for your time and the valuable information you have provided during this interview.

It was an honor to be interviewed for *The Parrot*, and I appreciate being given this opportunity.

HONEST THIEF: WHAT BEING HUMAN REALLY MEANS

MOVIE REVIEW

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER



I recently watched the movie *Honest Thief*, and I genuinely enjoyed it, not just as an action film, but as a story that made me reflect deeply on humanity, morality, and personal choices. My biggest take-away from the movie is that we are all

human. In life, sometimes we choose the right path, and sometimes, because of the circumstances we are in, we choose the wrong one. What matters most is not perfection but being human inside and out.

In *Honest Thief*, Liam Neeson's character (Tom Carter) represents someone who chose the wrong path due to his life experiences and circumstances. However, despite his actions as a bank robber, he never harmed anyone and never had the intention of hurting another human being. From my perspective, this shows that even when someone makes wrong choices, their humanity can still remain intact. He was honest about who he was, and what he did, and about wanting to make things right.

On the other hand, the movie presents a powerful contrast through the character of a police officer who took an oath to protect and serve. On the outside, he wore a police uniform and appeared respectable, but on the inside, he was driven by greed. Nothing was

ever enough for him. He even killed his own coworkers for personal gain, gain that he never truly benefited from. This contrast made me realize that humanity is not defined by uniforms, titles, or appearances, but by intentions and actions.

Another moment that stood out to me was when Tom fell in love. Love changed him. For the first time, he could no longer carry the weight of his wrongdoings. He decided to turn himself in, return all the money he stole to the government, and ask for minimum jail time with full visitation rights. He was honest and truthful about his reasons. However, the police officers did not take him seriously. They assumed he was bluffing, like others who had falsely claimed to be the infamous bank robber.

From this part of the movie, I learned an important lesson: even if someone might be bluffing, it is the responsibility of law enforcement to take every claim seriously. Their job is not to judge people over the phone, but to investigate and verify the truth. Because of neglect and assumptions, many lives were lost throughout the story. One small act of negligence can cost many lives. This shows how important it is for people in positions of authority, especially in law enforcement, to take their responsibilities seriously. If someone can no longer do that, it may be better to step aside so others who are willing to serve properly can take their place.

Overall, *Honest Thief* was an interesting and meaningful movie for me. I learned many lessons, but the biggest one that will stay with me is this: no matter what, it is never too late to return to the right path. It is never too late to stop doing what is wrong and choose to do better. Being human means having compassion, honesty, and respect for others. Never hurt people. Always help when you can. That is what truly makes us human and sets us apart.

EXPLORE CALIFORNIA: CHASING THE AURORAS

EXPLORE

BY MANNY, PARROT STAFF WRITER



Chasing the northern lights in Northern California is an exercise in patience, hope, and a little bit of stubborn faith. They are not promised here. They tease more than they reveal. Still, when the alerts started buzzing that night, I couldn't ignore the possibility.

I spent hours in the Truckee area, parked under cold, quiet skies, watching and waiting. The stars were sharp, the air was still, and yet the aurora refused to fully arrive, only a faint red glow lingered on the horizon, like a whisper instead of a statement. Time passed. Fatigue set in. Eventually, logic took over and I decided to head home, driving west on I-80, accepting that this might be another near-miss.

Then my phone buzzed again.

A fresh alert: auroral activity increasing with visibility possible now.

Instinct overruled exhaustion. I pulled off at Emigrant Gap Lookout, a place I've passed many times before, never expecting it to become the setting for something extraordinary. It was around 2 a.m. The mountains were silent, dark silhouettes against the sky. I stepped out, set up my camera, and waited again.

And then it happened.

The sky came alive.

Curtains of pink and red light began to rise and ripple above the Sierra Nevada, stretching across the horizon, softly pulsing like breath. What had been a quiet glow transformed into motion. Subtle at first, then unmistakable. The aurora danced. Not loudly, not dramatically, but with a grace that felt intimate, almost private, as if it had been waiting for the right moment, the right place.

Standing there in the cold, surrounded by forested ridges and distant peaks, I felt that rare sense of alignment, the feeling that despite the long wait, the wrong turns, and the doubt, I was exactly where I was meant to be. The lights didn't just appear; they arrived, rewarding the persistence it took to keep going when it would have been easier to quit.

This photograph captures more than a natural phenomenon. It holds the memory of hours spent trusting uncertainty, of listening to intuition over reason, and of witnessing something fleeting that asked only one thing in return: presence.

Sometimes the magic doesn't happen where you expect it to. Sometimes it waits for you at the very end of your patience, at a quiet lookout on the side of a highway, at 2 a.m., when you're almost ready to give up.

And sometimes, the sky finally speaks back.

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Requirements:

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IMMIGRATION, FEAR, AND KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS: WHAT ARC STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW

EVENT

ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER



For many immigrant students at American River College, immigration is not just a policy debate, or something seen on the news. It is personal. It affects our families, our education, our ability to travel, and our sense of safety. Even for those of us who hold lawful status, fear and uncertainty are constant. I am an immigrant student myself with Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) status, and despite having legal status, I am still

afraid to leave the United States to visit my parents. That fear is shared by many students across our campus.

On January 30, 2026, the ARC ESL Center hosted an Immigration Law Information Session on Zoom, led by Professor Oranit Limmaneeprasert and presented by immigration attorney Peter Kyung of Kilo Immigration. The goal of the session was simple but urgent: to help students, staff, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers better understand their immigration status, rights, and options during a time of heightened enforcement and widespread misinformation.

One of the most important clarifications Peter Kyung made was the difference between a visa and status. A visa is only used to enter the United States. Once inside the country, what matters is a person's status. For example, an F-1 student may enter the U.S. with a visa, but their lawful presence depends on maintaining their student status through documents like the I-20. Maintaining lawful status is essential for any future change of status or path to permanent residency.

The session also addressed undocumented students and DACA recipients. Peter explained that undocumented individuals generally fall into two groups: those who entered with a visa and overstayed, and those who entered without inspection. Importantly, he emphasized that relief options may still exist, even when people believe they have none. These may include asy-

lum, U visas for crime victims, VAWA protections for survivors of abuse, military parole in place, or advance parole for certain DACA recipients. His advice was clear: every case is different, and speaking with an immigration attorney can reveal options people may not know they have.

For refugees, asylees, and permanent residents, much of the discussion focused on ICE encounters and travel. Peter reminded attendees that individuals in the United States have constitutional rights, including the right to remain silent and the right to speak with an attorney. At the same time, he stressed that immigrants are legally required to carry original proof of status, not just copies. Depending on one's status, this may include a green card, I-94, passport with entry stamp, or proof of a pending case.

Travel, both domestic and international, was another major concern. While domestic travel may still involve TSA and sometimes CBP interactions, international travel carries additional risks. Permanent residents are generally advised not to remain outside the U.S. for more than 180 days, and trips longer than one year require a re-entry permit. Although inspections of phones or social media by border officials are rare, fear surrounding travel is very real. Peter cautioned against panic and encouraged balanced, informed decision-making rather than relying on alarming social media stories.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) was also discussed. TPS rules change frequently, and Peter advised students to rely on USCIS.gov as the most accurate source of information. Individuals should regularly check their country's designation, work authorization validity, and any automatic extensions or terminations.

Another important topic was the "period of authorized stay." Students with pending appli-

cations, such as asylum or adjustment of status, may not be accruing unlawful presence. However, Peter warned that this does not always protect individuals from detention under current enforcement practices. If detained, some individuals may be eligible for bond, but this depends on factors such as flight risk and public safety concerns. He strongly advised never signing documents without first speaking to an attorney.

Finally, Peter addressed delays in naturalization. Many citizenship interviews and ceremonies have been paused or delayed, while USCIS is prioritizing green card applications. Processing times are unpredictable, and those eligible for citizenship should seek legal advice before applying.

This session offered something many immigrant students desperately need: clarity. It did not erase fear, but it replaced rumors with knowledge and panic with preparation. For immigrant students at ARC, knowing our rights, understanding our status, and seeking reliable legal guidance can make a meaningful difference in how we navigate an uncertain system.

Resources for Students:

Kilo Immigration – Peter Kyung: <https://kilo-immigration.com/peter-kyung/>

USCIS Information: <https://www.uscis.gov>

Free Legal Immigration Services for Los Rios Students: Legal Services Appointment Portal (available at ARC and all Los Rios campuses)

For many of us, immigration is not just paperwork. It is our lives. Conversations like this matter.

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Students and
Employees

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FINDING HEALING, COMMUNITY, AND CULTURE: LESSONS FROM A CAMBODIAN COMMUNITY CENTER

BY ASILA SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

CULTURE

Last week, I had the opportunity to participate in a community event organized by a Cambodian community center in Long Beach Orange County, and the experience stayed with me long after it ended. What I witnessed was not just an event, but a powerful example of how culture, compassion, and community can restore dignity and hope, especially for immigrant seniors.

Many of the elders served by this center face deep challenges. They often feel physically weak, emotionally lonely, and disconnected from the world around them. Language barriers make daily life harder, and adapting to a new culture can feel overwhelming. For many, English is difficult to learn, and the cultural gap between their past and present lives leaves them feeling isolated and misunderstood.

This center exists to change that reality.

The organization provides a wide range of activities and services designed specifically to support Cambodian seniors. These include yoga, meditation, Tai Chi, art, Zumba dance activities, and social gatherings that encourage connection rather than isolation. Beyond wellness activities, the center also offers ESL classes, case management services that help elders navigate legal, governmental, and social systems. They assist with translation, connect individuals to resources,

and guide them through important processes at the right time. In many ways, the center acts as a bridge between generations, cultures, and systems that can otherwise feel impossible to cross alone.

The activity that stood out to me most

was the water blessing ceremony. While water blessing is rooted in religious tradition, particularly within Buddhism, the way it was practiced here was deeply inclusive and community-focused. The ceremony was less about religion and more about connection. Families gathered together, elders and



younger members side by side, sharing a moment of gratitude, reflection, and unity.

During the water blessing, participants expressed appreciation for their health, their families, and the good things still present in their lives. The practice encouraged people to release stress, negative thoughts, and emotional burdens. Water, symbolizing cleansing and renewal, became a way to let go of pain while honoring resilience.

Most participants identified as Buddhist, and I found myself unexpectedly connected to the experience.

Although I am from Afghanistan, a country now widely associated with Islam, Afghanistan has a deep and rich Buddhist history. Long before Islam, Afghanistan was a center of Buddhism and cultural exchange. The giant Buddha statues of Bamiyan, known as Salsal and Shahmama, once stood 62 meters tall and represented peace, learning, and spiritual reflection. Remembering this history helped me feel connected, not separate from the ceremony taking place before me.

I shared this history and my own experiences with members of the community, and in return, I learned from them. The exchange felt mutual and healing. The water blessing practice struck me as a powerful method for reducing stress and releasing negative emo-

tions. As someone who works in the mental health field, I saw its potential not only as a cultural tradition but as a therapeutic practice that supports emotional well-being.

This is something I plan to incorporate into my own self-care and, where appropriate, adapt thoughtfully for clients I work with in mental health settings. Sometimes heal-

ing does not come from complex systems or clinical language, but from simple practices that remind people that they belong, that they are seen, and that their roots matter.

This experience

reminded me that immigrant communities carry wisdom, resilience, and traditions that deserve recognition and respect. When we create spaces where culture is honored rather than erased, we give people more than services. We give them dignity, connection, and hope.



AMERICAN CULTURE THROUGH PERSONAL SPACE: MY OWN EXPERIENCE

BY MOHAMMED EL MRANI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

When I first came to the United States, I didn't realize how important personal space was in American culture. I only understood it after a few awkward moments, moments that made me step back, think, and compare it to what I grew up with in Morocco. Over time, learning about personal space became one of the most important lessons that helped me understand American behavior and communicate better.

The first time I spoke to an American in person from the physical distance I was used to in Morocco, I noticed something funny: they kept taking a small step back. At first, I thought, *Maybe they don't like me? Maybe I'm making them uncomfortable?* But I wasn't doing anything wrong. I was simply standing the way we usually stand back home, close enough to show warmth, attention, and friendship.

Later, I learned that in American culture, people need more space around their bodies to feel comfortable. They don't like standing so close. It doesn't mean they don't like you; it just means they have a different idea of comfort.

Another thing that surprised me was how much Americans value privacy. In Morocco, privacy is something we share. We live together, we spend most of our time with family, and we knock on doors, but we also enter quickly. We ask personal questions because we care. We show love through closeness.

Here in the U.S., I noticed people say things like,

"I need some space,"

or

"I need time for myself."

At first, this sounded lonely to me. But then I realized something important: for Americans, privacy is not about distance from others; it is about recharging, thinking clearly, and respecting each person's own world.

These cultural differences made me look at myself and my habits. I realized I naturally like being close to people when I talk. I like the warmth of Moroccan interactions, the friendly touch on the shoulder, the long greeting, the shared space in a busy home. These things feel normal and comforting to me.

But I also discovered that giving space does not mean giving less love or respect. In fact, in American culture, space itself is a form of respect. Standing a bit farther away, not interrupting, not asking personal questions right away, these things show that you care about someone's comfort.

Slowly, I started to adjust. I learned to read body language, to notice when someone steps back or needs quiet. And I realized that I can still be myself, friendly, warm, and open, but I can show it in a way that fits the cultural environment.

People often talk about language barriers, but for me, the biggest challenge was understanding personal space. This simple idea changed how I interact with Americans. It helped me make better conversations, avoid misunderstandings, and build deeper relationships.

At the same time, it made me appreciate Moroccan culture even more. Our closeness, our hospitality, our open hearts, they are beautiful. But understanding another culture's boundaries is also beautiful. It shows maturity, respect, and flexibility.

**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.



WHY LEARNING ENGLISH NEVER ENDS

GRAMMAR

BY SAYED EDRES SADIQI, PARROT STAFF WRITER

I like the fact that there is no end to learning a language. I have experienced this personally. Before immigrating to the U.S., I worked with U.S. government-funded organizations and projects in Afghanistan. During that time, I learned and developed my English communication skills. I used English every day at work, and after a few years, I felt very confident. I believed I was speaking English fluently.

However, in 2016, when I immigrated to the United States and settled in Oakland, my experience changed. English was no longer just a work language. It became the only language I used everywhere: at work, at home, in stores, restaurants, and daily life. After a few weeks, I got a job where I interacted with people every day. That was when I realized something important. Even though I had used English for years at work and felt confident, I could not always understand the English people used in daily conversations. The English I learned and used in Afghanistan was very different from the English people used in everyday life in the U.S.

A simple real-life example is the greeting “How are you?” As an ESL learner, this is one of the first sentences we learn. From books and work experience, I learned that when someone says “How are you?” the response is “I am fine, thank you. How are you?” I used this greeting many times while working on U.S. government projects in Afghanistan. After moving to the U.S., I noticed people

greeted each other differently. At first, this confused me. I was not sure if people were greeting me or asking a real question.

One day at work, a coworker said to me, “How is it going?” I did not understand what he meant. I started thinking about many possibilities. Was he asking about my work? If so, why didn’t he ask directly? What does “it” mean? To me, the sentence did not make sense.

So, I decided to ask him. I said, “I didn’t understand what you meant when you said ‘How is it going?’ Can you explain?” He smiled and said that this is a common greeting. It means “How are you?” Native speakers often use “How is it going?” instead of “How are you?” I became more curious and asked another question. I said, “If someone says ‘How is it going?’ and I want to say ‘I am fine, thank you. What about you?’ what should I say?” He smiled again and explained that in daily communication, native speakers do not speak very formally. The common response is simply, “All right, you?” This short answer means the full sentence I had learned before. This experience taught me an important lesson. There is no end to learning a language. Even when you feel confident, there is always more to learn.

Below are some examples of basic English expressions compared to more advanced or natural English expressions used by native speakers:

	Basic English	Advanced English
1	How are you?	How’s it going?
2	I am sure.	I’m certain.
3	It is rude.	It’s disrespectful.
4	I am happy.	I’m delighted.
5	I am sad.	I’m disheartened.
6	It is easy.	It’s effortless.
7	It is hard.	It’s challenging.
8	It is funny.	It’s hilarious.
9	It is boring.	It’s tedious.
10	It is important.	It’s crucial.

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.

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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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. To see previous issues of *The Parrot*, go to <https://arc.losrios.edu/academics/the-parrot-newsletter>