
ELI STUDENT VOICES

Volume 14, Issue 2

Summer, 2010

Today Is a Present

(1st Place)

Samuel Toffoli

R/W 41

What a great experience it would be to travel to a different time. I think this is a dream that everybody has dreamed at least once before. If I could, I would go back to the past and do something that would change the history of the world. Also, how fantastic it would be if I could go to the future and experience some technologies that today are unimaginable. Certainly, in both cases, I might know something about what to expect, of course more about the past than the future; but what about the present? What about the next second? I don't know what is going to happen. No matter how much I plan my actions in advance, there's always a big uncertainty in the results. Although it is always unexpected, the present is the time I know for sure that my decisions and my actions can change my life, others' lives and the world I live in.

Every single day I have the opportunity to do everything different in my life. It can appear a little bit too much, but it is not. I can, at any moment, realize that to reach my dreams and be happy I have to change the road I'm on or even change myself. This process is not easy but with courage, hard work, and determination, it is possible. I remember very well the day I made the decision to leave my job in Brazil to start traveling around the globe. It was not an easy decision to make; many people were supporting me, but others not. I had achieved in four years a good position as a regional manager in a big financial institution. Despite some doubts about the future I found more motivation than fear in this choice; something inside was telling me that amazing experiences and happiness were waiting for me on this new journey. In fact, something great has already happened. Now I'm learning English and I'm sure that it's going to open some opportunities that were closed to me before. Furthermore, I'm not only learning a new language, but also making new friends from different cultures, and this can in the near future give me more chances to live new experiences.

Even being a hard task, I can promote changes in my life. But how can I help other people to change? I believe that today we are living the moment in human history in which people are more individualistic. Most people don't want to know deeply about others' lives; consequently, few people share his or her life experiences, thoughts, fears, and any other real feeling with other people. This is causing a lot of psychological and social problems. For me it's very clear that we are not alone in this world; actually there are almost seven billion human beings sharing the same house. I can help other people to find answers to some problems if I listen to what they

have to say. Maybe something that I've lived can give some light to someone. I can help not only my family but anybody I have the opportunity to – if I keep my arms, my ears and my heart open. In my last job in a big financial group, there was a manager from northeast Brazil that used to make some grammar mistakes in her emails. While some people made some jokes about how people from the northeast were less prepared, I decided to talk to her. I told her about the mistakes with some examples in hand and I, myself, offered to help her with any doubts she had about grammar. She accepted the help and today is very thankful for the assistance I gave to her at that time. Also, she decided to take Portuguese grammar classes to improve her skills.

The example of my work colleague can be used to talk about interdependence, the concept that everything is connected somehow. What I did at that time caused a change in her life, which was improving her Portuguese. This new reality in her life probably changed the way she cared about how her employees, family and friends use Portuguese when talking or writing. In addition, her boss and other colleagues now should be looking at her with new eyes. This concept is very popular nowadays; every single act I do or word I say has more consequences than I can imagine. For example, if I buy one piece of candy I'm causing economic, social and environmental changes. First, my money will be used to pay the salaries of different people involved in the process of extraction of raw materials, production, distribution and selling. After that, my consumption rate will help to determine if this company is going to build new facilities and hire more employees. Finally, the destiny I'm going to give to the plastic package can impact more or less the environment in either a negative or positive way. This dynamic world I'm living in today gives me the opportunity to make a difference. I can start with small changes in my lifestyle and I'm sure that some friends, my family and even people that I don't know will start to copy some good habits I have. I believe that this is how big changes start: with small changes.

I'm pretty sure it would be amazing to live in different times in the past and also somewhere in the future, but I think that nothing can be better than living today and having the opportunity to change myself, other people and the world. I think that this is the magic of the present. It is unpredictable; I never know what is coming next. But I know that I have to do the best I can now, because the past has gone and the future is built every day.

My Heart Lies Open

(2nd Place)

Nannette Robles

Grammar for Writing

You can tell it's coming. The breeze will whisper it to your ears. Then you stand. The clock stops for a few seconds because you want to feel it. It is as if a baby was trying to tickle your face. You look around and everything seems to be getting ready to embrace it. The sun, always a gentleman, will step aside so the clouds can line up like a welcome committee. The grass will put on that perfume that would refresh any soul, and the wind will start dancing back and forth, like a slow waltz. That is when you smile, because you know you are not alone anymore. Even when the sky starts fireworking lightning and the thunders loudly sing their song, in that moment, I feel no fear. There is a calming sensation that covers my whole being. The cold drops wash my tears away, because my heart lies open, as I stand in the rain.

A Good Apology

Isnel Pierreval

R/W 3

One way to look at this biblical quote: "Let him who is without of sin cast the first stone" is all people can fall down or make mistakes. Another way is each single person has at least a chance to be forgiven. Actions to remedy your errors will depend on whether you have hurt a friend, have disturbed family feelings or have broken down public law or moral. As mistakes are innate, it is more than important for personal wellness or public relation to endeavor to regain trust. In this regard, apology makes the deal and a good apology matters. For example, have you ever wondered what makes the difference in public opinion regarding the Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton impeachment process? Tony Hayward handling recent oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico caused by British Petroleum (BP) and Akia Toyoda's response to Toyota's brake failure system? Closely, look at your friends or yourself; what has helped you to recover the trust of a relative or friend after a major harm? An acuminous insight would reveal that a good apology makes the difference. A successful apology has in common three steps: 1) confession, 2) endorsement of full responsibility, 3) actions to compensate inconveniences.

The first step of a good apology is to recognize one's faults. Be honest and say: "I am sorry..." Don't make it to save appearance and avoid using conditional contrition. For example "I am sorry **if**..." such clause sounds more to pull the wool over your victim's eyes and provide yourself esteem. Another one, I noticed lately, was about a friend introducing his apology to his peer after a prejudice : "*In order to be a great man, someone has to recognize his fault...*I am sorry that ...".The victim, in this case , could think that you did it more for your ego instead of pursuing an honest reconciliation. There is a better pay off to be sincere and honest because people are more willing to move with a heartbroken confession. If you conceal the truth you may

dig your own pitfalls. Don't waste time, seize the momentum and be natural.

Endorsement of full responsibility of your mistakes is a second step to forgiveness. It is important to demonstrate deep understanding of the consequences of your harm. Be meaningful and be aware of physical or moral prejudices, social or environmental issues, institutional or political problems implied by your lack of judgment. For example, Akia Toyoda as CEO of Toyota Company addressed his audience through the famous Show, Larry King Live; there he took personal and full responsibility for the brake system failure of Toyota this year. However, Tony Hayward's public address had aroused fire on the oil spill, first to minimize the consequences on environment (he says that the oil spill was "tiny" in the Gulf of Mexico) and second to fail to put the victims at first place ("I want my life back"). Instead of outweighing your responsibilities by previous record or rhetoric, demonstrate your deep concerns including your will to walk the talk.

At the end, victims are always waiting to be compensated for negative externalities. There are several things to consider when you take actions to remedy your faults. One, a family audience or personal relationship will require subtle attention. Be aware to not try to compensate explicitly some feelings by material gifts. It is welcome to invite your friend out; substitute Busch Gardens for Disney World and offer a bouquet of roses to your beloved. Two, in a public or an institutional arena your actions have to be more substantive and formal. You have either to feel directly duties required or appeal to gracious judgment of moral authorities while you demonstrate commitment to meet procedural obligations in this matter. Three, in business (BP for example), on the one hand it is likely the company will pay pro rata for its negative effects on the environment or victims; on the other hand, it has to improve its services or products to meet standards and consumer *needs*. In any case, when it comes to human life or lifestyle, the offender has to be subtle to communicate that the compensation is just a drop in the ocean.

An apology well communicated is a learning process for public or social relations. Speakers have to be sensitive to context, culture and lexicology. Friends and family are waiting for sincerity to move on. In both cases, honesty is the best policy. Can you apologize for the same mistake twice? It would sound you were not sincere and as Abraham Lincoln has reminded us: "You can fool some of the people all the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time." A good apology comes once.

Dreams

Daniel Bracho

R/W 41

Dreams are your greatest desires, your direction in life, what you want to get or what you want to become. You can also call them targets or goals. Dreams are part of your life, they are your north, your way forward, your compass to know where you have to go. The dreams for every person are completely different; everyone has a different way of seeing

life. For many people, life is based on their dreams. At the beginning of your life, when you're young, you start to dream; it is something natural. You start to dream about what you want for when you get older, what you want to be or where you want to go. Then, when you grow up, you gradually go chasing your dreams. No matter what happens, you will have obstacles, but you don't have to give up; you must be strong.

In the process of pursuing your dreams, you'll find people who will tell you that the dreams are impossible, you cannot make them happen. Simply, these people do not have the courage to want something or do not have the ability to achieve their own goals. What you have to do is not pay attention to these people and keep trying. Never be discouraged by anything in the world, and then you will demonstrate to all those people who did not believe in you how wrong they were. Even if you sometimes think that your dreams are unattainable, or that they are impossible to achieve, for sure that it will be very difficult, but you just have to have faith, and desire it with all your strength and work with hardest for it. If you want something with all your strength, the whole universe will conspire to make that happen.

When you realize you've reached your first goal, the satisfaction is the greatest you ever felt before. You will know that everything that you fought for, all those obstacles which you overcame, all the times you fell down and got up and tried again, it was all worth it -- you've finally achieved glory. Now more than ever, you will want to continue pursuing the dream that must be fulfilled. Just believe in yourself, and be willing to do anything to achieve it. In the blink of an eye, you will find that you will achieve all your dreams. You may have noticed that in life nothing is impossible.

People who achieved their dreams are admired around the world and they are the ones who are called lucky (or just not normal), but that is not the truth. They are people identical to us, people of flesh and blood, only they exert utmost efforts to achieve their dreams without thinking it is impossible, just believing in themselves, but we have to know that everyone in the world started the same, born in a room without anything special, without any superpower allotted. All the important characters in life were once young like the others; the difference is that they never gave up to achieve their dreams.

Here are some examples. Cristiano Ronaldo (the highest paid soccer player) was born in a family that did not have enough resources; Bill Gates (the richest man in the world) began his worklife in a company as employee; Donald Trump (one of the most successful traders in the world) has fallen into bankruptcy three times, which he overcame and remains one of the richest men in the world. Another example: A man ran for city council and lost the election. He ran for two positions more and was defeated. Do you know how he finished? He became president of the United States. His name is Abraham Lincoln. And as found in a recent [ELI Weekly](#), Michael Jordan is quoted as saying, "I have failed many times, and that is why I am a success."

Certain ideas of success state the only thing that is needed is a consistent person who never gives up in case of defeat, never believes that defeat is final. Do not hesitate to lose a battle if that will make you win the war. Everybody can

achieve what they really want to be: the best merchant, the best actor or actress, the best athlete, the next president or the person who finds the cure for AIDS. One chooses and carries out his or her future and destiny. Whatever happens, you should never give up; if you fail once, try it again and again until you do it, and always learn from your mistakes. Remember that nobody can stop you: Your ceiling is the sky. There is no limit.

Impossible is a challenge.

Impossible is a word.

Impossible is a shelter used by cowards when something gets hard.

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE.

What Makes English Difficult to Learn?

SoYeon Jeong

R/W 3

If you are currently learning English in a school, college, or institute, you realize that approximately one billion people around the world are making the same efforts. English is the international language for diplomacy, business, science, and technology in the world. Although English is spoken by more people than any other language, English is actually one of the most difficult languages to learn in the world. There are several reasons why English is hard language to learn: strange spelling system, irregular pronunciation rules, and lots of synonyms.

First of all, an English spelling system is extremely unreasonable. Maybe we can make a guess about English spelling based on etymology by guessing where the words come from. Some English words are from Latin, Spanish, French, or even from Asian languages. In fact, however, there are no rules for spelling every word, so in order to know the spelling of words, we have to memorize the spelling of every word. Even if some words seem simple, we still should memorize the words since there is no way to be able to spell correctly when you hear the pronunciation. Some people can say that an English spelling system is the one of the most successful systems in the world because of its flexibility. However, that does not mean that learning English is simple. For non-native-English speakers, English is hard to learn because the English spelling system is very strange.

Second of all, one of the most difficult challenges in learning English is how to produce the sound of the word. In the case of English, there are no rules how to pronounce the words correctly. For instance, think about next words, "Though" "Through" "That" "Thai": "Th" is used at the head of those words; however, "Th" in each word sounds differently. Moreover, as mentioned above, pronunciation is getting harder by the strange spelling system. Some words have the same pronunciation with different spelling, others have the same spelling with different pronunciation. Therefore, English learners should memorize all of the vocabulary as well as their pronunciation, which sometimes makes foreigners crazy.

Third, because of its etymological origin, English has lots of synonyms; those are words that have similar meaning,

but not identical ones. Therefore, it is very important for English learners to know which words should be used since group of synonyms have subtle difference in meaning. For example, *you can watch a movie, but cannot see a movie. You can see a picture, but cannot watch a picture.* In addition, the reason why English learners should use the synonyms appropriately is it is essential to use different words especially in writing academic papers. Even if some foreigners have never used synonyms in their languages, it is very essential for them to learn how to use synonyms if they are learning English.

In conclusion, English is a very difficult language to learn for non-native speakers because of the unreasonable spelling system, irregular pronunciation rules, and lots of synonyms. However, if English learners are going to memorize all of the vocabulary or grammar rules only by textbooks or at school, learning English is going to be painful. There are lots of ways to make learning English fun: watching a favorite movie, reading an interesting book, and having a conversation with friends. Therefore, foreigners can learn English more easily.

The Best Girl in My Life

Daniel Bracho

R/W 41

I love that girl in a way that I can't explain; she means everything to me. She is also my best friend because we have many things in common; she is always there to listen, speak and advise me. She always supports me no matter what and she is always with me wherever I am. When we're together I feel complete and I feel stronger. She wants the best for me as I want the best for her. Sometimes I feel she protects me like my mother does, and I know that she feels that I protect her like her father does. This woman is great; I have much to thank her for - so many things that I do not know where to start. Every day I thank God because she is in my life and, every morning, when I open my eyes and I see her, I remember how lucky I am. If ever someone does damage to her, I don't know what I would do. No doubt I would do anything for her; I could not live without her. And every time I look into her eyes, I can see the other two people that I love most in the world, our parents.

Unconditional Love

Ilane Silva

R/W 3

Sometimes is hard to change yourself, and harder is try to change someone else. But some circumstances in life open your eyes about the most important person in your life. The first time that I was separated from my mom was in 2006 when I lived in Spain. Until that point I couldn't see how special my mom was and is in my life. The thought that we just notice how much we love someone when we lose him/her is true. But fortunately I didn't lose her; on the contrary I just learned how to break the ice of her heart that was frozen by some sad events that occurred in her life.

Since I was 12 my mom started asking me to talk to her about my plans and my feelings. But it was hard because we both were introspective, and we weren't used to doing it. She couldn't understand how hard that was for me, and another factor that made it difficult was her closed mind. Therefore, I knew that she couldn't accept some of my beliefs. At that time I thought that my friends were the best people to talk with about my life, and I didn't need her opinion since she wouldn't comprehend my position. But I was completely wrong.

During my time in Spain I could see how I missed her, and I can remember that the first 'I love you's' were by email because I was ashamed to say it by phone. And this was the beginning of a beautiful and trustful relationship between us. I came back to my country and some facts made me see that friends are good, but the best of them had been next to me since I was born. Melting the ice day-by-day, I realized that I could tell her everything, and even not agreeing with my acts, she continued supporting me. The best gift of this whole story was trust! I don't have to lie. I know that even if I do something wrong she is going to be my 'safe harbor'. Actually, moms have the incredible power of sixth sense, and naive is the one who thinks that it is possible to hide something from them. Moms know more about us than ourselves. Between moms and children there is an amazing bond, which lets them feel how you are even if you are overseas of distance.

Nowadays, we both say 'I love you' to each other, and I can say without any doubt that she is my best friend and 'my' best mom. I would like to scream that for the world, but since I can't do it, I'm at least making people from different parts of the world aware of her essentiality in my life. There is nobody in the world like a mom. I wish I could have her forever. Mom, I LOVE YOU.

Searching for the Purpose of My Life

Giselle Ferreira Viera

R/W 41

Since I was a child, I had been searching for the answer to this question: What is the purpose of my life? This is because I couldn't believe that life was limited to: growing up, getting married, working, dying and done!!! Then, with this question in my mind and in my heart, I kept living: I studied hard and got my degree in Law; after that, I started working and became a hard-working lawyer. I also travelled a lot --I can say that I have already gone around the world. However, none of these things fulfilled my heart nor answered my basic question: What is the purpose of my life?

Nevertheless, I continued my search for the answer to my question; that is, I decided to ask God, who is the Creator of the World, which includes me, about the purpose of my life. And then, He helped me to discover the answer. For that, God told me about Jesus Christ, His son who is also God, who came to the Earth as man to show us His amazing Love. He came to make us free of our sins and to give everyone who believes in Him eternal life and real peace and happiness. Moreover, Jesus came to re-establish our relationship with God. And it was through this relationship that I finally got the answer, which

filled my heart of happiness! Now I know that the purpose of my life is share the amazing Love of Jesus, which gave meaning to my life and also the hope of eternal life.

Is the English Language Difficult to Learn?

Granada Fernandez
R/W 3

Nowadays, learning English is something essential in life. That is why most of the countries teach English in their schools. In Europe, the level of teaching English is very different depending on which country you are living in. The northern countries, like Sweden or Norway, have high English teaching level; in contrast, Italy or France are farther from this level. In my country, Spain, all children learn English since they are 4 years old. This is an obligatory subject in all schools, so young people in Spain know at least how to say, "Hello, my name is..." or "How are you?" But if you are in Spain, and get lost, forget about asking someone your hotel address and they understand you. Most of the people don't know more than those three words (even more the oldest people), although they will try to explain you with mimics. In addition, people from Arabic and Asiatic countries, have more problems when they try to learn English. That could be because they have another alphabet completely different than the Roman alphabet that we use, so the grammar and the pronunciation are really difficult for them.

On the one hand, you can find a lot of problems when you are learning this language. The English grammar is so complicated that even the English speakers make mistakes in that way. One of those problems is figurative language. The slang or the idioms are difficult to learn because you cannot learn them in books. You have to speak with English speakers or even see TV shows to learn that. And sometimes, you have just to guess what they are trying to tell you. The English language has many synonyms too; there are a lot of words for just one thing or, in contrast, so many meanings for just one word. For example, beautiful, pretty, nice, are different words that have same meaning, "*Having qualities that delight the senses, especially the sense of sight.*"

Also, the pronunciation is a very difficult subject when you are learning this language. There are just five vowels but a lot of ways to pronounce them, and that is really difficult to understand, especially for Spanish people, which just has 5 ways to pronounce them, one per vowel. According with this, you have to be careful when you are speaking, because you can say something totally different depending on the pronunciation of just one vowel. The speed of the English speakers is an additional problem when you are speaking with them. Sometimes you just can understand the last word of the whole sentence. This happens the first times you try to talk with them, but after some attempts, you will be able to understand 80% of the conversation.

On the other hand, the borrowed words make it easier for the European people to learn English. This is because different European populations, like Spanish, Dutch, Germans,

live in America. So you can guess lots of words just because they are similar in your own language. Even in the context of a reading or a conversation you can figure it out. But there is a trick here. Some of these similar words don't have the same meanings in both languages; that is called *false cognate*. An example of these false cognates is "dairy." In English, this word means the products that are made with milk, but in Spanish, "diario", that is similar, means something you do every day. Another example could be "sympathetic". In English it means characterized by, proceeding from, exhibiting, or feeling sympathy. Nevertheless, in Spanish "simpatico" means *nice*.

From my point of view, learning English is a difficult task, and even more if is the first language you are trying to learn. But the point is that the difficulty is bigger depending on the country you are living in. The Arabic and Asiatic people will find more difficulties than the European people. For them all this is something completely new, the grammar, the sound of the characters and the pronunciation. Finally, I think the better way to learn a language is living in that country for a while. This is the most effective way to be all day speaking, listening and even dreaming in that language.

My Mixed Martial Arts Stage

Guillermo Gallegas
R/W 41

A few years ago I started to practice mixed martial arts when my godfather invited me to join him. That experience lasted only one year and a half and it was completely awesome. I was involved in three martial arts: Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, Tae Kwon Do and Thai boxing. I trained very hard every day for almost around 4-5 hours from Monday through Friday. I participated in a few competitions and, due to my hard training, I won gold medals. People who trained with me were different in each martial art. Moreover, in that gym where I trained there were many martial arts, so people could take only one of them but also they could take two. Therefore I took Jiu Jitsu and Tae Kwon Do and I tried to do my best. As a result, the coach allowed me to take another martial art, so I took Thai boxing. I learned a lot of things from all of those.

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (a version of the Japanese Jujutsu) is a self-defense martial art that is focused on grappling and especially ground fighting; you learn how to apply an arm lock, an ankle lock, arm bars, to strangulate or to choke a person; this martial art is very dangerous because you can hurt or injure your opponent in a fight or the person with whom you are training. For me, this one is one of the best. During the time you are learning and practicing, you are getting new aptitudes and new ways of thinking; I learned that when a door is closing, another one is opening. Furthermore, people who practice Jiu Jitsu tend to be patient and careful when doing things or at least that was what I could see with my training partners.

The second martial art was Tae Kwon Do from Korea. This one brought me a lot of experience, not only because I could exchange experiences with people from other states in my country, but also it taught me how to be disciplined, how to control myself when I got angry and how to meditate on things to develop my intelligence. Tae Kwon Do consists of throwing

kicks to your opponent; they can go to the chest or to the head. People who practice it are also very patient, very intelligent, dedicated and motivated. I always remember my coach; he is a wise man.

The last one (Thai boxing) was practiced for just a few months. I think this martial art is probably one of the most aggressive in the world. It consists of throwing punches, kicks, elbows and knees; it is from Thailand and it's their national sport. People who practice it are in a good shape because the training is pretty tough. It can enhance your agility, speed and reflexes because it's a very fast martial art. The good thing about this one is that you can get rid of all your stress and feel liberated; in addition, because the people in Thai boxing are very active, everybody is always pushing each other to complete the exercises in order to get better and to be the best.

Practicing a martial art is a good way to experience many things. There are many environments where you can feel comfortable; you can get a great body shape and be healthy. Moreover, you can escape from all those things in life that overwhelm you. My mixed martial arts stage was a great moment in my life. I reached many goals and I had a lot of awesome experiences.

Families

Fahad Alghamdi

R/W 41

The family is a big concept. The characters of people depend on how their families were. The personalities of people in adulthood depend on what they saw and felt with their families in childhood. The families can be grouped in three groups: domineering families, supportive families, and reckless and careless families.

The domineering family model makes its children fearful. The child who has that family will be fearful because he cannot depend on himself. Also he will not be able to plan for his future and he cannot trust himself. For example, I know one of my friends cannot do anything in his life by himself and he needs his parents for every single thing.

The supportive and tolerant family is a good family to raise a child. The family gives their children self-confidence and it gives them the choice to do what they like. But, at the same time, it gives them all the necessary information to make a good decision. My family is a good example of this kind of family. My family gives me the advice which I need and then I always do what I prefer.

The reckless and careless family makes their children bad (OR puts their children in bad situations). It is a negative family. It doesn't take care of its children. The parents don't know what their children do all day or what the children do with their friends. They do not follow up with their children's school and they do not know what their children are doing in their classes. The result for these children will be bad because the children will miss their futures and they will not understand what they have to do to be on the right path. We saw many examples of those children becoming criminals!

I think the supportive family is my favorite because the child will feel better in a family like that family. The child will feel there is an enough freedom and he will not miss a good future. That family in the middle is not domineering and not reckless. I think the middle is always better.

What Makes English Difficult to Learn?

Ronald Cademus

R/W 3

Language is a vehicle of expression of thoughts, ideas and perceptions that characterize the culture of a community. It forges friendships and economic relationships. Nowadays, language is the key factor of competitiveness. The English language is one of the most important tools available for communication between countries, cultural groups, companies, organizations and friends. It is the most common international language. One of the testimonies is the number of people learning this language all over the world. However most of the non-native speakers find the English language is very complex and very difficult to learn. What could be the main reasons?

If we analyze the history of the English language, we can see that it has been influenced by many other languages like German, British (old), French, Latin, etc. which have different spelling systems. Thus, English has a lot of *borrowed words*. For example, the word *curriculum* is borrowed from Latin, *rendezvous* from French, *kindergarten* from German. English, also, has been through various stages: Old English, Middle English, Modern English and late Modern English, which have a lot of influence on the English vocabulary. The words *be*, *strong* and *water*, for example, derive from Old English.

Another reason why non-native speakers struggle learning English is the irregularity in the pronunciation. Since all sounds in English do not exist in all other languages, each case will need to be analyzed differently and individually. Spanish speaking students tend to add an *e* before any word starting with *s*. But that sound does exist in Spanish. For example they would say *estruggle* for *struggle*. If you take the words through, enough, and though; they all end the same way but are pronounced differently. The nasalization of French speakers sounds strange to English native speakers which makes them difficult to be understood. Non-native English speaker are also confused whether they need to pronounce the "d" sound at the end of a verb in the past participle form. For example, they wonder if *attacked* is pronounced [atak] or [atakid]

The way the words are ordered is another obstacle for many foreign speakers in learning English language. For example, *a good man* is *un homme bon*, translated to French. In English the adjective is placed before the before the noun, which is the opposite in French. *The Ronald's book*, translated *le livre de Ronald* in French or *el libro de Ronald* in Spanish, is another example of word order complexity.

In sum, all of the points that have been raised above show why foreigners have such problems in learning English. Indeed, the English language has been influenced by many other languages and also has suffered a lot of variations in its

evolution, which makes its vocabulary very diverse. Also, in terms of grammar, English is very complex and very irregular which makes the pronunciation very difficult to remember. Nevertheless, the English language is the world's best language to create and maintain social networking and business partnership.

My Favorite Toy

Nannette Robles

Grammar for Writing

Since I was a kid, I knew how lucky I was to have discovered a treasure everybody owns, but not many people realize they have. It was magical. No fancy toy in the whole world could replace it. I could hike and camp in mountains, I could be a superhero. I could become invisible any second and travel in time. If I wanted, it could change the color of the moon and even the taste of the veggies my mom would make me eat. I could swim in chocolate pools and slide in candy tubes. There was nothing I couldn't do with it. The best part? It was unbreakable. It didn't need to be plugged in and it wouldn't become old-fashioned. My favorite toy kept me from feeling lonely, if my other friends were not around, and would make me happy for hours. That magic toy, that I still play with once in a while, is my imagination. And let me tell you, it doesn't grow old!

ELI's English Only Policy

Eduardo Sanchez

R/W 41

Editor's note: This was written in ten minutes.

I think that the ELI's English Only policy is a good policy of ELI's English learning process. It is necessary because the only way to learn English, in my opinion, is speaking English. Why? Because it forces people to think in English, and to put into practice all the English learned in classes. I follow this policy often but, sincerely, I sometimes speak in Spanish. The reasons are simple: the first one is to take a break. Maybe it sounds silly, but it is the true. The second one: some topics like "CADIVI", the Venezuelan's foreign exchange system, is very hard to explain in English. We Venezuelans curse and insult our government every time we speak about it and it is better to do this in Spanish. The only suggestion I can make to enforce this policy is to give a gift monthly to one who doesn't speak his or her own language. Of course, I am referring to a small gift. Finally, I apologize if I have been heard speaking in Spanish on the 3rd floor. One solution, in my case, is to speak Spanish in the Florida Room if I must. These are my thoughts on the English Only policy of the ELI.

College Life Style

Mobarak ALrasheedi

R/W 50

Education is the most important thing in this life. Every kid in my country has to attend school. It was not my choice when I went to school, but when I grew up, I realized it was a good thing to go to school. However, I attended five years in King Saudi University in my country, and I intend to apply to a university here in the U.S. In this essay, I am going to write a compare and contrast essay about college life in my country and college life in the U.S. and discuss three points: rules, culture, and leisure time.

Every society in this world has to have rules to organize everything in that community. College life is a good example of a complete community. In my country, colleges have certain rules to help college move forward such as students are not allowed to smoke inside of the campus. I found these rules here in U.S. colleges as well. In my country, college students can use cell phones during class; on the contrary, here in the U.S. colleges it is not allowed.

Through the history of society culture has a strong influence on college life. In my country, girls cannot study with boys in the class. Both of them have different campuses; on the contrary, here in the U.S. college girls and boys can study in the same campus and meet each other. Both my country's college life and U.S. college life have something in common, and this is all students respect their teachers and their colleagues.

The most beautiful time for all students is leisure time. In my country during college life, we have a lot of activities we can do during free time such as play football, swimming-similar to here in the U.S. colleges. However, my country's colleges do not have a cinema in the campus. In contrast, the U.S. colleges have many movies theaters on the campus.

In closing, there are few differences in college life between my country's college and U.S. college life. I like both of these, no matter what the differences are.

New Ending for The Giver

Samuel Toffoli

R/W 41

Editor's note: In R/W 41, students read a novel titled The Giver, by Lois Lowry. In this essay, Samuel writes an alternate ending to the story.

Using all his energy, the little he still had, Jonas walked the fraction of a mile that separated him from the house after the sled had stopped. On the way he was carrying Gabriel very tightly in his arms and close to his chest – Jonas was trying to keep the little child warm. He felt exhausted, willing to give up and to fall into the snow, but the music somehow helped to make his mind alert. He was now only three steps from the front door; for a second he thought it could be a dream, and when he finally reached the door, he fell to his knees. Gabriel opened his

eyes and looked thoughtfully to Jonas. “We made it, Gabe.” Jonas said, catching his breath between his words.

Jonas raised his left arm and knocked on the door twice with a fist. He was shaking because of the fatigue, the hunger, and the cold. He didn’t know exactly how long his escape had taken. It had been a little over a month. After a few seconds, the door opened and Jonas could see an old couple standing in front of him.

“You are grandparents, right?” Jonas said in a weak voice before losing consciousness.

Jonas felt as if he had just finished receiving one of the good memories from the Giver. He was awake, but his eyes were still closed. He was on a bed and felt his body relaxed; however, he realized that it was not the same bed as the one from the Annex. This bed was softer and had a different fragrance. He opened his eyes and the first thing he could see over a table beside the bed was an image of an old man and an old woman. Those faces weren’t strange to him. Suddenly all the memories came back to him: the escape, the long journey, the sled, the old couple in the door, but after that he couldn’t remember anything. But he knows for sure he was out of the community and alive. Jonas felt an intense happiness for a while; however, it didn’t last too long. He didn’t know where Gabe was.

“Gabe?” he asked hoping to hear the little boy.

“He is here, Jonas, with me.” That was a familiar voice coming from the opposite side of the room. While still in bed Jonas gave a small jump and turned up to see the place where the voice came from. There was his dad, seated in a chair, holding Gabriel. Jonas blinked his eyes, testing his eyesight, but his father was still there. A strong fear surrounded his heart – he was worried about Gabriel – and he felt he had to do something, fast.

“Give me Gabriel!” Jonas said in a brave voice. After everything he had experienced, he felt more courageous than ever. Also, he felt strong, enough to fight with his father – if he had to.

“Calm down, Jonas.” said his father.

“Don’t tell me to calm down. I know everything about Release. I saw you killing the lighter twin and...”

“Jonas,” said the Giver, entering the room followed by Jonas’ mother, Lily, Asher, Fiona, and the old couple “You don’t have to worry. Everything is OK now.”

Seeing the Giver, Jonas felt better but was still confused about the unexpected situation. “What happened?” he asked eager to know the truth.

“You’ve been sleeping for five days.” The Giver started to explain. “When you got here with Gabriel, this old couple gave you a hot bath, food and tea. You were so tired that you couldn’t open your eyes. After eating all the food you could you went into a deep sleep and only woke up today.”

“But I don’t understand why all of you are here. What happened with the community?”

“After you left the community, the memories I gave to you started to come back to the citizens. In the beginning, the memories were weak and only some people could intensely revive the experiences from the past. Facing difficult memories and pain, some people got frightened and started to ask the

committee for explanations. I offered myself to help during the process, but the Chief Elder refused my help reminding me about my failures with both Receivers. So they decided to release every person who was strongly affected by the memories. At the same time, they made the searches for you more intense. If you had been caught and taken back, they would have controlled the community again. However, as the days passed, the memories were so much stronger that it was impossible to control the community. For a while people suffered a lot; some of them even committed suicide. But after that, they understood the community was a prison and they were living apart from real feelings. They felt a strong rage and together decided to destroy the community and leave that place forever.”

“But what happened with The Committee of Elders?”

“Those were the last releases in the history of Sameness.”

“Did you order to kill them, Giver?” Jonas asked with a surprised voice.

“No, Jonas. The citizens decided together. They didn’t want to take the risk of another community of Sameness being created. Now they all have the memories and the wisdom that comes with them. They don’t need my help anymore.”

“But how did you find me so fast?” Jonas had a thousand of questions to ask.

“That’s something I can’t understand very well yet. But, I could see through Gabriel’s memories. Somehow this little boy was sending to me all his experiences. I was fearful for your lives most of the time but I was rewarded in the end.”

Jonas was astonished by this story. The plan had worked so perfectly that it was hard to believe sometimes. The community had ended. Gabriel was safe. His family and best friends were together with him. Now, they were free from the pills and free from the rules of the Committee – they could now feel true emotions, pain, love, and make choices. Although it was everything he had fought for, Jonas felt some agony inside, some uncertainty related with the future.

“Giver, what happens now?” Jonas asked, hoping for a perfect answer.

“I don’t know, Jonas.”

Opinion Essays from Reading & Writing 50

Editor’s note: In R/W 50, students read a novel titled *The Phantom Tollbooth*, by Norton Juster. In this novel a character names Alec Bings says, “It’s all how you look at things... in my family everyone is born in the air, with his head at exactly the height it’s going to be when he’s an adult, and then we all grow toward the ground. When we are fully grown up or, as you can see down, our feet finally touch the ground... We always see things from the same angle.”

In these last eight essays, students give their opinions on which is better: Alec’s way of viewing things as he grows or the way we humans view things as we grow. Read the book!

People's Wishes

Hassan M. Alidrisi

R/W 50

I want to be capable of learning. Some people wish to be born knowing everything. They want to know how to read, write, or drive cars and other people think that will be boring. They want to live their life as a new experience. They want to learn some things new, and live a new experience every day. So is being born knowing everything better than learning a new experience every day.

People who wish to be born knowing everything, think that will help them to reach all of their desires. They think that they can avoid all negative actions to make their life better. For example, they want to know how they should invest their money in the best way. So, they assumed that they will have a happy life with no feeling of threaten. This way could be suitable for some people but not for all.

Other people think that will be boring and they wish their life to be exciting. So, they want to do mistakes then they learn from their mistakes. They think the life is like a school. So, they can learn something new and get a new experience. For example, they want to spend their life in learning then they use their knowledge in their life.

I think that people should take the risk every day and do something wrong. Then they can make these things right. In this way people can feel the feeling of success. On the other hand, if the person knows everything, he will not have any experience. For example, if someone knows that fire could burn him, he will not touch it. While, if someone does not know that fire can burn him and he touches it, he will know that the fire will burn him and he know the feeling of being burned. So, he knows two things while the first person knows only one thing.

In conclusion, some people want to use the shortest and the easiest way to success. For these people, they wish to know everything when they are born. On the other hand, some people want to experience life even if they do something wrong. However, both ways have advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, people should work hard and know how to end their lives successfully.

The Way To Be

Ehab Musharbash

R/W 50

How do you want to be? Usually people learn really well from their experiences this life, but some of us don't want to learn from this huge school which is called life. That attitude creates the following kinds of people; people who do not know what's going on around them, people with old minds and old technology, and people with a different life style for those of us who will change and will learn from this life.

First of all, I think that if we are not going to follow this life and know what's going on around us, then we will be living in our own world which is in the middle of nowhere. This attitude makes people reckless and allows them to do things that

might be bad for others. Also, I think we always have to be connected with people that are around us, because each of us has something new to learn every day, and from these learning experiences, we can help others with what we have learned.

Additionally, if we are not going to learn from this life then we might end up having living our lives with an old mind and old technology. This life goes very fast and the technology is improving faster every day. Therefore, we have to follow the technology too, and not to be lazy. We must try to learn new stuff and keep-up with the pace of learning and growing. We must think that it's never too late to learn things, so that we can always be part of life.

Finally, learning from this life keeps you online all the time and current with life. However, if you will not make any changes in your life, you are going to be old fashioned and you will never change your own ways to be able to live in this life. You might become homeless after a while, and life will treat you badly because part of living this life is that people usually like to change some things in their own lives, like a house, or car, or a viewpoint, or an opinion.

In conclusion, the question is for part of the people is "to be or not to be". People have to understand this life from the right viewpoint. People cannot rush around and not care about the things that happen around them. I think each of us has his or her own personality to pick and to find their future by themselves. You cannot do this by keeping the same perspective and refusing to change or connect to the people around you. People have to be willing to change to be part of today's life.

Maturing

Saeed Alghamdi

R/W 50

I can't believe it... some people have the same ideas their whole lives! We as human beings are born as little organisms then we grow up to be mature adults. Our knowledge increases while we are learning; therefore, our ideas change with time, sometimes in a positive way and in other times in a negative one. I read a story about people that are born with their heads at the heights that they will be when they become adults then they grow down toward the ground. So, they can see things from the same way. We can conclude from this story that these people resemble those whom have the same ideas their whole lives. If we considered the concept about the thoughts of people, then people would divided into people don't have the ability to change their ideas and others who do have this ability.

The first side of this issue is people for whom their visions of things are hard to change. It is difficult when someone discusses things with these people like an issue or concern because reaching with them a point of understanding is difficult because they are always attached to their opinions. Also, those people think that their ideas are always right. Usually, they see things from the same way; therefore, they have a routine life. They don't have the desire to renew their lives and try new something. Mostly, they are attached to their traditions although some of them are wrong. As a result of this

kind of thinking, they will lose either many friends or one of their relatives. Finally, I see these types of people are losing a lot in their lives.

The second side of this issue is when people have the potential to accept new notions. When people are born, they don't know everything; therefore, they keep learning while they are growing up until they become mature. However, when they become adults doesn't mean they have to stop learning, but they learn new things every day. Both ideas and visions of the second type of people are developing with time, so what they believe today must not be the same tomorrow, except their religious constants. Those people, when they discuss an issue with each other, accept the ideas of each other without nervousness; moreover, they can change their ideas when they believe in new things. So they practice the natural way of thinking about issues.

In my opinion, I believe that people have the ability to improve their ideas. On the one hand, human beings have the ability to think, talk, and learn; consequently, they are learning until they die and their thoughts and visions are changing based on the knowledge that they gain. On the other hand, I think people who have the same vision of things are difficult to communicate with because they will not accept from others and they will try to force others to accept their ideas. Furthermore, human are only the organisms that have minds, so I think this is evidence that we have to think about always and accept some ideas and refuse others until we reach the facts. For these reasons, I think that the second kind of people is what we have to be.

In summary, people are divided into two kinds on this issue. One kind are people that don't have the capability to change their beliefs, and the other kind are those who change their ideas when they have to. Can you think from which kind you are? Finally, I believe that people have to listen to each other and respect the opinions of others without nervousness to one side and that in time is how we can make progress towards maturity.

Growing To Be an Adult

Muteb Alhusan

R/W 50

Every culture or citizen has a unique way of marking how people grow to become an adult. There are a lot of different ways that young people learn in different countries to be aware, to understand, and to have wisdom; in brief, how they grow up. This paper is about the topic of growing to be an adult. Some people believe that the point of view should be the same for one thing and some people refute it. These two points of view will be discussed in this essay.

It is believed by some people that a point of view for something should be the same in your life. An example that supports this is a point of view about any subject like studying two hours per day that is not enough to pass an exam. This means whatever is a subject that you want to study, you should study more than two hours every day at any level you are. Since both the next and the present level depends totally on the

previous level and all information must stick together by studying daily. Thus, it is clear why some people gravitate towards this point of view.

On the other hand, many argue that a point of view may change in every period of your life. For instance, that clarifies this point of view if somebody believes drinking alcohol does not have side effects either on his body or his mind when he is a teenager, and after a certain period of time this person grows up and knows that alcohol imperils his body and mind; therefore, he changes his point of view about alcohol. As a result, this example can show us how people change their points of view when they become either more aware or become an adult. After analyzing this fact, it is clear why some people support this claim.

However, after analyzing these two points of view; it is clear that every point of view that concerns what is right or wrong can be changed after a while. Because we learn and know every time something refutes what we think is right to be wrong, and vice versa. So I agree with people who say points of view may change during our life when the passage of time allows people to mature and change.

In conclusion, some people believe that reasons and beliefs relating to a point of view should be the same one in their entire lives and many others refute this claim. However, it is clear for us that this claim that point of view or our perspective of life should stay the same cannot be supported. Who knows what will happen in the future? Perhaps we will learn something new or experience something different. Therefore, we must try to figure it out with our changing perspective.

Start Growing in the Air or Start Growing on the Ground

Mohammed AlGarawi

R/W 50

Have you ever imagined spending the first period of life flying till reaching the ground? People who start life on the ground have more experience than the other kind of people who start life in the air.

First of all, to begin growing on the ground helps people to have strong muscles in their legs and feet. Furthermore, they explore the route to their goals and overpass the obstacles which have various levels of difficulty. These things help them to improve their method of thinking. So then, they have a big chance to succeed in life. On the other hand, they have a different view in each age because they have a different height in each age.

On the other hand, people who open their eyes in the air reach easily everything they want because they take what track they want without any deterrent. For example, if they need to go anyplace they want the just choose the correct direction then cross the air without taking a long direction on the road or stopping at any intersection to wait for the traffic. So they do not need deep thinking. They get everything so easily but they can be stopped in any small hindrance or obstacle. As a result, they are weak.

In my opinion, people who are born on the ground and start growing up are stronger and have a logical thinking because they use their muscles since they are a child. They also have an experience to solve the problems that they faced a lot of them in their lives.

In conclusion, it is hard to adapt to your life if you start growing from up to down, but being on the ground allows people to gain more experiences and muscle power than people who start growing with their heads in the air. It is a logical result.

Growing to Be an Adult

Lara Sanz

R/W 50

“In my family everyone is born in the air...” said Alec Bings in *The Phantom Tollbooth*. This sounds so weird, but it’s inside of the imagination. Both sides have positive and negative aspects. On one hand, we have the effects about growing when you born in the air and in the other the effects about growing if you born in a normal way with the head in the ground.

According to the book *The Phantom Tollbooth* in its chapter #9, page #104, when “someone is born in the air, with his head at exactly the height he is going to be when he’s an adult, and then we all grow towards the grounds”, the things are completely different than the normal way. One of the most important things is that during all of their lives, they see things as always the same, and they see it with the same point of view. That aspect is good because you know how everything is since you’re a kid, and you have experiences about them, but this is also more boring.

On the other hand, sometimes it’s good to look at how things change, and you have to learn about it and adapt yourself to it. In this way, you can have more than one point of view and consider different options, because depending on what is your age, your opinion could be wrong. With this method, you can solve it. It’s less boring because it’s not always the same.

In my opinion, the second method is better or the usual method. The most important reason for me is that is more “funny”, you can see different ways and options and learn about it. Also you can solve the mistakes that you make because you can see with the time if you are right or wrong; however, with the first method you can’t because you only are going to see the things with the same point of view. Although maybe with the first way of growing, maybe it’s more effective because you can have more experience with the same things.

For all these reasons, if you like a static life without changes, the first option, is being born in the air. But if you like the changes, the other method is better. The method that each one chooses depends on his own preferences.

The Benefits of Changeable Viewpoints

Hye-Lin Lee

R/W 50

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said, “Sometimes we may learn more from a man’s error, than from his virtues.” Alec Bings, who is one of characters in *The Phantom Tollbooth*, was born in the mid-air. In addition, he grows down, so his viewpoint is always fixed. However, people in our world are born on the ground and grow up. Hence, people’s viewpoints have changed as they have grown up. Alec thinks the fixed viewpoints are better than the changeable viewpoints. However, I believe the changeable viewpoints are better than the fixed viewpoints because people can learn from their mistakes and they become knowledge through experiences. Besides, societies can improve through different views according to people’s ages.

First, the fixed viewpoints have two advantages. People get rid of the generation gaps by the fixed viewpoint; therefore, they can save resources which are useful to assemble different opinions. Also, people can decrease their mistakes from their immature thoughts. It helps people to save time in their lives. In brief, people can assemble their opinions and avoid wasting resources through trials and errors if they have fixed viewpoints.

On the other hand, changeable viewpoints have two advantages which are the direct opposite advantages to advantages of fixed viewpoints. People need a great variety of opinions to improve their society. There is no improvement without arguing and discussions. These changeable viewpoints help people to have different thoughts. It means, the changeable viewpoints help societies to improve. Moreover, people can get a lot of different knowledge which is from different experiences and processes to solve mistakes. Thus, the changeable viewpoints are a necessary condition to improve societies’ and people’s lives.

Finally, people should compare the value of the fixed viewpoint’s advantages with the value of the changeable viewpoint’s advantages. Both the fixed viewpoints and the changeable viewpoints have advantages and disadvantages. The fixed viewpoints help people or societies to decrease wasting resources when they are a process to make better conditions. In other words, wasting resources is a disadvantage when people give up the fixed viewpoints; otherwise, changeable viewpoints help people or societies to improve their conditions. That means, people and societies can’t be improved without the changeable viewpoints. Therefore, the changeable viewpoints have more value than the fixed viewpoints.

To sum up, the changeable viewpoints have more value than fixed viewpoints even though both the fixed viewpoints and the changeable viewpoints have advantages. In addition, almost all people actually have changeable viewpoints. Thus, people don’t know the danger from the fixed viewpoints. The fixed viewpoints are very dangerous because it makes you become a person without individuality. Therefore, people should remember the advantages of changeable viewpoints. People should consider the value of a variety of

opinions and gain knowledge from their experiences and mistakes.

Growing to Be an Adult

Daniel Mendez

R/W 50

According to Harper Lee, “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view” (Thinkexist.com). The logical way is to grow from the ground, where your perspective changes while you are growing. However, the character Alec, from *The Phantom Tollbooth*, and his family grow down from the air, so that their perspective never changes when they grow. This essay tells two sides of the meaning of point of view. I would like to explain what it means, the difference between them, and what are their advantages and disadvantages.

First, when people grow from the ground, their view is changing every day from whatever place that they are looking, because their heads are at different levels. In other words, when a person grows this way, it is a slow process, but he sees the world differently at certain points. It helps people have different points of view depending on his age and where he is at some specific point in his life.

Otherwise, when people are born in the air, it allows them to see things from above faster and easier than others. They have the privilege of seeing the world from the highest point. They can see the horizon and beyond, but they cannot see details that their lives offers when they are growing. It means that they do not change the way they see and interpret their lives.

In my opinion, we should grow from the ground because we have distinct points of view at different stages in our lives. This helps us to experience, analyze, and understand with more details each moment of our lives. Someone growing from the air would not have this advantage. However, when you grow from the air, you have the advantage of seeing the whole world and beyond, but you cannot appreciate the value of learning from positive and negative experiences.

In conclusion, there are two ways to grow; either we grow from the air down or up from the ground. Each person can choose one of them. Both growing from the ground and growing from the air have advantages and disadvantages to consider. The first one, a person can have the same perspective throughout his or her entire life, but they can see the amplitude of the things. On the other hand, someone who grows from the ground would have a changing perspective during his life, therefore evolving as he gets older. The good thing is that, luckily, we can choose which way we want to grow. So, which direction do you prefer to grow; up from the ground or down from the air?

Thanks from the Editor

Thank you for sharing your writing with everyone. I hope you enjoy reading your fellow students' writing. Also thanks to Megan Forbes and the University of Florida Bookstore for arranging the gift certificates, to Todd Allen for publicizing this issue of *Student Voices*, to the Reading/Writing instructors for supporting their students in their writing, and to Lia Brenneman, Daryl Bish, Robert Roberg, Rebecca McLaughlin, Jen Ramos, and Todd Allen for reading and evaluating the entries.

Thanks everyone!

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