

The ELL Student Voices

Summer 2021

Volume 25, Issue 2



UF | English Language Institute
UNIVERSITY *of* FLORIDA

Message from the Editor

Thank you to all who contributed to this edition of the *ELI Student Voices*. To the students who submitted their writing, thank you for your hard work and for having the courage to allow your work to be read by others. To ELI instructors and staff, thank you for always encouraging and supporting ELI students to develop not only as writers but also as people. To the Student Voices Judges: Patrick Klager, Lynne Clark, Victoria Dolce, Christine Voigt, Jennifer Vann, Karen Owens, Melina Jimenez, and Zariah Brown, thank you for your time and consideration in reading the submissions. Finally, to you, the reader, thank you for being a receptive audience. Life is better when you share it with others, so thank you for letting us share our efforts with you.

Editor, Thomas Dolce

Winning Pieces

First Place

“Cry of Distress for My Murdered Nation”

Christ Mane Belizaire

Second Place

“ELI activities: the Engine of English Learning for ELI's Students”

Donal Bissainte

First Place

Christ Mane Belizaire

RW 60

Cry of Distress for My Murdered Nation



Haiti, formerly called pearls of the West Indies,

You who were the richest colony in the whole world,

You who were the first independent black republic,

What happens to you today more than 200 years later?

Haiti, a rich country paradoxically in chronic socioeconomic distress.

Haiti beyond the crisis it faces seems unable to come out on its own.

The political game is overdetermined and natural disasters are no less important.

Haiti, what is the root cause of all your ills?

Haiti, you whose most formidable enemy is Western imperialism.

Haiti, you whose sovereign people fought in 1804 to obtain their independence from the French colonists.

Haiti, you who must fight today to obtain your independence from modern settlers.

Haiti, land of fire, suffering land, impoverishing land, against whom must you fight today?

Haiti, you are under pressure from modern settlers who have become the aristocracy or even the elite.

Haiti, you whose aftereffects of colonization are still glaring.

Haiti, whose colonization sequels are expressed in the form of collective alienation and persistent domination by imperialism and their colleagues, the Haitian elites.

Haiti, whose economic domination of the past continues in the present in the most odious and tyrannical form.

Haiti, when could you get out of this and recover from this fatal situation?

Haiti, whose generalized insecurity, poverty, and disrespect for the human person are the factors inhibiting the development of the country.

Haiti, whose agriculture, food security, civic education and good governance should be priority points for sustainable development.

Haiti, whose dearest dream is to see the level of social inequalities drop for the emergence of a system that values the human being.

Haiti, my love continues to grow for this country which will become my paradise anyway.

Haiti, whose death of the country's first citizen shocked me like most of my compatriots affected by this despicable crime on July 7, 2021.

Haiti whose villainous assassination of its president is a shame for its people and a slap in the face for its democracy.

Haiti whose horrible act must be severely punished by justice.

Haiti whose judicial evidence is still confused, scorned, and trivialized.

Haiti, when will you do justice to all the victims of assassinations committed in recent years?

Haiti, whatever happens, you will face your enemies and rise from your ashes.

Haiti you will get up and you will bypass the factors that inhibit your development.

Haitian citizens, let us act quickly to drive out our enemies hindering our socio-economic freedom.

Haiti there is a long way to go, but your bruised citizens dream of seeing you flourishing and respected internationally

Haiti, whose union will always be the strength of those who believe in justice, social well-being, and the satisfaction of the most basic needs.

It was the cry of distress of a Haitian woman who wanted to see her homeland reborn.



Second Place

Donal Bissainte

RW 60

ELI Activities: The Engine of English Learning for ELI's Students

As international students coming from different countries and different cultures, it was so challenging for us, ELI students, to speak English and socialize in American culture. In our first weeks in the US, we were like kids who started school with new classmates, roommates, transportation system, fast foods, restaurants, groceries, etc. So, the first tool to immerse in this new system is **English language**. Of course ELI classes give us all we need to communicate: listening, speaking, grammar, reading and writing, but the way to see their effects is in practicing in our real life. It is like a car: we can have tires, seats, the body, oil, and fuel but it cannot run without the engine which is essential for all vehicles. The engine helps each part of the vehicle to work. So, ELI activities are the engine for ELI students. They help us to combine all outputs of ELI classes to improve our English skills and make our life better in the US. The ELI activities, our engine, make us run in three main ways: practice English, socialize, and discover the US (especially Gainesville).

Our Language Assistants are English speakers. Every week we meet at Reitz hangout and movie night. Obviously, we have the opportunity to practice with them and our classmates. While we are playing in Reitz hangout, we can hear someone say, "my score is lower than yours," and someone else respond, "I have the lowest score in the game." So we can guess the meaning of comparative and superlative as it is practiced. At movie night we practice listening while watching and texting in the chat room. One time a language assistant asked, "Are you messy or tidy, guys? Me, I am messy." Automatically we checked the vocabulary if we did not know the words and remember them for life.

Reitz Hangout



Movie Night





ELI students at the Museum of Natural History

ELI activities also facilitate socialization and the development of our friendships. We find the opportunity to integrate ourselves into the Gainesville community through volunteering at Saint Francis House to support unsheltered people. In addition, we participated in salsa classes downtown. It was a real socialization activity in which we met other citizens of Gainesville. It was an opportunity to keep in touch with some of them in order to grow our friend network.

While we were socializing with the Gainesville community, we discovered many fantastic places in the city. Most of students were surprised when they visited the Museum of Natural History especially the butterfly garden and the artificial cave. We also visited downtown Gainesville where we identified restaurants, graffiti, statues and other landmarks. All the places explored with ELI could not be included, but the trip to Saint Augustine beach deserves a mention. It was fantastic! In addition, Thursdays are rotating because every week we can go either to a restaurant or a food park to eat, hangout and understand the American culture.

ELI activities allow the cultural immersion of the students. This aspect of the program is the engine because it helps us to practice all lessons learned at ELI classes. So, if we consider students to be cars, speaking English and living in Gainesville are the path on which the cars drive, ELI activities are the engines

Irene Lopez

RW 31

Why I Decided to be a Veterinarian

Many reasons led me to decide to study veterinary sciences. First of all, since I was very young, I always showed my love for animals. I remember the summers that I spent with my family on a farm. One day a cow went into labor, but it had a problem. So, the vet came and helped the calf to be born. It was wonderful. For me, a vet was like a superhero. In addition, I made my decision because I love to study sciences, for example, biology, chemistry, and math. When I'm learning, I have fun. Finally, I decided to be a veterinarian because of the job. Veterinary job is very grateful. I can help to recover animals and it makes me feel good. In conclusion, a lot of reasons throughout my life make my decision for studying veterinary. To be a veterinarian is a dream become true.

Mireya Arreaga Ramirez**RW40****The Pressures of being a Foreign Student**

Foreign students, which means “belonging or connected to a country that is not your own” Students decide to travel to other places to study or achieve their goals, even if they must go through hard situations living in another country and facing new challenges. Feeling pressure is a normal feeling when they have been living new experiences. Which are the most common pressures on foreign students? Students must change their habits and deal with financial pressure, transportation, and good grades. All these new changes can generate pressure and stress on the new students.

Next, financial pressure is one of the biggest concerns of foreign student. When they must pay for the school, rents, food, and transportation. Students who work part-time cannot have enough money to cover their bills and work in a job full time. They do not have enough time to dedicate to their studies. At this point, people who go to study out of the country should save money. Thankfully most parents support their children’s. They are contributing to the payments they all aspire to see their children succeed in their lives.

Like financial pressure, transportation can be another important factor that can generate pressure in student life. Waiting too much time for the bus can be frustrating most when every minute counts. Students need to be on time at the bus stop, if they fall asleep and miss the bus can generate a lot of stress and problems with the assistance or in their jobs. Besides, taking a taxi or an uber can be so expensive and not all students have the financial opportunities to use this service. Walking sometimes cannot be an option because of the long distances. A recommendation is to download an app that can let you know when the bus is close to you.

Finally, good grades are one of the most important objectives for all students. Students need to make a big effort to have excellent grades. Sometimes all these pressures can be an interruption to dedicate all their mind and soul to the classes. If they do not have a good score, they can present academic problems, lose the scholarship, and lose part of their visa which is the I-20. In other words, their effort and their parent’s effort will not have been worth it.

To summarize, the most common pressure is homesickness. Come to another country to study and prepare as a professional is admirable. Not everyone takes the risk and leaves the comfort of their homes. Pressures like payments, good scores in class, do not miss the bus can be hard at the beginning, but when you used to everything it comes very normal, finally you start to enjoy living in another country making friends from all around the world, you will have classmates and roommates that can make your life easier and fun.

Wendy Gavilanes Sanchez**RW 20/30****A Special Day in My Life**

The most special day in my life was when my first child was born. My surgery was scheduled at 8:00 in the morning because she wasn't in a good position, so I was very happy but nervous at the same time because it was my first operation. Later, my husband and my mother came to the hospital to support me until I was admitted to the operation room. When it was time for my daughter to be born, all my fears disappeared. Finally, my first child was born and it was the happiest, most beautiful, and special day of my life because with her on March 30, 1999, I became a mother for the first time. I felt a different and strong love, which is difficult to explain that filled my heart and soul. I will remember this special day forever. It is good to be a mom!

Rafael Indriago**RW 20/30**

My American citizenship was a very special day in my life! My American citizenship was in the morning, so all night before I couldn't sleep, I was prepared for my ceremony but very nervous. Very early that day, my wife, my daughter and I got ready. We arrived very early and there were a lot of people. I was so happy when I entered the ceremony hall and the authorities began to speak and then the words of the president of U.S. then we swore before the flag to defend our homeland and then they asked that we register to be able to vote and elect our leaders. It was a very very beautiful ceremony and for me it was something very important. After we took pictures, then we to a restaurant to celebrate and share with the family. I will always remember October 09, 2019 as a special day in my life.

Valeria Lopez**RW 20/30**

Moving and living in the United States had benefits for me. First, I changed my way of thinking. I'm more patient, stronger and all days I learn things about American culture and the people. For example, I become better with people and with American culture. Also, these changes in my life help me to become independent because I wasn't before. I had two months in the United States and I'm living without my family and without my friends. For example, I cook for myself every day, learn to be alone and because I don't have my family, I need to solve my problems by myself. Finally, living alone made me be more myself. I can do the decoration for my apartment and I can do any decoration that I want in my room. I can know myself better because I have only me. For example, I can have space for myself and have mental peace. In conclusion, the United States had a lot of benefits for me such as changing my way of thinking, being independent, and being more myself.

Abdullah Alammari**RW 31****Mathematics**

I decided to study mathematics for many reasons. Firstly, I enjoy studying mathematics. For example, when I was in school, I loved math classes. Secondly, mathematics depends on understanding and logic more than memorization, thus I like it. Finally, mathematics has many applications, so it is very interesting for studying and work. As you can see, there are several causes why I chose mathematics as my major.

Maria Segura Navarro**RW 20/30****The Health Ministry Took care of Obesity in Chile**

Chile is a long and thin country located in the south of South America. But right now I'll talk about some reasons why the ministry in Chile took care about children's obesity problem.

First of all in Chile, every year more and more children over 6 years of age are overweight. The National group of scholarship assistance shows us 23% of kids in 2021 were overweight, so the ministry took measurements and made a lot of rules for all food process companies and fast food restaurants. First, they put a low limit on the amount of salt and sugar they can put in their products. Second, they do not allow to put in the package gift or pictures of cartoon characters to stimulate kids to buy them. Third, to put a limit on fast food access at the kiosks at school by making them sell only healthy food.

In conclusion, for those reasons, the Ministry of Health took care and put all those rules. Nevertheless, the obese kids are increasing every year. I believe the children's obesity problem sometimes is because working parents don't have time to cook at home, so they take the easy way to feed they kids, like TV dinners, fast food, or buying candy.

Valeria Pena Sanchez**RW 31****Moving to Another Country**

The most important decision that I took was moving to Gainesville. The principle reason is because I need to learn English. The second reason is because I really want to study psychology at the University of Florida. The last reason is due to the fact that I needed to get out of my comfort zone, to be more independent. Moving to Gainesville was the most difficult and important decision that I took in my life.

Maria Segura Navarro**RW 20/30****My Life Before Now**

Hi, I'm Maria, and I want to tell you about my first time in Gainesville in contrast to right now. Let me tell you all about me. First of all, my nice husband told me about the ELI. Then my husband and I decided to move to Gainesville. So, we talked with Daryl, and he helped us with a lot of patience to prepare the papers. I was living in Fredericksburg, Virginia. We drove 12 hours from there to here. It was a fun experience. We already had a rental apartment when we arrived.

On September 15th, 2013, I went to my first welcome picnic at the ELI. It was the best time ever that I had at the ELI because I met many people from other countries that I still have as my friends. Another experience was my first day at class. It was amazing because I didn't know any English, but I could understand everything because my teachers were great. They talked with a lot of patience to us. Between 2013 to 2014 I had a lot of fun with my new friends. For example, I went every day to the activity, and almost every day we had parties, such as birthdays, pajamas parties and get-togethers. Therefore we practiced the English that I learnt at the ELI, and we learned to not be afraid to speak and express our feelings.

The last wonderful experience of being in the ELI and living in the USA I was pregnant with my first child. Unfortunately, my pregnancy was hard because I had to spent almost 9 months in bed.

Comparing between before to right now since my first son was born, my life has changed for good, because my time is only for him and everything that I thought to do for myself before I had to think about him. Having kids is amazing, but when my kids were little, it took a lot of my time. Therefore, I stopped studying at the ELI, but now they are grown. Now I have to get together with them, I have to go with them everywhere. On the other hand, kids bring to me other happiness that I didn't have before. Now I continue to study and I have an enjoyable life while I do everything with my sons. However, compared to before now, I have 2 sons and an amazing family.

Alexander Figueredo Moreno**RW 31****Why did I move to the United States?**

I had many reasons to move to the United States, but all the reasons are directed toward the same idea. The United States is a better country for me and my family. The first and main reason is because the United States is a country with many opportunities for all people, in the work field and education field overall. Secondly, this country is very safe in comparison with my country, where you can't feel safe in any place. Finally, I want to learn English, because for me it is very important today when you know two languages like Spanish and English. In conclusion, my personal opinion is that the United States is the better country for living with my family, because we will have more opportunities to progress.

Rodrigo Sebastian Viruez Vargas**RW 31****Moving to Another Country**

Moving to another country is a big step in the life of a person who decides to do that. First of all, another country means different weather, maybe a new language and a different culture. Also, moving to another country means leaving your family and your friends in your country. Finally, a new country is a new opportunity to get a new job, study in a university, and maybe to find love. In conclusion, a new place can be hard at the beginning but is full of opportunities.

UF | English Language Institute
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

PO Box 117051

223 Matherly Hall

Gainesville, FL 32611-7051, USA

Phone: (352) 392-2070

Fax: (352) 392-3744

StudyEnglish@eli.ufl.edu

www.eli.ufl.edu

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