BRIDGES ESL
2022-2023 ANTHOLOGY

Featuring work from our students:

Jose Malitasig
Eliany Pedrozo Araque
Alexander Espinosa
Gabriel Barsotti
Chantal Leppin
Hamlet Acevedo
Atsushi Yamasaki
Manuela Díaz
Mingi Um

Yoon Jang
Hyunjin Lee
Mingiyan
Hyun Jung Koh
Carolina Hernández
Jennifer Benner
Daniel Castillo
Rosa Nery Nino Yate
Maria Vivian Gabrielly da Silva Santos

Qi Zhang
Abraham Tame
Yuichi Ohashi
Paula Schuermann
Martha Lucia Mona Molina
Isabel Cristina Gómez Díaz
Shengming Yang
Carolina Hernández
Aneta Hoffman
BUILDING BRIDGES
2022-2023

HISTORY
In September of 2001, Annie Hsu alongside her mother organized the very first year of Bridges ESL. From advertising in the street to arranging the Asian American Cultural Center, Annie and the early members formed Bridges ESL. Now on its 21st year, Bridges ESL continues to provide free small-group students. All current tutors are Yale College students who’ve attended short training on English as a second language. Tutors design their own curriculum and are provided instructional books and other resources. The program provides several levels of instructions depending on each student’s needs: Survival, Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced.

MISSION STATEMENT
Bridges ESL provides free English language lessons to adult learners in the Greater New Haven area. Tutors develop personalized lessons to help meet students’ language goals related to employment, education, citizenship, and daily life. Bridges ESL helps people acquire the English skills necessary to confidently navigate family, work, and community —building bridges for their own future.

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CO-PRESIDENTS' NOTE

We have had the honor of serving as Bridges ESL’s Co-Presidents for the 2022-2023 academic year. Bridges has made an enormous impact on our time at Yale and our lives. Every Saturday morning, coming to the AACC for Bridges is the highlight of our weeks, and we love to get to know our students over breakfast, engage with our virtual students, and watch our tutors and students connect with each other and learn about each other’s cultures.

Bridges is a wonderful organization that, over the past several decades, has done so much for the New Haven community. Although the pandemic was difficult, it also provided us with the opportunity to engage with students abroad virtually as well. This year, when in-person classes were again possible, we were excited, but we wanted to make sure to maintain a hybrid model. We had gained a significant addition to our community abroad, and we did not want to take that component of Bridges away. Thank you for being such an important part of this community that values diversity and celebrates learning. We hope you have enjoyed your time with Bridges as much as we have.

We are going to miss being Co-Presidents of Bridges so much next year, but we are so grateful for our time leading the organization. We are so excited to leave Bridges in the capable hands of next year’s Co-Presidents, Melina Joseph and Derek Song.

Isabelle Stemerman and Gina Coque Alarcon
Bridges Co-Presidents

EDITOR’S NOTE

I am glad to be a part of the first year of in-person Bridges ESL at the Asian American Cultural and La Casa. I remember the hectic first day as we scrambled in the AACC. I am proud as I hope you all are of the achievements students and tutors alike throughout the fall and spring semester.

As I look back to Bridges’ history, I am reminded of the warmth of our community as a space of learning. As Abraham wrote in his piece, the warming sunbath. The tutors, students, and board members alike have all contributed to creating what Bridges ESL has become in the past year. It is because of the collaboration between our predecessors and ourselves that we have now the Bridges ESL community of today. This year we had over a hundred students and over 40 tutors. In this very volume of Building Bridges, we have more than 20 contributions.

There is only one word that I can think of to describe this sensation as I reflect: gratitude. The entries—this volume—are written proof of the community that tutor-student relationships fostered in the past year. They reflect our community of gratitude for the tutors, gratitude for fellow students, and most importantly a gratitude of learning that will help lay Bridges in our futures.

Janic Aguirre
Bridges Historian
FALL 2022

Students: Miles Song and Sara Xiao  
Tutor: Alan Dai

We are Miles and Sara. We came to New Haven this June. So this is our first year here and everything is new to us. When we just arrived here, we met many challenges, one of them being the language. Luckily for us, we got an opportunity to join the Bridges ESL program and met our tutor Alan DAI.

Alan is a very nice person and we really learnt a lot from him. Most of the time, we feel that Alan is more like a friend than a teacher. He is very friendly and patient. Before each lesson, he would check with us what we would like to learn the most. And we can tell he spent lots of time preparing the topic we asked for, all the PPTs, videos and books. We have to say Alan has great skills in teaching. His courses are always full of fun, and he knows exactly what we need. You could never get bored with his courses. He is the best English teacher that we have ever met.

This semester, we went through many topics together including how to read a restaurant menu and order food, how to make an appointment to see a doctor, the rules of football, small talk, idioms, pronunciation, etc. We benefit from all this learning. Alan also taught us many communication skills like how to play the “Ping-Pong” game in an English conversation, it’s really helpful.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Alan DAI, thank you a million times for every effort you made for this English course. We really appreciate it. Also, thank you so much to the Bridges ESL program and all the people working behind this. Wish you all the best in the coming year!

Student: Koji Uryu  
Tutor: Tri Ho

Experience in Bridge class

I really had wonderful time for past 2 month in Bridges class. Tri, our tutor, designed the class valuable for all of us. It was great that he asked us our preference, what we want to gain through the class, and organized everything according to. I was impressed that he prepared slides to make the class efficiently/productive though I guess it took some time for him to prepare it. Another thing that made the class wonderful was my classmates. They are so kind each other and have passion/willingness to work on English skill. On top of that, all of us have different backgrounds, like having different jobs and coming from different countries. The diversity enabled me to broaden my horizon and this might be one of the biggest takeaway which I gained from the class.

Student: Shengming Yang  
Tutor: Derek Song

After half a year of English study, with the arrival of the end of the semester, it has come to an end. Looking back at this time, under the careful and patient instruction of teacher Song, my English level has improved a lot, to my great relief. As an old Chinese saying goes: “As long as the effort is deep, the iron pestle is ground into a needle.” I think as long as I keep working hard, there is bound to be progress. At the end of the semester, I give heartfelt thanks to the leaders of Yale Bridges ESL and my English teacher Derek Song! I wish you all good health. Have a brilliant career!
Student: Abraham Tame  
Tutor: Tri Ho

**My experience taking Personal Bridges Classes On the Asian American Center**

To could attend classes in person again, after Covid-19 restrictions feels like a warming sunbath because the instructor and the confident atmosphere where you can communicate your doubt and improve in the learning of English language.

My instructor permits me to know more about the American Culture reviewing topics in relation with the holy days like Halloween, Thanksgiving, Black Friday and another important events in the society like the midterm election, and the politic and negative aspects of social media.

With my classmates I discovered similar hobbies like to follow the Formula 1 races or the world cup matches supporting each one our teams, but with the empathy for the success of other competitors realize that to win is not the most important thing but the share the experience to watch a competitive event generates inclusion and sets the basis for new friendship.

Finally I could say that all those experiences permit me to feel myself confident to communicate in other spheres like in my Job or in a meeting with new people.

Student: Yoonseung Kim  
Tutor: Tri Ho

**To survive in the US.**

When I was finally admitted to work at Yale as a postdoc, I had a lot of worries. This was definitely helpful for my career as a researcher, and I was excited to experience a totally different culture from my country. However, I had never lived in another country more than three months, and especially I was not confident in communicating with English.

The first three months in the US were full of difficulties. I needed to find a room for living, but most of them from Craigslist and Apartments.com didn't respond to my texts and emails. Fortunately, I had an old friend here, so I could get some help from him. My life in my new research group was also uneasy. I had hard times making relationships with my colleagues, since basically they usually don't come to the office after the pandemic. I felt like I was separated from the community here.

After all, I decided to find ways to interact with other people. Bridges ESL is one of the efforts. I was happy find a place that I could meet other people and learn English at the same time. Gradually I found out how to live here, like good restaurants and grocery shops near here.

Still, I feel like there is a long way to go. I still don't express my opinion fluently in discussions in my group. I sometimes don't understand what servers say in restaurants in unexpected situations. I think long time to determine how much to tip. Those experiences often make me shy and reserved. However, I will try my best to overcome those difficulties. I thank all Bridges ESL members for helping me on that.
Jose Malitasig
Tutor: Michaela Bauman

My name is Jose. I’m from Ecuador. I have been here for eighteen years. I’m working for the ACDI company. I joined Bridges ESL because I wanted to improve my English and I would like to speak English fluently to get a better job and to meet many friends and finally pass my citizenship test so that I can return to my country and make my life happy. My favorite part about Bridges ESL is the breakfast room and I liked receiving English class at La Casa because it is quieter. Bridges ESL has helped me to write, read, speak, and listen better. All of this helped improve the English I use at my job. Now, I’m feeling happy and I hope to continue receiving English classes next year and with the same tutor, Michaela. Happy summer break!

Eliany Pedrozo Araque
Tutor: Elizabeth Welch

Hello. My name is Eliany Pedrozo, I am from Bucaramanga Colombia, my profession is occupational therapy and I work at University of Santander as a teacher.

I like to teach students about research, but a lot of the literature is in English and I have difficulty with my vocabulary, reading and pronunciation. For this reason I need to learn English, especially to be less afraid to speak with others.

I found out about this course at Yale University from my friend Laura who was enrolled last season; she helped me set up an interview so that I could start the classes.

My teacher, Elizabeth Welch-Jani, taught me how to use verbs in sentences in present and past tense, the auxiliars for constructing questions, and also used podcasts to better my capacity to listen. Now I feel that I have more capacity to read.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to learn English and I hope to be able to continue in other courses with the Bridges ESL program.

Alexander Espinosa
Tutor: Elizabeth Welch

A few weeks have passed since I started my English classes again and I have met other people with the same needs and great desire to learn. Right now, this school New Haven is helping us fight for our dreams. In my life I want to get to know the USA. I have friends and family in different places, including NY, LA, Houston, who I want to visit someday. I still can’t have a full conversation or understand everything, but I’m sure the classes are helping, and I will keep practicing.

Atsushi Yamasaki
Tutor: Brian Moore

My name is Atsushi. I’m from Japan. I’ve lived in New Haven for one year. This is the second time participating in Bridges ESL. I appreciate my tutor Brian Moore and this program for providing a nice opportunity for me. Through this class, I learned a lot of things such as new words, idioms, expressions, and also communicated with some of my classmates. It was very helpful for me. It is still difficult to speak English fluently and listen to it correctly, but I want to continue to improve.
Gabriel Barsotti  
Tutor: Mariana Vargas

As a Brazilian student studying Healthcare Administration in a new country, adapting to a different culture and language has been a significant challenge for me. However, Bridges ESL has been instrumental in facilitating my transition and helping me in every aspect of my adaptation.

The Bridges ESL program offers English classes with native English speakers for free. It is a supportive learning environment for a diverse community of learners, which has been incredibly beneficial for me in both my academic and professional pursuits.

The classes at Bridges ESL have been instrumental in developing my critical thinking and communication skills. I am grateful to have Mariana as my instructor, who not only possesses excellent teaching abilities but also creates a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the class that helps boost students' confidence. Overall, I am confident that the skills and knowledge I have gained from this program will not only help me succeed academically but also personally in my daily life.

Hyun Jung Koh  
Tutor: Leila Glotzer Martin

My name is Hyun Jung Koh. I am from South Korea. I have been in New Haven for 9 months. I came here as a visiting scholar in the Park Lab of Stem Cell Center in the Genetic department. Actually, I am a doctor, an anaesthesiologist, so the work in biologic lab life was very different and strange at first. Now, I am accustomed to this life, and I make some friends in my lab. My lab members are very kind and help me in various ways.

When I started to know my surroundings, I heard that there is an English language course in Yale. I was very happy to have a chance to learn English and I searched for this course. It was Bridges.

When I started this course, at first, I was very nervous and worried about the class. But, I felt comfortable and on the other hand, very excited with this class. I met my teacher, Leila, and two other classmates. This class was different from what I thought at first. Sometimes, the lessons were easy and basic, but I could check my grammar and ask what I wanted to know my teacher freely. It helps me a lot. Every Saturday morning, I am so happy and wait for the class.

Now we finish the course. I will miss everything in Bridges. I will miss my teacher, Leila, and classmates.

And lastly, I am very thankful for all the members of bridges and will remember this time for a long time.

Hamlet Acevedo  
Tutor: Brian Moore

My name is Hamlet Acevedo. I am from Columbia, and I have been living in New Haven since 2015. I cannot recall when I started attending classes at Bridges; however, I get really surprised at how much I have improved. I still have a long journey to improve my English skills, but Bridges has helped me to navigate situations day to day at work, home, the supermarket, etc. I am very excited when thinking about the next semester. I expect to keep growing my skills, so that I will have the strength to pursue my goals with confidence.
Manuela Díaz  
Tutor: Carla Becerra

My name is Manuela Díaz. I am from Colombia. I am 26 years old. I have been in this country for 10 months. I live in New Haven Ct. My experience in this country has been gratifying with the English program, I have learned more of the language and I have advanced by speaking more with different people. I want to continue in this beautiful program offered by Yale University. I want to learn a lot and get to speak like an American. I hope to continue sharing more with my tutor and this program. Thank you very much for this experience.

Mingi Um  
Tutor: Deynna Rey Tovar

Hi there! My name is Mingi, and I am originally from South Korea. I have been in New Haven since July 2022. This semester was my second time taking this ESL course. As an international student, I sometimes get nervous about talking with English speakers. To overcome this, I decided to study English harder. My tutor, Deynna, is so patient and makes the mood comfortable. She is always trying her best to understand my words and teach me kindly. She shared her experiences about the difficulties of learning English. Like me, English is her second language, so she is able to relate to me better. And there are a lot of great tutoría in Bridges ESL! If you are a foreigner and you think it is hard to communicate in English, I highly recommend this program. You can become more familiar with speaking English.

Yoon Jang  
Tutor: Mariana Vargas

I have always struggled with speaking English, and it has held me back in both my academic and professional pursuits. I knew I needed to improve my English language skills, but I didn't know where to start. That's when I discovered the Yale ESL Bridges program.

From the moment I stepped into the classroom, I knew that this was going to be a transformative experience. Mariana, who is my instructor, was knowledgeable, patient, and supportive, and she created a welcoming environment that made me feel comfortable and motivated to learn. Plus, all instructors and assistant managers in ESL had very warm hearts, and they always tried to help all students in the ESL program a lot. I am very convinced that all people in ESL could make perfect environments for students to learn English more effectively and freely.

Throughout the program, I participated in a range of activities that helped me to improve my English language skills, from intensive writing exercises to engaging in class discussions about interesting topics. I also had the opportunity to engage with American culture through cultural excursions and events, which gave me a deeper understanding of American society and customs.

As the program progressed, I began to notice improvements in my speaking and writing skills. Most importantly, I became much more confident in my ability to communicate in English, and I was able to express myself more clearly and effectively in academic and professional settings.

The Yale ESL Bridges program has given me the opportunities and the confidence to pursue my academic and professional goals with renewed vigor and enthusiasm. I would highly recommend this program to anyone who is looking to improve their English language skills and achieve their full potential.
Aneta Hoffman  
Tutor: Mariana Vargas

When I arrived in the US in December, I signed up for the Bridges ESL program.  
At first, I was at the beginner level.  
Then I was on a higher level.  
I like the friendly atmosphere in the classes. Here I have met new people from different  
corners of the world. In class, they teach us about the countries from which they came.  
We often discuss various topics.  
We talk about what happened in our lives during the last week.  
It’s never boring. There’s always some grammar  
During the classes we read interesting articles.  
And of course there is always delicious coffee and cake.  
I hope that in September I will continue my studies in this school.  
What is most important to me is the help conversing in English.  
By reading the articles, we get to know important figures who influenced the culture of the  
USA.  
Sometimes it’s funny how we struggle with English grammar, although I think it’s not as  
difficult as it was at the beginning. It’s a pity that classes are held once a week. I would love to  
continue with them during the holidays.

Hyungjin Lee  
Tutor: Brian Moore

Hi, my name is Hyunjin Lee. My English name is Julie. I come from South Korea. Now, I live in  
New Haven with my husband. My husband is a postdoctoral researcher in the Yale School of  
Medicine. I got married last year in October. Before marriage, my husband came to the USA  
two years ago. Then, I followed him, and I started working in New Jersey. We sometimes had  
tough times doing long distance, but we finally got married. My purpose of enrolling in Bridges  
ESL is to improve my English skills. I haven’t studied English since I was in elementary school.  
And it is not enough to communicate with other people in the US. When I talk with others, I am  
very silent, and I think I have become an introverted person. I wanted to make a change by  
enrolling in Bridges ESL. Also I want to continue next semester to keep on improving my  
English. I will watch English movies or dramas with English subtitles and read more articles  
written in English. Hanging out with foreign friends is also helpful to me. I feel better  
nowadays because the weather is warmer and spring has come. I want to travel to many places  
and make good memories in the USA. I think someday I will go back to my country. But even  
when I am in Korea, I want to remind myself of good memories in the US. Sometimes, I miss  
my family and friends and my life in Korea. But I know how those times cannot come back. I  
want to enjoy life in the US now. I appreciate my teacher, Brian, and my classmates. I enjoyed the  
class. I hope everyone is healthy and happy.

Mingiyan  
Tutors: Leyli Granmayeh, Julia Pak

My name is Mingiyan, and I'm from Russia. I've been living in Brooklyn, NY for four months. I  
worked as a software developer in Russia, and I want to continue my career in the US. Because  
of that, I need to improve my English skills, especially speaking.  
I started to learn English in a middle school in Russia, but I was a bad student and my score  
rating was almost a fail. Then, years later, I continued to learn English at the University of  
Radio Engineering, but there was not enough practice speaking. I think that this English class  
from Yale University is a great opportunity for learning and improving.
Hyun Jung Koh  
Tutor: Leila Glotzer Martin

My name is Hyun Jung Koh. I am from South Korea. I have been in New Haven for 9 months. I came here as a visiting scholar in the Park Lab of Stem Cell Center in the Genetic department. Actually, I am a doctor, an anaesthesiologist, so the work in biologic lab life was very different and strange at first. Now, I am accustomed to this life, and I make some friends in my lab. My lab members are very kind and help me in various ways.

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When I started this course, at first, I was very nervous and worried about the class. But, I felt comfortable and on the other hand, very excited with this class. I met my teacher, Leila, and two other classmates. This class was different from what I thought at first. Sometimes, the lessons were easy and basic, but I could check my grammar and ask what I wanted to know my teacher freely. It helps me a lot. Every Saturday morning, I am so happy and wait for the class.

Now we finish the course. I will miss everything in Bridges. I will miss my teacher, Leila, and classmates.

And lastly, I am very thankful for all the members of bridges and will remember this time for a long time.

Carolina Hernández  
Tutor: Amelia Lower

Changes are hard. They, however, always bring new opportunities to grow in many aspects of your life and give you the opportunity to improve personally, professionally and spiritually. I consider myself to be a curious, brave and determined person. That is why, one day, I decided to change my life and start again in the United States, a country where I hoped to find new and better life opportunities.

This change has been the biggest and one of the most significant in my life, and time flies when you are doing what you want to do! Actually, last week, I completed my first year here. It has been a year with a lot of ups and downs, emotions and challenges. Starting new friendships, speaking English and adapting myself to the culture are some of the changes that I experience and challenges that I face every day, but surrounded by new people, places and experiences, has made everything a little bit easier.

Bridges ESL, for example, has become a place where I found a lot of help to improve my English skills, as much as I can, to be more confident, establish new relationships and adapt better.

Right now, I’m not sure about how long I will be in this country or what could be my next life experience. The only thing I’m sure of is that I will remember this moment in my life as one of the best.
Jennifer Benner  
Tutor: Ushuu Namarr

My name is Jennifer and I’m from the south of Brazil. I’ve been in the USA for 8 months and I’m here as an au pair. When I got here, I was feeling really nervous and unprepared even though I had already taken English classes before and knew how to communicate well.

I had a big change in my life and that made it hard to learn a lot of new things and advocate for myself. I had to understand the cultural differences between my home country and the country I was going to live in for at least two years.

Being in a different place than you are used to, improving a language that is not my native one, and starting a whole new life was really challenging to me especially when I needed to communicate with my American host family.

While I was discovering and enjoying my new routine, I found Bridges ESL. I got interested and signed up for the classes. This is my second time taking the classes and I’m so glad for the opportunity to be here and learn more every day.

I had an extraordinary experience, especially with my tutor Ushuu. She was really helpful and was always looking for the best way to teach. In every class, she used to bring extra materials such as videos and exercises.

I’m finishing Bridges ESL more confident and happy to share this experience with you

Daniel Castillo  
Tutor: Sarah Markey

Being my third experience in the Bridges ESL program, my expectations at first did not point to anything different or higher. However, possibly due to the fact that this time it was an in-person experience (the two previous ones had been remote, through a cold and sometimes uncomfortable screen), or because of the enthusiasm and disposition of my group, I must admit that this was an excellent semester.

At first, I also thought that the age and cultural difference between my classmates/tutor and me could be a barrier to developing the dynamics in the classes, but none of that, I discovered and learned a lot, both from the language itself, and from life experience, knowledge, aspirations and opinions of each of them. For this reason, I can only say THANKS.

Undoubtedly, living in the United States, here in New Haven, has been a strong experience that has allowed me to better understand "the American way of life", what the so-called American dream is and what it is not; to rethink, in the light of a consumer lifestyle and embellished by the beautiful architecture of the place, the inequalities between the different sectors of society, discrimination and marginality; but this experience has also helped me to discover the good, the magic of multiculturalism, the valuable in many of the economic and cultural expressions of the country and, above all, the potential that exists in young and conscious people to aim for a real change in the not so distant future. On this journey, learning through the Bridges program has been extremely useful, not only to continue improving my language skills, but also because of the opportunity to learn about other perspectives and ways of thinking.
Qi Zhang  
Tutor: Matthew Zoerb

Differences in shopping between the US and China

Learning to shop in the US has been a very interesting learning experience, but it was also a challenging process with some difficulties. Some difficulties may come from the culture difference.

This is my first time going abroad. I was born and grew up in China for 30 years. When it comes to culture, for my daily life, I have found there are some differences when I go shopping since I started my life in this country.

For instance, when you buy something in the supermarket, the amount you have to pay is not the sum of all prices, there is an additional tax. However, in China, the price includes tax. So, when I bought something in the supermarket for the first time, I found that the price of the bill was higher than the sum of all my goods, which made me very confused, I thought that the salesman had calculated the price wrong. After asking, I learned that the bill also included taxes. It was also different in Japan. 10 years ago, the tax was included in the price, so it was easy to calculate payment. But in the past few years it was not easy, because the tax system has changed. The tax depends on how you consume the product.

Moreover, China does not have tipping culture. We don’t need to think about how much to tip for the meal, because it was included in the price of food. This is the same in Japan, they don’t have tip culture at all. They just need pay what is on the receipt. I learned about the culture of tipping in the US by watching TV. But when I had a meal in a restaurant, I still didn’t how much and how to pay the tips. After a couple of days, I learned that for meals with a waiter, we need to pay a tip. However, for takeout food, there is usually no tip. When it is comes to tip, we should write the tip on the vendor’s copy, like 10%, 15%, 20% or more.

The last thing is that the shopping carts in China are smaller than in the US, because the people in the US usually buy up to 2 weeks of food at one time. However, in China we don’t need to buy so much things at once. Because the supermarket in China is usually very near to our house, we can go shopping every day. In the US, if a supermarket is close to our home or very convenient, it will be more expensive.

Everything is new to me, there is a long and special journey for me, but thanks to Bridges ESL classes, especially thanks to my mentors Janic and Matthew, I’ve taken a big step on this new journey.

Rosa Nery Nino Yate  
Tutor: Carla Becerra Sabrera

My experience in the USA has been good. I am learning about everything. I have been here for 11 months, and I live in Connecticut. I am an AuPair and have a big host Family. My English has improved after working with the kids during the week and attending English classes on Saturdays with Bridges ESL from Yale University. I have met many people from different cultures, and it’s been a big experience. I have traveled to other states and cities like Niagara Falls, New York City, Philadelphia, New Jersey, Boston, Miami, Orlando, Massachusetts, and other cities in Connecticut too. I am so happy to live through this experience.
Abraham Tame  
Tutor: Tri Ho  

My Memorable Four-Seasons Experience  

One of the most memorable experiences of my time in New Haven is being able to live in a region that has four seasons. Because I come from the middle region of Mexico, I have only been able to experience two seasons: spring and winter. Mexico only has a mild winter, so we don't have any snow.

It is amazing to see the arrival of the spring season. The spring season is like if someone had pushed a button and suddenly the weather becomes warmer, the flowers start to appear, and the sun shines brighter. You would want to go out to walk on the green grass, and you just smile and realize that you feel happy after a cold winter season.

After those happy months, the weather becomes warmer, but in some moments, it gets too hot. So, you feel the necessity to go swimming and do some aquatic activities to feel better. You suddenly want ice cream and iced coffee. You would want to wear lighter clothes, like shorts and tank tops, every day. That is what happens in the summer! But when you ask yourself if you are going to melt in the hot weather, the rain arrives to the rescue, and it is time to use your umbrella and ponchos when you go out. There should be a balance between outdoor and indoor activities.

Suddenly, everything – the grass and the leaves – turns into a Golden Color because autumn has arrived. At the beginning, the wind starts to run smoothly, but it becomes like a gallop that finishes taking all the leaves off the trees. This season has the most unbelievable sunsets that paint the sky pink, violet, and purple colors. Finally, there is a transition from the ponchos to sweaters and jeans!

Finally, the days get shorter, and the nights become longer. It is like it has sucked the colors of everything, and it starts snowing and everything turns white because winter is here! Now, it is time to put on more layers and do more indoor activities with friends and family, but also enjoy outdoor activities, such as playing in the snow, building a snowman, and sledding. The temperature continues decreasing to the point that you feel some sadness because you remember the warm days, but the cycle begins again!

Martha Lucia Mona Molina  
Tutor: Elizabeth Welch.  

The Importance of Playing Sports, being Happy, and having a Healthy Mind  

While in school, I played a lot of basketball with my classmates and other students. I was very happy sharing the experiences of basketball, dancing, and playing with all of my friends. It was a very interesting stage of life. To this day, dancing to any type of upbeat music seems to me to be a good therapy and form of exercise. It also helps me to have a healthy mind. If I can't leave the house for some reason, I can just dance for 45 minutes every day. It keeps me feeling young even though I am older now, makes me happy, and helps me emotionally.
Differences in pronunciation between English and Japanese

Learning English is an interesting and practical activity, but it is also a challenging process. Its difficulty comes from a lot of factors, and one of them - I believe this is the main cause - is the linguistic difference between English and a learner's native language. Therefore, the difficulty a learner encounters in the process of learning English varies diversely based on the learner's first language.

I was born and grew up in Japan and moved to the U.S. 2 years ago. I have become aware of some personal challenges that I face since I started my life in this country.

For instance, using an English noun correctly is, to tell the truth, a labored process for Japanese speakers. Japanese does not have the concept of the quantity of a noun. We don't have a single form and a plural form of a noun. We don't even differentiate countable nouns and uncountable nouns either. If you say “there be apple” in Japanese, there could be a single apple or some apples or there might even be many apples. Therefore, we don't conjugate verbs in accordance with the numerical condition of nouns. Put simply, we don't have a difference such as is/are and do/does. Moreover, the Japanese doesn't have articles (a/the). We don't need to think about whether the noun we are stating is definite or indefinite when speaking Japanese. I almost always confuse myself wondering which article I should install in front of nouns.

Thus, when I want to say a noun correctly in English, I should specify its numerical condition, its countability and its identity consciously for every single noun. As you could imagine, that is indeed a complicated and tough mental exertion to undertake just in an instant.

Obviously, every grammatical concept is different between English and Japanese. I would like to introduce you to some of the other challenging differences between English and Japanese especially in pronunciation.

1. Vowels

Japanese has only 5 vowels whereas English has 15-25 vowel sounds (depends on how you count).

For example, these following words sound very similar, and some sound even completely the same for me.

Eg.
- warm vs worm, wander vs wonder, pat vs pot, color vs collar
- hat vs hot vs hut, bat vs bot vs but, lack vs lock vs luck
- fun vs fan, fund vs fond, stuck vs stack, nut vs not
- boat vs bought, Hole vs hall, law vs low, coat vs caught
- hurt vs heart, burn vs barn, curve vs carve, firm vs farm, heard vs hard, stir vs star

2. Consonants

Japanese has fewer consonants, i.e., 13-14 consonants in Japanese while 22-24 in English. Some consonants in English are difficult to tell apart for me.

Eg.
- R and L (rice vs lice, light vs right, to lead vs to read, wrong vs long, correct vs collect, fry vs fly, grass vs glass, pray vs play, clap vs ...)
- S/Z vs TH (sick vs thick, some vs thumb, bus vs bath, sink vs think, close vs clothe, breeze vs breathe, sues vs soothe, dose vs those)
- B vs V (base vs vase, bat vs vat, boat vs vote, berry vs very, best vs vest)
- I/E vs Yi/Ye (ear vs year, earn vs yearn, east vs yeast, S vs yes, L vs yell)
3. Syllables

Since every single consonant sound must be followed by a vowel sound in Japanese, Japanese words can be easily broken down into syllables, for example, one syllable always contains one consonant and one vowel in Japanese. Identifying syllables of English words is difficult for Japanese people. Japanese-spoken English sometimes contains a lot of mistakes with regards to syllable pronunciation. I believe this makes English spoken by Japanese people hard for native English speakers to easily understand.

E.g.
- balance: 2 syllables in English, but Japanese people tend to say ba-ra-nn-su (4 syllables)
- rhythm: 1 syllable in English, but Japanese people tend to say ri-zu-mu (3 syllables)
- spring: 1 syllable in English, but Japanese people tend to say su-pu-ri-nn-gu (5 syllables)
- accomplish: 3 syllables in English, but Japanese people tend to say a-ko-nn-pu-ri-(tsu)-shu (7 syllables)

As we have seen, there are a lot of tricky obstacles that I need to overcome for me to master English. This is a long, tough and endless journey, but thanks to Bridges ESL classes, especially thanks to my mentors Janic and Matthew, I have definitely a massive step forward along the path toward the unseen goal. All of your dedication and contribution is much appreciated. Thank you.

Paula Schuermann
Tutor: Ushuu Namarra

Bridges

My name is Paula, I'm 18 years old and I am from Germany. I started learning English when I was 6 years old, so I was already fluent in English when I came to the US to do an Au Pair year. I started the Bridges classes because I wanted to learn more about the pronunciation and sound of words. The main purpose was to get rid of my accent.

First I learned that it is not bad to have an accent but part of your identity. It was interesting to speak with a native speaker and hear that it is not seen badly if you have an accent, but more interesting. Despite that, I wanted to improve some sounds and so we practiced together. In addition, we watched some news and did some reading and writing exercises. It was nothing hard, but I feel like just taking part in the classes and focusing two hours on the English language helped me to understand it even more. Now I know more about the roots of the language, the grammar and of course the pronunciation.

In addition to the learning aspect, it was nice to meet new people. As an Au Pair it is hard to meet people, especially under 21 because mostly you're just seeing your host family every day and maybe a few friends you met here. So it was nice to see your group every week and exchange your thoughts a little.

I would recommend bridges to friends who want to understand the language even more and learn about the perspectives of other people.
Maria Vivian Gabrielly da Silva Santos  
Tutor: Yuyuan Chen

My journey learning English started when I was 6 in 2004. At that time, my school introduced to us computers. It was a totally new thing in my city. And with the computers, I started learning basic words like “paint”, “penguins”, and “mountain”, and some years later when I was around twelve, I had contact with English again through Justin Beiber because the “Baby” song was so famous. I tried to find magazines with English classes so I could understand the music and song lyrics. Then, I tried to keep learning English when my friends and I watched Twilight, and I really loved the movie and got addicted. I wanted to understand all the interviews, but it was difficult to find Portuguese-translated interviews. This addiction doesn’t stop because I keep trying to learn English until I was 15, and I really loved learning new languages even though my city was a very small city in the Amazon so it was hard to find English classes without an expensive price. When I went to college, I choose the international relations course and because of the course English was very important, and some of the books were in English. At that time, my reading got better but not speaking because I was timid in English because I knew everyone else was probably better at English than me and I didn't want to look dumb in college. I was even a member of AIESEC to talk with people from other countries and feel less shy.

So when I finish college, I decided I needed to improve my English, and I went to the au pair program to live in the United States to improve my English. Since I’ve started living here, I feel more confident speaking in English. I even started thinking English, and the Bridges ESL helped me greatly. I have been subscribing to Bridges ESL since I arrived here, and every semester I am learning new things and improving my English, and I feel confident that even if I don’t speak 100% of English sometimes, people can still understand me. And most of the time, I can understand everything that people say. I feel very proud because when I started I never thought that I could understand this much one day.

Isabel Cristina Gómez Díaz  
Tutor: Clarissa Sauceda

Tarea de inglés

1. Discuss your earliest memory as a child.
When I was a girl, I lived in Socorro with my parents and my sisters. We lived in a big house. In the afternoons we played with neighbors in the street and we were very happy. I also played theater with my sisters. We met with the neighbors, did shows, and charged them for the entrance. Another thing that I enjoyed a lot in my childhood with my sisters was going for a walk in a nearby town called Simacota. We went to the river and had a lot of fun.

2. What is one thing you can never live without? Why?.
I could never live without my family. They are the most important to me. Although I sometimes enjoy loneliness, the company of my family makes me very happy. We enjoy going to the cinema and walking through the country with Kiara, our dog. We also like to eat pizza and Mexican food on the weekends.

3. Write about a time you had to make a hard decision.
The most difficult decision that I have had to make together with my sisters was to take my father to a geriatric home. We had to do that because the people who took care of him at home stole and are still doing it. My dad lives in Yerbabuena, a geriatric home where he is in good care and shares with the other residents. He reads, prays, plays, and has a great time.

4. Why is studying English important to you?
I need to study English because is very important for my profession and my work. I need to participate in meetings with people from different countries and it is difficult for me to participate because I do not speak English. Another reason is that I need to read research papers and I spend a lot of time translating them.
Student: Shengming Yang
Tutor: Derek Song

I will go back to China in May. But there are no direct flights to Xi'an, China. So I must pass through a third country. I select to pass through Korea Incheon Airport. But my English level is very bad. So I'm very nervous that the layover will be difficult. My English tutor Derek Song teaches me many languages of the airport, to get rid of my worries.

I'm very thankful for my tutor Derek Song and Yale Bridges ESL.

杨生明
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