BRIDGES ESL
FALL 2023 ANTHOLOGY

Featuring work from our students:

Maria Helena
Leonie Krueger
Juliana Pinheiro
Nadia Chrispim
Juliana Souza Milagres
Lewis Clormeus
Jose
Maria Vivian Gabrielly da Silva Santos
Barbara Caetano
Lanna Brambila
Tatiana

Maren Geschwill
Mayu Wada
Hamlet Acevedo
Mayumi Kimuri
Chuck Souza
Brenda Foerste

Sabrinna Rayane Alves Mendes
Talison Costa
Mingi Um
Yoon Jang
Larissa de Souza
Alexsandra Beatriz da Silva Leandro
BUILDING BRIDGES
2023-2024

HISTORY

Bridges ESL was founded in 2001 with the goal of providing free English as a Second Language resources to New Haven. We have proudly served our surrounding community for 23 years, seeking to break language barriers and promote social equity. All current tutors are Yale College students who have received training in ESL instruction. Tutors design their own curriculum based on their students’ needs and are provided educational resources, including sample lesson plans and office hours. We provide several levels of instruction based on student proficiency: 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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SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR TUTORS

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**CO-PRESIDENTS’ NOTE**

Dear students and tutors,

With the end of the fall semester upon us, we wanted to express our gratitude for your commitment to Bridges ESL. This year, we began our term as Co-Presidents of the organization, and we couldn’t be more grateful for the opportunity. Bridges has been an incredibly impactful experience for us throughout our time at Yale, and we are thankful to continue being part of such an inspiring and diverse community.

At Bridges, we have been able to maintain a hybrid learning model, with classes being held online and in-person at La Casa and the Asian American Cultural Center. Regardless of modality, it has been such a joy to see students and tutors connect with one another. Whether you were a new student this past semester or you have been with us for several terms, your dedication to Bridges is what makes this community such a unique and supportive space. Bridges would not be the organization it is without you.

Thank you for being a part of Bridges this semester—we are so grateful for your support and involvement. Happy holidays, and we hope to see you in the spring!

Melina Joseph and Derek Song
Bridges Co-Presidents

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**EDITOR’S NOTE**

I have been involved with Bridges ESL for three years now, starting my commitment to this organization as a first-year at Yale. I initially began as a regular tutor, dedicating my Saturdays to tutoring students beginner-level English. I was originally apprehensive at the idea of committing myself to something I consider elaborate and beyond reach of my comfort level, but I immediately found a community with my students. I learned from their experiences learning English, barrier they had faced since coming to the States, and impacts of my dedication to their enrichment.

Since then, I have served as Director of Pairing (2022-2023) and now Secretary (2023-2024) on the Bridges ESL board. Compiling and reading all of the entries for this anthology has reminded me of how thankful I am to be part of this community. I have enjoyed reading how tutors have made impacts in the very recent lives of their students, while also seeing the emerging confidence in language abilities from students due to their experience with Bridges ESL. I am reminded of why I have decided to make this space a forever community for me, as I hope to foster the same for others.

Thank you to tutors for work immeasurable work this semester and I hope you all have inspired a new generation of alumni that will forever be indebted to your services. Beyond everything, thank you to the students for trusting us in creating a safe and enjoyable space for you as you start (or continue) your journey learning English. We hope we have made a huge influence in your English-learning practices, so much that we invite you all to stay with us for future terms -- you are all part of this forever family.

Ignacio Ruiz-Sánchez
Bridges Secretary
Student: Mayu Wada  
Tutor: Linda Do

"A great place not only to study but also to meet new friends"

Hi, I'm Mayu. I've been here, New Haven, for about 4 months now. This is my 1st time to enroll in the Bridges ESL.

I can say that this is the best choice to enroll in the Bridges ESL class. My English is still like a baby but everyone I met in this class is kind and tries to understand my words. Because of the small groups, it is easy to share your thoughts and opinions. Also, my tutor, Linda, was making a welcome mood for everyone so it was comfortable for me and I could meet new people often! AND I could meet wonderful friends through this class!! Those encounters are changing life in here. I can't thank you enough for Bridges!

I super appreciate this opportunity, members and tutors who gave me the lessons. I've already decided to take this class in next semester! Can't wait to meet everyone♡

Student: Sameh Gendy  
Tutor: Linda Do

I am from Egypt, and it is my first time in the US; I studied the English language starting from primary school in my country but did not use it as a spoken language until I came to the US. So I searched for any community to start practicing what I was learned before until joining the Bridges ESL family (and I mean it by word Family).

Initially, I was afraid to make many grammar or wording mistakes, but I got encouragement to speak and very gentle corrections of my grammar and sentences.

I want to thank all Bridges persons, especially my teacher Linda, who made a big difference in my conversation, grammar, and accent, as well as taught me how to listen carefully and accept each other as a group of students from different cultures and countries.

I plan to join the next season to continue what I started here because the fall season was too short and had a lot of vacation and holy days, which dropped some lessons.

I have already recommended Bridges ESL to some people who want to understand the language.

Student: Chuck Souza  
Tutor: Yuanyu Chen and Jamie Cha

I am immensely grateful for the opportunities and experiences Bridges ESL has provided me. This program, it’s just fantastic and I wish everybody could have the opportunity to join. I’ve been learning a lot since I enrolled, the connection with young Yale students, the cultural exchange, and the opportunity to practice English in a safe place with people from all over the world has been a source of inspiration for me. Each class is unique and an opportunity to learn something new. And the program is especially important to me because when I joined Bridges first time I was living in Bridgeport-CT, but now I’m back in my home country Brazil, and having these classes is a way to keep connected with America, the culture and contact with the language, which I don’t use as frequently nowadays.

I hope to continue in the program, learn more and more to become fluent and one day come back to the US. And I’m pretty sure this is gonna happen because since I started this program I have made significant progress in my vocabulary, reading skills, and most importantly, I feel confident and motivated to speak, even if I don’t have all the words, even if I don’t know how to build a specific sentence. It doesn’t matter, cause I have a safe place to express my ideas with tutors that encourage me to speak without fear.

As I said before, I wish everybody could have the opportunity to join Bridges ESL and I’m always recommending it to my friends.

This is a short resume of my journey in Bridges and next year I’ll be here learning, developing, and growing. Thank you to all the people involved in this program, I wish you all the best.
I'm Maria Helena and I have been living in New Haven for four months. I'm a Ph.D. student at CAES. My research is about nanotechnology and siRNA. When I started this course, I didn't know a lot of things in English and Ushuu always was a good teacher. She helped me all the time and I can see that I've improved my abilities in English. She is always ready to help me and I feel very encouraged to learn.

I am proud of myself and I think Bridges can change the lives of a lot of people because it helped me and can help other people too. Thank you so much tutors, and especially Ushuu. I loved Bridges!

Hello! My name is Leonie and I am from Germany. I have been living in the US near New Haven for a few months and work as an au pair.

Improving my English was one of the reasons why I decided to move to the U.S. I did not initially think about attending class for very long. Yet, the program did not just give me the opportunity to improve my English, but it also allowed me to get in contact with other cultures from other participants.

I am really thankful for this experience, which made it possible to improve my English skills and meet other people in town.

Hi! My name is Maren and I'm from Germany. I came to the United States as an au pair to improve my English and have a new experience in life.

I found out about the Bridges ESL program because of a friend, and I'm glad I joined it. It was my first time being in the program, and it was exciting to meet other people from different countries and cultures. I had a good time every Saturday and learned something new every week. It was great to have a tutor of the same age and to learn something from a smart Yale Student.

I think the program is a good opportunity to improve your English and make new connections in town. I want to thank Bridges ESL, for having the opportunity to be a part of it!

I loved be a student of the bridges ESL, the classes was amazing, I learned a lot, and I meet nice people. Linda your classes was so good, I like so much the exercises, thank you!
Fall 2023

Student: Juliana Pinheiro
Tutor: Tommy Gannon

For me Bridges was a wonderful experience. I now feel comfortable talking when I can't pronounce words correctly. I learned new words that I will use in my daily life. Thank you so much Tommy!

Student: Tatiana
Tutor: Tommy Gannon

I feel very grateful because I enjoyed this Cme and learned a lot of new pronunciaCon and the teacher explained very well. Thank you so much to everyone. My classmates are so nice. My English skills have improved. I can write, read, and talk a liGle bit beGer. I learned more vocabulary and some new words. Thank you Tommy and God bless you all. I will see you all next semester!

Student: Hamlet Acevedo
Tutor: Tommy Gannon

My name is Hamlet Acevedo. I'm from Columbia and am married with two children. I lost count of the years that I have been parCcipaCng in Bridges classes, but I can tell you that every year is a great, enriching experience. I take part in the program because I want to improve my English skills. I want to be able to communicate clearly and effecCvely. I am ready for the next session, and I know it will be as exciCng and enriching as always.

Student: Mayumi Kimura
Tutor: Yuanyu Chen and Jamie Cha

Hello, my name is Mayumi and I'm a Brazilian who's living in Toronto right now. I found out about Bridges ESL while I lived in New Haven in 2020, and I'm happy that we can continue to attend classes online. It's an important source for me to practice my English and maintain my studies in a pleasant way. So, I extend my most sincere thanks to my tutors Yuanyu and Jaime for this amazing semester. It was really fun and productive, I'm always amazed at how they always try to incorporate subjects that are interesting for the students. I love how friendly and understanding they are. They turned this class into a space where I feel comfortable practicing my English without judgment. This year was a great opportunity not just to improve my English, but also to learn about other cultures with my classmates and tutors and of course, meet amazing people. I deeply appreciate these classes provided by Bridges and hope it never ends!
The opportunity to be part of Bridges ESL as a student is a privilege. The opportunity for immigrants improving their skills, learning a new language different from their own mother language can be a challenge and hard sometimes. In the middle of the process, you analyze yourself in a foreign language with different habits, cultures, language, food and so on. It seems scary, but it makes yourself stronger and happy about what you have conquered.

I came as part of an au pair exchange program. To develop in my work, I need to communicate very well in four abilities: listening, speaking, reading and writing. I don’t need to be fluent. However, it’s necessary to comprehend and sustain a conversation, for example.

At Bridges ESL, I saw an opportunity not just to improve my English skills but to have contact with an American teacher and a Yale student who can share her experience, abilities and knowledge with us.

During the classes, I recount a really cool activity called “Rose, bud, thorn” that made me reflect about my own life and experiences in the USA. Besides that, we focus a lot on the TOEFL preparation test. It was good because we could learn the steps for an amazing essay and to develop critical arguments about the topic we were working with. The debates were fun too, and they were sometimes hard and other times were easy. It was a great experience to challenge yourself.

I confess having this experience makes me think more about becoming a student and applying for a college.

I'd like to thank Bridges ESL for the opportunity to have free English classes for immigrants with an excellent teacher, a great number of students per class and resources, in addition to the huge plus of the classes being on Saturdays.

I'm an undergraduate student from Brazil, and I came to New Haven for an internship in a lab. My supervisor and colleagues are also Brazilians, so it is hard to learn English in this scenario. I'm planning to continue my academic life in the USA, and for this, I need the TOEFL exam. For this reason, I started looking for an English class. I have been looking for almost two years, and I couldn't find any option close to downtown. Finally in the last 6 months, I found Bridges ESL and started classes.

My experience was amazing. I improved all my skills: listening, speaking, writing and reading. Before the class, I felt not ready to take the exam, but now, I’m more confident and ready. A small class helps a lot for the dynamic. In particular, my teacher is awesome. Before I started, I didn’t want to take the classes on Saturday mornings, because this was the only day that I could rest. But after I started the class, I wanted to have the class every day, even Sundays. It’s a really great experience. Thank you Bridges ESL for this opportunity, and I hope to continue next semester!

I'd like to thank Bridges ESL for the opportunity to have free English classes for immigrants with an excellent teacher, a great number of students per class and resources, in addition to the huge plus of the classes being on Saturdays.
Student: Lewis Clormeus  
Tutor: Eliza Daunt

My name is Lewis. I'm from Haiti and I moved to New Haven last July. This is a great opportunity for me to perfect my English through the BRIDGES ESL program. Every Saturday, I've had the pleasure of discovering grammar rules and English-language literary works. I also had the opportunity to exchange with the other members of the group in an atmosphere of cordiality and eagerness to learn. Thanks to Eliza who was our guide during this adventure. Thanks to BRIDGES ESL for this wonderful opportunity.

Student: Jose  
Tutor: Michaela Bauman

What is your favorite memory from Bridges?  
I remember my teacher Michaela. It increased my English. I have been learning to write and listen. I improved my knowledge. I need to learn more and listen and speak more.

What did you learn this semester?  
I learned grammar, pronunciation, reading, and speaking. I feel happy because now I understand a little more.

What are your plans for the holidays?  
During the holidays I wish to spend the time with my family and review my worksheets from Bridges English class. I would like to improve my English by listening and talking with other English speakers.

Student: Maria Vivian Gabrielly da Silva Santos  
Tutor: Chloe Budakian

Learning English in the last few weeks has been good. When I arrived in the United States I already liked studying and learning English, however, as soon as I arrived here, English, which I liked so much, made my head hurt a lot. I already talked to some foreigners as soon as they arrived here and the answer was unanimous, after about 3 months of listening to the language almost all day, the brain becomes so tired from the effort that you get headaches.

I'm happy that at the moment it doesn't work like that for me anymore, English has become natural to the point that I no longer need to translate things in my head, I don't think in Portuguese and then translate and speak in English, I think in English and I have learned so much that I don't even know if there is a translation. I'm happy to be in the part of learning where learning is smooth and even if I keep making mistakes in speaking or writing, I can communicate most of the time and when I can't say a word, I say a synonym and I'm understood.

The weeks at bridge ESL were good, I learned a lot of new words and I enjoyed reading, doing the exercises and learning new things from the teacher and other students.
Student: Barbara Caetano  
Tutor: Chloe Budakian

Having knowledge of the English language has always been important in my life, which my family realized early on. Therefore, I dedicated a considerable amount of time and effort to study it in my home country. However, coming to the US gave me a new perspective on how English is used in everyday life. I came to the realization that the English language utilized in work books is different from the English used in practical situations. It became apparent to me that the ability to write and speak in English wasn’t sufficient to comprehend the language entirely. Being in the US, I had the opportunity to enroll in the Bridge English language course, which was important to me to understand the language better in a real-life context. The course provided me with a broader perspective on the language, and I was able to comprehend more of what we hear, and see in everyday life. Through study and an exploration of the culture, I gained a comprehensive understanding of certain references and jokes that were used a lot in daily life.

Student: Lanna Brambila  
Tutor: Derek Song

Hello. My name is Lanna and I’m from Brazil. I recently moved to Chicago, IL and realized the need to improve my English. Because despite being able to communicate, my vocabulary and understanding of grammar was basic. So the need to expand my knowledge arose, this way I would be able to communicate correctly and clearly. Unfortunately, I didn’t have the opportunity to attend English classes before. I learned the language on my own, which was difficult and enriching at the same time. However, when reading about Bridges ESL teaching plan, I became excited and interested in gaining more knowledge about the language. The classes were taught with excellence and I learned about sentence construction and much more. I was able to clarify questions and communicate with the teacher in a nice way. Which I personally think is an amazing thing. Furthermore, I have a degree in Letras, the study of the Portuguese language, and one of my future goals is to work with Literature. This requires a certain level of English to understand what authors express in their books. So, I would like to express my gratitude to Bridges ESL and to my teacher specifically, for helping me get closer to this goal. Thank you.

Student: Brenda Foerste  
Tutor: Derek Song

My name is Brenda and I’m Brazilian. I met Bridges ESL on the recommendation of a friend who had already taken the course and decided to do it to develop my writing and reading in English to help in my master’s degree in animal biology, whose scientific articles are all in English. In addition, I have family members who live in Boston and I often travel alone to visit them, and the course helped me for when I need to go again, especially at the airport, which requires me to understand a little of the language, and having a class with someone who speaks exclusively English helps me with that.
Student: Sabrinna Rayane Alves Mendes
Tutor: Keenan Miller

My opportunity
My name is Sabrinna. I’m 22 years old and I’m from Brazil. I came to the USA almost 2 years ago as an au pair. I was studying to become a nurse in my hometown of Minas Gerais, Brazil, but I realized that I wouldn’t be happy if I followed this profession. Back then, I thought I wouldn’t like working in a hospital.

After 3 and a half years of school I decided to pause and look for a new path. I already had experience working with children and learned English in a self-taught way so the au pair exchange program is what seemed most right for me.

In 2021 I left my family, friends and country to venture into a completely new experience in another culture, language and connection-building with people from all over the world. My program is not very conventional. Most of the girls come and spend two years with the same family, but I have spent time with three families. I first was in Falls Church, Virginia, and moved to New Canaan in Connecticut. I now live in Cheshire in a boarding school.

During these last two years I have had the opportunity to mature. I’ve gotten to know several states, cities, and countries. I’ve met incredible people and discovered what really awakens my heart in relation to my career.

During my time in the USA I also had the opportunity to work on my English and now I can resume my studies by going back to university next year – but this time in another country. I am going back to finish my nursing degree and hope to transfer my credits to Connecticut Community College. Then I want to get a degree in anesthesiology.

The Yale English course helped me a lot. Thanks to the program and the dedication of my tutor I had the chance to work on issues in relation to my pronunciation that I never paid attention to before. I am grateful for my journey so far and hopeful for what the future holds for me.

Student: Talison Costa
Tutor: Sofia Prieto Black, Brian Moore

I came to New Haven this year to do an internship program. As a non-native English speaker I have a lot of struggle talking in public. This situation at Yale is very different from what I was used to and I was able to practice my speaking and reading skills in a pressure-free environment. In classes, we were able to talk about ourselves, our culture differences and more about what happening at the city. Our tutor Brown made the experience of learning really fun.
Student: Mingi Um  
Tutor: Brian Moore

Since last year, I am taking this English learning program. I was born and raised in South Korea, and it’s my first time to live in US. I was struggling with communicating in English until before. I found this program, I met three tutors in the Bridge ESL, and they were all supportive. I was able to learn some important grammar, ideas, through communicating with tutors and other students as well. Although it is true that my English skill is still not perfect, I am able to be more confident than before. The time that I learnt English in this program have become memorable. I highly recommend this ESL class for anyone who wants to gain English skills. If you are living in New Haven or nearby and want to overcome the difficulties in English, don’t hesitate to take this class.

Student: Yoon Jang  
Tutor: Brian Moore

Brian led me to a great opportunity to enhance my English skills. He was always well-planned, not to mention his dedication and kindness, to give lecture for the participants. I really appreciate it and I believe that other feel the same way like me.

It was really impressive for me to see how he taught us. Class was high and also creative. It made me consider that I should do it in the future.
To be specific, in terms of learning from his class, I learned many things. Firstly, vocabulary. I came to know many words which I had not been aware of. Secondly, speaking. Every student felt free to speak English in the class. And he gave us feedbacks quickly in a good way. The feedbacks were really helpful for me to use the expressions in my daily life. Thirdly, reading. He brought up reading materials in different kinds of topics, and the topic changed every week. This expanded spectrum of my thoughts, and inspired me to get used to the way of thinking in English. Also I could be benefit of latest information and trends. Lastly, friends. I met a lot of good people and friends here. ESL is the perfect venue for international people to interact with others who have different background. I really appreciate this cherished opportunities for learning cultural diversities. Also I thanked all the people who participated ESL program like I did.

It's my third time on Bridges ESL and I couldn't be more grateful for this opportunity. Bridges is an amazing program to improve your English skills and learn more about the American culture. This is my first time having in person classes and I really appreciate being able to connect with people from all over the world and share experiences with them.
Brian is an awesome tutor and very engaged with our classes. He always shares interesting articles and helpful materials with us, making our classes easy to follow and understand and keeping us motivated to learn more. Learning English has been a long journey and Bridges ESL has been a positive addition, making me feel more confident and capable of achieving my educational goals.

This semester was very interesting; I met a new place here in New Haven, a pinpoint in Yale that I never knew before, the Yale University Asian American Cultural Center. Here I could improve my language skills, and also meet new people from my classmates that they are from Brazil, Korea, China. I cherish how the same words can be so different in so many accents. This semester I also could simplify my reading skills, with my teacher Brian, who always came with so many articles about different things, he also made me learn powerful verbs that I came use in my days and make me feel more confident and flourish my speech. I’m cherish all this and hope that when something goes fast is because we good, so I hope that I remember all my new friends and also my teacher Brian be here with me. I Belive that we should never stop to study, cuz every class we learn more, maybe about something that we have never listen an about something we already know. I’m really appreicated this time.
Bridging a new life after Bridges ESL

In October, the Bridges ESL Board was contacted by a Bridges ESL alum of six years (from 2013 to 2019), Younsoo Shim, who recently published her memoir, Bridge: Beyond the Uncertainty Into a New World, about her life in the United States as the spouse of a Yale graduate student who struggled adjusting to life in the States with an eminent language barrier. She writes about her journey finding a new community with students like her and passionate tutors, many of whom she grew along throughout their four years at Yale. Today, she lives in South Korea but she is still in touch with her five tutors and has formed a deep bond with them, so much that they have even visited her back home in Korea.

We were excited to host her on a regular Saturday class day to share her story in her memoir with current Bridges ESL students and tutors. We hope by sharing her story we can inspire a future cohort of alumni capable on taking on the big world without the fear of language barriers or life troubles. Thank you Younsoo for your words and commitment to our family!