

# ESL Newsletter

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# *ESL NEWSLETTER*

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## **King and Queen for a Day!**

BY: FOUZIA BELHAFIANE

"Every bride is beautiful on her wedding day, but in Morocco, she gets to be a queen, too," said my son Zakaria as he saw my sister's wedding. For the bride, the wedding is like a coronation. She is dressed just like a



queen. In the past, most Moroccan weddings were arranged, but today, young people choose their own partners. However, the children still respect tradition and will ask the parents for their blessing. A marriage is considered the most important decision that a man and a woman can make, and the wedding lasts from three to seven days.

In Morocco, many marriages are still arranged, but it's becoming more and more rare. I still remember that day when I came back from school, and my aunt was home waiting for me. She told that her husband's nephew wanted to marry me. My father considered my marriage to this man as a good deal because we knew him, and we knew his family. My refusal would have been an offense, so I had to accept. On the other hand, five years later, my little sister, Leila, dated her husband without the knowledge of my parents for three years since she was fifteen. On her eighteenth birthday, my father accepted her request to marry without asking questions. Two years later, my other sister Ilham, married Driss, the man that she had dated since high school. My sisters and the men they married knew that they were meant to be together, but they had to wait for the family approval. The families still play a big role in approving or disapproving a marriage. I asked my father



why he forced me to marry my husband while he allowed my other sisters to marry whom they wanted to, and he said, "The days when marriages are arranged are gone." Today, young people choose their own partners, and while the parents have the veto power, they often accept their child's choice

A Moroccan wedding celebrates the joining together of two families and the establishment of a new family. Five days before the wedding, the focus of the preparation is on the bride. The women have a party in the Turkish public "hammam" (bath). The night before the wedding, there's a henna party for the bride and the women. The bride sits on cushions for several hours while a henna artist paints her hands and her feet with beautiful designs. The guests listen to music, dance, and drink tea with cookies made with almonds and eat a big feast at the end.

During the wedding celebration, the family employs a group of women called "Negafa" who devote themselves to making the bride look her best. They dress her in a traditional Moroccan wedding gown, with lots of jewelry, makeup, and crowns that match every costume. For centuries, henna has been applied to the brides. The bride is not expected to perform any housework until her henna fades.



The next day is the wedding. Moroccan weddings are a big celebration in which a marriage is recognized in the eyes of the community. The bride and the groom can't consummate their marriage before the wedding celebration. While it was normal for the groom to have sex before the marriage, the bride has to be virgin that day, or it's shame for her and her family if she's not. If the bride is a virgin, she is given the utmost respect and admiration. As a reward, the

groom's family offers her a luxurious golden necklaces or bracelets.

At Moroccan weddings, guests stay up all night dancing and eating. Around nine or ten p.m., people start preparing to go to the wedding. Men usually wear suits, while women are dressed elegantly in their best caftans. The caftan is a traditional, long silk dress with beautiful designs. The weddings are often held in big villas. At the beginning of the wedding, the villas give an impression of a sumptuous empty palace. In a few hours, it is full of people dancing, kids running around, and young people sitting in the garden enjoying the cool night air.



Weddings are a good chance for young people to get together and socialize. There's always the possibility of meeting a prospective spouse, and young unmarried women are often showing off their best

dance moves. My brother Samir, who was a bachelor at my sister's wedding, was very popular, and all the young girls were looking for a dance with him wishing to be his future bride.



As the guests arrive, they are announced by the musicians. Once all the guests have arrived, the bride, like my sister Ilham, is carried on a big silver chair called "ammaria." The groom walks in front. In the back, the musicians and young men and women follow the procession playing horns and drums.

All the guests, crowd around the ammaria as it's arrives in the villa, and for about thirty minutes people clap and cheer.

The bride and the groom sit on special chairs that look like thrones. Through out the night, people greet them and have their pictures taken with them. The orchestra plays Moroccan wedding music: songs about love and marriage into which the names of the bride and the groom are inserted.

After forty minutes or so, the bride and the groom go to the back room, so the "negafa" can help the bride into her second caftan. When the couple returns again, the bride is in her traditional wedding gown of brightly



colored silk, overlaid by gold thread. Jewelry is arranged to cascade around her face, and makeup highlights her eyes. The bride's wedding dresses can be of various designs from different regions and countries: rbatti (from Rabat), fassi (from Fez), Berber (the native Moroccans), Indian, and European. The couple parades for a few minutes then return to sit on their "thrones," and the guests go back to dancing and eating. No matter how many people the family invites to the wedding, they always expect more, as it's usual for guests to bring guests, who are also welcome at the festivities.

Finally, at around five in the morning, the bride and the groom come in for the last time wearing western clothes: the groom in a black suit, and the bride in a beautiful, pink, wedding gown brought from Italy. They cut the cake and leave for the hotel. Then everyone piles into their cars and caravans to the hotel, honking the car horns loudly in the streets. In the past, thirty years ago, the couple would have be taken directly to the groom's home. The guests would examine the bedclothes for blood as evidence that the bride was a virgin. However, today, the couple is afforded more privacy and gets to "disappear," generally to a hotel, and the couple is no longer expected to display their sheets to the guests. What happened that night will stay between the groom and the bride.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when I put my son to sleep after my sister's wedding, and right before I kissed him "good night," he asked if he could marry anyone he wanted. I said, "Yes, even if she's not Moroccan but she has to be Muslim because we are not allowed to marry non-Muslims." He smiled and said, "I like the Moroccan weddings, and I want to be a king with my queen as my aunt and her husband were tonight." I laughed and we slept all day.



## What Bothers Students

BY: SHINNOSUKE BAN

Sometimes a person will say, "I am on top of the world," but the next day he says, "What a miserable life I have!" That's how it is with life. Some people deal with worry well

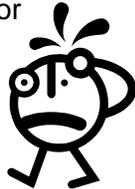
and change worry into the keys to success. However, others struggle and suffer from worry and can not get over it. The point is,



there is no human who does not have worries in this world. As for students, including me, there are some particular worries we face. Of course, although worry is a very complicated and diverse among

people, I want to share three major worries students have based on my experience.

Language difficulties are a major obstacle for students who speak English as a second language. Although my English has improved since I first came to America six months ago, I have had some frustrating experiences. At one fast food shop, I always asked for coffee, but the worker always gave me a coke, which fortunately I do like, because of my poor pronunciation. Pronunciation is a real headache for Japanese students because we do not use a letter alphabet; we use symbols instead.



One of my Japanese friends, Ayako Hirai recalls a frustrating experience. Similar to me, people have a difficult time understanding her. She thought she was ordering vanilla ice cream but was always given a banana ice cream. She often said, "Because of my poor English, I couldn't even say to change it to my favorite, vanilla ice cream!"

Another Japanese student at BHC, whose name is Masako Yoshizawa, said to me, "Whenever people said to me, 'What's Up,' I used to face up. It was a while until I got the meaning of 'what's up.'" We are really unfamiliar with English idioms in Japan, so English is a big hurdle for us.



Another worry and difficulty for me as a student is relationships. As

you know, building good relationships among people is not easy, especially for foreign students. In Japan, people respect older people, and so even in America, I am used to trying not to offend people, so I use more formal language. Sometimes being more formal makes it difficult for me to be comfortable talking and making new friends.

As I see it, people tend to gather in the same nationality groups, so it's not easy to

communicate with other people. In my case, I have tons of homework every day, so time to talk to people is limited. And what's more, I don't live in dormitory where it would be easy to talk to more people.

American students, of course, have a lot of worries about relationships. One American student whom I interviewed told me, "I have a friend who is taking the same four classes as me. She is always asking me personal questions such as my grade or meaningless questions. I know she wants to share all information, but I am sick of this." It's hard to maintain friendships when people want different things from each other.

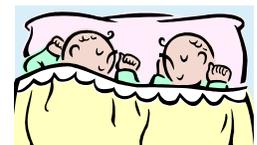
Lynn Kuan, who is from Taiwan and is a student at BHC, has a teenage son. She told me, "Students in my class are not only all American, but they are also all young. That's why it is difficult for me to communicate with most of my classmates." Being an older student can make it hard to develop friendships at school.



Anxiety for the future bothers all students at some time. Although I came to the U.S. to be a chiropractor, I am often worried whether I can keep up with hard classes and graduate school. I wonder if I will find a job in Japan after I graduate from chiropractic school. In addition, I would like to marry, but I wonder if I will find anyone. Can I support a family in the future?

Students who have worries or difficulties can go to the Advising Center at BHC. Coleman Harris, who is a counselor in the Advising Center said the most typical problem that students have is about their future. They come to see him to consult about what is a good career. He said, "For these students, I try to give some advice, and help them reduce their stress because they are serious about their future."

For American students, whether they will get a job or not seems to be the number one worry. Many students at BHC have children, but that's a rare case in Japan. These BHC students, always care about their children while they are attending school. That must be hard!



International and American students share some worries in common. Whether they are the same worries or not, the weight of the worries depends on the personal sensitivity and how people adjust. So, we can't measure exactly how much people worry. The key is to notice the anxiety first and to take a look at the worries; then students need to deal with them.



## 911 For Families

BY: LAMYA BENJELLOUN TOUIMI

Family should be seen as a happy concept, and a family's house should be a source of love, peace and harmony. Parents are the founder of the household paradise, and children are the fruit of love that joined those parents. Imagine everyone living a total happiness and satisfaction until the day comes when the child says, "Mom, if you don't give me what I want, I'm going to call 911!" Nobody can deny that people are different, and that personalities and ways of interacting vary from one person to another. Americans as well as Moroccans have their good qualities and their flaws, so it's unfair to gather every one in the same basket. However, some shocking events have made me think about what I have learned since I was a child, and what I have experienced in my new life in the USA. According to these experiences in Morocco and the U.S.A, I have come to the conclusion that there are several differences in the relationship between parents and children in these two countries, and the most obvious are interdependence, obedience and respect.



To start with, interdependence is the first noticeable difference. Interdependence ties the members of any Moroccan family. Parents are responsible for the children's needs and education. They have to assure enough money for their children's food, clothing and school tuition. The parents are the head of the house, which means whatever they decide is the right thing, and it has to be done immediately. Parents



assist children in their school work and follow them to the end of their student life. Not just that, parents also help their children find a decent job and don't feel released from parent duties until the grown children are married and grandchildren are on their way. Fouzia Belhafiane, a Moroccan student in the ESL program and mother of two children, agreed with the information cited above and added that the assistance of the parents doesn't end at that point, but it continues until the death of the parents since they keep giving advice to their grown children and helping them make the best decisions possible by employing the wisdom acquired during their life. Once the children grow up, and the parents become old and unable to take care of themselves, the children have a new role to show how grateful they are to their parents.

Children take care of their parents and help them with every single need. The child parent relationship is reciprocal.



In contrast, American families often seem tied by coincidence. In my interview with some American students, many of them said that their parents are a matter of chance. For this reason, children believe that they don't have to take care of their parents when they get older. In addition, they try very hard to leave the family house in order to get rid of their parents' observations and remarks. American students said that their parents bother them and interfere in their lives. Two of my coworkers proudly affirmed that they pay rent to their parents for living with them, so that they won't have to deal with their parents' comments of being responsible for them.



In addition to lack of interdependence in American families, the lack of obedience is a big issue. American society urges self expression, but I think it's gone too far. Children practice this right at school, in the street with their friends and also at home, which has the advantage of permitting them to build their own personality and to learn how to handle their problems. However, when it comes to refusing the advice and the instructions that their parents give them, the personal advantage becomes a social disadvantage.



According to my modest experience in two countries and with two families, I can easily point to several problems that American parents suffer from because of the lack of obedience from their children. Since I came to the USA a year ago, I have been living with my cousin who is married and her two daughters, seven and two. Her daughters have been raised in the United States, which means that they have the same values that Americans have despite the efforts that my cousin is making to change that. Her daughters are very cute and nice, but because of their lack of obedience, they are devils. They almost never listen to what their parents say because they believe that they have to do what they think and what they feel like. I have heard the older daughter say several times, "I don't have to do what you want me to do. I'm myself, and you are yourself, so I'm not supposed to do whatever you want," or "If you want something, do it yourself because you are annoying me." This comment would hurt any mother's feelings. In my experience, Moroccan children are not allowed to talk with their parents that way because they know that they will be punished, and they have been taught to be obedient to their parents and to any other member of the family who is older than them.



Finally, respect is the base of a compact family. Children respect their parents and look up to them. They believe that they are

the reason for their own existence, so they have to respect them. Back in Morocco, children kiss their parents' hands to show their respect and never look them right in their eye when talking. By doing so, children display their inferiority in comparison to the adults. Children also listen to their parents comments without interruption and give them their interest even if they know that their parents are wrong about an issue. After listening, they can argue with their parents but in a respectful way that won't make



them feel hurt. In contrast, American children don't respect their parents. My heart almost broke when I heard a little boy in a store telling his father that he was going to call the police if he didn't get the toy he wanted. In my opinion, he was



about to commit a crime against the person who raised him.

Since parents and family are the most valuable fortune that a person can have, let's work on the bond making it as strong and developed as possible. Let's think about the way we all treat our parents and try to make a sharp turn if we are headed the wrong way. Let's ask ourselves: Is this a respectful way to talk to a person who has done his or her best to raise and educate us? Is it right to hurt his or her feelings? The answer is in our hearts.

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## What You Don't Know About Colleges in Mexico, and Were Afraid to Ask!

BY: ALBERTO OLVERA

In 1998, I met Rebecca Dail, who came to my university (Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro) in Querétaro, Mexico to study for a semester in business administration. It was her first time in a foreign university. I asked her the reason that made her come to Mexico to a government university instead of going to another university in another country. "I chose this university in Mexico because my university (WIU) has an agreement with your university (UAQ) that I can take classes here with the same curricular value, and because it shows on my resume when I look for a job that I have experience abroad," she said. At that time, I didn't ask her the differences between an American and a Mexican university, but now that I have the opportunity to take classes in an American college, I can tell that there are differences between these two schools in the tuition, the facilities, and the academics.



To know their opinions about these differences, I interviewed people with experience in both places. In tuition, colleges in Mexico are different because most of the students don't have to ask for financial aid because the government pays for almost 90% of the education. Students have to pay approximately two hundred dollars for the semester in which they take five or six classes. On the other hand, financial aid is for those students



who want to take classes at a private college; they have to pay similar amount of money like U.S. students pay here in a college like Black Hawk.

I asked Carla Cobian, who is Mexican and studied in WIU for one semester, if the education in the U.S. is more expensive than in



Mexico. "The education in the United States is more expensive than in Mexico; that is why I had to ask for a scholarship of two thousand dollars to study at WIU for one semester," she said. For

Rebecca Dail, who is an American and took classes in Mexico, some colleges in Mexico are more expensive than in the U.S. One example is the Tecnológico de Monterrey which is more expensive than WIU; also, she paid her fees to WIU, but when she studied in Mexico; she couldn't continue do this without financial aid.

As the interviews kept going, the facilities came up. In Mexico, classrooms in college are completely different, and the first thing that came to my mind was the air conditioning that we don't have because we don't have similar temperatures. Also, in Mexico, we don't change classrooms to take the next class. We only have to leave our classroom to go to the computer lab.



Carla Cobian told me that for her changing classrooms was a good experience because liked have the break between classes and was able meet friends while she was walking from one building to another to take a different class. Additionally, she enjoyed the comfort and the modernity of the classrooms that are bigger and almost equal to a private club in Mexico. Rebecca Dail has the idea that taking classes in the same classroom is good if you have friends as classmates, but "switching classrooms gives students an opportunity to hear varying opinions on different issues," she said.



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"Facilities and the campus in Mexico are smaller, but as a whole were just as attractive as the WIU campus with lots of trees, flowers, etc."

The last part of the interview was centered on academics, which has been a big difference for me. I wasn't used to writing essays or reading a chapter for the

next day's class. In Mexican colleges, reading is important, but I didn't spend a couple hours or more reading a chapter for the next day of class. Here, my ESL classes are hard, first for reading in another language and second because I didn't have much technique to do it.

Furthermore, the syllabus was something new for me because in Mexico the teachers give you the program of the semester; details like homework, cell phones rules, and calling your teacher are verbalized but never printed in a syllabus. Rebecca Dail told me that in some classes she received a syllabus, but it wasn't always given.

Another difference that Rebecca Dail told me about the syllabus in the U.S. explains the class procedures and expectations of the teachers more clearly than in Mexico, and in Mexico the syllabus was more an outline of topics they were going to cover. Similarly, Carla Cobian received a syllabus in every class she took in the U.S. and just 60 percent of her teachers in Mexico gave her a syllabus.



The answer to my question: In which country do you have more homework? was different. Rebecca Dail said, "I think I had more homework in Mexico, even though I took fewer classes." In contrast, Carla Cobian said, "In the U.S." I agree with Carla. While Rebecca Dail thought there was more homework in Mexico, she also



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thought it was more difficult in Mexico, mainly because "of the language barrier or the classes I was taking. For example, in one class for my final project, I had to interview the head of HR at an international company and then write a 60-page paper about his answers and my observations and research. Such lengthy projects in the U.S. are rare." For me this example represents the Mexican system very well. I didn't have to read too much or write essays during the week, but at the end of the semester in most of my classes I had a project to turn in. Apparently, we don't have a lot of homework, but we have to work on our project during the semester, and sometimes we start



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to do it in the last month. For Carla Cobian, homework in the U.S was to read and prepare essays, and be ready for class. "For my classes in Mexico, it doesn't

matter if you didn't read. You know that the professor will explain the entire lesson; it is not that demanding as in the U.S."

My last question was focused on the time that they liked to take classes better: in the morning, evenings or both because in the U.S. you can take classes in this way, but in Mexican colleges you have to take classes in



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the morning or in the evenings. To illustrate, when I went to the university, I took all my classes in the evening. My first class was from four to five and my

last class was nine to ten Monday to Friday. Carla Cobian

told me that she prefers class in the morning while Rebecca Dail said, "I liked my morning and afternoon classes; I did not like taking evening classes. They seemed too long."

About punctuality Rebecca Dail made a last comment. She said, "Teachers in Mexico were stricter about punctuality and attendance, but some didn't have the same standards for themselves."



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In summary, Mexican and American colleges have their differences. For me that is the best part of taking classes in both places. I can learn from both countries and take the good from of each one and share experiences with classmates and teachers and with my family and friends. But, you decide where you would like to take classes better. You can learn a lot in both countries as Rebecca Dail, Carla Cobian, and I did.



## Yes, I Do

BY: AKOU AMOUZOUVI

Imagine your best friend got engaged, and you were on your way to an engagement party. Often times, the party is not fancy; it's just a party for friends to tell them of your engagement. Mary Beth Kwasek, an Associate

Professor of English at Black Hawk College said, "I had an engagement party, but it was not formal." Then she added, "It was just a party for my friends to announce my engagement, and for those whom I knew could not make it to the wedding. My mother came, but my father didn't make it."



Now imagine that you are in my home country, Togo, West Africa, and you are invited to an engagement ceremony. You would probably wake up early in the morning to get yourself ready because the engagement ceremony starts at five o'clock in the morning, and you would dress up traditionally, which consists of a dress or a top and skirt for women and a shirt and pants for men. The fabric for the women is brightly colored, usually with abstract prints. Women also often wear a head scarf.

Usually, the engagement ceremony happens in the parent's house of the girl to be married because no matter her age, she will be living with her parents until she marries. When you arrive, you would see the entire girl's family and some friends. They would be sitting down and be waiting patiently for the boy's family's arrival.

When the boy's family arrives, they will bring two, four, or six expensive liquors for the girl's family. The number of the liquors the boy's family brings is optional, but it starts at two. A Togolese engagement ceremony is very formal and contains many rituals. One ritual is that the boy never comes to his engagement party; another is the liquors, and the last is the greeting. After the two families greet, the boy's family would give the liquor to the girl's family, and one of the girl's family would ask the traditional question, "Why have you come." The boy's family answers that they have come to be engaged to the girl. That is a huge difference between Togo and the United States. In Togo, people are engaged to a family, not just a couple is engaged. The girl's parents obviously know that their daughter wants to be engaged to the boy, but her parents will ask her in front of the boy's family if she wants to accept the proposal, so everyone can be aware of the engagement. If she says yes, then her family accepts the liquors. After that the girl's family will tell the boy's family what they want from them, a sort of "bride price," before the marriage can occur. To marry in Togo, the bride price includes liquors, fabrics, scarves, necklaces, earrings, ring, and money.



In Togo, guests are not allowed to leave on an empty stomach, so after the engagement ceremony, the girl's family would cook, and the two families would eat together

# ESL

## English as a Second Language Program

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The ESL program is an academic program designed for non-native speakers and international students who need English skills to participate in American society, to enroll in vocational or academic programs at the college level, or to enter or advance in the workplace. Students will attain and refine language and study skills as well as deepen their knowledge of U. S. culture through a series of specially designed courses in sentence structure, reading, writing, speaking, listening, pronunciation, and conversation. Students have access to computer, video, and lab equipment through the Independent Learning Center. Individual and group tutoring can be arranged free of charge for any student needing help. Students may also participate in college clubs and attend all extra-curricular activities.

### TESTING:

Students do not need to present a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) score to enter Black Hawk College's ESL program, but students should have a beginning knowledge of English equivalent to 430 or 117 on the TOEFL to move through the program efficiently. If the student has taken the TOEFL, he/she should report the score to the ESL Coordinator, for this and other test scores will help place the student accurately in the program. Before class registration, all first-semester students will be given the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency. The test is composed of three segments:

1. Michigan Test of Aural Comprehension (listening)
2. Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (grammar, vocabulary, reading)
3. Writing Sample (composition)

#### Placement on the test is as follows:

60 or below	beginning level
60 to 69	intermediate level
70 to 80	advanced
80 or above	academic program

### PROGRAM PROFILE:

Students attend classes 5 days per week. The average class size is small and the average course load is three hours each day. Students are given daily assignments as well as special projects that are completed outside of class. Students take the equivalent of 12 credit hours for a full class load. Upon finishing the program, students receive a certificate of completion at the spring graduation ceremony.

### INTERMEDIATE ESL:

Students who enter this level have decided to begin academic or vocational programs. All reading, writing, speaking, listening, and sentence structure activities are taught in the context of a variety of academic disciplines. Students study the simple sentence from a linguistic perspective, write paragraphs using all rhetorical modes, write college essays, give 5 to 10 minute oral presentations, use the computerized library resources, listen to academic lectures and take notes.

Courses of this level: ESL 061 Simple Sentence Structure  
ESL 063 Reading I  
ESL 065 Writing I  
ESL 067 Listening/Speaking I  
ESL 069 Pronunciation and Conversation

### ADVANCED ESL:

Students in this level advance their language skills and knowledge of the academic culture so that they can enter academic classes or vocational programs. They study complex sentence structure, write documented academic essays and research papers, read a variety of texts from many disciplines, read a novel, listen to lectures and take notes, and give 10—15 minute speeches. Students at this level participate in a number of special projects. They create an ESL newsletter that is distributed campus-wide; listen to lectures given by Black Hawk College professors, and interview professionals in their chosen fields. Students take field trips related to class readings.

Courses of this level: ESL 073 Reading II  
ESL 075 Writing II  
▲ COMM 105/ESL 072  
Essentials of English/Grammar II  
▲ COMM 100/ESL 078  
Communication Skills/  
Listening/Speaking II

\* All of these courses are offered at Black Hawk College.  
▲ Students receive 3 transferable credits for each of these courses.

#### For more information contact:

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