

THE CELAC STUDENT VOICE

Why Don't EFL Students Learn the Language Accurately?

by Willan Jandir Armas Suqui

EFL is an abbreviation for English as a Foreign Language; it is used to talk about students whose first language is not English and who study the language in their own countries, whereas ESL stands for English as a Second Language. It refers to students whose first language is not English but study the language in a country where English is the official language.

I have been doing research among some of my classmates from different countries, asking them if they have had the same problems studying the English language in a non-English-speaking country. Not surprisingly, all of them have struggled with similar disadvantages when learning English because the acquisition of knowledge is limited when the language is not part of a speakers' daily life. Students do not find the need or encouragement to study due to the fact that it is used neither in their internal environment nor in a professional aspect.

Factors of the failure in learning a second language are various. First, the motivation to study a second language is insignificant in a country where English does not play an important role in people's lives. According to Seyyed Mohammad Reza Amirian (2018), "EFL learners have few opportunities to talk with native speakers of English in society"

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EFL students do not see the point in learning a language that is useless in their lives, unlike ESL students who are part of an environment in which English is wherever they go, and whatever they do. The importance of the language makes its acquisition vital in order to survive in an English-speaking country.

Despite this lack of motivation, EFL students must learn a foreign language in a setting in which teachers do not encourage students to learn. This happens when teachers are not competent to teach the language. Win Listyaningrum Arifin (2017) has noted, "When teachers are not able enough to control the classroom, it might be influenced by their mental and psychology. Lack of confidence, less of esteem, are the common psychological problem of teacher." In addition, teachers do not differentiate students' qualities to learn. Those are factors that make the acquisition of the language more complex.

EFL students take the English language for granted due to the fact that they are aware once they leave the classroom, the acquisition of the language is useless in their social environment. Students do not need the language to survive, then there is not a stimulus to acquire it. Amirian (2018) reports, "The learners in English as foreign language (EFL) context learn the language in a formal classroom setting without opportunities to use the language outside the classroom." Students do not have the motivation to get the awareness because they will not put it into practice in real situations. This is by far the biggest obstacle EFL students must overcome to learn the English language meaningfully, their being surrounded by the native language makes the learning process more difficult. To get fluent in any language, it is vital to practice and to be immersed in its' culture.

Regarding English teachers performance inside the classroom, most of them are not able to help, or correct students problems about the language on account of teachers acquire the English language just as their students do, in a non-English-speaking country.

This lack of preparation to teach the language makes them incompetent to teach it because they might have the same doubts or mistakes as their students'. Annjeanette Martin states, "EFL teachers, 80% of whom, by some estimates, are non-native speakers who prepare to become English teachers far from English-speaking centers." Teachers turn a deaf ear and move on to the next topic without clarifying students' problems because teachers have not had the adequate training to do it.

Strategies carried out in the classroom lack in creativity and mostly an accurate methodology to teach the English language. The teaching process is more focused on the word, grammar aspects rather than speaking, which is why when it comes to communicating students fail because there is a huge gap between writing and speaking skills. Therefore, most of EFL students have difficulty understanding native speakers owing to the English that is taught in a classroom is nothing compared to the real English spoken in any English-speaking country. On top of that, professors do not have a meaningful influence in students' learning because they stop talking in English right after finishing classes. I had the unfortunate experience of having a teacher who could not even speak accurately the English language. It is ironic to ask a student to learn a second language even when the so-called teacher cannot master it.

To learn a new language it requires time, eagerness to at least acquire the basic awareness; notwithstanding, most students have difficulty trying to get motivation to learn because English does not play a significant role in their daily interaction. To study a second language means to invest time and to have the will power to acquire it; those factors are vital to learn the language meaningfully in order to succeed. Yet, EFL students take the English language for granted because it is barely used in their environment.

Student Survey: What do you think about the TOEFL Waiver?

Compiled by Maria Catalina Cardenas

In Spring 2019, CELAC students will no longer be required to take the TOEFL test in order to take classes at UNM. Instead, students will need to pass all levels of CELAC courses. We asked students what they thought of this new development and here is what they had to say.

"In my opinion, the TOEFL test is good and it is not good. It is good because the international students can practice while they are studying English in the United States, and they can evaluate the grade they need to improve. It is not good because some people are not good test takers. So, it takes like [forever] to take [and] to pass that test. Like for example, I hear some people in CELAC a long time ago...[took] two or three years to go to the university, so it can really take a long time for them to achieve. I am not a good test taker. I can speak pretty well but I can't pass the TOEFL test because the grammar structure, you never use [it] in your conversation, every day, but you need to [have it to] take that test, and sometimes it makes you confused because native speakers don't even know about this structure."

--Y (Tiffany) Doan
Advanced

"I think it is a good way for students, but my TOEFL score was not good. The TOEFL score is a good way [to check] for our English level. If I want to go to the university, but I don't have a good TOEFL score, I think I will not be able to understand in class. So the TOEFL score is a must."

--Yuta Kimura
High Intermediate

"It is a very good thing!"

--Mingxin (Kiko) Lyu
Low Intermediate

"It is a great idea. I am happy with the new waiver!"

--Perla Maldonado Cortez
Intermediate

"I am happy with the proposal. I am happy with the step that they have taken to remove the TOEFL test for students who complete the academic bridge program because the program itself [prepares] the students very well for the university...it is formidable and touches on the experiences that the students need that will help them to do well in both the graduate program and under graduate program."

--Celestine Ojike
Academic Bridge

"I think the TOEFL is a difficult test and most of the test is evaluating your ability to understand the test, but not English. I think this is the major problem for the TOEFL test because I understand a lot of English; I believe that my level of English is better, but I didn't pass the TOEFL test. I think [the waiver] will be good for different careers--for example in Statistics--it could not be a problem if the student does not have the TOEFL test."

--Carlos Inga Torres
High Intermediate

Featured Essay: How to Fail a Test

by Xinyu Zhang

Intermediate Writing

This is a funny essay to teach you that how to fail a test.

First, you should not pay attention to your study. When you are in class, you can make fun of it to your heart's content. If the teacher was supposed to say something, you should speak and laugh loudly. Don't listen to the teacher and soon you will be thrown out from the classroom.

Second, make some mess. Suppose you are not in the classroom at this time. What are you still waiting for? Do not hesitate anymore. Just stand in the hallway. And what will you do next? Please sing a song and try to attract attention from others. In this case, other students will come out to you and play with you. And so that not only you but also your classmates will fail the test.

Next, remember to tear up all of your textbooks and just play. Books are like a pile of waste paper for you. You do not need them and all you need to do is playing. Go to the Internet bar and play a computer game with confidence. Do not go back home until 12 o'clock, and after you go home, please go to bed immediately.

After that, about the homework. You can put your homework into the dustbin; this is the best use of homework.

Finally, you will have a test. Do not have any plans for review, even if you never learn. And in this way, I promise you will fail a test.

Fall Preview: Video Games to Debut in November

by Abdul Bahri

Most of the video gamers have been waiting for November eagerly. November is also a competitive month for the developers of the games. The game developers must provide some good aspects, such as perfect graphics in order to get as many players as possible. I am going to introduce two of the hot games that will warm the players in November and these games are Battlefield V and Hitman 2.

Battlefield V, also known as Battlefield 5, is a shooter video game, developed by EA DICE, Electronic Arts. Battlefield V is a special game because the game is about the events that happened in WWII, which means that you play with some characters in the game in order to help the country of that character. In addition to story mode, there is also another mode called online mode. In this mode the players play in two teams and the team with most of the points wins the game. Also, in this game, players play with early 20th century weapons and this feature may help the company to get so many players buying it. The game is scheduled to be released on 20th of November.

Moreover, Hitman 2 is an amazing game that is coming in November. Hitman 2 is a stealth game developed by IO Interactive. It continues its story from the previous versions. One positive aspect about this game is the series of the events in this game. The game is about an agent called Agent 47 who tracks the mysterious Shadow Client and to disassemble his militia also to learn about his past. Hitman 2 offers the players the freedom to plan the assassination and use a diversity of tools and weapons. The game is scheduled to be released on 13th of November.

All in all, Hitman 2 and Battlefield V are the anticipating games for lots of players, including me. It is hard to miss playing these games. After reading this article, and if you are a gamer, which game will you buy?



Salsas for the Heart to Dance

By Liliana Alva

How many kinds of flavors has the life? What does the life taste like? In Mexico, we have an idea that there are many flavors, and the taste is important for to be happy; maybe (only maybe) for that reason, we have many kinds of salsas, each having differences and similarities. Yes, I know, it's confusing, but I will explain it to you.

Before anything else it is important to tell you there are many kinds of salsas (or sauces); even each house in Mexico has different recipes for the same sauce. Mexico has 32 states, and in each estate there are different kinds of chiles. For example, in Quintana Roo (the state of the famous Cancun beach) the habanero chile is very common; it is delicious if only chopped with onion, salt and lemon juice. It's fresh, small, flavor is deep and perdurable; as you eat it is more and more spicy.

And this is the secret of the Mexican sauces: they don't need to be spicy in the first bite! The spicy flavor comes slowly.

Another central thing we need know is the kinds of chiles. We can say there are two big classifications of chiles: dried and fresh. The dried chiles are used for salsas, and all of them can be combined with each other. The kind of salsa from red dried chile that is the most famous is "mole" or "adovada." They can both be spicy or not; the decision is of the chef.

Otherwise with the fresh chiles you can make salsas easier, in my opinion. The chile serrano (similar to Albuquerque's green chile but smaller) is the most popular in Mexico (recently it's being planted in China), so if you travel to Mexico, probably you will eat a Serrano chile.



If you want cook a basic Mexican salsa, here is one basic Mexican salsa you can make: put in a pan 2 tomatoes, 4 serrano chiles, a quart of onion and a small garlic clove. Move the ingredients from time to time, and wait until everything is toasted. Then, put everything in a blender but do not make it like a smoothie; crush the ingredients. Put salt to your taste.

Another easier salsa (my favorite) is a green salsa with avocado. In a blender, put 4 spoonfuls of water, a quart of onion, an avocado, 4 serrano chiles (more or less depending on spiciness; remember, it is your decision), 4 green tomatillos, a big portion of cilantro and liquate. Put salt and pepper. If is necessary, add the juice of half a lemon for a little acid.

Mexico is popular for the spicy food, but the truth is many times the spicy flavor comes from the salsas, so if you travel to Mexico, be careful with how many salsas you put in your food, and ask about the dimensions of the spicy flavor. Each salsa is delicious, only you need time to taste and make the combinations of whatever you want. Over time, you will find your own recipe for a good salsa.





Featured Essay: Silent Language in Nigeria and in the US

By Celestine Ojike
Academic Bridge

By way of definition, nonverbal communication between people is communication through sending and receiving wordless cues. It includes the use of visual cues such as body language (kinesics), distance (proxemics) and physical environments/appearance, of voice (paralanguage) and of touch (haptics). "Communication is only 7 percent verbal and 93 percent non-verbal. The non-verbal component was made up of body language (55 percent) and tone of voice (38 percent)". This rule came from Mehrabian, an American professor who combined the statistical results of two studies to show that 93 percent of a message was transmitted by the speakers' tone of voice and facial expressions. Only 7 percent of the person's attitude was conveyed by words. Apparently, we express our emotions and attitudes more nonverbally than verbally. Although nonverbal communication is a universal phenomenon, meanings of nonverbal cues are not, in fact, universal. They vary tremendously across cultures and are often ambiguous. Because of this fact, the similarities and differences between nonverbal communication in Nigeria and in the US in terms of facial expressiveness, gestures and body positioning, eye contact, conversation distance, and haptics speak volumes.

To set the ball rolling, winking as one of the facial expressions has varied meanings like thanks or appreciation, friendliness or niceness, sexual attraction, eye problem, habit, ulterior motive and insecurity in Nigeria and in the US. So, facial expressions carry meaning that is determined by situations and relationships. For example, in Nigeria, winking between adults of an opposite sex is a gesture that is often considered a romantic or sexual invitation. Also, Nigerians wink at their children if they want them to leave the room at the presence of a guest or a stranger. Smile is also interpreted differently in Nigeria and in the US. For instance, in Nigerian and in American culture smile is typically an expression of pleasure. Yet it also has other functions. A woman's smile at a police officer does not carry the same meaning as the smile she gives to a young child. A smile may show affection, convey politeness, or disguise true feelings. For example, many people in Nigeria consider smiling at strangers in public to be unusual, rude and even suspicious behavior. Yet many Americans smile freely at strangers in public places. "Americans smile at strangers. I don't know what to think of that." This is the way a Russian Engineer interpreted the well-intentioned smile of some Americans to strangers.

Secondly, there are noticeable similarities and differences in gestures and body positioning in Nigeria and in the US. Gestures are specific body movements that carry meaning. Hand motions alone can convey many meanings: 'Come here,' 'Go away,' 'It's okay,' and 'That's expensive!' are just a few examples. The gestures for these phrases often differ across cultures. For example, beckoning people to come with the palm up is common in the United States. In Nigeria, the acceptable way to call someone is compressing and releasing the right four fingers continuously in the direction of the beckoned, with the palm down not up.

In the case of eye contact or gaze, it plays an important role in nonverbal communication, and such things as looking, staring and blinking are important nonverbal behaviors. When people encounter other people or things that they like, the rate of blinking increases and pupils dilate. Looking at another person can indicate a range of emotions including hostility, interest, and attraction. In the US and in Nigeria, people generally utilize eye gaze to determine if someone is being honest. Normal, steady eye contact is often taken as a sign that a person is telling the truth and is trustworthy.

"Silence" cont.

Shifty eyes and an inability to maintain eye contact; on the other hand, is frequently seen as an indicator that someone is lying or being deceptive. "He didn't look at me once. I know he's guilty. Never trust a person who doesn't look you in the eye." This quote was the reaction of an American police officer to a crime suspect. It is good to note also that in Nigeria kids who maintain steady gaze at the seniors are seen to be rude.

Unconsciously, we all keep a comfortable distance around us when we interact with other people. This distance has had several names over the years, including 'personal space,' 'interpersonal distance,' 'comfort zone,' and 'body bubble.' This space between us and another person forms invisible walls that define how comfortable we feel at various distances from other people. The amount of space changes depending on the nature of the relationship. For example, we are usually more comfortable standing closer to family members than to strangers. Personality also determines the size of the area with which we are comfortable when talking to people. Introverts often prefer to interact with others at a greater distance than do extroverts. For the Americans, the usual distance in social conversation ranges from about an arm's length to four feet. Less space in the American culture may be associated with either greater intimacy or aggressive behavior. It is not uncommon to hear, 'Excuse me,' for the slightest accidental touching of another person in the US. This reveals how uncomfortable Americans are if people get too close to them. Thus, a person whose 'space' has been intruded upon by another may feel threatened and react defensively. Also, in Nigeria close physical contact is acceptable and even desirable for family and close relations and friends, and the keep of a good distance to strangers and possible aggressors.

Looking at haptics, we see nonverbal communication through touch. Touch can be used to communicate affection, familiarity, sympathy, and other emotions. In America as well as in Nigeria, using a firm handshake is considered appropriate to greet a stranger or another business professional. Touching children on the head is fine in the US and in Nigeria. It is worthy of note that in both countries, sex differences also play a role in how people utilize touch to communicate meaning. Women tend to use touch to convey care, concern, and nurturance. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to use touch to assert power or control over others.

To wrap it up, for nonverbal communication across Nigeria and the US there are similarities and differences which we have seen under these headings: facial expressions, gestures and body positioning, eye contact, conversation distance, and haptics.

Featured Essay: How to be a Good Reader

by Noe Alfaro Casas
Low Intermediate

Sometimes the students ask themselves, how can I be a good and active reader? From my experience, I am going to give you some steps that can help you to improve your skills of reading. The process to be a good and active reader has these steps that you can follow easily. First of all, look at the title and ask yourself this question: what do I know about the topic? If you don't know the meaning of any words, write definitions about them. Some articles or texts contain pictures or captions that can help you to understand the text. After that, read the introduction. At this point, the writer will show you the purpose and introduce you to the subject. In my opinion, this part is the most important because you need to find the main idea and purpose in each paragraph. It is important to connect ideas in the paragraphs; one tool is identifying the connectors and prepositions the writer uses. In the last step, write any questions if you have them about the text. It is important to make charts or mind maps to help you understand your ideas visually. Another way is to make short summaries in the text in one or two sentences. In conclusion, following these steps can help you to improve your skill of comprehension and I promise you can get good results and become a good reader.



Featured Essay: Fight for Your Right to Study

by Yamily Villalba
High Intermediate

Why are we missing information about the universities? In Paraguay, some high schools don't prepare you for a higher education because they assume that students will not attend college. However, students that want to study don't have enough information about the career or the requirements. Therefore, advice and leadership from community leaders, counselors and teacher will be a giant help for students.

There are several benefits of the promotion of Universities. First of all, if teachers let students know about the benefits, students will be able to have the idea of what they want to be in the future. Therefore, in Paraguay, we will have more students that want to attend a university. Through the information learned, students will be able to set goals.

Some people may object that students are not interested in attending a university, because most students want to finish high school and start to look for a job immediately. However, this idea includes all students, but there are some that want a higher education. To begin, teacher can provide a test where students can discuss about the future career paths and the requirements that are needed for them. The teachers can send those students that want education to talk with a counselor.

Many people will see this as a waste of government money. They may say "why hire counselors for just a few students when money is needed in other parts of the country". However, this investment will have a high return. As these students get higher education, Paraguay will benefit from the new doctors, engineers and other new professionals.

People may agree with the idea of a counselor, but they will say that students don't the skills required for universities. Most students don't have the experience where they learn job skills. Nonetheless, Paraguay does have internships where students can learn skills related to the career that they want to study. This will help students in their decision of their goals in life. In conclusion, Paraguay will greatly benefit from these students that want to expand their knowledge and become professionals. We must call on teachers to begin the discussion of career path, have the government invest in hiring counselors and encourage community leaders to expand internship programs. Together with these steps, we will have a better Paraguay.

Korean Thanksgiving

by Seungyeon Kang-Nava

Home-made pumpkin pie, marshmallows, sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, and cranberry sauce with all the scrumptious dishes. Yes, I'm talking about Thanksgiving. Just thinking about all the foods I'll relish on this Thanksgiving makes me drool. At the same time, I cannot but lament on how fast time flies; I still remember what I did on the last day of 2017 – binge watching and binge eating "for the last time" before I start fresh. Besides, I haven't completed even one of my 2018's resolutions yet, but Thanksgiving is right at the corner. How grateful I am!

Speaking of which, this coming holiday reminds me of Korean Thanksgiving, aka Chuseok. Chuseok is one of the biggest holidays in Korea celebrated on August 15 on the lunar calendar, which means its date changes year by year within a range between about 10-20 days. Traditionally, relatives gather together at the house of the eldest member of the clan and perform ancestral duties, giving thanks to them for the harvest.

"Korean Thanksgiving" cont.

Recently, however, this custom has gone through a ginormous transformation – many Koreans prefer traveling or having a quality time with friends and family members to “wasting” their precious time on the road to meet with their distant relatives.

Nonetheless, there’s one thing Koreans will never compromise when it comes to Chuseok, and that is special food prepared for and eaten during Chuseok such as songpyeon (rice cake filled with sweet stuffing), galbi and bulgogi (marinated meat dishes), japchae (glass noodles seasoned with meat and vegetables), and a variety of jeon (fried pan cakes). This is a little tangent, but Koreans love food; they love to talk about food, think about food – believe it or not, the most important and serious topic at the lunch table is what to eat for dinner – and, of course, eat food. No wonder most Koreans stuff themselves with a ton of dishes throughout the holiday and end up with a food baby and a food coma.



In addition to Chuseok dishes, the full moon is another symbol of Chuseok. Many Koreans make a wish to the full moon on Chuseok night and Korean parents tell their children the Moon Rabbit story, a folktale that was told from generation to generation. A long time ago, there lived Rabbit, Fox, and Monkey in a village. One day, the Emperor of the Heavens ordered them to offer him food to test their faith. Fox and Monkey were rich enough to bring him food, but Rabbit was too poor to offer something, so he jumped into a fire to offer himself up. The Emperor of the Heavens was deeply touched by his piety and sacrifice and appointed Rabbit as the guardian of the moon. This folktale is deeply ingrained in the Korean culture, and most Koreans can “see” the Moon Rabbit standing underneath a cinnamon tree pounding rice with pestle and mortar to make rice cake (possibly, songpyeon) every Chuseok night.

As a young girl, I used to sing Half Moon, a famous Korean children’s song, with my sisters and my mom looking at the Chuseok full moon.

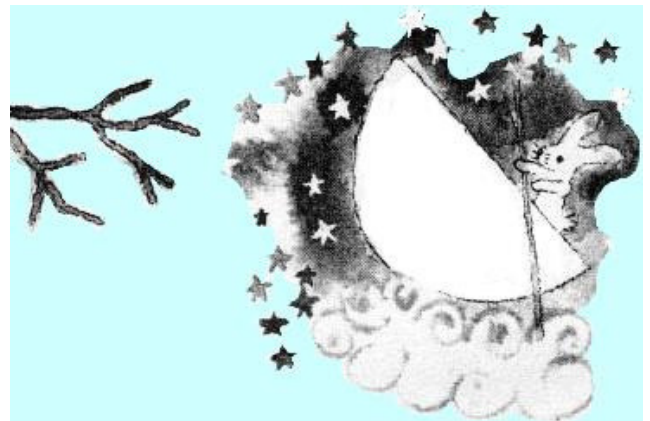
Even up until now, I love the sentiment this song evokes in my mind: something mystic, sad, but beautiful:

On the milky way far dark blue sky in a little white canoe,

A tree, known as cassia tree and a lone bunny beneath

*No sail is raised and no barge pole is used
Yet it glides onward effortlessly, to the land of the west.*

Here is link to a YouTube video to watch at your leisure.



Pumpkin Carving on Halloween



Meet the Staff of the CELAC Student Voice

Liliana Alva Regalado



I'm from Morelia, Michoacán, México. My interest are dogs, movies, cooking and traveling. I was a journalist and teacher in Mexico, and now I'm a lobo.

Willan Jandir Armas Suqui



Willan Armas is an Ecuadorian student who is passionate about writing. His field of study is Languages. He speaks Spanish, English and French. Willan Armas lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Maria Catalina Cardenas



My name is Maria Catalina Cardenas Garcia. I am from Colombia. I was born in Bogota. I studied Finance and Business Administration at the Sergio Arboleda University. I am so happy living in Albuquerque and enjoying this new experience in my life. I prefer outdoors activities, so that I like hiking and playing volleyball.

Abdul Bahri



I am Abdulrhman Bahri. I am from Saudi Arabia. I am a video gamer. I also like soccer. Thank you and have a nice week!

Seungyeon Kang Nava



I'm from South Korea, and I enjoy playing the piano in my free time. Also, I love to help learn Korean and talk to people. So, don't be shy to say hi if you see me around the campus!