Uran Ganbold immigrated to the United States 10 years ago. She earned a degree in finance in her home country of Mongolia, but she knew she needed to improve her English skills in order to find success in the workforce. That led her to Triton College, where she enrolled in the Adult Education Department’s English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

Uran was the student speaker at Triton’s National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week kickoff event. She shared her story with hundreds of other students who attended the event. “Each level (of ESL classes) you finish, you learn more, you communicate better, so people understand you better and it makes you happier and very satisfied,” Ganbold said during her remarks.

Uran was awarded the Triton College Board of Trustees Scholarship and is using it to take accounting classes here at Triton. She is also enrolled in the CareeReady Program, which was developed by Triton College’s Adult Education Department.

The program, which launched in 2018, helps degree adult education students improve job prospects by allowing them to pursue industry-recognized certifications in their respective fields. Uran is working toward an accounting certificate. CareeReady also offers business writing and computer courses to help students develop employability skills, and offers support to aid them in their job search.

In celebrating National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week (Sept. 22-28), Triton joined other schools and organizations to heighten public awareness of the vital role that adult education and family literacy plays in our nation’s well-being. Triton’s Adult Education Department offers ESL, High School Equivalency, citizenship and college transition courses to students at no or minimal cost. For more information on Triton College’s Adult Education programs, call (708) 456-0300, Ext. 3259 or 3513, or visit the Adult Education Department located in the A Building, Room A-205.
Soraya Salmasi, ESL Instructor

The year was 1980, one year after the Iranian Revolution, and news agencies from all over the globe had descended on Tehran, looking to hire locals who spoke English. **Soraya Salmasi**, a recent graduate from Tehran University with a B.A. in English Literature, fit the bill. She was hired by a Japanese News Agency, where she worked for the next thirteen years. Soraya quickly realized that her formal education in the English language was no match for the fast pace of the news room, and so she worked as hard to improve her English as she did to accomplish the daily tasks of her job.

In 1993, Soraya immigrated to the United States, settling in Skokie, IL. A new mother living in a new country, she was bored, lonely, depressed—and she knew that she needed to find something to put her mind to. After some research, she learned about opportunities to teach English to immigrants, and this became her career goal. She applied and was admitted to Northeastern University, where she would pursue an M.A. in Applied Linguistics with an emphasis in TESOL. Like the news room, the graduate classroom challenged Soraya’s English. “I was the only non-native speaker in all of my courses, and I’d spend hours and hours studying, reading, and writing, so much time that I often doubted my decision to go back to school,” says Soraya. Yet, she persevered, receiving her M.A. degree in 2000.

Soraya has been teaching ESL at Triton for almost twenty years, and as masterful as her English now is, she has never stopped learning. “I still discover new English words all the time, and I love using them to make my speech and writing richer.” Indeed, Soraya’s journey demonstrates that learning a new language is an obstacle-ridden, risk-taking, life-long endeavor. Soraya uses her experiences as a non-native English speaker to advantage in her teaching. “I know exactly what my students are going through, and I tell them all the time that if I can do it, you can do it too.”

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**ESL LEVEL 3 STUDENTS CELEBRATE HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH**


These were among the foods present last month in Mr. Ali’s ESL Level 3 class. According to Mr. Ali, the previous few lessons had emphasized culture and community, and Hispanic Heritage month presented the perfect opportunity to have students share about their cultures while at the same time improving their public speaking skills, collaboration skills, and writing skills. Students brought food and created presentation boards about their home countries, among them: Venezuela, Columbia, Mexico, Honduras, Ecuador, Ukraine, and Poland. Presentation boards covered the gamut, from cultural traditions to famous landmarks to celebrities and sports stars. Students listened to their classmates present about their countries and tell stories from their past lives as they nibbled on home-made dishes from around the world. According to Mr. Ali, “class projects like this solidify life-long connections between the students.”

If anything, the night demonstrated that for many immigrants, English, while it feels at times like a mere object of study, is a deep means of connection—to people, to community, to a new place and a new life.
A group of level 4 ESL students interviewed five people across the college campus – a dean, a director, a custodian, a student and a teacher – asking them the same five questions (only three questions and answers are transcribed here due to space limitations). The purpose was to see whether our most prominent differences – job title, gender, nationality, age – define our answers, or whether these features are only skin deep and the deeper we look, the shorter the distances between us become. Special thanks to students Nadiia, Iuliia, Rohan, Helem, Svitlana, Yamileth, Iryna, Pablo, and Teo for conducting the interviews or being interviewed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pablo</th>
<th>Aracely</th>
<th>Martina</th>
<th>Mitchell</th>
<th>Jacqueline</th>
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<td><strong>1. If you could have a superpower, what would it be?</strong></td>
<td>When someone has a problem, I would love to be able to snap my fingers and help them change their focus, see the problem from a different perspective. Because even if you are mad, and you are angry, everything gets better if you change your point of view.</td>
<td>I think my superpower would be flying so I can feel free and see people from above.</td>
<td>I’d love to have the power of healing. To be able to touch someone and instantly heal whatever is hurting - their body or their soul. And I hope this power would work on me, too!</td>
<td>Because I live in Chicago in a really busy neighborhood where parking is very difficult …..I wish that my superpower was that I could just – with my mind – move parked cars so that I could fit between them.</td>
<td>I’d like to be able to read people’s minds.</td>
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<td><strong>2. If you could change only one thing about the world, what would it be?</strong></td>
<td>Selfishness. People don’t think about other people. I wish I could change that.</td>
<td>Sickness.</td>
<td>Sickness and disease. I’d allow maybe a bit of runny noses and sneezes just so we are reminded how great it is to be healthy but nothing more than that. I’d love to live in a world where everyone – especially children – is healthy and thriving.</td>
<td>All people, regardless of their gender, class status or where they were born would have the opportunity to go to school, learn how to read and write and think, and have access to information.</td>
<td>I would love to get rid of hate. Why do we have to hate? There has to be something less extreme than hate. We can dislike things about people and ways that people do things.</td>
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<td><strong>3. If you could meet yourself 20 years ago, what would you say?</strong></td>
<td>I’ll tell myself, “Life can be hard but there is always a solution. Always. Find it.”</td>
<td>I would say, “I am proud of you!” I really am, I am proud of what I have done and I am happy.</td>
<td>I’d shake her and look her in the eye and say, “Stop worrying about the little things! Stop wasting your time with people who don’t deserve it. Quit the drama and look up! Time is precious, spend it doing things that make you happy, and with people that make you laugh. Ultimately, nothing else matters.” And I’ll tell myself to study Spanish.</td>
<td>I wish I could have told myself, “You might not be naturally gifted at math but you are naturally gifted at other things: you are a very social kid who gets along with people well and those skills are as important, or maybe even more important, than understanding math.”</td>
<td>“Don’t stop studying! Stick with it now, when you’re young!” I can go back to school now, my kids are grown up and I have the time, but I would have loved to have done it when I was younger.</td>
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Why I Changed My Name

By Rohan Kousa, ESL Level 4 Student

I have three sisters. I love them all but my youngest sister had the biggest impact on my life, she was always by my side in times of sadness and in times of joy. She was honest, loyal, helpful and sincere, and she had the best heart in the world. She loved helping people who were oppressed, she was there for anyone who was weak and needed her. Everyone loved her. She had a goal in her life: to complete her studies. After she finished high school, she enrolled in a private University where she graduated in Desert Land Engineering. She started working and got married. Unfortunately, five months after her wedding, the doctors discovered cancer in her right breast. Hearing about that was the hardest moment of my life - I was here, far away from her, I couldn’t do anything for her, I only prayed. I also shaved all my hair. I will never forget how when she saw me like that on Skype, she laughed and said, "You are crazy! Why did you do this?". I answered, "To remind you that despite the distances between us, my heart is with you". She fought her illness for two years but it was stronger than her. On Wednesday, the 10th of February 2016, my mom called me and said, "Rohan died". At this moment I felt how my heart and my senses stopped. Indescribable feeling.

My name was Lubna Kousa. When I got my American citizenship, I took the opportunity and changed my name. Now we can keep my sister’s name alive in our family and nobody will forget her. Rohan, no one can take your place in my heart.

Modern Technology: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

By Francia Sepúlveda, ESL Level 5 Student

Little by little, technology has become an important part of our life. Years ago, access to this world was limited to a few people who had enough money to give themselves such benefits. Nowadays, it is so common to see people having access to the following: smartphones, internet, laptops, smart TVs, social media and so on. But the usage of technology also includes a high responsibility and control; this can be a good tool if you know how to use it or can it become a really deep nightmare.

Firstly, technology has been used to improve people’s lives and to make things easier for us in many ways: communication, access to information and daily life. Communication is faster since we just send a text message and can get the response in a few minutes; or we can call, voice or video, to other people around the world instead of using telegrams which we had to wait days or weeks to receive a response. To have access to the information is also easier and faster, we just need to ask Google what we want to know and it will show us all the results (Blessed internet!), nothing compared with the hours spent on books in the past days. However, technology has a big impact on the daily life of people: we can pay our food, do shopping online, transfer money between bank accounts, find the place we want to go and the way to get there, and so on.

Secondly, if we don’t control how we use technology, we can become its slaves. To be “visible” online on social media has always represented a risk when we are very active and post personal information in our profile. There are a lot of platforms to be online (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat —to name some of them), which give us the option to be someone else, or at least, to show our friends (Facebook), followers (Instagram and Twitter) or contacts (Snapchat) that we’re more interesting than we really are. For example, Facebook gives us the illusion that we are popular and we have thousands of friends. Twitter offers us the option to can express ourselves as we want without any filter and of course, we start thinking about us being the Socrates of our time. Instagram, on the other hand, is about how other pretty people see us, as we post the prettiest, sexiest, most awesome photo while we just wait for our follower’s likes and approval. And last but not least we have Snapchat, maybe the harmless social network since photos you post only stay online for 24 hours and you exchange them with your contacts.

At one point everything seems to be good with social media, I mean, we are just posting our thoughts, photos, and some moments of our lives on it, what could happen? How can this become a dangerous thing? The answer remains to be one word: excess. Everything in excess is bad: candies, alcohol, fast food, parties, staying up late, and of course, social media is not the exception. Every time we are posting or updating the information we have on our profile, we are allowing other people to use that information in different ways.

Have you ever talked with some friends about a specific topic and then, have you seen that there is advertising about that in your social media? The first time we could think that is simple causality, but it is not. It is because people are having access to all our information and conversations we have using social media to suggest us things that maybe we would like, but if they are using the information to suggest things to us, what else could they do with that? Another way they use our information is when there are some suggestions about people to be friends with (Facebook) or people to follow (Instagram and Twitter), they take all the records about our likes, pages we follow, post we have shared and so on to do this.

This is not something that only happens in the United States, it is something that occurs around the whole world; people from different countries have access to social media so everybody is exposed to spying by a group of people, call the US government, FBI, or Illuminati Group. Some of them won’t ever accept that they are spying on us through our social networks. Are you familiar with guinea pigs and how the scientists study their behavior and reactions to different experiments and environments? Well, they are the scientists, we are the guinea pig and our dependence on social networks is the experiment.