

THE ELC NEWS

A Publication by and for Students of the English Language Center, Old Dominion University

February 2007 - Spring 1

Interview with Heather Gaddis, ELC Graduate Assistant

ELC students visit Communi- cations 200 class in January

ELC students visited Fred Warren's Communication classes to learn about communications between Americans and people from other cultures. Here's what some of the students from Intermediate said about their experience that day.

Aly Tapily, Mali—My experience was very interesting because I learned a lot about American culture, life, their method of teaching, and their comportment. I liked it although it is different from my culture. I think that they also learned a little about culture.

Jin Hyuk Kim, Korea—We talked about majors and our hometowns. I felt so tense my lips were too dry to continue. Also, I couldn't understand everything because many students in the room were talking and it was noisy. After 10 minutes of conversation, I still wanted to continue to talk with the American student.

Sary Abu Nijem, Saudi Arabia—My experience with the American student was wonderful and perfect because we talked about general life in the United States. I met Jerry, 20 years old. He said the people here are more friendly. He asked me, "What is a bad thing about Norfolk?" and I said, "The weather's awful. It changes from day to day."

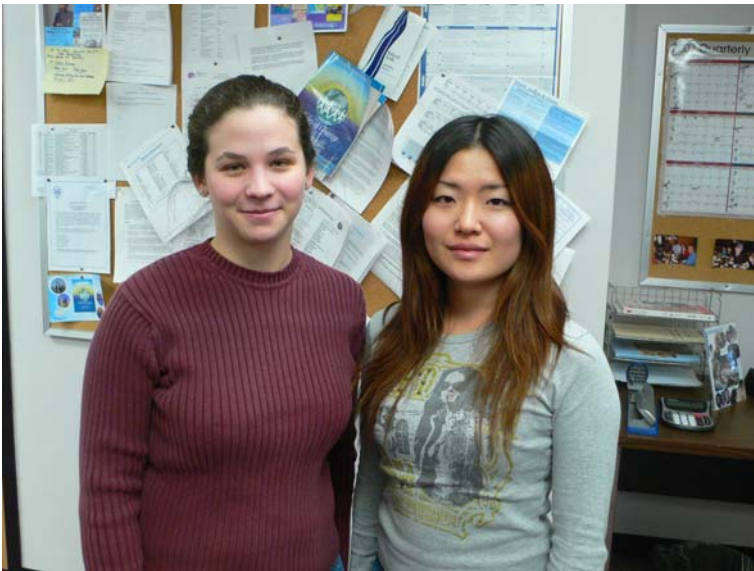
Sang Yun Park, Korea—My experience with the American students was good because they talked to me in simple English. I understood everything. They were very kind and spoke slowly and waited for my answer. Although I was nervous when I met them, I enjoyed it. I think that many ELC students liked this also, so I hope some time we can do this again.

Naif Alzahrani, Saudi Arabia—I talked to an American boy and girl about traditions in our country. They asked me about my country, especially about the women and oil and the money. I showed them some Saudi Arabian money, and they said, "it is very nice."

Minju Kang, Korea—We both like the same American fashion styles. She is from Omaha and she misses her family. She spoke slowly and I envy her good pronunciation.

* **Have a safe trip! Spring Break is** *
* **February 26—March 11!** *

Recently, Ayumi Fujiwara (Advanced 2, Japan) interviewed Heather Gaddis (left), graduate assistant, about her job.



Ayumi:
What are the most difficult things and the most happiest

things about your job at the ELC?

Heather: The most difficult thing is getting to know people from many different countries. I can't help them at first because it's difficult to understand what they are talking about. On the other hand, I'm getting accustomed to them as time goes by and I can get to know students more as people.

A: Why are you working here?

H: I'm going to be an English teacher in the future, so working here will help me in the future because I now have an opportunity to talk to people from many different countries. In addition, I am learning about visa procedures and how to get apartments and other things that teachers don't learn. Knowing these things might help me someday when I become a teacher.

A: Have any ELC students influenced you or changed you?

H: I am very impressed by the students who come here all by themselves. I can't imagine going to another country, learning another language, and living by myself. It is tough, but they do it. It's amazing.

A: Since you began working here, have you set any goals?

H: To finish my graduate program as quickly as possible and start teaching English. Thanks to my job here, I've gained a lot of resources and these resources have strengthened my goals.

LATVIAN OPERA SINGER AT THE ELC

By Melda Sanli (Advanced 2)

Melda Sanli interviewed Sandra Opilla for this article.

Here is Sandra Opilla from Latvia. She joined us this semester and I would like to introduce her. Let's get started and get to know her better.

Sandra, can you explain what your major is and how you decided on it?

My major is music—singing. I have been singing in opera for more than 15 years. Thirteen years with the Latvian National Opera and almost two years with the Virginia Opera. I always knew that I would sing. I just didn't know how and where. In childhood, I studied piano in music school, but it wasn't interesting for me. I always wanted to sing. When I was 21, one morning I read the newspaper and found an advertisement for auditions for the chorus of the Latvian National Opera. I read it out loud and laughed, but my mom said, "Don't laugh—just go and try. What's the worst that could happen? They could just not hire you—that's it." I thought, *really, why not?* And I went and sang and they hired me the same day. After 1 year, I went to music college to study voice.

Were you in the opera "Carmen"?

Yes, I was in the chorus in "Carmen," but I am doing a solo part in the opera "Cinderella" in the Children Education Program with the Virginia Opera. I have the role of the cruel stepmother. Another children's opera is "Alice in Operaland." In this opera, I perform six different characters. Sometimes I just have 30 seconds to change my costumes. It is very interesting—I like it!

How do you feel before going on stage? Are you nervous?

When I have to sing a solo part, I am very nervous, but when I sing in the chorus, I am not. Singing solo is a very big responsibility, and of course I want to do my best.

So, how did your US story start? Could you give us some details about yourself and your family?

I came to the US two years ago because I got married. My husband is a US marine. Here in the US, my family is my husband; we don't have any kids so far. I have one sister; she is one year older than I and I have mom and dad—they all live in Latvia. My mother is Estonian. My parents are professional actors.

How many languages can you speak?

I can speak three languages fluently—Latvian, Russian, and English. Latvian is our native language, but I have learned Russian since I was a child. In elementary school, I learned German, but I have always liked English more. I started to learn English by myself. Then I took a seven-month course and my English became much better.

What are the three most important things you want to do in your life? What are you planning for the future?

I want to be happy and I want to bring happiness to



Sandra Opilla as Carmen.

others. I want to help children who don't have parents. I am planning to use all opportunities for singing in the US.

How do you spend your free time?

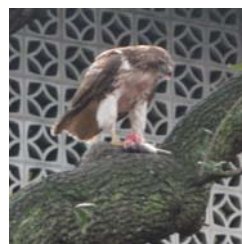
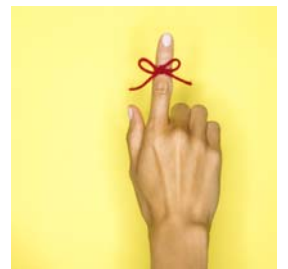
I exercise: aerobics, yoga, and lifting weights. I also love to rollerblade and ride bicycles. I try to walk every day; I read good books and learn new music.

How do you feel about America and Americans?

Of course there are many things that I like about America—people are nice and polite and there are so many things for children: playgrounds, many activities, and amusement parks. In Latvia, it is a big problem. I like the easiness of life here and there are many career opportunities. What I really miss [about Latvia] is organic food, culture, and my friends and family. But I am trying to take from America the best things and I also give back the best that I can give. I'm learning. I'm growing. And I am happy!

Don't forget!
Spring 2 starts
March 12!

Registration starts
Thursday, March 8!



FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Sometimes you are the hawk, and sometimes you are the squirrel...which one are you? Is it better to be aggressive or to be passive? Do you think you are more aggressive (like the hawk) or more passive (like the squirrel) when you learn? Do you think your teachers are hawks or squirrels?

ELC Tailgate Party 2007

On January 29, we gathered in the ELC to party, play basketball, and win prizes! This helped us get in the spirit for the basketball game that night between ODU and Georgia. Many people have "tailgate parties" out of the backs of their trucks or in a special place before a game that help get people's spirits up. ODU won the game, and we all had a lot of fun!



→ Right: **Dominique Owana (UP)** prepares to throw the basketball as **Abdullah Alkhalidi (Basic)**, **Kyeongbam Ham (UP)**, **Seung Hye Kim (Advanced 1)**, and **Nasser Alabedolgader (Basic)** watch in anticipation.

← **Melda Sanli (Advanced 2)** is surprised to find she won the ODU hat.

Left: **Seung Hye Kim (Advanced 1)** won the basketball and net after competing against four other students.



How many people went to the basketball game? Here are some guesses from ELC students...

Abdullah (Basic): 2,500
Nasser (Basic): 3,300
Fa (UP): 12,800
Azziz: 300
Ali (Intermediate): 2,050
Young Min (Advanced 1): 450
Seung Hye (Advanced 1): 5,000
Melda (Advanced 2): 4,000

Linda: 1,000
Ibrahim (Basic): 2,050
Musaed (Intermediate): 450
Kyeongbom (UP): 2,000
Stefanie (Intermediate): 2,500

Who guessed correctly?
Jane (Intermediate): 6,000

Student Writing Spotlight

Why I Chose My Major

By Emmanuel Ambane (UG Bridge)

I am from Cameroon. I came to ODU to study accounting and to play soccer.

Soccer is fun, but accounting is important. When I have learned accounting, I will support myself and my family and I will encourage education. I think that people in developing countries need education even more than they need food. I hope to return to Cameroon and help my brothers and sisters improve their lives.

I am happy that my parents think that education is important, and I am happy that the ODU's students and teachers from all over the world feel like a family to me now.

Faculty Trivia Time!

Answer all four correctly and win a prize!

Which faculty member has...

...lived in India? Twice?

...attended boarding school?

...dyed his or her hair purple?

Which FOUR faculty members have lived in Japan?

Beth Buchanan
Rosemary Camilleri
Diane de Echeandia
Greg Flick
Heather Gaddis
Anne Geyer
Alex Harris
Jane Hirsch
Bettye Hussey
Angela Huynh
Claire Mack
Jason McSparren
Karen Medina
Lori Redman
Alison Schoew
Jamie Sturges
Bill Thompson

*What experience in America have you liked?
Or what have you seen in America that you liked?*

Kyeongbom, UP, Korea—Wide playing fields and big gyms for sports.

Marepalli, Grad Bridge, India—People are straightforward—they do not hesitate to say anything.

Ziyad, Advanced 1, Saudi Arabia—Punctuality.

Ashraf, Advanced 1, Iraq—Everything is organized and you can do a lot in a short time. American people care so much about each other's feelings.

Santiago, Advanced 1, Spain—People are kind and friendly.

Raju, Grad Bridge, India—The closeness and friendliness of American people are the most heart-touching aspects which I would like to take back to my country. I like the Americans' concept of killing silence and mingling everyone even though they may not know each other.

Kana, Advanced 2, Japan—I like the way Americans think. Most people told me Americans are lazy, but I don't think so—ODU students have 8 o'clock classes and they go! Americans have their own way of thinking and they're independent. People respect each other and they're unique.

Tookta, Advanced 1, Thailand—Drive-thru bank—it's easy and fast.

Linda, Advanced 2, China—I like the traffic lights. When we cross the road, we can push the traffic button. And I like to try on clothes in the fitting room at the clothes store.

Jin Young, Advanced 2, Korea—In America, people always wait in line.

Katerina, Advanced 1, Czech Republic—It's easier to drive here, clothes and cosmetics are cheaper, and fresh seafood.

Yuki, Intermediate, Japan—I like American chocolate.

Nasser, Basic, Saudi Arabia—The thing that I like most about America is freedom. I love that I have the opportunity to pursue my dreams.

Daniela, UG Bridge, Israel—What I like in America is the patience. Americans don't care if they have to wait in line. Americans usually say what they think. When people tell the truth to your face, it can build a system of trust.

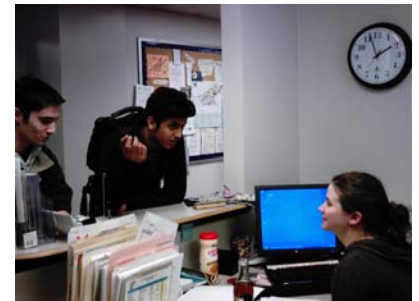
Scenes from the ELC



Advanced 1 students Ashraf Hussin (Iraq), Tookta Apichayaporn (Thailand), and Alioune Diaw (Senegal) discuss some topics before class starts.



Korean students Ji Hyeon Kim, Young Min Park, and Yun Hee Kim prepare for their Advanced 1 class by studying notes.



Grad Assistant Heather Gaddis takes questions and helps out Kartal Topcu (Advanced 1, Turkey) and Saud Al-subaie (Intermediate, Saudi Arabia).

*What would like you like to see in America that we don't have?
What do you miss from your country?*

Mohammed, Advanced 1, Saudi Arabia—dates.

Fa, UP, China—Morning markets. In China, there are many morning markets and small, middle-sized, and big cities where you can buy many fresh, cheap fruit and vegetables.

Kana, Advanced 2, Japan—Japanese 7-Elevens because they have many sorts rice balls, and desserts such as "custard pudding." I'd also like to see a "rotation sushi shop"—delicious and cheap.

Katerina, Advanced 1, Czech Republic—Coffee shops where you can sit outside and not look at a freeway JBars close at 5 a.m.

Emmanuel, UG Bridge, Cameroon—I would like to play soccer on our fields without grass. I would like to play in the dust and mud without shoes like I did a long time ago.

Yuka, UG Bridge, Japan—Japanese customer services are really nice. Buses and trains run on time.

Stefanie, Intermediate, Colombia—music for dancing.

Mashref, Intermediate, Saudi Arabia—I miss the streets, the restaurants, and even the air.