



MEI NEWS

ISSUE 3 • FALL 2014

THE FRONT PAGE

THE MOST MAGICAL TIME OF THE YEAR

This fall, we welcomed students from 26 countries to MEI, including 93 **eager** students from 17 different countries to the Intensive English Program. These students have joined together to work on their English at MEI and broaden their circle of friends.

Students have been working hard, of course, as we are at the University of Maryland, one of the finest universities in the US, but all work and no play is not the MEI way. We've cheered on the Terps in their **inaugural** season in the Big Ten. We've visited Butler's Orchard to see those beautiful big red apples the state is famous for, and we've explored an important moment in American history at the famed town of Harper's Ferry.

Now, the second half of the semester is upon us. To help you continue improving and to finish the semester strong, you'll find helpful tips in this issue on how to succeed in your English studies.

You'll also notice some words in **bold blue type** throughout the newsletter. Look them up and use them to complete the crossword puzzle on page seven. Be the first person to bring a correctly completed puzzle to Melanie Baker in Cole 3111 and you'll win a surprise gift!

Here's to leaves falling, pumpkin spice, and fall's promise of something new and exciting,

YOUR FRIENDS AT MEI

If you have photos of you and your MEI classmates at MEI events or traveling together that you would like to submit to the newsletter, send them to ask-mei@umd.edu with the word "photos" in the subject line.

Visit us at <http://mei.umd.edu> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/meiusa>



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WHAT'S UP AT MEI

This semester, MEI students come from Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Germany, India, Iran, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, South Korea, Sudan, Sweden, Syria, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

- **October 16-17: Midterm Exams – good luck!**
- **October 20: Faculty Retreat Day – no class**
- **October 22: Midterm Conferences**
- **November 29: Thanksgiving Break – no class**
- **December 3-4: Achievement Tests (Final Exams)**
- **December 8: MEI Writing Test & Compass Test**
- **December 10: Final Conferences & IEP Final Ceremony**

S U C C E S S

in the United States

Congratulations on beginning your journey at MEI. Studying in a different country away from home is always an exciting, **albeit** perhaps challenging, experience. In order to help you be successful, teachers and students have prepared a few tips for you.

Tips from a Teacher |

Ms. Daniela Wagner-Loera

- **Drink Plenty of Water and Rest**

The course of the semester is very busy. You have received a lot of information and adjusted to a new environment. Now, homework and assignments are in full gear. Staying **hydrated** and being rested will help you **retain** the information you have learned so far and will help you survive the mid-semester rush.

- **Stay Organized**

In week 1, you probably bought a binder, pens, pencils, an eraser, a highlighter, and paper. Take some time to make sure you have organized these efficiently and in a way that works for you! If your current system is not working, take some time to **reassess** and find a new strategy.

- **Choose and Prepare a Study Area**

Set up a study area in your home or visit the library to use their study **lounge**. **Identify** quiet places for your homework.

- **Read – and Review! – Your Syllabus**

In the first week of the semester, you were given a syllabus. Take some time to re-read it and be reminded of the policies and **upcoming** assignments. Be sure to ask questions if anything is unclear.

- **Save Your Teachers' Email Addresses**

Be sure to have your teachers' email address saved in your phone and computer. Should you not be able to come to class or feel sick, it is important to tell your teacher. This is especially true on exam days!

Tips from a Student |

Abdulrahman Alrobaian, Spring 2014, Saudi Arabia

- **Know the Rules**

Be sure to read the student handbook to become familiar with MEI's rules such as the attendance **policy** and office hours.

- **Organize Yourself**

Define your academic goals and make a schedule to manage your time for homework.

- **Sign Up for the Speaking Partner Program**

This program will help you improve your speaking and vocabulary skills while teaching you US culture.

- **Get to Know UMD**

Visit the gym, library, and movie theater. Also, **familiarize** yourself with the shuttle schedule. Take advantage of the UMD community.

- **(Almost) Free Software**

Download free software to your PC from the UMD IT service at the McKeldin Library. It will save you a lot of money and help you write your papers.

- **Attend MEI Workshops and Activities**

Attend the Wednesday afternoon activities to break your **routine** and connect with your classmates. It will help you stay motivated.

- **Use English Only**

Speak English as often as possible – even with your native friends.

- **Ask Questions**

Always ask questions in class. If you have a question, so may your classmates. Your teacher will have answers.

We hope that these tips will help you be successful this semester. Remember that you can always come and speak to your teachers and classmates should you feel stressed or frustrated.

We are here to help!!! Good luck!

The *MEI* VOCABULARY CORNER

How to Increase Your Vocabulary

By Nina Liakos

Part 1: **Extensive** Reading

Have you ever wondered how many words there are in English? Many people have asked this question, and there is no real answer because nobody can agree on what a word is. Is **fast** in 'She is a **fast** reader,' 'She reads very **fast**,' 'Muslims **fast** during Ramadan,' and 'They break their **fast** when the sun sets' one word, two words, three words, or four words? Are take, takes, taking, took, and taken one word or five words? Does sombrero count as an English word? (It means a kind of hat in Spanish, but native English speakers understand and use it, and you can find it in any English dictionary.)

No matter how you count, English has more words than other languages. According to the language blog Johnson (<http://www.economist.com/blogs/johnson/2013/05/vocabulary-size>), four-year-old native English speakers have a vocabulary of 5,000 words; eight-year-olds already know 10,000 words, and adult vocabularies range from 20,000 to 35,000 words. Clearly, if you want to speak English like a native, you have to learn a lot of vocabulary, and university students need to know more words than people who do not continue their education after high school.

Every issue, we look at a specific topic connected to English grammar or vocabulary. In this issue and the next, we look more closely at how to increase your vocabulary.

If you have a question you would like us to address in a future column, send it to us at ask-mei@umd.edu.

The same blog also reports that non-native speakers learn an average of 2.5 new words each day in an English-speaking country. At this rate, it will take you a year to add fewer than 1,000 new words to your vocabulary—ten years to have the vocabulary of the average eight-year-old. So what can you do to grow your vocabulary as quickly as possible?

First, realize that there are different levels of “knowing” a word. Do you recognize it if you hear or see it, understanding it in context? Can you use it in speech, pronouncing and stressing it correctly? Can you use it in writing, spelling it correctly and using the proper grammatical form? A word that you understand correctly but do not use yourself is part of your **passive** vocabulary, while a word that you use correctly when you write and speak is part of your active vocabulary. A person’s passive vocabulary is always larger than his/her active vocabulary, and this is also true for native speakers.

[Continued on page four...]

Research shows that the best way to increase your passive vocabulary is to read extensively. Easy books and articles are the best choice because you can read more of them, **exposing** yourself to more words. Children's books, books for teenagers, books written or adapted for English language learners (graded readers), and adult books that are not too difficult are all good choices, depending on your level of English. Both fiction and non-fiction are fine; even graphic novels will add to your vocabulary. The important thing is that you read a lot, so you should choose books that you enjoy. If you love murder mysteries, choose Stieg Larsson or Patricia Cornwell. If you like romance, go for Barbara Cartland, or try "Rebecca" by Daphne du Maurier. If you hate fiction, don't force yourself to read a novel. Instead, choose nonfiction books about what you like: sports, animals, science, biography, or history. A novel set in your country, or a **nonfiction** book about your country or a topic that you are very familiar with, will be easier to read than a book about a foreign culture, a different time, or an unfamiliar topic. The Reading Power series of textbooks recommends books at different levels that you might enjoy.

You don't have to buy the books that you read; there are public libraries in each Maryland or Virginia county and the District of Columbia where you can apply for a free card and borrow

books for three weeks. If you can't finish your book in that time, you can usually renew it. (Unless your English level is very advanced, you probably won't find **suitable** books for extensive reading in the university libraries; the public libraries are a better choice for beginning and intermediate readers.)

If you start a book but don't like it, it's okay to put it aside and try a different one. But to get the maximum benefit, you should read every day for at least half an hour—more if possible. Think of your extensive reading time as relaxation, not work. Don't look up all the new words in your dictionary. It's best just to read for information or to follow the story. Use your dictionary only when absolutely necessary (certainly not more than once or twice per page).

How can you decide if a book is the right level for you? It should not be too easy, but it should not be too hard, either. Read the first couple of pages. If you already know all of the words, the book is probably too easy. If you need a dictionary to understand the main ideas on those first pages, the book is too hard. Ideally, you should be able to understand the main ideas without using a dictionary, but there should be some words that you don't know.

These are some ideas to get you started. Check back next month for Part 2 of this series!

S O U R C E S

- **Reading Power 1, 2, 3, 4** by Beatrice S. Mikulecky and Linda Jeffries (Pearson Longman)
- **Vocabulary Power: Practicing Essential Words 1, 2, 3** by Jennifer Recio Lebedev and Kate Dingle (Pearson Longman)

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

JULIE LAKE



Q: Where were you before you joined us here at MEI?

A: I had just finished my Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics (i.e., how we learn and process our first and second language) at Georgetown University. During my graduate program, I worked at Georgetown's Intensive English Program, where I taught reading, writing, speaking and listening classes.

Q: When you're not teaching English, what do you enjoy doing?

A: I enjoy hiking and spending time outside. In the fall, I always look forward to apple picking!

Q: What languages have you studied?

A: I have studied French, German, Hindi, Sanskrit and Hebrew, but only my French and German are conversational.

Q: What advice do you have for MEI students?

A: I recommend taking **linguistic** risks and letting yourself make mistakes in English. Sometimes these conversations are the best learning experiences. Try new things in the language! Say something even if you are not sure it is 100% correct, and then see what happens. For example, talk to a stranger at the bus stop about the recent football game or post a response on an online forum.

BROOKE BURNETT

Q: Where were you before you joined us here at MEI?

A: Before I joined MEI, I was teaching in the Intensive English Program at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana.

Q: Can you share an interesting fact about yourself?

A: During college, I studied abroad for a semester in Cairo, Egypt, which is where I met my husband. (He's an American who was also studying abroad with the same program.)

Q: In your opinion, what's one place in the US that international students should visit while living here?

A: I think Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming is one of the most beautiful places in the US. It's famous both for its unique **geological** features and its amazing wildlife. It's pretty far away from here but definitely worth the trip.

Q: When you're not teaching English, what do you enjoy doing?

A: When I'm not teaching, I enjoy hiking, spending time with friends, baking, watching movies, and reading.

Q: What languages have you studied?

A: I have studied Spanish, Greek, Arabic, and Hungarian.



Q: Where were you before you joined us here at MEI?

A: Before coming to MEI, I was teaching ESL part-time at various schools in Boston, including Boston University, Harvard Extension School, and the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Science.

Q: What languages have you studied?

A: I've studied German for quite a while, and I love the language. I'm out of practice though, so I need to start really speaking it again. My grandfather's parents were from southern Germany and he spoke a **dialect** of German, so that's how I got into it. In addition to German, I've studied some Japanese, Spanish, and Swedish, but I only have a basic knowledge of these languages.

Q: What advice do you have for MEI students?

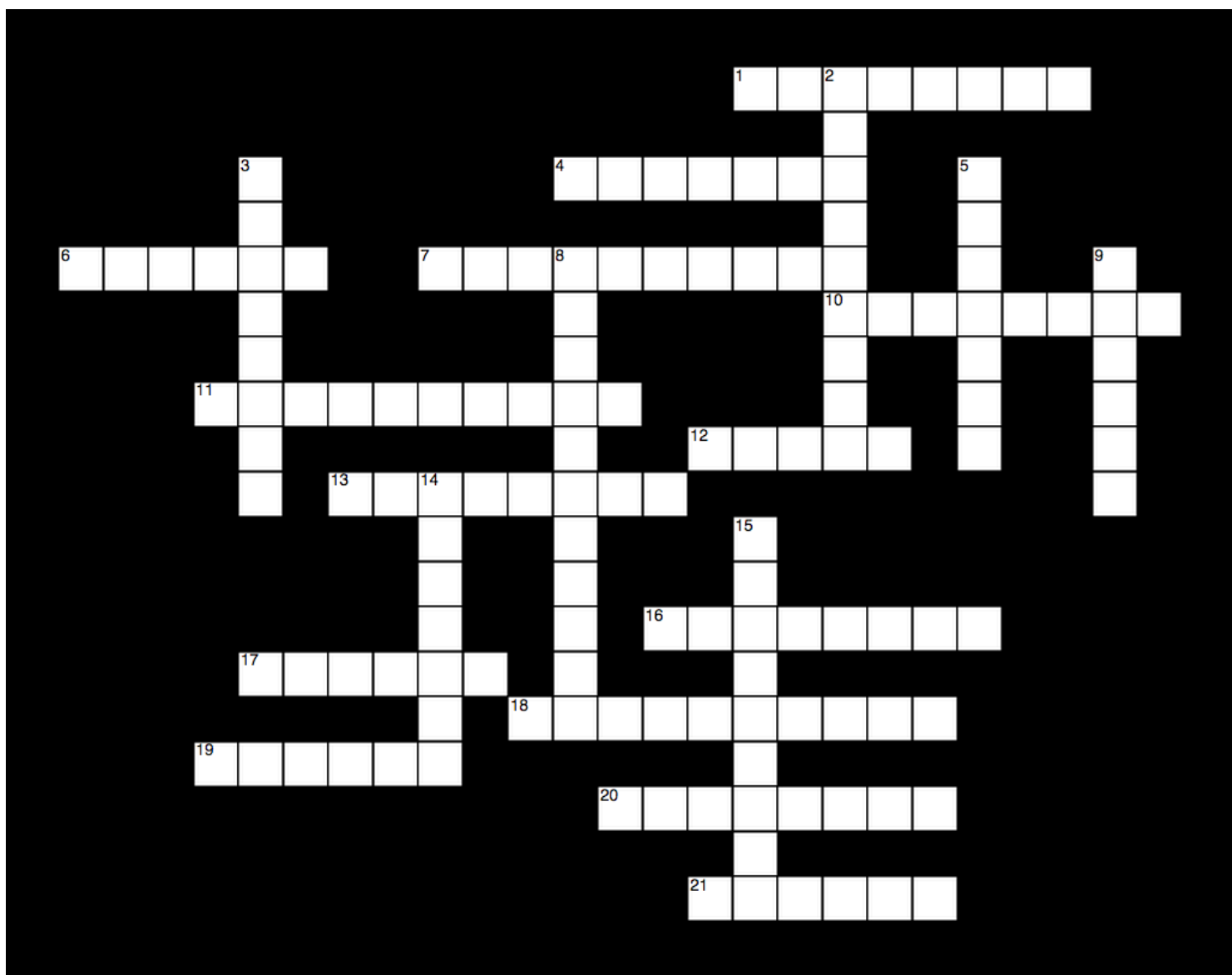
A: Practice, practice, practice! It's OK to make mistakes; in fact, mistakes are good! They help you learn! The reason I don't know German as well as I'd like is because I was always afraid of making mistakes, so I didn't practice enough, especially in conversation! Now I'm finally learning to just use the language as much as I can. Also, be social and make friends. You need friends to help you get through being in a new culture. I recommend going to the International Coffee Hour and on MEI field trips. Americans love meeting new



HEATHER MEHTENS

people! Also, there are many international students at UMD that can help you with English.

VOCABULARY CROSSWORD



**Use the clues below to complete the puzzle. The answers in the puzzle are the blue, bolded vocabulary words found throughout the newsletter.*

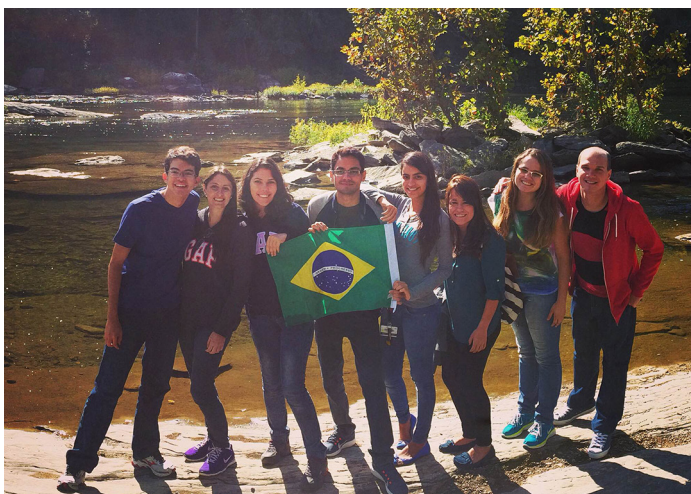
Across

- 1) to recognize and correctly name someone or something
- 4) a form of a language which is spoken only in one area, with words or grammar that are slightly different from other forms of the same language
- 6) a rule or a way of doing something that has been officially agreed upon and chosen
- 7) books or texts about real facts or events, not imagined ones
- 10) having the right qualities for a particular person, purpose, or situation
- 11) related to language or words
- 12) very excited about something that is going to happen
- 13) showing something that is usually covered or hidden
- 16) to think about something again carefully in order to decide whether to change your opinion or judgment about it
- 17) to keep something or continue to have something
- 18) related to the rocks, soil, etc. that make up the Earth
- 19) a room that is used by many people as a place to relax
- 20) having consumed an appropriate amount of water
- 21) although

Down

- 2) large in size, amount, or degree
- 3) happening soon
- 5) the usual order in which you do things, or the things you regularly do
- 8) to learn about something so that you understand it
- 9) enough or more than enough
- 14) tending to accept things that happen without taking any action
- 15) describes the first event in a planned series of similar events

THE BACK PAGE



Students in UMEI 004 read excerpts from “The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears” by Dinaw Mengestu. This novel takes place in Washington, DC. After reading selections of the book, students were able to meet the author at the DC Public Library.

MEI students took advantage of the beautiful fall weather to get outside. In pictures are trips to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia and Butler’s Orchard in Maryland.

