

# SCIENTIST CRACKS LANGUAGE BARRIER

## Brazilian doctor learns conversational English to continue immunology career

By Jill Spear

Even with her doctoral degree and post-doctoral studies, Daniela Grosso had more to learn. In July of 2023, when she arrived in Vista from Brazil, she didn't speak conversational English. It was a hurdle she'd have to conquer to resume her career in immunology.

Though she'd studied English to read scientific papers, she couldn't converse in the language. Remarkably, she is now nearly fluent. In March of 2024, she enrolled in Advanced English as a second language (ESL) at Vista Adult School and proved to be a quick study.

Like many other professionals, she'll have to pass an English language test to work in her chosen field. She's working hard to eventually pass that test and establish a new career, taking six Advanced ESL classes a week.

"It's been a challenge to move to another country and speak another language at the age of 50," she says. "That's true for my husband also, who was a math teacher in Brazil, and my daughter, Manuela, who's 14."

It was Manuela who provided the motivation to move to the U.S. "My home city of Sao Paulo has a thriving economy, but it's dangerous. Crime is a big problem," she says. "I wanted to give my daughter a better life with more opportunities.

It was a bold move, and one that many immigrants make. After spending their lives in Brazil, where the native language is Portuguese, she and her family risked an uncertain future and culture shock to leave their home country and build new lives.

"The only regret in life is if you don't try," Grosso says.

Like her mother, Manuela has proven to be a fast learner and is already speaking English with her classmates, thanks in



Despite having advanced degrees from her university in Brazil, Daniela Grosso lacked the conversational English skills needed to continue her career in the United States ... until she took ESL classes at Vista Adult School. Photo by Charlie Neuman

large part to her ESL class at school. She has adapted well to her new life, and Grosso says Manuela has expressed a desire to stay in the U.S. "My husband and I think it's important to live in different countries and experience different cultures," she says.

Grosso has high praise for her experience at Vista Adult School. "My teacher is the best. She worries about us and we've learned a lot from her. She teaches carefully to make sure we understand."

Grosso also appreciates the assistance Vista's personal counselors provide. "The counselor has been such a big help. Whenever I need advice about my career, she's there for me. She worked with me on creating a resume in English and helped prepare me for a job interview," she remarks.

"Everybody is so friendly and welcoming here. I never feel that I'm an immigrant. My schoolmates in ESL come from all over—Japan, Ukraine, China and Mexico," she says. "We're all on the same page, working to learn the language, so I'm not alone. The school has really lifted my mood."

Once Grosso has finished her Advanced ESL studies and passed her English fluency test, she plans to focus more on her career in science. With her doctoral degree in biotechnology and postdoctoral work in immunology, she'd like to combine teaching at the university level with lab-based research, just as she did in Brazil.

"People in Brazil think it's great to live in the U.S.," she adds. "Here, they want you to learn and have fun, too."

  
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