

"I was afraid to talk with people in the streets. I was afraid to speak, to go downtown, because I didn't know how to say things."

That's how **Sebastian Rodriguez** felt as a new immigrant in Boston before learning English.

Sebastian is from Colombia, where he earned his Bachelor's degree and worked in retail banking. In 2015, he decided to come to the U.S. to fulfill his life-long dream of having a career in finance.

But once he arrived, Sebastian found he did not know enough English for a public-facing job, so he took a job as a dishwasher. Working at that job, he says, pushed him to learn English so that he could succeed:

"I decided to learn, and I decided to work hard for that...I had the abilities. I had the skills. I knew I could do it, I just needed to learn the language --- I gave all my effort."

After waiting for six months to get into a class, Sebastian was able to take an ENB-funded English/digital literacy class at Maverick Landing Community Services. He describes his English teacher, Antonio Lobo who is from Cabo Verde, as "the angel in my life."

"I could see that Antonio had come here and struggled, but then he learned English and was successful. I thought, 'I can do that too.'"

After two years of taking English classes, including one specific to the banking industry, Sebastian earned a job as a bank teller. Now, he works at East Boston Savings Bank in Somerville, where he was recently promoted to Assistant Bank Manager.

"Everything is possible with effort and sacrifice. If you work hard, you can achieve great things," says Sebastian.

Today, Sebastian also gives back by volunteering at Maverick Landing - he teaches students about banking.