

Don't think be an
international is eassy



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The paper "It is Not Easy Being an International Student" is an outstanding example of an essay on sociology. Born to parents from a rich family, I think I can say that I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth. Mine is a close-knit, happy, complete family. I was used to helping my mother in her household work and father in his work. Late at night, I would sit with my little sister and help her do her maths. In between, I would attend coaching and study for my exams. I must thank God and my parents for giving me quick grasping skills and good intelligence. My parents have always taught me to work hard and I am grateful to them for this. For the first sixteen years of my life, I had stayed in the same town, the same house and with the same people around me. I had attended the best school in the city and passed my exams very well. Though not serious, I had just applied to a few international schools after middle school. My cousins had attended degree and post-graduation programs in our town and were not at all happy. They wanted me to continue my studies in a global atmosphere. They convinced my parents that today, the world has condensed into a global village and to be able to compete well in the job market, you must have adequate global exposure. My parents too were convinced of the fact that one must be able to interact well in an international atmosphere. They wanted me to try my luck abroad.

So, when I got a student visa for Canada, everyone was overjoyed. I appeared for the visa interview and in a month, my bags were packed and I was ready to leave. There was an unending queue of relatives and family friends coming to bid farewell, some tearful ones, and some cheerful ones. Last-minute packing was done till I checked in my bags. Clothes, shoes, books, a few homemade snacks, family photos, farewell gifts from friends; everything was dumped into the suitcases. With a combined sense of joy and

nervousness, I boarded the Boeing to Vancouver, Canada. It was the first time I was on a plane and I was too scared to even look at anyone, forget to speak with my fellow travelers. I was too nervous to eat the food and went hungry during the journey.

At the Vancouver airport, I was nervous and not able to read signs properly. Everything was so English. I do not understand the meaning of most of the boards. I tried speaking to a few people, but no one understood me as I was not speaking in proper English. I went around and looked for the Immigration counters. I went here and there but could not find the right place. Before that, my baggage had got mixed up with another person's and I had to explain to the other person that it was my suitcase and not his. A taxi was waiting for me as I finally to clear the Immigration and walked out of the airport. I got into it with my baggage and another international student from Indonesia. The drive to the campus was amidst heavy traffic and I hardly got to see any of the interesting places that I had heard about. When it was time to alight, I felt in my wallet and took out some currency. Oh, no! I had not got my currency converted and had to request the other international student to pay my fare too. What an embarrassment. We took our baggage and went to meet our guide at the reception of the guest house. Looking me up and down, his reception was a lukewarm one. I felt like burrowing my head in the ground. We were introduced to the kitchen staff and other blue-collar workers and shown the way to our rooms.

Classes were to start the next morning and I realized I had overslept, probably due to jetlag. By the time I found my way to the class, the second period was over. Summoning all the courage I had, I entered the room just before the third period. Not very comfortable, I sat in the last seat where no

one would notice me. The teacher entered and started taking attendance. When he called out my name, there was a roar of laughter from the class and a few catcalls. The kind teacher, however, asked me not to bother about the others and concentrate on my studies. He asked me about my background, the country I belonged to if I had ever been to any other country. Embarrassed, and in my then not-so -fluent English, I gave the answers. I felt miserable and did not sleep at night. There had been no time to get my currency converted and I could not even speak to my family. God! It was bad. The next day was slightly better and I managed to speak to a few expats from my country. While most of them were snobs, a few were nice and helpful. Slowly, after almost a month, I felt better, though nothing like your own country. I had also contacted a host family who was ready to take me in. The family is very nice, but I miss my parents.

The food was different, the culture was different, everyone spoke English very fast and the buses and trains were very expensive and stopped for hardly a few seconds at every stop. The teenagers were far beyond their age, there was racism lurking in every corner and everyone was busy going about his job. The beaches were a cultural shock for me. Being from a conservative culture, it took me many months to see people of so many shapes and sizes in such scantily clad conditions. Even today, I do not feel comfortable walking on a crowded beach.

The food is so different from ours, my mother cries her soul every time she speaks to me. I miss the familiar smells of rice and chow. Chinese food is available at roadside stalls but is not real Chinese. I prefer to eat at home, but do not like Continental food at all!

The agent who had done the visa processing had painted very rosy pictures

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of students getting part-time jobs and work permits. Unfortunately, students in the program I am pursuing are not allowed to take up work. What a shame! I could at least have worked at some fast food joint and earned a few dollars. A friend helped. He tells me about some expat families who want someone to babysit at their place during weekends. I was very happy to know this, but sadly, some so many students were already babysitting, I had to wait for almost four months for my turn to come. An inexperienced nineteen-year-old is not too favorably in the parents' list of babysitters, so I hardly get any preference.

There are students from all over the world in my school. There were only three students from China, the rest were from the middle-East, Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Malaysia, besides local students. My friends in China think I am lucky to be studying in an international school. They feel that life is very easy in an international school. They are completely mistaken. While the medium of instruction was Mandarin in my country, where everything is in English. While I was the topper in Maths and challenge my teacher at my local school, where it takes me some time to understand the question itself. I lose too much time in reading the question three to four times. Sometimes, I am not even able to understand the question and have to ask the teacher to repeat it in simple English. Oh, it is so embarrassing! And there are so many subjects to study!! English Prose and Poetry, World History, Canadian Geography, Computer Programming (in English), Music, Physics, Biology, and Chemistry are just a few of the subjects I have to study. Not just studies, here you have to compulsorily take up a sport and a co-curricular activity. After all these activities, I am so tired; I have no energy to revise my lessons. I wanted to improve my English. In my spare time, I hang

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out at the library and try to read simple classics. I also read the newspaper aloud, so I hear myself speaking English. Now I am better than the time I landed in Vancouver.

Now I understand why my parents insisting I study in an international atmosphere. My friends are also under the impression that if you do you're last few of schooling in Canada, it is easy to get admission at the university level. How they got the idea!! We have to write exams and compete with the best brains in the world. Then there is the local competition also. How can admission to University be easy without English? No, you must know English for everything. No, it is not easy being an international student. You have to work hard, very hard to be a good international student.