

Interview 1

ANONYMOUS

Today, we had the opportunity to interview students at the Intensive English Centre. I feel very glad that they agreed to tell their stories and let us into their lives.

However, their lives aren't as easy as I thought. They reported feelings of isolation, a lack of purpose and barriers that have made it difficult to become actively involved in their communities. Through most of their life journeys, they encounter a number of obstacles and challenges. Here is the journey that my interviewee experienced when he migrated to Australia.

When he arrived he couldn't understand any English at all. He was scared to go outside and preferred to stay home. He felt this way because he couldn't immediately adapt to his new environment. Sydney is so different in comparison to China. Foreign people, culture and environment, had replaced his familiar feelings of his city – Shanghai. However, his migration is a journey that is filled with many challenges.

Soon after he arrived, he started learning English, but sitting in a big class, he was too nervous to talk and felt embarrassed to ask questions. Most of the time he sat there quietly until the lesson ended.

When his parents went to work, he felt even lonelier in this strange world. Language barriers made it difficult for him to connect with his new surroundings.

As time went by, he slowly realised that he was studying in a pleasant and harmonious environment. The class was informal and the teachers were friendly. He began to feel relaxed and comfortable enough to talk. He has learnt many English words and has actively joined in conversations.

He made many friends at the IEC. They had come to Australia a few months earlier than he had, they came from the same country and spoke the same language as he did. They freely shared their feelings and experiences together.

His life has changed since he has made friends. They go out together, make new friends and experience the lifestyle of this country. All this support from his friends has really opened up his mind and made him feel less isolated. He feels the world around him isn't strange and fearful, and many people care for him.

Report written by an ESL student from Beverly Hills Girls High School after an interview with a student at Beverly Hills Intensive English Centre.

Interview 2

SAMAH

Each year, thousands of people migrate to Australia for various reasons, and each person's experience is significant. An interview with a young Palestinian girl Samah, who migrated to Australia four months ago, assisted me with my study of 'journeys'. A journey suggests a movement from one place to another and includes all the experiences that happened along the way. The young Palestinian girl's physical journey to Australia includes experiences, which affect her both intellectually and emotionally.

Physical journeys occur over land or sea, and also tend to be accompanied by learning and understanding. Samah was born in a traditional Muslim family in Jordan, which is a small South Arabian country. She spent her childhood there and had started schooling before her family migrated to Australia, "I didn't know much about other countries, but now I am beginning to learn about some of them. Australia's society is more democratic than Jordan's," she says. This physical journey has given Samah an opportunity to learn about the world.

Physical journeys could also result in learning about new people. Samah has met many different people in Australia through her journey from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. "I cannot believe that there are so many cultural groups in the world. I find that their cultural values are different from mine, I couldn't understand them at first, but now I think that these values are not wrong". Samah's interaction with other people has made her more tolerant of others. Her journey is about her belief, her understanding and acceptance.

Physical journeys often involve emotions, and many people can have a stronger connection with their homeland when they journey away from home. During the interview, Samah showed her sadness of leaving home: "It's very sad to leave a place that you've lived in for more than 10 years..." She also shows her love and connection to her country: "I miss my homeland. Every week I find out about events that happen in my country, I've never been so connected with my homeland as I am now".

Making choices is an important part of our life journey. The decision we make can affect our future. Migrating to Australia was a personal choice for Samah's family. She gained a better education and future because of her life's journey. Journeys are powerful; they challenge us, but also inspire us. "Language is a big obstacle in my journey, but every time I learn a new word, I am inspired because I know that I am developing" says Samah. The power of the journey has challenged her thinking and broadened her understanding of new places and people. Also, through her journey we have learnt about the importance of personal choices. Samah will continue her life journey with great passion – "I want to be a nurse and help people".

Report written by an ESL student from Beverly Hills Girls High School after an interview with Sameh, a student at Beverly Hills Intensive English Centre.

Interview 3

AN INTERVIEW WITH NANA

On March 16th, a Year 11 ESL English class visited the Intensive English Centre to interview students. Many IEC students immigrated to Australia with their family. Obviously, they went on a physical journey from their home to Australia. There are many types of journeys, such as a physical journey, an emotional journey and an imaginative one.

Nana came from Thailand and she has been here since January. Her life seems complicated. She was born in Germany and when she was two years old, her family migrated to Thailand. Her mother is Indian and her father is Thai. From Thailand to here, she spent several hours in the air, which can definitely be seen as her physical journey.

Before Nana came to Australia, she was excited and confused. Excited, because she would be living in a new country and she was starting to imagine what Australia would be like and how her life in this new country would be. There were reasons why she wanted to come to Australia. Firstly, she wanted to study here and learn the language. Learning English in Australia is better than learning English in Thailand. Also, there are more chances and opportunities in Australia. She was looking forward to discovering herself.

Nana suddenly looked a little upset. She said, “Although I am enjoying living in Australia, I have also experienced several obstacles”. She felt that the hardest thing she had to face was to speak a different language. She also had the problem of making new friends due to her different culture, different language and different interests. She lives without her parents. They work in the country and she only gets to visit them in the holidays. Nana currently lives with her grandmother. “I feel that life is so hard. I hate cooking and looking after old people. Sometimes I feel like I am a nurse”.

When Nana came to Australia, she learnt how to live without her parents and manage herself by living independently. She also discovered how to form relationships with people from other countries and therefore about multiculturalism. She learnt to respect and understand others. Nana is a brave girl and she has the courage to overcome life's adversities.

After I interviewed Nana, I realised that emotional and inner journeys are closely linked to physical journeys. A physical journey can inspire an emotional journey.

Report written by an ESL student from Beverly Hills Girls High School after an interview with Nana, a student at Beverly Hills Intensive English Centre.