

UNC Charlotte

## Crossing Borders: How my international experience has affected my view of the world

Undergraduate

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## Joy of Life

How would you imagine two totally different people existing in one body? If someone asked me this question, I would think “what a weird question”, even before I think how to answer. I think everyone is an actor. We have different faces and characters. For example, at school we have to act like a student, at home we have to act as a member of a family, at work we have to act like an employee. It is very interesting how everyone creates his/her own story and has to be a main character of their own life. If a writer writes a movie about ten different people’s lives, they all have different stories, and none of the stories will be repeatable.

My story began three years ago. I was a happy little girl, just like a free bird. I grew up getting what I wanted, saying out loud what was on my mind, and doing whatever I felt like doing. I was so careless about my actions because I had everything I wanted. My grandparents always used to warn me, “It is better to punch a person in the face instead of speaking heartbreaking words to a person.” Even though I heard their warning, I never cared about it until I received an unexpected letter. My grandparents were trying to tell me, that words are strong if you say a word without thinking you cannot return it, and it might cause you a problem.

One morning, I received a letter from the University of Mongolia. It said that I had failed the English exam and would not be accepted to the university. I felt just like someone had thrown stones at my body. This had been my goal since high school, so I felt like life had slapped me in the face and had awoken from my sweetest dream. Everything turned from white to dark, from happy to sad, and from heaven to hell. My parents were ready to do everything for me to enroll in the University of Mongolia. The biggest decision I have ever made in my life was

to cross the border and start everything from the beginning by myself. I was not afraid or nervous. I was ready to face with difficulties.

When I hopped on the airplane, for the first time a voice in my head said “DO IT!” This voice pushed and helped me to see the world brightly again. When I landed in The Korean airport, I was with my two Mongolian friends. We were only 16 year old children. None of us had experienced living independently before. We didn’t understand the reality. In addition, we had no clue what was waiting for us in America. We were going to three different states. At the time I was about to depart on my flight to Atlanta; they wished me luck and gave me cute friendly cheek kisses. I would never forget it. It helped me a lot to calm down and warmed my heart. At the Atlanta airport I saw so many unfamiliar faces. I felt like I came to a different planet. Whenever I saw an Asian I was hoping that person would be from Mongolia. Unfortunately, I had not enough English to ask that person “where are you from?”

I remember it like it was yesterday. I arrived in Charlotte at night around eleven pm and there was no one to pick me up at the airport. I was a 16 year old girl full of energy and hopes, and luckily I didn't get punished. One old woman walked to me and asked a question, but I didn't understand what she was saying. I guess she was asking me, “Do you need help?” or something like that. She helped me to find a hotel and go to UNCC the next morning. I believe that God sent his guardian to help me.

Now I look back to that time and it seems like a dream. As soon as I started making friends and improving my English, life got easier. Many people have asked me, “were you afraid or scared when you get here at first?” I proudly say, “No, because there was no time to be afraid, I had so much to learn. “

One important thing I now understand is how significant language is. It is the key of communication. It is the door of the world. While I was improving my English, I learned the culture, the life style; the movies, the songs, and the commutation of America. I had to turn myself to American Uyanga. When I try to speak or write in English at first no one understood my main point. For example, in Mongolia we don't say "I". We prefer to say "we". When I write "I" people think it is self-concentrated and disrespectful in Mongolia. This is how I found out that in America individualism is freedom, and being independence is important. Now, when I to start write a paper or speak to people, I have to switch my brain from Mongolian Uyanga to American Uyanga.

Living in a different country opened my eyes and my mind. A baby bird opened her wings for the first time and learned how to fly. I can confidently say that crossing the border was crossing the gate of my dream. I understand one thing from bottom of my heart that is I cannot learn life if someone else is living it for me. When I crossed my country's border I had all responsibilities of my life in my hand. I call this period of time in my life, "joy of my life." Thank you America, my family, best friends, brothers and sisters, and everyone, who taught me about life and helped me to find myself.