

eUTOPIA
Alliance of 10 European Universities



EUTOPIA Alliance
International university of Rabat

“a girl who learns, a girl who loves”
GAOUNA K. LUMIERE

List of activities

Internship at FARATEC, Morocco, Casablanca, July-August 2023

Engineering degree at UIR 2022-2026

International Student club, UIR, Iftar party 30th march 2024

AEROBRIGDE event, UIR 22nd April 2024

Internship at ASECNA, Senegal Dakar, june 2024

Language learning (Darija, English, German)

Introduction

We live in a world in which being closed in is a mistake. People around us are new adventures and experiences, and they are important to us, and their different cultures help us understand that in this world there is more than what we know. In the globalization area, recognizing our differences and looking beyond to fight the scourges more than our peers is crucial. Furthermore, the COVID pandemic has shown us that we can only create a better world if we comprehend that, despite our differences, we face the same challenges. For example, while Italians were grieving, Moroccans and Congolese were grieving as well because everyone lost a loved one. I think we can relate—we felt vulnerable at the same time, supported by the medical staff and our families.

As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to study and to be useful to society, to the world, and even to contribute with what I know and who I am, and that is one of the main reasons I decided to study abroad. According to me, we all must bring something to the world from where we live, help the neediest, work on eco-responsible projects, smile to others, and bring them happiness; yet the international experiences have brought me much more than I have brought to others. Lead by that idea, I have made international experiences part of myself.

But as you can imagine, I felt scared to live alone and disoriented, mostly because of the change that will occur, but it did not stop me from pursuing my ambitions.

One of the questions I was asking myself to help me apprehend this whole journey was: What is internationalization? I never thought about what it was before, but I did not know I was experiencing it and that it was taking a prominent place in my life and that I will be forever experiencing it. But I only knew this after the four seminars. During the first seminar, I listen to others on their experiences. How many languages do I speak? How long have I been in Morocco? These relevant questions have awakened a deep reflection on my international experiences as a learning experience, especially when we were dispatched in small groups to discuss. Internationalization means much more than traveling and discovering. Because knowing that on Earth there are many continents where different people live, with diverse cultures, but there is only one Earth where live people who are much more similar than they think has completely changed my mindset. Today I am proud to see in each person a similarity and that beyond our differences we have much more in common, and this has made me a more compassionate person.

I can then say living in Morocco for years, made me grow, know myself more, know others, their culture. I love that of Chad, but this is only before I lived for 2 years in Morocco and discovered the beautiful cultures. Chadian people love their family, Moroccans also. I have early been influenced by people's cultures, and it made me a person with a mixed culture, and it is beautiful. But I am attached to my Chadian education; this is my roots.

I could have included many experiences in my reflective portfolio, but I believe that being able to choose the key moments and reflect on them is more relevant than just stating my experiences; these are the most outstanding activities during the last seminars. In this essay, I went through my international experiences and reflected on them. I believe I am who I am today because I have gone through all these experiences.

Development

My name is Lumiere, I am Chadian, and I have been living in Morocco since 2022, where I am studying aerospace engineering at the International University of Rabat. But it is not an appropriate definition of who I am because I am much more than that; I am loved, so loved by a great God. I knew this as I went through my experience with the international.

As a child, I have always known that traveling and studying abroad will be part of my path, but I did not know what it would bring me as a person and how important it would be for me. I did not think of it.

I grew up in a family of 5 children where interculturalism was part of our lives. We shared foods with family friends from different countries and discussed how different the cultures are and how it impacts our family upbringing. The first time we ate with a Germano-French family, we made dishes from our culture and shared them with the whole family. It was a good day; in thinking back, I could have asked to learn some words in German and some things about German culture, besides the fact that it is not easy to learn languages.

I can speak French, English, Nandjere (my mother tongue), moderate Darija, and I started German this year. I think learning languages will always be part of my life. I have many reasons to learn languages. Now that I came to Senegal for an internship, I feel like it has become obvious; Senegalese speak Wolof, and I realize despite the languages I speak, I need to resize and be open to new horizons, one of these reasons. I am fluent in French, and I feel the safest when I speak, write, or do anything in French. I have lived in a house where we spoke French and Nandjere. I speak French more fluently than my mother tongue; I studied in French. Which is logic; I only speak my native language when I'm with my family. I feel less confident expressing myself in other languages because I learned them on my own and as I encountered difficulties in my international journey. Also, my learning process is not finished, so my pronunciations sometimes make me realize that I need to work even harder to feel as confident as when I express myself in French.

But let's begin with the beginning. My own journey began when I received an admission letter and had to move abroad to study aerospace engineering.

I arrived in Morocco in the city of Casablanca. Before I continue, you must know that for academic purposes I have an internship program each year. In my first year, I applied to several companies and did not receive their feedback. I started thinking I would not have the internship opportunity, but deeply I had hope. In addition to that, I had difficulty talking to people; making friends was one of my challenges. By the grace of God, in my church I have met people from different countries, and some of them have become friends. Sometimes it only takes an effort. I had to say, "Hi, I am Lumière; I am in an engineering program," and a "yes, me too" was sufficient to have a friend as passionate as you are, and that is what happened to me. I felt proud of myself for having opened myself to people. I became friends with people I met, and I have learned that friendship is an important part of my humanity.

What if a human is set apart? I think he or she will lose his or her humanity because “as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” We are made for this: interact with others, spend hours chatting, go to the park, and share meals together. It feels so exciting to have people as friends and love them, sharing things with them. Besides friendship, I found a family (Justine, Abbas, and Jasmine), one of the best things. I felt at home when I spent a week at their house. Family is more than blood. I wholeheartedly believe everyone should experience friendship and family. International experiences have taught me that friendship is a beautiful thing.

As God does things well, I got the opportunity to work in a company through my friend. I, then, began my journey as an intern in the company, where the principal activity in the company is engine maintenance. After 4 weeks, I have learned more about engine components and the maintenance process. I learned to listen to people because they have experiences I did not have; I have learned to actively listen, which is required both for personal and professional life. This internship confirmed my idea that people have more to give us than we can imagine. I enthusiastically will connect with people and recommend doing so. And this was my first time addressing the “international experience” in the world of work, marking the dawn of my journey in Morocco as an international student.

During this internship, one time, when we had to clean the rotor (the component that spins or rotates within the machine) of an engine, we were talking, and we used translator tools such as Google Translation to help us understand the processes. Language should not be an obstacle to such connection; before that internship I struggled when a person spoke a different language, yet I spent four weeks learning words in Darija (Arabic speaks in Morocco), and I now understand that communication is more than words. I persuaded myself to learn Darija because the faces of workers when I repeated a word in Darija were funny; they laughed because my accent was funny and the words I repeated had nothing to do with the originals one. However, I understood one thing: a language is attached to a culture, and it changes the way you see things. Language is part of everyone’s culture, so to understand one’s culture, you must understand their language. A language is tied to a culture; that's true. For my part, since my childhood, I've known this feeling when you express yourself, all the culture comes along with it. For example, the words in my mother tongue that have no equivalent in French, English, or Arabic because they are strictly cultural things. Just as many times, when I asked for translations of words in Darija, I was able to notice that. On reflection, I realize that speaking French was not sufficient; I must effectively speak English and Darija and be flexible enough so that languages will not stop me from knowing people because my need for learning is above language challenges. Furthermore, language skills are always a professional skill required.

In the first week, I rotated in several departments in the company, where I gained experience and familiarized myself with the workers; during breaks, they often invited us to have lunch and made us discover their home-made food. I always have a taste of adventure and discovering; therefore, I was happy, and this ease of sharing their food is amazing. I felt like

I did not have the sense of sharing that I always thought I had. Sharing is crucial; in our world full of fast food, intentionally sharing yours says much about your kindness. I will seek to share more smiles, more foods, and more love.

In my childhood, I personally was not responsible for the administrative documents; my parents always took care of anything regarding this; now I am on my own and must do it myself. I got lost while trying to find the municipality in Casablanca. Casablanca is a high-speed and big city; it is not fun to get lost in the streets, yet I learned to be responsible, and it helped me because this year, I moved to a new city, Rabat, in the international university of Rabat to continue my degree, but I am skilled. This time things became easier. I have already been through the application process; I know that I should be attentive to deadlines; I have already paid tuition, been to banks, and paid bills.

Among all my international experiences, the UIR campus experience stills the best one, in terms of intercultural campus. I love the international experience in my university as well as the degree. Concerning my professional career in UIR, I have gained a lot of new knowledge and will continue for the upcoming years. I gained more active skills in English; I can speak clearly and understand English; however, writing documents in English was complicated. I faced challenges; English was my second language, and now I am fully studying in English, and I cannot believe I am writing my portfolio in English. I remember when we had technical writing class and I felt that I could write explicit text in my native language, but I was not able to draft an essay in English. I felt so stupid. Many of us, when we start learning a new language, first start by speaking, listening, and writing come last, but in the case of education, writing is required. On the one hand, I can easily do anything in French; on the other hand, I had difficulties writing in English. For that reason, I started writing and reading books in the library and have overcome these challenges. I also learned that sometimes I have to work harder than others to fill the gaps and have become a hard worker.

Some people often talk about smart working, but what about hard working? A smart worker needs to work hard; he or she knows that learning is key and is the way to get what you do not know. Sometimes, you do not have the choice but to stay late and work on these projects. Hard work is the basic for advancement; nothing will happen if I do not put in some serious effort in doing something about my English level. Of course, working hard is good, but I am a human. I have felt stressed more than once, I won't lie; sometimes I didn't come to the library because I was cold, because I was stressed, because I missed my family, or simply because I was tired.

One marking experience I had in UIR was when we attended the AEROBRIGE event organized this year to allow us to learn the reality of the aerospace industry and the academia. I deeply question myself, industry or academia; in fact, we had a roundtable with the guests; they answered questions concerning their own careers, challenges they face, and what led them to go further in academia or industry. I recognize that I would never finish learning and that my career was not a straight path but with many turns and twists.

Besides my professional experiences, I was in the International Student Club (ISC), where I was involved in activities with the club. My primary motives were discovering a club; I felt like this one would give me the opportunity to experience different cultures. I think commitment is important, and I respect people who keep their word. In this case, I felt terrible to have missed more than one activity of the club. The one in which I took part was the "iftar party." We went to visit a center that aims to help disabled people, CIAT. During the Ramadan month, usually Moroccans (especially the Muslim ones) have dinner at the sunset called iftar. So, we went in the center, and we spent hours talking, playing games, and discovering the center before dinner. Some people were reticent (somehow, we all were), then we came to talk and spent a great moment. I appreciate the fact that we were from different cultures, but our backgrounds did not affect the atmosphere, because I felt like everyone was also at this event to discover and spend a great time. The game we played was called "guess the country." One person from each group had to hold the phone above his/her head where the flag was displayed. The members of his/her group with descriptions of that country make him/her guess it. I remember when I guessed countries in French and the girls wondering what the country was. Or when it was time to have dinner, we ate and found the dishes delicious, the others a little less. I love the cuisine of my country, but at that moment I was able to appreciate what others cooked. The "it is not too spicy" and "I want sugar for my tea" made it a beautiful moment. The comments are mainly related to discovering Moroccan dishes and that the flavors were not familiar; there are some dishes that have more salt in than others, for example.

I will seek out to engage with different cultures; it is enriching. With hindsight I think in the upcoming years I will fully participate in the activities. I will participate in the activities of the club; why not be part of the jury in a club? Seeing the leaders of this club inspired me. I believe that in the future I could start a club, especially a reading club, one of my passions. We learn by practicing, and I believe that it will help me strengthen my leadership.

Conclusion

To conclude, through the international experiences I have gained a lot of knowledge. The international experience helped me strengthened my interpersonal and language skills. First, I will never finish learning. Because every single day I am learning. Secondly, people may look different than me, yet we share more than I think, and I should be open minded. The thing I have learned above all is love, this is the most important, to love people, whatever you have been through, whatever you are going through now, love people.



The open day at the university, 2th July 2022