

ILS 367 Interview with a Migrant

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Sitting down with my friend, Yihan, for this interview felt like more than just a class assignment. Asking questions about migration, identity, and home can be deeply personal, and doing so with someone I know brought an immediate layer of comfort, but also a sense of responsibility to listen with care.

I was immediately struck by Yihan's openness and the thoughtfulness he brought to each question. There was no hesitation in sharing his experiences, from his initial imaginings of life in the US to the more complex realities he encountered. Hearing him articulate the difference between the external opportunities he anticipated – access to a broader world, diverse interactions, new learning – and the internal experience of happiness was particularly insightful. His realization that happiness wasn't simply granted by the move, but something that still required conscious effort and practice, resonated deeply. It felt like a universally human lesson, highlighted through the specific lens of his migration journey.

Perhaps the most touching part was discussing the concept of "home." Yihan's definition was so clear and rooted in his place of origin in Jinan (济南), China. His explanation of how Madison, despite its positives and the life he's building here, couldn't replace that original feeling was poignant. Listening to him describe missing his hometown, even down to the details recalled in dreams, fostered a real sense of compassion. It wasn't about feeling sorry for him, but about recognizing the complex layers of belonging and longing that can coexist when living away from where you grew up. It made me appreciate the unique weight that the idea of "home" carries for someone navigating life between cultures.

This interview did more than fulfill a requirement; it bridged the gap between academic concepts of migration and the tangible, often emotional, reality of lived experience. It highlighted how expectations shift, how personal growth unfolds in unexpected ways, and how the pull of one's roots remains strong. I'm incredibly grateful to Yihan for sharing his perspective so generously. The conversation left me with a much richer understanding, not just of his journey, but of the nuanced human stories behind the broader topic of migration.

Link to interview video: [Here](#).