**Ahmad Sohaib Wasiq interview 2**

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[Speaker 2]

Good day, I'm Ahmad Soheib Wasik, student of Master of International Business in the Asia-Pacific region program and Higher School of Economics. So, today I want to conduct an interview for my project called Cultural Codes and Asia. So, could you please tell me about yourself, about your name, what you are doing, where are you from?

[Speaker 1]

Okay, thank you very much. My name is Ajibola Olaleko and I'm a Nigerian, meaning I'm from a country called Nigeria. I'm also an international student studying for my Master's in Data Analytics for Economics and Business here in St. Petersburg, Russia.

[Speaker 2]

So, great. You told you are from Nigeria and you came to Russia. Why you came to Russia to study here?

[Speaker 1]

Okay, first of all, it's very important because I was privileged to get a scholarship opportunity here in Russia. And then also, why not Russia? Because Russia is a beautiful city, beautiful people, beautiful heritage and beautiful culture.

And also, more importantly, the standard of education is recognized worldwide. So, why not?

[Speaker 2]

Great. No, I ask this because Russia is a little bit far from Nigeria and also the climate is more different than your country. As I heard from some Nigerians, they told we don't have snow in the winter and the weather is extremely hot there.

But in Russia, weather is cold, first of all. And second thing, the distance is too much. That is why I ask this question.

[Speaker 1]

That is true. A lot of things are different. Trust me, a lot of things are different.

But I think one of the way a person can enlarge his horizon is the fact that you have to live where you are, maybe your comfort zone or something and try to see the way other people view the world, try to see the way culture are, the way that other things build our experiences and build us as humans.

[Speaker 2]

Great. Beyond your studies, what do you do for a living?

[Speaker 1]

So, I teach English language to Russians. So, I teach from children to adults. I teach English language and also currently I'm trying to apply for some internship and some position that has to do with what I'm studying, which is data analytics.

But so far, I've not been able to get something. But majorly, what I do for now is teaching English.

[Speaker 2]

That is great. So, you told me you teach English for Russians. Do you speak Russian?

[Speaker 1]

I speak Russian just a little bit. So, most times, the Russians I teach are those that already understand English a little bit. So, I just help them get better in their English language.

And sometimes I do understand what they say too, but my Russian level is not so fluent. It's just, let's say, a little bit above beginner's level.

[Speaker 2]

So, you teach Russians in English? Yes. Okay, so great.

And how long are you working here?

[Speaker 1]

I've been working for, let's say, five months.

[Speaker 2]

For five months. And do you like this work?

[Speaker 1]

Yes, I love this work because I love teaching English. I've been teaching English a little bit before I came to Russia, so it's just like a continuation of what I'm used to doing. And also, it's very important because, let's say, in my country where I was teaching, generally everybody speaks English.

So, I wasn't seeing, let's say, I wasn't seeing the richness of a person learning a new language. But coming to Russia, I'm seeing someone trying to learn a new language. English is their second language now.

So, I see the way they are happy to do it. So, that happiness also gives me a little bit of motivation and a little bit of a sense of accomplishment.

[Speaker 2]

That is great. So, what do you enjoy most about your work? My work?

Yes.

[Speaker 1]

Most? Most.

[Speaker 2]

The main point?

[Speaker 1]

The main point is the fact that I see, let me give an example because I met a student of mine that, before I met him, let's say, I have spent like four months with him now. But before I met him, his English language was not so strong, it was not so good. But I've seen him develop very well from the point I met him to now that he's able to communicate and understand English.

Not with me, just even with his friends or whoever he's communicating with. So, it gives me a little bit of joy that, yes, I've been able to mold and help somebody in their journey to greatness. Great.

[Speaker 2]

So, you study data analytics. Yes. But you told that I was teaching English in my country and you teach also in Russia.

Why you teach English like you didn't study English literature? Why you just like chosen to be an English teacher instead of being like a freelancer or like data analyzer in some companies?

[Speaker 1]

Okay, that's a very good question. I would say many times for international students, first of all, maybe in your first year, what you try to do is how to adapt to the country. So, sometimes while getting to adapt to the country, sometimes you just need to do something for the time being.

And also, I'm just learning the course data analytics. So, I believe by the beginning of my second year, I will have the skills and everything, the knowledge and the boldness, so to say, to be able to. It's not like I'm not applying.

I said it in the beginning that I'm applying for some positions. Nothing is forthcoming as of now. But I trust that very soon I'll be able to get something, maybe start from an internship, gain some experiences, then begin to apply to higher positions.

[Speaker 2]

Great. So, can you walk me through a typical day at your work, like since morning or since starting?

[Speaker 1]

So, what I do there is just trying to look up, because all schools have their curriculums on what they want their students to learn. So, I go through the curriculum, see what I'm supposed to teach the students for that day. So, because most times I teach students in groups, I teach maybe like one hour with a group, another one hour with another group, another one hour with another group, different set of students.

Right. So, I just go through what each level and each set of students are supposed to learn. So, I just try to prepare, take all the material, because in teaching you have to have like materials and props, what you need to, let's say for children, if you are teaching about toys or you are teaching about a character, you need to bring some of those things to show them so that they can learn the words or something like that.

So, I just try to prepare those things. Once the children come, I teach them, we practice together. Once I'm done with the three sets or the four sets or whatever sets it is that I'm teaching for the day, I try to grade them and I try to report back to the management of the schools, these are what the children are progressing in, these are the things we need to focus on and so on like that.

[Speaker 2]

Great. So, for you, it's more convenient to teach for children, for young people or for adults?

[Speaker 1]

Which one is more convenient? But for some students that they are 10, they are 11, they know English a little bit, right? So, I talk to them, so it's easier for me to communicate to them, to pass the message to them.

I also do teach children that have no level of English, but that is more of using props, we use videos, we use characters, we use dramatization and playing and tools like that. But for me personally, I believe for children from 10 to 100 is better.

[Speaker 2]

So, could you please tell me about your responsibilities, like what you exactly do, what kind of books, what kind of system you teach, like about your curriculum and also about your responsibilities of yourself as a teacher?

[Speaker 1]

Okay. So, as a teacher, where I work, they have like a structure on ground, so I'm not like the administrator, I'm not the methodologist or something like that. What I do is, I get the curriculum from them, I get the lesson plans, sometimes not in lesson plans, but I get the topics, I get the curriculum, they provide me with the props, let's say the toys, they have the TV, they have the printing machines, they have everything for me.

So, I just need to come up with like a lesson plan, how I want the one hour to go. Maybe I have dictation, maybe I have reading materials and all, so I come up with all those kind of things for them and for the students. So, basically what I just do is, I teach the students, I evaluate their level, I come to grade, I grade them individually, then I come up with, okay, these are the next steps we need to take on this group, these are the next steps we need to take on these individual students.

So, basically that's what I do.

[Speaker 2]

So, it is good. And what motivates you to work for this school as an English teacher?

[Speaker 1]

Okay, what motivates me to work? Number one, of course, it's money. I need to earn to live here.

I need to survive. So, yes, number one is money. And also, teaching is just what I do.

Also, if you compare me to other opportunities that we have for maybe for foreigners or international students, teaching is also a great one that a person can do.

[Speaker 2]

Great. So, how do you know that you are a successful teacher? How do you evaluate yourself?

[Speaker 1]

How do I evaluate myself?

[Speaker 2]

I mean, how do you know that you are a successful teacher?

[Speaker 1]

Okay, how do I know I'm a successful teacher? All right, thank you. So, I made an illustration just some minutes ago.

I met a guy, all right? So, it is, this is the level that's, because once you get a new set or a new set of students, right, you try to grade or evaluate their level, right? So, you know, this is where they are, and you know, this is where you want them to be.

So, let's say you've spent a month with them and you cannot see any changes, then you know that something's really, really wrong, right? Because they have to be, as a teacher or as an educator, there should be a foresight, something that you want to impart into the students. So, after a little bit of time, there should be changes, and these are changes that your parents should know, the school authorities should know, you as a teacher, you should know.

You shouldn't be going back to the same thing you taught them four weeks ago. They should be able to understand those things. So, these are the ways that you need to grade or evaluate yourself as a teacher that, okay, I'm impacting this student's work.

[Speaker 2]

What is the most good feedback that you received from your students?

[Speaker 1]

Alright, for my students, it's the fact that, okay, I once had a gig or a class which I just had to do, like, I don't teach in that school as a permanent teacher, but I once had them invite me to be like a substitute teacher. The main teacher was not available, so they just needed me for two days to come and just teach their students and just go. But within those two days, the students were asking me that they wanted me to stay and come back and come back again.

Why? Because they enjoyed our time together. And also, the school director also called me and she didn't even see me the second day that I left or stopped coming because I was just substituting for two days.

But she also called me and just said, the students love you, blah, blah, blah. We would love to work much more with you. If we have an opening, we'll let you know so that you can come and become a permanent teacher with us.

So, those are great, great feedbacks.

[Speaker 2]

Great, great. And did you have any probationary period or trial class for this?

[Speaker 1]

Yes, yes, yes.

[Speaker 2]

And how did you pass it?

[Speaker 1]

Most times, what they do is that you apply online. Most times we apply online on this job hunting site and all. Then maybe the school would contact you, the HR or the human resource person will contact you and then they do maybe like an interview with you online.

Then they will invite you to come for like a demo class. So, those demo class, the students will be there, the HR personnel will be there. Sometimes the demo class may even be with the director or the HR personnel so you know you have to prove yourself or something.

[Speaker 2]

And did they give you some curriculum for your demo classes and also for your normal classes or you have to create by yourself?

[Speaker 1]

Sometimes they will ask you if you need something. But I think in my experience, I think it's better for you to use what you create. Because sometimes what they give you may just be so solid but what you create and what you are used to, you can just come up with it, do it because teaching is just teaching.

Come up with it, do it and I think you should be good to go.

[Speaker 2]

Can you tell me an example when you feel that your school is really satisfied with your work or you just doing really well good?

[Speaker 1]

Okay, an example of how I think my school is satisfied with my work is, okay, majorly the schools I work with, most times they have other teachers that are working with them, right? It's not just me, they have other teachers that are working with them and sometimes they group us into, okay, you this teacher, you are going to be taking this set of students and all. But it's very easy for them, let's say, teacher stop working, they could just go outside and put the vacancy outside that, okay, we need this person to take this class or courses for us.

But sometimes the way you know that they are satisfied is that they can, when maybe this teacher stop coming, they can come to you and tell you that please, you are doing this and you are doing great, can you please add this other set of students to your classes again and you should be able to cater for them also.

[Speaker 2]

Okay, so now let's go to your adaption to Russia. So, when you first came to Russia, how did you feel about it as a foreigner? Like, was it good for you?

I mean, was it easy for you to adapt to their culture?

[Speaker 1]

I think it is both, it was both, okay, it was both great, it was both a great experience and also really, really, really stressful also, let me use that word, stressful also because you are coming to a new terrain, the language is quite different, right? I think communication is one key thing that exists for us as humans, I believe everybody wants to be in a place where you can be able to communicate very freely and express yourself very freely, so that is it, I think it was great also, really great, I was able to meet great people, great classmates, great classmates, make great friends, right? But also sometimes when you are going, you may just feel, because the weather is quite different, it is really different, so for you to adjust to the weather, sometimes you fall sick because the weather is changing and all, and those times can be really frustrating for you as a person, but I think generally as time goes on, you begin to adjust to these things and then it gets better.

[Speaker 2]

So, it is great, and what did you like about Russians and Russian culture and what you didn't like and what was quite interesting for you, different for you?

[Speaker 1]

Quite, okay, what I love is the beautiful city, the city is very very beautiful, and it is not just beautiful, they have a lot of historical stories to them, right, so you could see a very beautiful figure, even a very beautiful statue, right, just a pillar with a person and you could know that this person has a story to him or to her or something like that, or this particular building has a story for it and all, so I love the fact that a lot of culture backs most of what they have as monuments and even as buildings and all like that, but what I don't really like, I would say what I don't really like but I would say what caught me like a surprise because it is not something that is quite popular in my country, so I would say maybe what I don't like because preferences are different, so I would say what I don't like but I would say what caught me off target is the fact that I don't know but I feel maybe the communal relations is not there because most times everybody is just busy about their life, going on their own, sometimes I wonder how do they make friends with each other, I don't know really, because when you are going in the morning in the metro, everybody is busy, just focus on going, in the evening when you are coming, everybody is busy, just focus on going, but from where I come from it is not really like that, everybody knows each other, everybody can relate with each other, greet each other and the likes like that, so I think those are just the things.

[Speaker 2]

If you have to compare the culture of Russia with Nigeria, how you evaluate them, do you have any common cultures and what is good here, what is better than Nigeria and what is better in Nigeria than Russia?

[Speaker 1]

It's different continents, different ideologies, different beliefs, so because of what we believe, I can't say what they believe is wrong and because of what I can see here that they believe, I can't say what we believe is also wrong, but I think both have beautiful similarities, also the fact that I think we both value family cultures, family system, I think it is very strong here also, the fact that the younger ones respect their elderlies, those are two things that I really see that we have very strongly similarities in and it is everywhere, even on the streets, in the metro, in the bus, you could see that everybody values their elders.

[Speaker 2]

That is good, and did you experience any cultural shock? Can you share an example?

[Speaker 1]

Cultural shock, I think number one cultural shock is the fact that they smoke a lot. That was huge, but I think I've come to understand that for them, they don't see it as wrong or something, but from where I come from, you don't smoke, you don't smoke at all. Those that smoke, they do it in somewhere, in their closet, not like opening and all, so I think that is one of the cultural things that, for me, I think that is more like a culture for them because it is now like a way of life, culture is just like a way of life, so it is just something that they just do.

[Speaker 2]

What change happened to you in Russia since you came here?

[Speaker 1]

Alright, so I think change, I would say Russia really helped the way I view life now, or the way I view things, because like I said, sometimes when you leave where you are comfortable with and you get to a place where you have to do a lot of things, now I have deadlines, I have, okay let's just say now I think I'm more calm and I think I'm more smarter because I'm able to see, okay this is the way they do things here, so I need to change a little bit from the way I go to in the system.

[Speaker 2]

And if you also ask something, they only just answer you yes, no, or just answer your question quickly without asking you another question, so how did you deal with it, like was it hard for you to deal with such an environment or it was easy for you?

[Speaker 1]

I think I mentioned it earlier that I see people in the morning where they are going, they are focused on themselves, when they are coming back they are focused on themselves, so I would say that I have been totally, I have totally dealt with that, I think it is still something that I'm trying to break into that is making more Russian friends, because it's, I don't think they are hostile people, I just think maybe the way we, the way they believe life to be is quite different from the way we believe life to be, from where I'm from we can be total complete strangers but we can become friends within 10 minutes, within 5 minutes we can become friends for life, exchange contacts and go on, so I think maybe for them it's not so much like that, so I think it's something that I'm still trying to break into, making more friends.

[Speaker 2]

So that is great, and how about your university classes, how they are going?

[Speaker 1]

Great.

[Speaker 2]

In which language you study?

[Speaker 1]

English language.

[Speaker 2]

So they are going great, and what do you like about it and what you don't like?

[Speaker 1]

Okay, so I think sometimes I wonder if maybe I should even be studying in Russian, maybe to up my Russian fluency, but I think it's all good, because in English language I don't need to wait for a year to study the Russian language, I've just started right now, by next year I should be done. So I think what is great is the fact that we have a lot of professionals, the lecturers that teach us are not people that just have the theoretical aspect, they are people that have maybe practiced for a number of years, so as they are teaching us the theory they can teach us the practical examples that we are confident that if we follow we have good results to meet. But maybe on the other side is the fact that sometimes it can be stressful, because we change our courses in 2 months, 3 months time, every 2 months, every 3 months time and we try to adjust to a new course, learn it from the beginning again, which is quite different from the system that I am coming from.

From the system I am coming from we do 4 months straight and we do maybe let's say 11 courses, so we do 11 courses for 4 months, but now it's like 2 months we change into a new course and we are learning again, learning again and learning again, sometimes a lot of deadlines, a lot of assignments together and also sometimes it could get stressful and maybe sometimes frustrating, but I think thus far it's been good.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I see, it looks like a very challenging and hard program and how about your personal stuff, I want to ask you something about your personal behavior and are you trying to be a good person, an honest person, an helpful person?

[Speaker 1]

I don't think I would use the word try, because try is like I am trying to, like maybe I am making a change or something.

[Speaker 2]

I mean you, are you, do you like intending to be a good person, are you intending to?

[Speaker 1]

Let's just say I do the right things, things I feel are very right, I would not do to somebody else.

[Speaker 2]

And what motivates you to do things good?

[Speaker 1]

Because I don't want to do something to someone that I know that if it is done to me, it will be painful to me.

[Speaker 2]

But why you do like that, for example, why you do good for people and like for what you believe, is it religion that keeps you to doing this?

[Speaker 1]

I would say, behavior and also culture, right, because aside from religion, where I am from, culturally we are taught to always be nice, always be good, always be friendly and always be kind to people.

[Speaker 2]

So great, and what communication style you have?

[Speaker 1]

Communication style, communication style, and give me the examples of the ones we have, I forgot.

[Speaker 2]

For example, you are very open or you are very close or you are very talkative, you start a conversation or not, are you very friendly in this or not?

[Speaker 1]

Ok, so I would say, I am a bit of an introvert, let's say that way, so let's say I don't always start like a conversation with somebody, but I feel if I become more comfortable with somebody, then I am good to go, I begin to open, I begin to talk as I wish to with somebody.

[Speaker 2]

Ok, so where do you see yourself in future 5 or 10 years?

[Speaker 1]

Future 5 or 10 years, I see myself as someone that is now very renowned in the field of data analytics and I see myself as a very big business man.

[Speaker 2]

Why data analytics? Why you selected data analytics?

[Speaker 1]

Because my interest basically is human resource management, but now you see, everything now is about data, now you need to understand data to be able to understand the effectiveness of the human resource themselves, so majorly I am planning to be in the people analytics or human resource analytics.

[Speaker 2]

So that is great and how about your experience in Russia? Do you like to continue your life in Russia or you want to go back to your country?

[Speaker 1]

I would say that Russia is not so bad to me, I think so, I think it's still great to live in, I think if you just have the right opportunities, have the right network, right connections and all and you are able to adjust to the life, which I think gradually I am getting to adjust to it, then why not? Because I wish to stay, maybe not for life or something, but maybe for the next 5 years or 4 years, even after my graduation I wish to stay.

[Speaker 2]

Do you have any Russian girlfriend? No. Why?

[Speaker 1]

I have Russian friends that are girls, but not like romantic.

[Speaker 2]

Okay, so do you want to marry a Russian girl?

[Speaker 1]

No, I wouldn't say so.

[Speaker 2]

Why?

[Speaker 1]

I don't know.

[Speaker 2]

Do you have someone from your own country?

[Speaker 1]

Right now, yes.

[Speaker 2]

Ah, so that is why. And what do you like the most about Russians?

[Speaker 1]

I think...

[Speaker 2]

I mean about Russian girls.

[Speaker 1]

Russian girls.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Okay, so I think they are friendly people, of course they are beautiful people, of course they are beautiful people and they are very friendly people. I think even for their males also, they are friendly. Sometimes you may see them and feel like, is this people really friendly?

But really I think once you get to know them and you become a little bit French with them, you know that they can do a lot of things for you.

[Speaker 2]

So, it was great to have this interview with you, Mr. Olalika. Thank you very much for your time.

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