

## Being a Foreigner

By **Chrystelle Sachse**, former Au Pair from France in Wausau, WI in 2008 and currently a Community Counselor for EurAuPair in Wisconsin.

*Chrystelle Sachse was a French EurAuPair au pair in Wausau, WI in 2008. She is now married, living in the USA as a Permanent Resident. She used to live in California and became a Community Counselor for EurAuPair. She then moved to Wisconsin and is now a Community Counselor in the area.*

Linguistics differs from being a linguist. One can

required knowledge and apprenticeship.

I was born and raised French. At the time, second language education was only taught in middle school. I was about 12 years of age, when I attended my first English class. I can recall some of my first teachings on the English language. "Where is Brian?" the teacher would ask. "Brian is in the kitchen." we replied like robots. As learning

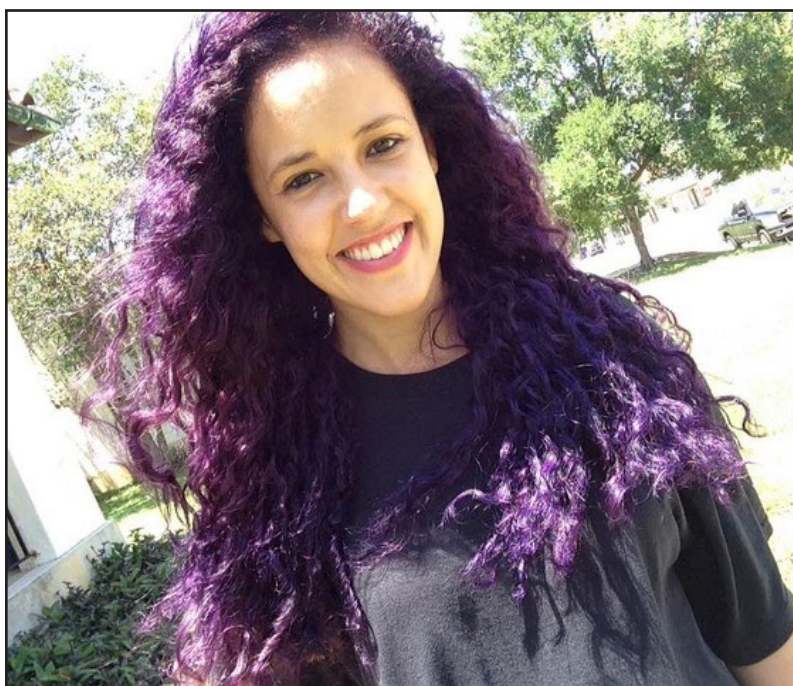
to be. I became an au pair. I chose a full immersion path as my internship for English.

I can recall, like it was yesterday, my first time at the drive thru of McDonald's; the first of many similar occurrences. "...and for your drink?", she asked through the microphone. "I would like some water," I answered (or so I thought). Confused, "Some what?", she replied. I repeated myself a few times before she kindly, yet eagerly said, "How about you come around and you can show me what you would like." It was both awkward and puzzling; I did not comprehend her confusion. After exchanging smiles, I pointed to a water bottle. "Oh, water" she exclaimed, pronouncing the word as if the "t" did not exist. This is when it really hit me: we spoke different English, and to her I had an incomprehensible accent. I learned British English, not American. Then, like today, I found meaning in using the terms 'American English', and 'British English' to point out that there are differences.

I had needed some readjustment in order to be understood in America. Eventually, I took an Accent Reduction English class, which proved to be useful. Six months of practice later, I was more aware of some of the differences. Only regular rehearsal of dos and don'ts helped me improve. I learned to hear and pronounce words differently. I became knowledgeable of some of the language complexities of American English.

Years passed, and I am now still in America where

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Former French Au Pair and current Community Counselor Chrystelle Sachse

only learn so much before the inevitable is needed: practice. As neither a linguist, nor born American, to me, English was indefinite. This language, was somewhere between different sounds I could hear on the radio, and fancy terms like "has been," that I did not grasp the correlation between definition and use. Not only was I not aware of all grammar rules, accent differences, or vocabulary varieties; furthermore, I never experienced them in their original context. As I submerged myself into American culture, understand and being understood

by heart was sufficient, I managed good grades with very little understanding. For me, comprehending the meaning and then interpreting, as opposed to word-for-word translation, was highly confusing.

Almost 10 years ago, at the age of 20, I set foot on American soil for the first time. A small step for mankind, one giant leap for the youngster I was. I had a mind craving for anything new. Traveling to the United States of America was both realizing one's heart desire and moving closer to the multilingual person I wanted

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### About Us...

EurAuPair Intercultural Child Care Programs is a non-profit, public benefit organization designated by the U.S. Department of State to conduct the Au Pair cultural exchange program under the Fulbright Hays Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 and is intended "to promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges".

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# Clear Skies over Wichita with Lupita!

By Community Counselor Pamela Porvaznik in Wichita, KS

I have to brag on my au pair, Lupita Hernandez Cruz of Cabo, Mexico. She's mature, takes her job seriously, loves her small charges - twins Scarlett and Penelope, and their brother, Xander - and fits beautifully into her host family's life and expectations. Sometimes matches are just made in heaven.

Lupita doesn't drive, and that might be a puzzlement to some, but not to her host family, Dr. Matthew and Gabriela Robertson. They don't care that she doesn't drive, they take her everywhere they go. They want her to feel comfortable and safe in their city, and it just doesn't matter to them. She's become their oldest daughter.

Lupita's host mother is a goer and likes the company. She and Lupita have taken the children to Wichita, Kansas' Exploration Place, a fantastic children's museum. They've explored the city, jogged by the Keeper of the Plains, a huge statue of an American Indian that looks over the Arkansas River, created by the late Blackbear Bosin, a much-revered Wichita artist and sculptor.

They've signed up for art classes together at Wichita's new Mark Arts center which offers painting, jewelry-making, even cooking classes. Lupita and her host mom love being together. And the host family children love their au pair. Gabriela says the twins wake each morning and run throughout the

house looking for Lupita to give her hugs and kisses.

As her Community Counselor, I couldn't be prouder of her, and look forward to our monthly outings and chats. There's

an authentic "empty nest" syndrome. They love their au pair that much. It's hard to plan things to do on our outings that Lupita hasn't done with her host family. But I've



From left to right au pair Lupita, her host sister Scarlett, host mother Gabriela, Scarlett's twin Penelope, host dad Matthew and host brother Xander

no drama with Lupita. She's grounded. She knows her own mind and came to America with the perfect attitude of wanting to be the best au pair she could be and glean from the

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Lupita with her Community Counselor Pamela

American Midwest all that blue skies, farmland and a small urban environment had to offer.

Lupita is an extension

managed to come up with some things even the Robertson's haven't experienced. One of our first outings was to

Wichita's Nifty Nut House. It's kind of a rite of passage among Wichitans who have moved away but return once a year to visit their families and their favorite haunts. "Nifty" is known for its fresh-roasted nuts of all kinds, handmade fudge, chocolate-covered everything, lollipops, hard candy, taffies...well, you get the picture. One giant Willy Wonka factory in the middle of the city!

My friends love meeting my au pairs and they'll think up things to do that only born Wichitans know about, such as eating at the Stearman Grill, watching the private planes do acrobatic tricks, landing to refuel while pilots order up the best burgers in town and fries before they fly out again.

Wichita has a terrific art museum, a wonderful Historical Museum, great college sculpture gardens and wonderful sports and ballet offerings. Lupita is game for anything and my friends adore her.

Sometimes the stars just align perfectly, and living in a place where one can see the stars nightly because Wichita is a land of endless skies, Lupita and her host family have melded into one happy family.

I'm one lucky CC!

Thank you Pamela for writing such a beautiful ode to your au pair! We wish you many more exceptional experiences with your au pairs.

# EurAupair Photos



Community Counselor Nancy Paschal from Garrett, IN took her au pairs to spend a fun day at Kuehnert Dairy Farm Fall Festival in Fort Wayne, IN.

From left to right: au pair Laria from Venezuela, Annika from Germany and Aroa from Spain.



Community Counselor Stacie Blalock in Mobile, AL took her au pairs to an Alligator farm.

From left to right: au pair Camila from Brazil, Naomi from Italy, Claire from France, Sarah from Colombia, Heloisa (au pairs' friend), Daffne from Colombia, Shihua from China



Community Counselor Carole Cilento from Bronxville, NY took her au pairs to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City to learn more about American history by viewing examples of the US decorative arts, sculpture, furniture and paintings. In the background is the painting "Washington Crossing the Delaware" by the German-American artist Emanuel Leutze. It commemorates General George Washington during the crossing of the Delaware River with the Continental Army on the night of December 25-26, 1776, during the American Revolutionary War.

From left to right: French au pairs Sara and Coralie, Community Counselor Carole Cilento, German au pair Anna, French au pair Manon (seated in center), Venezuelan au pairs Maria and Lisa, French au pair Marion.



Community Counselor Elizabeth Ramsay from Stony Point, NY took some of her au pairs apple picking at Stuarts Farm in Granite Springs, NY.

From left to right: au pair Marinna from Brazil, Community Counselor Elizabeth Ramsay with her son, au pair Yai from Venezuela.



Community Counselor Amandine Salling from Nashville, TN took her au pair to the Smoky Mountains and Gatlinburg, TN.

From left to right: au pair Annie from China, Community Counselor Amandine, au pairs from Mexico with another program Melissa and Paulina, au pair Thai from Brazil, au pair Natalia from Ukraine



Community Counselor Traci Presley from El Paso, TX took her au pairs to Chalk The Block Arts Festival.

From left to right: au pair Sinem from Turkey, Bianca and Maria from Venezuela, Tassia and Larissa from Brazil.



Community Counselor Jessica Okugic from Fort Mitchell, AL took her au pairs to an escape room for their monthly meeting. They did not make it out but Community Counselor Jessica found it fascinating watching the different cultures working together. The au pairs did have some issues with the alphabet and such, but they worked through it. Everyone had a blast!!

From left to right: au pair Roxana from Venezuela, Gaelle from France, Paige from Namibia, Nollz from South Africa and Community Counselor Jessica

# Being an Au Pair in the USA

By Rafaela Kurumoto, former Au Pair from Brazil in Germantown, MD with the Lewis family

I'm Rafaela from Brazil and I'll tell you a little about my experience being an au pair in the USA.

I was the au pair for an awesome family from June 2016 to June 2018. During my process to become an au pair I talked to three families and I fell in love with two of them, they both seemed to be amazing. I chose my host family for a number of reasons: first, I felt a good connection with the little boy Eric. He is a very smart, sweet boy with a big sense of humor, and he has a lot in common with me. Also, the parents were very nice to me. His mom is Brazilian (which made it even easier to find things in common), and his dad likes to play music just like me. Last but not least, I know it will sound silly, but we were talking about McDonald's and Eric mentioned he likes the Big Mac song, then I told him I

could sing it in Portuguese. So his mom and I started singing the song, and we had a blast! When I arrived, they received me very well

I can say that this exchange program gave me the opportunity to make most of my dreams come true (I'm a dreamer, so I

to my host mom's advice), also I went twice to Berklee College of Music to participate in workshops (that's one of the things that I liked the most). Two years went by so fast, and now I'm back in Brazil missing my host kid Eric, and all my host family, including the beautiful dogs Cookie and Luna. I feel like my relationship with my host family will be for life. My host mom's parents even went to the airport with my sister to pick me up when I arrived in Brazil. I hope all the future and current au pairs can have an amazing experience like I did. My advice is: enjoy every second of it because it goes by in the blink of an eye and sooner than you think you're going to be missing every single moment of it.

*Thank you Rafaela for sharing your experience with us!*



*From left to right: au pair Rafaela from Brazil, her host brother Eric, host mother Leticia and host dad Jeremy*

and they made me feel at home throughout the two years. Because they were so welcoming and nice to me, everything went smoothly. I adapted very quickly to the language, to the culture, to the routine, to driving...

still have more dreams!). I visited all the places I wanted to visit and more, I went to a lot of concerts, I met three of my favorite bands, I studied IT and ended up finding a new profession for me (thanks

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I have played the roles of French and American for almost a decade. I experienced and learned a lot. Although important, knowing how to enunciate was not sufficient by itself to fully communicate. Consider table manners. In France, best manners include putting both of your hands on the table and using your knife. Little did I know it was not the same in America, where pretty much knives are put on the table only if meat is involved; making one hand on the table common behavior. At first, even my best manners were not enough to blend in; time trained me to the sole use of a fork. This was a little thing; yet, it meant effort on my part. But, greatly

satisfying has been the reward of blending in.

Nevertheless, sensitive topics are still problematic. My opinion is regularly perceived as from an outsider, or a form of attack on American society. I have been living on American soil for all of my adult life; learning and integrating the culture, as one of my own. I have a hard time when my views are strictly perceived as coming from a stranger; as if hiding my French identity would change how my interlocutor understood.

Certainly, learning is a two way road. As a foreigner, I have found pleasure in sharing my perceptions and knowledge. When discussing about French vocabulary with Americans, often they have

interjected, "Ooh la la!" with a sexual innuendo. Many times, I explained that in French language the word is not used the same. Walking around Paris you could hear in French, "Ooh la la this Cathedral is majestic!"; or, "Ooh la la this guy is handsome." The meanings going from feelings of admiration, deception, or surprise. Being able to rightfully use a term found in both languages is gratifying.

Only time and practice helped me make the right correlation between the knowledge I had on English, and American language. Never would I have been aware that there was more to learn than the English idiom. My experience had a greater outcome than to become bilingual. I am

grasping the variations between different English dialects; as well, between American and French alternative behaviors. It appears that, within the eyes of the people I connect with, their perception of the French language has evolved too. Now, I keep on practicing. I look forward to understanding all word games. The more I aim to understand, the more I am understood; glad I can confidently go to the drive thru.

*Thank you Chrystelle for sharing your experience with us! We hope you don't have any more trouble ordering water at a drive thru. :)*