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## A Guide to English Education

### Abstract

Moving to a new country is scary; being thrown into school with a loose grasp of the language being spoken in said class even more so. Kamile Gustaite, a first-generation immigrant from Lithuania, presents four defining takeaways from her educational career after having moved to England, from writing the number nine the correct way to feeling exposed as an outsider more than a decade after arriving in the country.

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### Recommended Citation

Gustaite, Kamile. "A Guide to English Education." *Text & Type*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2024. CSU Open Journals.  
Available at: <https://journals.calstate.edu/textandtype/issue/view/451>

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KAMILIE GUSTAITE

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## A Guide to English Education

1. The number nine will become your enemy.

There is one thing and one thing only that will matter in the beginning, and that is *the green tick*. Speaking sufficient English after months of practice, finally it will be the day you have been waiting for, and you will find yourself in the first official lesson since you arrived in the country. Books open, small heads down in concentration, the emerald makes its way towards you.

*Tick, Tick, Tick*, Pause.

“What is this supposed to be?” a smile asks.

“A nine,” you will respond.

“Aha.” *Scribble scribble*.

Well. That is not a tick.

As it turns out, the number nine is written differently in England than how you were taught back home, and it will cost you the fulfilment of a job well done. Many lessons will pass, and many a nine will have its hook chopped off until it is uniform to the classmates around you. The number nine will not best you again.

2. You will build a promising future in translation.

If a career in translation post-education interests you, then you will be in luck. Employers will not be able to overlook your 11 years worth of hands-on job experience at 18. From parent evenings to forged notes for book diaries to applications to secondary schools. Students from similar backgrounds as you will enrol in your school, new to the country, and they will be assigned to the same classes. You will show them around, whisper directions and meanings of sentences on the board in your mother tongue until, inevitably, your services will no longer be needed.

“I think it’s about time you two sat apart,” an exasperated teacher will say. “They can get on just fine now.”

Repeat twice. Your CV will be stacked.

3. They will always be able to sniff you out.

Years, a whole decade in fact, will pass in England and you will feel as if you have assimilated well with your classmates. You will complete work to a high standard. Despite your later start

to the language, you will understand pop culture references. And you will not feel uncomfortable anymore when the city you live in gets described as “home.” Yet, something will be missing.

A teacher will turn to you in the middle of a class explanation: “Don’t worry if you don’t understand this on the first try. I’ve found a previous pupil from Lithuania struggled with this concept before.”

Your conversation will be stopped by someone at your table: “Sorry to interrupt, but where are you from? Your accent is so intriguing.”

4. Attending Hogwarts will not be as magical as you imagined.

After stressful nights where time will seem to run away from you like sand as you study, you will receive your congratulatory email. You will be swept away in the fancy of it all at first: the beautiful old buildings, the winding cobbled roads, and the robes, *god* the robes!

But weeks will pass, the glamour will settle, and just as Harry did, you, too, will encounter your Slytherins. Some will question your choice of degree. I mean, what *will* you do with a humanities subject? Surely you are not serious about doing a Ph.D.? That will just be a waste of money. Others will seem to be living in a world completely alien to yours. Do you mean to say you do not ski? Not even in, like, Slovakia?

But the last of the enchantment will seem to wear off not due to the fault of anyone else but yourself. The historic buildings will seem to judge you as you stare, taunting you to enter the same way scholars of the last millennium have. The ancient roads are lined with shops you will not be able to afford, and the robes will engulf you, as if to hide the fact that you feel you really do not belong in this magical world.