

The product is originated in the E526 Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language graduate course at Colorado State University. It is designed for teachers who are in charge of EFL/ESL students at school and it is expected to contribute to the understanding of Korean EFL/ESL learners at each school.



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Stories of Cultural Differences and Adjustment



Real stories about 5 Korean ELLs

It is assumed that the majority of EFL Korean students who have come to Fort Collins, thanks to their parents' job or academic work, have faced many unexpected problems in learning, communicating and socializing in a different situation from Korea. Two of the main reasons for such problems are derived from language differences itself and from cultural differences. Therefore, it is noted that they might have difficulties at school adapting to school life in America while learning subjects in English and encountering a different school life.

This booklet is designed for teachers who are in charge of EFL/ESL students at school and the stories of five Korean ELLs are expected to contribute to the understanding Korean EFL/ESL learners at each school.

Jee Eun Park & Sookhee Jeong

(MA in TEFL/TESL at CSU)



My friends spread what I said to their friends and more American kids wanted me to be their friend. Now I have lots of friends here. We play football and basketball, make some jokes to each other, and visit each other's house to spend time together on weekends.

I noticed that every kid in the world has something in common. All kids enjoy hearing the life stories from other cultures and talking about their personal interesting episodes! When Korean kids have a chance to meet and talk with American kids, they don't have to feel nervous or strange. Just talk to them first. They just need a small amount of courage to do it like I did!



Sangwon's Story

Making Friends in the United States



Sangwon Kim (Leshler Middle School)

When I came here to the United States for the first time in my life, I had lots of difficulties to adjust to American school life. One of my biggest difficulties was how to make American friends. Fortunately, I have many American friends by acting in a brave way.

When I came here, I thought that I could not spend two years without any friends, because I had many friends in Korea and getting along with them made me feel so happy. I remember clearly how I felt on the first day at Leshler Middle School in Fort Collins. I felt so strange and alone. Fortunately, one of my ELO classmates came to me and suggested that we have lunch together with his friends. I was so thankful to him for talking to me first. At lunch time, I plucked up the courage to tell them about me and some interesting facts about Korean culture. I also told them interesting stories about what I experienced in Korea. Surprisingly, they really liked my stories and we started to get to know each other. I found that American kids also like to hear something new about other cultures.



Hyunsoo's Story

A Lack of English



Hyunsoo Kim (Leshler Middle School)

If you are a foreigner from a different country, you must've had the problem of not knowing much English. Well, that's exactly what happened to me 2 years ago; but you know what they say. "Practice makes perfect."

There are several issues on having a lack of English. First of all, your grades and school work matter. If you don't understand what the teacher is saying, you won't want to learn about them because you think you are bad at English even though the fact is, you just came to the United States! For example, I had trouble doing Mathmate's which was one of our math assignments that were due every Friday. If you pay attention to these Mathmate's, you will notice that there are lots of math vocabulary and reading skills needed to solve these problems. It is always important to look into the dictionary or ask your parents what some vocabulary means. After all, you are probably here because of your parents.

The second issue that you could have caused by a lack of English is your friends. When I first came here, I didn't know anybody and no one seems to care about me. Then I started learning to communicate even though I still had a late response/reactions when people asked me questions. Now, I can speak English fluently; I have as many friends as I need. By that, I mean everywhere you go is full of your friends so that you will never be lonely. I'm sure you will have a lack of friend issues too like every one of us did. Just don't forget to smile everywhere you go. Smiling is how I have my best friend now.



Next, you might have a racism problem if you are not fluent in English. My family and I had tons of racism experiences when we were new to United States. For example, in some grocery stores, we had cashiers who would seem very nice to the previous customer and when it's our turn, they would just ignore us with cold-stoned face instead of saying, "Hi! How's your day going?" or even "Did you find everything okay?" This doesn't just happen outside of school. Yes, it happens inside the school, too. The perfect example is, gossiping.



All of this just seems mean but don't mind them. Some people are just racist like that. Instead, I would recommend you to study more English so that this won't happen again because they do know when someone understands English

I hope you are not scared of being here suddenly. I'm not going to guarantee you that everything I said will happen. Who knows? Maybe you are already fluent in English or people have changed. My point is, be proud of who you are. Even if you're not perfect in English yet, you already know another language that other people in United States don't know! I wish you enjoy living in United States, and have fun!

Another thing I struggled with and still do now is vocabulary, especially scientific vocabulary and geographic vocabulary. Last week I had a huge project due in geography class. I had trouble with this project because we had to fill out a sheet of paper with the information of a country I chose but I couldn't understand most of the words I researched on the country because the vocabulary was so hard.

So knowing little English vocabulary made it hard for me to study here, and communicating was hard for me because of knowing little English vocabulary. These communicating skills and vocabulary skills were the hardest things when I first came to Leshar Middle School.



Eunsung's Story

Things I Struggled with



Eunsung Kim (Leshar Middle School)

When I first came here to the United States of America and I went to middle school, it was really hard for me because I didn't know that much English. When I was in the 6th grade, I had an English class and we had a big project coming up. It was about studying a historical person, and we had to pretend to be the person we researched and parents would come that night to school. When they came to look at our poster, we would have to tell them about that historical person's life. That project, I think, was the hardest project of all the other classes' projects because I had to present to other parents and I didn't know how to speak English very well. I started to have nightmares because I was so nervous. But I worked hard to memorize my script and although I was nervous, I did well that night.



Sangyeop's Story

Dear my Friend, Hyobin



Sangyeop Kim (Laurel Elementary School)

Hi, Hyobin.

I'm glad to send you an e-mail like this. I'm gonna tell you about the differences between Korea and America. First thing you have to know about America is that you have to speak English in order for people to understand you. However, it is not easy at all. If you are in Korea, you can say whatever you want to say in Korean and people understand you. The second thing you have to know about American schools is that you have to pay for the school lunch whereas you don't have to pay for the lunch in Korean schools so you can save money. The third thing you have to know about the U.S. is that it is too far to go any place you need to go, so you always need someone to drive you. In Korea, as you know, you can walk to your school, go to your friend's house to play, and buy a pen or a notebook at the stationary near your house. The fourth thing that you have to know is there is no such thing as racism, so you don't have to feel worried about that when you are in America. By contrast, if you are in Korea, you are not happy because you don't have many recesses. The second difference is that it is easy to say whatever you want to say because you can speak Korean. Hyobin, you have to know things in both countries if you want to come here .

Bye.

Sangyeop



Euihyun's Story

Difference between Korean and American Schools



Euihyun Seo (Bennett Elementary School)

There are lots of differences between Korean and American schools. They both have good sides and bad sides. Their education, clubs, and vacations are different .

Korean and American schools have different types of education. Korean schools' education is more intensive. They also give students lots of homework. This may be a good thing, because students can learn things faster. But students might not catch up, so it is both a good and bad thing. American schools' education is slower and broader than Korean schools. They also give less homework. This may be a good thing and bad thing, too. Students will have less work to do, but they can't learn things fast. Korean and American schools' types of education are very different.



Clubs are different between Korean and American schools, too. American schools have lots of kinds of clubs such as orchestra, sports, learning other languages and more. But most Korean schools don't have a variety of clubs except some private schools.

Korean and American schools also have lots of differences with vacations. American schools have longer vacations. They have about 3 months of summer vacation and 2-3 weeks of winter vacation. They also get lots of days off. Korean schools don't get many days off. Korean schools have about 3 weeks - 1 months of summer vacation and 2 months of winter vacation.

Lots of things are different between Korean and American schools, but they are both used for teaching kids and help kids make friends .

