The Most Priceless Experience

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*“Learning a new language and get a new soul.”* – Czech Proverb. In my life, the year of 2000 – 2001 is the most valuable and indelible time when I went to Indianapolis, USA to learn English. My decision to go to USA arose from my professional goal that I wished to work for a multi-national company, like a foreign bank, after graduation. I thought that the key qualification to get a position in that field was English. Furthermore, at the time of starting a social life, I needed to be prepared to be independent from my parents and I wanted to pioneer my way in a new and wide world.

I took an intensive English program of American Language Academy (ALA), in Butler University from October 2000 to February 2001 and got a certificate of completion of the most advanced level in English as a second language. The reasons why I chose Indianapolis were that there were a fewer Koreans comparing with other cities in USA, the city was quite safe and people were naïve and inoffensive.

The classroom environment was totally different from Korean traditional one. In my classroom, there were just 7-8 students which were much smaller than Korean school. Lessons were thoroughly student-centered, focused on communication and emphasized speaking and listening rather that reading and writing. We got a lot of conversation practice in interacting with one another. In addition, lessons did not cover only textbook. For example, we debated on social hot topics in group and we often watched TV sitcoms and movies. Besides, we had some opportunities of out-of-class trips and activities. The most difficult and memorable lecture was a personal presentation. I had to pick up a topic, get information from internet or others’ papers and survey Butler University students. Then I wrote a report and gave a presentation. Although it was a rather tough and time-consuming job, it served as a momentum that I fostered my confidence in speaking English.

My teacher naming Lisa was one of my best favorite teachers. She was very authentic and unbiased. She always tried to listen carefully to students and advised us about academic issues and lives in a foreign country. Also, I thought she was good at balancing as a role of explainer, involver, and enabler. Together with lecturing and explaining her subject matters very exactly and effectively, she challenged our involvement with various interesting methods and inspired us to know the subject matters for ourselves. She monitored discreetly what we were doing and got information from monitoring about feedback and new lecturing contains. I was highly contented with curriculum, instruction and teachers which were provided by ALA.

Apart from schoolwork, I made greater efforts to enhance my English ability by myself. I tried to mend my introvert nature and be talkative intentionally. I got along with many foreign friends and had exciting weekends together with doing varied activities, like traveling, going shopping, watching movies, making their own country food and having parties. Additionally, living with an American family was a very precious experience and a critical factor in improving English fluency. I endeavored to spend time with them as much as possible in ways of eating dinner together, doing volunteer activities, and celebrating important holidays such as Thanksgiving Day, Christmas and Halloweens.

I can say with confidence that my language learning experience is a success. I took a fear of English away and made good progress in English. I got a satisfactory score in English test and worked for The Bank of New York. Further, I experienced diverse culture and I had grown up as an independent and open minded adult (of course I have a long way to be a highly mature adult). I was not a frog in small pond anymore. Through learning English in USA, I can understand what Czech Proverb’s quote, “*Learning a new language and get a new soul”* means and I create my new another ego.