

The *Global* DOMER

April/May 2012

An International Student Services & Activities (ISSA) Publication



Hyewon (third from top right) celebrates the end of the year with her ESL classmates.

WHAT THE ESL CLASSES TAUGHT ME

by Hyewon Yun, Korea

Writer David Sedaris said that he felt like “the lowest life form” while he was discussing on NPR his humiliating experiences of learning French in Paris. The statement might be extreme, but it does hold some truth. I worked as a translator back in Korea, and helped many English-speaking business people and professionals communicate with their Korean counterparts in mutual interactions. My best efforts to change one language into another failed me sometimes because as foreigners, English speakers could not fully understand what was going on without a basic awareness of Korea’s cultural and social contexts. In this situation, they first floundered in a deluge of

words, then abandoned themselves in a pool of loss, and finally had this I-have-no-idea look on their faces. This made them look not very smart, at best. However, the tables were turned when I came to America with my husband, who had been accepted as a business graduate student at Notre Dame.

I started to learn English at the age of 13 in school, majored in English education at college, and was trained and worked as a professional English translator. I often watched CNN and PBS, read *Time Magazine* and the *New York Times*, and loved *Sex and the City*, *Desperate Housewives*, and *Iron Man*; however, as soon as I landed in the middle of Midwestern corn fields, I immediately

became a “foreigner” who had no idea about America and American life.

When I came to Notre Dame with my husband, I began participating in International Student Services and Activities’ English as a Second Language (ESL) for International Spouses Program. Part of my journey in the ESL classes was the process of better understanding American culture and history. One of the insightful topics during the classes was tall tales, which extoll courage, resourcefulness, as well as physical and mental strength of the grassroots heroes and heroines who pioneered this country long before Hollywood, New York fashion, Michael Jackson or Coca-Cola. I could see the painful struggle of those

people who crossed treacherous waters from around the world, endured hard labor to survive poverty or slavery, or took one tough step after another to build a better life in the New World behind these funny or exaggerated stories. I believe that this heroism, unsung outside America, has served as a basis for this country's entrepreneurship, country music, hard-to-pronounce street names and beautiful national parks. Those tales helped me to understand the formation of this country a little more.

The ESL Program opened my eyes, not just to America, but also to the world. In celebration of Valentine's Day every year and in the middle of busy presidential primaries this year, two different classes under the program had joint sessions to discuss love and wedding customs as well as presidential election systems in the students' home countries. The students in the class represented almost the entire world: China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan from East Asia; India, Iran, Israel and Sri Lanka from South Asia and the Middle East; Armenia, Russia and Spain from Asia and Europe; the Dominican Republic and Mexico from Central America; Brazil, Chile and Uruguay from South America; and Cameroon and

Mali from Africa. I was sometimes shocked, and at other times amused, by the stories. For example, Islamic Chinese hold a family-oriented hour-long wedding ceremony, which seems to be the combination of the Islamic faith and Confucian values. Iran surprised me with its great status of women and high divorce rates. Africa and Asia have similarities in putting communities and families before individuals. I never expected to meet a passionate Iranian feminist or modest, silent Chinese career woman (Chinese people are considered assertive and outspoken to many Koreans). I also learned what roles religion plays in American and Iranian politics, why the Chinese do not bother to vote, and how totally different countries have so much in common.

These experiences reminded me that I had a mold to break, which required more sincere effort and commitment than expected. It is true that I have learned things from CNN World Reports, BBC World Service, and *The Economist*, but they often cannot beat five minutes of small talk with real people from

the regions that news media touch upon. The ESL student body is a microcosm that provides many chances for such interactions as it represents a big world across diverse countries, regions, skin colors, ethnic groups, cultures, and religions in a small classroom. This English-learning program encouraged me to break down the walls of preconceptions and misunderstandings and to see the world beyond the endless cornfields of the Midwest.

Some might say it is an exaggeration, but I believe these eye-opening moments help build trust, harmony and peace in the world. The lack of understanding often produces prejudice and discrimination. I couldn't have learned this lesson living a comfortable life as a non-foreigner in Korea, nor did I expect to learn this lesson when I first signed up for the program. This is the education this unique and precious program can deliver – I couldn't have learned it from any other part of American life. This is what the ESL for International Spouses Program taught me, and how it helped me grow out of feeling like “the lowest life form” in America.

IMMIGRATION *Updates*

VISITOR VISA LETTERS

Students who plan to invite their parents, relatives, and/or friends from outside of the United States to their graduation ceremonies on campus may need to obtain a Visitor Visa Letter from the Office of the Registrar. The ISO does not furnish Visitor Visa Letters for graduation purposes.

To begin the Visitor Visa Letter process, students should visit https://www3.nd.edu/~undiso/Secure/Visitor_Visa_Request.html, fill out the form, and print it (they should not submit the form online). Students should then take the paper copy to the Office of the Registrar in 300 Grace Hall to receive the letter(s).

SUMMER EMPLOYMENT

Students who stay on campus during the summer are permitted to work full-time during scheduled school breaks; the 20-hour per week limit imposed during the academic year does not apply during the summer. Students should check with their on-campus employers for other limits that may apply.

off-campus must first obtain the appropriate employment authorization in writing and in advance of their start date through the Immigration Services Office. Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or Optional Practical Training (OPT) may be options for many Notre Dame students for summer employment or for employment after graduation. Please contact the ISO at undiso@nd.edu for further information.

Employment Authorization: Students who plan to work

GOOD LUCK, GOODBYE, AND GOOD TIMES

by Nikita Taniparti, International Ambassador, India

Yet another year comes to an end as we eagerly await the warm summer weather and final results of the semester. Before all the formalities, International Student Services and Activities (ISSA) hosted the International Ambassador Spring Banquet, which celebrated the International Ambassadors (IAs) work over the past year and welcomed the new team of IAs. This year, the dinner was held at the Morris Inn on April 10. Along with a fabulous fare, we were fortunate to have Dr. Nicholas Entrikin, Vice President and Associate Provost for Internationalization, as our guest speaker.

The International Ambassador Program is group of selected undergraduate and graduate students who are involved with International Student Orientation in August, mentor the new students

throughout their first year at Notre Dame, and help with a variety of events on campus, including International Festival Week and International Education Week. As an IA, I feel immensely lucky to have such an important role in welcoming the incoming students, especially since I understand the challenges they might encounter as they make Notre Dame their new home. The IA Program comprises of current international students as well as American citizens, and all students may apply.

With graduation nearing and study abroad opportunities and new Resident Assistant positions on the horizon, we would like to bid a heartfelt goodbye to some current IAs who will not be in the program next year. It was a blast working

with everyone, and these friendships will last indefinitely. That being said, each year brings fresh spirit and enthusiastic new applicants who will make a tremendous contribution to our team. We would like to extend a warm welcome to all the new IAs. We look forward to having a fantastic year ahead.

In the midst of all the goodbye wishes and welcoming greetings, the Spring Banquet was the perfect setting for us to get together at the end of the year. We have a wonderful orientation planned in August for the new international students, and we cannot wait to come back and get going! We hope everyone has a fantastic summer, and comes back full of stories to tell and things to share.



English as a Second Language (ESL) Certificate Ceremony

On Thursday, May 3, the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program for International Spouses held its annual Certificate Ceremony at the Morris Inn. At the ceremony, students received certificates for completing their ESL classes, enjoyed lunch, and bid farewell to departing students.

The ESL for International Spouses Program provides ESL instruction to the spouses of Notre Dame students, scholars, faculty, and staff. Registration for the 2012-2013 academic year will take place in August 2012.



International Student Study Break

On Friday, May 4, more than 100 international students attended the International Student Study Break in the LaFortune Ballroom. Students took a short break from studying to spend time with their fellow international students and enjoy free pizza and snacks.

Graduating international students and their families are invited to attend the 20th Annual International Student Commencement Reception on Saturday, May 19 from 3:00 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. in the McKenna Hall Atrium. Rev. John Jenkins, C.S.C., President of the University of the Notre Dame will share brief remarks. Students who plan to attend should RSVP to issa@nd.edu by May 15.

International Student Commencement Reception

For more information about ISSA's upcoming programs and events, visit <http://issa.nd.edu>. Questions? Email issa@nd.edu.