

The Korean Language Immersion Programme took place in the summer of 2013 at Yonsei University's Korean Language institute (KLI). Through the three-week programme, we were able to learn new grammar and vocabulary that were used in everyday life as well as revise the grammar and vocabulary that we had learnt from the modules previously taken in NUS. The immersion programme also allowed us to improve our conversational Korean as we had to use it on a daily basis since we were in an environment in which Korean was the main mode of conversation. In addition to the lessons we received at the Korean Language Institute in Yonsei University, we attended cultural programmes after classes which enhanced our knowledge of the Korean language and culture.

During our three-week stay at Yonsei University's Mu-Ak dormitory, we would wake up daily for a reasonably priced and hearty breakfast comprising of rice, soup and four other side dishes. After which, we would take a shuttle bus to the Korean Language Institute situated at the Eastern side of Yonsei University. There, we attended four hours of lessons daily which focused on improving our comprehension skills, writing skills, listening and conversational Korean. The first two hours was usually dedicated to teaching us the grammar and vocabulary of the Korean language, whereas the third hour of the day focused mainly on enhancing our comprehension skills. Occasionally, the third hour would be used to improve our writing skills. We would be given a topic such as "Introducing a close friend" to write about, while the teacher walked around the class, correcting the mistakes we had made on the spot. After writing, we would share our writings with the rest of the class. This allowed us to adapt to speaking in Korean comfortably and confidently. This usually resulted in an interesting sharing session during the third hour as we would share the culture of Singapore with our Korean teacher and vice-versa. I especially enjoyed those sharing sessions as we not only learnt more about the differences in culture between the two countries, but also got to know our classmates and teacher better. Lastly, special activities were usually conducted in the fourth hour of lessons. During the fourth hour, the teacher engaged the entire class in fun games aimed to improve our spoken Korean as well as refresh our memories of the grammar learnt earlier in the first and second hours of the day. Once a week, we also learnt to sing some Korean songs during the last hour of lessons. From these sessions, we picked up a variety of popular children songs, traditional Korean songs and pop songs such as Arirang, Yoon Jong Shin's Patbingsu and Dong Bang Shin Ki's Balloons. The Korean song learning sessions often turned into a huge sing-a-long session as we sang along to the melody of the song after learning the tune and meaning of the lyrics from our Korean language teachers.

The image of the entire lecture theatre singing along to a song still lingers in my mind. It would definitely be one of the most memorable parts of the immersion programme.



Special Korean cultural activities were also arranged for us to increase our knowledge of the Korean culture. Once a week, we would attend these classes aimed to enhance our knowledge of the Korean culture after our regular four-hour lessons. During the first lesson, we attended a traditional pottery class, dojaki. We had a hands-on experience in making our own wind chimes. It was an interesting experience moulding the clay into a dome shape for the top of the wind chime and into anything creative we want for the bottom part of the wind chime. Cultural exchanged occurred between the instructors and us as they taught us more about the pottery while we told them more about the objects that we moulded our clay into for the bottom part of our wind chime. In the second cultural activity lesson, we were taught to make two Korean dishes, Mussammalli and Dakkangjung. Mussammalli is a dish in which various vegetables such as perilla leaf, red and yellow paprika, cucumber and radish sprouts and crab

sticks were wrapped in a pickled radish while Dakgangjung is a crispy sweet and spicy chicken dish. In our last cultural activity session, we learnt Samulnori, which is the traditional Korean percussion involving four different types of percussion, the Janggu, Buk, Jing and the Kkwaenggwari. We started out learning how to play the Janggu, an hour-glass shaped drum, by learning the basic rhythm and beats. After learning the basic beats, we were taught more complicated beats and even split up so that some of us were playing the other instruments like the Buk, Jing and Kkwaenggwari. It was a refreshing experience learning Samulnori under the guidance of a lively instructor who taught us the roots of Samulnori and the occasions in which Samulnori was used in traditional Korea.



Participating in the immersion programme has also allowed me to widen my social circle. Not only have I made new local friends, I was also assigned a Korean language exchange buddy whom I could seek help from, should I have any problems with my studies in the Korean language. Engaging in conversations with my Korean language exchange buddy often resulted in hilarious and sometimes frustrating moments as I could only speak simple Korean and him, simple English. Despite that, we were able to enjoy our time together. Through

conversations with my buddy over the simple meals we shared, I was able to learn more about the viewpoints of the Koreans and more about the Korean culture. I was also introduced to baseball, a sport loved by Koreans, as we went to watch a match together. Through the match, I was able to experience the exhilaration of watching a match live as well as immerse myself in the lively atmosphere at the baseball stadium. Having a Korean language exchange buddy also allowed me to experience the everyday life of a Korean as we followed the custom of eating Jeon, a Korean pancake, and drinking Makgeolli, a Korean rice wine, on a rainy day and had fried chicken and beer at a baseball match.



During our free time, we would spend our time exploring the streets of Seoul with our friends. As classes only took place from nine in the morning to one in the afternoon, we had ample time to tour the streets of Seoul and indulge in delicious Korean food and shopping. It was also a great opportunity to practice our Korean as we had to converse with the store owners should we want to purchase an item or order food. Occasionally, we would have to ask for directions from the locals and hence put the Korean we had learnt in class to practice. In addition to practicing our Korean, we learnt more about Korea's history as we visited historical sites such as the palaces located in Seoul.





Learning a new language such as Korean is a life skill as it would be something that we will be able to use to our advantage in the future. For students interested in joining the immersion programme in the future, I strongly encourage you to do so as it would be an experience of a life time. Not only do we get to hone our Korean through this immersion programme, we also learnt to be more receptive towards other cultures and enjoyed ourselves thoroughly during the programme.