How I learned English

 Sera Kim, 2011.06.08

 When I was twelve years old, my mother asked me one day, smiling,

“Dhohee, would you like to eat bananas everyday? “ I said “Yes”, smiling back,

thinking it was a funny question. Then she told me that we were moving to

the States to live there for one year. And later I found out that it was a very

unusual chance for a young girl to experience a new culture and a language

as well.

It was a small campus town called Bloomington, Indiana, and I was one

of the five Asian kids in the entire middle school. At first, many kids came up

to me and wanted to ask various questions as it was quite unusual for them

too to have a friend like me. However, they soon found out it was difficult to

make friends with me because I was unable to communicate with them due

to language failure. My father wrote a note in front of a notebook asking the

teachers to write down the day’s homework as I could not understand what

the teacher said during the class and did not know what the homework was

as well. When I showed the notebook, teachers used to smile and write down

the homework for me so that I could successfully perform them with my

father’s help.

 Then I was suggested to take an ESL class which was the only class in the

school consisted of foreign kids like myself. It was the most interesting and

hilarious class for me as the teachers knew our needs exactly and were eager

to help us and encourage us all the time being very kind and generous. It

took six months for me to follow the regular class and later I did not need to

take the ESL class any more. Thinking back, it was such a precious and

productive time for me that I could learn English fast and easy, with the help

of good teachers and useful instruments. Moreover, I could make friends with

American girls among which I can even remember the names still today, and I

believe that was the fastest way to learn a language to just talk and play with

native friends while having fun.

As I grew up, many people ask me where and how I learned English.

Frankly speaking, I do believe there is a certain period of life stage that we

can best learn a language to speak like a native speaker. After many times of

trial to learn Chinese and Japanese as an adult, I myself experienced several

failure to learn the language. As adult learners have characteristics such as

being autonomous and self directed etcs., I, as a candidate for an English

teacher, need to be more strategic and sophisticated to help out adults to

learn English effectively. Koreans tend to fail to learn English even after six

years of education during teenage period as the method and approach of

English classes in schools were unproductive. It is a tremendous loss of

energy and money in my point of view and fortunately I see a lot of effective

language education programs are in progress currently thanks to many new

curriculums and teachers who know the developed educational contents.

 As a second language, English is not only the most common language but

also very interesting language for all Koreans as we are almost always

exposed to English and there are many channels to learn it. After learning the

characteristics of adult learners, I hope to become more capable candidate for

an English teacher and it already makes me feel really excited.