

What could we do to understand people from other cultures?

-Ji Ahn

Nowadays, we can see a lot of people from other countries that have diverse cultures. As the geographical means of boundary disappears, it became possible for us to move around the countries freely and also with the help of internet; it is easy to know a big amount of news around the world. As a lot of people go on a trip abroad, the biggest problems those travelers feel is the culture difference. They feel the culture difference between their own and others'. Some people might be planning about immigrating to other countries. They go through hard times to fit into new environment. I once went to U.S. when I was 10, and I felt the culture difference immediately. And I learn how to adapt to new environment with completely different culture by living with the native people. Because I was young, I was able to adapt to new place faster than my parents. Having this kind of experience, I knew what we should do to understand people from other cultures. It can be divided into two ways. One is to experience other cultures indirectly, such as learning their languages and knowing more about their backgrounds like religion and history etc, and another is to experience directly. For example, going to other country as an exchange student is a very effective way to understand different cultures.

First, experiencing indirectly by learning other languages is best way to understand their cultures. It is because the languages are the fundamental source of cultures. All culture began when the languages were created. Also, knowing the language helps communicate with people living in the country. How are we going to get information about them if we cannot communicate? This is the most important because learning the language is the only way to adapt to new surroundings.

Also, knowing their culture background is also essential. How other people establish their country and what kind of hardships they went through makes it possible for us to understand their cultures. Those culture backgrounds were not formed in a day. People obtain their knowledge when they are faced with difficult problems.

This kind of knowledge is almost equal to tradition. When we encounter people from other cultures with the knowledge of their traditions, it will help us to understand their cultures much easier.

Second, experiencing directly by living with the natives is the most effective way to comprehend all kinds of traditions. We can live among the natives by going their country as an exchange student. The advantages of being an exchange student are those students can get a chance to see how the others are different from themselves. For example, those students could try food from other cultures and by seeing how

other people live; they can learn how to act according to their cultures. Once we know how they think, it is easy to understand why others behave in different way from ours.

In conclusion, we can try to understand people from other cultures in many ways. If you are planning to go to foreign country, get more information before you go. Once you go to foreign country, try to see many things as possible. Because I once have been a foreigner, I was eager to adjust to new circumstances. This made me easy to understand foreigners in Korea. But this couldn't have happened if I didn't know about their backgrounds or their languages.

Therefore, we should always try to think in various ways to understand people from other people. It will be a great chance if you are chosen as an exchange student. Opportunities to go abroad don't come by often. So try not to miss it if you have a chance.