Two Big Keys to Improving English: Friendships and Good Study Skills

By KangHee Moon

In my one year in the Intensive English Program, I have learned English in a lot of different ways. My classes are very good, and there are a lot of extra activities too. Friendship, though, has been the best way. Speaking with friends, doing things together and having fun has been the best way to learn.

I am a fourth-year college student from South Korea. When I came to Bloomington, my English skills were not very good. However, in my time here I have met students from all over the world – from other countries in Asia, Latin America and Europe. Many of them have become good friends. We eat dinner together, go to movies, and hang out all the time. And, what is important is: We have to speak English!

Of course, our English is not perfect, but we have a lot of fun and laughs while we are learning. We go to different places in Bloomington. We even go to Chicago together. Whatever we do, we do with English. Also, because we are friends we are not afraid to make a mistake.

Everyday I read and write and do my homework, and everyday I also talk to my friends. I try new words and new expressions. For example, last week I told my good friend Al-Faisal Asherhi of Saudi Arabia “I will get back to you.” He thought I was going to come to his house, but the expression means “I will call you again later.”

With practice – and good friends – you can have a lot of success with English. You can learn about different cultures, make friends you will have for your whole life and also have a lot of fun!
By Elvira Koskova

IEP Extra Activities Give Students A Big Push in English

In addition to regular classes, the IEP offers many other activities to help students improve their English skills.

“We offer an extra activity almost every day of the week,” says IEP director Marlin Howard. The activities include English Table every Tuesday, where teachers and students share dinner time by eating and chatting together. There is Grammar Circle on Thursdays, where IEP teacher and grammar expert Michael McCafferty offers extra help in the often-difficult area of grammar. On Wednesdays, students can go to Reading Circle, where students practice reading and comprehension skills.

According to IEP Assistant Director Heidi Vellenga, those students who participate in extra activities tend to learn English faster. “Our students get a lot of input from classes and homework,” she says, “but the extra input from these other activities increases the amount of English that students learn, as well as their speed of learning,” she states. It is a good time for all involved — teachers too!

Another extra activity is the Saturday morning TOEFL and Conversation Circle. From 9 a.m. to noon, students have three options: first, they can take a TOEFL practice exam and review their results with a teacher; second, they can enjoy some lively conversation with other students; or, third, they can do both activities.

They can take the exam in the first half and join the conversation group in the second half of the morning. “The TOEFL practice time and the conversation circle gives us three hours of total English practice,” comments Osama Badr, a 23-year-old engineering major from Egypt. “Plus, there’s good food too!”

By Ana Pitra Cabral

International Restaurants Make Bloomington a Culinary Delight

There is an American saying: “There’s no place like home.” This is especially true with food. One of the first things that international students miss is the food from their homeland — or what Americans call “home cooking”.

Fortunately, there are a large number of international restaurants in Bloomington. There are Chinese, Japanese, Turkish, Korean, Thai, Malaysian, Tibetan, Mexican restaurants and more.

“It’s fun to go to the different restaurants,” says Omer Turkmanoglu, an opera singer from Turkey. Omer is also a regular performer at Café Django, a popular restaurant with international dishes and musicians from different countries. Several times a month, Omer and other Central Asian students perform traditional folk songs at Django’s.

“It is always good to see people from different countries eating, singing, dancing and having a good time,” Omer says.

Whether you like baklava from Turley or cocadamarela from my native Angola, it is a good chance you can find it in Bloomington. Bon Appetit!
HOW THE IEP HELPED PREPARE ME FOR
GRADUATE SCHOOL STUDIES

By Hany “Willy” AlSalmi

When I entered the Intensive English Program more than two years ago, I was a very nervous student from Saudi Arabia. I did not know anyone. My English needed a lot of work. I knew that I wanted to study my major, Information and Library Science, but I did not know how to carry out my plan. In short, I had a lot of work to do!!

Today, I am in my second year of the masters program in my Library Sciences, and I owe a lot of my success to the IEP. First, the program helped me develop my English skills — in reading, writing, and communication. I tried to attend every extra event including Reading Circle, Language Table, and Saturday Morning Conversation and TOEFL Class. Plus, there are extra opportunities to learn English around Bloomington, such as the Bloomington Public Library.

Through the Intensive English Program, I have also met many new friends from countries around the world. I have had the opportunity to learn about different cultures, different ways of thinking and different foods. My friends have even taught me bits and pieces of their languages.

Another lesson I learned in the IEP is that it is okay to make mistakes. In fact, this is the best way to correct our English and make it better. All the teachers were kind and helpful.

Of course, the success of every experience often depends on the effort we make. My advice to any new student in the Intensive English Program is to attend extra activities and make friends with all your fellow students (they will teach you so much about the world).
A Gallery: Pictures & Thoughts

“The IEP was my first introduction to English and America. I learned a lot of English — and made good friends too.”
-Al Faisal Ashehri, Saudi Arabia

“My time in Bloomington has been full of good things — good teachers, good friends, and good lessons in English. Bloomington is a beautiful place and I have learned a lot!”
-Donderee Suteerrangool, Thailand

“Bloomington has a lot of nice things — the downtown, the Indiana campus and the IEP!”
-Yoko Kijima, Japan

“The teachers are more than teachers — They are friends too.”
-Batuhan Bozdogan, Turkey

“I was only able to spend one session in the IEP, but it was eight weeks full of good experiences—even some good soccer! I came here as a stranger but everyone has been so nice. I’m sad to leave.
-Marcelo Portela, Brazil

“The IEP was my first introduction to English and America. I learned a lot of English — and made good friends too.”
-Al Faisal Ashehri, Saudi Arabia