

During the summer of 2024, I had the privilege of studying Korean language and culture at Middlebury College in Vermont. The Korean program, which ran from June 21st to August 16th, comprised intensive classes meeting for four hours a day, five days a week, totaling 160 contact hours. I began with minimal to no knowledge of Korean language and completed the program as a Novice High speaker and writer.

The Middlebury School of Korean offered a diverse range of activities and clubs, including Drama, Sports, Samulnori, Literature, Cooking, and Community Service. Participation in at least one club was required, and I personally enjoyed the Cooking Club. This club allowed us to prepare and cook kimchi, bibimbap, gimbap, tteokbokki, and buchimgae.

Additionally, throughout the course, we had the opportunity to attend three special lectures, including Tyler Rasch, who provided valuable insight into Korean culture and linguistics, allowing me to have a deeper understanding of Korean culture alongside my language studies.

In the classroom, we focused intensively on the Korean language. Starting as an absolute beginner, we started off learning the absolute basic grammar and vocabulary. We began speaking Korean the moment we stepped foot in class that Monday. It felt very overwhelming as we were so novice, but despite the initial challenges of immersing, everyone in the program was super encouraging no matter the language level, helping facilitate my language learning. We worked hard everyday building off the previous day, seeking language acquisition.

Interaction with fellow level 1 beginners and the invaluable support from the level 2 instructor, with whom I frequently engaged during lunch, greatly enriched my experience. The level 2 instructor would ask very easy basic questions that would help me think harder on how to implement what I learned in class. The guidance and encouragement from my level 1 teachers also played a crucial role in building my confidence and proficiency. They were patient and silly by using many methods to instill language knowledge upon us. I loved that during our breaks in class that my teachers would check in on us individually, by asking if we understood the material. I felt that the classroom environment alongside the meal time really helped me grow the fastest, as I had to be quick on my feet. They did not waste any time with us being confused and made sure we were all on the same page. The community feeling in the classroom allowed for us all to show significant growth.

Immediately following the program, I traveled to South Korea to begin my studies at Yonsei University for the Fall 2024 semester. This transition has been smooth, as I have been able to confidently interact with locals and navigate various signs and restaurant menus. It feels immensely satisfying to be understood in my conversations with native speakers.

At Yonsei University, I plan to enroll in several Korean culture courses and aim to test into a higher Korean language class. After a summer dedicated to language acquisition, I am eager to further explore Korean culture through my studies. I also intend to integrate my Asian Studies major with my Economics major, with my next goal being the of securing an insightful internship.