

# Contributor Series: Impactful Moments

DeokJun Lee reflects on his move to America

## Abriana Carnes | Contributor

As sophomore, DeokJun Lee navigated a move across the world that not only involved a time change, but a cultural change as well.

Lee grew up in Seoul, South Korea before moving to the United States for college. One of the key cultural differences is the ideals that Koreans hold in regard to respect for elders. While in the United States it is normal for someone to address one who is older than them by their first name, Lee said that in Korea, that is not the case.

“Older people have to talk to you first,” Lee said, “You can never call their names. You can say hey teacher but not their name.”

In addition to respect for elders, Korea also holds different ideals when dealing with politeness. While Americans are quick to say what they like and dislike, Lee says that in Korea, people will usually say “I like this better than this” instead of “I don’t like that” in order to spare the other person’s feelings.

While Lee was attempting to conform to a new culture, he was also challenged with learning how to connect and communicate with his new peers. Though Korea has similar applications such as Netflix and YouTube, he was still unfamiliar with the content that is notable in the United States.

Because Korean versions of these popular apps offer different shows and networks, Lee did not understand many jokes his peers would make about popular American shows such as “The Office” when first moving.

Luckily, language was not a barrier for Lee during his transition to the United States. His high school was an international school that provided him with many different opportunities to study English professionally through different study abroad programs.

Though language was not technically a barrier, Lee did learn traditional British English, so he had to change his vocabulary with some words such as elevator and bathroom. Normally, he would say “lift” or “loo” when addressing these places, respectively.

In addition to Lee’s high school offering international studies, he was also introduced with connections to Taylor University. Because his school has a “sister relationship” with Taylor, he was able to attend the Taylor CRAM program, where he had the opportunity to take college courses over the summer with other students his age.

After attending CRAM, Lee decided to attend Taylor to study film and media production with a minor in journalism.

Though Lee now lives across the world from his family, he still makes it a priority to stay in contact. Since international phone lines are pricey, he uses Instagram chats and video call services like Skype.

Lee does not plan on visiting Korea again until the end of his junior year at Taylor when he will be required to serve two years in the Korean military, as are all men in Korea. Though he will be unable to finish his degree

before heading back to Korea, Lee said he still plans to come back to Taylor to finish after his military time is served.

While Lee faced many changes before coming to Taylor, it is evident they did not faze him. He is walking proof that America could use some more of those “Korean values.”

---

## Related Stories



**Yeakle talks career, compassion**

By MARIAH HURST



**Where Does All of the Taylor University Tuition Go?**

By TIM PIETZ



**International student recruitment shifts**

By ABIGAIL ROBERTS

---