

KGC Newsletter

Issue 14, April 2003



In This Issue

**Is Living Abroad Driving You Crazy?
You might be experiencing culture shock !**

What does it take to become a successful woman?

Choosing your first place in Vancouver

Getting a driver's license!

The History of Chinese Clothing

The Golden Boy of Spain
Raul Gonzales

"Dogs---Your Best Friend"

Improve Your English

EDITORS: EPP Level 6 students :
Grace, Doris, Maple, Vivian, Jennifer,
Edison, Sharon and Antony

PAGE DESIGN: Stanley Yau

Contact information:
Kester Grant College
2412 Laurel Street,
Vancouver, BC V5Z 3T2
Tel: 604-877-0355
Fax: 604-877-0375
E-mail: info@kgc.bc.ca
Web: www.kgc.bc.ca

Students are encouraged to submit
letters to our editors. The editors
reserve the right to edit letters for
publication.

Any comments or ideas, please email
to newsletter@kgc.bc.ca

KGC Newsletter team:



By Vivian

Is Living Abroad Driving You Crazy? You might be experiencing culture shock !

How long have you been in Canada? Have you experienced culture shock during this period of time? I am an international student here, and I think I am entering the fourth stage of culture shock--the "home" stage. You may not know about the symptoms of culture shock, so let's share some ideas on how to recognize and deal with them. Culture shock is the trauma you experience when you move into a new culture from your home culture. It includes four stages. The first stage is the "honeymoon" stage when you are interested in everything which is new. When I first came here, I felt even the water here was much sweeter than it is in China. In the second stage you begin to criticize the country, the life and values of the people; next is the "humor" stage where you can go back and laugh at the mistakes you made before and the last stage is the "home" stage when you are enjoying living in the country. So which stage are you in now? You may feel upset when you are between the second and third stage. Some people can not understand why they are so depressed; that is very normal. I think it is necessary for students to know more about the symptoms of culture shock.



There are many kinds of symptoms related to the culture shock. If you are experiencing one of these symptoms discussed below, you may have a culture shock. Do you feel angry when you have to use a fork instead of chopsticks? Some people get so angry that they will ask the waitress in anger for chopsticks. Those people may be in the second stage of culture shock. Also do you feel you have extreme homesickness? If you do, you should call your family or your friends at home often no matter how expensive telephone cards are. You will be happy to speak your own language. Furthermore, try to find a place where there are people who are from your own country? In addition, do you always get headaches or upset

stomachs? Do you withdraw from people who are different from you? I had this kind of experience after I was in Canada for one month. It was my most terrible time in Vancouver. I became so quiet, and I felt so lonely; however, my roommate took me out, and finally I got out of that horrible feeling. Also, do you even lose your ability to work and study effectively? If you have those problems, how can you deal with them and make yourself happy?

The things which you should do to get out of culture shock are pretty simple. First, you can make friends because friends are important. When you have enough friends, you will not be lonely any more. Instead, you will be busy being with them, and you will forget about the culture shock. In addition, reading is also a

good way. When you are reading a book, you expand your thinking of life. You will be affected in a positive way, and also your English will improve at the same time, or why not try to do some exercises or join some community activities? It will be

difficult to begin doing activities, but once you get used to them, you will find it lot of fun. Furthermore, if you only work on your English, tell yourself the reason that you came to Canada was to study English. You will feel satisfied when you get high marks on the tests. All in all, everything takes time, so you should be patient.

Actually, culture shock is not as bad as you think. You can think of it from many good sides. You can learn many things from it, such as foreign countries' culture, and you will be more independent when you get into the fourth stage of it. In my personal view, how your life will be depends on your attitude towards life, so I hope every international student will be able to deal with the symptoms of culture shock and enjoy their lives here in Vancouver.

What does it take to become a successful woman?



By Doris

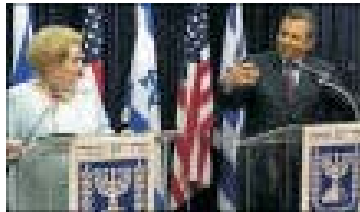
When I was young, I read a Buddhist book which said that if you go to a temple, you will find that there are many rooms which people are not permitted to enter. In these rooms, there are many statues, which have women and men sitting together in many positions. These statues have special meanings. A woman means a good-heart; a man means wisdom, so when you have a good-heart together with wisdom, you will succeed. Nowadays, women have joined the competitive aspect of society; our competitors are not only men but ourselves as well. Madeleine Albright said, "Women's careers don't go in straight paths. They zigzag all over the place." She described clearly the difficulties related to women's careers in society. A career is one part of life for a woman; furthermore, education and marriage are also very important for women. Different women have different methods of dealing with their life problems. What are the differences between women activist politician women and ordinary women? I think the difference is activist and



politician women have special personalities.

Magnanimity is one of the main characteristics of these women. In their childhood, some of them are ordinary; however, others have special personalities. For example, Hillary Rodham Clinton, who was raised in a conservative Chicago family, was a high achiever from childhood. These important facts have affected her life, especially her marriage and career. As we all know, her philandering husband put her in an awkward position, yet she still exhibited grace to her husband. It's unbelievable for people to understand her behavior. However, when we think deeply, we will find that her magnanimity has many benefits for her career and the effect of her societal image.

Next, we change to focus on their career achievements. Hillary's career related to



her husband, Bill Clinton, who named her to head up a National Health Care Task Force in 1992. She promoted women's and children's rights by using her prominence and her experience. Similarly, Jane Addams' career had the same feature. She with her female staff helped the immigrants adjust to their new life style in the U.S.A. by offering job training, medical services, education, child care, and culture programs. Their careers are welcomed by people because people can get benefits from their work. They dedicated themselves, so dedication is a decisive characteristic of their personalities.

Getting a good education is necessary for women to obtain benefits for their life. If they get an education, they can become independent women. Like Albright, In 1982, her husband left her for another woman; consequently, she depended on herself. Also from their attitude of studying, you can easily see they are very diligent. For example, Albright got a scholarship when she attended Wellesley



College. In her thirties, when she began studying her PHD in international affairs at Columbia University, she always studied late into the night after her three daughters were in bed. What she has done shows that diligence and independence are the two basic characteristics of these women.

Activists and politicians have similar personality characteristics. The reason why they are successful is they are magnanimous, deductive, diligent, and independent.

I admire these women not only because of their success but also for their personalities. They have had a great affect on my life. Whatever trouble I meet, I always tell myself that I need a magnanimous heart and then I become calm and solve the problem. Also, I understand that even though I can't enter into a famous university, I still should get an education because wisdom is very important and my education will never end as long as I'm trying to become like my role models.



Choosing your first place in Vancouver

Photos from BCIT web site



By Jennifer

Lots of international students live in Vancouver in order to study English. Naturally, their living environment is important to them. For example, an international student will need a quiet and suitable place in order to study. In addition, they may face big challenges abroad such as dealing with culture shock and homesickness. Fortunately, they can get help from their teachers and friends who live in Vancouver. Choosing where they should live and how they can find nice places is important. Moreover, in my view, students need to know some real life examples to understand more about living aboard. There are three places to consider when looking for a good place in Vancouver: living in a BCIT dormitory, living in an apartment or a homestay. Let me share several real stories which I heard from KGC students that may help international students to understand better about living in Vancouver.

Generally, most KGC students have plans to study at the BCIT (British Columbia Institute Technology). Therefore, I have focused on information on BCIT dormitories including their location, rent fees, benefits and rules. The BCIT dormitory; Maquinna Residence, is located on the Burnaby campus. There are two types of buildings which include seven- low rise and split-buildings. These are separated into 4 townhouses. In a townhouse, there is enough space to house 12 students. Each building contains a laundry room, a kitchen, cooking facilities, a living /a dining room and washrooms. Moreover, students don't need to buy furniture because each room contains a single bed, a desk, two chairs, a desk lamp, a book case, mirror and dresser. Students also can choose from among several different kinds townhouses such as all-male, all- female and co-ed suites.

Furthermore, there are residents who help students if they have problems in dormitories. The rent fee of a room in a BCIT dormitory is \$525 a month. If you have a pet or a smoking habit, you should not consider living in a BCIT dormitory because the school does not allow you to have animals or to smoke in the buildings. If you are interested in living in a BCIT dormitory, you can apply by internet, phone, fax or mail. You need to apply early, for there are not so many rooms for students.

E-mail: housing@bcit.ca
Phone: 604-432-8677,
Fax : 604-438-4174
Mail: housing office,



Maquinna Residence, 4200 Willingdon Avenue Burnaby B.C. V5G 4J3

This is a real story about my friend; HANNA, who already studies at the BCIT, and had lived at the BCIT dormitory before. The building where she lived before has three refrigerators which 12 students share. Each refrigerator is divided into four spaces. One day, she came to her room after finishing her classes and wanted to have some food, but when she opened her refrigerator, there was no food in her space. She asked one of her roommates what happened to the food. She said that other roommates threw all of her food away due to the bad smell. She became so angry that she told all the residents what had happened. After the incident, she moved out even though she liked living in the dormitory. From this story international students should learn that not every Canadian understands the cultures of others. Therefore, in order to live in dorm, students have to try to understand the cultures of other people.

Some international students are afraid of living on their own because everything around them is unfamiliar. Therefore, I suggest those international students live in a homestay. The cost of living in a Canadian home stay is \$700-\$750. Most Canadians are friendly to foreigners, so if students live with them, they will feel comfortable. Moreover, they can practice English everyday which is the main purpose for being here for many international students. If you want to try to live in a home stay, you can ask BCIT international students management office. You can contact them by e-mail. E-mail : www.gohomestay.com www.whnc.org

Although, living in a home stay has many advantages, there are a few unpleasant stories. I know one terrible story about my brother's friend who is a Brazilian. When he first came to Canada seven months ago, he did not know anything about Vancouver, so he decided to live in a homestay. After staying there for two weeks, he had to move out to another homestay because the first homestay did not offer good food, and the refrigerator was locked to prevent him from touching the food. I do not think that many homestay families are the same as the one I mentioned above. Even if, students have similar experiences , they don't need to be afraid because there are many friendly people who are willing to help them.



Many international students want to live in an apartment because they think it offers a lot of privacy. There are two effective ways to find a good apartment. First, you can find an apartment in the Vancouver Sun newspaper. Students are able to find rent information through the internet; www.thevancouver.sun.ca. The rent information provided by this newspaper is divided by areas. Most KGC students want to live in Burnaby. Fortunately, there is a lot of information to find a house in Burnaby. Second, if you don't mind sharing an apartment go to this website; www.rentbc.ca. This site usually has many town houses which are shared by university students. This internet site is divided by many different kinds of university students. For example, if you want to live near by BCIT, you just need to click the area where BCIT is located. Then, you will see much information which also contains house pictures. In addition, you can choose the price limit that you are willing to pay.

Presently, I live in an apartment. I also thought living in an apartment would offer me much privacy, but there are also some disadvantages. I heard one funny story from Maple who is my classmate. Do you know every apartment has fire alarms? One of Maple's friends lives in an apartment. One day, the friend was cooking in her kitchen. Suddenly, the fire alarm started to make a noisy sound, but there was nothing wrong. She decided to take out the batteries from fire alarm because the noise kept bothering her. She continued cooking and enjoyed her own food. After a while, four fire fighters came knocking on the door. She was so surprised ! It is easy to see that we need to be careful when we make our own meals. I just want to say even though living in an apartment looks good, students should consider unexpected situations.

Finally, to live abroad can be difficult or can be fun. In my view, it depends on where you choose to live and what people you choose to be around you. If you live in a dormitory, you will have Canadian friends and an educational living environment. If you live in a homestay, you are going to have a second family and cozy feeling. Or, you can have lots of privacy if you live alone , and you will learn to become more independent. Each choice offers a special experience in Vancouver. I hope you will benefit from my information and choose the right place for yourself.



By Antony

Getting a driver's license!

Many people think that getting a driver's license is difficult. Sometimes people give up to get a driver's license. For example, my classmate Maple failed 3 times, and she gave up to get her driver's license. However, if you spend some of your free time! I'm sure you can pass the test. I'll give you some advice on how to get a driver's license in B.C.

● Applying for your learner's license.

To enter the learner stage and to start driving you'll need a learner's (Class 7) license. You can apply for your learner's license at the nearest driver licensing office. You have to bring your photo and your proper I.D. when you go to apply. There's \$10 charge to apply. After you have applied for learner's license you have to study the ICBC manual for new drivers: *RoadSense for drivers*. The next thing you'll do is take a knowledge test. The knowledge test is based on the material in *RoadSense for drivers*. The knowledge test fee is \$15.

The learner stage.

If your application is accepted and you pass the knowledge test, you will receive your learner's license. Now you can get out there and drive. Great! Remember, though: during this learner stage, there are several restrictions on your driving.

Learner stage restriction.

1. Qualified supervisor

You must be accompanied by a supervisor who is 19 or older and has a valid B.C. driver's license (Class 1, 2, 3, 4 or 4). He or she must sit beside you in the front passenger seat.

2. Passenger restriction

You may carry a maximum of two passengers.

3. Driving hours

You may drive only between 5 a.m. and midnight.

4. L sign

When you're driving, you must display a red **L** sign.

Generally, the learner stage is 6 months long. You can stay in the learner stage as long as you need to. Your

learner's license is valid for one year, but it can be renewed. After 6 months, you qualify to take your first road test.

● Class 7 road test

You may take the Class 7 road test after you've had your Class 7 learner's license for at least 6 months. Here is what you need to know for the road test. You must book the Class 7 road test in advance. You have to be sure to bring proper I.D. The test fee is \$35. If you pass, a Class 7 novice photo driver's license, which is valid for 5 years, will cost an additional \$75. Once you pass the Class 7 road test, you get your Class 7 driver's license and enter the novice stage of Graduated Licensing. If you don't pass, you may take the test again after 14 days.

The novice stage

Once you pass your Class 7 road test, you are issued a Class 7 novice driver's license. You advance from the learner to the novice stage of your licensing process. There are now only two restrictions. During the novice stage, you must display a **N** sign and there must not be any alcohol in your body when you drive. After a minimum of 18 months, novice drivers are eligible to take the Class 5 road test. If you pass it, you get your full-privilege, Class 5 driver's license.

● Class 5 road test

After you have spent at least 18 months in the Novice stage driving with an **N** sign on your vehicle, you may take the Class 5 road test. The earliest date on the back of your license tells you if you are eligible to take the Class 5 driver's license. You must book the Class 5 road test in advance. The class 5 road test is \$50 and you have to bring your I.D.

If you don't pass, you may take the test again after 7 days.

As you can see, there are many steps you have to go through. However, it is not too difficult, and I think you can study English while you preparing the test.

GOOD LUCK!

The History of Chinese Clothing



By Edison



www.hudie.org/shihua/zhqp/zhqp.htm

China has a very long history. The Chinese have created many miracles and also invented many kinds of products. Even until now, the creation method of some products is not known. Chinese clothing also has a long history. Some Chinese clothes styles are popular and famous through out the world. When you walk on the street in China, you will see many people who wear many kinds of clothes. Some clothes are very modern, and others are very traditional. I would like to introduce the history of Chinese clothing to everybody.

1) Original Clothing

Chinese people have used leaves and animal furs to cover themselves for keeping warm until about 18,000 years ago when they invented sewing. The Chinese used animal furs to sew some simple clothes. After they invented cloth, clothes had a more formal style. Those clothes were made of coarse cloth, and they were very thick and stiff.

2) Qipao (cheongsam)

Qipao is one of the most typical costumes for Chinese women. It is translated cheongsam. Usually it is made of silk.

In the 17th century in China, a man set up the Eight Banner System. After his troops overthrew the Ming Dynasty, a collarless tube robe was developed which was worn by men and women. This is the embryo of the Qipao. It was popular in the Qing Dynasty. All the officials wore it, and they used the pictures which were on the clothes to differentiate official positions. After several years, Qipao became an expensive dress and was only worn by women. My grandmother told me about the kind of clothes she wore when she was young. Fifty years ago, China was very poor, and many people even didn't have new clothes on their

wedding day, so most people borrowed new clothes for their wedding. The man would borrow a new robe, and the woman would borrow a new Qipao. When the wedding finished and they took some pictures, they would return the clothes. Because Qipao was the most expensive and popular clothing of that time, most people wore Qipao and robes only on their wedding. Some brides still wear Qipao on their wedding these days.

3) Silk

Silk was the best material for clothing in ancient China. There were many legends about the discovery of silk; some of them are romantic.

A father and his daughter had a magic horse which could not only fly but also could understand human language. One day, the father went out for his business and did not come back. The daughter made a promise: If the horse could find her father, she would marry the horse. Finally, her father came back with the horse. However, the father killed the horse because he didn't want his daughter to be married with a horse. A miracle happened! The horse's skin flew away with the girl. They flew and flew. At last, they stopped on a tree, and the moment the girl touched the tree, she turned into a silkworm.



www.chinesesilk.com/chinese/product/plist.php?category=0%7E14

Everyday, she spins long and thin silk. The silk shows her feelings of missing him. Many kinds of clothes which were made of silk became popular.

In the Han Dynasty, the King wanted to develop trade

with other countries, so the "Silk Road" was built, and it became famous throughout the world. It started from Chang'an (now Xi'an), across Middle Asia, South Asia and West Asia. Many countries of Asia and Europe were connected by this passage.

4) Chinese Tunic Suit

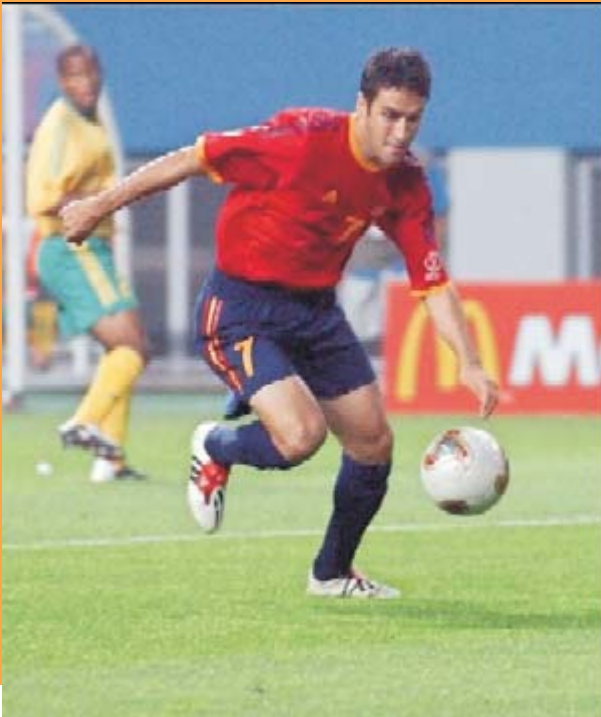
A Chinese tunic suit is called the "Country suit of China"

In 1923, Sun Yat-sen invented the first Chinese tunic suit, and it was named after him. His personal tailor sewed the first Chinese tunic suit. It included four pockets, and the color was dark. Sometimes, Chinese tunic suit instead of Western-style clothes is worn in formal situation. Now, some students like to wear it.



www.cctv.com.cn/Im/23/1/1.htm

In recent years, Chinese clothing has become more popular. Now, Chinese clothing is sold to other countries every year. You also can buy Chinese clothes in other countries. Chinese people hope to expand the sales of Chinese clothes. The history of Chinese clothing is very long. I do not know the whole history, so I am sorry that I can not tell you the whole history. I think if you want to know more information about Chinese clothing, you can go to shops that sell Chinese traditional clothes. I think they can tell you more. The best way to get more information about Chinese clothing is to go to China. Don't forget! If you go to China, you must tell me. I will be happy to be your guide.



THE GOLDEN BOY OF SPAIN

RAUL GONZALES



By Sharon

Hello, I'm Sharon, level six student at KGC. I want to ask you a few questions. Are you a soccer-lover? Do you have a favorite soccer player? Although I don't have a lot of knowledge of soccer, I still have a favorite soccer player. He is a Spanish guy named Raul Gonzales. I would like to introduce to you his childhood, career, marriage and the reason why I like him.

Raul was born into a poor family in Madrid on June 27th, 1977. His father was an electrician. Raul was the youngest child in his family. When he was young, he lived in an area where poor people lived. You could often see many people in this area taking drugs; however, Raul wasn't affected by those people, and he was well behaved. Because of his father's love for soccer, Raul became interested in soccer too. When he was a little boy, he usually played soccer with his friends, and really made quite a name for himself.

When his father found Raul was interested in soccer, his father became excited because his father had a dream that one of his sons would be a soccer player. Although Raul's family was very poor, his father still sent him to study soccer and gave him a lot of support. I think that's one of the most important reasons for his success.

When he was 17 years old, he signed a contract with Real Madrid---one of the best soccer clubs in the world. When he first joined Real Madrid, he wasn't a top player of

the team, but his coach discovered his talent for soccer and provided him with an opportunity to prove himself. On October 27th, 1994, he took a part in a formal match with the best players of Real Madrid. That was his first time playing for a whole match with the best players of Real Madrid. He really tried his best and had many chances to shoot; unfortunately, he didn't score. That was the worst match of his life, and he still doesn't want to talk about it. Although Raul didn't do well in the match, his coach still believed he would be a soccer star in future. So Raul's coach kept on providing chances for him and was very strict with him. Raul worked very hard, for he knew that not everybody could play in the Real Madrid. He trained hard and never quit. Because of his hard work, soon he did a good job in the matches. Then he became famous. Five years later, he was already one of the top players in the world. He keeps the record for kicking the most goals in Spain. Spaniards love him and call him the golden boy of Spain.

On July 1st, 1999, Raul married Mamen Sanz who used to be a model. Now, they have two sons. Raul loves his wife very much. Every time he kicks a goal, he kisses his marriage ring. He is a man who thinks he should be responsible for his family. Every time after he finishes his match, he will go back home directly because he thinks family is very important.

The reason why I like Raul Gonzales is not only for his soccer skill but also for his

personality. He has a strong mind; therefore, he works very hard and never gives up. He knows the importance of teamwork so that he co-operates with others well. Unlike some top soccer players who are very arrogant after they become famous, Raul is still easy-going and modest.

Many people think he's very gentle and polite. I appreciate Raul Gonzales. His life shows he is a hardworking man. His characteristics are admired by many people. He is a great player, and I hope he will be even more famous in the future.

Pictures and information are from <http://hk.geocities.com/raulworldhk>





By Maple



Since I was very young, I raised many different kinds of dogs. Dogs have been my best companions, and during the last few years, I have learned a lot about taking care of them. I am in Vancouver now, and I am so happy to be living in such a good place where so many people love dogs. I hope I can give some useful information to those people like me who like dogs. I think it's important to think about how to raise a dog in Vancouver. In this article I will give some advice from my personal experience. Here are the four questions I think people might want to ask before you buy a dog.

1. Where can I get a dog in Vancouver?

As we all know, we can easily get a pet from a pet shop. There are many pet shops around Vancouver, so you probably would like to go to some of them to find a pet you like. Also, there is another way to get a dog. That's to go to the S.P.C.A. which collects dogs that have been abandoned. All you have to do is to go there and find a dog you like, then register it and pay \$145 for the adoption fee. That's it. But the only thing you have to think more about is that most of the dogs from the S.P.C.A. have been abandoned, so they may have some psychological problems, and they need more help and love than the dogs from pet shops. In this case, you have to make sure you have prepared yourself for building a new family for the dog.

2. How to choose a healthy dog?

After you decide which kind of dog you are going to raise, then you will want to know if it's

a healthy dog. From my experience, if it is a puppy, it is important to see if it has energy. Secondly, you should check if its eyes are bright and clear. This means the dogs' eyes should be without tears or secretion. Then, you can check its nose. A wet nose shows the dog is in good condition. Lastly, its teeth should be checked, too. Because you probably want to make sure it can eat normally. However, if you cannot make sure of these things by yourself, you can also ask a veterinarian to give the dog a formal checkup.



3. How to raise a dog?

After you take your dog home, it will take a long time for the dog to adapt to the new environment. During this period, your care, and love will be the most important to it. If you treat it well, the adjustment time will be much shorter. Also, it is important for you to build good habits for your dog. Most people who have no experience in raising dogs think if I give it a lot of food, it means I am treating my pet well. Unfortunately, the fact is not so. Most dogs do not refuse food, so you cannot give food to it too often. You have to make a meal

schedule for it and show it the food must come from only you. A regular and good eating habit can maintain the dog's health. Also, providing fresh water is very necessary, and being clean is important, too. Some people think giving the dog a bath everyday is good for the dog, but not so. Because giving baths too often is not good for the dog's skin, it is better to give baths two to three times a week in summer time and once a week in winter time. Also, a warm bed for the dog is important. If a dog catches a cold, it might cause a lot of other problems. And if you don't want your house to have a bad smell and get dirty, you have to teach the dog where it should excrete from the very beginning.

4. What can you do if your dog gets sick?

People get sick; similarly, dogs do, too. The most common sickness to a dog is catching a bad cold and getting a high fever. In this case, you had better take the dog to see a veterinarian because the longer it lasts, the worse your dog will be. A rash is the other common disease dogs will get. If your dog gets a rash, you have to ask the veterinarian for some cream to put on its skin. Generally speaking, as soon as your dog gets sick, take it to the veterinarian.

Now, you probably have a general idea of how to raise a dog in Vancouver. But I really hope the people who are going to raise dogs think carefully about the all problems that may happen after they buy a dog. If you get a dog and get tired of it, you may abandon it; then the dog will be the victim. Dogs can be your friends if you treat them as friends, and they will be your most loyal friends. Just plan your pet purchase carefully and enjoy the time you spend with a dog!





By Grace

Photo by Stanley



Improve Your English

RIGHT NOW!

How many times have you gnawed your pencil because you couldn't think of what to say or write? How many times did you have difficulty understanding what a Canadian was talking about? Have you ever felt that it was so hard to say something? I have. We, international students, are so anxious to improve our English quickly. Here, I have some advice to offer you from my personal experience.

Written English:

When you are writing in your mother language, you seldom think about the grammar; you only care how to make beautiful sentences with the most powerful words; however, when you are writing in English, you feel it's so hard to find the exact word to describe what you want to express, and you always worry about the grammar and punctuation. Why? The reason is you haven't developed your sense of writing yet.

There are many efficient methods to resolve these problems. First of all, reading. If you want to write in the right way, you should learn the rules of writing first, and then follow them. Reading newspapers is one of the best ways because a newspaper's audience is the public, so it should interest various kinds of readers' tastes. You don't need to read all of the whole paper; instead, you can choose something that interests you. What should you do if you run into some new words at the time you are reading? My suggestion is "don't worry about it", unless these words are key words which obstruct your understanding and focus on the writer's meaning. Following this way to read newspapers or magazines, your writing level will improve at the same time you get lots of information. In addition, reading different kinds of books is very helpful. Although reading

Shakespeare might be too difficult to begin with, you could choose some easy books. If I were you, I would choose some fairy tales such as "Andersen's Fairy Tales" because they are interesting, short and easy to understand. You might even have read these well-known stories in their translated copy in your own country, and you may have loved them since you were very young. Why don't you read them again in their English version, for you are familiar with the stories and just need to focus on the expressions? You can borrow a book from a library, and every night when you go to bed, just read before you fall asleep. Third, read some compositions written by authors who are your age. Reading these compositions will benefit you a lot because what you are reading is what you are trying to write at the same level or higher. From these same-age-writers' compositions, you learn how to use transitions, punctuation and connectives in the right way just as your teacher teaches you. Although there are many good materials to read, to improve written English, reading is far from enough; we need to practice. Maybe you will tell me your teacher has already given many composition-writings as your homework, so you have no time to do any extra work. Maybe that's true, but what I am suggesting is to do a little extra practice, which is easy, interesting and effective.

First, I advise you to write a diary. You can write it in any length because you don't have to hand it in to your teacher; one paragraph or several sentences are enough. It could be about an exciting experience of learning tennis, an amazing trip to Tibet or some personal comments on your teacher's hair-style---anything you wish. For you are both the reader and the writer. Feel free to write anything and

try your best to avoid mistakes. Second, describe your feelings in an essay after seeing a movie. Many people love watching movies; I bet you do too. After seeing a great movie, you may be so affected by it that you just can't stop talking about this wonderful movie to your friends. Why don't you put down this great feeling on paper? While writing, you should think about the meaning of the movie more deeply and organize your thoughts in written form. Third, from my personal experience, I found recitation is another effective way to improve English besides reading and practice. When I was learning "New Concept English" in my home country, my teacher always asked us to recite the texts. At that time I found reciting these texts was really difficult for me, even though they were normally very short. After several weeks of reciting, I was so excited that I could write some short paragraphs by myself because I felt the words jumped out of my mind spontaneously. You need not recite an entire article; you could try to remember some useful sentences. For example, "In the long run, the kind of person you are is the result of what you've been thinking over the past twenty or thirty years." is from one of my textbooks, and I love this sentence so much. Not only does it include very useful phrases such as "in the long run", "the result of", but is also a present-perfect-progressive-tense sentence, so I learned how to use this verb tense.

Listening in English:

Many international students consider listening in English to be the hardest part of English learning, for they can't follow the native speakers' speed. They can't catch key words, and they lose information. If I ask you how to improve your listening skills in English, you

Continued to page 9.....

might tell me to watch TV, see a movie or listen to the radio. I would offer the same answer if I have been asked the same question, but have you ever thought about how to watch TV, how to see a movie, and how to listen to the radio? I have three pieces of advice: take notes, watch more than once, and follow the speaker. When you watch TV, you might think you can understand 50% or more, but when someone asks you for some details about the TV program, you find you have lost lots of information. Taking notes can help you. Try to catch the key words by asking yourself the 5 w's (when, where, who, what, why) and numbers (year, rate or money). When my teacher gave us homework to take notes while watching TV, it was the first time I took notes. At that time, my pen seemed too dull to write down even a single word, so I lost many details. After all, it's just the first time, and I will practice more.

Do you love movies? How many times have you watched your favorite one? If you have a DVD, and if you are not very confident of your English, I suggest you watch it three times. After you watch the movie using your native-language subtitles, review it using English subtitles, and then try to watch it again without using any subtitles. Listening to the conversation and reading the subtitles in your mother tongue at the same time helps you catch the meaning, so when you watch the movie the second time, you could focus on the words you were not clear on the first time you saw it; finally, limit the subtitles and pretend to sit in a cinema watching the movie. If your English is strong, you can skip the first step and reverse the second step and the third step. It will be very effective because you push yourself to catch the meaning in the very first step, and then get back the details when you review the film. The last method is the most difficult one. Following the speaker means to repeat what you heard immediately. It's somewhat like simultaneous interpretation but much easier because you don't need to interpret; it's just an exercise of ear-mouth cooperation. Actually, it is not as easy as it sounds. How can we catch the next sentence when we are speaking the present one? We can. Trust me; I've tried before. When both your ears and mouth can keep up

with the native speaker's speed, your listening comprehension is absolutely no problem.

Oral English:

Although many international students are good at reading and writing but not at speaking, I still believe spoken English is much easier to improve than written English if you are not afraid of talking with foreigners. From my point of view, there are two main problems that cause international students not to be able to speak English as well as native speakers; one is pronunciation the other is we can't think in English. To correct your pronunciation, one important way is to read---read aloud. Find a tape of English read by a native speaker; follow the tape exactly as the reader's speed and tone; repeat it again and again till you read as well as the reader in the tape. This is what my father told me. Thinking in English is really difficult for us. Most of the time we have to interpret English to our mother tongue in our mind and vice versa. I am certain if we want to solve this problem we must do continuous practice. If you are new here and have no Canadian friends, living in homestay is a good choice. You will have lots of chances to talk with your homestay family and at the same time you will learn Canadian culture and customs. While you are communicating with them .you are making progress in your English.

After several weeks or months, you might think of meeting some other Canadians besides your homestay family. If you go to community centers and join some clubs, you will meet lots of Canadians, so you can talk with them. Some of them might become your friends, and you will have more chances to talk deeply with them. If you are going to join these clubs, you might need to take some courses first, so when your coach explains the main points of the game, you get another chance to practice your English. Actually, in our daily life, we should use English in many ways such as to buy an international phone card, open an account or ask for directions. If you avoid speaking English, you will lose a good many opportunities to practice. In Vancouver, you can easily find Chinese, Japanese or Korea shops and restaurants; many banks have Chinese language service; you can even find a person who can speak your mother language in the street to ask directions from if you get lost. What I want to say is give yourself more chances to practice, and you will reap unexpected beans.

Believe in yourself; practice as much as possible; you will find English words flow out of your mind and speaking English will become second nature. I hope my suggestions in this newsletter article will help you start to improve your English. Why not start right now!



Photo from KGC