

General Comments

This is a very well-done essay. Most people will likely have very commonplace answers, and I think yours will really stand out. Most of my comments were small English language things. A few things:

Flow/organization

At times the essay seemed to jump around and transition awkwardly. While all the paragraphs described cultural experiences, getting from one to the next often seemed a bit jolting. I've worked in my edits to impose more of a flow on the essay.

Conclusion

In the original draft the essay ended rather abruptly. You had a sentence about why cultural appreciation factors into your business life, but it seemed a bit out of place. I've offered a suggestion for a better conclusion in my edits.

Details, details, details

Specific personal details are what really make an essay like this. They make you memorable to the admissions reader, and they make the writing more interesting. The piece of advice I always give is to show instead of telling. Instead of saying that you liked to be funny for your co-workers, give an example of a time you did so. This accomplishes the same thing as telling but makes the writing more fun to read.

INITIAL DRAFT with specific comments

What matters most to you and why?

Even though the number of foreign workers and biracial marriages are constantly increasing, many Koreans still like to think Korea is a homogeneous society. I stand out for enjoying African cuisine and buying Arabian goods in the little known alleyways in Seoul, but after living in New Zealand, discussing organizational reform with student leaders from 88 countries, working with U.S. servicemen, and traveling to over 40 countries, I celebrate not only my own heritage but have grown to love other cultures. Learning about different cultures, ideas and technologies and implementing them to bring about positive change to society is what matters to me most.

Born under Japan's colonial rule, my grandparents were privileged to earn Bachelor's degrees in Japan when even university education was a rarity in Korea. Living with them as a child, I was exposed to Japanese media and western food.

In 1988 my father was assigned as the regional director of a Joint-Venture fishing company and I left Seoul and moved to New Zealand for a five year stay. Everything was different to a nine year old in the land of kiwis and sheep. With hardly any knowledge of the alphabet upon arrival, I was taught English by my teachers and friends, and by the third year I was awarded honors for academic excellence at one of the most prestigious English private schools in the country. Full immersion into the local customs and culture (the rugby Haka!) helped me think like a New Zealander, and as the only Korean family in town I was constantly representing my country and introducing Korean culture to those around me.

Moving back after five years of excellent private school education in New Zealand was more difficult than I had imagined. The culture shock of re-immigration was immense as I not only had to catch up with the language but had to come to terms with Korean habits and customs which were considered rude in the West. The experience was instrumental in shaping me into not only a bilingual, but a bicultural person. I attended six different schools moving back and forth from Korea and within New Zealand, and learned to make friends fast and effectively adjust to new surroundings.

All Korean males must complete their 26 months of mandatory military service, and in 2000 I was stationed at the Korea-U.S. Combined Forces Command(CFC) as one of four Korean army representatives in the Combined Secretary Office of the Commander, a four star U.S. general. We worked jointly with U.S. personnel to provide administrative and protocol support to numerous formal and informal events, functions, and exercises that involve the Command Group of the CFC and the United Nations Command. Sometimes getting work done in a particular way was natural in the Korean army, but required more complex procedures in the U.S. military. Such cultural and systematic divide led to disagreements between the Korean and U.S. staff and I was called upon numerous times to arbitrate and solve misunderstanding. During Ulchi Focus Lens, the nation's most important week-long joint exercise with the U.S., I was given the task of

Comment [MSOffice1]: This seems a bit redundant, and moreover the way it's worded right now is a bit politically sensitive.

Comment [MSOffice2]: Though it's implied that you stand out from other Koreans because you enjoy diverse things, there is some ambiguity to this wording as to who you "stand out" from.

Comment [MSOffice3]: These are great details; let's tighten the language.

Comment [MSOffice4]: "But" is not the appropriate transition word here.

Comment [MSOffice5]: Spell out numbers that take fewer than three words to write.

Comment [MSOffice6]: This is not parallel tense construction. For more on parallel construction check out: <http://www.myenglishteacher.net/parallellis.m.html>.

Comment [MSOffice7]: You use the same sentence construction twice in a row which sounds repetitive.

Comment [MSOffice8]: Insert comma before and two join two independent clauses (ie two clauses that could function independently as sentences.)

Comment [MSOffice9]: Hyphenate this phrase. "Nine-year-old" is correct.

Comment [MSOffice10]: This another passive construction, and I think there are too many of them. Active verbs make the writing more interesting. As a general rule, too many passive sentences are frowned upon.

Comment [MSOffice11]: Immersion in, not into.

Comment [MSOffice12]: Not the best word choice; immense usually has to do with physical size.

Comment [MSOffice13]: This sentence is awkward right now.

Comment [MSOffice14]: Hyphenate "four-star".

leading several U.S. non-commissioned officers and a team of reserves from Hawaii to support the arrangement of all the major meetings within the command post. In my efforts to make the reserves feel at ease I learned that humor knows no boundaries. For every meeting that needed arrangement I assigned specific roles to my team members, thereby imbuing each person with responsibility, and minimizing time loss. My work was recognized with an Army Commendation Medal from the U.S. Army.

Comment [MSOffice15]: You talk a lot about what you did, but there are not that many personal details here. It's always better to show than to tell.

After my military service I signed up for Salsa classes to experience Latin American culture and polish my dance moves. Quick and slow steps in rhythm with Latin music were exhilarating. By the second week I was unanimously elected the leader of a 40 person class and successfully prepared the class for a month for a Salsa dance presentation.

Comment [MSOffice16]: Where was the class? I'm having a hard time picturing this in my head, so some details would be helpful.

As the President of the Korean chapter of AIESEC, I discussed organizational reform with university student leaders from 88 countries who were not only extremely intelligent but had diverse perspectives and ideas. I implemented best practices with the help of fellow presidents from Asia and Europe and overhauled the Korea chapter. As a favorite past time I have also travelled to over 40+ countries. Such experiences were very helpful in befriending and doing business with international factoring partners at the Export-Import Bank of Korea.

Comment [MSOffice17]: Spell out this abbreviation.

Comment [MSOffice18]: It's too informal for this kind of essay to use symbols like this.

EDITOR'S FIRST REVISION

Even as the number of foreign workers increases in Korea, many natives still cling to the belief that they live in a homogeneous society. On the contrary, I thrive on diversity, enjoying African cuisining and Arabian goods found in the dimly lit alleyways of Seoul. After living in New Zealand, discussing pressing politically issues at [INSERT WHERE YOU DISCUSSED THE REFORM] with student leaders from across the globe, and working with U.S. servicemen, I have learned to celebrate my own heritage while embracing foreign cultures. Learning about other peoples – their ideas and technologies – and applying them to my own society is what matters the most to me.

My background has had an enduring effect on this passion for diversity. My grandparents, born under Japan's colonial rule, were lucky enough to gain a college education when such an advantage was a rarity in Korea. Their education instilled a love of multiculturalism in them. Since I lived with them as a child, I remember well [INSERT SPECIFIC MULTICULTURAL THINGS YOU REMEMBER. WHAT KIND OF WESTERN FOOD WAS IT? WHAT KIND OF JAPANESE TELEVISION SHOWS WERE THEY? THESE ARE ALL PERTINENT DETAILS].

When my father's job took our family to New Zealand in 1988, that interest in the cultures of others developed. The land of kiwis and sheep certainly presented quite a stark contrast for a nine-year-old from a land of [INSERT WORDS TO DESCRIBE KOREA TO DRAW AN INTERESTING PERPENDICULARITY WITH SHEEP AND KIWI]. Though I possessed next to no knowledge of the English alphabet upon my arrival, after three years of intense study I gained awards for academic excellence at some of the country's most prestigious English schools. I remember well my fascination with local customs like the Maori rugby Haka and [INSERT SOMETHING ELSE SPECIFIC YOU REMEMBER]. Additionally, as a member of the only Korean family in town I constantly exposed those around me to aspects of my culture.

Moving back to Korea in 1993 was more difficult than I had imagined. The culture shock of re-immigration forced me to catch up with the language and acquaint myself with Korean habits and customs which had faded from my memory in New Zealand. The experience was instrumental in shaping me into an individual who was not only bilingual but was truly bicultural. I attended six different schools moving back and forth from Korea and New Zealand, and I learned to make friends fast and calmly adjust to new surroundings.

I applied these skills when serving my compulsory twenty-six months in the Korean military. In 2000 I was stationed at the Korea-U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC) as one of four Korean army representatives in the Combined Secretary Office of the Commander, a four-star U.S. general. My job was to bridge the gap between the two cultures, working to provide administrative and protocol support for numerous formal and informal events, functions, and exercises that involved the Command Group of the CFC and the United Nations Command. I learned first-hand how different cultures' practices can shape their interpretations of one another: [INSERT SPECIFIC STORY ABOUT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN U.S. AND KOREAN HABITS].

While my time in the military taught me about the differences between Americans and Koreans, it also taught me some universal aspects of the human experience. During Ulchi Focus Lens, the

nation's most important week-long joint exercise with the U.S., I was given the task of leading several U.S. non-commissioned officers and a team of reserves from Hawaii to support the arrangement of all the major meetings within the command post. In my efforts to make the reserves feel at ease, I [INSERT EXAMPLES OF YOUR HUMOR]. I realized that everybody laughed in the same language. My work for this and other projects was recognized with an Army Commendation Medal from the U.S. Army.

Eager to continue my immersion in diversity after my military service, I signed up for Salsa classes [INSERT WHERE THE CLASSES WERE] to experience Latin American culture. The quick and slow steps in the Latin rhythm exhilarated me, and my passion was contagious: by the second week I was unanimously elected the leader of the class and was charged with preparing the class for a culminating dance presentation. Working to help others enjoy a foreign culture proved a truly rewarding endeavor.

As much as I enjoy learning about individual cultures, approaching a single policy issue with students from many countries proves equally engaging. As President of the Korean chapter of [INSERT WHAT AIESEC STANDS FOR], I discussed organizational reform with intelligent, diverse university student leaders from eighty-eight countries. I worked with fellow presidents in Asia and Europe to overhaul Korea's chapter, and seeing how varied cultures approached such a task proved enlightening.

These experiences from my grandparents' table to my school in New Zealand, from the army base to salsa classes, have all enabled me to perform my international business duties competently and with a sense of enjoyment. I have traveled to over forty countries, and my commitment to learning from other peoples while teaching them about my background continues to drive me to this day.

EDITOR'S FINAL REVISION

Even as the number of foreign workers increases in Korea, many natives cling to the belief that they live in a homogeneous society. On the contrary, I thrive on diversity, enjoying African cuisine and Arabian goods found in dimly lit alleyways of Seoul. After living in New Zealand, discussing organizational reform strategies at congresses in Istanbul and Edinburgh with student leaders from across the globe, and working with U.S. servicemen, I have learned to celebrate my own heritage while embracing foreign cultures. Learning about other peoples and implementing their ideas and technologies to my own society is what matters the most to me.

My background has had an enduring effect on this passion for diversity. My grandparents, born under Japan's colonial rule, were lucky enough to gain university education in Japan when higher education itself was a rarity in Korea. Their education instilled a love of multiculturalism in them. Since I lived with them as a child, I remember well sumo tournaments my grandfather watched on satellite TV, and the English breakfast and suki-yaki my grandmother made.

When my father's job took our family to New Zealand in 1988, my interest in the cultures of others developed. The land of kiwis and sheep certainly presented quite a contrast for a nine-year-old from a land of kimchi and taekwondo. Though I possessed next to no knowledge of the English alphabet upon my arrival, after three years of intense study I gained awards for academic excellence at some of the country's most prestigious English schools. Full immersion in local customs like the Maori rugby Haka helped me think like a New Zealander. Additionally, as a member of the only Korean family in town I constantly exposed those around me to aspects of my culture.

Moving back to Korea in 1993 was more difficult than I had imagined. The culture shock of re-immigration forced me to catch up with the language and acquaint myself with Korean habits and customs which had faded from memory. The experience was instrumental in shaping me into an individual who was not only bilingual but was truly bicultural. I attended six different schools moving back and forth from Korea and New Zealand, and I learned to make friends fast and calmly adjust to new surroundings.

I applied these skills when serving my compulsory twenty-six months in the Korean military. In 2000 I was stationed at the Korea-U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC) as one of four Korean army representatives in the Combined Secretary Office of the Commander, a four-star U.S. general. My job was to bridge the gap between the two cultures, working to provide administrative and protocol support for numerous formal and informal events, functions, and exercises that involved the Command Group of the CFC and the United Nations Command. I learned first-hand how different cultures' practices can shape their perception of work: for instance U.S. servicemen freely utilized their time after work, while it was not unnatural for Korean servicemen to handle informal duties in the evening.

While my time in the military taught me about the differences between Americans and Koreans, it also taught me some universal aspects of the human experience. During Ulchi Focus Lens, the nation's most important week-long joint exercise with the U.S., I was given the task of leading

several U.S. non-commissioned officers and reserves from Hawaii to support the arrangement of all the major meetings within the command post. In my efforts to make the reserves feel at ease, I commented on exaggerated or outrageous misconceptions some Koreans have regarding their military service. I realized that everybody laughed in the same language. My work for this and other projects was recognized with an Army Commendation Medal from the U.S. Army.

Eager to continue my immersion in diversity after my military service, I signed up for Salsa classes at a Salsa Academy in Seoul to experience Latin American culture. The quick and slow steps in tandem with Latin music exhilarated me, and my passion was contagious: by the second week I was unanimously elected the leader of the class and was charged with preparing the class for a culminating dance presentation. Working to help others enjoy a foreign culture proved a truly rewarding endeavor.

As much as I enjoy learning about individual cultures, approaching a single policy issue with students from many countries proves equally engaging. As President of the Korean chapter of AIESEC, a student-run non-profit organization that facilitates global internships, I discussed organizational reform with intelligent, diverse university student leaders from eighty-eight countries. I worked with fellow presidents in Asia and Europe to overhaul Korea's chapter, and seeing how varied cultures approached such a task proved enlightening.

These experiences from my grandparents' table to my school in New Zealand, from the army base to salsa classes, have all enabled me to perform my international business duties competently and with a sense of enjoyment. I have traveled to over forty countries, and my commitment to learning from other peoples while sharing my knowledge and ideas continues to drive me to this day.