

“TALK, LISTEN, ACT AND DREAM”

Student sharpens English language skills—in the classroom and at the Tracy Adult School ESL Café—on her way back to nursing career

By Jacob Peterson

After living in the U.S. for nearly a decade, Sang Mi Ahn is back on the path to continuing the nursing career she left behind in Korea, with the help of the Tracy Adult School.

The 46-year-old Sang arrived in the U.S. with her husband for the latter’s job in 2016 before settling in Tracy in 2018. She worked as a nurse in Korea for four years, but her initial lack of English skills proved an obstacle to continuing her career in the states.

“I really loved my job, but my English wasn’t enough to work here,” Sang says.

Sang says she was also spurred to improve her English after a bad experience when she first moved here. She remembers a cashier refusing to help her at a store because of her English.

“Don’t talk to me, I don’t understand your English,” she shouted at me,” Sang says. “So I was pretty frightened and pretty nervous.”

Sang began her English learning journey in 2021, and chose English as a second language classes at the Tracy Adult School for a practical reason—proximity. As a mother of three, she needed a school close to home so she could be there for her children.

“I don’t have a lot of time to study because my kids are young,” Sang says. “I have to be back home before 2 p.m. and I cannot drive to a faraway place.”

Though she chose the school for convenience, she says she’s happy with the results so far. Sang notes one of the benefits of the classes is the friendly environment they foster.

“They are very friendly and they always support us,” Sang said. “It is a very, very comfortable place to me because they give enough time to speak and they give us enough time to think.”



Sang Mi Ahn says Tracy Adult School’s ESL Café class—in which students work at an on-campus cafe and earn their food handlers certifications—helped her become more confident with her language skills. Photo by Bea Ahbeck

As a student at the Tracy Adult School, Sang has also taken its ESL Café course, which has students earn their food handlers certifications while working at a café on campus. Having completed the course in 2022, Sang says the experience made her more confident about English and optimistic about continuing her nursing career.

“They asked questions and encouraged long conversations so that students in the café could speak more in English,” Sang says. “As I developed cooperation and quick communication, I gradually became more confident in English.”

In addition to completing intermediate, advanced and café ESL courses, Sang has also taken citizenship test preparation courses offered by the school. She praises her teachers for helping her make her way

back to her original path and encouraging her to explore new directions.

“All the teachers help us grow by making us talk, listen, act, and dream,” Sang says.



**SAN JOAQUIN
Adult
Education
CONSORTIUM**

If you would like more information about ESL and other programs offered at the Tracy Adult School, go to tracyadult.tracy.k12.ca.us/. To learn about more adult education opportunities in the area, visit the San Joaquin Adult Education Consortium’s website at sjadulted.org.