TESOL (7/24)

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Allen’s class

To begin with, I want to tell that how important English is in Korea. Currently in Korea, every student learns English from 10 years old in elementary school which is quite earlier than before. In my ages, we hadn’t learned English in elementary school at all. However, most children start learning English before they enter the Elementary school. That means, English has been being regarded as one of the most important subjects.

 Though Korean students are taught English for 10 years on average,  most of them are afraid of speaking English because they learn to ‘know’ not to ‘speak’. That means, for them, English is not a spoken language but an academic language.

In my opinion, Korean students have fear of speaking English because not many teachers are available to speak English Fluently and they usually have taught English grammatically. In Korea, there are some books which are regarded as bibles which are made in Korea and mostly written for grammar learning not for a communication. That’s the reason why Korean students feel so nervous when they ‘speak out’ in English even after the whole English education.

Here is the crucial reason why it happens.  In Korea, we only consider Koran as a mother language. We think English is ‘Foreign language, not a second language.‘ We don’t regard English as a ‘second‘ language, actually. That means, among Koreans, we don’t use English for a communication.  In other words, we don’t ‘speak or use ‘ but just ‘study’ it.

In my case, I had started studying English since when I was 14 years old. When I became middle school student, teachers poured much grammatical knowledge into my brain with senseless and ineffective explanation. At first, I was too confused to comprehend all the theories related to the basic English. Nevertheless, there were no other ways to escape those circumstances but just follow the lecture and record everything being taught. I took a note all the time and I tried to remember every word and sentence even example. However, after taking test I forgot most of what I’ve learned. Because I didn’t practice and drilling using English while learning. I just studied with books and tried memorize shortly for the exam and the score.

One of the biggest and most decisive reasons was the problematic way of teaching English. So Korea used ‘GTM(Grammar translation method)’ as the only way of teaching English. GTM is the earliest and oldest way to teach English. It is all about ‘rules‘ by which words and sentences are ordered. Students are asked to absorb what they are taught and the knowledge goes to the brain. They don’t have any chance to speak using English. If they have a chance to speak, It’s just repeat what the teachers say.

In that way, teachers are just explainer, not an involver or engager. Usually they explain the principle of grammar theoretically and give some examples to make students record them more easily. They only explained without showing(using) some visual materials. Korean teachers hadn’t considered of affective ways of teaching. In their lecture, teachers were not taken care of which means ‘giving lectures by teacher‘ is more valuable than ‘Being Communicated by students.’ Also they do some reading in their lecture, but it’s all about decoding sentence by sentence. In this lecture, students face to the teacher not to each student. So they don’t do some pair or group works at all. That means they don’t interact and drill what they learned. Students are very passive so their retention rate is absolutely low such as 10~20%. Even though they are learning language, they didn’t acquire it. It says students can’t produce communication by that sort of lectures.

As I mentioned above, traditional way of teaching English was ‘lecture’ done by teacher. In this lecture, learning types of students were never considered. I’m quite sure that almost all of the Korean teachers didn’t recognize there were ‘learning types’ and its importance. That’s why only few learners could be familiar with English and the others were not. There are 3 types of learners and 8 types of intelligence. If the lecture has an importance on one or two types of learners or intelligence, that lecture could be ineffective or even meaningless for many students.

 As time goes by, English teachers are getting challengeable to try using various ways to teach English. That is the positive signs that Korean students are more close to real language learning. Also it means all of the students can reach the goal in the class.

I’m becoming English teacher in 2 years, hopefully. Frankly, because I’m not teaching in the school, I’m not taking care of other barriers. I’m just thinking of my ideal goal. I hope every student in my class could get their goal and be more familiar with English. For that, I’ll make my students use all the skills in the class. Even though there would be gap of ability among students, I’m willing to be good helper and designer for the class.

 I think I’m not the only one who manages the class. With students’ participation, we can make an English communication class. For my aim as an English teacher, I’m going to plan based on the types of my students and circumstance of the class.