**Assignment #1**

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Learning English as a second language (“ESL”) starts early in Korea. My age group, which completed the primary education in the mid-1990s, started learning English from middle school years. Given that most universities require students take English courses, and students also study English hard to get a better job, average English learning period in Korea is at least ten years before one graduates from the university. What is frustrating, however, is that such a long learning period often does not lead to fluency or proficiency of English. Through my personal experience, I realized that effective second language acquisition is more likely to take place not with deductive but inductive teaching method and with more students’ participation in the class. Also, for effective second language learning, it is important to strike a right balance between different language skills such as listening, speaking, writing and reading.

When it comes to learning English, though there have been some changes in a good direction, it seems traditional teaching methods like chalk & talk and jug and mug are still dominant in the public school. It was more so when I learned English in the middle and high school. The teacher was the “knower”, and he or she tried to pass on all the knowledge to the students, and the focus was on explaining well rather than engaging and encouraging students. Teacher talking time (“TTT”) was definitely longer than student talking time (“STT”), and the teacher didn’t seem to care much about building rapport with students. At that time, I thought learning English was nothing more than studying grammar and memorizing as many vocabularies as possible. I had never thought learning English was exiting and often pretended as if I was paying attention while daydreaming. It all changed when I went to the U.S. to study English. I could learn new grammar, vocabularies and phrases by doing a variety of activities, and it was students who spoke, practiced and taught one another. It was fun and I could retain what I had learned more and longer than I used to in the Korean public schools. With this experience, I realized that effective language learning requires student-centered teaching method, more student participation and high STT during the class.

In addition, I would single out unbalanced learning and practicing as a contributing factor to the failure of effective English acquisition. Throughout my English learning experience in the public schools, grammar and reading took up the major part of the learning, and the students didn’t have enough chance to listen, speak or write in English. There were listening tests once in a while but not regular listening practice during the class. This kind of lopsided learning resulted in high test score but low English fluency in general. While taking an ESL course in the U.S., after I learned new words or phrases by reading a textbook, I could practice them right away by listening or speaking to other students or native speakers, and repeating this cycle of balanced practicing, my English proficiency improved faster than ever in a short period of time.

In conclusion, my belief, based on personal experience, is that effective language acquisition requires more engagement of students, balanced practicing and also teachers who can not only pass on knowledge but also encourage, guide and facilitate students.