**What can I do for my students as a teacher?**

According to the education ministry, Korean parents who are obsessed with English education spent more than 19 trillion won ($ 17 billion) per year on private institutes for their children. Even though we have invested our money to improve English skills, it is frustrating to hear the news saying that our country’s global standing in proficiency of this language has fallen from 13th in 2009 to 21st in 2011. What’s wrong with English education in Korea?

I think we do not have enough opportunities to practice speaking. When I was a high school student in the 1990s, English teachers only focused on reading. This is because the university entrance exam was mainly about reading skill. Examiners made exam questions with the most difficult words and the most complicated structures. What students could do to get a higher score in this education system was to try to memorize as many words as they could. Some kind teachers devised the special way to help students remember words easily. The most famous way to memorize vocabulary was to pronounce it in the Korean way. For example, in the case of ovum, we try to pronounce it in the Korean way such as o-bun, which means 5 minutes in Korean. I believed that this was the most effective way to memorize English words quickly, and I decided to take this method. Of course, I could get the high score in the English exam, but I ended up as a speech-impaired person at university. Everyone could not understand what I was saying, and I needed to spend a lot of money and time to correct my cursed pronunciation.

Another thing is that there is too much pressure in the classroom to learn English. I prepared for IELTs, the British English test, 5 years ago to study abroad, and I registered the English class for IELTs preparation in the private institute. My instructor said that if you wanted to get score 7 in the speaking test, it would be better for you not to speak much. What he meant was that you had more chances to make mistakes as you speak more. He kept emphasizing that I should keep in mind grammar to prevent errors during the exam, and scolded my classmates and me whenever we made small mistakes. Since I followed the teacher’s advice, I could get the score I needed. However, after this class, I had a habit of reminding me of grammar in mind like the formula of mathematics, making a sentence many times until the right sentence was made, and speaking the sentence out. You can imagine that conversation with my foreign friends was over even before I opened my mouth to start talking. Because of this class, I lost confidence in English and I felt like I had a nervous breakdown. It took time for me to overcome the fear of making mistakes, and when I have my confidence back, I found myself speaking without any problems.

As you can see from the above examples, Korean students including me have done our best to learn English. However, our final result seems terrible, because we ignored the basic factors. That is, it is necessary to have enough chances to speak English with the very comfortable atmosphere. As a teacher, I will try to make the class without tension, where every student can speak aloud without fear.