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| Essay |
| Personal experience learning a second language |
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| **SoYoung Kim** |
| **TESOL 111** |
| **2015-03-12** |
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English is not my national second language but I’d like to share experience learning English since this is the foreign language that I have spent most time to learn and the importance of learning English is emphasized like a second language in Korea. It was almost 25 years ago that I first met the English as a foreign language in the class of my middle school. It was normal at that time differently from these days when students start English class from 10 years old in the elementary school. After the first meeting in the class, I have experienced various types of language system and skills of learning foreign languages.

The public English education 30 years ago was the typical example of traditional teaching. A teacher used to stand in front of the class and keep reading one’s text book or writing on the board while students seated in rows and looked forward heading the teacher and the blackboard. The first lesson of the middle school English class was general conversation like “How are you?” and “Fine thank you, and you?” but there was not much chance to practice conversation in the class. Also there was not much interaction between the teacher and the students. Students would talk only when the teacher pointed out one student and let him/her read something or answer teacher’s questions. It seems that the majority of teachers at that time were the **explainer**. They mostly focused on grammar and vocabulary and listening and reading were the language skills that majority of teachers used. Books and cassette players are only teaching materials they used. The English exam to enter university also consisted of testing pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and reading & comprehension. Even there was no listening test at that time. Relatively, it might simple and easy for students to get a good grade comparing to now but it would not beneficial to students in terms of learning foreign language with various language skills.

As a result of this kind of English learning system, it was very popular to take conversation classes in the private language institute after graduation of high school in order to learn how to speak and listen that were missing skills in our public English education system. I also was one of them. The teacher of my class was really nice and fun. She didn’t just focused on her textbook but provided various activities to give dynamics to the class. Due to her effort on the class we could easily build the close rapport among the teacher and students. Grammar focused education without enough practical practice may make people be afraid of using (speaking or writing) language with any grammatical mistake. Other students and I felt like this when we were in the first class of conversation course. But the rapport we build and teacher’s encouragement made us get more comfortable and feel free to participate. I think she was the **enabler** type of teacher in ways how she provided many options and guided us to move forward.

Another experience learning English is the listening class using American TV shows. The materials we used were video tapes with popular TV dramas like “Friends”, “Fraiser”, “C.S.I” and textbooks with blanks in the scripts so that we can fill in it during class. The advantages of using TV shows would that we can learn live expression and vocabulary what Americans are using in their real life and TV shows themselves are very interesting so no time to be bored in the class. The teacher repeated sentences and let us try to repeat and guess the blanked words. It seems he is the **involver** since he’s not just lecturing but involving students actively.

Recalling back my experiences, I think all my experiences were helpful to my English skill in some ways. They were like building blocks of my own language system. Even grammar and vocabulary focused lecturing style teaching in school also helped me to learn basics of language system and build stable ground of it. Consequently, if we can teach with integrated language skills providing various experiences to students, then I assume that they can build concrete and balanced construction of their own language system.