“Practice makes perfect.” I have come across many idioms in my life, in both Korean and English, and this has got to be one of the few that I agree with the most. It proved to be very true in various experiences, especially in my experience of learning English which began 22 years ago when my family moved to Singapore. I had no language skills whatsoever when it came to English, but thanks to the environment and help from a few wonderful teachers that I was fortunate enough to have in the early stage of learning English, I can confidently say that the overall experience was a success.

Miss Mann, my English teacher from middle school, was an amazing mixture of all three teacher types - explainer, involver and enabler. She gave clear lectures on grammar, was well prepared with exciting games and what little visual/audio aids available back then when it came to vocabulary and storytelling, and assigned us with fun individual/group projects for cooperation and collaboration. She controlled the class at times, but sometimes handed it over to the students to lead and support. Although I was a shy student with intermediate level English who kept to herself most of the time, she never let me feel left out of the class or be afraid to speak up. Not only her knowledge, but also her passion for teaching, encouragement and genuine interest in students’ well-being resulted in mutual respect between the students and herself, and all the students stayed relaxed yet focused in her classes. Being a verbal and visual person, I absorbed fast and all of my receptive and productive language skills improved dramatically.

I met Mrs. Trenaman in high school, and she taught quite differently from Miss Mann. She was in her fifties, firm and strict when it came to assignments and class rules, and was not keen on using any technical aids. However she was very good at integrated-skill approach - she provided us with interesting topics and reading materials on which we would have discussions or debates afterwards. Her teaching style which went from traditional to modern depending on the subject worked well with me and the other students, as we were much older in high school and we needed to get down to the serious business of getting good grades. It could not always be fun, but she never lost our interest. One assignment that I still remember clearly, was creating an article that would go in a beauty magazine, on the relation between the sun, skin cancer and protective measures - we had to research and come up with the content, select appropriate format and words, and decorate the pages to suit the purpose of the article. It could not be more enjoyable and practical, and the sense of achievement I felt after completion for the time and effort I put in was priceless.

I call myself lucky when friends and colleagues envy my English skills, because besides having had great teachers, I was also put in the most ideal environment for learning English. Most of the Korean people begin learning English at a very young age, and I am certain many have studied longer and more intensively compared to me. However I believe it is hard for their efforts to beat my reason for learning – I learnt English to survive in the English speaking society. Except for the short period of time during the day that I spent with my family, I had to speak, listen, write and read in English. I had to not only learn the language, but also get the jokes, the expressions and the habits to get along with the people. Later the English level required of me went even further up as I had to pursue higher education in English. I was taught well in the beginning, but I also had the advantage of being able to constantly practice what I learnt every single minute of the day, which led to continuous enrichment of my English quality. I strongly believe in the power of practice, as my English has deteriorated fast ever since I returned to Korea 10 years ago and have not had many opportunities to use English.

I am currently not in the position to decide on my future plans as an English teacher in details, obviously because I still have so much to learn before I can get a more clear view, thoughts and ideas. Also, my teaching type and methodology would depend heavily on the students’ individual learning differences, so for now I intend to work hard to equip myself with the knowledge, theories, and available technology in order to be prepared for any type of students and classes. Being able to quickly and accurately analyze students, and plan the classes accordingly would be a very important first step to take in becoming a good English teacher. Also, obtaining the ability and flexibility to wisely select and mix characteristics of teaching types, and to use the right materials/activities to suit the class to the utmost compatibility, would be my ultimate goal to achieve at the end of this TESOL program. One thing that I can be sure of at the moment because it has been my strong belief for a long time as explained above, is that I will try my best to provide the students with as many chances as possible to use English in their everyday lives. I could do it directly with them, or give them rules and ideas to create the chances themselves. I also hope to be a sincere and trustworthy teacher that the students feel that they can rely on, for studies as well as matters outside of the classroom if necessary. That way, both the students and I can be in a win-win situation where everyone has a good, valuable time.