Second Language Acquisition Assignment

In Korea, English education was first provided at the middle school level in the past. Most English teachers provided students with substantial vocabulary, and repetitively explained grammar rules for reading comprehension at that time. The curriculum was test-oriented to develop learner’s test-taking skills, and heavily relied on textbooks as class materials, with no thought to communicative skills; speaking proficiency, listening skills, writing revisions and so on. Looking back, English was a big academic burden for many students. Even though the students spent considerable time studying English and made efforts to enhance their ability, most of them do not have even basic conversation skills in English. Conventional teaching, which is teacher-centered and test-oriented, has failed to produce learners who are proficient in English.

On the other hand, there is a personal background where communicative teaching approach made success of language learning. I have previously worked for YBM. After a brief English interview, I had to take a five-week training course for prospective English teachers. The training program included developing lesson plans according to learning subjects, effective teaching methods, various class activities and materials, interactive projects, different forms of assessment, time and classroom management skills, as well as acquiring useful classroom expressions. This training program was based on an active learning approach, and expected to assure teacher’s quality in the teaching profession. In addition, professional teacher trainer’s guidance and feedback help encourage trainees to become reflective practitioners. This course enabled inexperienced teachers such as myself to give learners organized lessons. Through the training course and my real-life teaching experience, I was able to recognize that a communication- oriented curriculum via student-centered classes was much more effective and enjoyable than teacher-centered approaches in second language learning, and strongly motivated students.

It is generally agreed today that it is necessary to change one’s mind in order to see that foreign language is not a learning subject, but a communication tool; therefore, the second language teaching system should be reconsidered comprehensively, together with the development of teacher training programs, in order to build a balanced language education program. For effective language learning, teachers should help students set goals first, focus on communication through interaction between a teacher and learners—and learners themselves—, present authentic tasks and use authentic matarials.

Nowadays, English plays an important role in the fields of politics, economics, trade, commerce, sightseeing, study abroad and other activities. As Korea is a small country which lacks natural resources, the Korean economy relies on export businesses, world trade and commerce. Thus, English is not only an essential skill that enables Koreans to be more competitive in the global market, but also one of the most important qualifications for seeking jobs. In practice, Korean society gives more advantage and incentives to people who have good English abilities in many aspects; in other words high English ability is directly related to good universities, employment and promotion in companies. In these contexts, the leveling up of English proficiency is now a national demand. Moreover, there is no sign that such enthusiasm for English learning is fading. As English learning becomes more intense, teachers and teaching staff with higher abilities and professional teaching methods are more and more needed for English education. Accordingly, more effort and research with regard to English teacher training programs are needed.