**Second Language Acquisition**

**By**

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The Korean government has prioritized learning English at an early age, emphasizing interactive and situational English, developing more reliable tests to access practical language skills, and attracting foreign human, financial and academic resources to improve teaching. The figure for Korean students studying abroad has quadrupled in five years with the United States being the most popular destination (Industry Canada, 2007).

In the writer’s experience, this major trend for English learning has to be followed when going to school, because English has become an object of wealth and social status in South Korea (Park, 2004, Oh, MacDonald and Graf, 2007, Butler, 2007). Therefore, the choice my parents and I made was to study abroad in the United States for a few years. Because it seemed like the fastest way to learn their language since the learner, myself, would be exposed to have natural communication with native speakers everyday regardless of my choice. This paper will show how the idea of “Language acquisition” had applied to me when studying and socializing among native English speakers.

“‘Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill. Acquisition requires meaningful interactions in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding.’ – Stephen Krashen” ([Schütz](http://www.sk.com.br/sk-inst.html), 2006).

Not only parents in Korea, but many parents in non-English speaking countries may believe in second language acquisition, ‘a hypothesis established by Stephen Krashen in the theory of the natural approach, which refers to the process of natural assimilation, involving intuition and subconscious learning, which is the product of real interactions between people where the learner is an active participant’ ([Schütz](http://www.sk.com.br/sk-inst.html), 2006). This is the reason why so many young learners are persuaded to go abroad to study English, because if the learners are at their young age, they can pick up language in ways similar to a child learning their first language (Scrivener, 2005: p39).

A classic example of language acquisition involves adolescents and young adults who live abroad for a year in an exchange program, attaining near native fluency, while knowing little about the language in the majority of cases. They have a good pronunciation without a notion of phonology, don't know what the perfect tense is, modal or phrasal verbs are, but they intuitively recognize and know how to use all the structures ([Schütz](http://www.sk.com.br/sk-inst.html), 2006).

Being the only Asian student among Americans in the classroom was once in a lifetime experience for me. The environment like that for international student, particularly Asian Student, is priceless because it is very rear for most of high schools in the United States to have just one Asian student. However, my case was very exceptional which I could not use my first language at all. Instead, I always ought to use English to communicate and interact with Americans without knowing much about language skills and systems. As time went by, my English skill has improved especially in speaking and writing, which it would never have improved that much if I stayed in Korea.

The English education in Korea, however, used to be teacher-centered compare to these days, using basic procedures in class - Using only textbooks, lists of vocabulary and there are no students’ involvements – in which depended on more traditional teaching method. However, it has changed a lot since the South Korean government has placed English learning high on its agenda and initiated new policies in English Learning (Li, 1998: 681-682). But the teaching method is still relying on receptive skills – listening and reading - in which it cannot help the learners to learn productive skills - speaking and writing.