

H's Language Learning Life Story  
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5In elementary school, I joined the English conversation club as an extracurricular activity. At that time, students, including me, who were involved in this activity, saw a variety of movies in English conversation class. Among them, I was so impressed by one, "Thelma and Louise." I saw the movie many times because I was so interested in the story. Every time I saw it, I would watch it with transcripts or without transcripts repeatedly. When I saw the movie without the transcripts, I 10had trouble understanding the movie. I could figure out only some words. I never understood any sentence-level dialogue. On the other hand, when I saw it with the transcripts, I figured out what the actors and the actresses said. Without any transcripts, I couldn't understand anything again. After I saw the movie, I tried to memorize the sentences in the movie which I could use in everyday conversation. In addition, I tried to study unfamiliar words I faced in the movie by using 15the dictionary. I could use several sentences I learned and memorized from the movie in everyday conversation.

In middle school, I had to learn English because it was one of the required courses. At that time, as other students did, I studied English grammar a lot. When I learned English then, I didn't feel any burden at all. In other words, I was so excited in learning English because learning 20English was one of many new experiences to me. So, I didn't think that learning English was difficult. English was not one of the courses that I had to study to take an exam, but was enjoyable to me.

Before I entered middle school, I knew only the English Alphabet. However, I was interested in learning how to read English. So, whenever I walked along the street, I was curious 25about how to read English billboards on the street because I didn't know the phonetic alphabet. I

didn't have any way to read English on the billboards. So, I paid attention to how other people read them. And then, I recognized how to read them in the long run. Using this way, I continued to find English on the billboards. Also, I tried to find the words I learned in class in magazines or in English books and read them. This was so exciting to me.

30           When I was in middle school, I generally learned English grammar such as declarative sentences, questions, articles, and conjunctions. However, I never experienced English conversation class except for one class. I met with an English teacher who was a native speaker of English for conversation class every week for one year. I was so impressed with the English conversation class because it was the first time that I met a native speaker teacher. Even though I  
35met foreigners on the street, I never interacted with them at all. The teacher was always nervous in class because he was young and often couldn't understand what students asked him. At that time, he saw a Korean English teacher who stood in the back of the class and she interpreted students' questions into English. He inclined to ask students about the simple questions, such as where they lived or how to say hello or goodbye. He was sometimes so embarrassed to students' prankful  
40questions, such as "Are you married?" Students were likely to be curious about the foreign teacher. However, I didn't have the chance to interact with him. Even though I met him, I rarely said anything to him. One day, I met him in the corridor. When I saw him, I just said "Hi."

Even though the class was so funny and was impressive, I rarely had experiences of having a discussion with him in class because the number of students was over 40. Furthermore,  
45students, including me, in my class had difficulties in communicating with him. Nevertheless, I thought the class was a real English class because I learned English in fun ways.

When I was in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I met one of the impressive English teachers. He tried his best to teach me English in exciting ways because he thought that I was learning English for the

first time. He used a variety of methods, such as watching movies and playing games. I especially  
50enjoyed watching cartoons because the characters were using simple sentences or simple words so  
that I could understand what they said easily. After I watched them, I was asked several questions,  
such as “Do you remember what they said?” and “Do you remember the words?” After that, he  
explained the story of the cartoon. In addition, he taught us how to speak in English in everyday  
conversation. Furthermore, I also enjoyed learning English by playing games, such as card games.  
55In a card game, a student explained a word on a card in English and another student figured out the  
word. Moreover, we could get gifts and grades through these games. At that time, even though  
students in my class didn’t have enough capabilities to explain the words, they enjoyed the game  
very much.

When I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I met one of my best English teachers. I think he had a lot of  
60passion. He motivated us to study English by making comments on students’ strengths and  
weaknesses. He advised some students to study grammar and others to study reading  
comprehension based on their abilities. One day, he and I had a face-to-face conversation and he  
told me my strengths and weaknesses in detail. He said that I should study grammar because I  
didn’t have the systematic knowledge of English grammar; I had some difficulties changing  
65declarative sentences into question sentences.

Furthermore, after taking mid-terms and final exams, he explained questions to students in  
detail. He gave us additional questions that were related to what we answered incorrectly. He made  
additional questions which we could practice and handed them out to students. He showed his  
interests in students all the time. After taking the final exam in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, he advised us that we had  
70to prepare for the entrance exam for high school. So, he printed out the words we had to memorize  
when we were in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and distributed them to us. Furthermore, he checked whether or not we

memorized them from time to time.

When I was in high school, I was so confused of how to study English because the teaching styles were totally different compared to middle school. For instance, teachers would have us read 75long passages at one time and asked us whether we finished reading the passages and asked us to answer the questions directly. So, I thought studying English tended to be focus on the entrance exam. I thought studying English was so boring. On the other hand, I met a English teacher who used different teaching styles. He made attempts to have us exposed to English in special ways. Sometimes, he let us listen to pop songs in class. In addition, he had us read English poems in 80class. However, they didn't occur all the time because they were extracurricular activities.

I felt a lot of burdens of studying English because I had to pass the entrance exam. On the other hand, I tried to find ways to study English excitingly. I sometimes studied English by using movies because I was interested in English movies. While I was in high school, the movie *Titanic* was released. I loved the movie very much. I was eager to understand what the actors and the 85actresses said in the movie. However, I couldn't. So, I bought the transcripts of the movie and I still have them today.

In Korea, most university students wanted to master English. If they did, they could have good jobs after graduation. In general, they poured their passion into studying English to have good scores on English tests, such as TOEIC and TOEFL. Also, I thought I had to study English 90when I was in college because I wanted to get a good job. So, I went to one of the private institutes to study TOEIC. For the first time, studying TOEIC was very boring. However, I had to study it because I wanted to get a good job. I studied TOEIC for a time being when I was freshman. Even though I quit studying English, I was interested in English every time I saw movies. I started studying English, especially TOEIC, again when I was senior. I wanted to get a good job. At that

95time, I registered for one of the courses with my friends in the private institute. When I was taking the course, I was shocked at teachers' teaching styles. I didn't like the class very much because he ordered students to follow what he instructed without any conditions. So, he instructed students to memorize the words and the sentences he provided without any explanation. I just followed what he instructed in the class because I had to get a good score on the TOEIC test. The second reason 100why I didn't like the course was that I didn't think attending the class was studying English because I didn't understand what he said. He forced students to put something in the blanks without any consideration during the class. In addition, the class was so crowded because the number of students was over 80. I didn't like that kind of class. Finally, I didn't think I was studying English at that time because I couldn't understand what people spoke in English in the 105movies and in soap operas. So, I just quit going to the institute after 3 months.

Even though I didn't like studying TOEIC, when I was senior I had to study it again because I had to get into the company. I was bored of and had difficulties studying TOEIC due to my obligation. At this time, I went to the private institute again. I had the same feeling like the first experience due to teaching styles. One day, the teacher handed out some words I had to memorize 110before class. After class, the teacher would randomly ask students what the words meant. I didn't like the teacher because he forced students to memorize the words. Sometimes, the teacher checked time and students had to finish answering questions within the limited time. Unless we couldn't finish all the questions, the teacher was angry with us.

I was not sure why I had a job. After graduation, I had a job in the newspaper company. I 115had worked there for one and a half years. I had several reasons to decide to quit the job. First, I thought working at the company was different from what I did in reality. Next, I thought I couldn't improve my position in the company because I am woman. Finally, I wanted to study more English

in English-speaking countries. After deciding to study English, I submitted the application to take a language course. In addition, I found several conditions to have admission to university. So, I  
120 started studying TOEFL. I liked studying TOEFL more than studying TOEIC. So, I enjoyed  
studying TOEFL. I felt comfortable studying TOEFL because I had a goal, getting admission into a  
U.S. university, and made plans to do so. I studied it by myself because I didn't like going to the  
private institute. I had some difficulties studying it at first. However, I tried to study it with fun. I  
liked studying reading comprehension and listening comprehension. In other words, I just enjoyed  
125 reading and listening to stories. After reading and listening to them, I looked up TOEFL words in  
the dictionary. In addition, I planned to memorize ten words by using several papers I printed out  
in advance. However, I couldn't accomplish my goals as I planned. So, I changed my plans and  
found another way to memorize the words. When I did reading comprehension, I tried to find  
unfamiliar words and tried to memorize them. When I studied listening comprehension, I listened  
130 to passages at once. I tried to memorize idioms and expressions I often faced in the passages and  
pronounce them aloud. For writing practice, I got a writing book. I tried to make sentences that are  
related to the topics.

When I came to the U.S. for the first time, I was nervous to go somewhere and speak in  
English in everyday conversations. On the first day when I came here, I had to submit insurance  
135 documents. Unless I had any insurance, I had to purchase the insurance. However, I've already  
purchased the insurance in Korea. So, I had to say "I already have the insurance. So, I filled out the  
form with it. I didn't need this form." However, I could have said just one sentence, "I have an  
insurance form." I couldn't say more. One of the staff in Office of International Affaires figured  
out what I wanted to say and dealt with my problems because he had a lot of opportunities to  
140 communicate with international students.

I couldn't speak in English instantly in the first semester. Even though I could answer questions with simple words or simple sentences, I had to prepare to say long sentences or to make long paragraphs. I had difficulties making sentences because I never had an experience making sentences. If I wanted to make a sentence, I needed two or three minutes to make the sentence 145because I had to check whether or not the sentence was grammatically correct. When I checked the grammatical things in the sentence, I found article errors the most. In addition, I had difficulties making complex sentences like a relative clause. I did not know whether or not I needed a subject when I made subjective relative clauses. So, I put the relative clause and the subject together. In other words, I thought that when I made a sentence I had to put a subject and a verb, or a subject 150and a verb and an object in every sentence without considering the sentence type.

I was so shy. So, even though I could answer in everyday conversations I tended to avoid speaking and expressing a lot and just laughed because I was so afraid of using incorrect or incomplete grammatical sentences. I knew well that I had to use "has" instead of "have" for third singular subjects. However, when I spoke in everyday conversations, I couldn't say it because I 155couldn't say it instantly. So, I just said "He have." I couldn't attach '-s' to the verbs for the third personal subject either. While I was saying those sentences, I didn't recognize that I was making errors. Immediately after I said that, I recognized that I made errors by myself.

I didn't solve my problems easily because I didn't understand what native speakers said in campus life. One day, I wanted to have driver's license. So, I needed to see a supervisor to have the 160documents in ALI. Then, I went to the Office of International Affairs with the documents. I said to a student who worked at the front desk, "I bring some documents." He told me that he didn't have the authority to deal with my problem and suggested that I see one of the staff in the office. At that time, I could figure out that he couldn't deal with it. However, I couldn't figure out the rest of what

he said. So, I asked him to say it again because I couldn't figure out what he said. He said it again,  
165but I still couldn't figure out what he said. With a smile, I asked him to say it again. We interacted  
with each other like this three or four times. Finally, he recognized what I didn't figure out and  
found a supervisor who had a lot of interaction with international students, especially ALI students.  
She explained to me, but I still couldn't figure it out. To be honest, even though I roughly  
understood what she said, I couldn't figure out exactly what I had to do. So I asked her what I had  
170to do with the ALI supervisor and I figured it out in the long run. I went back and forth between the  
ALI and the Office of International Affairs four times. However, I was denied because my  
documents didn't meet the requirements to get a drivers' license.

I also had a similar experience off campus. One day, I went to the post office to send a  
package to Korea for one of my friends' birthdays. I said to a worker in the post office, "I want to  
175send the package." Then, the office worker showed me a price list. I asked him about how I could  
send the package. He suggested that I find a box somewhere. At that time, I couldn't figure out  
what he said. He said again that I should find a box with a bubble. Again, I couldn't figure out  
what he said. However, I pretended to understand him and tried to find the box he told me about.  
As a result, I found the box and brought it to him. When I chose the price, I chose the price  
180including insurance. However, he recommended a cheaper price. He said to me that it was good  
and had a \$10 dollar gap, I couldn't entirely figure out what he said. I couldn't figure out which  
was better and which was cheaper. I couldn't figure out the differences between them either. So I  
asked him about the differences again. He explained them in detail. However, I couldn't  
understand what he said. Finally, I chose the first one because the post office was crowded and I  
185was so nervous and shy.

Since I came here, I have been surrounded by English. However, I couldn't speak in

English and couldn't express my mind as much as I wanted to. So I tried to be exposed to as much English as I could. As soon as I woke up, I usually turned on the T.V. to listen to the news and weather forecasts. I usually watched Fox channel. At night, I tried to see movies on T.V.. When I 190 watched T.V., I sometimes felt that I was improving my English abilities if I heard the words I learned for TOEFL on the news. On the other hand, I felt so frustrated when I faced unfamiliar words or couldn't understand the news. When I watched programs that I knew about, I had no difficulty figuring out what was being said, even if I didn't concentrate. When I watched weather forecasts or news about crimes or fashion, I could figure them out. On the other hand, when I 195 watched a talk show like the Larry King show, I couldn't figure it all out because I was not familiar with those kinds of genres.

I usually studied English alone and I didn't think I had enough speaking abilities. At that time, I tried to find a native speaker as a conversation partner. However, I couldn't find her or him because not many students did apply for it. I had to wait to have a native speaker until the next 200 semester. So, I asked one of the Korean students to be my conversation partner. He has been here for a long time and had enough speaking abilities. He was happy to accept my proposal. So, He and I meet with each other every week. I tried to speak in English with him. I had several advantages about having a Korean conversation partner. First, when I could not express in English, I could speak in Korean. In addition, I felt comfortable with him because we're in the same cultural 205 boundary. In other words, I was less nervous than when I communicated with native speakers.

When we met for the first time, we usually talked about everyday life such as my major, my hometown, and my preferences. We also talked about American culture such as my impression about America and my feeling about American students. He sometimes advised me that because I tried to make complete sentences by using subjects and verbs in everyday conversations, I didn't

210speak in English. He suggested that I use simple words without any hesitation because I had to respond to other people's utterances instantly in everyday conversations.

I was so nervous and was tired all the time because I had to speak in English to communicate with my classmates or teachers in class. I was so afraid of speaking in English with my classmates that I didn't have conversations with students who were from west Asia because I 215didn't understand their pronunciation and their culture. On the other hand, I had a few chances to communicate with classmates who were from Taiwan. There were not many. I just exchanged "hello" and "good bye." From time to time, I asked them where they were from or where they got the textbook or how much they paid, especially at the beginning of the semester because I had limitation of English ability. When I conversed with them, I used the simple conversation sentence; 220for instance, when I would like to initiate the utterance, I said "the clothes you wear are beautiful or your T-shirts are pretty." In other cases, I usually used a word. Even though I often said the complete sentences, I said them slowly. Furthermore, when I made long sentences, I needed more time and murmured them. At that time, I was uncomfortable with speaking in English.

Sometimes, I couldn't understand what my classmates said or my classmates couldn't 225understand what I said because we couldn't pronounce the words in adequate ways. In these cases, we wrote them on the notebook with each other or looked up the words in the dictionary. One day, I said "I can't reflect the teacher's answer." However, one of my classmates didn't figure out what I said. Even though I said the sentence repeatedly, he continued not to understand what I said. Further, I could see his face which expressed that he didn't figure it out. Eventually, I wrote the 230word on the notebook. He looked up the words in the dictionary and figured them out at that moment. I often couldn't figure out what and of the male Taiwanese students said either; he looked up the word which he wanted to say in the dictionary and showed me.

I was always nervous all day in class for the first three weeks because all the teachers are native speakers. When I attended the class, I was afraid of the fact that I had to speak in English. I  
235couldn't understand what the teacher said in class because he or she was a native speaker. In addition, I found a lot of words I couldn't figure out. I just guessed what the teacher said. I couldn't figure out assignments. Furthermore, I couldn't say anything at all.

Even though I had many difficulties adjusting to the class during the first semester, I was so interested in attending the class because I could practice speaking in English in class, but not in  
240everyday conversations. In addition, even though I didn't speak in English very much, I felt free to interact with teachers in English in the class. I thought I had to continue to be exposed to English here. One day, I attended one of my classes, a speaking class, which is different from other classes where students usually listen to what teachers say in class; the teacher tried to make students have more chances to talk in class. He often made pairs with students and had them interact with each  
245other instantly. Even though he had students come out and ask them unexpected questions, he didn't give students any burden because he asked students questions based on the textbook all the time. One day, I learned about how to appreciate receiving something. He gave me some gifts and I had to respond to him. Even though I didn't respond appropriately, he gave me some tips. To be specific, if I had a gift from other people, I should say more besides "thank you," such as "I like  
250this design," or "I need this one." If so, people are likely to be satisfied at your expressions.

Therefore, even though students couldn't answer the teacher's question fluently, they all enjoyed the class because they couldn't learn these expressions in the textbook.

I attended another interesting class. In this class, I went to some actual places such as a museum, hospital, and police office. I was so impressed with this class because I could meet other  
255native speakers unlike other classes in which I just listen to what the teachers said. One day, I went

to the police office. At that time, I could see one of the police officers in the office. He took us on a tour around the police office and explained what police officers did. Finally, we went to an office and asked questions, such as the rate of crimes and the kinds of crimes at IUP. In this discussion, I had language difficulties. I was asked to make some questions that I wanted to ask in advance  
260 through several steps. At first, I had to look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary. Then, I found similar examples which I could use to make a sentence by using the dictionary. I checked and used it to make a sentence. Finally, I made several questions and asked the teacher to check whether or not the questions were adequate. If I didn't make adequate questions, the teacher said that I should add more.

265 When I attended the class in the middle of the first semester, I could figure out half of what teachers said in class. However, I couldn't figure out all of the sentences. In this case, a teacher tried to help me understand what he or she said by using a variety of ways in class. She usually looked at my face which expressed whether or not I figured it out. If she recognized that I was not likely to understand what she said, she emphasized what she said again. Even if I didn't figure it  
270 out again, she wrote the words which I was likely to miss. Finally, I could figure out what she said.

In order to catch what the teacher said, I usually used the electronic dictionary in class. One day, I faced unfamiliar words during the class. I tried to look up the words in the dictionary and asked the teachers the meaning of the words. I always was tired during the class. Furthermore, if I couldn't find the meaning of the words in the dictionary; I asked the teachers about them after the  
275 class. At that time, I tended to ask the teachers about whole stories of the lecture rather than individual words because I couldn't remember detailed words.

I took "open-lab" class last semester. The class and the teacher were so impressive to me because she showed me her continuous interests. She said "hello" and asked me about how my

studying was going even though I did not take the class this semester. The class was a kind of face-  
280to-face conversation class. For the first time when I took the class, I was a little bit nervous  
because I had to have face-to-face conversations with a native speaker teacher. To be honest, I  
wanted to avoid taking the class because I had difficulties communicating with the teacher. For  
example, I was so irritated because I didn't understand what she said and what I said in class at all.  
I asked her to pronounce words and was allowed to repeat them. In addition, even though I tried to  
285say something, I spoke for less than 10 minutes in class. I just listened to what she said for the rest  
of the time. Furthermore, I was not familiar with face-to-face conversation, but I was familiar with  
the class which many students attend.

However, I liked the class because the teacher tried to explain to me with kindness and  
made me speak in English more and waited for me until I finished speaking. In addition, she was  
290an old person and gave me a lot of useful information. One day, she told me about one of the web  
sites through which I could get the materials of TOEFL. She and I met two times every week.  
Besides these, when I passed by the ALI office, I could talk with her if she was sitting and using a  
computer.

During the open lab class, we usually talked about American holidays such as  
295Thanksgiving and Halloween. In these cases, she told me about historical background and  
explained to me the words that related to the holidays. Sometimes, I read story books and listened  
to music such as the Beatles. After listening to the music, I was asked to translate them. One day, I  
was so embarrassed because she had me sing a song with a headset. At that time, I couldn't sing  
the song because many people were using computers in the room. Eventually, she sang the song at  
300first and asked me to sing it together. It was so fun.

Through this class, I had confidence because even though I couldn't say very much, I had

some opportunities to speak in English. She usually encouraged me to say something even though I didn't say anything perfectly. I thought I could speak in English in the future. In addition, when I spoke a little, she told me that I was right. She also corrected what I said and had me repeat it when she finished listening to me. Then, she asked me "Do you want to say it like this?" Even when I didn't figure out her explanation, she wrote her explanation on the notebook. I had a fun story in the class. I planned to make a presentation about a folk tale. I prepared the presentation and told her a Korean folk tale in front of her for 10 minutes. After listening to the tale, she asked me to send an email with what I made for the presentation because she was unlikely to figure out what I said during it.

When I was in the second semester, I had one native speaker as a conversation partner. When I chatted with her, I was inclined to listen to what she said more than I talked to her. At this time, listening to what she said was very helpful because I knew how to speak in English. I recognized how to speak in English in certain situations. For instance, I didn't know how to describe a person who doesn't have any brothers or any sisters in English. However, she just said "only child." At that time, I knew how to describe the person.

I could understand the class during the second more than the first semester. However, I still had difficulties figuring out everyday conversation because I was not exposed to everyday conversation with native speakers. Furthermore, when native speakers used unfamiliar sentence patterns, I was embarrassed and didn't figure out what they said because I didn't concentrate on or was not familiar with what they said all the time. I figured out what other people said in everyday conversation, when I had to think about what they said two or three times. One day, I went to Java city to get a cup of coffee in the library. If someone got an Americano, one of the clerks asked him or her whether or not he or she needed some room for cream. When I heard it for the first time, I

325didn't figure out what she said, but I just asked to get cream. I just said "yes." After getting a cup of coffee, I could recognize what she said.

Even though I had to instantly respond and had enough time to prepare what I wanted to say, I had difficulties because I didn't do them. One day, I lost my students' ID. So, I went to the first floor in the library and said "I lost my ID." One of the workers told me "You should go there  
330to find it." However, I couldn't find the place and jotted down my name. Next day, I went to the library again. A worker said to me that he found my ID with the note. So, even though he asked me where I should get my ID, I didn't answer instantly. So, I was so embarrassed that I asked him where I should go to get my ID in hasty ways. He told me I had to go to the HUB. However, I didn't know where I should go because the HUB is spacious. Again, I asked him whether I had to  
335go the first floor or the second floor. However, he didn't know where I should go exactly either. He just told me I could see it at the PNC bank. Further, I became so embarrassed again that I didn't say "thank you." And then, I just left.

After this case, I thought I had several reasons why I experienced the difficulties in everyday conversation. First, I just attended the class and never had conversation with students in  
340everyday life. For instance, my conversation partner told me that native speakers said "coup" to indicate Asian people. However, when I heard the word, I didn't figure out what it means. I rare have experiences about everyday life. As a result, I had difficulties conversing with people in everyday conversation. When I went to "Taco Bell," a waiter asked me what kinds of noodles I would like. At that time, I was so embarrassed that I couldn't ask him what he asked me about the  
345kinds of noodles. So, I just chose the first one on the menu. In another day, I went to Starbucks one day. I wanted to drink soda and I asked a cashier what kinds of soda I could have. However, she was so embarrassed because nobody asked about the kinds of soda in the Starbucks. I spent much

time to order a soda because I asked her about the kinds of sodas and she said to me all kinds of sodas.

350 I felt irritated when I couldn't express as much as what I wanted to express in everyday conversations and in writing class. To be honest, I thought I expressed less than 1% of what I wanted to express. Furthermore, I looked forward to expressing it in Korean because I thought I might write it better. Actually, I had many problems with describing English sentences because I didn't know how to describe what I wanted to express and how to find English expressions. One 355day, I was so stressed because my teacher advised me that native speakers didn't use the expressions which I used in my writing. I also used sentences that native speakers didn't use any more. Furthermore, I used words that have similar meanings, but can't be used under some conditions. To be more specific, I thought "problem" and "matter" have the same meaning so I used both of them interchangeably. However, the teacher advised me that they have different 360meanings. In order to overcome the difficulties, one of my teachers advised me I shouldn't find just words, but sentence examples in the dictionary. It was a little helpful for me. Before this time, I checked just the first or the second meaning in the dictionary. Thereafter, I made a habit of finding the sentence examples. As a result, I knew whether or not a word was adequate for a certain sentence.

365 I also had difficulties understanding what the teacher said in class during the second semester. I had a funny experience. I had to write the first draft about where I would like travel. However, because I didn't figure out what the teacher said, I just made an outline. In other words, I wrote just the place I wanted to travel. However, all of my other classmates made the outline. I was so embarrassed. However, I was told that I was okay and was able to write the draft during the 370class. I wrote the draft for 50 minutes. However, I couldn't finish it.

After then, I tried to ask teachers how to say what I couldn't figure out. If I couldn't understand it continuously, I asked the teachers to write what I didn't understand on the board. The teachers sometimes wrote their explanation on the notebook personally. In a class, I understood what a teacher said when he explained how people make a process when they  
375 memorize something because he used easy words. However, I didn't understand a part of it even though I listened to what he said three or four times. I asked him to write it on the board. To make matters worse, he didn't find the marker. He said sentences word by word and classmates and I wrote them.

Sometimes, I tried to understand them by myself. Even though other classmates are likely  
380 to figure out, I felt more frustrated when I didn't think that only I understood her utterance in class. On the other hand, when I couldn't understand an assignment, I tended to ask the teacher what I didn't figure out until I could understand it compared to other classmates because I felt guilty unless I did my assignments. However, when I asked the teachers, I tended to use just simple sentences such as "Could you explain again?," "Repeat," and "I can't understand, please say it  
385 again."

Despite my difficulties of understanding the class, I took one of the most impressive classes, grammar class. I had taken this class since the first semester. I was so scared about learning grammar when I attended the class for the first time. However, I thought I had to practice how to use grammar. If so, I thought I could be applied the grammar to other English abilities such  
390 as speaking, reading, and writing. Especially, I applied the grammar to everyday conversation. So, I thought the grammar was very important.

I usually thought I wanted to attend the class without any hesitation. I had many reasons why I liked to attend the class. First, I liked her teaching style. Secondly, I liked her attitudes

because she usually respected students. Finally, I thought she tried to understand students' 395 situations. In regards to her teaching style, students read the passages which the grammar is used. Then, they read a small piece of article. At this step, she applied the grammar to the sentence examples without mentioning any grammar. She asked students to find which parts are incorrect by using several steps. At first, she had students find incorrect things by themselves. Then, she and students found them together. Finally, she explained to students which parts were incorrect. In 400 addition, she introduced more examples which students might have found in everyday conversations. She explained English grammar in the examples. Several weeks ago, I learned how to make tag questions. To be honest, I didn't understand it because she explained it in English. In other words, I had difficulties catching the concepts of grammar. At that time, she explained it to me repeatedly. For example, she gave me some examples which were related to what I couldn't 405 understand and explained it to me. So, I could know it more and more.

When I attended the class, I wasn't familiar with grammar terms such as part of speech. Even though I learned the terms of English grammar in Korea, I didn't understand them because she explained them to me in English. So, I usually used the electronic dictionary. Also I usually asked her about unfamiliar terms in class. When students faced difficult grammatical terms, she 410 usually gave some examples. For instance, when she explained about adjectives, she gave other examples which were related to what she wanted to explain. Then, she explained to me that the adjectives modify nouns.

She didn't give students burdens of studying grammar. Even though I usually thought that I was not an expert at English grammar, I didn't feel any burden about the test because she made 415 questions by using what I learned during the class. In addition, she usually encouraged me not to be nervous and said to me that the test was not important and it was just a grade. The most

important thing is that I know it. Before taking the test, I could practice questions by using similar questions.

Unlike other classes where teachers were busy talking by themselves or students couldn't interrupt teachers' utterance when they met difficult words, she considered students' situations. To be specific, she usually spoke slowly. In addition, if she felt someone had questions, she asked him or her whether or not she had questions. Finally, she explained the easy words in detail. She usually paid attention to students.

I learned many valuable things I can use in other contexts. I often used what I learned in class in everyday conversations. One day, I learned about the contraction forms in class. I didn't understand them even though native speakers used them many times. Furthermore, I didn't know the fact that native speakers used the contraction forms because I learned non-contraction forms such as "I want to" in Korean. I didn't know why native speakers used the contraction forms either. However, she explained them to me.

430 I learned the idioms in class. They were very useful because I used them. To be honest I didn't know what "back seat driver" meant. I thought it meant a person who sits on the back seat. However, I recognized that native speakers used it many times. One day, when I was in a parking lot, I heard that someone told others by using "back seat driver." At that time, I recognized that it was used in everyday conversations. In order for her to teach idioms, she handed out the prints  
435 which included the idioms in alphabetical orders. She explained what they meant and explained it again by using the examples. For instance, I learned "piece of cake," when I could easily answer some questions without any hesitation. She told me by using "piece of cake," so I could easily learn it.

Before I came here, I never had experiences about English writing. Moreover, I didn't

440 know how to make English sentences. I thought writing class is one of the most important classes because I could apply sentences which I used in writing to speaking. One day, I learned how to deal with sentences delicately. To be specific, before learning writing, I just wrote “Friends are important.” However, after taking the writing class, I wrote “Making friends is important in our life.” Also, I learned where I had to put conjunctions into sentences. I used the sentences without  
445 any difficulties during the class.

However, I had serious difficulties writing English. When I made sentences, I stared at sentences after I just put subjects, verbs, and objects. It is needless to say I couldn’t make one paragraph. I didn’t know how to connect between a sentence and a sentence. To be honest, when I wanted to express something, I faced a lot of words which I was not familiar with. So, I used my  
450 own methods to make sentences for the first time. If I was in the class, I tended to look up examples, idioms, and structures in the electronic dictionary. Then, I decided which words I had to use. Then, I saw teachers to check whether I used appropriate words. At this time, if the teachers said “They are okay,” I thought it was correct. If the teachers suggested that I use other sentences and words, I rewrote them. Furthermore, I needed much time to write just one page. One day, I  
455 spent one and a half hours writing one page without looking up anything in the dictionary. Also, I made many grammatical errors when I was writing. Especially, I made errors about tense.

I was so proud of myself that I didn’t think that I wasted my time to study English in the U.S. I tried not to miss what the teacher said in class at all. I was satisfied with it. Even though I said different amounts of utterances depending on the class, I tried to speak in English as much as I  
460 could. I had one of the classes where I could speak in English more than other classes. In this class, students including me were usually nervous because the teacher had students talk more. I usually prepared and thought about what I would say before the class. Sometimes, I was thinking what I

wanted to say while the teacher had other students talk during the class. For instance, I was analyzing the autobiography of Kevin Howard in the class. The teacher asked me about what he  
465did. At this time, I was thinking about how to make sentences to answer his question. I was thinking in my head that Howard would retire soon and after that Howard wanted to do something. I said “He want to retire.” I thought all these things in my head at one time. Sometimes, I needed much time that I couldn’t answer the teacher’s question right away. At this time, the teacher waited for me until I finished speaking. Because I often didn’t come up with some words, I looked up the  
470words in the dictionary. Nevertheless, I might not speak in English perfectly. The teacher advised me how I should say it correctly. At this time, I realized how to say it and thought what I wanted to say again. As a result, I tried my best to talk more by using just a simple sentence or just s words in this class because I wanted to talk more in this class.

In the class, the teacher often had students have many discussions and talk about something  
475in groups. In the case of writing class, he had students write a draft at first. At the beginning of the class, students switched their writings and read them with each other. He had students discuss advantages of others’ writings. However, most students didn’t discuss it because they had difficulties communicating. They were likely to avoid talking to each other. In this case, because he forced students to say something about what they discussed, students couldn’t help saying  
480something. In one of the activities, I had a female partner who was from Saudi Arabia. She tended not to talk too much. So, I couldn’t help leading the discussion. I started saying “I was interested in this one because I didn’t have the experiences like that one.” However, I tended not to think about the writing deeply. On the other hand, she had no response to what I said. If she had to say anything, she just said “It is interesting.” Often, I chose a familiar or an easy topic because I had  
485difficulties discussing for 10 minutes. In another discussion, I chose a topic, “music,” among many

topics, such as background of the author, the vitae of the author, and the background of the characters. After my participant and I chose the easy topic, we just laughed because we chose one of the easiest topics faster than others. Then, we discussed it for 10 minutes.

I participated in one of the interesting activities in the class. I was so stressed because I had  
490to say something and was video-taped for 10 minutes. I talked about the summary of Kevin  
Howard's autobiography by using one of the tools in the handout which the teacher provided. In  
my presentation, I had to say the reason why I liked the tool or why I didn't like the tool. Even  
though I liked all tools, I chose three tools, such as drawing, connecting, and summarizing. I also  
had to say something that is related to my life. To prepare the presentation, I had some difficulties  
495practicing and making the presentation. Even though I spent some time translating and  
understanding the article and the handout, I didn't understand and follow the handout easily.  
Furthermore, I was not familiar with one of the tools, "drawing," because I was not sure how to  
draw the picture based on a biography. I had to ponder it for so much time. Then, I wrote what I  
wanted to say on my small note and practiced it for one hour for three or four days. Even though I  
500read what I wrote 50 times, I often had to see my note during the presentation because I was so  
nervous that I couldn't remember what I wrote. When I practiced it alone, I could see one page at  
one time. However, I couldn't do that in front of the video camera. Despite the difficulties, I could  
have many benefits from this presentation. After the presentation, I tried to say something and  
could say something in more natural ways.

505 I videotaped my presentation three times. After videotaping the presentation, I analyzed my  
videotape with a Chinese teacher. As I presented, I could see that I could say something more and  
more naturally. In the first presentation, I found that my voice was shaky because I didn't prepare  
my presentation enough and I didn't know how to prepare it. In addition, I couldn't say the main

points either. However, I could say something more neatly at the second presentation. I had to say  
510and explain my biography of the first presentation. However, I talked to myself about my  
weaknesses regardless of the topic.

Beside difficulties about grammar, writing, and reading, I had difficulties pronouncing  
words perfectly at the presentation. For instance, I didn't pronounce, "prepare," "retirement," and  
"require" in adequate ways. Furthermore, I didn't try to pronounce them perfectly. Also, I didn't  
515know how to connect the sentences either. I said the first sentence naturally. However, when I said  
the second sentence, I was thinking how to connect them in my head. Eventually, I couldn't think  
about anything in my head.