Although I was born and raised in Korea, I spent most of my teenage years in Indonesia. I attended Mountainview International Christian School, where the majority of students were missionary children from the United States. I entered the school as a seventh grade ESL student, and I finished my eleventh grade as an elected member of the student council and an honor student. Having never lived outside of Korea prior to moving to Indonesia, my journey to reaching this level of achievement in English proficiency and adapting to Western culture was full of struggles.

I had to wake myself up at four every morning to study. As I had virtually no grasp of English, I resorted to literally memorizing entire pages of my science and geography books in order to prepare for the exams, which left my teachers speechless. Learning English was certainly not an easy task, but it turned out to be “a magic carpet ride”. It opened up to me a whole new world of classic literature and knowledge. I started to really cherish the language. I started to write poems and stories in English. I was amazed how learning a new language was like discovering a secrete door to a whole new world. After high school, without any hesitation, I decided to become an English teacher so that I could share this experience.

My first experience as an ESL teacher was at my alma mater in Indonesia. When I first met my students, they were wearied and frustrated due to the language barrier. Not being able to freely express themselves, they felt discouraged and were reluctant to become proactive in both their social life and academic studies. It was my earnest desire to help them overcome the language barrier and demonstrate their full potential. In order to motivate my young elementary students, I designed my lessons with a lot of hands-on activities such as making mini-books, art crafts, and science experiments. I tried to make it as fun and exciting as possible; in the meantime, I always had clear objectives for each of my students. I made sure that their vocabulary pool and grammar knowledge expanded day by day.

My second job was teaching TOEFL to university students, which was followed by teaching high school students at a foreign language high school. These experiences awakened me to a whole new paradigm as an ESL teacher. I realized that students struggle so much because of their limited English vocabulary. With a larger vocabulary pool, students can hear, read and write better and richer sentences. On the other hand, with a limited amount of vocabulary, it was literally impossible to move forward. Designing a curriculum guided by this rather simple realization is easier said than done, but has proven to be quite powerful. <RESULTS> Keeping this in mind, I try to equip every single student I meet with a large pool of vocabulary, knowing that this will become the foundation which will help them to not only score well on standardized English proficiency tests but will also open up the door to a limitless universe of knowledge delivered in English. I adhered to this principle even when I taught kindergarteners. I would frequently conduct additional research in order to adopt a variety of vocabulary in my classroom, and when new words were introduced, I did my best to explain in as fun and exciting manner as possible for my students to remember.

For the past twelve years, I have taught thousands of students. It was my joy to see them improve day by day in their English ability, and for my students, overcoming this language barrier truly opened up a door to a whole new world. For me, teaching English is not simply a job and a career, it is what I am born to do and it is my life. To this very day I am still striving to find more efficient ways to teach English.