Reflecting on my English learning experiences

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“Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.”

– Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*

I would like to reflect on my past English learning experiences. I have learned English since I was fifteen years old.. My first middle school English teacher was Mr. Jo. He was young and passionate teacher. He always emphasized that English learning should not be difficult. Every class, he taught us famous pop songs. I think that method was very useful and interesting. I am still remembering some of those lyrics and melodies. He had an “ involver” teaching style. He didn’t teach the word’s concept directly. I was lucky that I could meet him as my first English teacher.

I learned English at Daewon Women’s High School (1995-1997). My least favorite English teacher was Mr. Lee. He was a famous author of an English study guide book, but his English teaching skill was very poor. He was definitely an “explainer”. His passion for English was awesome, but he made most students fall asleep. From that experience, I realized that an expert knowledge doesn’t mean an ability to teach.

After graduating from high school, I entered to Kyunghee University (1998-2003). I took some English conversation classes. Sadly, I have no memorable lessons in my university times. However, fortunately, I could have a chance to go to America for 6 months (2002). I studied at William Carey International University which is located in Pasadena, California. I also learned English through the trip. Even though I was exposed to English a lot, I couldn’t speak English well. Because I was afraid to talk to Americans. I addition, my motivation to learn English was not clear.

After graduation, I had worked as a staff of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship for 6 years(2004-2009). I taught university students as a preacher, teacher and their mentor. I loved my students, and I tried to help them a lot. From that experience, I could have another vision of my life. That is being a teacher in the third world. For instance, in Cambodia, large numbers of people were killed and buried by Killing Fields. Now days, they don’t have adult teachers. If I have a chance to go there, I hope to be an English or Korean teacher. My motivation to learn English was getting clear.

Recently, my husband and I have lived for 2 years in Wilmore, Kentucky (2010-2012). We went there for my husband’s studying. I didn’t take a class officially, but I could meet many good friends inside and outside school. I joined spouse ministries and also audited some counseling classes. I went to American church and I met great friends. Those experiences were very helpful to broaden my perspectives. I was not afraid to talk to American any more, even though my English was not perfect.

My church friend, Lisa taught me English for 4 months (2011) for free. I was very grateful that I had her as my English tutor. She wanted to teach a lot of individual investigations. She encouraged me to write a journal. Absolutely she was an “enabler”. She was listening to my stories carefully, but sometimes she was very strict at my writing so that she could correct my grammatical errors.

I believe that an authentic teaching comes from an authentic identity and integrity. That’s why I started my essay with Parker J. Palmer’s saying. My Best friend and teacher, Lisa was Canadian, so she could understand my situation as a foreigner in U.S.A. She was interested in my life, not only in my English. I want to be a teacher just like my friend, Lisa. Now I think I have clear vision to teach English. I hope to be an authentic teacher, so I’ll do my best.