**Do we really need teachers for second language acquisition? :**

**: My experience of second language acquisition.**

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(Word Count : 663)

“The English teaching methods in public education up to now have proved

to be a total failure.” That was the common opinion among the panel in the TV

show – that is of one of the major Korean TV stations – that I watched several

years ago ; it had me look back on my school days in 1970’s and 1980’s.

English is one of the three major subjects – Korean, mathematics, English –

for entrance examinations required by most universities and colleges in an

extreme academic clique society as Korea. Consequently, English courses in most

Korean schools are very intensive and there become needed a great deal of time

and money. Nevertheless, after all undergoing their six years or more English

learning experience, most Korean students could hardly make meaningful

communication - in the main four language skills : Speaking, Writing, Reading,

Listening – in their business and advanced school contexts. Now then “Why?”

My essay will be a consideration about this “Why?” and the reasons in three

different sources : 1. my twelve years’ struggles as English learner in the States, 2.

six years’ school days experiences, and 3. new knowledge on modern classrooms,

teacher types, and effective teaching from TESOL course

I am pretty sure that most of students in Korea after graduating high

school, have no/very poor ability to write their journal in English, and to make

conversation with English-speakers. Even though they were a good hand at

grammar – well-trained in it, they would face considerable difficulty in reading a

newspaper in English. Actually, once I moved to the States in 2000, I had to face

huge language barrier. Whenever I got mysterious letters – in fact, it was just junk

mails - , I would feel ill at ease. I couldn’t throw them right away. I had to keep

them until I found out it is nothing but handbill. I used to be misunderstood by

native-speaker brothers and sisters in a bank, a office, or a restaurant, etc.

Without their generosity for my mistakes, and my desperate efforts to get over

the gigantic wall – it took me more than decade to do it - , I couldn’t

have survived.

Now, why did I fail in learning English in my school days? From first

module of TESOL course, I learned that there are three core teacher

characteristics to help to create an effective learning environment – Respect,

Empathy, and Authenticity. Sad to say, I cannot recollect these characteristics from

my English teachers in my school days. There was ‘Respect’, but it was forced one

– just to teacher, one-sided, not to students from their teachers. There was no

authenticity. The teachers in my memory were always hiding themselves behind

traditional, Confucian teacher-persona. Hence there couldn’t be genuine empathy,

but twisted self-projection to students. In respect of ‘Three Kinds of Teacher’, they

were the explainers rather than the involvers or the enablers. They always relied

on blackboard with a great deal of contents on it, killing the time/chances for

students to consider on subject matter deeply, trying to understand in various

angles. And in the long run, they made the students lazy and incompetent on the

subject – even though the students had got to memorize a good deal of

grammar-oriented knowledge.

Language learners don’t always need teacher. If there can be possible way

to learn without teachers, what can we expect from them for learning? When I

reflect on my experience and new knowledge like ‘Five Characteristics of Adult

Learners’, I am sure I can say that the learners still need the teachers who can

help them have their own motivation, relevancy for learning, proper respect, and

their own attainable goal. Also good teachers should keep their eyes on learners

to prevent them from straying or being lost just like lighthouse in the whole new

waters – on their voyage of ‘Second Language Acquisition’.