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Personal Language Learning Experience

As a child who was born in Seoul, Korea, I was exposed in the one of the world’s most competitive learning environment from age of three. I had to learn many languages since I was raised in two different countries. I only can remember few teachers amongst many other previous language learning experiences. I want to discuss about my worst experience with foreign language teacher in high school, who had a typical traditional teaching style; very high TTT and low STT, Teacher centered, favor certain students, does not have any of three core teacher characteristics and many others.

Second language class was requirement at my high school and to be honest, I chose Japanese class for an easy credit. I already took Japanese classes for many years and was very fluent at it. Mr.Hegge was my Japanese teacher from 9th to 12 grade. He has taught English at Japanese public school for fifteen years in Tokyo and came back to the States to teach Japanese. He insisted to have “Japanese Style” class all the time including language, manners, body language, and even discipline.

Mr.Hegge was mostly explainer and bit of an involver. His classes were almost always had same routine. He starts a lesson with a long explanation, go over vocabularies and write twenty times in a notebook, read aloud dialogues as a group, , practice dialogue with a partner, copy notes for grammatical explanation from the board and assign homework. He never used outside material or activities but only used text book. He was very talkative teacher. He liked to share his stories back in Japan, tried to be humorous which no one could engage with. It seemed like a monologue. So there was very high TTT with minimal STT in his class. Only STT time was when practicing dialogue with a partner or answer for his questions.

Mr.Hegge does not have any of three core teacher characteristics; no empathy, no authenticity, no respect. He always talked about how Japanese students respect their teachers and obey them. He forced “respect” from students by bow to him and never talk back to him. Respect is not something you can force someone to give, but to earn from corresponding feelings. As a person he would never have empathy for students. He was never approachable since he was the only “God” in the classroom, so no one could talk to him when they had questions or issues. Also, He had very thick accent and spoke Japanese like English. Whenever he made mistakes, he didn’t accept the fact that he could mislead students with wrong answers and never apologized. He also favored certain students, including myself, and being unfair to the other students especially someone who challenges him by giving disadvantage on grades, giving extra homework or discipline them.

When I look back at my high school Japanese class, even though I was favored from a teacher and got many advantages, I never enjoyed single class.

He was by far the worst teacher I’ve ever had whose class was typical traditional teaching style. It was absolutely teacher centered by pouring information to students and pushed them to absorb passively. He never listened to his students but forced them to enjoy his class. Mr.Hegge’s class was neither entertaining nor informative.