What is the biggest obstacle of second language acquisition?

Korean and English have no common roots and entirely different writing systems, therefore learning English as a second language is a challenge for most Korean speakers. I studied 3years of ESL classes from Canada and from this experience, I figured out different three factors why I failed to master learning English as second language.

The children's ego is dynamic, growing, and flexible through the age of puberty, so they don't accept new languages as a 'threat' or 'inhibition' to their ego. However, as they grow up, their language ego becomes protective and defensive. Therefore, when they become an adult, they will feel strange from another language ego. Besides, children want to be like the rest of kids unlike adults. In one case, one nine-year-old child emigrates to a foreign country, the child tries hard to learn the foreign language to join the mainstream as soon as possible. Nevertheless, adults tend to tolerate linguistic differences. Owing to these reasons, scholars posits that 'age' is a big problem in second language learners learning a second language.

Second, culture is a way of life, and language is a part of the culture. Consequently, culture and language continually interact. If the first culture and the second culture have big divergences, the gaps will hinder acquiring target language. For instance, American society places emphasis on individualism, but Korean more emphasize groups than individuals. Therefore, American use 'I' frequently, and Korean use 'we' more often than 'I'. Culture also affects our way of thinking. Different ways of thinking will create social distance. If the country where the second language learner belongs to recognize polygamy is legal, the learner can't understand second language country's monogamy system. Then, the learner will feel unfamiliar and may have negative attitude to the second language.

Third, the reality of second language education in the society where second language learners live can affect learners' language acquisition. For an example, Korean learners study English as a foreign language, so they don't have chance to use English out of the classroom. Frankly, It is impossible to give students a chance to speak even in the classroom, because teachers take charge of too many students per capita. Reportedly, to overcome this situation, a number of Koreans go abroad and pump tens of trillions of money into private English education, but Korea only ranked 91th between 212 other countries in the TOEFL test in 2014 and 2015. In contrast, in Northern Europe where is famous for advanced English education recorded an outstanding grade. The majority of European English teachers give lectures to students in English, and government-run broadcasting stations of Europe area broadcast popular American dramas without subtitles and dubbing. The motive power of their high grade was 'constant access to English'. Besides, Korea actually advocates the cramming system of education for exams. However, language learning needs to be meaningful learning. To make matters worse, Koreans prefer a person having an all-round capability to a person who are only good in one field, so to survive in Korea society, learners can't spend time only studying English. This reality of Korea de-motivates more and more second language learners.

Indeed, these four factors seem to be the biggest problems in learning a second language. However, learners can conquer these problems. Anthropologically, there is evidence that demonstrate that some adults who acquired a second language after the age of puberty, though they are infinitesimal cases. Sorenson who studied the Tukano culture of South America found at least two dozens language were spoken in the Tukano community, because the group was an exogamous unit. The members of the Tukano community began to speak two or three other languages in adolescence, and as they approaches old age, they went on to perfect their knowledge of all the languages. Moreover, whatever there differences exist between languages and cultures and no matter how circumstances hinder learners, if learners have interest in acquiring second language, nothing can interfere with their language learning. Consequently, the most powerful obstacle is eliciting learner's intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation allow learners to engage in classroom activities for their own sake and to bring about internally rewarding consequences like feeling of competence, autonomy, or self-determination. Even though learners elicit their intrinsic motivation by themselves from time to time, in most cases, teachers' role is significantly important. Teachers should bear in mind that they are not rewarders but enablers. Therefore, teachers should help learners to take charge of their own learning and give students choices in activities, topics, discussion, etc. to maximize learners' autonomy.