Dec. 27, 2011 Yoon (Hyun-Cheol Yoon)

**Memories of My English Teachers**

- How to be a good English teacher -

I started to study English when I became a middle school student. It’s hard to recall details of any specific individual lessons, since so many years have passed, but I can still recall some teachers and the ways that the teachers related to the class.

Although I had many English teachers through middle to high school years, the teaching style of all English teachers seemed all the same in those days. All English teachers were, so to speak, ‘the explainers’. They relied mainly on ‘explaining’ or ‘lecturing’ as s way of conveying information to the students. Some of them usually read textbooks and translated into Korean. At the time, I felt very bored and sometimes fell asleep. Some of them asked students to read and translate. Then the class became frightening and tense. Except translation, teachers mostly explained important phrases, words and grammars.

I was just listening, occasionally answering questions and taking notes. But, I almost never had chance to speak in English. Therefore I didn’t have to think about making sentences by myself. As a result, I wasn’t able to communicate in English.

English teachers perhaps had limited knowledge of teaching methodology. Or the number of students in one class was too big to give all students chances to talk. Or teachers maybe just focused on the score of exam that were mainly about reading comprehension and grammar. Whatever maybe the cause, the result was that most Korean students had difficulty in communicating in English, even though they learned English more than 10 years. That’s why I believe our traditional English teaching method was not so effective, especially in communication.

It was the private institute that taught me how to speak English and made me realize learning English was so fun. I can’t remember the teachers’ names, but I can still remember the pleasant and exciting atmosphere at the classroom. The English teachers I met at the private institute were native speakers who were mainly from U.S.A., Canada, or U.K. Their teaching method was totally different; they were not ‘the explainer’. They created the classroom that enabled the students to speak in English at the comfortable atmosphere. In class, although I mostly talked with Korean students, I felt my English got improved as time went by. And interestingly, through practicing speaking, other skills, such as grammar, reading, vocabulary, improved as well.

Therefore, I will do my best to be a good English teacher who creates the condition that enables students to speak in English as much as possible. In order to do so, I will try to have three core teacher characteristics that are respect (a positive and non-judgmental regard for another person), empathy (being able to see things from the other person’s perspective, as if looking through their eyes) and authenticity (being oneself without hiding behind job titles, roles or masks), which will help to create an effective learning environment.