**My Experience Concerning the Second Language Acquisition**

Like many other Korean secondary school students in 1990s, I learned English alphabets for the first time when I was the first grader of middle school. All of my English teachers were in their late fifties or early sixties. Because they learned English from their teachers who had learned English from Japanese, who are notorious for their deviated form of pronunciation and grammar-based teaching, they taught English with the exactly same way they learned. Our blackboard was full of unfamiliar grammatical terms and we had to repeat after the teacher such as Datu *is a booku* (That is a book) though we knew English does not really sound like that. The teacher’s explanation about grammar was difficult to understand more than the foreign language itself and memorizing the whole content of the textbook gave me a great cognitive burden.

Sure enough, I could not feel any joy from learning a foreign language at all in school. Rather, the girl who used to like copying the foreign accent now began to be horrified by the abstruse grammar. Luckily, however, I could attend an academy called ‘*Kid College*’ which is teaching ‘live English’ to kids, thanks to my parents who thought more highly of how to use the language than learning rules of it. Thinking back, I was more likely to be an adult learner rather than a young learner although I was only twelve years old in that I was very autonomous and self-directed in language learning. I showed lots of interest of learning English and had a practical reason to learn it: to communicate with natives. Moreover, I preferred an active participation in my learning process rather than being involved without my own intention and liked a teacher who guides me to learn, not controls the whole process. I was also very relevancy-oriented in the way that I liked to choose projects which reflect my own interests: my favorite rock bands, novels I had read, or movies I had seen, etc. With these reasons, it was so natural to learn English better at *Kid College* because my characteristics as an autonomous learner were fully satisfied there.

Not only because that they encouraged me to be an independent learner, I liked to learn English at *Kid College* far more than at school regarding the environment of classrooms, teacher types, and their teaching styles. In the classroom of the traditional Korean school at that time, unfortunately, it was not allowed for students to participate in their own learning courses actively: teachers considered any sudden questioning from students as impolite and “dominated” the classroom; students had to stay quiet and motionless not to interrupt the teacher’s grammar lecture. In fact, the rapport between the teacher and students was not even needed at where the teacher does not really communicate with their students. They may have known English grammar rules more than anyone but they did have limited teaching methodology: only lecturing and explaining with no activities. In *Kid College*, meanwhile, the relationship between the teacher and the students was very important. Teachers were trained to be friendly to their students and respect them. I did not need to worry about what if my asking questions offend the teacher. Furthermore, teachers were more of an enabler rather than a controller. They employed the different teaching methodology-sometimes explanation and other times appropriate activities-to promote the effective learning. Due to this students-centered teaching style, the atmosphere of the classroom was always very comfortable. Probably, this was possible because the number of students was not more than 10 in one class which was very different from the school classroom full of more than 50 students.

Consequently, I admit that my language learning experience at school was a total failure but one at *Kid College* was quite successful. Also, I admit that I was lucky enough to learn English through the facilitating teaching atmosphere of the teachers who were used to EAR (Empathy, Authenticity, and Respect). As a self-directed learner, I benefitted a lot from *Kid College* whose core philosophy was “even young students can learn better when they are treated as autonomous learners” as appears by its name. I hope that the more Korean English learners can enjoy the same pleasure with me in the more enabling classroom and I can help it through what I learn from the TESOL course.