<My Dear English Teacher> 2/22th 2014 weekend class #97 Penny Yun

A Korean ESL (English as a second language) class in Korea, in the 1980’s, was only focused on memorization of grammar structure; mainly in a deductive learning style. The teachers were “explainers”. They explained grammar rules, asked us to translate English sentences into Korean, and then memorize them. My parents learned English the same way and they thought that was the best method to learn English.

However, my dear English teacher Mrs. Lee was not like that at all. She was a pioneer. Mrs. Lee was a charismatic guide who tried to find the best method to help us learn English. She always said “I can teach you many things about any topic, but you’re the one who has to absorb everything I teach. I can lead you to water when you are thirsty, but I can’t make you drink.” She made me realize nobody can make me intelligent and knowledgeable without my effort. In addition, she always brought up the question “Why?” for me to think further. I was attracted to her inquisitive way of interacting with students and her ability to give me proper examples in a simplified way. Mrs. Lee always tried to prepare authentic teaching materials for us, so her English classes were always interesting and fun. There was more STT(Student Talking Time) then TTT(Teacher Talking Time). Her effort enabled some of her students to incorporate the education they received in the classroom to real life. Among the students, many discussions occurred during the class because of various debating topics.

As you know, students are likely to get affected from others especially from their teachers. Mrs. Lee affected me a great deal by giving me directions to move toward a better life. She cheered me up whenever I felt depressed, motivated me and took time to ask how I felt. The more I got to know her, the more I studied. She knew how to approach an individual student and focus on his/her needs better than others involved in the educational process. Some of my friends and I tried to speak in English outside of the classroom. In that regard, Mrs. Lee was a true inspirational figure as well as an enabler. The way she taught helped me design my future goals independently.

This is exactly what Carl Ransom Rogers (January 8, 1902 – February 4, 1987 American Psychologist) suggested that there are “Three core teacher characteristics” that help to create an effective learning environment. These are respect, empathy, and authenticity. As a teacher, it’s necessary to know plenty of knowledge to teach theories. However, if students don’t want to listen to the teacher, what can you do?

In the conclusion, the greatest motivation for studying comes intrinsically. If you want to study for your own aspiration or for your dream, that could be the strongest motivation factor. Mrs. Lee’s warm hearted teaching styles strongly influenced me to study English and as a result, I became an English teacher.

I would like to be a sensitive teacher, like Mrs. Lee, who believes in the importance of ‘rapport’ between teachers and students, who respects and listens to students. So I can concern finding ways of enabling learning.