I studied about three kinds of teachers at this TESOL class last weekend. Teacher, Tim said that there are explainers, involvers and enablers. When I recall my learning experience, I think teachers who were enablers were the most helpful to me, while things teachers who were explainers did were rather ineffective.

I have two memorable experiences of English study. One is when I studies TOEFL in groups. Usually I had studied TOEFL alone after listening to teacher’s lecture. In this case, though I studied very hard, my test score was not improved very much. One of the teachers suggested that we should study together by forming a group. In the group, we could solve each other’s problems by teaching other people. Also, if one of the members missed or neglected his or her assignment, we imposed some financial penalties. For example, we should have paid 100 won whenever we missed one question in the daily test. Later, that collected money was used for the party, which gave us a lot of fun, As a result, after several months, I could get surprisingly high TOEFL scores.

Another good memory of learning English was when I studied in Australia. Before visiting foreign country, I was very shy to speak English. So I hardly spoke English to foreigners. Even if a lot of expressions just wandered in my head, I could not express anything. Actually, my best teacher was not the one in the language institute but a home-stay mother. She was very kind, generous and talkative. Because she liked to talk to me, I could not help saying words. She forced me to speak every day. Eventually, my mouth began to open and I tried to speak as much as possible. I even imitated her gesture and way of talking. I guess my speaking ability at that time was much better than now.

Like my cases above, the best way of learning languages is studying together. All people whom we run into can be teachers. When we were babies, all people around us could be teachers. Parents, friends, relatives, siblings etc. We copy languages according to their expressions, words, tones, and gestures. As we grow older, we get to meet a wider variety of teachers in the society. For example, we can see and imitate the languages of new teachers, entertainers we like, and also co-workers. I think that’s the process we create our own languages.

Unfortunately, Though most of the Koreans learn English from Elementary school period to adult ages, there are few people including me can speak English fluently. That is to say, our way of learning English was ineffective. I think the worst problem comes from written test-centered learning. Usually, in Korean formal education, we mostly learn English with textbooks in one way. It’s true that most of Korean English teachers is not good at speaking English as well. Thus, they prefer to teach by reading materials mainly. For better conversational class, I think much more foreign teachers should be placed in the Korean public educational system.

In other words, our method of teaching English should be more students-centered. In such a modern classroom, students can be more active and do cooperative activities. Group work, role play, and more dynamic activities are necessary in the class.