

Teacher, You Got it All Wrong

by Christina Chang, Taiwan

Oh, NO, Teacher, You Got it All Wrong

Oh, No, Teacher, you got it all wrong.

I just realized how we never learned to think in English
and why we could not write in English without fear of making
mistakes.

Hate: when you introduced the word 'hate' to me
in English, you were in such a hurry to show me
that it was a verb, a transitive verb but it could also be intransitive
and the past tense looked like 'hated' and
the past participle was also such and such and you moved on
to write on the board the tricky "hatred"-noun of 'hate' -
not to be confused with 'hated' and then the adjective of 'hate'.
And You yourself never did tell us one thing
you hated in your life. Not one thing. There was no time.

It was when I read Seymour Papert, a renowned scholar at MIT,
through the Internet, writing how he grew up
in South Africa . . .

"I grew up in South Africa and one thing
I learned to hate was all forms of segregation . . ."

He went on and on, saying what and why he hated . . .

It was then that I relearned the word 'hate' and
I picked up the word 'segregation' so surely without looking up
in a dictionary. No need to.

I then learned to say . . .

I hate, growing up, being taught English in Taiwan
by teachers, who could not say what they hated and I became
stuttered in English and not knowing why . . .

I hate the segregation of Native and Non-Nativeness;
I hate the blind fear you harbor in yourself secretly and carefully
about using English . . . yeah, not to lose face
I hate that you did not use English to communicate
anything about yourself, about your feelings and thoughts and
We never got to do so and learned how it is to say
"I hate" in English.

You did teach 'Grammar' and 'Rules'
as if they were the only guarantees that would save me
against 'losing face' or 'losing out' -- in exams.
But do you see what we might lose in life's journey
Beyond winning exams and saving faces?

I hate that people around me are trying to make me into
someone like you, make me believe that we could only
be someone like you,

Who are willing to judge and be judged by
grammar and rules all throughout their lives of using English
because of the segregation of Native and Non-Nativeness.

Oh, No, Teacher, you got it all wrong.

I've found my voice in English. Have you found yours?
In life's long journey, I know I have won my share of using English
without fear of segregation.