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Anne (Seung Yoon Kim)

Benjamin Valencia

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Passionate Teacher, Active Learner:

“Learning is spontaneous, unpredictable, fun, passionate, and dangerous.”

-Bowring

People learn English for a number of reasons. They want to make foreign friends, travel to English speaking countries, learn western cultures, see broader world, and etc. In South Korea, however, learning English is not an option anymore. Most schools have English classes as one of the essential curricula, the majority of universities ask students to have good grades on the English examinations, and many companies require employees to have English skills. I also started learning English to qualify myself for the society. My English, however, did not improve so greatly just by doing what others did. Dramatic and rapid progress happened when I truly enjoyed the learning itself under a passionate teacher.

I, as a middle school student, started going to English institute called ES academy. According to the level test I took on the first day, I was a low intermediate student with limited vocabulary and knew the basic rules of grammar. I was assigned to Ms Heather’s classroom. There were about ten students who were in my age. Since the class was not for the adult learners, the atmosphere was quite different from how it is in this Times Media TESOL course. Most students came to the academy because their parents told them to. I was not exactly autonomous either and Ms Heather’s role might have been to support me to be an active learner.

Unfortunately, my first English teacher in ES academy did not know how to teach the

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language effectively. She insisted that traditional teaching is the best way to “make” students learn. There were no activities at all and “Chalk and Talk” was all she did. As Jim Scrivener mentioned in his book *Learning Teaching,* teachers should “question whether their teaching method is indeed the most effective or efficient (17).” What I learned in Ms Heather’s class was that her teaching style is not working at least for me, but she never tried to change it. I would categorize her as an explainer with no passion in education. Few months later, I moved to Ms Julie’s class and this marked a turning point in my life.

My second teacher showed me what modern teaching is like and how effective it is. Before I met her, I thought that a teacher is someone who gives students information, who stands in front of people talking, who is in a position of authority, and who I would never feel so close to. Ms Julie’s class was student centered. She was always prepared with a number of interesting activities. She often used English novels or American films to teach language systems and skills. After I met her, I learned how to enjoy studying English. Naturally, I spent more time and effort on it, and became an active learner.

Under Ms Heather’s teaching, I was just a student who study English because everyone else does. With Ms Julie, I did not just study English but explored the whole new world of learning. I even think that if I have not met her, I would have never given myself a chance to study abroad because I simply could not see the point of it. After three years of studying abroad in US, now I dream myself as a teacher like Ms Julie.

I would show my students how passionate teacher is like. I would communicate with respect, empathy, and authenticity. I would be a teacher who could change her teaching method according to the students’ learning styles. I would support them to find themselves enjoying English and be active in classrooms. Finally, I would show them how “Learning could be spontaneous, unpredictable, fun, passionate, and dangerous.”