ESSAY #1 : Learning English as a second language

Class: 77 TESOL / Weekdays

Word count: 1005

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People learn English for a variety of reasons. One person may learn it in order to broaden their job opportunities – another may learn it to enrich the quality of their travel experiences. Some may even be learning it for a significant other. And, as the world is becoming more and more globalized, English remains world’s most wildly spoken language by native and non-native speakers alike.

I have spent about 15 years studying English as my second language. I first began learning English when I was 9; I was young and barely knew the alphabet. It was all new to me and it was a very positive experience thanks to my first English teacher.

She was pretty, young, fun and enthusiastic about teaching. She had modern teaching style. Rather than just stand there and lecture, she used a lot of visual aids to enhance her teaching. When we were learning about a particular story, she would show us a video of the story instead of just reading it to us or playing an audio tape of the story. This way, we could see what was happening and listen to the story at the same time. I remember watching a lot of videos like this. Even when we were learning songs, she showed short clips with dances to accompany the songs. Looking back now, I feel that it was a pretty effective style of teaching. Even to this day, I can still remember some of the songs that she taught us.

In addition, she provided lots of activities to do. We solved puzzles, played games that involved speaking English, and made Christmas cards. They were fun ways for us to learn English and improve our critical thinking skills at the same time. English was not intimidating, instead it was enjoyable. It was our first time learning English, and she was trying to get us interested in it. She challenged us to use our critical thinking skills which I believe helped us to remember our English vocabulary better. This was a very successful approach since she got me interested in English. She was very much of an involver. She put a lot of effort into finding appropriate and interesting activities for us. She tried to get us involved in each and every class. She was also an enabler. She listened to us, asked questions, and respected our opinions.

She was definitely one of the greatest teachers I have ever had. She could empathize with us, was honest, and showed us respect even though we were very young. Additionally, she always complimented us whenever she got the chance. She was patient, well-organized, and charismatic. I believe that these qualities and characteristics were what made her an excellent teacher.

However, it is not possible to have a good teacher all the time. One teacher I had in middle school was not that great. He was quite old and just gave lectures all the time. He was a typical explainer. He talked, and we listened. There were no visual aids, activities, or group work at all. He was not really good with computers, so he used a chalk and blackboard. We took notes and were never really involved in class. He never really involved us in any decisions or listened to us. He wanted us to show him respect but showed us no respect at all. He was not exactly the ideal teacher for me or, as his teaching style was very traditional and not effective in any way. He was dull and had no desire to actually see his students succeed. He was just going through the motions of teaching, but no teaching was happening.

People have countless teachers in their lives as life is about learning, studying, and improving one’s self. Some teachers can be awesome and amazing as they actually try to teach you something and help you learn. Others can be horrible. Sometimes they might not even know what they are teaching or not even prepared for class.

The reason I am taking this course and learning about teaching is because I desire to be a good teacher. I have had tons of horrible teachers throughout the years and I do not want to be one of them. I would like my teaching style to be a combination of an involver and enabler - a teacher who knows subject matter, is familiar with methodology, and is caring. Furthermore, I will make sure to use a variety of techniques to make class more fun and interesting, doing numerous activities with my students in order to keep them involved in class. I will also try to empathize with my students and give them a hand when they need it. I want my students to be able to talk to me when they have problems. Teachers should not only teach, but be mentors and friends as well. They are with you at crucial times throughout your childhood and should be able to help with learn academically and grow as a person as well.

I think understanding students’ levels of proficiency and their abilities is also a crucial factor in teaching. When you are aware of what they know and don’t know - and what they are capable of - it is so much easier to make a plan of how class is going to be carried out and what kind of teaching methods would be most effective. In my opinion, having a sense of humor is essential, too. It can brighten up the atmosphere of class and get students’ attention. I believe these are the characteristics that make an effective teacher.

I know what kinds of teachers are effective - and even outstanding - and what kinds of teachers are less than stellar from my experiences. With all this and studying TESOL, I am sure I will be able to gain better knowledge of how to become a good teacher so that I may make a positive difference in my students’ lives and ensure that their futures are full of opportunities.