**TESOL Essay No. 1**

**My Positive Experience Learning English**

Thanks to my diplomat father, I was lucky to have started learning English in a country faraway from Korea. I used the word “lucky,” because the Korean educational system – during my middle and high school years (early to mid-1970’s) – had taught English in the most ineffective way. Korean students mandatorily started learning English in middle school, until they graduated from high school. However, they could hardly understand nor speak English even after six years of English lessons. Moreover, the majority of students graduating from a Korean university as an English major spoke English with heavy accents, nor could they write proper essays.

When I became a seventh grader, I went to live in Turkey, where I attended a private Turkish school called “Ankara Koleji.” And it was there that I had my first encounter with English. Since every Turkish student in my class had no prior knowledge of English like me, we were all on a “Beginner” level, as compared to a “mixed-level class.” What differentiated each student was not our age or English background, but our individual learning differences – such as personalities, aptitudes, learner modes (ie: Audio, Visual, Tactile-Kinesthetic) - in addition to different Intelligences (such as, Verbal/Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical, Visual/Spatial, musical, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, and Intrapersonal intelligences).

Throughout my middle school years, I had three different English teachers – one every year. In seventh grade, I had Mrs. Karabulut, who was a young American married to a Turkish. She turned out to be one of my most favorite English teachers, because she was not a “Mug and Jug” type of teacher. She applied the modern teaching method, and she had us get involved all the time. Since none of us had any previous experience learning English, she had to do a lot of explaining in the beginning of the year. But as our English skills got better, she started to apply the “Involver” teaching style, which called for our full participation in class. In addition to lots of reading and writing, we also had frequent listening and speaking sessions, during which we had to wear headphones to listen and answer out loud. It was a good way to practice what we had learned in books.

In eighth grade, I was taught by my least favorite teacher – Mrs. Wall, whose strong British accent I was not too fond of. Moreover, she talked all the time, giving long lectures, which made us more passive and feel bored. She was an “Explainer,” so proud of her British heritage but without any sense of humor nor empathy for her students’ problems. There was no rapport between Mrs. Wall and her students – in other words, “Affective Filter Hypothesis” was lacking, not to mention “positive learning atmosphere (classroom dynamics).” She intimidated us, which made us all the more passive in class.

By the time I became a ninth-grader, my English had improved greatly. Had I done the intelligence survey then, it probably would have said that I had high Verbal-Linguistic, Visual-Spatial and Interpersonal Behaviors. I loved to read, write, spell in English, and I also enjoyed doodling and looked forward to my art classes. Owing to my interpersonal behavior, I got along with my Turkish classmates so well that they elected me as class captain – even though I was a foreigner. As the only oriental student in the entire school, mine was the easiest face to spot whenever we took group photographs.

Our ninth grade English teacher was a Turkish gentleman – Mr. Yaldir – whose teaching style was closest to an “Enabler.” By ninth grade, our English was upgraded to the “Intermediate” level, so it probably was easier for him to foster his students’ leadership in class. For those students with lower retention rates than average, he showed patience and tried to boost their confidence. He tried giving them equal or more opportunity to get involved, whereas my eighth grade teacher -Mrs. Wall - would have been more strict with slow learners. When necessary, Mr. Yaldir was authoritative, but not as distant (prejudiced) as Mrs. Wall had been. In many ways, Mr. Yaldir was a mentor we never had. It did not matter to us that his English pronunciation was not as perfect as Mrs. Karabulut’s. We felt that he really cared for his students, and we were eager to please him by studying harder and also by participating more actively in class.

Learning English was so much fun for me because of great teachers like Mrs. Karabulut, and Mr. Yaldir. Mrs. Karabulut gave me a solid start in understanding Language Systems like grammar, sounds (phonology), vocabulary (lexis), function, and discourse, while helping me improve both my receptive (reading and listening) and productive (speaking and writing) skills, at the same time. From Mr. Yaldir, I learned that a great teacher also had to be a good counselor, willing to listen to and render help to each student – especially to those in need. If I should get the invaluable opportunity in the future to teach a class, I would like to combine the teaching styles of Mrs. Karabulut (Involver/Enabler) and Mr. Yaldir (Enabler), with a touch of sense of humor. I also hope that my mature age will provide me with the wisdom I would need to become a mentor to my pupil at the same time.

By: Hae Young LIMB (Robin) – Weekend Class (79th)