Sunny’s English Learning Experience

TM TESOL Class 87 Essay 1

I have been studying English since middle school. English has been the most enjoyable part in my life, and I would like to thank my 2 great teachers who inspired me to like English. One of them was from my middle school, and her name was Jin Hee. She was very passionate, and had a lot of energy to give to us much. She seemed to really enjoy English songs, and she often brought a music player to introduce the songs that she loved, and introduced the meaning of the lyrics to us. That was a very unusual English class in Korea. Typically in Korea, the teacher introduces the textbook, focusing on grammar and lexis, and commands us to memorize it (I would call it just input for the test). However, my teacher did it differently. She practiced the passages or dialogue with the students, and always made us guess the meaning of words. She wants us to think autonomously. Therefore, she didn’t make me stressed in learning English, but also built a comfortable environment for learning.

Intimacy of English gave me confidence and lots of interests. She had given us lots of options in terms of teaching, which were watching movies, singing a song together, reading poems and so forth. English lesson class was not a boring class at all, but the most interesting class. With those lessons, I’ve learned vocabulary in a natural way, and I could build up good comprehensive skills.

I was full of confidence in English; therefore I decided to go to Canada all by myself for learning more English and Canadian culture at the age of 20. However, it was a real world. I didn’t have much difficulty communicating with the Canadian (native) people about the simple issues like routines, trivia. However, due to my lack of grammar knowledge, I realized that I was just mimicking the sound. English people would have thought I was good at English, but once they talked to me with more serious issues, I couldn’t go any further. That was my first experience of frustration about my confidence in English. I found out that my grammar and vocabulary needed a lot more work because I was too much focused on pronunciation, not discourse. My system of language needed to be balanced.

Then, I took a TOEFL class to enhance my English ability, and there I met another unforgettable teacher, her name was Susan. She seemed to be a definite “Explainer” teacher like the other grammar teacher at the beginning of a course. Looking back, however, she was the most effective teacher I’ve ever had.

She asked the students to write a journal everyday as daily homework, and checked the errors every morning. Then she’d hand it back to the students to correct the mistakes by ourselves instead of telling the right answer directly. Therefore, I had to search through my entire grammar books trying to correct my mistakes. It really annoyed me at first, because it was not a typical teaching style in Korea that I have had. Usually the grammar teacher teaches us to memorize the vocabulary and grammar repeatedly. However, with Susan’s correction practice, I started to make fewer mistakes, and one great thing about the practice was I hardly ever made the same mistakes. I started to build up a strong foundation of grammar, and also learned to be self-directed and autonomous spontaneously. She, consequently, made me strong and deep, even though she was not very friendly in person. She was not the friendliest teacher I’ve ever had, but she was the most knowledgeable (it seemed she knew everything) and was a respectful teacher as a consequence.

With all these experiences, I definitely want to be an inspiring person to my learners just like I had when I just began to study English. Inspiration means a lot to the learners (especially for the beginners), it also creates the positive and supportive environment. I want to inspire students not just by telling or showing instructions, but to give them a clear reason to learn. I would like to be a part of the student’s learning process by showing them respect, and I hope the students to enjoy learning languages with me. As I realized learning language is a fun part of my education, I would convince my students to take pleasure in the language by being full of enthusiasm. Teaching methods are various, and techniques should be applied in different ways to every individual student. There is no right or wrong answers. However, as a future teacher I would like to be an “unforgettable” teacher like my Jin Hee and Susan, I want to be my future student’s “Jin HEE and Susan”.