TESOL 01 Language&Learning

Jess (Hyun Jeong, Kim)

What kind of teacher I should be

As we all know, in Korea, English education is focused on grammar and translation too much. Even though I have learned English for more than 10 years now, I still struggle when I have to speak out loud my opinions in English. It’s because I have had teachers who used traditional teaching method only through all my middle school and high school years. Usually TTT was so high and STT was very low. The teachers did not care about helping students to learn how to listen and speak in English. There was no time to practice speak in English. Since I have studied in traditional classrooms for many years, I lack speaking and writing ability in English. However, when I think about it now, I cannot hold the teachers or the education system entirely for my inabilities. As I learned so far in this TESOL class, a teacher’s role is to help students to learn, so I personally think that, that means if I was more motivated and tried harder to be better at English, I would’ve learned more even in that environment. I guess, at that time I had no intrinsic motivation. Although I liked English literature when I was in high school, I didn’t take full advantage of the English classes and I got to admit that some of my teachers were good ‘explainers.’ I could’ve followed their instruction and put much more energy and effort in learning English literature so that I could be more motivated to learn other areas of English. In that sense, I think an ‘explainer’ can be a good teacher, only if the teacher tries his/her very best in certain academic fields. But I realized, not long ago, through my own experience that if I can speak and listen well in English, I can understand English grammar, phonology, and lexis much better. For I had no teachers who were like ‘involver’ or ‘enabler’, I had few chance to develop my listening skill. Then I got into rock music and American TV shows and stuff. And by listening and watching them for years, I could improve my English skill considerably. Through that I could not only improve my English skills, but also could get the hang of the culture a little. And that motivated me to want to be good at English and to know the culture more. And yet, not everyone has an interest in the culture like me, so if I want to be a good English teacher, I think I should be good at motivating the students first. And of course, I must get used to using variety of teaching methods because every method has its merit. Furthermore, I have to be good at drawing out students’ intrinsic motives and sometimes, encouraging them to focus on their extrinsic motives could work I think, especially when they’re adults. And in my opinion, many Korean students would prefer ‘involver’ type teachers because they’re not confident enough and somewhat passive. I am kind of like that too, so I liked the teacher I had back in New Zealand 6 years ago. She was a typical ‘involver.’ She gave us instructions and grammar lessons by making us participating and talking to each other. She was a good example of a good teacher who makes students to think in English. That is so important because in my opinion, being able to think in English is the cornerstone of becoming really good at English. And lastly, genuinely caring about the students is essential part of being a good teacher. If students can feel that the teacher actually cares about them, they will open their heart and mind more and be willing to participate actively in classes. It is definitely not easy to become a teacher who has every element I mentioned above, yet I believe that I have the right motive and tenacity for it and I won’t stop trying until I become one.