Essay 1

Class : TESOL 101 WD

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**I’m fine thank you and you?**

“I am a boy. “ I am a girl.” “Hello. How are you?” “I’m fine thank you and you?”

These are the first English dialogues I learnt at school. This was what was exactly written in an English textbook and what we had to learn for the exams. The focus of learning those dialogues was the grammar explanation. The subject comes first, and then comes the verb and so on. I hated English classes.

I am talking about my first experience of learning English 20 years ago. I know the content of the English textbooks has changed a lot since then. When I see sample English textbooks in a bookstore, I find that the main focus has switched from ‘boring’ grammar to a ‘exciting’ conversation such as “I'm a guitarist in the school band, so my guitar is really important to me.” Back in the days, the teacher mainly used grammar teaching method (GTM). I guess the teachers themselves were taught in GTM, therefore, they were probably not aware that the grammar is language itself, not just rules and regulations. Nevertheless, most Koreans still believe that the most appropriate response to the question “How are you?” is “I’m fine thank you and you?”

The language is not just about grammar but its systems consist of 5 parts; phonology, lexis, grammar, function and discourse. All of these 5 systems must be used in an appropriate manner in order to brush up the 4 language skills; speaking, listening, reading and writing. The traditional Korean English classes focusing on only one or two language skills did not lead to an integrated skill approach but ended up making students think of the word order before speaking out and automatically answer “I’m fine thank you and you?”

When I was at school back in the days, all the classes were lecture based and we were forced to be passive students. We all sat facing the teachers in a row and the teachers talked most of the times, if not all, and we only spoke when asked a question and interestingly only the standard answers were accepted. However, it is widely understood now that this was not an effective way of teaching. The teacher should be a facilitator not an authority. Whilst the classes were only textbook based, nowadays the students prefer to have more of a collaborative class with a high level of student participation where a variety of activities and teaching materials are used. According to average learners retention rates for various teaching techniques, listening to a lecture and reading books scored the lowest. What will the students learn in a class when the teacher talks most of the time and students read the textbooks throughout the whole class? I am sure that this modern method of teaching is way more effective in touching the visual, auditory as well as the tactile modes of the learners.

It is obvious that the teachers should not be explainers but be involvers or even better, enablers. The teachers should have ‘people skills’ and have a control over students. We are living in a ubiquitous world full of information. When the students need to find out something, they can always do so with a simple click on the internet. Students do not go to school to acquire a simple fact which they can get an easy access to. They are at school to share and develop ideas through collaborative work with peers and teachers. This way the teachers will help the students to foster leadership and not to be autonomous leaders.

As I am certain that the way I was taught back in the days was extremely ineffective, I will consider the following facts if I become a language teacher.

First, I would consider the qualities to become an effective teacher. I will emphasize will with students’ problems, be authentically myself whilst being enthusiastic about teaching and I will respect the students giving a positive and being non-judgmental.

Second, I would use an appropriate teaching method depending on the class contents. For instance, the traditional grammar translation method should not be only criticized as this method is useful in literature reading and is a foundation of learning accuracy in grammar and vocabulary. However when teaching conversation, I would use communicative language teaching method. It is important to teach communication focusing on how to communicate your ideas to others in the best way and develop them.

Third, I would use a variety of teaching materials and techniques. As shown in the average retention rates in teaching techniques that the students only remember 5~10% of what hat they are taught from lectures and reading textbooks. It is clear that more of visual materials and cooperative learning through group work and discussions will help them to remember the contents of the class. But of all, for the adult students, it is very important for them to have a experiential learning and also an opportunity to teach and mentor others as this requires them to have all the information digested and absorbed.

Having these listed 3 facts in mind, I am positive that I will be able to forget such an ineffective teaching method that was used when I was at school but become a world class teacher leading the class with all the information and help I can give them. This way my students will be able to answer “I’m great thank you”, “Not too bad” “Nothing much” “Good, what about you?” and so on, when asked “How are you?”