My Dream as a Teacher of English Learners

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About two months ago, I stopped by Times Media TESOL center to get some information. I did some research ahead, so I had brief idea about the program. “Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages” I got this definition in my head, but I still want to know more about TESOL program.

I hope TESOL program will introduce me to the new world of teaching English. I do not have a background in education. I do know little about “teaching”. Throughout my life, I always consider myself as a learner specially in English. From my living abroad experience, I’ve been exposed to the English speaking world. I had to speak English for communication. After graduated from Culinary Art School in California, I worked as a chef. With that career, I explored a bunch of different kinds of experiences. Not only cooking for my various clients but managing other matters. Especially I loved to create menus and do cooking classes which I got the idea of little bit of “teaching” someone. But after I got used to my new environment, I didn’t really try to improve my English.

When I had a cooking class with my clients, our goal was following the recipe and cooking together. It required communication and practice. But It was about the dish we made, not a language itself. During that time, English was a tool for communication. But how can I actually teach English? Am I qualified? Most of my life time I was a learner, not a teacher. But now I am eager to move on to teacher side. But still my vision was somewhat vague with some doubts and questions. I have a faith in TESOL program. I hope I can learn from the program how can I be a great English teacher.

But after first week of class, I got more clear idea and picture of teaching English. I realized that I need to think again about whole concept of teaching English! Because I am so used to lecture style learning, so all I think about was teacher’s role and ways to teach. I didn’t consider about how important the student’s role is. Teachers cannot learn for students. Only they can learn for themselves. I would like to learn the best way to reach that point.

Teachers should have solid knowledge of English but what I realized that teaching English is not just about handing out knowledge of English to students. Not only I can teach them skills of language but can show them to see bigger picture of the world. I would like to share this with my future students.

First of all, I will respect my students’ own learning ability and their own different background. I will try to find out about their interest, not just about their language level. For that matter I need to get personal with my students. If there are any students who seem to fall short, I will have to figure out way to help. Because I was in that position before so I want to let them know that is ok. I want to tell them about my own experience so they can also feel free to open themselves to me. I will respect their happiness and frustration while they have learning experiences.

I would love to share my story of frustration and joy. It was a very hot summer day in 2001. I was walking down the street in Burlingame. I went to Starbucks store and ordered new Frappuccino drink. But I didn’t get what I ordered, instead of a cold Frappuccino I got a hot cappuccino. Because of my tiny voice, the clerk didn’t understand my order. Even I was so frustrated I couldn’t say anything. I felt embarrassed. Because I thought I didn’t do right. On the way back home, I talked to myself “I have to tell him what I want” I need to do something.

The next day, I went to same store and got my icy cold Frappuccino! This time I was not a shy customer, I looked at clerk’s eyes then told him with clear and loud voice.

With my story, I would like to tell my students that you will get frustrated sometime but don’t be afraid to make mistakes and be yourself.

I also want my students to respect each other. I want to let them know that it’s not all about how many right answers you got or what did you do wrong. I want to remind them with our class, we learn English together as a team and we also build relationships. “Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care” I love this saying. I would love to tell them how important it is to be a good listener. We live very fast paced and self-focus world. A lots of time, people are busy to talk without listening to other’s. I want my students to listen actively and carefully to each other. This way, I can also learn from my students.

But above of all, my main dream for my students is to inspire them. I will keep reminding myself that all of my students have different intelligences and interests. With learning English, I want my students to go further from classroom. I want them to find what is their passion and I want our classroom to be a star point for exploring of new interest. I want my students have fun while they learn English. I will try to stimulate their curiosity. I want to find most effective way to help them.

Lucky for all of us, we live a global internet world. There are so many resources that are available to help our learning. Without taking a plane we can go to the British National museum or African savanna. That means we can study art history or life of African animals from the classroom. Even we can check some famous New York restaurant’s menu and learn how to make Hong Kong style Dim Sum. We don’t have to stick to just our classroom material. With ability of English we can easily access to that information and explore more. Depending on the subject I will encourage them with related movies, documentaries so on. Also I would love to use my cooking background for teaching.

Of course strong speaking, grammar, reading and writing abilities will be the foundation for our class. I have to work really hard for my teaching skills. I have a long way to go and I need to improve my English as well. From the explainer type of teacher, I will try to be the involver and enabler type of teacher. That way I can make change in their heart, and that will also change my heart, too.