The Worst Teacher? The Best Teacher?

A person may have his or her memories about their favorite and the worst teachers. When a teacher’s teaching style and students’ learning style do not match, the problem--inability to build a rapport between the teacher and the student--begins. A teacher will keep ‘bothering’ students (from a student’s perspective). On the other hand, a student may keep making teachers annoyed (from a teacher’s perspective). To maintain an effective language learning environment, the first important task to do is to build a close relationship between them. If not, students are not willing to learn that language due to lack of interests. In regards to a language teaching environment, I would like to share my own experiences in learning language in the United States as a international student.

The best teacher I have ever met is my high school English teacher. For me, she is the teacher of teachers. As a person, she is a warm-hearted person who loves her students wholeheartedly. She has an enabler teaching style because she knows how to deal and teach students, shares control of the class with students, and creates autonomous learning environment by giving students opportunities to figure out and/or guess new concepts first. Also, she just acts as a guide only when students asks questions. Most importantly, she understands an individual’s learning difference and cares about her students’ motivation and their reactions. Thus, her effective teaching is for every student--those who are visual, auditory, and tactile-kinesthetic learners. For visual learners, she writes down on the whiteboard and uses various visual aids. For auditory learners, she allows students as a whole to read out aloud each paragraph. For tactile-kinesthetic learners, she lets students come up to the front of the classroom and gives them an opportunity to talk or give a brief speech.

Another best teacher in my life is an English as a New Language (ENL) professor from Syracuse University. Compare to other classes, his class size tended to be big. There were about 20 students (15 Chinese, 3 Koreans, and 2 from other Asian territories) in class. Everyday, he gave us a chance to communicate with each other by assigning and mixing us up with students from different countries. So we could get to know some other peers. Furthermore, he gave us thorough feedbacks for every assignment. Grammar might be a boring topic to teach and learn but he encouraged us to learn in fun ways such as group or partner activities so that we could relate the concepts into real-life examples.

Even though it was a political history course, my first aim as an international student was to learn English through reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Mr. Carriere’s class was fully teacher-driven and maintained a top-down structure. To be honest, he is the worst teacher I have ever met in my life because he did not want to listen to or interact with any students. Every lecture, he just read powerpoint slides word by word and moved on. When students asked questions to him, he was not eager to answer them. Moreover, he did not like students who have different opinions from him. There was no communication between students and the professor in this class so most students do not listen to the lecture and study by themselves. This class was not effective at all.

To sum up, there is no right or wrong answer for the best and the worst teacher. It might be a subjective matter; however, an effective and an unhelpful teaching methodology are quite obvious and objective.