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My Best English Teacher

My best teacher is Mr. Park who I met in my high school located in Seoul. I learned English from him for one academic year when I was a first-year high school student. Even though I took his classes a long time ago, I still remember how I felt in his class and how much I enjoyed his teaching. He was excellent in his content knowledge and teaching skills. His classes were effective and successful in that his students, including myself, were highly motivated to learn more about English and became more competent in our learning. He distinguished himself from the other teachers in terms of his modern teaching techniques, enabler style, and excellent attitude for effective teaching. He showed genuine passion and interest in his students’ English learning by continuing to develop and use new instructional materials and activities to give his students the best learning opportunities and outcomes. As an effective teacher and enabler, he tried to create a supportive and safe classroom environment, where all of the students were treated with respect, empathy, and authenticity and they could freely ask questions and make mistakes. In his class, it was okay not to be perfect or correct, which was not common in other classes. He also gave detailed feedback on the students’ assignments and guidance for further study direction, considering each student’s level of understanding and performance. His constructive feedback and practical guidance helped his students to know how to study English effectively and keep making progress throughout the year.

When reflecting his class, Mr. Park used some modern teaching techniques, which were not common at the time. He made every effort to make his classes more interesting and understandable through his well-structured teaching and using additional new materials and activities (e.g., pop songs and interesting reading passages). Also, he sometimes gave us individually-tailored materials and activities according to the students’ current level, which made us more motivated and engaged in English learning.

In terms of his teaching style, Mr. Park was an enabler in that he created a supportive learning environment which enabled us to be self-motivated and self-regulated in our English learning. He helped us understand our current status of what we know and what we do not know by asking questions and regular formative assessments (e.g., quizzes) and challenged us to move forward by providing us with well-structured study guidelines and materials. Thanks to his teaching, we became more competent in our English, particularly reading and grammar, throughout the academic year.

Mr. Park was also an effective teacher in all aspects that Carl Rogers proposed—empathetic, authentic, and respectful. He often showed concern about students’ learning as well as their personal and school life, so we could easily feel that he cared about us and we could openly share our struggles with him through personal interactions. He was also authentic in that he did not pretend to know everything. He rather was a good model as a learner by showing that he kept learning for the improvement of his English teaching and his own English and by teaching that it would be completely fine to make mistakes in the process of language learning. He used to challenge his students to develop further with high expectations of students’ progress and he provided appropriate scaffoldings when we faced difficulties in our learning. He shared his disappointment and frustrations when we did not work hard and was willing to deal with the issue with us through discussions. He was always respectful regardless of students’ performance and attitude. He treated all students in a very respectful way and listened to students carefully. He also tried to understand us and the situations that we faced through communication~~s~~ rather than making assumptions.

With all these reasons, I consider him as my best teacher whom I met in my secondary school. He was a great teacher and I learned a lot from his classes. I think he tried his best to adopt modern teaching techniques and to be an enabler in his classroom even in very limited English education settings at the time. Due to his characteristics as an effective teacher (empathetic, authentic, and respectful), we could benefit from his teaching by enjoying English learning, having more interest in English, and improving our English. Learning excellent teaching skills and attitudes as an effective teacher from his example, I would like to add more modern teaching techniques (e.g., activities and group work) into English teaching, particularly for English communication, which may promote students’ successful English learning and positive attitudes toward English.