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What made a language teacher as memorable and respectful one?

I met an English English teacher in London about 19 years ago. His name was Steve and he was teaching at an English language school in Fulham, West London, UK. He was in his early 30s and grew up in London. As an English man he did not care to be wet under rainy day even when he caught a cold. I still remember one rainy day that I was in front of the language school with my umbrella, he walked down along the road with a cigarette not with an umbrella but he was coughing several times. I was shocked at that time as I did not have any knowledge about British culture and lifestyle. It was quite strange scene for me as a stranger newly moved. When I started a General English course, I was in the elementary level and he was the first English teacher to me in England. As my English level tells, I hardly spoke in English when I arrived in London for studying English. Without him, I could not have made such progress in all aspects in English Language. As an experienced ESL teacher, he developed language skills and systems as well as trying to do less teaching. He was definitely a modern style teacher and enabler.

I could recall that he always encouraged students to raise questions during lessons and most of the time he sat with students and helped them to think they are the center of the class. I cannot recall that he used lecture style teaching at the class. As a result, students did not hesitate to raise questions but actively participated in the class and freely shared their opinions. He used various modern teaching methods and gave students more chances to speak each other.

 By discussing in groups as well as by teaching/mentoring others, our retention rate was increased. For example, when any students could not understand a word or expression, he asked students if anyone could explain it to other students. As I was in the elementary level, it helped me to learn a lot of new words and expressions from other students who were from various countries and backgrounds and in slightly different English levels. Also, through this method I was trained how to describe a word in English. Because I had poor vocabulary at that time, I learnt most of English vocabularies in English not in my mother tongue. The method enabled me to think in English when I speak in English.

I remember him as an effective teacher. Because, he had empathy, authenticity, and respect toward students. He tried his best to tailor lessons according to a bit of different levels. I was in his class for 2 semesters for about 6 month and my English skills developed a lot from the elementary level to the intermediate level. When I made more progress in the elementary level class, rather than sending me to the next level to change the class and the teacher, he gave me extra hand-outs and homework in order for me to make progress in the same class which allowed me to stay in the familiar and comfortable class setting. Also, he gave me more chances to do teaching/ mentoring new classmates in the elementary level. The more I had a chance to speak up, the more I could firmly establish my vocabulary.

After 19 years, I still remember Steve and regarded him as my best English teacher. He was empathetic and genuine teacher who loved his job and his students. He was always friendly and tried his best to establish good relationship with students. In his classroom we could hear more student voices than his. Because his lesson was active and effective, there were always laughs and active participation. By taking the TESOL course, I could realize that he really used effective teaching methods and skills. I taught English for 7 years from kindergarteners to adult even elderly ones from General English to Business English and the modern teaching methods he used helped me greatly to be able to teach effectively. I did not know that I would be an English teacher in the future when I studied English with Steve but I could not keep this precious experience and knowledge only for me but I would love to share them with learners who are eager to learn English but don’t know what to do or how to do it. I was really happy to have Steve as my first English English teach and I will teach the way what he taught and apply what I learn in this TESOL course.