TESOL Assignment # 2 : Classroom Management Assignment

TITLE : How to deal with unexpected problems in a class

TESOL 70th intake

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“ Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire. “ – William Butler Yeats

Let’s suppose that you are doing your very first lesson. You are very well prepared for your lesson. You have such a great knowledge and an excellent lesson plan. Now you start your class and want your students to do an activity in pairs. Suddenly, one of your students says, “I don’t want to do this exercise.” How you are going to react? What are you going to say? If everything goes well as you plan, it couldn’t be better. But in reality you might have to deal with a range of unexpected problems like this. In this essay, I’d like to talk about three unexpected problems especially regarding implementation, enforcement and discipline of an institution’s policies and how to handle these problems based on my own personal past experiences.

First, let me begin with an “English Only” policy your institution has. They seriously ask you to have this strict rule applied to all of your students. How you will implement and enforce this policy? I might get an idea for this matter from my English teacher named Danielle. In April, 2004, I registered for an English conversation class at WINGLISH, an English institute, in Boon Dang which extended opportunities to speak English. During the class we were all asked to speak only English. At first, all of us hesitated to speak English only because we were afraid of making mistakes and worried about how we looked to the others. We felt awkward when speaking English with other Koreans. My teacher, Danielle, tried to create a climate where using English was normal and natural and not special or frightening. He always boosted our confidence by saying that I don’t speak Korean but you speak two languages. You are much smarter than me. So you don’t need to be afraid of making mistakes or taking your own time when speaking English. He was very patient whenever he talked to us. If anyone of us had troubles describing something in English, He always allowed time for us to process our own answers and speak. He helped us finish our own sentences by eliciting, gestures and board drawing.

Second, you might have to encourage your students not to be absent from a class and enforce punctuality as a teacher. My teacher named Jin-Hee taught me English in SUJIN elementary school in 1994. She divided sections for each student on a board and gave a red sticker to students who came to the class on time. She promised to give a prize and certificate to the one who got the highest number of red stickers for the whole year and then she asked each one of us what we wanted to have for a prize. We had fun putting stickers above our names and we were excited about getting what we wanted at the end. Above all, as a teacher, building strong rapport with your students and encouraging them to have a good relationship with each other will be a good way to enforce frequent tardiness and frequent absences. If your students like you personally and their classmates, they would love to spend time together. They are eager to come into a class even if no one told them they have to take a class.

Third, as a teacher you will also have to help your students to prepare for any lesson presentations. How will you handle this matter? Again, I’d mention my teacher, Ms. Jin-Hee, as a good model for this. She always spent the last 15 minutes of her class to let us prepare for a next lesson. She had us seated in a horseshoe shape which helped us to make eye contact and let everyone engaged from strong students to weaker students. Instead of giving all for preparation she supported us to find them by ourselves. She gave chunk instructions to increase our understanding but was not over-helping. She minimized TTT and made us do a lot of student to student communication activities to give us an idea for next lesson.

In conclusion, Jim Scrivener said the skills of creating and managing a successful class may be the key to the whole success of a course. Even if you have such a great knowledge and a lesson plan, unless you manage these unexpected problems in a class in an effective way, your class might not be successful. Experiences will eventually enable me to find more effective alternative solutions to handle the problems. I think if I create an environment where using English is normal and natural and build strong relationship with students and let students involved for lesson by getting their attention I would be able to deal with any other unexpected problems as well.