Learning Environment in Teacher’s Hands

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Do you have a second language? If you have, how was the start of studying? Was it stressful or of interest to you? Nowadays we are living in a multicultural society that a lot of people are learning or willing to learn another language with different reasons like traveling, working, making friends, studying, etc. Then, what makes your learning environment good or bad? The most powerful thing would be what kind of teacher you have. There are some types of good and bad teachers I have met.

First, the good leader is a good listener. A good teacher should not monopolize the class. He has to communicate with the students and try to understand them. On November 16, 2010 through April 16, 2011, I was in ELS language school in Vancouver, BC, Canada. It was my first time to study abroad and I met the most memorable teacher, Donna. The class was heterogeneous that it was composed of the students from Asia, South America, Europe, and the Middle East. All of us had different languages, cultures, ages, different reasons to study and even different levels. Nevertheless, the teacher listened to every single student, respected all of our differences, and tried to find what we needed. Amos Bronson Alcott said “The true teacher defends his pupils against his own personal influence.” Donna kept her ears all the time, but she did not have the answer and also did not want us to think the same as she did. She always believed that we had the answer ourselves. On the other hand, I was sick of school in South Korea because I had been taught in receptive-based classrooms before I went abroad. The teacher always talked and we had to listen. The answer is always in the teacher’s hands and the class was totally teacher-centered. But Donna gave me student-centered educational environment which I always dreamed about.

Second, no one wins a man of passion. Georg Wilhelm said “Nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion.” To be a better teacher, you ought to prepare for the class before you come into the class. Donna always brought various activities and materials and she had different ways to teach. She has been teaching for about 30 years, but never stopped studying. Also, she always gave us feedback after exams. She complimented and advised us about even very small points. In addition, she tried to elicit the answer from the students instead of just telling the answer. She also focused on motivating the students. In the middle of the course, I was having a hard time and became exhausted of studying. But she was there and reminded what I wanted and what to do for it whenever I was about to lost my way. She knew that study without desire spoils the memory and it retains nothing that it takes in. Walt Disney said “If you can dream it, you can do it. Always remember this whole thing was started by a mouse.” She helped me to take out the tiny mouse inside of me. Otherwise, my worst teacher, John Doe from my high school was more like an explainer who had no passion. He had a high level of education, but he was lazy and like a puppet. He was busy following the theories that he looked like a reading robot and everyone looked down on him. Samuel Jones said “Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful.” You can not be a good teacher if you are not passionate even though you have a lot of expert knowledge.

Finally, Humor is a wonderful resource. Since we are surrounded by a bunch of machines, people are longing for something warm and humane and humor fulfills the desire. It makes the atmosphere better and people feel closer to each other. In class, it also helps the students remember what they learned in class too. But remember not to let the humor be the leader in the class. It should be a part of the class and appropriate. Donna used some games to help the students memorize vocabulary and did a drawing on the board to explain grammar. She was such a great involver. She always made the students feel comfortable and enjoyable in class. However, she never got lost and forgot where to go in class. Instead, she made the students participate in the lesson using humor. In ELS, there was another teacher, Glenn Deefholts who liked to do fun activities with his class. The class was fun, but we always forgot what we had to study because we played during the entire class. It is really easy to overdo that you must be careful with it. If you have no sense of humor, the class might be boring and it would be hard to communicate with your students. In addition, it also helps you to cope with problems which could be happened in class. Humor is an excellent lubricant between the teacher and student or the lecture and students. Donna was strict, but she was a two-way communicator and her class was productive-based. She knew the balance.

In conclusion, a teacher is very influential when you learn something, especially, if it is new for you like a second language. Therefore, a good teacher should be rational and emotional and strong and soft at once. Having a good teacher is the same as having a best friend. He or she tells all about you even your shortcomings, but he or she is always beside you listening to you.