Experience Makes Perfect

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Word Count : 747

Class : 87th WK TESOL

When I was 6 years old, my mother turn on the BBC children programs. She looked up to her brother-in-law who was an interpreter in U.S. army and set her heart on educating my sister and me to learn English naturally. When I became 7 years old, I met an American tutor in my house. I can remember that I didn't study English in the classes but we enjoyed games, stories about America and many activities in English. It was very fresh and exciting experience. In every class, I was very thrilled and felt that she took me to adventures. Entering elementary school, I had great chance to go to the house of cousin in New York. Visiting there during every vacations, even the cultural shock seemed to be joy to me. Despite of being a beginner, I felt that English was a piece of cake. Of course I knew that I should be more fluent and accurate and I should study more words and structures. But with the great experience I went through, I could motivate myself strongly. In spite of the hard time of Korea middle and highschool intensive education system, I kept learning conversation and making foreign friends in an international church. Thanks to the good memory of English, I was not stressful but I could enjoy it all the time.

I think my younger hood experience was very successful because it was a great motivation to me in learning English until now. From my experience, I believe that experience is very important and essential in adult's learning second language. Sometimes trips and good friends can encourage learners to be motivated and sometimes bad memories can discourage them from learning language. Even though I was little, the great one inspired me to keep learning English until now.

As Malcolm Knowles defines, adult learners are autonomous and self-directed. And they have foundation of life experience and knowledge. They are very practical, respectful and respectable. And I agree with them. To encourage adult learner, instructors should avoid traditional class type. It is said that traditional classes are like 'Jug and Mug' or 'Chalk and Talk'. Jim Scrivener says that in the traditional classes, a teacher talks much more than students do. They pour their knowledge on students without use of realia. It is focused on grammar memorization as well. On contrary, modern classes are very active with lots of activities and discussion. Instructors support learners to speak more and use more methods including multi-media.

With instructors' empathy, authenticity and respect for learners, I think teachers should build and improve rapport. Showing respect, really listening to students, being fair and patient, inspiring confidence and being authoritative without distance, teachers can create a positive learning atmosphere. That's why instructors should try to be the enablers not explainers. There are three kinds of teacher, the explainers, the involvers and the enablers. They all know their subject matter very well. But the explainers are lack of knowledge of teaching methodology. They depend on lecturing with students usually listening to them. In otherwise, the involvers have lots of teaching method. So they can adapt their appropriate teaching and organisational procedures and techniques to help students learn about subject matter. But I think the best one is the enabler. They are the teachers who are confident enough to share control with the learners. They create the conditions that enable the students to learn for themselves. They are less traditional teachers and can be a guide or a counselor or a resource of information when needed. And they have awareness of how individuals and groups are thinking and feeling within the class. This is the one that can encourage learners to learn second language.

For about 10 years, I have been teaching young learners. The more I loved the children, the more I enjoyed teaching and improving my teaching and organisational skills. But these days I notice that I am getting less sensitive and less active in children classes. And I feel I'm less excited with teaching them. I think this is the right time to motivate myself with new, improved and sophisticated teaching skills. Like the experience inspires learners. new teaching experience can make my passion vivid again. And I hope that all my experience of teaching and life can motivate the learners as a professional instructor, the enabler.

\*reference

Learning Teaching The Essential Guide to English Language Teaching.

Jim Scrivener