My English Teachers

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words: 738

I have learned English as a second language for more than 20 years. I have also met many English teachers and they demonstrated a variety of teaching styles. I think their styles depended on teachers’ characteristics or the trend of English education at that time. Especially in Korea, the trend of English education has changed a lot for 20 years, because it has been a big part of the education industry. Learning English has been essential to succeed in Korea. Therefore Korean people have adapted many methods of teaching skills. I want to introduce what I have experienced about them based on three categories of teaching style.

First of all, all of the English teachers were explainers in my middle and high schools. They read textbooks, explained the meaning of words and grammar. They focused on reading and solving the questions. Students did not have any chance to speak or write and teachers’ pronunciation was not similar to the native speakers’. So it was hardly possible for students to learn listening and practice speaking. However, students could memorize a lot of vocabulary and be good at grammar. For me, it was boring to learn through the explainer. It was the same in every class, such as reading, memorizing and many tests. I was a passive learner and not motivated to practice English. I did not feel interested in English. It was just one of the subjects which I had to study to go to college. We knew that kind of teaching style was not effective, but it was inevitable in the classroom which had 60 students.

Secondly, I have met many teachers, who are involvers, in private institutes. I took many English conversation classes after graduating from college. At that time, it was more important to speak English well than reading or grammar. I think an involver is quite appropriate to teach speaking and listening, because students could listen a lot from a teacher and have a chance to practice speaking through activities. It is fun to learn English for even the students who are not interested in it. They could be active and participate in class a lot. It does not push students to study, but their English could be improved little by little. I enjoyed taking those classes and felt my speaking had improved. It was a good opportunity for me to get to know how fun learning a language is. I think it is appropriate to young students who do not know the excitement to learn a language yet and the size of class has to be small like having less than 15 people.

Finally, I met a professor who was an enabler, when I attended English writing class in the community college in the US. The professor taught how to research and assigned students what to write. She also gave many articles related to the subject and made students read all the materials and discuss them. And then, she extended feedback on whether students were doing well or not. She was barely visible in the class and all the process was up to the students. It was not fun and I did not feel that I learned something from a teacher. However, I was an adult and voluntarily chose the class and paid a lot of tuition. I was so motivated to learn and knew the goal I wanted to attain like other students. I researched a lot and wrote an essay. The professor counselled how to make a point in the writing and corrected my essay. It was helpful for me to improve my writing skills, since it was achieved by myself through active studying. I assume this kind of teaching style could be effective for adults who are autonomous and self-directed.

I cannot judge one of teaching style is absolutely best or not. It depends on the types of students and the size of classes. An involver could be an effective teaching style to young children, because it makes students active and fun. Children are not goal-oriented yet and easily distracted in class. An involver can make them concentrate on class and practice English a lot. An enabler is appropriate for adults who are ready to learn. An explainer is necessary when the class is too big to make students participate in it. Personally, I want to be an involver, because I do not want to make students bored, instead, giving them delight to learn a foreign language.