“Does “English Only” Policy Always Work?”

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“Devotion, by itself is weak and useless without knowledge. Knowledge, by itself is dangerous and fearful without devotion.” -Samuel Johnson-

I will definitely have to deal with “English Only” policy from my institution and students’ frequent tardiness and absences in the realities of teaching English. I will describe how my past teachers dealt with the above issues and how I will manage them in my classes. Also, I will explain my past teacher’s method of helping the students preparing for their classroom presentations.

When I was a freshman in Fort Lee High School in New Jersey in 1990, I took the class of “English as Second Language” and the teacher was Mr. Robravsky. He was probably in his early sixties and his image resembled much like our grandfathers. On the first day of the class, he told us that we should not speak any other language other than English during the class and even during the break. Mr. Robravsky used the “Direct Method (DM)” which is from the Diane Larsen-Freeman’s book, “*Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching*” as a teaching methodology for us. If someone broke the “English Only” policy, he or she had to stay for detention for 30 minutes and study English with Mr. Robravsky after school. One day, I unconsciously spoke Korean with my classmates, so we had to stay for extra study. During the extra class, Mr. Robravsky had lead in questions and he brought out the subjects from our answers. We actually learned a lot of speaking in English from the “punishment”.

I had to take “Humanities” class for two years at Juilliard. During the second year of the class, Ms. Cox had a specific rule for the students’ frequent tardiness and absences. Her rule was very similar to what our TESOL course requires; she counted more than three absences as a failing and three lates as one absence. If a student is consistently late and absent for a class, it is definitely the student’s bad habit. In order to break off the bad habit, very strict discipline is necessary.

When I was in Mr. Winter’s “Performance Practices” class at University of California, Los Angeles in 2000, I had to give a few class presentations. The day Mr. Winter assigned us the first presentation, he helped us how we can prepare them by his demonstration. He also told us where he could find his primary sources: books, journals, dissertations, dictionaries, and CDs. His ideas and opinions were extremely interesting because they were described and approved in details. The topic of my first presentation was what are the differences between the traditional and the modern days performance practices of the flute. Mr. Winter told me that it is very important to find historical recordings for my presentation. He suggested to me that I should try to find historical recordings from music libraries and the “Tower Records” on the Hollywood Blvd in Los Angeles. I could find very valuable historical recordings, were recorded during very early 20th century, at the “Tower Record” finally. Those recordings helped me to bring out very important points and to give a successful presentation.

I believe that Mr. Robravsky’s policy was workable and wise. All of us really made our efforts at speaking in English and as a result, many of us improved speaking skills very much. I think “English Only” policy always works and Mr. Robravsky’s policy, which I will use for my future classes, did not give any negative effect to the students but positive.