**“From the Cradle to the Grave” –** Winston Churchill

* **A teacher has a great affection to people learning from the cradle to the grave**

Eunkyoung Choi in TESOL class 100

Coining the phrase, “from the cradle to the grave’, Winston Churchill said that every British citizen must be entitled to national insurance throughout their whole lives. Judging from this mention, most people naturally think that he seemed to have strong responsibility for his citizens as a prime minister leading the entire nation. Whenever thinking about a sense of duty as a teacher, this quote comes into my head. What if students are entitled to ‘learning insurance’? A teacher is a job leading children to the right path of life or the right path of acquisition in each field. I believe that life itself is acquisition itself because human beings are learning and practicing animals educated by adults, especially by teachers. When a teacher positively affects, the teacher entitles students to ‘learning insurance’. As the consequence, teachers’ role is so important that almost all the people can be affected by those thought as giants to young learners’ eyes. Thus, it is not so strange to say that the affection starts from the early stage of learning and lasts to the end of life.

I interviewed some students of mine in order to add experiences in these days to my old memories of teachers. In this essay, I will lay out my thoughts about teaching approaches based on three questions and, in the third question, summarize the results of the interview.

**1. “Which of the approaches you saw or presented may have had the most influence on your own ideas about teaching and why?”** The most influential method permeated into my teaching method might be ‘input approach’. Once I ran an English academy based on audio system and I felt quite limitation to enhance students’ English skills because they only listened to the voice from the records and memorized some sentences. As a result, I changed the audio based system to computer based system. Both were all based on ‘input approach’. I, at first, chose those methods in the thought of “Input generates Output”. Students in my academy listened to the record players and memorized lexical items and learned/solved grammatical problems. In fact, they just solely input knowledge without meaningful thoughts and feelings from lively connected to the real world.

**2.** **“Which of these approaches do you hope will have more influence on your teaching in the future and why?”** I think many people may wrangle over the argument quite often. In my thought, I am in agreement with most parts of ‘Constructivist approach’ which Jean Piaget is an example of. His cognitive development as a differentiation of biological regulations is so attractive for making a decision on proper teaching methods for young learners’ growing process from birth. And another additionally desirable approach is ‘Input approach’ under the condition of ‘Comprehensible Input’ from reading and ‘Natural Communicative Input’ step by step. I will suggest two logical bases to support my position. First, in the fast evolving society, even children may be forced to deal with too many subjects for competition. As the product of those races, children may build up serious stresses from cramming words and rules given every day in school system, especially in Asia. To reduce their stresses, constructivist approach is effective by giving many chances of physical as well as mental activities. Second, Piaget underlined appropriately leveled teaching methods should be introduced to each cognitive development stage. In my case, I remember one of my elementary school teachers explaining political matters which are attractive to only adults. I was only 10 years old then, didn’t understand what he was talking about and didn’t even know why those matters were so important. Naturally, I lost all my interests in the class. In the other hand, I felt so interested in politics when I was in university. Therefore, I could conclude properly leveled teaching is not only able to promote students’ motivation but also effective for students to build up self-confidence by ensuring their suitability in learning. When it comes to ‘Input Approach’, I don’t agree to solely inputting words and rules meaningless to children. Stephen Krashen emphasizes “The power of Reading” which enables imagination and critical thinking by deeply understanding stories and then generating internalization. And yet, reading all the time can be a burden on growing students who need physical movements and experiences with various angles. Although some book-worms may enjoy reading all day long, they still need to evolve to be well-balanced people who escape from alienation among people using various language skills through their lives. In addition, students will develop their cognition as growing step which means syllabus should be adjusted to the process of growing. Hence, I am sure to conclude that stage-leveled activities of constructivist approach and reading input approach should be thoughtfully introduced in the accordance with the unique environment of each class from the cradle to the grave.

**3. “What factors are particularly important to consider when developing an approach for children in Asia?”** In my opinion, understanding students’ different characteristics and difficulties is most imAsian children are under the hard working condition indeed. It is a reality which we cannot avoid although many people don’t like it and try to change the harsh environment. The tough environment may be so stressful to young learners who are still immature. The stress can discourage them in many ways and even hurt their self-esteem as well as take them apart away from the internal motivation. That’s why teachers in Asia should regard students’ emotional changes and characteristics more than those in other countries do. I conducted a survey to three students of mine on the impact of teachers. I summarized the interview in the table below and added the entire interview sheets in the back as an attachment.

**Interview on the impact of teachers**

Respondents: Heeyeon Cho, 1st grader in Goyang foreign language high school

Chaewon Park, 2nd grader in Moowon high school

Sungjin Park, 2nd grader in Moowon middle school

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **experiences** | **Worst teacher** | **Best teacher** | **A good teacher should….** |
| **Heeyeon Cho** | Unequal preference to Ss  Ignoring Ss  Didn’t understand Ss’ pain | Forgiving Ss’ faults  Waiting until Ss get ready  Understand Ss growing  Amicable relationship | Understand each student’s difference  Know well about how to explain  Encourage Ss  Stimulate Ss’ interests |
| **Chaewon Park** | Bad preparation for class  Ignorance in subject matters  Make conflicts with Ss | Using various methods  -multimedia, visual aids  Interesting teaching style  Helping Ss  Understanding Ss’ feelings | Use various methods to enhance Ss’ interests  Improve their teaching skills  Understand Ss’ emotion |
| **Sungjin Park** | Not allowing questions  Boring  Painful activity like “Kkamji” | Fun explanation  Interesting activities  Understanding Ss  Trustful to Ss | Use many activities  Know about Ss’ differences  Understand Ss  Give a rest |

As shown in the survey, the most important factor to be a good teacher is to understand students according to three students. Of course, we all think understanding sounds so beautiful to educational fields. But why did those students specially emphasize ‘understanding students’ for a good teacher? I have already found Asian students often feel flat out and depressed by stress-ridden routine works which can spoil not only their feelings but also motivation and self-esteem. For a heavy stress causes students tired and slows them to learn. As the following step, they may feel ‘a sense of inappropriateness in learning’. This is a very dangerous situation for leaners indeed. As the result, most students must be so happy to have understandable teachers to soothe their wounded self-confidence. With the help of understanding teachers, students may have good chances of rebuilding their confidence and gradually become to like learning again. So I strongly say that understanding students’ differences is the most important to develop an approach for children in Asia.

In conclusion, teachers have a great affection which enables students to nurture potential and maximize their capacity by giving chances of learning. However, in reality, students can have both negative feelings and positive feelings from teachers. And those feelings have a high possibility to last long throughout their lives: “From the Cradle to the Grave”. In this vein, it is not an overstatement to argue that teachers should have a strong desire to be responsible, like Winstone Churchill had for his citizens, for their students not only to cultivate their potential but also to rebuild self-confidence in the long course of learning, from the cradle to the grave. Especially in Asian EFL classes, teachers should understand students’ stressful routines and spontaneously volunteer to take a role of a break from the stress. It is because, getting rid of the stress, students are more motivated and have confidence in learning languages. In order to have students be free from stresses and meet the requirements of school subjects in the unique environment of Asia, constructivist approach and input approach should be conducted simultaneously following the developmental stages.

**Attachment - Whole Interview Contents**

Respondents: 1st Heeyeon Cho, 1st grader in Goyang foreign language high school

2nd Chaewon Park, 2nd grader in Moowon high school

3rd Sungjin Park, 2nd grader in Moowon middle school

I have been teaching those students for 11years from their stage of learning alphabet.

1. **Give examples of your experience with a bad teacher who affected you in a negative way.**

1st: A history teacher of the 2rd grade in the middle school.

“He preferred some students to the others. His way of teaching was quite fun, but most students did not like him because he just listened to active and talkative students. In my case, my voice volume is quite low so he just ignored what I said although he recognized that I told something. With the unequal preference, he graded us to the aptitude field. Is being loud good for everything? It’s so ridiculous. How silly.”

2nd: A math teacher of 3rd grade in middle school

“He always showed off in classes but did not prepare for classes and even didn’t know about the subject matters. It confused us a lot. He said, “I don’t need to study. You study! I should fix you!”. All students did not like his classes judging it as wasting time. He needs to fix himself. He was the worst teacher. How could a teacher make too many conflicts with students?”

3rd: An English teacher of 2nd grade in the middle school

“She did not allow students to ask any questions although they were relating to subjects. He just kept teaching with low voice and same tone. It was so boring that every student dozed. The worst of all was A4 sized paper, “Kkamjee”, on which students fill with small sized words a thousand of times. It was so painful. After doing Kkamjee, I became to hate English itself.”

1. **Give examples of your experience with a good teacher who affected you in a positive way.**

1st: Homeroom teacher of the 4th grade in the elementary school

“She often brought some food to share with students and understood us well. Once she noticed her hair pin was not on the desk and she found one of students took and hid it. I knew because I saw the pin in the student’s bag and told it to teacher. But she said, “Let’s wait until she summons up her courage to tell her fault. Don’t even tell her that you saw the pin.” I was so impressed by her saying and I just had conversation with the classmate about how much our teacher liked the pin. One day, the classmate put the pin back on the table when nobody was in the classroom. And my teacher said, “See? She eventually found out her faults by herself and she would not do such a thing in the future.” From then on, I decided to be a teacher someday, a great teacher.”

2nd: A science teacher of 1st grader in the middle school

“He used multimedia to enable students to understand easily. By seeing many visual aids, most students got better scores in the exam. And he noticed some students had difficulties understanding. He helped the students while others doing group works. He had a good sense of understanding students’ feelings. As the result, it was so easy to approach him to ask counsel. We could talk frankly about ourselves.”

3rd: A history teacher of 3rd grade in the middle school

“He was so fun and was like a comedian. I didn’t even notice the class time had passed because I was absorbed in the class with good and fun explanation. Moreover, he understood us a lot and had fun games with us. At the beginning of the semester, the attitude of our class was the worst of whole school, but at the end of the semester, most of my classmates became polite. He changed bad students into good students.”

1. **What is your opinion on a good way of teaching or who teachers should be?**

1st: “A good teacher is one who leads whole class. The most important matter is to understand each student because students have different ideas and emotions. Teachers should know and study how to explain easily and encourage students to do something. Boring teachers discourage students to study. It doesn’t mean funny talking session should be delivered all the time. Teachers should know how to stimulate students’ interests.”

2nd: “If a teacher does telling interesting stories about lesson topic using various methods and activities, then most students will like the subjects and get better score. Sincere teachers will improve their teaching skills for students. Teachers should understand students’ emotional changes by the growing process.”

3rd: “Teachers should give students many chances of doing things in classes. Students have different views of things and also they have different interests. Teacher should know about how different students have different abilities. They should deeply understand what/why/how student think. And teachers should know that we want to take a rest.”