Who is a good 2nd language Teacher?

“We don’t need to teach grammar.” – Stephen Krashen.

I’m 33 years old in universal age now. I’ve been studying English for 20 years so far. My first experience of learning 2nd language was English class at Moon-hwa Junior high school for 3 years since March, 1993. My total period of English education acquisition in Korea is 10 years, and another 3 years in Lakeland College(hereunder; LLC), Mattoon, Illinois, U.S. since Jan, 2005. Based on my experience of learning 2nd language, I would like to talk about who the good 2nd language Teacher was by comparing different types of teachers through my experience.

My first English teacher was Mrs. Kim who was a traditional Korean woman. She was not any kind of the three teacher types that we have learned from the TESOL 01 Module. I can rather describe her as a teaching-by-rote style teacher. Looking back on my junior high school English class, I remember one thing that she forced students to memorize whole lines in 2 pages of the text book that we would learn in the next class. Students tried to memorize whole 2 pages by rote without comprehension of the contents on the pages. When it came time to her class, she called students one by one to the front of the class and let us recite it. If anyone is wrong or cannot recite smoothly, she punished those by hitting palms with a wooden rod. All teaching method of her was to force students to memorize vocabulary, grammar, and even whole paragraphs. I didn’t feel anything weird at the time and it seemed like normal and natural, or a matter of course.

Most Korean people around my age had been taught by this kind of teaching style or mostly like an Explainer type. When I went to Dongguk University in 1999, English education environment was a little bit improved than what I’ve experienced. First different thing was that I’ve met a foreign English teacher, Mr. John, who was from Canada. However, he was also following the Korean style teaching guide just like as the Explainer. He read the text books alone and then explained what the paragraph meant, and just asked students to repeat the dialogue after him. I could not speak any words except “Hi, Hello, and those like greeting words” at the end of class. I’ve got “C” grade after the final test of John’s Class in 1999, even though he was trying to explain as much as he knew, I could not listen to and could not understand at all about what he was saying in the class, so I could not do the assignment or failed to submit homework accordingly. I think, for the beginner level assessed students, teacher should elicit the effort to understand sufficiently from students and their interesting in the class.

When I went to LLC, U.S., I took the ESL class for 8 months from Jan. to Aug. 2005. Finally I’ve learned the real English education by the Enabler teaching style. At the beginning, I was not adapted to new education environment but I could well understand and develop my language skills very easily. I mostly remember that I answered to questions and told about my story, as well as many group works to discuss with classmates. The great teacher, Mrs. Kaye Ryan, is a matured experienced woman teacher over 70 years old. However, she had a lot of passion as much as 3~40s teachers and moreover she was like a grandma for all students. She was very kind and had nicely a word to students, in addition, waited for students to finish their words.

I’m a Tactile- Kinesthetic learner. Through my own effort and interest to learn, trying to practice or applying what I memorize to the same circumstance will be the best experimental acquisition of the 2nd language. I also agree to one of the 5 key Characteristics that Adults are autonomous and self-directed. A good English teacher, of course, should not only having the expert knowledge of English, but also experiencing various kinds of teaching methods so could be aware of how students are thinking and control them completely, as well as eliciting autonomous learning motivation from students. I hope that I would be the ideal teacher 7 weeks later.

Jaewon, Choi