My personal experience of learning second language

TESOL 110th WK

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I have had many English teachers in my life since my first year of learning English in middle school. Some are memorable and some are not memorable at all. And then the two great English teachers who I am still able to recall their faces vividly. They have helped me significantly improve my English skills as well as confidence in English.

One of them was the English teacher in my last year of high school. He was a short man with a serious face and stayed stern, but passionate during the whole class. He was the ‘involver’ type in his teaching according to the categorization of teaching styles suggested by Adrian Underhill. He always started the class by emphasizing the importance of having an abundant vocabulary in order to have a good command of English. He gave a vocabulary test at the beginning of every class which led to a scary punishment of getting hit on palms for each wrong answer with the teacher’s stick. And for the rest of the class, he called out one of us randomly and made us read English passages out in Korean directly. If we were not prepared enough, we had to stand until the end of class. Like this, he tried to have us involved actively in learning, rather than lecturing us like most other teachers at school. Despite of him being the strictest teacher and keeping us on our toes, he was one of the most popular teachers and received many gifts on Teacher’s Day. I believe that was because of the authenticity of him longing for students to improve. We all could see that he was genuine and warm enough to care for our success in the future behind his strict face. In addition, his voice was always passionate and tried his best to get the most out of us without wasting a minute of class. I was highly motivated by his passion towards us and made a big effort to match his expectations. I memorized most of my current vocabulary in English during the year. Starting from the midterm, I got a perfect score almost on every trial examination throughout the year, and this was a big progress for me, when I couldn’t score more than half on trial exams in the beginning.

The other teacher was an English teacher at a private educational institute that I attended in my second year of middle school. She had a fair complexion, and always wore her signature red lipstick. She was close to the ‘explainer’ type in her teaching. She mostly explained about grammar and pronunciation enthusiastically. While lecturing us, she had a great control over the class in terms of holding our attention. Sometimes it was calling out one of us and asking random questions, sometimes telling a fun short jokes, and sometimes letting us do some stretching. I couldn’t see back then, but now I can see that she was continuously interacting with the whole class in her own way. After her lecture, she checked our homework individually face to face at the back of the classroom, and she was kind and friendly there different from her powerful and energetic image in front of class. I still remember some of the tips she gave and corrections she made in one on one check. Through this personal interaction, I felt that she cared for me as well as my English ability, and became motivated to focus and study harder.

I must admit that I was lucky enough to have had two great English teachers in my life. Otherwise I would have missed out on the importance of being authentic and passionate as a good teacher. They both have showed me that how being genuine with students brings out motivation in students and creates a successful learning experience. With great appreciation for them, I will try my best to become a good teacher who has much passion and love for students.