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Essay 1

January 10, 2016

Title

*“An investment in knowledge pays the best interest”*

*By Benjamin Franklin*

“Hello” was the word that I first spoke after I got to the United States. I didn’t know any other words beside “Hello”, so I said it to everyone I saw. At that time, I was an 8th grader, who failed the English test, taken in school. Since I got to learn English, I dislike the class the most. I was not a language type person, and I hated the fact that everyone, includes my parents, consider the English is the most important language to learn. But I was there, all alone, came all the way over to States, just to learn English. There were several people who were very significant in my English life. I was affected by them in different ways. Some of them were perhaps younger than I; some of them were around my parents’ ages. It was not really important how old they are, it was all about the environment they created and what I learned from it.

Mrs. Pham and Mrs. Singleton were my English teachers in high school. My English level wasn’t good enough to take regular classes for full time, so I had several ESL classes to improve my English, and few regular classes. At first I didn’t like the ESL classes I was taking. It gave me the feeling that I couldn’t take the regular classes because I needed a help. So through the first semester, I did not speak a word. It was more like anger. I was mad at myself, couldn’t express myself, and speak what I wanted to. But as the time went by, I started to feel I was actually evolved. Mrs, Pham gave us the assignment every day, which was writing a journal. In that moment I was feeling more comfortable on writing than speaking, so I was able to express myself into my writing. Sometimes she read my journal and wrote me back with the comments. But she focused the stories, not the grammatical errors, so I could actually enjoy writing. In her class, there were about 25 students, taking the same class with me. There were some students who are from different countries, speaking different languages. Even though there were so many of them, she cared every each one of us so much. By questioning us, she found out where we got lost, and which parts made us hard to understand. She did not give the answer directly, but let us find out by ourselves, talking to each other, and sharing the information. Through her class, I had so many group projects. It was very rare to work individually. Sometimes we spent entire class to prepare the presentation. Because there were more group works than individual work, I got to know everyone in the class and got to talk to them.

In the same time I had Mrs. Pham’s class, I also had Mrs. Singleton’s class either. They both taught me English, but in opposite different ways. If I would describe their teacher skills, Mrs. Pham was enabler; Mrs. Singleton was more like an explainer. This doesn’t mean I didn’t like her class. She assigned a book every month and told us to read pages before the class. So when we came to class, all pages read, she asked us to question her any words that we could not understand. She explained what those words means and what circumstances those words used. Then we needed to write down. Sometimes she gave us the writing assignment. They were usually about the book, and the story, and when we got those back from her, she corrected every single mistakes we made and assigned us to rewrite them. She listed the most mistakes we all made, and explained the reason we got wrong. Because there was not so much variety of activities, some students did not concentrate, and did some other things unrelated to class. I think the pattern of her teaching style boredom the students sometimes, and made them hard to concentrate the subject.

Personally I love both of their classes; however I can tell that I was more impacted by Mrs. Pham and her teaching style. In her class, everyone was involved. She gave the chance to speak to every single of us, so no one was really left out. I believe that she understood us more because she was young and knew more about now day’s high school life than Mrs. Singleton. However, just because she was young and easy going type of teacher, there were some students who always tried. They always asked her to play games instead of doing the assignments. And they sometimes lied to skip the classes. In the other hand, those kids who were tried in Mrs. Pham’s class did not cause those problems in Mrs. Singleton’s class. They knew she’s not going to let them just ask her, so they didn’t even try. Because she was stricter, students did not play around.

Because I have been through both of the opposite style of teachers, I think there is no such as a right answer to be a good teacher. They both have great strength to teach students and both have provided high quality of education for me. I was more affected by teacher who was enabler, but I also learned that I should be less easy going teacher. Mrs. Pham’s class was more student centered, but Mrs. Singleton’s class was more teacher centered. When a classroom operates with students centered instruction, students and teachers share the focus. Instead of listing to the teacher exclusively, students and teachers interact equally. Group work is encouraged, and students learn to collaborate and communicate with one another. This way, students learn important communicative and collaborative skills through group work, and learn to direct their own learning, ask questions and complete tasks independently. And also they are more interested in learning activities when they can interact with one another and participate actively. However, because students are talking, classrooms are often busy, noisy and chaotic. And teachers must attempt to manage all the students’ activities at once, which can be difficult when students are working on different stages of the same project. And because the teacher doesn’t deliver instruction to all students at once, some students may miss important facts. For the last, not every student prefer to work together. There are some students who want to work alone. In teacher centered education, students put all of their focus on the teacher. The teacher talks, while the students exclusively listen. During activities, students work alone, and collaboration is discouraged. When the class is teacher centered, the classroom remains orderly. Students are quiet, and the teacher retains full control of the classroom and its activities. And because students learn on their own, they learn to be independent and make their own decisions. And also because the teacher directs all classroom activities, they don’t have to worry that students will miss an important topic. In the other side of this education, when students work alone, they don’t learn to collaborate with other students, and communication skills may suffer. This can also get boring for students also. Their minds may wander, and they may miss important facts. For the last, its instruction doesn’t allow students to express themselves, ask questions and direct their own learning.

I realized that in recent days, more teachers have moved toward a student-centered approach. However, some students maintain that teacher-centered education is the more effective strategy. In most cases, it is the best for teachers to use a combination of approaches to ensure that all students’ needs are met. When both approaches are used together, students can enjoy the positive of both types of education. Instead of getting bored with teacher-centered education or losing sight of their goals in a completely student-centered classroom, pupils can benefit from a well-balanced educational environment.