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My Life As A TESOL Certified English Communication Facilitator

When I first applied for the TESOL class, I had to read a prompt from a TOEFL exam and answer five questions as well as having to write an essay and explain what the benefits of teaching history to students are. I felt as if the class was going to reinforce all the four kills of English: listening, speaking, writing, and grammar. I was wrong. The class had great emphasis on the communicative properties of an English lesson. The materials and activities we have gone through as a class were invaluable experiences that would only better my perspective about being an English Communication facilitator. There were times when I thought some of these activities or language target intended to teach were too elementary; I wanted to be an English teacher for adults and at times I thought some activities or materials didn’t concern me. However I was wrong in the sense that the attitude and the approach of how to teach the students, to understand them, and empathize with them were the most lessons that this TESOL course has taught me. It does not matter what age group the students you teach belong to as long as we have an educator’s mind. Out of the many ideas and methods that the TESOL class has enlightened me, one of the most important lesson was the importance of eliciting the students. Frank, our instructor, has made it clear that the traditional Korean way of teaching English heavily relies on test taking skills and answering questions that has a straightforward, non-critical thinking questions. Through eliciting the students, instructors are able to make the lesson more memorable to them by letting students discuss among themselves, enjoy while doing so, and improving their skill sets more effectively in a natural communicative way. Through various presentations in front of the class, I learned to be more flexible. The technique to make various lesson plans are important but it also taught me to be flexible as nothing is set in stone in a classroom setting. There are unexpected consequences and uncontrollable variables that emerges when teaching an ESL course; students may not understand the instructions clearly, they may be too pressured or shy to openly express their opinions, and not be interested in the topic to be motivated to participate during class. It was important for me to see that as a teacher, we have to take control of the classroom not only to give transfer knowledge to the students, but also set up an adequate teaching and learning environment in which the students feel the want to learn about English in a comfortable and approachable way.

 My experience in TESOL class would undoubtedly be one of the most important factors that will define me as an English communicative instructor in the future. Unexpectedly, the course had zero emphasis on improving the students’ grammar, listening, writing, and reading skills; it proved to be a far more valuable lesson to the soon-would-be educators. Our assignments and activities made us self-reflect and find out what we truly wanted to get out of the class. We all had our differences and I can confidently say I have found an answer to my query: through a myriad of activities and assignments, I was able to know how to approach different types of students and how to focus on each of the four language acquisition skills effectively. When I had my first lead-in presentation or even the ice-breaker, I was absolutely terrified. Even though I have improved in being more approachable and friendly with the students, it was evident until the end that I need to change the tense and melancholy mood that I introduce the students to. The evaluations taught me that from a third person perspective, my weaknesses and strengths were clearer than trying to evaluate myself as a first person. Looking at others students’ micro teachings and other presentations were also extremely helpful as it gave insight on how other teachers break the ice, pass their knowledge of English, or create an educational environment.

In the near future, as I am currently employed only as a part timer in a children’s English library institute, I plan to acquire a full time job to teach an older generation of students. While teaching kids is more casual and have some wiggle room for mistakes, it is not the path I want to pursue as the teacher is basically working for the parents of the children. If the children does not want to learn there are not many ways to bypass his or her stubbornness and unwillingness to cooperate as the student is basically forced to attend the class which has been a long tradition of Korean academic nature. Meanwhile the older students may realize the importance of learning English or are even they themselves who have applied for the class to get English skills out of it, therefore while the teacher may have to be familiar with a more challenging material, it is more focused on being educational instead of trying to please the parents of the few recalcitrant children. My dream of wanting to become an owner of a respectable institute that does not focus on elusive loopholes to make the most profit or exploiting the teachers has not changed. However the way I would approach the method in teaching the students have. Unless I am obligated to follow a strict teaching style proposed by the institute that I work at, I would aim to teach the students in a more natural, communicative, and enjoyable way. It is apparent that the advertisements we see on the streets or on the TV may emphasize expanding the vocabulary base or achieving a high score in the shortest span of time, but if I were allowed to come up with my own methodologies, I would focus on the class to be more communicative and stress free. Not only is that the way that the native English speakers acquire their language but it would lessen the pressure felt by the students and let them feel comfortable acquiring and familiarizing themselves with English. There were various ways to approach a certain language target or topic of the lesson to be taught to the students. It opened my eyes to many creative and effective styles of teaching that could be used in all spectrum of my prospective students. Thank you for teaching the class that would serve as an inception for being a great English teacher.