TESOLWK 158TH

HEEWON KIM (STELLA)

There are many different teachers in the world. Among them, meeting a good teacher who knows how to teach and understands his students well is one of the greatest fortunes that students can have in their lives. That happened to me when I was in middle school. Based on my experience, most of the teachers tried to explain about the various theories and formulas to show how they are related to each other to solve problems. It was somehow useful to learn and gain new knowledge, but not favorable to stay in the class for an hour. However, one English teacher was different and his teaching methods caught my eye and interest throughout the semester.

First, I liked the way he thought about the role of teacher and the meaning of teaching. He did not write much on the board for students to copy. He said the relationship between teacher and student should not be just one-way where the teacher only does the talking while his students passively listen to his lectures. He also stated that a teacher is not the one who always gives the explanation to students, but guides them to the right direction by communicating with them. He wanted himself to be the enabler, not the explainer. He emphasized that this kind of interaction was important, especially for students who are not native speakers. He said, “Do not hesitate or be afraid to talk to me if you have any questions during class or outside of English class.” I thought this was the key to his teaching method. He wanted modern relationship with his students, rather than traditional teacher-student relationship. I could see clearly that he wanted to break the ice and narrow the space with us. With lower anxiety of talking with my English teacher, I could get more chances to participate and focus in the class. With his help, my friends and I could get more motivation, self-confidence and self-esteem when we faced learning and speaking in English. His effort brought our class together and enabled us to stay awake during class, even though his class was after lunch.

Second, I liked him because he did not teach English only for taking the exam. One thing that I can remember from his class was that he wanted his students to take English as a fun subject. He wanted students to think about what they are learning and how to apply the lessons to various situations. Many English teachers teach students to memorize vocabulary words and just solve questions for the test. Because of this, some of my friends had a lot of stress when they heard the word ‘English’. Unlike this, my teacher used many fun and useful expressions, which could be easily seen in daily life. He used many materials to teach other than the school textbook. Compared to other teachers who mainly used textbooks for teaching, he used lyrics, articles in a newspaper, a subscript from movies and group discussions. By using various methods, we could approach the English subject more comfortably and see how literature is used outside of the class. He also liked for his students to discuss about the topics by using words learned from the previous lessons to recall their memory and self-correct their mistakes. Not only was there reading and writing in the class, but also speaking with friends in English, and with that, we could check and speak our own sentences although they were not always perfect. He believed students could remember more effectively by questioning and answering by themselves. If students memorize the words only for taking the test by using their short-term memory, the words will not last for a long time. It was definitely more student-centered classroom.

On the other hand, it was unhelpful for me to learn English pronunciation since he was not from the foreign country. Also, one thing that I wanted him to supplement was to organize what he was teaching. At that time, he was a young teacher who did not have many experiences but lots of passion and ideas of teaching toward English. It was an interesting class as mentioned above, but sometimes I felt he was not fully aware of the level of the students. Because English is my second language, my friends and I sometimes had hard time in following his visual and audial curriculums. The foundation of students in the class was too weak to perfectly understand and absorb his lesson. As a language learner, my English teacher helped me to speak and use English comfortably in his class. Yet, I wished that he would have selected the curriculum, more suitable for students based on their abilities in order to accomplish desired result, learning English. Since it was already 15 years ago, I believe he must be now a great teacher who can manage the curriculum and his students based on experience.