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Jan. 16th, 2019

Word Count : 751

A Teacher Who Changed My Way of Thinking

My best language teacher was a guy named Jeremy Knap. He was the professor for the subject 'English Reading and Discussion(ERD)' in my university. I took the class on the first semester after I finished my military service and returned to school. It was the 2nd semester of 2012, and the class was very impressive to me. The subject was an essential course for the students to graduate. Students were required to go through series of English classes, and ERD was one of them. So it could be typical and monotonous to him, but he spent his time and was eager to encourage the students to broaden their insights, set the worldview and so on. He was an enabler, who could use various language systems and effective teaching skills well.

I think Jeremy was an enabler due to his teaching methods. The main form of Jeremy's class was discussion. It was quite natural because the title of the subject was 'Discussion,' but he was especially good at encouraging students to express their own ideas. Most of the class was composed of students' presentation, sometimes alone and sometimes by group. Then we were sitting in a circle, and he sat among us and let us ask question and himself did. He used a story book to read through the semester, and we had discussion on it every class. Also, he kept in touch with me through Kakaotalk chat and Facebook. He had a Korean wife and his Korean was quite good. Although he did not use Korean during class, he often talked to me in Korean outside the classroom. He focused on the rappot rather than the lesson.

 He was also skillful to use language system. In my university, there is a course following ERD, called EGC, English Grammar and Composition. Jeremy’s class was ERD, but as a preview of EGC, he taught us a complicated form of grammar and essay. Also, while students were going through discussion, he took care of our phonology, and corrected our pronunciation. Other than phonology, he taught us the grammar, the form of an essay, such as using ‘Times New Roman’ fonts as in this essay, double spacing and so on. At the same time, while teaching us the phonology and grammar, he added some more information dealing with function and discourse. Function was mainly focused on verbal usage, while discourse for reading comprehension and writing essay. They were helpful to develop a methodical mind within me, as well as the method of analyzing English.

He did not only pay his attention to the skills, but also cared a lot for the mind and hearts of the students, which made him an effective teacher. As I mentioned before, he did not only lecture, but sat along with the students and motivated us. His questions to the student presenters were quite similar to my thought in some sense, and he often asked much better and deeper questions that made me think deeply over. Those questions triggered a shift in my way of thinking, which is still affecting me both in conscious and unconscious terms. Also, to promote students to participate in class, he did not hesitate to share his experiences with students. It would be a good example of an authentic teacher. Of course, he never blamed or teased students for their mistakes, but treated them with high respect. He always accepted what students said, and just added some of his opinions on them. Those comments of him made students feel comfortable to speak out, with no fear of being blamed or ashamed. It played a crucial role to encourage active participation of the students.

 As you can see above, Jeremy rarely lectured just to deliver his intelligence to students, rather he was an enabler who made us think independently and meet challenging topic. He was good at using various language systems to improve students’ basic skills. Also, he used effective teaching skills with enough care and respect. These methods of him enabled me to develop my own ideas and express them logically and stately. This is a big difference from that of the traditional teachers or explainers, and is much more effective to the students. Lecturing and explaining cannot cause the dramatic improvement in the learner’s intelligence and mind, but an enabler with enough talent can. I want my future students to think independently and express their opinions with no needless restriction, so I want to learn his techniques and be an effective teacher like him.