

Three-week Course at the International School of Exeter, Britain

It has been one of the most precious experiences I have ever had in my life. This trip has brought some colorful, joyful and yet unforgettable moments into both my personal and working life.

Personal

It is great to make nine friends within the same working field sharing the same interests, aiming at the same goals. To a certain extent, we were very close among ourselves like we were the only family for each other in Exeter. Being a student once again made me act like a student who had the right to be naughty in class. However, having had a lot of experience as a teacher and student also enabled me to work seriously in class. What I treasure most is the feeling of homesick; being far away from home let me have a chance to appreciate everyone around myself. I am not sure if ten of us are going to be able to keep in contact, but I am sure the time we spent together is going to be in my mind forever. Through the sharing and discussion among us made me realize that I was not the only one in battle, and yet there are hundreds and thousands of them.

Working

Generally, the program is divided into two sections. The morning section is English proficiency class while the afternoon one is teacher training. According to the result of the placement test, I was put into the Advanced class with two other teachers – Alex and Philip. There were three more students in our class – one Spanish English teacher, one Israel pre-university student and one Swiss engineer. In this proficiency class, I not only gained better competence, but also learnt more about different cultures. Being in such a natural learning environment makes me realize why it is sometimes so monotonous and uninteresting for our students to have English classes. I was surrounded by English speaking people and people who were there to learn English. Thus, I

felt very easy and natural to use the language all the time for it was an authentic environment, which unfortunately can hardly be created for students in Macao. It makes more sense to me why it is essential to create a certain learning environment for my students so as to make more sense to them to use or learn the language.

This school is a language school, which is very different from other ordinary schools. It provides students with “perfect” learning environment which covers the size of class with 1 to 12 students at most, combination of students according to their Level and nationality, basic construction of the class in which teacher talking time is far less than students’ and variety of in-class activities as well as mixed-class activities. Moreover, each student is arranged to stay with one native British family so that they can have more opportunities to use the language and even explore the language when in some cases students only have an elementary level of English.

As I am not teaching at a language school, I can only make use of the resources I have to provide them with a more natural and authentic learning environment. The followings are a few elements which I think quite significant and worth taking into considerations:

1. Course design – make it relevant to students’ daily life
2. Cross-curricular tasks or activities – using English only as a tool to learn, not only one single separate subject
3. Learners’ responsibility and autonomy – not only emphasis on how many marks they get in written tests or exams

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