

Changing Yourself for the Students

A story of a teacher that is motivated to change herself because of the response of her students.



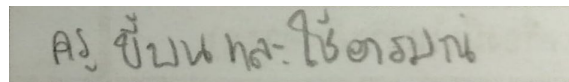
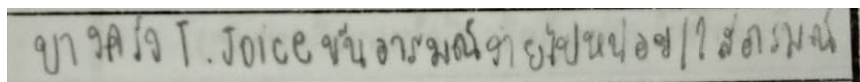
*“I looked back at my teaching throughout the year. I realized I forgot something important - to **smile.**”*

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Changing Yourself for the Students

Recently I felt dissatisfied with myself with my own teaching. I felt that even though each lesson was enriched with values, only a few students were able to reach the goal. Some of them were way too playful and missed the point. In some topics, they were so interested and excited to learn but as the lessons went by, they became rowdy and talkative. I was exhausted in nagging and reminding them to be quiet or ready for the lesson. When I looked back at my teaching throughout the year, I realized that I forgot something very important – to smile. I wasn't happy. I had a frown on my face almost all the time. This was also reflected in the attitude survey. While the students understood the lesson, some of them commented that they were being nagged or that the teacher complained about them so much.

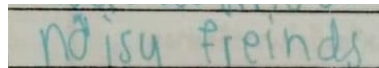
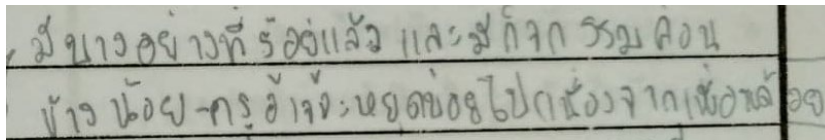
Handwritten Thai text: อาจารย์เข้มงวดเกินไป (Teacher is too strict)Handwritten Thai text: อาจารย์ T. Joyce เข้มงวดเกินไป (Teacher T. Joyce is too strict)

A couple of comments in the attitude survey on the teacher factor.

As a teacher, when we nag the students, it is due to some expectations we have for them. For me, I want them to understand the topic. I also want them to try with their fullest potential. Based on the test and reading assessment, some students are able to read at higher levels and communicate in English with ease. However, they felt more comfortable talking to the teacher in Thai. Partly I feel that I am at fault for not encouraging the students to speak in English in class. But another part of me still wants them to feel comfortable and to feel that the teacher is approachable. For the students who don't really speak English, I wish they have

the courage to ask for clarifications when they don't understand. I wish they have the determination in completing the tasks.

In the past terms, the thing that frustrated me the most in the classroom was them not being a good speaker and listener. It obstructed themselves from learning effectively. I had to stop the class and wait until they were ready to resume the lesson several times in one meeting. As a result, some of the students were negatively affected by the noise and interruptions in class as shown in the attitude survey below. It showed that this interfering behavior of a small group of students frustrated both me and the students that were paying attention in the class. When one of those rowdy kids was asked whether they felt bored getting nagged all the time. The answer was, "I'm used to it." I was surprised by the way he thought.



A few comments showing the class atmosphere was interrupted.

My major concern about my teaching is about how I can change the way the students behave during class so that they can learn better. I have tried a few strategies to improve my students' behaviors and attitude towards learning English and me as their teacher. I will discuss that in the section below.

Changing the way you talk to the kids

After I received the attitude survey results, I tried talking to the students without using an authoritarian voice. It was quite challenging for me to tone down my voice since I tended to speak more loudly when the students got noisy.

However, after a little practice, I could project a friendlier voice while teaching. It seemed to be quite effective with some kids who had been too shy to ask for my help. Some kids who had difficulty understanding, instead of showing disinterest like they used to do, paid more attention to the teacher and the lesson. I approached and asked them if they needed any help or more explanation on the topic. I could guide them until they understood. I observed that, at the beginning they would always say no. However, during a whole-class correction, I insisted on spending time to check the work with them individually. I let them know that it is okay to make mistakes, and how making corrections would help them improve their English. Those students became more acceptant of their errors as well as their teacher who approached them in a friendlier way than before. I also tried to make jokes in class to ease the tense atmosphere, which also made the students more receptive. For example, in the writing task about their favorite things. Some students were going to write about their favorite dessert. However, they wrote 'desert'- a dry place with no/few rain instead of writing 'dessert'- sweets. Once I pointed out how their misspelling altered the meaning of the word, they understood it immediately and were able to make corrections. The most important part of this is to laugh with them and not at them. Another example of a joke I added in class was when I told them the criteria for their speaking presentation. I told them that they should speak confidently and look at the audience and not be the mackerel fish that they saw in Amphawa. (These fish were so big that they were forced into the basket. As a result, their necks were bent. That's why they got the name Pla Tu Na Ngo Kor Hak which could be literally translated to broken-neck mackerel fish.) They laughed at this idea and tried their best not to resemble the fish.

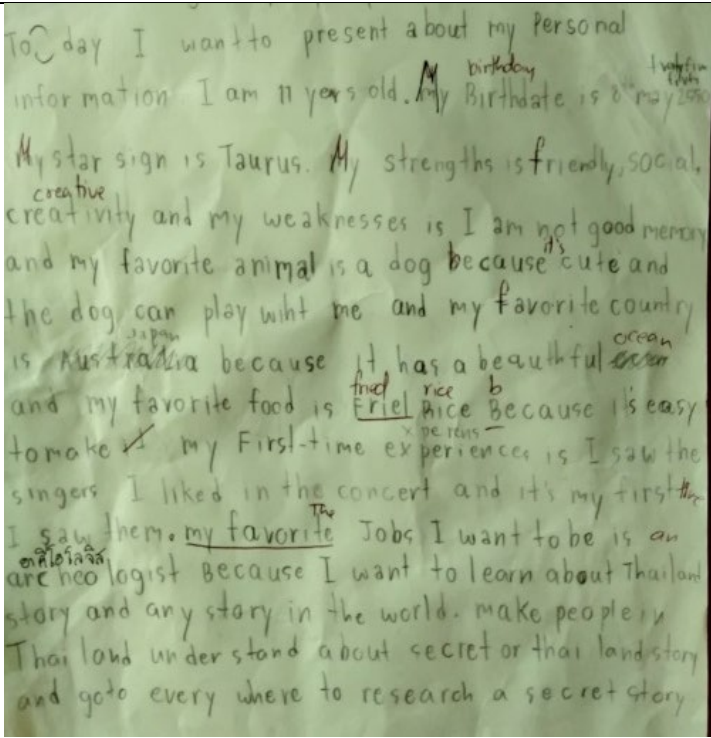
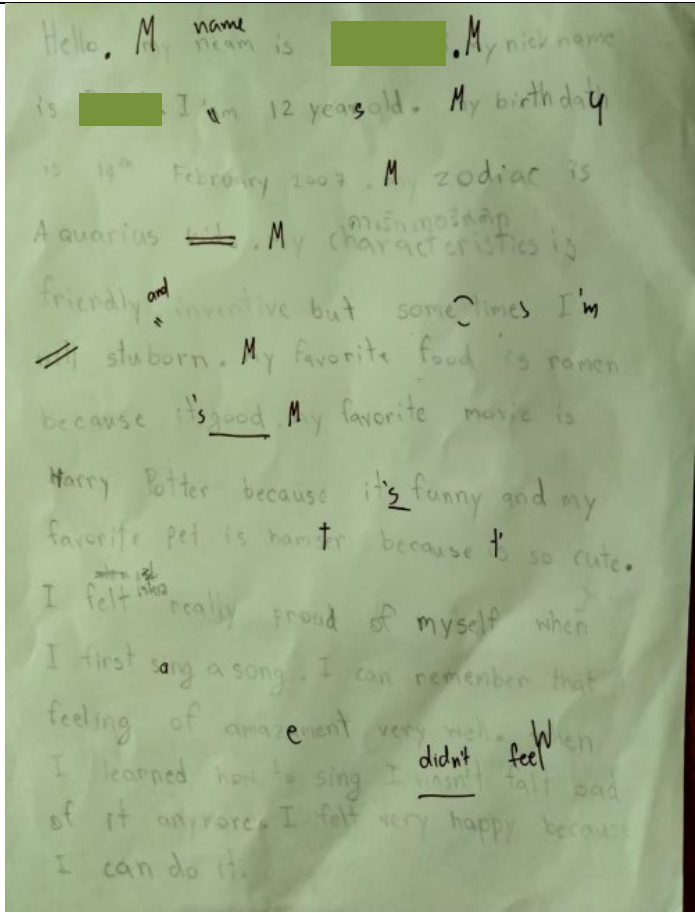
After I began to be more approachable for the students, I could see some improvement in some of the students' learning habits. They showed that they were trying harder to complete the term project and they were more confident in

expressing themselves in simple English. They tried to approach the teacher and ask for suggestions and comments. Though this might not be the only reason that created the change in the students' attitude, it certainly played an important role in it as it opened up their mind to learn English. The sample output on page 5 shows how the students were more willing to improve their work.

Getting to know them individually and building rapport

As mentioned earlier, the main strategy I previously used to correct students' misbehaviors was communicating with them as a whole class about their learning behaviors and other things such as responsibility and my expectations. I turned out to be a teacher who liked to nag. Therefore, I adjusted my strategy; instead of taking it on the entire class, I took the matter to the only students who I needed to talk to. I approached the students individually outside of class to talk to them about my concerns of their behaviors. The students talked to me openly about why they seemed to be naughty in class. I found out that some of them were bored because the topics were easy or irrelevant to them while some of them just couldn't help playing with their friends.

That allowed me to understand the reasons of their unpleasant behaviors. However, it took me a long time to come up with this strategy, so I did not have much time to use that information to help these students improve their learning behaviors. The next step that I want to do further is to work closely with each student to set goals for their learning. Moreover, another way of shaping the desired characteristics for the students is to work closely with the homeroom teachers and the guidance teacher.

| | Term 4 Project |
|------------------|--|
| Student A |  <p>To day I want to present about my personal information. I am 11 years old. My ^{birthday} Birthdate is 8th May 2006. My star sign is Taurus. My strengths is friendly, social, ^{creative} and my weaknesses is I am not good memory and my favorite animal is a dog because cute and the dog can play with me and my favorite country is ^{Japan} Australia because it has a beautiful ^{ocean} and my favorite food is ^{fried rice} Fried rice because it's easy to make. My first-time experiences is I saw the singers I liked in the concert and it's my first ^{time} I saw them. My favorite ^{The} Jobs I want to be is an ^{archaeologist} archaeologist because I want to learn about Thailand story and any story in the world. make people in Thailand understand about secret or Thai land story and go to every where to research a secret story.</p> |
| Student B |  <p>Hello. My ^{name} name is [redacted]. My ^{nick name} nick name is [redacted]. I'm 12 years old. My birthday is 14th February 2007. My zodiac is Aquarius. My ^{characteristics} characteristics is friendly ^{and} inventive but sometimes I'm ^{stubborn} stubborn. My favorite food is ramen because it's <u>good</u>. My favorite movie is Harry Potter because it's funny and my favorite pet is hamster because it's so cute. I felt ^{really} really proud of myself when I first sang a song. I can remember that feeling of amazement very well. When I learned how to sing I <u>didn't</u> ^{feel} feel bad of it anymore. I felt very happy because I can do it.</p> |

After focusing on the students whose behaviors I was concerned about, the classroom atmosphere improved. Some of the students with disruptive behaviors tried to improve their behavior in the classroom. The other students could do the tasks without interruptions. All of them were able to focus on the goals. While they still required reminders every now and then, they were more receptive towards the teacher's comments and suggestions.

To prevent this situation from happening in the next term, it would be best if I talk to these students as soon as possible so that they will be more motivated towards the goal.

Currently, it is the end of the term and once again I'm happy to see how much my kids and I have grown over the year. I wish them all good luck for the next school year wherever they might be.