

## Tehachers are Humans

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When I first started teaching in Korea, I didn't consider myself a teacher. I have no teaching certification in my home country and have done no prior teaching to coming here. Because of this, I felt like I needed an edge before I got into my actual teaching. I easily decided that this had to be my personality and sense of humor. If nothing else, I figured my students would like me and that would get them to open up in class and help it run smoother.

My first week at school consisted of me shadow teaching, observing and lesson planning. I spent a good part of that week creating my opening introduction. I made a PowerPoint with tons of pictures, personal information, and things I thought the students would find interesting. I practiced it in my head; what I would say, what hand movements I would use and my tone and inflection. It was perfect, and it needed to be perfect for me to make up for my lack of teaching experience.

Next week came, and it was 9:00 a.m. The students started shuffling into my room. Despite my preparations, I was intensely nervous. I had seen the students before but had not formally introduced myself to them yet. I sat in my chair and waited for my co-teacher to come. "Where is she?" I thought to myself. I started to panic in my head a little bit. She finally arrived. "Whew", I thought to myself. "That's one problem averted."

We both stood in front of the class. The students were talking, and I wasn't sure why my co-teacher wasn't greeting them. I had seen it done a number of times at my school before. The Korean teacher always greets the students and has them bow before beginning class. My mind must have been racing so fast at the time that in all of the commotion, I thought she greeted them. I opened my mouth loud and with authority, "Good morning, class!" Dead silence. "Oh, no. What did I do wrong?" My co-teacher leaned over and said to me, "Daren. You have to wait until I greet the class first." "Oh..." I responded. My face got red. I looked like a deer in highlights. All of the students began laughing. I composed myself and successfully completed my first class.

I thought to myself that the worst had to be over. It was only downhill from here. Throughout the rest of the day, I made countless errors, embarrassed myself continually, probably made plenty of social faux pas and even had a girl cry in my class; all on the first day. It definitely wasn't pretty, but I stayed optimistic and worked hard at becoming the best teacher I could be.

To this day, I still make plenty of mistakes and still don't consider myself a teacher, but at the same time, I accomplished my original goal of getting my students to like me. This has actually been a huge part of my success in teaching. Even if I'm not the best possible teacher for my students, the relationships that I have built with them make class more fun and exciting because they are always willing to participate in class. Even my lower level students enjoy speaking in class because they know the classroom is a place for mistakes. There are no wrong answers, and nobody is going to judge you.

That might be my greatest lesson throughout all of the teaching that I have done in Korea. Make mistakes. You are not just some robot who is programmed to teach students English every day. Build relationships with your students, and show them that you are human, too. My biggest weakness actually turned out to be one of my greatest strengths. I think if all teachers embrace this philosophy, they will be very successful, as well.



My students are now always willing to play whatever game I have for them.



They even like to put their own spin on things sometimes!