Reflective essay

Through this reflective essay I would like to share my experience in learning English from my primary school in New Zealand. As an immigrant it was very hard for me to understand the English language while being simultaneously confused about my mother tongue, Korean. The process was difficult at the time but currently I’m very satisfied with the positive result. The overall positive experience will be shared along with related information such as how I analyzed the language, teacher type, learner retention, and first language acquisition theories.

My family was one of the first immigrants to come to New Zealand where the population of Koreans was just beginning. At the time I didn’t realize that the others didn’t speak Korean, as everything was still very new to me so to communicate I used Korean but obviously the communication resulted in failure. The miscommunication continued to my first day of primary school but as time went on I found myself trying to copy what others did. From this I realized that phonology was the key or the only method I had to communicate with others. Furthermore through the actions of imitating others and undergoing experiential learning, while playing with natives I suddenly found myself not just imitating but in a way becoming a native myself. It was very interesting to see how I learned English by playing rugby, cricket, and just simply eating a mince pie out on the field with my friends.

As my verbal skills grew while playing with my friend’s my other essentials such as grammar, reading, and writing was taught in the classroom. Since I was an international student I had to attend a special class called ESOL, which concentrated on the very basics through fun and games. The teacher was an involver who knew the subject well but used various techniques to convey information. We would always sit in groups of tables where we can chat with one another and carry out team exercises where we were encouraged by points. On the other hand we all gathered around the teacher where he or she would read us a storybook with so much enthusiasm that we could imagine the story in our minds. The teacher was very thoughtful and kind towards the kids but she was very helpful especially to me. I didn’t know it at the time but since I was the only student who was learning English as a second language she always corrected my errors and encouraged me to be more active in and out of the classroom. I even remember my first week where the teacher assigned other kids to show me around the school, which eventually lead to our friendship.

After I have achieved a near native level English proficiency I moved up into a higher level of education where I found myself achieving a better and much more faster result than other Korean students. I believe that this was because they were concentrating on more grammatical English by writing notes and spelling whereas on the other hand I was listening and asking question to fully understand what the teacher was trying to teach us. In the near future I want to change the way non-English speakers approach the English language and teach them the more effective method, which I have experienced first hand. The ultimate goal would be to break the stiff grammar based mindset of students and teach them to really listen and speak freely without worrying about mistakes. Furthermore encourage students to be more confident and use the methods I’ve used such as imitation and mingling with actual natives to develop their skills. Using experiential learning to maximize the students retention rate while supported by various games and group work to create an active environment without the classroom being teacher centered.

All in all my first contact with the English language was a long bumpy road but I have come to overcome my limits through my experience in New Zealand. I have realized that the key to learning a foreign language is to interact with natives and do as they do and concentrate more on speaking and listening rather than reading and writing. Furthermore when you are more fluent in speaking and listening the grammatical techniques naturally becomes easier to understand. I hope that I will be able to teach others the way I was taught and share the secret of learning English.