Learning English In Canadian ESL Program

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According to the Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, number of foreign students in Canada reached 218,245 in 2010. I was 13 years old when I decided to study abroad with a curiosity about new environment and challenge in mind without any basic knowledge or skills of English. Due to my poor English skill, my courses were mainly all ESL classes in my first year in Canada. I had to complete ESL program successfully to be able to take regular courses with my Canadian friends. Although I struggled at first, those ESL classes gave me stronger foundation and confident. I was able to successfully accomplish basic level of English in ESL class because of the modern classroom teaching style and teacher's TPR teaching method. Moreover, once we got to the advanced level in ESL program, we had chance to mentor and teach students who just have started learning English.

First of all, in terms of learning second language, I believe that modern classroom environment is a very important factor. In our ESL class, we were very active rather passive, and were not afraid of speaking our opinions through various presentation. Furthermore, we interacted and communicated freely through our discussion. Like Scrivener’s Affective Filter Hypothesis, teacher’s friendly open atmosphere and a low-anxiety learning environment enhanced our ability to focus and provided motivation to learn English. We also viewed many videos and visual aids to help us understanding contents rather than just getting explanation. Therefore, modern classroom teaching style was really a key factor that helped me learning English successfully.

Second, our ESL teacher taught us English very effectively by using TPR teaching style. As students in my ESL class were all very beginners, we used a lot of physical activities rather than focusing on text books. We were asked to imitate some animals, plants or objects; through these activities we naturally learned various vocabularies. We also demonstrated actions that teachers commanded, such as “dance, sleep, ate, studied..etc", through these verbal commands, we learned past/ present/ future tenses easily. Because our ESL teacher was a native speaker, and did not want to hear any other language other than English, we were able to naturally acquire English speaking skills. As result, TPR teaching method that my ESL teacher used really helped in improving my English skill.

Finally, our school allowed me to teach and mentor beginners once I got into advanced level. Through teaching, I could correct and think over my own mistakes when I was at the beginner's level. For example, I taught one Indian friend, she asked many questions including complex grammar rules. Although I had to continuously review and look over my dictionaries to explain and teach her with correct information, I could discover my own effective way of teaching as well as learning. Therefore, learning through teaching was a very special and precious experience which gave me chance to overcome my limitation on learning English.

To sum up, I had struggled learning English in my ESL program at first due to lack of knowledge and background in English. However, I could successfully overcome these obstacles because I was taught in modern classroom teaching style and TPR teaching method. Furthermore, once I got my basic skills, I could learn even more by mentoring and teaching other students. In my observation, learning second language at beginners’ level, we learn more effectively through classroom with TPR teaching method along with modern style classroom compared to traditional classroom with GTM teaching method. Furthermore, teaching and mentoring other students are imperative to overcome personal limitation on learning.