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89th WD TESOL

1st Essay Assignment

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**Second Language Acquisition**

Learning languages are one of my favorite things to do as it allows me to communicate with someone from not my country. For myself, other than my native language, Korean, I have learned two different languages which are English and Chinese. Thus, my second languages would be those two but I will go over my learning experiences of English in this essay since it is the one that I have studied more than 15 years.

I started to learn English when I was 6 years old as I went to the English kindergarten. Starting from there, I spent my entire life learning English and I think my learning experience of English was successful in overall. There are actually three big parts in my English learning experiences which are very different from each other and I would like to explore those three periods of time.

First of all, as I wrote previously, I went to English kindergarten when I was six. Because my mother knows that there will be English class starting in elementary school, she wanted me to learn it ahead of time. Thus, I had chance to learn English when I was very little kid. At that time, everyone had to speak only English and it was quite helpful for me to start learning language because we could freely talk and had conversation with other classmates using some of gestures. There were no grammar, writing, reading classes for these little kids but what we did were singing, playing activities and etc. In other words, the Audio-Lingual (ALM) and Total Physical Response (TRP) were the main methods of teaching English Languages in there. For me, they were effective methods because I really enjoyed speaking English after that and not afraid of talking with foreigners.

Then, when I turned into age of 8, I entered elementary school. At this point, the learning environment was very different from my English kindergarten. English teachers in this period were “explainers” as they just gave us a lecture about a topic and no such interactive activities or discussions with groups contained in the part of class. It was like “chalk & talk.” Also, the teachers were more focusing on receptive skills rather than productive skills. Therefore, we did many activities such as reading and listening but not much speaking or writing. As we learned in our TESOL class, lectures and reading are the two least effective teaching techniques for students since their average retention rates are only 5 and 10 percent. Therefore, my English skills did not improved much in this period but it was still very valuable experience as it became the comparison target with my other learning experiences.

After that, I had a great opportunity to study abroad when I was 15 years old. I moved to Canada for my middle and high education and I was very shocked on the first day of school. It was really different from what I have been educated in South Korea. The ESL classes offered by school had other curriculums compared to the English classes in Korea. In a multi-cultural environment, learning English is very different since it is the only language that we could communicate each other. Even though, I did know the words or the sentences, I had to use some other materials such as pictures, objects, drawing and etc. in order to communicate properly with not only teachers but also with other students. Therefore, the English education was more likely to learn by myself, not getting knowledge from the teachers. Also, the teachers in this country were mixed of “involver” and “enabler.” They prepared lots of group or team activities so that we could interact with others most of the time and also they asked many questions during the class. In other words, student talk time was very high whereas teacher talk time was relatively low. Furthermore, productive skills were the main skills that they wanted us to learn; therefore, I did many presentations or writing essays when I studied in Canada. With this learning experience in Canada, my English became very fluent and I had no trouble expressing what I wanted to say to other people.

In conclusion, all three stages: kindergarten, elementary school in Korea and middle and high school in Canada are great learning experiences of English. Because I was taught differently in each stage, I was able to understand the language of English completely. Thus, I think my English earning experience is successful.