TESOL 01: Second Language Acquisition Assignment

Not anybody can deny that we need to learn second language, especially English nowadays. For the global markets become smaller and closer economically and culturally. Personally, I have been learning English since third grade in elementary school. There were effective and ineffective learning second language environments. In this essay, some of my personal learning experiences will be shared with applications of following modules: characteristics of adult learning, traditional vs modern classrooms, teacher types, and effective teaching.

My learning experience of English in Korea was ineffective, closely failure because of the way of teaching and classroom environment. Teaching skills and systems of English in the Korean educational fields were limited and passive. Most of English teachers were ‘the explainer’ type; they threw out their knowledge to students who were not either motivated or understanding. Teachers lectured and explain the topics but never asked some questions or gave teamwork projects. As learned about the types of teacher, my experience of learning in Korea was always one-way teaching, from teacher to student. Teachers do knew what they were talking about, but teaching approach was limited as teacher-centered. Classroom environment was ‘traditional’ as teacher focused on receptive skills; most of students were listening what teacher talked and reading the book. There were almost none of speaking and writing chances of student in the classroom. Teachers were limited to use learning materials, such as visual and audio aids, except the board. They were not really asking questions and patient enough to pay attention to students. Thus, there was not really relationship between teacher and student. Teachers’ duty was to present and explain information and knowledge of the subject; there was no need for them to listen what students thought, give clear/positive feedback, communicate each other, and be enthusiastic or show respects.

In contrast, learning experience in Canada was the opposite; it was powerful and effective enough to make me finish degree in Canada. I took ESL courses in a college, and courses were detailed with listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Classroom environment was ‘modern’ style; teachers acted as a facilitator or manager, so they were not overly controlled and communicated with student. There were a lot of activities: posture presentation, interviews, survey, etc. Most of time, students are centered and enjoyed participating with activities. Interesting assignment I had was teamwork essay. Writing assignment is usually individual work, but it was team project to complete 3000 words essay. Team members were fully participated and brainstormed all ideas, divided detailed tasks, did research, communicated each other all the time, etc. While completing the assignment as a group, we all had the ‘integrated approach’ of learning. Teachers were definitely the ‘enabler’. With full knowledge of the subject, they used many materials to help students understand better and brought out students’ participation by doing activities, such as team discussion, presentation, interview, survey etc. Because of integrated teaching approach and communicative focus on students, teachers listened students patiently, communicated clearly, was enthusiastic, and gave powerful feedback. All these effective teaching characters created deep trust-relationship; it brought the positive effects on students’ learning.

With application of Malcolm Knowles’ characteristics of adult learners, I will share how I could succeed in completion of degree in Canada. I started living in Canada when I was 21 years old. I was a typical Korean student who was very shy and had nerve breaking in front of many people. The ways I have been taught starting in ESL courses were making me active and self-driven. Teachers helped me how to catch a fish not gave me a fish. It made me keep searching for the answers and make it my own ways to complete the tasks. There were many assignments and projects I can relate to my own knowledge, experience, and cultures. For example, there was team presentation to introduce cultures, so I had a chance to introduce Korean foods and histories. Also, I tried to learn English with good score because I planned to go to the post-secondary school in Canada. With this goal, I was very motived and had the reason for studying English hard. As Malcolm Knowles mentioned, I agree that adult students are motivated to learn effectively when they are respected from their teachers. My first academic course in a college was economic. I was confused all concepts of theories and troubled with many vocabularies. One day, I visited instructor’s office to ask some question. After discussing all inquiries, he said to me, ‘You are smart’. I was so shocked because it was the first time for me to have someone’s, especially from teachers, compliments. I felt respect and cares. It definitely helped me to study really hard on the course, so I got A+. I believe that there is great power of respect in sense of learning; it can motive adult students overcome difficulties regardless of outside pressures, such as parent, age, living environment etc,

In conclusion, I discuss 4 topics: effective teaching, Malcolm Knowles’ characteristics of adult learners, traditional vs modern classroom, and teacher’s type with my learning experience. With all effective applications and approaches of the above knowledge, I can succeed in influencing my future students’ effective learning.