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Essay assignment

My personal beliefs

I have experienced different kinds of second language environments. I am glad that I can think of many examples from my life whether or not those are successful or failure. While I am in this TESOL course, I had chance to think about my own personal beliefs of characteristics of adult learners, traditional vs. modern classrooms, teacher types, and effective teaching.

For the characteristics of adult learners, I realized that adult learners are autonomous and self-directed because they want to be free to direct themselves and involve themselves in the learning process. Most of them are goal-oriented as well. They usually know what goal they want to achieve, so it is important to show them how the class would help them attain their goals (Malcolm Knowles, ‘Characteristics of adult learners’ handout). In my opinion, having specific plans or goals is really essential especially for adults because they know what they are doing and what they need to do. Besides, adult learners can connect learning to their knowledge and experience base and recognize the value of experience in learning. I realized this while I am taking this TESOL class as well as other English classes in the past, and my experiences are successful to me because while I study with adult learners, I could observe their characteristics as well as mine.

Until I was a high school student, my classrooms were traditional, and I believe that most of Korean schools’ classrooms are traditional. Traditional classrooms are usually a large size of classroom and students, the teachers are jug and mug, chalk and talk, teacher-centered, and explainer, and also teacher talking time is longer than student talking time. Students do not have discussion times, and their behaviors are very limited. When I was in high school, teachers explained everything, and students took a note. We did not have much time for discussions or group projects. Because going to university is really important to Korean high school students, all they do is listening to teachers. However, when I was a university student, I did lots of activities and group projects, and usually professors talked less than students. I realized that American schools and Korean schools are really different from each other. Maybe it depends on teachers, but most of American school classes are modern ones, and students can enjoy their classes by doing group activities and interacting with other students. When I took classes in the States, there are only about 20-30 students in one class. The students knew well with each other, and I really enjoyed interacting and group working because I could learn not only from professors but also from students. I cannot say that my experience in Korea is failure because I learned a lot when I took classes in Korea. However, I can say that my experience in the States is successful because everything was new and precious to me.

For teacher types, I want to talk about one of my professors in university. She was really an enabler type. She put much emphasis on interacting each other and encourages autonomous learning. People who talk during the class were the students not the teacher. She shared control with the students. She wanted us do research, find out by ourselves, and talk about it in the next class. At first, I was wondering, ‘why didn’t she teach? Why didn’t she speak much in the class?’ I was not sure whether or not I was learning. However, as time went by, I could remember better when I researched than when I listened to teachers and took notes. She also wanted us do lots of group projects and presentations. My group had to meet almost every week to check we were doing well on our projects. Because of her teaching style, she was one of my favorite professors, and I can definitely say the experience in the class was successful and unforgettable.

While I was taking the class, ‘History of Psychology,’ in the States, I realized that teaching/mentoring others is really effective methods for students. In the class, we had to divide parts of the textbook and study our own section so that we could explain to others. While I explained to them, I could review the information and realized that I learned better by teaching others. It was interesting because when other students explained their parts, I also could understand well. Besides, when my class had group study for exams, I joined the group and studied with other students. It was successful experience to me because I learned by teaching/mentoring others.

After I wrote about my beliefs of characteristics of adult learners, traditional vs. modern classrooms, teacher types, and effective teaching, I could organize what I learned in the TESOL course better and clear. I realized that I have different kinds of precious experiences so that I could connect those to my learning.