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Best Learning Experience in My Life

(762)

TESOL 106

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People always encounter a series of new and unexpected moments in the learning process. As for me, I meet the best learning moment in my life when I participated in PDS English Immersion Camp in 2008. The camp provided an ideal opportunity to learn English in the respect that it balanced the three main factors of education - a teacher, students and content.

To begin with, Steve, a teacher in charge of my class in the Camp, was not only active and enthusiastic but also empathetic, authentic and respectful, resulting in high interaction. He was open-minded and passionate enough to accept our ideas and feedback, and to observe change of our mood feeling in a respectful, genuine and authentic way. His attitude absolutely corresponds to the Carl Roger’s suggestion about three core teacher characteristics - respect, empathy, authenticity. It led him to be successful in encouraging the T-Ss and Ss-Ss interaction.

In addition, the content for learning used in the camp ranged in a broad way at the appropriate level. The class I took part in was the class for the students with the TOEFL score from 85 to 100. For the students, who needed to learn English on basis of academic materials, the texts for learning English were excerpted from English Literature, and many books taught in American universities. Even if it could be a little difficult to learn, compared to the level of English ability of students, students including me were able to improve our English ability to the similar level of texts with the scaffolding of teacher, classmates, and dictionary. It is because the content we studied in the camp served a comprehensive input to us according to the Input hypothesis.

Furthermore, students could learn English with the various methods for learning promoting student’s participation in learning. Besides the textbook we read, a lot of activities followed in order to deepen our understanding of the contents, the use of vocabulary, contexts of reading and background knowledge and so forth, which definitely promoted the high STT and low TTT environment. For instance, we discussed the contents of reading, our own thought and expectations on the ending in a free and comfortable ambiance once a day. In this activity we stopped being reluctant to show our ideas or misunderstanding on the subjects and topics. We also wrote a diverse range and types of essay from half page to 15 pages and from explanatory to argumentative ones with my teacher’s scaffolding, one step by another. Additionally, we played each character of the English Literature we read in a self-made drama, which enabled us to use numerous useful expressions in the texts fluently and to promote more profound understanding of the contents. It is definitely the learning methods that facilitated us to acquire what we learn in a class without being aware of the learning process.

Last but not least, students were very calm, modest, active and motivated to learn English without any anxiety and stress thanks to the environment set well for learners. What an educator does is to help create the conditions in which learners might be able to learn according to Jim Scrivener. The PDS English Immersion Camp provided the perfect environment for student to learn. The camp was held in the first class hotel in Kangwon-do, Korea, which has featured abundant nature such as surrounding grand mountains, fresh air and water, endless meadow etc. On top of the fact that the nature comforted us, the strict rule of no phone and no internet didn’t provide any room for distraction. Also, we ate an enough amount of nutritious and delicious meals served by first class hotel three times a day. Cozy and clean bedrooms and bathrooms were always set for the participants. All these environmental factors kept students from being hindered by emotional variables especially when it comes to learning, which is emphasized in the Affective Filter Hypothesis by Krashen.

For the three reasons aforementioned with specific examples, it is undeniable that the PDS Immersion Camp held in 2008 was the perfect learning place for me. A teacher, students and contents, which are said to be three main characteristics of education, were on the balance in unbelievably positive way. Not only did this learning experience help me develop my English ability effectively, but it motivated me internally to learn English in the long term. I assert that this experience is the best learning experience I have ever gotten in my life. Also, this is the strong foundation for me even to make a decision to participate in TESOL program nowadays.