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TESOL 65th

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Early Adapter (Second Language Experience)

After finishing my third year of elementary school in South Korea, my family suddenly made a decision for me to study abroad in Canada. Being away from home and adapting to another culture was very difficult at the start. Everything was new and especially the English language was the biggest fear I had at that time of my life. Despite the fact of being difficult, I strongly believed that my parents made the rightful decision to begin my English studies early. The reason is because, as a kid, I quickly picked up my pace and easily overcame the challenges through the different learning concepts. After finishing up to high school in Canada, I experience many different ways for a person to learn a foreign language. Also currently studying in the US, I realized after becoming an adult, there were few changes to the ways of learning a second language. Comparing the two experiences, I think my earlier language learning experience in Canada was more successful than my college years in the States.

My middle school in Canada had an interesting way of teaching students. The method was very simple but effective. Every student had a main and a second-head teacher. Every Friday, all the students had to meet at their second-head teacher’s classroom to discuss with other classmates about a specific given topic by the teacher. This system allowed me to open up to others and built a stronger communication skill. These kinds of classrooms are very student centered and it focuses on group building. Also, the teacher is effective for the students because he or she really listens to the students and give positive feedbacks. In result of this, I think it was a success for me to experience the effective type of teaching.

After my High school years in Canada, I decided to attend a University in the US. It was my first time learning in the states and I believed at that time, their teaching method would be the same as Canada. However, I was wrong. Usually, there were just huge lectures without discussions. Also, the teaching method was not very effective because it was mostly teacher-centered. The classroom’s focus was on the teacher and not the course material. As an adult learner in College, I became more self-directed. When I was in Canada, I used my resources to get help. However, after becoming an adult, I started to become more independent. The reason is because I learned many good experiences back when I was young which I used that knowledge to input in my work material.

In conclusion, my two experiences were very different, but I believe that studying a foreign language can be most effective when you are young. It is always better to start everything early. From my experiences, in order to become a successful teacher, I must break the adult barrier and let my students have some sort of freedom to discuss. I strongly believe that effective teaching comes from giving positive feedbacks and listening to their opinions carefully.

Word Count: 511