**Learning from real experiences**.

‘Experience is not what happens to a man,

it is what a man does with what happens to him.’

- Aldous Huxley -

Since 1994 the Korean government has started the 7th education law. Which includes teaching English starting from 3rd year of Elementary school? According to 7th education law, Korean parents started to teach their child English when they are in Kindergarten.

In 1996, I had a chance to go to America with my family. At that time I was only 2nd year in Elementary school and I never learned English at school. Because, I was just before starting 7th education law.

It was a unique chance for me to learn my second language, English. I didn’t even know English alphabet when I get to America, but 1year and half of my life at there really helped me to increase my English skills.

To increase my English skills in America, there were main two supports; teachers and environment.

First, there were two teachers in my class, because there were 20 students. Two teachers sometimes taught us as two groups which are divided into native English students and un-native English students. While we are separated, my group was learning ESL(English as a Second Language). The teacher was an involver which helped us to understand vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation easily. It was modern classroom style, because teacher understood each of students. As there is the theory of multiple intelligences, our teacher surely taught us from this.

Multiple intelligences theory was created by Howard Gardner in the 1980’s. This theory is based on the idea that individual have at least seven distinct intelligences that can be developed over a life time. The seven distinct intelligences are ‘Linguist/Vocal, Logical/Mathematical, Visual/Spatial, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, and Intrapersonal’. From this multiple intelligence theory, teachers can understand students characteristics easily and made the class atmosphere more activity and enjoyable. By teacher’s effort, students can have a great time during the classes. For example, after the ESL divided class activity we had a math class with other classmates. As we had ESL class, we have learned how to speak English and how to physically involve. For instance, raising hands and answers the questions. If we answer the questions right, teachers gave us a little treat like candies or so on.

Giving a little treat is also the other idea of theory which was created by Burrhus Frederic Skinner. The theory was about ‘Operant Conditioning’. This operant conditioning is divided into 4 groups such as ‘Positive reward, Negative reward, Positive punishment, and Negative punishment’. Positive reward is a good way to teach young students participate during class. So, I waited expectantly for my math class. Answering questions and have a little treat made me a confidence to be with other foreign friends.

Secondly, my life in America while the age of developing ego identity, really helped me to learn ‘Second Language’ from different culture. Whatever I do wherever I go, I had a chance to satisfy my 4 language skills; Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. It was easy to be exposed to hearing and talking in English. Naturally learning and acquisition English is a widely known theory by Stephen Krashen. He described 5 main hypotheses theory of how adult learn second language.

As I mentioned two main sources to increase my English skills in America, it really confirms the Stephen Krashen’s theory. In his theory, 5 main hypotheses are ‘Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, Monitor hypothesis, Natural Order hypothesis, Input hypothesis, and Affective Filter hypothesis). According to my experiences in America learning second language, it can support the idea of ‘Acquisition-Learning hypothesis’ and ‘Monitor hypothesis’ but it is not always all of the people all of the time right.

But, there is a saying ‘Experience is not what happens to a man, it is what a man does with what happens to him’. These great experiences in my lifetime will change my future teaching skills. Study more and experience more to be a great teacher.

[667 words]