**Essay Assignment: Experience on Second Language Acquisition**

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I arrived with my whole family in Montreal, Canada as immigrants at the age of 17. Montreal is a vibrant multicultural city, often earning its recognition as the “Europe of North America.” This was obviously an environment that was totally different from the one that I came from. In fact, Montreal is the second largest French-speaking city in the world, after Paris. And Montreal is culturally distinct from the rest of Canada because its sole official language is French. The majority of teenagers who arrive in Montreal must attend the French public school under the provincial regulation.

Acquiring the second language living in Montreal wasn’t an easy task, and it was definitely one of the toughest challenges I have ever faced. The *classe d’accueil*, directly translated as a *welcome class*, was a mandatory option for those of who do not have a functional ability of French when they arrive in Montreal. For me, the ten months of this welcome class was not only about learning a second language but also about integrating into the French-oriented society. In addition, being with teenagers who are in a similar situation as me, going through the same experiences and learning together at the same level, it helped tremendously while I was being introduced to the new culture.

It was a wonderful experience overall. I had already learned a few words in French in Korea. The teacher was very patient with students, and he had a warm approach. Students were encouraged to begin communicating in French as consistently as possible. I still remember that in the very beginning I sat in back of the classroom and felt shy to speak with classmates and teacher because I couldn’t frame any good sentence to express my problem. But the teacher helped me in each and every step of my problems that I faced, and I was able to improve significantly in a very short amount of time.

In the very beginning, understanding grammar in general was emphasized as part of “the direct teaching method”, as students needed to get down to the basics. Students were asked to spend quite a lot of time with vocabulary through a series of different activities such as dictation (listening) and oral communication (speaking). Teacher encouraged students to voluntarily speak in French even though we seemed to constantly provide the grammatically incorrect sentences. The repetition and practice through a variety of exercises in and out of classes were the keys to improve French (or any other language acquisition in the early stage).

Later on, as students got more comfortable with listening and speaking largely thanks to teacher’s dynamism and enthusiasm, teacher changed gear and brought up the new teaching method emphasizing on how to improve our ability to read and write. Teacher took us to the library and encouraged us to choose some easy children’s books. He enabled us to start off with simple books that we could enjoy reading (Back then, the computer wasn’t one of those many tools and resources to get access to a huge selection of books, as far as the quantity goes). Then, we were finally asked to start writing in French as post-reading activity. I believe that extensive writing homework strengthened composition skills and helped increase overall language proficiency as it is used to support other language skills.

It is clear to me that being part of the welcome class was not only an exceptional experience but also a huge success in acquiring a new language. Studying with other students from all over the world and learning language from the teacher who has done an unbelievable job creating a harmonious classroom atmosphere made me successfully finish the program. I am still proud that many of my dictionaries are physically damaged because of the extensive everyday use of them! Sure, I found it was frustrating at times but it was one of the most memorable times that I have ever spent in my life.