Module 1 Essay

A Second Language Experience That made Me Who I am Today

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When I was in the 2nd grade, moving to the United States changed my life. Remembering that I was only 8 years old, I was all of sudden surrounded by kids and teachers that looked very different from me and who spoke in a language I couldn’t understand. But thankfully, I was blessed to meet wonderful teachers who helped me through the rough process of learning a new language and who led me to where I am today.

One of my favorite quotes is, “It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.” Even if I was young and everyone was understanding of my situation, learning English was not easy. But my first ESL teacher, Mrs. Kineffkee, was so patient. Knowing that I was a sensitive and shy child, she kept her soft tone consistent and explained kindly over and over again until I finally understood what was being taught. Knowing that I wouldn’t answer back to her questions, she made ways to engage me into learning where I would feel more comfortable. She would make flashcards where she would first simply show them to me and tell me what they were. She didn’t expect an answer from me at first but she repeated this game for a few minutes every day, slowly piqued my interest. Seeing and hearing the cards repeatedly helped me understand the words and allowed me to say them out loud.

One other activity Mrs.Kineffkee repeated every day was taking me and two other students around the school. She would take us to the cafeteria, the offices, the playground, and the library. As with the flashcard, she didn’t expect us to memorize anything at first. She would explain what the word was, how it was pronounced, and how it was used. Then slowly as the days went by, she would question us, yet never pressure us. She would give us clues and hints to what they were, which made it enjoyable. Looking back and based on the TESOL lessons I have taken so far, I’ve realized that Mrs. Kineffkee was an explainer, enabler, and an involver. And she was successful in all three because having her as my teacher for the first year made me comfortable and gave me confidence in speaking, writing, and understanding English.

After the first year with Mrs. Kineffkee, I was assigned to a regular class where I was involved with other third grade students. Like Mrs. Kineffkee, Mrs. McCoy knew that I was from a different culture and that I spoke a different language. And slowly figuring out that I could be shy, she never asked me to answer any questions in class. But after class or during recess hours, she would ask me to sit with her and she would explain what I could have found difficult. She would print out coloring pages with vocabulary words on them that I would find very enjoyable. And as the semester went by, I could see that my English was getting better, and with confidence I was able to be part of other activities and slowly interact with other classmates. Through Mrs. McCoy, who had the same traits as Mrs. Kineffkee, I was able to move up a level and start to get comfortable using English.

I know that I was very fortunate to have met the teachers that I did in the past. As I am studying to become an English teacher, I know that I have a lot of experiences to look back on. I know that the children that I will teach someday will come with different backgrounds and different learning styles. My ultimate goal is then to make a classroom setting comforting where students will feel welcomed and create different lesson styles such as using flashcards and activities that involve hands on experience that could help them learn. Most importantly, I hope to become a loving teacher who can be an explainer, involver and an enabler where the students can learn and enjoy the class.