TIMES TESOL

TESOL 01 Language & Learning

Essay Assignment

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Submission date December 10, 2008

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Word Count 689 words

My next second language acquisition experience

When I was in junior high there were two subjects that I dreaded. One was history, because it was all about just memorizing dates and names, seemingly meaningless events at that time. Another subject that I did not like was English. Unlike today there weren’t many students that lived abroad and I sort of acted as a sub teacher, especially when it came to reading the text for the first time. The class itself focused on grammar rules and the exams were multiple choice questions, which to me did not add up to an effective learning environment. This ended up being my first experience with second language acquisition.

Such attention toward my English speaking capabilities came to haunt me once again at the Korean companies I worked for. My bosses at two companies ended up talking me into teaching conversational English classes to my colleagues. At that time the utmost concern for me was how to create a learning environment that would not embarrass anyone. The older managerial level colleagues would have felt the most awkward if they ended up in an embarrassing situation in front of their subordinates. My next goal was to help them realize that communicating in English is more so about becoming an effective communicator in a second language as opposed to aiming to be a grammar perfect English speaker.

Although I was not paid for these unexpected teaching jobs, and not having received formal education in this area perhaps not fully qualified either, I tried to perform as professionally as I knew possible. As a way to help them make the cultural connection needed in a real life English speaking environment, I tried to introduce real life settings along with expressions used which were usually not taught in your normal English classes. I also brought in excerpts of movies and TV dramas and took turns to play out some of the main characters’ roles. As far as I could tell mostly everyone actively participated in class activities. For the younger group of colleagues, who were at a higher average proficiency level than the earlier group described, we ended up taking turns at discussing a pre-assigned topic for the week. My role was more close to a facilitator. Although they seemed really shy and reserved at first this kind of discussion setting eventually turned into opportunities for each individual to practice English in a fun and safe environment. I would have to say that this second experience was more rewarding, as I actually saw progress made in practically all members of the group.

Well that was close to 10 years ago. Recently I finally got around to signing up for a TESOL course. I wanted to first be better equipped for the next teaching experience I encounter, whenever that might be. And I would also like to go to China to learn the language and gain exposure to the culture. And while there I would like to find a conversational English teaching opportunity as a way to financially support my expenses there.

I have only completed my first week into the eight week TESOL course, however I already have much to reflect on and incorporate into my next classroom experience. There are four areas that stand out the most. First of all, I will give more thought to bringing into the classroom a more integrated-skill approach, in which I will introduce activities that make use of both receptive as well as productive skills. Secondly, I will plan to bring in more visual aids to make the learning environment more lively and fun. Thirdly, I will continue to work on my people skills so as to become more of an enabler teacher. Lastly I will keep in mind the various learning styles of class participants and develop classroom activities accordingly.

I certainly look forward to making use of the academic background and teaching exercises from the TESOL course I am attending, and at the end hopefully will be able to add to my enthusiasm as a teacher a more well thought out approach to teaching English as a Second Language.