¡Hola!¿Cómoestás?

Hyejin Kim

(724)

It was a bright sunny day, March 25th, 2005. I was in the city of angles, after I had taken a thirteen hour plane trip from Korea. My father’s friend welcomed me at LAX, and we directly went to his liquor store. “¡Hola!¿Cómoestás?” Andres, Mexican, greeted me with a big smile. I was so embarrassed since I even did not know which language it was. I remember the moment I just responded him, “No English, only Korean.” It was the first time that I realized the needs of leaning a language for communicating with others not for getting a good score in the language classes. Reflecting upon this experience, I would like to introduce how I studied English and Spanish based on my teachers types in terms of language skills, sensory preferences, and multiple intelligence with teaching techniques.

Most of my Korean English teachers chose the extremely receptive teaching skills and had used similar listening and reading materials every Monday through Saturday for six years. I, honestly, memorized whole passages and highlighted grammar rules to take a test and never tired to talk to others and write in English. In the introduction, I shared my first experience with a foreigner, Andres, who appreciably gave me a chance to learn a language not only receptive ways but also productive ways. As I more tried to copy and say sentences of what he said, I could learn Spanish much faster than English. It showed me how important the integrated skills -using all listening, reading, speaking, and writing language skills- are for second language learners to use and apply it to the real life. After two years, I also had taken two years of Spanish classes with two professors who preferred ‘involver’ and ‘enabler’ teaching styles. While I did a lot of group works and presentations with my classmates in class, I truly enjoyed reading some poems and novels and listening to some *musica española*.

During the summer session, I took a child development course, and my professor gave me an assignment about checking my sensory preferences. There were three learner modes such as a visual modality, an auditory modality, and a tactile-kinesthetic modality; I selected the appropriate number response and got the highest score on the auditory modality. It was very expected result because I used to teach myself using some objects to learn a new subject matter efficiently. For example, before the physics final exam, I explained some challenging problems to my puppy called Happy. “Happy, do you know how to start this problem?” even though I asked and Happy just whined me back, it helped me a lot to figure out each steps clearly and understand the definitions and theorems.

While I was in my college, I used to tutor mathematics for college students at the learning center. At that time, my biggest consideration was teaching math in “English.” When I told my director of math department that I wanted to quit because of my language barrier, he encouraged me to keep working and gave me some advice, “You have a mathematical intelligence. Why don’t you use that to improve your English? You can practice speaking English as much as you can while teaching math to native speakers.” I listened to him and had worked there for two years under his deep concern and care. I gradually spoke English better and luckily also found another way to learn English proficiently by using my logical/mathematical intelligence, which Howard Gardener mentioned as one of his multiple intelligence theories. I began to look at the English grammars in a deductive way like how I proved the math theorems. It definitely helped me to structure a complete sentence properly and understand the information of new functions and discourse quickly.

Malcolm Knowles stated that draw upon their reservoir of experience for learning, besides, he mentioned the experiences of a lifetime of experience allow the adult learner to bring more to the table and ought to be celebrated and become part of the process. All of my successful and failure experiences with my different types of teachers, own special auditory sensory preferences, and the logical/mathematical intelligence brought me up here to take a tesol class to not only improve my English skills but also get ready to teach other second language learners.