My personal successful language learning experience

Name: Ra, Moon Sun

Word Count: 749

9th grade was my turning point when I truly wanted to learn the English language. Before that of course I knew how to speak English, but not in an academic or in a communicate setting where I could clearly my opinions or beliefs. I always considered English as my second language until 9th grade because until then I had to go over the English words in my mind before I said a sentence out aloud. Therefore the second language environment success case I would like to describe is my English literature class when I was in 9th grade. It may not have appeared entirely like a 2nd language environment. However, personally it was a 2nd language environment because imagine learning English (a 2nd language for me at the time) with English literature when I couldn’t fluently form English sentences. It was very difficult at the time but through the teacher’s inductive related teaching styles and methods and relating to Stephen Krashen’s Input hypothesis and Reading hypothesis theory, in the long term it was a successful language learning experience.

The teaching environment was inductive, where the teacher never just explained to the students the rules or directions. For example, if she wanted us to understand the symbolism of an object she would start broad with the characters related to the object then she would elicit the ideas from us, and eventually through discussions we would get to the the main point of the lesson at hand. Our teacher’s teaching style was mostly an involver but sometimes she would be an enabler. She was an involver because most of the times she was in control but simultaneously encouraged participation. In some classes she would be an enabler because she would give students autonomy to direct and drive the lessons. Thinking back, what was interesting is she would switch her teaching style to an enabler only after when we’ve fully understood her classes when she was an involver.

Learning all of the themes and symbolisms of literature in a 2nd language was not easy, and since I wasn’t so fluent in English I couldn’t really participate actively in class discussions. But through observation, I gradually understood the literature parts. This literature class could have felt impossible for me. However what made me not give up was the teacher surprisingly didn’t emphasize a lot on lexis or grammar. We had a couple of written assignments but she didn’t make a big deal out of my extremely poor lexis and grammar. This doesn’t mean that she didn’t correct them, she did correct them but she would just write small explanations on where I got my grammar wrong and she would just lightly write suggestions on top of my mediocre vocabularies. Now I realized that her method of teaching was although not similar but close to the direct method. Our literature teacher’s goal was for us to communicate literature in the target language. Her role as mentioned above was mostly an involver, similar to the role of the direct method where teacher and student interaction was high and during group work student-student interaction was present too. Just like the direct method, most of our literature class was a discussion class where we had the text in hand and we would go over together themes and important paragraphs led by our teacher; of course she would always start with a pre-teaching where she reviewed the characters’ characteristics or an explanation of a historical background and then slowly encourage discussion to direct us to the lesson for the day.

Just like in Krashen’s Input hypothesis, the level of the literature class was higher than my comprehensible input, which acted as a motivating factor for me to improve my English. Relating to Krashen’s Reading hypothesis, the more I read the literature text in English, I could see and feel my lexis and grammar improve dramatically.

In conclusion, all of these methods and hypothesis combined together was a successful learning experience for me because using Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence theory I have high Intrapersonal and verbal-linguistic intelligences. To be precise; the teacher led discussion classroom setting allowed me to observe and understand the class at my pace where my intrapersonal intelligence came in and through reading literature in the target language I naturally enjoyed it because of my verbal-linguistic intelligences. The most important success factor I think is because even until now this language acquisition experience was not forced or pressured but it was done at my own pace.