92th weekday class / Essay 1

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Analysis of my second language acquisition

My major is chemical engineering and I hoped to be a chemical researcher. To join the research center, I was required a very high TOEIC score. On this account, I attended an academy which specialized in TOEIC. At that time, I met a renowned Korean teacher and his teaching was very effective in raising my grade.

After quitting my job for my daughter, I was very interested in her education especially with English. She showed lots of curiosity about English and wanted to learn it from me. So I decided to join a TESOL class. For more effective learning in that class, I started attending conversational language institute and there I met my first foreign English teacher.

Now, I’m going to look back at my second language acquisition experiences and analyze 3 aspects of it; characteristics of adult learners, classroom environments and teacher types.

First, adult learners have some characteristics and so do I. In a TOEIC class, the age groups and jobs of each student were quite various. But they had same purpose, which was getting high score for the TOEIC through less time investment. For this reason, every student studied diligently and concentrated on the teacher’s speaking without any complaint although the lecture was really boring and deadly dull. So this experience can be related to the “goal-oriented characteristic of adult learners”.

And it also applied to the institute time. The desire for speaking English well was my goal. But it was not all. The more I participated in conversation, the more self-directed I became.

Secondly, the classroom atmosphere is absolutely an important factor.

I think this TOEIC academy was a traditional classroom. The teacher had too many students to care for. So there was no time for question or discussion in that class. Also students never had a chance for team task or group activities. It was totally one way lecture. The students took notes and just memorized those words. It was not only grammar and reading but listening. Students repeatedly heard a variety of listening materials and the number of repetitions was determined by teacher. It was not important whether students understood or not.

By contrast, the institute for conversational English was a modern classroom. During class hours, I learned English through lots of discussions with other students and conversations with the teacher. The subject matter of these talks was mainly about what students empathize. Sometimes, it was suggested by students. The teacher used the blackboard only when it is absolutely necessary. I can say the class offered two-way communication.

Third consideration is a teacher type.

Not only the teacher at the TOEIC academy but also almost all my school teachers were explainer type. They knew subject matters well. However, they were unfamiliar with methodology. They solely focused on raising test score by conveying their knowledge to students.

The American teacher at the language institute was an enabler type. At the start, I was very nervous and not able to speak my opinions due to shyness. He recognized my concerns and helped me participate in conversation naturally by having small talk and discussions about my favorite things. After I having more confidence, he often let us (me and other students) discuss freely together. Thanks to his teaching, I felt interest in learning English and could be more involved in it.

Was the experience a success or a failure?

 On account of a high score acquisition within a month, my experience at the TOEIC academy was a success in the short term. But it was a failure in the long term due to the non-retention of what I learned. I learned English very fast yet also forgot it at the same rate.

 Actually, the American teacher’s teaching was a time-consuming style. But I could remember quite a lot of expressions which I learned from him.

In conclusion, I think the most effective environment of second language acquisition is the enabler’s teaching in a modern classroom atmosphere.