

Week 01 H/W: 500~750 word essay

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I remember learning English from a private group lesson when I was in year 4~5. I was doing it with a bunch of other beginner girls who were 1 year older than me, which were my sister and her friends. I was not really serious about it then, just fooling around a lot while everyone else studied earnestly. But here's what's interesting; I actually learned to read when no one else could. For a while I thought my younger brain just had the natural advantage, but found out later that that wasn't the only reason when my mother cleared my memory: She put a phonics sheet on the side wall of the bathroom, right next to the toilet. Although it is a bad habit, I used to read a lot while taking dumps. (There was an article saying that the bathroom is where you can concentrate the most, you know) My mother, who attempted to correct my habits to no avail, decided to embrace it and use it to aid my English learning. So, she was very patient and enthusiastic to say the least, understanding her son and enabling him to learn the phonics naturally. Our private teacher was a university student at the time and I remember her as a kind teacher with a mild, gentle atmosphere. I can't recall too much about her lessons, but do remember the day I started reading things out to everyone's surprise - they were hand-made, laminated word cards with pictures. I don't think that there were a lot of activities and she was probably either an explainer or an involver type of a teacher. I would infer that she was well prepared and was a sincere person, using visual materials.

Then came 1993, when I moved to Australia with my family. I first entered a language center, a place where they simulated public high school system but was more centered around on the English education. Different subjects had different teachers, and they all had different approaches, but all in all it was pretty much a half-way between what we call 'traditional' and 'modern' teachings - worksheets were used, and classes were run in an explanatory style more than any others, but it actually assimilated Australian high school education (which, I assume, was mostly teaching in such style), so it was very direct and communicative too.

If the definition of an 'adult' is set by legal standards i.e. 18 years or older by international age, I have not learnt any new language since I became an adult. However, there are a few conditions which nicely meet the descriptions of adult language learners for when I was acquiring my

Japanese language skills: I was into Japanese video games and animations, and wanted to understand what the words really meant. I tried to translate some of their song lyrics, looking for words in the dictionary. As I grew up, I was growing sensitive to mistranslations in subtitles, and more so since I was giving suggestions of good animation films to my sister, who also studied and worked in the animation industry. I began learning Japanese formally when I entered a foreign language high school back in Korea, at the age of 16, and took a couple of Japanese courses while I was in University. I also studied academically when I was preparing for a Level 1 JLPT certificate. They did help too, but in terms of 'acquisition', it was very much for my own interest and for practical reasons.

As a working teacher, I deeply concur with Dr. Stephen Krashen's claims that one needs to understand the message in order to learn the language. Modern teaching styles require a lot of creativity and generally requires more personal preparations, but I firmly believe that it helps more in what really matters - to communicate clearly and effectively, to deliver and receive messages as they are. (People who need to achieve advanced levels will proceed on to get what they need, of course. But I see it as an icing on the cake to complete his/her skills.) I believe that we can only truly learn things when we have intentions. Teachers can be spark plugs that can initiate the students' interest and give them guidance along the way, rather than jug-and-mug. And while there are several different qualities as to what makes a good teacher, I want to add an extra quality which my mother has shown to me - to understand the student. Wholeheartedly, that is.