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Experience of Learning Second Languages

TESOL 01: Second Language Acquisition Assignment

Philosopher Baruch Spinoza states that “The highest activity a human being can attain is learning for understanding, because to understand is to be free.” By learning languages we can not only speak but also understand their culture. I believe that learning second language will broaden and deepen our understanding of the world. When baby start learning their first language, they communicate with their parents using “language-body conversation” and when they are able to speak and stats to express their need, emotions, and thoughts. I think learning second language follow the similar processes that baby learn their mother tongue.

I have several experience of learning second languages. All teaches had their own way and it did not always work. Since I entered elementary school, I started to learn English. At that time one homeroom teacher taught all subjects. She was in mid fifties and had a strong Korean accent when she speaks English. She used traditional teaching style, spending a lot of class time using the board to explain alphabet. I am pretty sure that she was “Explainer” type of teacher who just chalk and talk. There was no communication between teacher and students, very teacher centered and controlling, and TTT (Teacher Talking Time) was way longer than STT (Student Talking Time) so could elicit no response from us. For the students who were 1st year of elementary school and barely write Korean, it was very hard to receive knowledge from pouring information. This can be characterized as “Jug and Mug”. Even though teacher gives me lots of information I ended up with empty mug.

After four years of learning English I moved to San Jose, California and lives there one and half year. I entered school and participated in ESL class. Interestingly, ESL teacher used totally different way. She probably had known methodology of language teaching. Every morning before the class we played several games. She used Total Physical Response (TPR) method rather than lecturing. She often used”Simon Says” to teach the parts of the body and directions. Teacher was still the boss of the classroom, she told us what to do and we follow direction. She was the “Involver” type of teacher. “TPR” works great for me who need more action or hands on activities. Over the course of my life, I have discovered that bodily-kinesthetic intelligence reflects my learning style. After games she used “The audio lingual method” to teach us vocabularies, phrases, and pronunciation. It was quite too much repetition but this way of teaching helped me to change my Korean accent and bad habits. Teacher used pictures to teach us new words and that made me easier to understand meaning and lexical skill. Also using visual aid and tapes are useful for practicing and developing phonological skills. In my memory she is a great teacher, but it is not only because of her effective teaching skills but also her characteristics. First of all, she respects us and always put herself in students’ shoes. Whenever I asked question, even though it was stupid question, she listen patiently and explain in my point of view. While teach English she helped me to build high self esteem by encourage me.

Learning second language is still an adventure for me. Instead of satisfying with my present situation I will keep trying.