Class number: Gangnam TESOL 128

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**My experience of second-language acquisition**

When I was 12years old, my family immigrated to Montreal, Canada. The province of Quebec, and the region where the first language spoken is French. I went to an English school, but learning French was required at school, and the language I hear from streets and public places was mostly French rather than English. It was quite a shock to me because I had to acquire two languages when learning one was hard enough.

Obviously in the beginning, my English level was a true beginner, and I was set with one to one English teacher for a semester and focused only on English. I was forced to be in the space where I had to speak English only, because I was the only Korean student in our grade, which I think boosted speed in learning.

Before I moved to Canada, I was from an environment where teachers were mostly lecturing and students were listening, so participating in class was very limited in the beginning. But when I look back at the time, I can assume that my English teacher understood my weaknesses well, because she watched me over patiently until I got used to the environment. She asked a lot of questions about my background and culture, the things I was familiar with and the topics I was interested about, and listened to me well without any judgement. I remember her bringing different objects that can interest me, and sometimes sang a song together. That had helped me a lot to feel comfort in class, and then I was able to make more friends, be more participative and talkative.

When I got a bit of confidence in English, I had to face new challenge in school which was French, the mandatory subject in Quebec. Most of the kids who were born in Quebec naturally acquire both languages without learning, but it was totally new language to me, and it became a terrifying class, because the school had put us all in the same classroom even though some of us were very beginners and some were natural speakers of French language.

We had one hour class everyday, and the teacher only spoke French in class. I couldn’t understand anything in class, but seems like the teacher wasn’t really paying attention to beginners like us. The school totally ignored students’ level, and that’s where it began wrong.

Unlike my English language class, French class was mostly about grammar, memorizing verbs, and writing. We were only allowed to speak French, but obviously I was speechless.

The teacher was teaching us in a very traditional way. There wasn’t much interaction going on, she did some lecture, and made us to do individual writing work most of the time. I could memorize words, and verbs, but writing an essay was a mission impossible.

One of the main hypothesis in *Stephan Krashen’s theory* about adult learning a second language is the *natural order hypothesis*, which means to be progressive and in order, start with easy and slowly level up to high, and he also made clear points about *affective filter hypothesis;* make students feel comfortable, and create welcoming environment, but my French teacher was far distanced from his theory. Ignored natural order to weak students, and didn’t care much of their feelings. I barely passed the course, but I cannot say I acquired the language nor can speak the language. *Krashen’s theory* also mentions that the language is best learned through natural communication, but a language class without speaking? It was a total failure.

I had very different experiences about second language acquisition. I successfully learned English in a very natural ways through different types of dynamic tools such as movies, songs, live demonstrations, games, debates…etc, and above all good relationship with the teacher and friends, and welcoming environment encouraged me to speak more and more, and that slowly leveled up my English skill without realizing. And on the other hand, learning French was a terrifying experience, because I was very lost in class, and there wasn’t a teacher to guide me through. It was a big struggle for survival rather than learning a second language.

My experience clearly shows the importance of natural communications when learning a second language, and I must thank my English teacher for giving me wonderful opportunities, and I hope I can become a good teacher like her in the future.