Tesol 1: Second Language Acquisition Assignment

90th Weekday / Teacher: Mehrlein Chris

Reva (735words)

Outline

Introduction

Body

* My second language acquisition environment
* Learning Experience in Private Institute
* Korea English Education System (SAT)
* Combine the modern classroom with the traditional classroom
* Three Types of Teachers

Conclusion

I’ve studied English since 1992 in the traditional class where an English teacher taught students grammar and made them memorize vocabularies repeatedly. But actually, one interesting about my experience in learning English is that my English speaking skill has improved since I signed up for a private academy in 2006 a few years later after graduating the college. How could on earth this happen?

For starters, I’d like to tell you about what happened in my class environment back then first.

To specify this, the second language environment I was involved in my school days was a disaster. When we were in school, we started English from middle school. Afterwards, when I was in high school, I nothing but learned words and grammar by rote and was given spoon-fed lessons by a teacher as an explainer to prepare the SAT(Scholastic Aptitude test) which literally means Korea college entrance exam. So, no wonder I didn’t have a good command of English at all and English felt clumsy and new to me as ever.

In contrast, as I mentioned, I started speaking rightly first in a private institute where an active instructor showing the quintessence of involver or enabler began classes with icebreaker games to engage students and made them engrossed in the class with plenty of comprehensible yet slightly challenging communicative activities by using advanced props and equipment like computer, OHP, slides and flash cards, etc. instead of only reading and listening comprehension check up and writing on the board as CLT has suggested. Plus, that student-centered class was full of laughter and enthusiasm each time. In this way, I could end up being open-minded in speaking English step by step, little by little, and day by day thanks to the teacher’s devotion. Although I went through a series of trial and error in learning English back then in 2006, I think that was when I got absorbed in the exhilarating second language acquisition and went beyond my comfort zone like preparation of TOEIC for the first time noticing GTM(Grammatical Teaching Method) does not help much to develop learners’ communicative ability.

I’d like to point out, however, currently students still can’t help studying English in a traditional class environment in a passive way, now that SAT has been mainly about solving reading problems and English education in Korea being concentrated on grammar and translation.

Then, what do you think makes our English class successful in language acquisition?

First of all, I think we need to figure out the ways to combine the modern classroom with the traditional classroom so as to adapt the communicative approach to traditional teaching structures. Traditionally, teacher centered class was required to educate every students in exactly the same way and were not held responsible when many failed to learn communicative English. So, it’s important they are encouraged to adapt new practices that acknowledge both the productive skills like speaking and writing and plenty of activities like role-play, games and discussions to compensate for the missing part in the traditional classroom.

Second, there are three types of teacher which are an explainer, involver and enabler. It’s said that this kind of explainer relies mainly on ‘explaining’ or ‘lecturing’ as a way of conveying information to the students so they’re mostly not being personally involved or challenged. On the contrary, the involver is trying to involve the students actively in a friendly way and puts a great deal of effort into finding appropriate and interesting activities and plus, the enabler may become a ‘guide’ or a ‘counselor’ or a ‘resource of information when needed’. (‘Learning Teaching’, Jim Scrivener, p20, 2011)

As the types of teacher depend on the context or the content of the target language, no single teacher’s type deals with everything that concerns the second language acquisition. That said, however, in my opinion, among the teacher types, the enabler or involver are definitely more likely to encourage students to learn English with much more interest on condition of communicative language learning.

Overall, I’m quite certain that Korea’s English education has gone through the time of transition. That is, although we cannot help sticking to the traditional system, at the same time we have been trying to focus on improving the communicative skill which are totally different from that system. To conclude, hopefully, there will be no failure of second language learning for years to come like the one I’ve experienced before.