**A Linguistic Nomad**

**That I Came To Be**

 **Class : TESOL 135th Wk**

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 Date : May 22, 2016

A famous line says, "life is like a box of chocolates," and mine was definitely full of surprises yet with uncertainty due to living in my home country, Korea, and in overseas countries, back and forth throughout my childhood and one of them was learning a "second" language. My second language acquisition experience had not always been my true second language and my next paragraph will explain the reasons for this being.

Vague memories of my very first "second" language acquisition goes way back in the mid 80's when I finally set foot on my native country for the first time in my life (I was brought into the world by my Korean parents but was born in Argentina when my father was on mission for diplomatic tasks). They tell me that I, a Spanish "native" speaker, learned Korean, my "second" language at the time, through a mixture of just 'picking up' in daily life and a bit of classroom work since I was only at the age of four. My new language teachers were my parents, my preschool teachers and classmates, piano teacher, neighbors, mother's friends and their children, and of course, last but not least, comic books and cartoons. I never really "tried" to learn the language but it had a 'natural approach' by watching others talk and act within a group of children playing with toys and dolls or on the playground, or via kids-related media, or through drawing art classes, all of which were in my interest, showing that I was a relevancy-oriented child. This behavior basically sums up to the conclusion that my retention rate as a learner was very high due to such teaching techniques as experiential learning, live demonstration and audio-visuals. By the time I entered elementary school, my "second" language, Korean, was now good enough to take its proper place of becoming my mother tongue.

My real struggle to learn a second language autonomously, whether the motivation was intrinsic or extrinsic, was when I went to Tunisia and South Africa in my school days. I had to learn and improve English to keep up with the standard of native English speaking schoolmates. Most of the time, my motivation was extrinsic due to my feeling of insecurity on the consequences of test or exam failures, but I also had a bit of internal motivation of gaining self-pride and living a better quality of life in the future. This I know is uncommon for a child but as I got older and became a teenager, I was gradually brain-washed by what my parents believed was the right motivation for learning and prepared me to becoming an adult.

Whatever the case, I was in an all-round English speaking environment, moreover under modern education systems with most teachers that come under the types of an involver or an enabler. When I went to the American elementary school in Tunisia, I could not understand a word of English at first so I had to take ESL classes among those that were in the same beginner level as me. The initial stages of ESL classes had a lot of simple vocabulary teachings using pictures and body languages as language acquisition devices, helping me to get comprehensive acquisition rather than learning. Then they developed into participating in meaningful practice activities such as Hangman, word puzzles, and picture card games, naturally transforming me from an observer or listener to open my mouth. Having learned Terell and Krashen's 'Natural Approach Method', I now know that my ESL teacher really did a good job in the input. It only took me about six months to speak and write, and about a year to come level with the productive skills of the English natives, and moreover, since I gained confidence, my characteristics underwent a big change to become an active person when it came to communication with other people, which I think may have played role in improving my linguistic and interpersonal intelligences.

The education in local English middle-high school in South Africa was also more focused on modern teaching and with most teachers practicing great ICQ's, high STT activities and some even with real rapport qualities. These classes were full of presentations, group discussions and role plays from famous classic fictions to modern movies. My favorite were the presentation classes because I got to spend time to research the information needed myself, then sharing my knowledge and opinions in front of an audience gave me a feeling of high self-esteem. However, some did turn out to be the traditional way of teaching depending on the topics such as grammar but these were usually of less importance out of the whole syllabus, so I was not too bored about it.

I have a whole lot more experiences regarding the learning of a second language, but I focused on my life time I most encountered with the learning experience. Before my adolescence, it seems that I did not actually "learn" but "acquired" the second language through natural approach. At teen age, it appears I did more conscious learning and intrinsically motivated too. I had lived a special "nomadic" life, and had been exposed to much of modern classrooms, and I am thankful to my parents for having given the benefits. I mean it when I say, "benefits," here, because I know I developed into quite a good verbal and communicative person that I am today.