**Learning a Second Language**

TESOL 136wd

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Growing up I have had the chance to live in two different countries, the U.S. and Japan. As a child, to live in the U.S. gave me the opportunity to learn English as a first language. Without much difficulty, I was exposed to a new language and had the efficiency to experience a new dynamic naturally as most children would. However, learning Japanese was a new experience not knowing how to spell or even know the characters of the language. The goal was simply set for to learn, in order to reside and go to a university in Japan.

My whole family moved to Japan because of my father’s job in a quite short period of time and enrolled for a Japanese institute as soon as we arrived. The classes were set for a beginner level and taught basic greetings and formal speaking when meeting others for an official event within a company. The teachers assumed we already knew how to spell the basic Japanese characters and made each student study or memorize the content based on the textbook. The institute was renowned for teaching Japanese to foreigners, however much of the classes were based on traditional teaching as each formal conversation and vocabulary was being poured onto us on the board as characterized in the ‘jug and mug.’

As a recent high school graduate or for my sister and mother, the course was of no use for any daily purposes. The only thing we found useful were the greetings taught at the beginning of class. So we soon turned to a private teacher who could cope with our levels and teach us the language, and found the perfect match. The teacher was Japanese who was studying Korean for a doctorate degree and knew how to communicate in both Japanese and Korean. She showed empathy of learning a new language as an adult and truly authentic as she integrated both productive and receptive skills in learning.

The lessons were all taught in Japanese and she would engage us in an activity conducted with simple basic words we learned previously and engage us in each conversation to ‘acquire’ the language based on the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis. She taught most effectively using the auditory learning mode for us to read out loud and listen carefully to her words on a current event or topic. At the beginning we would just list the words we heard and as our proficiency level improved, we were able to share thoughts and write complex sentences. As we gradually approached the advanced level, we switched roles and enabled us to conduct a 5minute presentation to teach her a Korean word in Japanese.

As an adult learner, especially in a new language provided new understanding of a learning mechanism and directed me the skills of an interpersonal intelligence to perform at its best. It is important assets to be able to live, learn, and breathe in the country to learn a second language; however the right respectful guidance to do so fulfills the final goal and motivation to attain a new language skill. Based on the Affective Filter hypothesis, whether the Japanese teacher was aware of it or not she surely demonstrated a field for me to explore and develop future classroom atmosphere where everyone can feel at ease to ‘acquire’ the language and create meaningful communication.