My Experience of Second Language Acquisition

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It was 8 years old when I started to become an English learner first time. Same as most of the elementary school students in Korea, I guess it was not quite successful even the study had gone through until my high school life. When I became the English learner again in the U.S.A at the age of 18, it was very successful. I am finally able to speak English without any inconvenience.

I encountered English first time when I was in 3rd grade of an elementary school. The classroom was very quiet and same everyday. The teacher wrote down a lecture on the chalkboard, and the students took a note whatever on the board. The students rarely gave voice when teacher ask to repeat after him. Teachers were strict explainers and did not have good rapport with the students. A typical Korean traditional teaching style never changed until I graduated from high school. I memorized tons of vocabularies and learned all different patterns of grammars. However, only about ten percent left in my brain. Thus, any teacher motivated me to study English.

I decided to go to the U.S.A when I graduated from the high school. I thought that English is necessary whatever I am going to do in the future, and it is better to learn abroad than Korea. I was able to say subject, verb, and word by word only at the time. I took a level test from the language school and entered to the beginner level of the ESL program. To tell the truth, I learned more from activities with the kid form my homestay during my beginner level rather than learning from the language school. With 5 years old kid, I played games and role-play things. We talked a lot even that was not perfect English. Then, I started to understand and speak more accurate English from one moment. I am not sure what was the turning point, but it happened suddenly. From my experience, I strongly support the acquisition-learning hypothesis from Stephen Krashen. I tried my best to learn English for survival in the U.S.A after all. As I worked harder, the ESL teachers helped me more. We had great rapport, and the teachers were good involver to assist me. I easily learn from doing physical activities rather than visual or auditory, and my teachers knew that. For instance, they made me to read a novel thoroughly by using role-playing in the classroom. It helped me to understand the story well enough and kept me up to be interested in reading. Except the class time, I spent most of my time to develop my language skills with my homestay mother, Anne. She was one of my English mentors. She was patient enough to wait until I came up with full sentences and showed me respect. She also corrected my grammar and phonology gently. All she did affected me a lot, and so my English improved quickly.

When I finished the language school and moved to New York for the collage, I had to challenge myself once more for standing myself without the teachers and Anne. Although my English level had been improved than before, I wanted to be advanced. Accordingly, I decided to work a part-time at a cafe to meet new people and to use English more. Then, it was even successful. I met whole new people from all different places, and we became good friends. I was able to experience different pronunciations, expressions, functions of words, and discourses. It was effective than take a lecture, reading, or discussion in the collage classroom.

I have been studying English about two third of my life. Language acquisition during my teenage could not be successful because not only teachers never motivate me but also I did not have volition myself. Second a third learning acquisition has been accomplished with good mentors and my volition. There are many things to be considerate when learning English as a second language; however, most important thing is that learner is willing to learn. It could be better if environmentally supported. According to my experiences, nevertheless, I strongly believe that the second language is acquired naturally once anyone desires to learn with practical exercises.

Word counts: 714