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Learning a New Language

Every individual will learn a language in their lifetime, the first language they learn the ‘native tongue’ is usually done through language acquisition. Throughout our lives we can learn more than one language usually through language learning education, and learning a second language can be a challenge. My first language that I learned was Korean, then when I moved to the United States of America with my family, I learned English. When I think about my own language learning experiences I am glad that I was taught by great teachers who helped me greatly when learning English.

The first language an individual learn is usually from childhood, and through language acquisition where you learn the language naturally without having to put in tremendous effort. However, once you are past the acquisition age of around 8, many consider learning a second language to be much more difficult. In my own experience that is also true, when I came to America and was put into an environment where I had to learn english, it was very difficult for me because at the time I barely knew the basics such as the Alphabet. However, when I was put in a situation where everyone spoke in 100% english, I studied hard to acquire a new language as fast as I could. In that process I had many great teachers, who gave in great effort to teach me English.

In my own experience I was never much of a visual learner, as I became bored of a subject quickly especially when I had to read a boring book or learn from simple lectures. However, when I came to America and I began to learn in the ESL class, I had many opportunities of learning English through Auditory and Kinesthetic learning methods. My ESL teacher would often allow me to hold my own book, and helped me read the story and allowed me to write my own sentences with my own pencil. These kinds of direct methods gave me a better idea of how I should approach learning English. Also the teachers spoke to me often and encouraged me to speak in English, and helped me learn to form basic pronunciation through teaching me the basics of phonics. For me I learned a new language much quicker when I was able to hear from many native speakers, and was given a chance to speak myself.

For me learning a new language came in the order of, hearing first then reading, writing and finally speaking. Once I was able to hear what other people were talking about in English, I was able to mimic how I should use their language. It was similar to how a young children learn through language acquisition. I believe because I was young I was able to acquire another language much faster than an adult would when learning a new language. Throughout my primary school education in America I was able to learn the basics of English, but I was still not confident at speaking the language. When I entered middle school, throughout my secondary education by attempting to communicate with other English native speaking students, I was able to enhance my speaking abilities. I didn’t have a good pronunciation or even intonation, but by speaking with other students I was able to mimic their way of speaking. And more time I spent talking with them my English began to noticeably improve.

When I entered High school, I had a good understanding of the English language, and I could speak in english, but my sentence fluency was still lacking especially when I spoke for a long period of time. During my Freshman year I met a great teacher in Speech and Public Speaking Class that taught me many things that would improve my English. I wasn’t confident in speaking in English because it was not my native tongue, and I believed that I had a bad “accent” however I was taught that even at my age I could improve my accent by practicing to speak for a long time. Most of her teaching methods were based on auditory learning, she would play tapes of many famous speakers and taught us what makes a person to speak well. Listening to famous speakers repeatedly and practicing to speak in their pronunciation, and intonation helped me improve my speaking skills tremendously. I still remember her teaching method on how she would make us listen, then had us actually speak in front of others, and told us that practice makes perfect. It is such a simple saying but practicing by actually speaking aloud in front of others made a big difference in my English learning experience.

For me learning English was a long journey as I went through primary, and secondary education in America. And through learning English I was able to even better understand my own native tongue of Korean language, when I came back to South Korea. I realised that learning a language takes many different forms of practices and experiences. Learning theories of a language, vocabularies, and grammars are important aspects, but I believe that practicing the language by actually conversing with others is the key to learning a language. I hope to continue my journey of learning, and be able to teach others by using my own learning experiences and effective teaching methods.