Was my Acquisition of getting my 2nd language successful?

194 Ina(백지성)

‘What does Acquisition even mean? And how can it be successful?’

Hi my name is Ina and I used to live in USA for about 4 years during my elementary years. There I had to speak English or I couldn’t attend the local school. So my uncle became my ‘teacher’ during the 4 month winter break. That’s when I can say I got my 2nd language.

Let’s first talk about the 2 questions in the beginning. Acquisition basically means getting your 2nd language just like you got your first. Not worrying about making mistakes. Doing it yourself to learn it.

My uncle’s teaching type was definitely an enabler. He would give me a topic that was quite interesting and made me learn about it myself. He would literally just give me a dictionary to find the words I wanted to know and went away to watch in the corner. He was more like a facilitator than a teacher. My language proficiency at that age was ‘High Beginner’. I could say only basic immediate needs like ‘bathroom’ or ‘water’ but nothing else. We had a long way to go but there were a deadline. I knew I only had 4 months and my anxiety started to shoot up. He noticed and started to follow all the five main hypotheses by Stephen Krashen but especially Affective Filter Hypothesis. As he didn’t turn into this strict teacher as I thought he would while teaching, I started to relax. He was still cracking bad jokes all the time, complimenting me even at the smallest progress which kept my motivation and self esteem very high.

Plus, his lessons were never boring. He followed a lot of Howard Gardener’s theory especially Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Verbal and Naturalist. I did plays for the family with my cousins, and find ‘treasures’ in the backyard, figure out what it was and taught everyone about it during dinner time. I was more of and Kinesthetic learner, where I loved to do things myself physically to get it. He tried to learn about my learning differences. He noted my reaction to things, mood, and habit. My speed at learning things and checked my intelligence. He always asked me about my background and showed interest. Malcolm Knowles 6 principles were applied to me and his rapport and I was very positive. The living room quickly turned into a classroom. There were things that was interesting like gold fish or toys that made positive classroom dynamic.

Even though my language proficiency was only ‘High Beginner’ at the time where I could only say basic immediate needs like ‘bathroom’ or ‘I need water’, from his teaching is helping me even nowadays. If I had learned English through a lecture or reading a bunch of “possibly the most boring topics ever made”, I would’ve remembered about 10~25% at the most. If I were to learn in a Traditional way, I would have never really GOT English. But I learned in a natural, very student centered, having interaction with the teacher. I learned by literally doing things and teaching others what I learned that day really helped. Even though my English was far from being “good” and very questionable, after the first two months there were noticeable progresses. By grade 4, I was in the 6th grade English literature, reading books and speaking English better than the kids in my local school. They even sent my mom a letter where they wanted me to transfer to a new school where they had students that got higher grades.

I am still interested and loving English and teaching English. Yes I lost some pronunciation but I can still speak like a native speaker and there is no monitor talking in my head. There never was. Now, I even want to become a teacher myself just like how my uncle was like to me. Because I am more than confident to say my Acquisition was successful and I wish the students I teach could say the same thing I said in this essay. I believe learning and teaching new languages should never be a ‘mug and a jug’ relationship, there should be talking, taking time to know the person learning what you teach because if not, nothing will ever last. And that’s the kind of teacher I am hoping to be. A teacher who realizes students is human, not robots that takes notes.