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My experience of L2 Acquisition - a Success or Failure?

By Krashen’s definition, L2 acquisition is learning about a second language after one’s first language is established. There are two ways to learn a second language. One is **Acquisition** and the other is **Studying**. **Acquisition** is a subconscious acceptance of a new language that naturally takes place through communication. On the contrary, **Studying** is a conscious and unnatural learning of a new language without involving in communications. I can say my L2 acquisition has been done through **Studying**, which led to a failure. In this essay, I will discuss the factors that affected my experience of learning L2.

I started to learn English when I was an elementary school student. Since English was a new challenge for me, I was full of excitement. However, the English teacher did not go through **Assessing Language Proficiency** process during the first week of the semester, so he was not aware of the overall class level at all. Neither did he make an effort to identify **Individual Learner Differences**, only giving lectures everyday without communicating with the class. What’s worse, he was not willing to build **Rapport** with the class, lowering students’ participation and causing the whole class to lose interest. The teacher never paid attention to the students, let alone facilitated learning English. As a result, I was not able to become intimate with the teacher, and my L2 acquisition started with full of disappointment and frustration.

After graduating from the elementary school, I expected some positive changes in English learning when I became a middle school student. My classroom, however, was a **Traditional Classroom** where desks are arranged toward the blackboard in front of the classroom. The teacher was strict, and the class was entirely teacher-centered, which made students passive. I was taught only listeningand reading skillsthat are receptive, except for writing and speaking skills that are productive. Consequently, I became a **Rule-Former** whose grammatical accuracy was good but fluency was too bad, being slow and hesitant to speak. Although I was good at grammar and did well on the test, I was not satisfied. Furthermore, she was a complete **Explainer** who talked all the time without interacting with the students. She lacked effective teaching techniques to encourage students to focus and participate. The class was always a lecture that was high in **T.T.T** and low in **S.T.T.** I had no chance to interact with classmates as well as the teacher, so I was still disappointed.

When I became a high school student, the whole curriculum was focused only on the preparation for the college entrance examination. Most of the questions on the exam were reading questions, and it was only a lecture that the teacher used as a teaching technique during the lessons. Never did she apply any other teaching techniques that facilitate direct participation such as discussion, experiential learning, and teaching others. The fact that there had been only lecture type of teaching in the classroom is directly connected to **Learner Retention Rates.** The more teachers talk, the less students remember. I forgot quickly what I learned in the class, which made me frustrated. To make things worse, even though **Three Learner Modes** including **Visual**, **Auditory**, and **Kinesthetic** had to be balanced so that effective learning could take place, only **Auditory** modes were used throughout the high school years. As a consequence, I couldn’t improve my English ability effectively and efficiently.

Looking back on my L2 acquisition that took place during my school years, it was a complete failure. There always had been a **Monitor** which blocked me from enhancing my writing and speaking skills as teachers and education system emphasized only grammar and reading skills. In addition, incomprehensible **Input** had imposed a huge burden on me. Above all things, Krashen’s **Affective Filter Hypothesis** applied to me perfectly. He states that three emotions - motivation, self-esteem, anxiety - affect acquisition; when our motivation and self-esteem are high, if we receive comprehensible input in a zero anxiety environment, we can successfully acquire a new language. However, in my case, the lack of balanced learning opportunities and poor learning environment lowered my motivation and self-esteem, and strict teachers who did not build any **rapport** with students created anxious and uncomfortable atmosphere. All factors considered, my L2 learning process was **Studying** rather than **Acquisition.** Having experienced **Studying** process, I realized that learning by **Studying** can be lost before long, once I stop studying the language.

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