

My experience of L2 Acquisition

When it comes to developing a second language (L2), Stephen Krashen suggests two ways; **Acquisition** and **Studying (Learning)**. **L2 Acquisition** means the way of learning a second language after your first language has been learned. Just like you learned your first language, **acquisition** is a subconscious acceptance of new language which progresses slow to fast while being stored deeply and unforgotten based on learning through communication. **Studying**, on the other hand, is the product of formal instruction and the conscious acceptance of knowledge 'about' a language, which is unnatural and non-communicative. Unfortunately, my experience of L2 (English) acquisition during school days was a kind of failure.

On the **traditional teaching** environment where I belonged, most of my teachers were good or poor **explainers**. Sometimes they wanted to play as **involvers** focusing on **visual learner mode**, but it happened only for special occasions. Even though the model classes were well designed, I was not very happy with them since I had to rehearse the class in advance for visitors like school inspectors or directors. The truth is that my teachers were good at explaining 'about' English but did not teach us how to use it. They pushed students to memorize grammar rules & vocabularies and translate textbooks into Korean, which were easily evaluated but forgotten after certain tests; lecturing is the least effective way of teaching, extending only 5% of **learner retention rates**. At school, I mostly remained **auditory learner mode** and had very weak **rapport** with teachers. Obviously, **studying** was not an effective way of learning to me at all. It was difficult, confusing and boring.

Language acquisition only occurs when learners receive messages they can understand; the comprehensible **input** is the crucial and necessary factor for the acquisition of language. As Krashen suggests, this input should be one step beyond the learner's current language ability. Also, he issues that we learn certain aspects of language in a predictable order, which is called the **natural order**. This means that learners use previously learned languages as a basis to learn new language; teachers should start with relatively easy concept for learners and then use more difficult ones.

With that in mind, however, most of lectures for my school years were pretty much teacher-centered with heavy textbooks. Teachers wanted to explain too many things at one time and believed that only scores could prove how much we got it. They seemed not to care

about students' level of understanding nor natural order of learning but being busy to cover what they had to teach, just like other subjects. They wanted to produce students with good scores but not communicators with the language they were teaching. I felt depressed and lost confidence that I turned to be passive in the class. Eventually I did not want to express myself in English because of being afraid of making mistakes and not meeting teacher's expectation.

Yes, there must have been certain types of expectations between both teachers and students in the class. Even though teachers would come up with study goals for each semester, I did not have proper opportunity to share them with either teachers or my peers but guessed it should be only good grades which I could barely pursue. Those goals didn't seem to reflect **individual learner differences** where students could set up and reinforce their own goals. If I had had good **rapport** with teachers though, I would have been motivated to acquire my second language differently. That would have set up **classroom dynamics** more positive, communicative and interactive.

Whenever I recall my English classes, I can find myself worrying about tests and then grades constantly. The more you think about judgement and teacher's opinion of you, the more nervous you become. According to Krashen, there is an obstacle to language acquisition, and he calls it **affective filter**. He claims that learners with high motivation, high self-esteem, and a low level of anxiety are likely to succeed in second language acquisition. All these things together, I must admit that my L2 acquisition is a failure. However, because of that negative experiences, I can understand/communicate with students who are suffering from learning English. Through TESOL, I will be better equipped to help them motivated and receive comprehensible input in a zero-anxiety environment, which is the only way of acquiring language. TESOL will be a great help for me, I trust.

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