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My experience of L2 acquisition – a success or failure?

Let’s start to work with the title of this essay. Was my experience of learning second language success or failure? Before I pour my heart out on paragraphs of difficult and hardship experience I had, let me explain what **L2 Acquisition** is. It’s a way of learning non-mother tongue language as if people got their first language. That is subconscious acceptance of knowledge which is stored deeply in the brain through the use of communication. People can acquire language when their motivation is high, when they receive comprehensive input in a zero-anxiety environment. In this essay I will discuss my own experience of getting second language and how it went.

When I first had an experience of learning L2 which is English, my elementary school teacher couldn’t care about **Individual Learner Differences** due to Korean school system. I was in a **Traditional** environment. It was teacher-centered, lecture style teaching system with passive students in rows and columns desk organization. My teacher was definitely an **Explainer** and students were not involved in learning process at all except when we take exams. Teachers like this know their subject matter very well, but have limited knowledge of teaching methodology. They mainly rely on explaining or lecturing. It can be informative but students are usually left out and not challenged. There was lack of **Rapport** for sure. That is, relationship and understanding between people. Also, respect. When there’s good rapport, it makes teaching easier and students will be willing to learn. But sadly, when I continued to learn L2 in middle school, I gave up. And there was no empathy, authenticity nor respect for failing student.

But then I got a chance to study abroad as an exchange student in U.S. when I was in high school. Till this day I remember that I didn’t speak at all for first two months and people around me were frustrated including myself. But my **English proficiency** was at beginner level. I was communicating with gestures and a few isolated words. I was basically thrown into atmosphere where I had to listen and learn L2 like a baby. Naturally and subconsciously, I started to gradually understand better and tried to communicate. I realized, I had to let my guards down and stop monitoring how accurate my L2 is, in order to participate in classes and make friends. Basically, to socialize like any other human-being. I had high anxiety, low self-esteem and huge motivation. There definitely was an **Affective Filter** in my brain, too. It means that it did not prevent learning but rather it prevented knowledge from entering the part of my brain where language acquisition happens. I had to break it through to acquire and comprehend L2.

Eventually my L2 got better and I started to understand lexis and functions of words but still struggled with grammar. Because of **Modern Style Teaching** system which made me more active as a student while doing variety of activities and group works at school, I did become a part of data-gatherer but still extremely concerned about errors. I assume it was because of my personality more than academic atmosphere I was in. However, according to **Stephen Krashen’s Theory**, I acquired L2 in **Natural Order** which can be explained by following; learners acquire parts of language in a predictable order. For any given language, certain grammatical structures are acquired early while others are acquired later in the process. Slowly but certainly, I became more confident in L2. I still do have a bit of anxiety but not much of an affective filter is left. After a while, my grammar also got better naturally.

In conclusion, I believe my L2 acquisition was a success. Throughout my entire experience of learning L2, I learned that my experience as an exchange student in English speaking country helped a lot for me to naturally acquire it. As **Learner Retention Rates** shows, experiential learning has 80% effectiveness in remembering what I’ve learned. In the future, I want to become an **Enabler** type of teacher who can teach English while having strong rapport and trust in students’ abilities that no matter whichever level they are at, I trust them to thrive someday. This assignment has taught me that I need to become a modern style teacher who can use various **Multiple Intelligence Theory** in order to become a teacher that I want to be.

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