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My Experience of L2 Acquisition-a Success or Failure?

According to Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition, Acquisition is a "subconscious acceptance of a new language in which the information is stored deeply in the brain through the use of communication." My acquisition of the English language seems to be an eventual success since my experience of learning English as a second language started from the age of ten but it took a lifetime of commitment, especially as an adult, to finally feel as though English is deeply stored in my brain and to use the language freely beyond simple day-to-day conversations.

But the journey of learning English in school as a 10-year-old started somewhat rocky. I have lived in the US, graduating from elementary school to college. I remember having a difficult time adjusting to the new environment and trying to find a new set of friends with similar difficulties so I can feel somewhat encouraging. The school gave me an **assessment of language proficiency** to test which level I can be placed in an ESL (English Second Language) class. The assessment consisted of listening, reading, writing, and speaking portions. Now in retrospect, all of these 4 were **Language Skills** that are needed to "acquire" the English language. As a result of the assessment, both the school administration and my parents decided to enroll me into an advanced class, or a False-Beginner class, so that I was challenged. Krashen describes this concept as **The Input Hypothesis**, in his Theory of **Second Language Acquisition**: "to let students be one step above the learner's current level." Krashen is in favor of this concept "otherwise, the learners will not be able to acquire anything new and the language needs to require meaningful interaction - natural communication."

The goal of such a decision was to push me to learn English more quickly but this caused a lot of anxiety and confusion about attending school everyday. My motivation and self-esteem were low and I struggled with anxiety in school.

Among my ESL teachers, there were **effective teachers** who had a good organization, empathy, and respect. But when I reflect on the classroom environment, most of the teachers had a **traditional teaching**/classroom set-up with desk arrangements being rows and was focused on receptive skills. Such set-up led teachers to be mostly **Explainer** from the **Three Teacher Types**. Since I didn't have enough confidence to speak up in class, I was passive and continuously used body language instead of trying to speak in words. Therefore, I was a **Rule-Former learner**: being shy and hesitant to make mistakes.

I've realized the decisions made by teachers are important to adolescent education, such as: establishing a classroom dynamic, the way teachers teach, and what kind of curriculum they prepare. The teachers taught grammar, lexis, and phonology as their **Language System**.

I recall teachers trying to have a good **rapport** with students by asking personal questions, building trust, and supporting their **Individual Learner Differences**.

As I moved onto junior high and high school, my acquisition of the English language became more practical and successful than my earlier years, due to having my own internal motivation and being goal-oriented. This mirrors Malcolm Knowles' theory of **Characteristics of Adult learners**. Knowles provides 6 principles of adult learning; he shows how adult learning is more goal-oriented and being practical.

Students tend to learn quickly based on the technique the teacher uses. According to the **Learner Retention Rates** and my own experiences, teaching/mentoring had the highest student talk-time. Instead of Traditional teaching, Modern teaching has a curriculum with more opportunities for students to get experiences. Therefore when I was able to experiment and join discussion groups, I was able to learn and retain skills in English faster. Moreover, Howard Gardner's Theory of **Multiple Intelligence** shows the seven distinct intelligences and out of these seven I was and still am a person of **visual, musical, and interpersonal intelligence**. I was able to relate and acquire more when I saw experimental videos, artwork, and presentations. When the classes covered musical/rhythmic and interpersonal curriculum, I enjoyed them the most.

Even though the journey in school was challenging because the way I was taught was not individualized and was not designed for my learning style. But once I discovered the teachers who provided the right method and set-up for me, and found the motivation internally, I was able to learn the language and I retained the skills successfully.

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