TESOL 01: Second Language Acquisition Assignment

**Learning Language Experience**

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We are currently living in a society where everyone is obsessed with learning English. Most Korean children start learning English before begin school. However, compared to the amount of time or money that goes to learning English, their English levels are not high enough even they become adults. Why is learning English as a second language so hard for us?

Is it because Korean students are not smart enough? I say “no”, because there are some important factors that teachers must know in order to help students improve their English, and create a good atmosphere for learning English.

In this essay, I want to describe my personal experience in college which was unfortunately unsuccessful in regards to learning English. I believe three factors are an important environment when it comes to learning English.

First, the teaching styles are an important factor.

According to Adrian Underhill, he describes three kinds of teachers which are the explainer, the involver and the enabler. When I was in College, my English class was intermediate level course. This meant that we knew basic grammar rules but had some grammar errors. At that time our English teacher, Sandra was ‘the explainer’. She was very smart and knew her subject matter very well; however, she was not familiar with teaching methodology. Most of the class, she spent lots of time on lecturing grammar rules and new vocabulary using the board after that she asked us to do some worksheets by ourselves. There were no group discussion for us to share our ideas and while we were doing individual work in the class she just sat in her chair. We expected her to not just lecture but to help us to learn from ourselves through group activities. It would have been much better if she was the enabler type who not only knows about the subject matter and methodology but also thinks to care about the feelings of each student and groups and give some feedbacks.

 In addition to the teacher’s types, effective teaching is also important. Personally, aside from teachers knowing the subject matter well, they should be able to communicate clearly. As I said before, even though Sandra knew the subject matter well, she had some problems when she talked to us. She was from Arab so it was very difficult hard to understand her pronunciation, accents and on top of that she spoke too fast. This was such a big problem because every time we asked her questions, we were not able to understand. When we made mistakes, she always seem disappointed at us and discouraged us; therefore, we were afraid to participate in class. If she was more generous to give us positive feedbacks, we might have been more eager to volunteer in the class.

Lastly but not least, characteristics of adult learners are also important to learn English successfully. According to Malcolm Knowles, there are five characteristics of adult learners which are

1. Adults have knowledge and life experience.

2. They are independent and self-motivated.

3. They are relevancy-oriented.

4. They are goal-oriented.

5. They need respect.

Since adult learners are more eager to learn English than children, it is much easier for teachers to control their students. Unfortunately, my teacher Sandra did not seem to understand those five characteristics and could not use some benefits that we had. As I said earlier, even though we were independent, she simply lectured and did not encourage our challenge. Moreover, she did not respect us as adults so it was difficult for us to respect her as a teacher. It might have been much better if she understood characteristics of adult learners and showed her students respect. In addition to teachers, I believed that students’ responsibilities and attitudes are important factors that influence learning English successfully.

 To summarize, learning a second language is not as easy as learning your first language. No matter how much time and money you have spent, I believe there are more important factors to learn English effectively. My story about learning English with my previous teacher Sandra was unsuccessful because of these three reasons were not satisfied .First, the teaching style does matter. Second, there are some qualities that make an effective teacher such as communicating clearly, showing respect, and giving clear, positive feedback. Third, understanding characteristics of adult learners are important. With all these factors, teachers are able to make a better class atmosphere and students can interact with others easily.