TESOL Assignment #1 : Second Language Acquisition Assignment

TITLE : My second language experience

TESOL 70th intake

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“ Give a man a fish and he eats for a day, teach a man how to fish and he eats

for a life time “ – Lao Tzu

You have probably spent many years studying English as a second language. Unfortunately my second language learning experience I had when I was in school was mostly a negative experience. In this essay I’d like to share my thoughts and feelings regarding my second language learning experience which I had in the high school.

To reflect upon my memories I would travel back to Mar. 1998. I was in my first year in Joong-Ang high school. My English teacher was a 50 year old gentleman whose name is Noh Hee-Chul and he taught me an English 5 times a week until Feb.1999. In my memory he is remembered as a teacher who was not enthusiastic at all. He looked like he was just teaching to kill time while waiting for retirement. He’d never asked if there were any questions and when I asked some questions he didn’t give me clear feedback.

I would describe his class as a traditional class which is chalk and talk and teacher centered. He led most of lectures by explaining and writing things on board. He let us read a text book aloud sometimes but normally STT was very low and language skills were very receptive. They were mostly limited to listening and reading. Actually most of us got bored and he lost our interest. It was easy to see students dozing off or drawing things on their notes unless the teacher said that this might be in the exam.

According to average retention rates for various teaching method students can remember only 5% of what they learn from a lecture and from reading only 10% of what they read are still in their memory. Actually I didn’t remember much of what I had learned from his class containing about 80% of lecture and 10% of reading and another 10% of extra activities like writing, testing and memorizing. Based on Multiple Intelligence Theory by Howard Gardener I’m more of a visual learner since I tend to see the word and visualize how words are put together when retaining new words and grammar. It would be great if there were more visual aids such as pictures, slides and videos during the class then I would probably engage myself in the class more and extend my memory even longer.

He was an explainer. He was busy explaining meaning of words and how the words are formed. In other words, he mainly focused on each word’s lexical meaning and grammar rather than its function and discourse. Instead of giving an idea how the words actually can be used in our daily lives or providing with an example to help us understand better he just wanted us to memorize meaning of words and use of grammar for a test. When he explained things he used to complicate them unnecessarily and tend to assume that all of us already know lessons. Even though all of us already had spent some time studying English in middle school, not everyone had the same level of basic knowledge of English. While some of us already prepared lessons from their tutors or institutes, some of us still had difficulty reading paragraphs in English. Although it would be very hard to find the right level for all students, at least I feel he should’ve checked if there’s anybody having troubles keeping up with.

As I mentioned above my second language experience was not successful. I can’t blame my teacher or the way he taught since I do understand under the current Korean educational system teachers have full responsibility to have students get good scores on the test and the teachers doing jug and mug in a best way and eventually send more students to prestigious universities are considered good teachers. Even if I can’t change this system, at least I’d like to be the teacher who is approachable and willing to listen to my students. For them, I want to be someone learning together with rather than just delivering knowledge in one way communication.

In conclusion, Malcolm Knowles, an American adult educator, said adults are autonomous and self-directed and need to be shown respect. I want to help my students motivate themselves by boosting their confidence and feel interested by assisting them involved in many more activities and treat them individually with full respect.