Second Language Acquisition

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Language is a lifelong lesson that we will constantly be learning from the day we are born. Especially when it comes to learning a second language, which is actually a requirement in today’s global era. My opinion is that language is not proportional to ‘How long you have been learning it’; but rather that the improvement of Language differs depending on ‘How effectively students are able to learn it with what kind of teacher.”

But it is difficult to learn a REAL Second language in Korea because the education system focuses only on college entrance examinations. Teachers pay little attention to the productive skills needed by the students so that they can participate in the class but only think about the receptive skills.

The teacher teaches with lectures and reading techniques that are best for short term memory so as to ensure great grades on mid-terms and final exams for their students, but actually for a person to really master a second language they must put a lot of time and effort into it.

As it is with many Koreans, my second language is English. I’ve studied it since the age of eleven. I am one of those people who have difficulty in learning a second language. In fact, when I was in middle school I thought I should give up learning English. She was a perfect explainer but didn’t have any enthusiasm. She never respected or considered the characteristics of each of her students, things such as the speed of learning, reactions to things, etc.

We didn’t have any chance to speak in class, the teacher only spoke and we took notes like Jug & Mug. Actually, we did have an opportunity to speak (or ask something) but we couldn’t really because if you gave the teacher the wrong answer you were told off. This is why I am afraid of teachers asking questions.

I thought English was not my strong suit at that time.

After I got my job, it was really hard and not satisfying so I made the resolve to quit my job and go to South Africa to travel and study. I was really shocked after I took a level test at a language school because the result was ‘Beginner’. My teacher tried to talk to me at that time, but I tried to avoid her as I had taken the class in Korea.

She understood that I was taught with the traditional teaching methods and tried to know what my interests were so that she could have conversations with me. She also considered all the characteristics of each of her ten students and then made our groups accordingly. She also gave us projects that she felt would interest us and so we had the opportunity to make presentations based on research we did, drawings and pictures and on field trips that we had experienced. This was a whole new and exciting way for me to learn English.

My teacher was an involver and sometimes an enabler, something I had not experienced in Korea. I was glad that I could graduate with great scores and became more positive about learning English as my second language.

Confucius says, “I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand”. Also, I have learnt from the Learner Retention that using Experiential Learning and Teaching/Mentoring techniques will enable students to retain between 80% and 90% of what they have learnt.

Therefore, I will try to make my students raise their own participation in the class by attracting their interest at the beginning of the school term, but then I will also use traditional teaching methods, such as lectures and readings, during the exam period to improve their memories.

When children are young, the most effective way to teach them is to let them see and touch rather than to discuss things. As a child gets older it becomes more effective to teach them through discussion and to sympathize with them. Students of middle school age like to talk with their friends and to watch soap operas, so I think it would be more effective using various materials such as videos and media, or creating discussion groups and allowing students to do pair work

Based on my learning experience, I want to be a teacher who is an involver and an enabler. A teacher who respects her students and gives her students lots of fun activities and motivations.