My Learning Experience of Second Language, 中國語

Michelle Mihyun Park

(Word count: 663)

 Learning a second language is always a difficult challenge to everyone. Generally Koreans study English passionately and I was not an exception. I first had a fear of learning a second language of English. I also had taken several Chinese classes during college years and I could say that it was a successful experience of learning a second language. It was a successful experience because my Chinese class was more like a modern classroom than a traditional classroom where my teacher was an ‘involver’ type which fitted well to my learning style. Therefore I had a strong motivation about learning Chinese.

 A modern classroom setting is usually more effective than a traditional class. My Chinese class was based on a modern teaching. Even though my class had some traditional teaching methods such as lecture and explaining, those were minor features. The teacher gave just a little bit of lecture and she gave a lot of group works and group activities. My Chinese teacher was very skilled and experienced teacher who had an understanding of adult learners. Since the class was designed for college students, all students were adults and we knew what we are learning and why we are taking the course. It made the class more student centered environment than teacher centered. Assigned groups had to stand in front of the whole class and do some conversations from dialogues in textbook. I felt uncomfortable at first but as we learned more expressions and words, this group presentation became more and more interesting. Also, the teacher could easily check students’ progression and understanding of learning Chinese through this presentation. The modern teaching made me to interact with other classmates and I had many friends by the end of the semester.

 An ‘involver’ type was well fitted into my learning style. My Chinese teacher was an involver type which matches with me well. She often demonstrated words by giving some pictures or video examples or body demonstrations. Since I tend to be a visual and auditory learner, learning Chinese words by pictures and other visual materials helped me a lot. Also, the teacher required us to listen and repeat dialogues from the textbook to teach the pronunciation. I had to meet the teacher individually to speak 1 to 1 conversation with what we learned from the class. It improved my Chinese a lot because a personal relationship between the teacher and I was built, and I was able to communicate with a native Chinese speaker by using Chinese words and sentences. So I felt very confident about speaking Chinese and it reduced affective filter toward Chinese. For me, learning a Chinese became very fun activity.

 Having a strong motivation of learning a new language brought more interests in learning. I took the courses to earn credits and grades, but I also wanted to learn Chinese because I wanted to speak the language well. At the time I was deciding to learn Chinese, my father advised me to learn Chinese because China was developing more and Chinese is being used more globally, therefore learning Chinese will be more useful than learning other second languages for my future. There were some international students from Korea in my college who were taking Japanese class for decent grades—Japanese is similar to Korean, so it is easier to learn, but I chose Chinese course not only to get a decent grade but also to “learn” Chinese. This kind of strong motivation made me to have more interest in learning Chinese.

 As most people do, I had a fear about learning a second language. I am still nervous when I use English or Chinese because those are not my native languages. Even though second language is not easy to learn, I had experienced a success of learning Chinese because its classroom atmosphere was designed like modern class, the teacher was an ‘involver’ with using lots of visual materials, and my motivation of learning Chinese was very strong and clear.