My chronicle of successful English learning

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How many foreign languages have you ever learned? And how many of them were successful? It is obvious that learning different languages other than your own is challenging. However, I believe that there are less burdensome and effective ways to learn foreign languages from my personal experience. Followings are three main aspects that I think the most crucial for language learning: motivation, autonomous and self-directed, and specific learning style corresponding with their own sensory preferences and current level of language which you want to be taught. From now on, I am going to explain how I successfully acquire English as a second language, linking my experience with some concepts which concern learner differences, sensory preferences, multiple intelligences and teacher types and dividing my learning period into three steps according to my English level.

First of all, the very first time I encountered with English and had experienced it was quite similar to days of a baby who heard his or her native language. In other words, I acquired English as Stephen Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition, and my internal and external circumstances were mostly fitted in his five main hypotheses. For instance, a series of Walt Disney Animation videos which only had English subtitle were my first English teachers as well as my English textbooks. I did not know anything about English so I just watched the videos and listened all the song and lines continuously. There was no one who pushed me to mimic or speak something in the videos. I had enough time of silent stage to comprehend the stories and to match the letters of the alphabet against the subtitles in the videos. Moreover, since I am visual and auditory learner, these videos could effectively work especially for me. About a half a year later, I started to repeat and say some words and phrases, and then I asked my mother that I wanted to learn phonics and vocabulary. My Affective Filter was low enough to enhance the speed and level of language acquisition because I was so delighted and confident that I could understand all the stories if I learn language systems like phonology, lexis, and syntax. As you see, motivation to learn English, independent attitude towards learning, and visual materials helped me to start acquiring English as natural and as joyful as possible.

Second, I managed to make my aim at learning English higher enough to enjoy all comprehensible inputs from English classes, even if most of the classes were teacher-centered and focused on reading and grammar. In my opinion, the reason I could enjoy second cycle of learning English during my adolescent is that I had kept myself being self-directed and joined English study club. With members of the study club, we mainly had heated discussions on various topics every week. According to Multiple Intelligences Survey by Walter Mckenzie, I have Verbal and Interpersonal strengths. Thus, I believe that every single session from the study club facilitated my English level to improve. From this point of view, it is not too much to say that having internal motivation, controlling my own study, and using suitable learning style for myself made me an intermediate level student.

Third cycle of learning English is the time when I was in New York as an exchange student. At that time, I was a goal-oriented adult learner who is majored in English Literature. My goal was to get all the graduation requirements and to improve my English skills. Fortunately, in terms of teaching style of my professors, most of them were enablers, and their teaching style and my learning style created a synergy effect. This was possible because the professors lead the class had many group discussions as well as presentations, and I could learn from them. For example, when we learned ‘Death of a salesman’ by Arthur Miller, we read the play by ourselves and then discuss about the scene one by one. From the discussions, I could argue my opinion about the scene and learn from diverse ideas toward the play at the same time. Thanks to the classes and professors, I successfully improved my productive skills of English and started to consider myself a high-intermediate level student.

In conclusion, my personal grounds for successful English learning are internal and external motivation, highly self-directed learning, and individually appropriated learning styles. I firmly believe that any can learn foreign language with the three aspects, adjusting them according to your level of the language you want to acquire. The more you know yourself according to learner differences, sensory preferences, and multiple intelligences, the more you can acquire the language in pleasant and effective way.