**Survive Successfully in the Jungle of English:**

**Learning English in South Africa**

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(741 words)

In 2003, an Asian girl left a gate of Johannesburg OR Tambo International Airport. Her face was covered by worries. That girl was me, Il-A. 16 years old girl experienced a life of dumb person in South Africa. Why? That is simple: I could not speak English at all. Entire living environment and language have been changed after 18 hours flight. My eyes, ears and senses were widely opened to adapt the new environment. A talkative Korean girl became a shy foreigner. I was living under an extreme tension of learn English. Unfortunately, this awful feeling was continued for a while.

In general, Young children have a good language acquisition. However, I was not that young. I was a teenager so I do not have the good language acquisition like them. However, adults are autonomous, relevancy-oriented and probably have life experiences but I was not. I was an adolescent; I was not that autonomous, relevancy-oriented and my 16 years life could not give me an enough life experience. Maybe I was stuck between children and adults. I was in stuck! I thought this age was not an optimal stage to learn a totally new second language - as a first language in this case.

At that age, I supposed to be a student. So I entered a high school called St. Mary’s Diocesan School for Girls. English survival started from then. It was a hard survival environment for English beginner for the reason that I had to study same level like other native speakers. Furthermore some of girls teased me and made fun of my English skill. From then, I zipped my mouth and never opened, until I leave the school.

My favourite subject was a math because numbers and calculations are same all over the world which means require less English skill. The most difficult subject was ENGLISH. I remembered three different English teachers. First teacher was old woman. She had an explainer, text-book oriented and had traditional classroom style. She spoke, read and explained a lot but sorry to say that my listening level was completely low and I hardly understand the meanings. I was bored. I was glad that at least she handed out notes in the class which helped me to follow the lesson. After school, my work was using English-Korean dictionary to understand the meaning in the text-book and notes. I studied in dependence on the notes. This work took long hours but helped to learn vocabulary slowly.

Second English teacher was also explainer. She taught me for 3 years, until I graduated the high school, her teaching style was similar: she spoke a lot but gave no notes and her class was bit more like modern classroom (She seldom used literature movies). No class note was a disaster to me because my poor listening skill could not understand her lessons. So I recorded the lessons on a tape. After school, I used the recorded tape and make my own notes. This activity helped me to improve the listening skill rarely.

The Last English teacher was not my school teachers. She was an English tutor. She started to teach me since I arrived in South Africa. She is the best English teacher. She really listened carefully and tried to understand my condition: language stress, the new environment and not easy school life. She treated me comfortably like a friend so I became a chatty girl when I was with her. When I made grammar mistakes, she corrected the mistakes every moment. She repeated explanations until I understand and sometimes she visited me on weakened to teach me. She was patient and enthusiastic. When she communicated with me, she used simple words and clear pronunciation and always kind. She provided comfortable learning environment and finally led me to success language learning.

Living in South Africa was like left alone in the Jungle. I needed to learn and survive myself. My language acquisition was not optimal stage and my English skill was pity but I can say my learning was success because I improved pretty well. The most important thing in learning a second language is providing comfortable learning environment. Do not let learners under the tension and stress. My school English teachers were not bad but they were not suitable for my level. It was ineffective teaching. Now I can understand English struggled people according to the experience. I want to make them comfortable in the jungle.