Second Language learning

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Second language acquisition is defined as the process by which people learn a language that is not their native language[[1]](#footnote-1). There is no one formula applicable to everyone in language learning as each and every person has their own style. This is in line with Howard Gardner theory of multiple intelligence. I believe that the degree of success in language learning lies on one’s motivation, manner of teaching and consistency. When someone is interested in a particular language or motivated internally, acquiring second language will be easier and enjoyable. But of course with assistance of good teaching that take into consideration of various student types. Consistency in the context of language learning is referred to as learning the second language habitually by means of speaking, reading materials or watching films in the target language. I am going to share the second language environments that I have experienced to illustrate how I acquired the said language. I will further determine based on my experiences whether it was a success or a failure as a language learning experience.

I was in a primary school from year 1990-1996 when my first second language experience took place. The second language in concerned was English. The language environment was traditional whereby the students were seated in a traditional classroom setting. The classroom condition was unconducive, there was no air conditioner let alone modern equipment. However, I found that although a classroom with good condition facilitate learning, a poor classroom did not stop me from learning. I did not realize that I have much interest in learning English until my fifth grade English Teacher came into the picture. She usually greet the class warmly and have a casual chat with the students in English before she begins the class. She conducted the class in an interesting manner. It had helped me eased my anxiety and made me readily prepared for the lessons. This is in accordance with *Krashen* on the affective filter hypothesis whereby anxiety, self- confidence, and stress can deter learning therefore it is essential to provide a safe and welcoming environment.

Apart from that, our English learning did not focus on the four basic language skills per se which are speaking, listening, reading and writing but also on other skill particularly acting in which we were given a task to do a role-play in English for our School’s Annual Event. I remembered how we rehearsed the dialogue repetitively and tried to mimic the teacher. We enjoyed every bit of it. Here, it can be seen that the teacher used Audio-Lingual Methodology as part of her teaching. I feel that my language learning experience at this point was quite successful in that I was highly motivated in learning English and had improved my English socially and academically.

Another language learning experienced that I have encountered was during my Matriculation in the university which required me to take MUET[[2]](#footnote-2). In this learning environment the classrooms were air conditioned, limited computers were available at the library and power point as well as projector were used during lectures. It was slimly modern as compared to my previous experience. I still remember on the first day of lecture, the lecturer did not introduce himself instead he made us asked questions about him in English and when the question asked by a student was grammatically or structurally wrong he did not immediately correct the mistakes but tried to elicit the correct questions from other students. Based on that, it can be said that he is an enabler and the ice breaker was a good one as everyone get to speak with each other while constructing the questions. This is following the Communicative Language Teaching Methodology by Charles A. Curran where the teacher act as a Counselor and supported by Malcolm Knowles on Characteristics of Adult learners which stated that adult learners are autonomous and self-directed. In addition to that, he entertain the class with his good sense of humor without being an entertainer when the student’s retention level has reach their limit. To me, the language environment that I have experienced through this course can be considered a success in language learning experience.

Herewith, I concluded that in learning second language the yardstick that measure success or failure of a language learning does not rely solely on one factor but it involves three factors that I considered as vital in language learning which are motivation, manner of teaching and consistency. One should be motivated and the manner of teaching play an important role. Also, student should persistently use the language in order to acquire the second language successfully.

1. *Macmillan Dictionary.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. (Malaysian University English Test). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)