**Second Language Acquisition**

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Date: 13th of August, 2013

Words count: 624

Although I have always been interested in learning a second language, I haven’t always had positive experiences with teachers and their teaching methods.

For instance, nothing in my early education in English as a second language sticks out. I have a hard time even remembering the names of my English teachers in middle and high school. In fact, the only memories of middle school English class I have are negative.

My English teacher, who was also my homeroom teacher, could best be described as an extreme “explainer”. Each day she would write five vocabulary words on the blackboard. We had to memorize the words and were tested on them each day before we went home.

Because I was an athlete, I trained in the afternoon instead of going to class. After training, I had to meet with my English teacher privately so she could test me on the vocabulary words for the day. If I failed a test she would beat me with a stick as punishment.

The only positive I took from this traditional class room style was a strong desire to memorize each day’s vocabulary words -- but it was for the wrong reasons.

In high school my English teacher could be at best described as an “explainer”. Her teaching style was to use the grammar-translation method each day. This method did not help improve my English speaking skills.

Much like middle school, the only learning I did was to memorize vocabulary words. I lost interest in studying English after high school. But, shortly after I graduated college, I married an American.

So, for the next two years my English vocabulary expanded as I had to converse with my husband on a daily basis. He could be described as having an “involver” type of teaching method. At first it was difficult because in school I had focused solely on vocabulary words, but now I was challenged with sentence structure and expressing myself in conversational English.

As I was soon to learn, textbook English is much different than that used in everyday speech. In 2005 I traveled to the United States to attend an English as a second language class at Southern Illinois University.

I was living overseas at the time and needed to improve my English speaking skills to get a job. I had an intrinsic motivation to take an ESL class. My ESL Teacher was an “enabler”.

Since our class was very small, she could dedicate time to each student and focus on individual student’s needs in the modern classroom style. Some students were there to take regular college classes. Some, like me, were there to increase their chances of landing a job.

The students seemed very relevancy and goal-oriented in the class. The teacher treated the students equally and had a nice disposition. I was very satisfied with my experience when the class was over. Comparing the different types of teachers in different classroom styles has made me realize the importance of teachers and how they can affect each student’s life in a profound way.

I often wonder what would have happened to me if I had met an “involver” or “enabler” type of teacher during my early education years? Would I be better at English?

In the course of our life we come across different types of teachers. Some of them come into our life and leave without influencing us, while others leave a lasting impression in our memories and help to determine our future.

I want to be a teacher who can lead and encourage students in the right direction by using effective teaching skills that I will learn from this TESOL class.