**My Experience Learning a Second Language**

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On a hot day of August 1995, my family and I immigrated to Jakarta, Indonesia from Seoul, South Korea. As we arrived, my parents had put me in an International school located in a different city, making a dorm life inevitable. Me then being only seven years old, it was one of the greatest challenges of my life to live apart from my parents and learn a second (English) at the same time.

The school that I attended was small and had no special classes to instruct a second language learner like me. Therefore, I was put in to a class that had only native and English fluent speakers. Because I could not say a single word in English, I had spent most of my class time trying to imitate other students or trying to guess what the teacher was saying. I frequently missed my parents and cried in class. But whenever I was feeling insecure, my teacher appeased and encouraged me throughout the way. My teacher was authentic, respectful, and empathetic towards my situation and the language barrier that I was facing. Other than these three most important traits, she was also caring and enthusiastic towards her teaching. Stephen Krashen suggests in his Affective Filter Hypothesis that emotional variables have influence on learning. I truly believe that my teacher’s efforts to build a friendly relationship with me have helped me to feel secure and thus made me comfortable to participate in class and make mistakes.

My teacher was a great stepping-stone to my learning English because she observed and considered her students’ learning styles, interests, and differences. Unlike the traditional classrooms which are usually lecture and textbook based, she applied modern classroom characteristics to encourage active participation from students in individuals/partners/groups. My teacher tried to implement Howard Gardner’s 8 Multiple Intelligence Theories to her class activities. Group activities such as singing, decorating posters, and playing games like ‘show-and-tell’ greatly helped a musical and visual learner like me to follow the class lessons better.

Among the three teacher types, Explainer, Involver, and Enabler, my teacher definitely was an Involver/Enabler who encouraged teacher-student and student-student interactions. She encouraged us to do things on our own and with each other rather than explaining the instructions to us every time. Learning through interactions has definitely motivated me to stay attentive in class even if I could not understand anything. Also, participating in diverse activities with different classmates has helped me to make friends easier.

Out of the four basic language skills, Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, my listening and speaking have progressed after a couple of months from the help of my supportive teacher and friends. Then gradually my reading and writing skills had improved as well.

If I reflect on my second language acquisition experience, I am very grateful for the privilege that I have received. Even if it has been more than seventeen years since I have last seen her, I still vividly remember her kind smile and warm heart. I hope to become a mentor and a good facilitator like her soon.