My experience of second language acquisition

Class: Tesol 135

Name: Amy (Ahn Mi Young)

Teacher: Jayme

When I entered the middle school, I started to learn English as one of the subjects for the first time. The English alphabet was everything that I knew at that time. I learned English without any knowledge of how to read. But my teacher seemed to never consider individual differences and levels among students. And I remembered that most teachers I had met in my middle school, high school and private language academies had ‘traditional teaching’ style that was characterized as ‘Chalk and Talk’ and which meant ‘the explainer’. Actually in language learning, the four basic language skills: listening, reading (productive skills), writing and speaking (receptive skills) are needed. But they always focused on vocabularies, grammar and reading comprehension. Moreover the environment in class was not active and dynamic at all. I never played any simple games as well, because the teacher was very strict. I just had to listen to what he said and he pushed students to memorize words and sentences. Additionally, I never got the chance to speak in target language with each other because he mainly wrote his grammatical knowledge on the board and then we had to take notes. As I was not involved in my English classes, the retention ratio of learning was less than 15% for me throughout all classes. There was little interaction between students and teachers. One day in high school my teacher let me interpret the meaning of English sentences in the textbook but I could not make it properly, because I did not understand how to analyze grammar. He did not explain. Instead he scolded me in front of other students. That sort of experience made me lose my interest at learning English. I did not used to have both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to learn English. To get a good grade, however, I had to memorize without understanding. Unfortunately I don’t remember the teachers’ names for now.

In my university years, I had not studied English at all because I focused on my major, which is Polymer engineering. In my senior year of university I was required to get a TOEIC score in order to get a job as well as to graduate in the university. I found a private language academy to help me. Because I was extrinsically motivated, I tried to do my best but I just concentrate on grammar and vocabularies which were likely to be on the test. There was also listening part on the TOEIC, I was given some chances to practice. The more I studied, the more I wanted to go abroad to experience English environment. I decided to go to the Philippines so that I could have an opportunity to develop visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning experience. Even though I stayed only for 4 months there my English skills improved dramatically. I took two 1:1 classes, two 1:4 classes and a grammar class that was taught by a Korean so there were no differences in grammar classes from what I experienced before in Korea. However, the Filipino English teachers, their teaching styles were all different in a way that they used communicative approach. A lot of discussion activities in their classes helped me overcome my nervousness or feelings afraid of making mistakes. Gradually I also gained self-confidence that I was able to get involved in my classes. In addition, I had the chance to listen to conversation in English and I had to speak English for communication. Besides I was able to pick up some intangible expressions thought and intuition by eye contact, gestures and facial expressions. I think I got to know how to learn language including their culture by meeting many people who used other languages. Living in English environment is an advantage as a learner.

I think my language acquisition was pretty successful. As I could be exposed to English environments, I was highly motivated to communicate with foreigners. I was able to effectively communicate by mimicking ways of speaking of some teachers who fluent speakers. To make all language learners master the second language effectively, I want to be a teacher who would lead students to be motivated spontaneously through taking this TESOL course.