TIMES TESOL Module 1

Second Language Acquisition Assignment

*Description of a second language environment based on personal experiences*

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I would like to discuss my second language acquisition based upon my personal experiences in chronological order. There are several bullet points; how I have learned English in detail; how I interacted with teachers and peers; pros and cons of each teaching method from a learner’s perspectives. Those would be described with combined theories.

When I was 7 years old, I began to study English at Yoon’s English Class nearby my neighbour. First thing I had been taught was the alphabet. I listened repeatedly an alphabet song from the audio tape and a teacher’s pronunciation, followed them and finally could memorise. They used vocabulary cards full of illustrations as well. Also, storybooks enabled me to be interested in English and to understand how the words function in particular circumstances. Although teaching techniques such as reading, audio and visuals, which consisted of less than 50% of learners’ retention rate, were adapted, those were quite effective for beginner like me. It is important for learners in the initial stage of learning second language to be exposed to different language a lot. In this stage, I was able to figure out sounds, learn frequently used words as well as read overall context in certain situations. However, there was a lack of opportunities to have conversation in English. My teacher solely focused on teaching subject matters.

When I turned into 13, I started learning English grammar and reading skills from obvious traditional type of teacher called “The explainer” coined by Underhill. Her teaching style can be characterised as “jug and mug”, which means the knowledge being delivered to students who have no idea on subject matters. She forced me to draw underlines on the grammar book published in Korean and to memorise all grammar rules like math formula so that I could well prepare exams in school. This kind of studying continued until 19 years old. The only interaction with teachers was asking some questions. Motivation for studying English was entering a decent college. Interest in English was least at that period, but through continual practice on grammar, my reading and listening skills were largely enhanced. This helped me to take iBT TOEFL test and IELTS test more easily afterwards. However, jug and mug teaching style seems not to be appropriate for modern classroom which highlights students’ participation in learning process.

When attending the college,I took a mandatoryEnglish class in school and several courses at British Council, which required performing speaking and writing activities a lot. It was totally different type of language learning compared to the past. It was very close to the form of modern classroom and ideal learning environment. Group discussion, experiential learning and making a presentation, which were essentially in need of learners’ role as a facilitator, were mainly performed in the class. An instructor in the class tried to create the conditions where his students were able to learn themselves by involving them, enabling them to work at their own speed, encouraging them to participate, talk, and interact. He was quite “The Involver” person who dealt with subject matter very well backed by teaching methodology. Sometimes he slightly intervened in the conversation in order to correct grammatical errors and misuse of expression and words. His passionate teaching made me feel interest in English again, and in the long term, this led to positive effects for an intermediate learner to move forward.

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To sum up, the form of teaching and learning has changed depending on the purpose. I think my second language acquisition is generally successful. Employed diverse teaching methods from lectures to experiential learning allowed me to acquire four language skills; reading, listening, speaking and writing. However, learners should be given more opportunities to improve productive skills. “Teaching” does not always lead to learning. Doing themselves is the best way of learning.

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