Joanne

Essay 1

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Acquiring Korean

According to linguist, Stephen Krashen, second language acquisition, often abbreviated as SLA, or L2 (language 2) is a process which people learn a second language after a first language is already established. I was born into a family where English was the primary and only language spoken at home. After graduating high school, I enrolled at Sogang University Korean Language Education Center for 3 months to learn Korean as my second language. The class was taught in a modern classroom setting, where an enabler teaching style with experiential learning and teaching/mentoring teaching techniques were used. I believe my experience in acquiring Korean as a second language at Sogang University Korean Language Education Center was a success.

First, I had zero anxiety. My teacher, Young-hwa Kim, had established great classroom dynamic and accommodated well to each students’ individual learning differences. For instance, my classmates were from various countries, ages ranging from 19 to 50 with different purposes in learning Korean. During the first 10 minutes of each lesson, Young-hwa would do ice breaking activities that helped her and my classmates find out more about each other. It created a comfortable environment that helped students know one another more while learning how to be respectful towards one another. However, the way Young-hwa related to my classmates and I made everyone forget the differences amongst each other. Young-hwa created an atmosphere that was on the basis of respect, empathy, andauthenticity. These three qualities created a stronger and deeper communication not just with her but amongst the students as well. Also, in her classroom I never felt afraid to makes mistakes out loud nor feel that my classmates would judge me if I misspelled a word.

Second, I was highly motivated. Young-hwa taught in a combination of the 3 learner modes that satisfied multiple intelligences. Her lessons were built suitable for visual, auditory, and tactile-kinesthetic learners while being aware of verbal, logical, visual, interpersonal, body kinesthetic, musical rhythmic, naturalist, and intrapersonal skills. For instance, she took interest in everyone’s internal motivations by acknowledging his or her preferred learning style. She had the bodily/kinesthetic learners write music in Korean and had the auditory learners listen to the music and sing it out loud while visual learners wrote out the lyrics to the music. These types of activities were all very fun and memorable, while creating strong interpersonal and intrapersonal skills by providing reflective thinking and writing application activities and sharing personal values. All the activities done in the classroom were integrated in speaking, writing, reading, and listening that touched up on all 5 basic language systems (phonology, lexis, grammar, function, and discourse). She not only taught Korean as the object of study, but for communication purposes, which enabled my classmates and I to communicate in authentic language (used in real context of the language). Additionally, on a weekly basis, she would review goals and acknowledge goal completion for each individual.

Lastly, I had high self-esteem. Young-hwa properly assessed my level of Korean and the classes were organized after a placement test. She did not make my classmates and I feel like we were being babysat and respected everyone as individuals. For instance, when one would make errors, she would note them but would not interrupt the flow of class to make corrections. She would always encourage everyone to share their ideas, reasoning, and feedback whenever possible. It never felt like she was someone who was telling me what was correct and incorrect but someone who was on the same team. Moreover, I believe Young-hwa’s teaching techniques of experiential learning and teaching/mentoring others led to high learning retention. She did not interrupt nor speak much during activity or presentations. She mainly would give out instructions or teach new rules and principles in the beginning, and encouraged my classmates and I to lead the class. I believe her methodology of less teacher talking time encouraged more student talking time. This naturally, created opportunities for my classmates and I to speak Korean out loud, building self-esteem.

In conclusion, my experience in acquiring Korean as a second language was successful because of great rapport which gave me zero anxiety, high motivation, and high self-esteem. If I was placed in a poor rapport full of anxiety and stress with low self-confidence and motivation, the affective filter hypothesis would have come into effect and prevented me from acquiring Korean.