Second Language Learning

TESOL 163

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Most people may have second language learning experience at school, by self-study, or at private institute. Whereas some people obtain satisfying outcome after a course, or a book, others feel it is not enough, or even it was waste of time. What do you think the differences? Why some people don’t get the result they wanted to? I will tell you some reasons from my two different experiences.

First, I had studied English for six years at middle and high school. It was a long time, but I got only little from it. So, I consider it was not successful. There are some clear reasons for the failure. They are ‘Extrinsic Motivation’, ‘Traditional classroom environment’, Teachers as ‘Explainers’, and low ‘learner retention’.

Among the list of the reasons I mentioned, I think motivation is the most important aspect of learning. When I studied English at school I did not have any reasons I had to study except my parents and teachers do so. It was very unconvincing to me and the more they told me, the less I liked studying English.

Moreover, it was traditional classroom environment which I think is boring and the teachers taught only receptive skills, reading and listening. The teachers knew well about English and some of them spoke English well, but it does not mean they could teach me well. The teachers mostly talked throughout the whole time and I wrote down what they said or what they wrote on the blackboard: They were only explainers. I could get very little from the teachers lecturing and explaining as we learned in the TESOL class: Students’ retention is only 5% by lecturing.

Second, I have another English learning experience. I went to the USA for studying English. It was my first time study abroad and I was very nervous and a little fearful. On the first day of the language institute, I was frustrated since I was assigned to the elementary level even though I studied in an intensive course for four months in Korea. Nevertheless, I ended up at Advanced level after a year and I can tell you it was a successful language learning experience and I was proud of myself. Why is this time so successful? That is because of strong ‘Intrinsic motivation’, ‘Modern classroom environment’ with teachers as ‘Involver and Enabler’ using various teaching methods, and more ‘learner retention’ is obtained. In addition, there were levels and I was put in the right levels (Level +1) like Krashen insists.

Like I said previously, the strong intrinsic motivation was the key of the success. I was very pleased watching my integrated English skills improving and I was enthusiastic to take risks and to face challenges in the classes.

Furthermore, the classes were always modern classroom environment. I did activities with my classmates and always talked to each other. I still remember one activity that I had to go out with my teammates to the street holding a piece of paper, tasks were written on and do what it says. I had to find a grocery store and write down the price of a chocolate bar, ask a person the direction to the park nearby. I was excited and a little nervous at the same time and definitely enjoyed the class. Since I am a body/kinesthetic person, this type of activity would be useful for learning so that I still remember.

The teachers were involvers or enablers obviously. They brought various activities and some of the teachers took care of my feelings when I thought the class was difficult to understand and were good at eliciting students’ reactions. About the levels, I had thought the instructor in the institute had overestimated me because I felt the class was a little hard for me, but I found I had been put in the right level when I was learning Krashen’s beliefs.

To sum up, I had a better language learning experience when I learned with intrinsic motivation, involver and enabler teachers and various teaching methods and in a slightly harder level. Therefore, when I teach students I should use them in my class.