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My second language acquisition was not easy

I went to United States around the age of 8. As a young child growing up, that was a very important timing in my life as it really got me to speak English. Korean parents usually say the best timing to learn a second language is when they are younger and I agree with that 100%. My first year of elementary school was lonely and the I really wanted to go back to Korea where people actually understood me and speak the same language. But by meeting a teacher that was passionate about teaching, I feel like I acquired English without much stress.

Although it was difficult to get along with friends at first, my teacher was very supportive which led me to try my best. The classroom’s dynamics was always in a positive mood because of how he used to teach. It even got me to try to speak up and get in front of the board and use body language if I cannot communicate with other students and teacher. English, history, science classes were all difficult to understand because I could not understand a single word they were saying and what was written on board/textbook. As a visual and kinesthetic learner, I learned the best and taught myself by getting in front of the class to draw diagram and etc. for math. Math was simple numbers and it’s a common language and I was a top student among every other student on math. So slowly affective filter no longer existed because I had so much confidence in myself in getting in front of the class constantly to draw diagrams and show my answers to students. I slowly gained friends that were asking me to teach them math and by trying to communicate with them by giving it my all, I feel like English just came to me naturally.

The teacher was the most important figure in terms of me learning English because of his rapport. He was very friendly and motivating and always questioned me in class if I could understand during lectures and made sure that I was okay with what we were learning. He was a very good explainer which made it understandable even though I could not speak nor understand English. He used body language, and even looked up in dictionaries and showed me what words means in Korean. His teaching was very effective and I learned without myself knowing on how much I was improving at speaking English. I feel like he understood the learner retention rates chart because as I remember, we used to have movie nights every couple day and made us discuss what the movie was about. We had little acts in front of the class after we finished a chapter on history class or a short story in English class. Kids tend to have more problems when it comes to behaving but he really knew how to keep us entertained and made sure we are learning through interesting activities and probably was aware of each students’ intelligences and use it to the fullest.

The classroom was traditionally set up, but I remember we used to switch desks around every couple week to be sat next to a different partner and the formation of desks changed once in a while. He really emphasized on students communicating with each other so through those experience, I gained more friends and was able to speak without hesitation and throw away the monitor that kept me from speaking most of the time. My language proficiency slowly went from beginner to high intermediate in just 2 or 3 years as I recall. Language systems are important but kids are kids. Even the students around me were not speaking perfect English and I knew that as a fact. So I just did not hesitate to fit myself into the crowd.

I could tell from experience that having confidence is the most important part of learning a second language. It may be because I was a very young kid and information just sucked up in my brain but I honestly think I really tried to speak and communicate with other students even though I knew what I was saying wasn’t correct.

WORD COUNT: 714 WORDS