

Language Teachers as Language Learners

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Abstract

This paper suggests that the best way we can know what our students experience in language classes is by becoming language students ourselves. After looking at research that has been done on language teachers as students, primarily in the areas of diary studies and teacher education, it reports on two teachers' experiences as language students. After describing what stood out for them as language learners, it discusses how their thinking about what is and is not good teaching practice has changed. Finally it provides suggestions for teachers wanting to explore a language class from the other side.

Key words: language learning, transformation, teacher beliefs, awareness, teachers as students

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抄 録

本研究は、私たちの学生が授業での経験をどのように感じているかを探るために、語学の教員自らが語学の学習者になることを提案するものである。このような研究はダイアリースタディーや教員教育のエリアでそもそも行われて来たが、本研究では2名の語学の教員の語学学習者の経験を語っている。この2人の学習経験で特筆すべきことを述べた後、どのように自分たちの指導法に変化が生じたかを論じている。最後に、別の視点からの語学の授業についての提案を行っている。

キーワード: 語学学習、変化、教員の信念、意識、学習者としての教員

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Language Teachers as Language Learners

As language teachers two of the most important questions for us to answer are “what do our students know” and “how do we know they know it?” Whether we are working with five students in an advanced seminar, 25 students in a “normal” language class, or 50 plus students in a lecture class, it is difficult to know what is going on in our students’ minds. Just by looking, we really do not know what is going on behind their smiling, scowling, solemn, or sleepy faces.

Of course, one option is to ask the students. And there has been a lot of research into what students’ experience in a language class, what they believe about language teaching and learning, what they think a good teacher is, why or why don’t they apply themselves in class, and so on. One shortcoming of this kind of research is that we are still looking in from the outside. There is always the chance, even unconsciously, that students will give us the answers they think we want to hear. So what are we to do? To really understand what a student experiences in a language classroom, is to enter the classroom not as teacher but as student. Becoming a student will give us insights that we can never obtain as an observer or teacher.

This paper is an examination of two veteran teachers’ experiences as language learners. It describes their experiences and reflects on them through the lens of a student. They discuss how some of their ideas on language teaching have been challenged and transformed by being students.

Teachers as Language Learners

There has been much written on teachers as language learners. This section will examine how language study has been reported in ESL/EFL research primarily as diary studies. It will also look at how language study has been used in teacher education, and will point out benefits as well as potential problems. Finally, it will present an argument that suggests why all teachers can benefit from being language students.

Diary Studies

As students of second language acquisition many language teachers have read of attempts by researchers to learn, and record their progress in learning a new language. These studies are frequently called diary studies. Fry (1988) summarizes some of the claims made in favor of diary studies as helping to generate hypotheses about classroom SLA, providing insights into learner variables, and insights into the process of SLA itself (Fry, p. 158). One of the first and most widely cited studies is Schmidt’s reflections on his attempts to learn Portuguese (1986). Bailey (1980) is another often quoted diary study that reports on her experiences in a ten-week French reading course. Shumann and Shumann’s (1977) report

on three language learning experiences that they documented in intensive journals: Arabic, Persian (in a formal setting at UCLA), and Persian (outside of a formal setting in Iran) is yet another study.

For a readable, if somewhat dated, overview of diary studies in SLA see Matsumoto (1987). And to see the problems associated with diary studies, see Fry (1988). "Each of the diary studies . . . contains unique and noteworthy information which contributes to our understanding of the processes underlying second language learning and teaching in a formal classroom setting (Matsumoto, 1987, p. 21).

Teacher Education and Language Learning

Often language learning is a part of teacher education programs as many teacher trainers feel that a language learning experience is an important part of becoming a teacher. These trainers share "a conviction that foreign language teachers need to experience or re-experience what it is like to be a foreign language learner, whether at beginner or other levels" (Hyde, 2000, p. 265).

Most studies documenting these special programs report that they are usually perceived as a positive experience. For example, Lowe (1987) describes a Chinese language program for teachers that was well received. The program was designed to give teachers "a chance to renew their connection with language learning, and thereby to become more sensitive to the problems and processes confronting their learners" (p. 89). As a result of the study, teachers discovered how anxiety and motivation affected their students. They also saw how diversity and having a variety of activities was important to students. And they could see the importance of hard work and personal learning styles. "In their roles as students, the teachers were able to look again at some of their professional preconceptions. In particular, they were able to reconsider the roles of praise, grammar, repetition, revision, and communicative teaching, at least as they understand and practise them" (Lowe, 1987, p. 95). Lowe goes on to point out that it was through "carefully structured diary" writing that the teachers' self-awareness was developed reinforcing what we looked at early on diary studies and teachers' language learning.

Some of the benefits of teachers studying a second language include "increased awareness of students' often unexpressed learning preferences and needs," "a chance to see a language from the outside," and "a chance to gain intercultural understanding" (Hyde, 2000, pp. 268-269).

At times the language learning experience is of limited duration but even then "its potential for enhancing understanding of classroom events, as viewed from the learner's perspective, is widely recognized" (Waters, Sunderland, Bray, & Allwright, 1990, p. 305). It can encourage more of a learner-centered approach, give confidence in trusting one's own opinions, and introduce one to the benefits of experiential learning. At the same time, there

are some potential pitfalls including exposure to negative learning experiences, mistaking the lessons as a model of how teaching should be done, and being too far removed from a teacher's own teaching context. It is worthwhile to underscore the idea that language lessons that are part of a teacher training program "tend to be short, based on formal class teaching at beginner level, conducted with purposes other than actually learning an L2, and posing little threat to the identity, academic success, or material advancement of the learner" (Ellis, 2006). As such, they may not really let us look behind the curtain so to speak and experience what students are really experiencing.

Ellis (2006) argues that language learning should be part of a teacher's professional practice, and she points out one drawback facing teachers who have never learned a second language. They are in the position of saying "I have never learned a second language, but I am going to teach you the best way of doing so" (Ellis, 2006). They will not know what it is like to exist in an L2 only environment, to be taught only in the L2, to have experienced the need for code switching, and the list could go on.

Burden (2007) looks at how language-learning experiences have influenced teachers' practice. Through language classes teachers developed empathy, experienced the role memorization and drills can play, and had a chance to see how using the mother tongue affected their learning. They also could see negative aspects such as a lack of flexibility on the part of their teacher and became frustrated over inappropriate teaching styles (Burden, 2007).

Finally, it can be hard to apply the insights gained through language study. Hyatt & Beigy (1999) suggest that although studying a language increases systematic language and learning awareness, it is often hard to transfer what has been learned into one's teaching practice.

However, McDonough (2002) writes that sometimes teacher as learner and teacher as teacher are discrepant situations and depend a lot on context. Although based on one teacher's experience, she does connect it to other studies and comments on the "apparent dissonance between teachers' and learners' pedagogic value systems" (p. 404). McDonough also conducted a straw poll of teachers and learners as to their beliefs about language learning. The poll is reproduced in the Appendix (along with this paper's authors' responses both before they studied a language and after). Teachers' and learners' responses differed in several areas including the role of translation, bilingual dictionaries, and regular grammar practice (students believed these areas were helpful; teachers did not).

This Project

It was a coincidence that the authors of this paper both started to learn Korean at around the same time. Author one is a male from the United States whose L1 is English; author two is a female from Japan whose L1 is Japanese. Author one started learning a second language as an adult. He had learned (and forgotten) Spanish before moving to Japan where he had

learned Japanese. Author two studied and mastered English as a student and had earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in English in the US. Author one started to learn Korean in Seoul, where the target language is spoken, in a language program at a university; he then continued his studies at a Korean cultural center in Osaka. Author two started to learn Korean in Osaka at the same cultural center; she also did an intensive summer program at a major university in Seoul. Both authors used the same textbook and studied in programs that followed the same curriculum. Author one studied for three months and during that time finished two textbooks; author two finished the same two textbooks through the course of a year. Both authors reached the same beginning level but at different paces initially. Since that time, author two has continued to an intermediate level, while author one has remained at a beginning level.

In the next section, we will present the authors' experiences in studying a second language. It will look at why they started learning Korean, before examining their attitudes towards various areas including the textbook, how they acquired Korean, the four skills, favorite activities, teacher stories, and evaluation.

Why Korean Learning?

Author one.

Author one began studying Korean as part of his sabbatical research into the experience students went through in a language class. He spent one summer studying Chinese in an intensive program in the United States and one semester studying Korean in Seoul. His main reason as stated above was to experience what students experience in class. He had taken a weekend Korean Silent Way seminar that focused on pronunciation and grammar; it was similar to the type of program described by Ellis (2006) earlier. After returning to Japan, he forgot most of what he learned in Seoul and decided to try to learn Korean as a third language that he could use. Osaka has many Zainichi (ethnic Koreans) and his university, Osaka Jogakuin has long accepted many Zainichi students and has a commitment to Korean language and culture. Because of a busy schedule he has not been able to focus on his studies and has had to repeat one level.

Author two.

Author two started taking a two-hour Korean lesson once a week at a Korean language school for the following two reasons. One, her research interest is how young children acquire literacy skills. She wanted to become a language learner to examine how they begin to read. The Korean language was a perfect language because *Hangeul* was an unknown script and she needed to learn how to read it. Two, she was also motivated to learn how to read Hangeul because of the frustration she faced when she visited Seoul. With alphabetic languages such as Spanish, Italian, and French, she can read the signs in the stores or directions on the street based on her English knowledge. In addition, when visiting China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong,

she can guess the meaning of signs based on her understanding of *Kanji*. However, she had no idea of how to read signs written in Hangeul. These are the main reasons why she started learning Korean. One term lasts for 20 lessons and she ends up taking 40 lessons per year.

After she started learning Korean, she became very interested in the Korean culture. This motivated her to study more. In addition, as an EFL teacher, the lessons, activities, textbooks, teachers, and tests in her Korean classes made her think more about how methods and materials affect language learners. This is something she did not expect when she decided to learn Korean. And these things have kept her learning Korean for five years. She is now taking Level 4 (advanced intermediate level) and needs two years to complete the program at the school.

Textbook

Author one and two.

The textbooks both teachers used are part of a series produced by Sogang University. The series include four skill language development activities: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. From Level 1 to Level 3, there is a model dialogue using the target grammar, followed by a short reading and a short listening activity. This integrated approach is very similar to Osaka Jogakuin University's English education. In order to acquire the target grammar of each chapter, a number of handouts are provided. Along with the main textbook, a grammar handbook is available in Japanese or English. It has explanations of the grammar rules, lists pertinent vocabulary, and provides example sentences. It is helpful when it is necessary to review the target grammar.

Teachers

Author one.

Author one had three different teachers when he studied in Seoul. He also had a pronunciation teacher as part of an elective class and he took private lessons through a Korean language school to try to keep up with the fast-paced classes. Two of the teachers could speak English; the others did not use English so he does not know if they could speak English or not.

Author two.

Author two had a single teacher in each term. The teachers are Koreans, including those who have lived in Japan for a long time. Most of them were fluent in Japanese, but the lessons were conducted mostly in Korean. She had six different teachers in the past five years.

Steps to Acquire Korean

Author one.

Since I was a complete beginner I was placed in the lowest level at the program in Seoul. Even among the beginning levels there were differences as some students were already familiar with Hangeul; my class had students like myself who had never studied Korean.

My classmates came from all over the world (Bangladesh, Taiwan, the U.S., Australia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Uzbekistan, Japan, and Laos). From the beginning, I took three classes per day with three different teachers: general conversation (2 hours), writing (1 hour), and reading/listening (1 hour). I also tried to take a pronunciation course as an elective but soon stopped attending as the amount of homework in regular classes grew. Although we focused on learning Hangeul in our initial classes, we also began conversation practice and simple writing. It was a fast-paced class conducted primarily in the target language. There were visuals (of Hangeul) placed on the blackboard. We worked at desks where four students could sit. Once or twice we did activities with other beginner classes where we exchanged personal information with students from the other beginning classes. One policy at the school was that to move to the next level, one had to have passing marks in each section: general conversation, writing, reading/listening, and passing a speaking exam.

Author two.

My Korean learning started at the cultural center in Osaka and my classmates were all Japanese. My learning started from Hangeul reading. Starting with vowels and continuing through combined Hangeul characters, it took about three weeks to become fully capable with the characters. The homework given was to write different Hangeul characters on a worksheet, which reminded me of Hiragana practice in the first grade of elementary school. The lesson activities were also helpful in learning to read Hangeul. In class the teacher gave us a number of Korean word cards. Four of us sitting at the same table spread them out, and when the teacher read the word, we needed to find the card. This reminded me of karuta, a card game we played as children.

After our Hangeul practice, basic conversation practice such as greetings and self-introductions started. Pair practice was often used and we were encouraged not to read the dialogues, but to memorize them. We were often asked to memorize the dialogue, but memorizing it blindly does not work for acquiring the target grammar. Learners should produce the dialogue line by line understanding the new grammar they just learned. This is what I did most of the time. I tried to memorize the dialogue context, and without recalling the exact line, I tried to reproduce the line by using the grammar that was expected. People often wonder how we become able to speak a foreign language. We need basic vocabulary and grammar to produce spoken language. This was demonstrated in my class by our learning vocabulary and grammar. In order to learn the target grammar of each chapter, we practiced speaking many different ways. For example, the teacher gave us a slip of paper with a question on it. One person read it and her partner needed to answer it by using the target grammar. This activity made us practice speaking and focus on the target grammar.

Reading and Listening

Author one.

We began reading and listening from the very beginning. Listening was one of the most challenging areas for me as the teacher did not make any accommodation for our level. We worked with the CD that came with the book and listened to dialogues and tried to answer the questions that were in the book. Reading was a little easier for me (probably because I could go over the text at my own pace multiple times). It was a good review of the grammar and vocabulary covered in the general conversation classes.

Author two.

Simple paragraph reading was implemented 10 lessons into the first term. By the end of the first 40 lessons, learners were expected to read one-page long readings. The length of the reading materials got longer as the level went up. I am now able to read longer passages in the textbook.

At the end of each chapter, there was a section to practice listening. After checking key words, the teacher had us listen and then discuss what we understood. Sometimes, she gave us questions which guided us on what we needed to pay attention to.

Writing

Author one.

Writing mainly had us work on worksheets (copied from the course workbooks). However, the writing teacher did do two interesting things. One was he had us work on a project where we introduced an interesting place from our background; I wrote about Vermont where I had done some of my sabbatical study. He had us do a draft of the project, checking to make sure our Korean was correct. He also encouraged us to write more detailed information. Finally, he found internet photos that we could use in creating a poster. These posters were placed around the classroom at first, and then eventually put in the hallway for other classes to look at.

And the second thing that the writing teacher had us do after about one month was write sentences that used a specific grammar point. He passed around seven to eight sheets each of which had a grammar point written at the top. Each student wrote a sample sentence. The next class, he handed out a booklet of all of our sentences with errors circled. We then had to correct the errors as a class. A final note on writing is that both in Seoul and Osaka, Korean teachers seem to be able to catch almost all writing mistakes as the class is going on. Teachers will correct misspelled words as they circulate through the class.

Author two.

Writing practice was done in two ways. One was writing out the dialogue of each chapter at the beginning of the lesson. We needed to memorize it because we were quizzed by having to write it out. This exercise helped me to write and review Hangeul. As often is used in EFL, a

second way of practicing writing was to have us write free journals.

Favorite Activities

Author one.

As mentioned above, one of my favorite activities was the writing project where we described a place that was important to us and that we suggested others visit. Since we were in an intensive program, we had opportunities to do things that students studying one night a week cannot. We went to Lotte World to see a Korean cultural museum and, as part of that, we made a Korean doll. This arts and craft project was conducted entirely in Korean and we traveled to the center by subway with our teacher and classmates. Another activity we did was to take a campus tour with one of our teachers (our writing teacher) after which we wrote a report. The teachers used a lot of communicative language teaching techniques which included having us line up and do relays where we wrote words on the board that the teacher dictated. In addition, we practiced dialogues by standing up and working with different partners, and we practiced pronunciation with partners using minimum pair type activities. These types of activities were sometimes challenging as I had trouble understanding some of my classmates' accents especially with words that had vowels that sounded similar to me.

Author two.

In the very beginning, pair work was used to practice dialogues. When I teach English, I mainly teach reading. Therefore, learning Korean has helped me see how learners acquire speaking skills. After practicing with one person, we were encouraged to find another person to work with. In order to do so, we moved around the classroom to find a partner. This was not easy because I did not know my classmates very well in the beginning. However, pair work helped us not only practice dialogues, but also to develop new relationships. Pair work was also used to learn new grammar. Pattern practice has been criticized because it ignores learners' cognitive skills and creativity. Repeating the same pattern is not fun in language lessons, but pattern practice is useful when it is implemented creatively. For example, it is useful when one person reads a question from the slip provided and her partner needs to answer it. We need to use the pattern of the target grammar orally. This also makes us listen to our partner's question carefully. When we did not understand the question, my partner and I looked at the question together and tried to understand and answer it. Through these activities, I also came to know my weaknesses and strengths. For example, I sometimes felt that I needed to remember more vocabulary because my partner knew many more words. However, now I feel that I am quite capable of answering open-ended questions.

Teacher Feedback

Author one.

I was very impressed with how the teachers provided what seemed like immediate

feedback in class on both written work and oral work. Having three teachers at the same time (we met each teacher each day), allowed me to see different teaching styles. One teacher was like our homeroom teacher and seemed to try to help us with some English language support; the other two teachers did not use English with us at all. As mentioned above, the reading/listening teacher spoke quickly with no accommodation for our beginning level.

Author two.

Another example of pattern practice was implemented by making learners work on a worksheet. We needed to answer the questions on the sheet by using the target grammar. This tended to be boring, but we did so by speaking with a partner first, and then finishing the sheet as homework. When working on this task, we were sometimes not sure if our answers are correct. We usually asked the teacher, who was going from table to table, if we had questions, but not always. We checked our answers by taking a turn as the whole group, but we were not sure of our answers sometimes, especially, if they were open-ended questions. When we submitted this sheet as homework, the teacher marked our mistakes. This has led me to see the importance of teacher feedback.

Teaching Techniques—Reading Aloud, Backwards Build Up

Author one.

I found some of the reading practice interesting. In Seoul we did reading aloud to help work on pronunciation but it was only done sporadically. However, in Osaka we often do reading aloud since finishing the first level. What is interesting is the reading aloud is done to improve our fluency. We are given a time limit to complete the reading passage and practice at home. Then in class we are timed as we read the passage. The goals are quite challenging. Thus, it is not just reading aloud to read aloud, but what might be labeled as reading aloud with a purpose.

I was surprised that both in Seoul and Osaka almost none of the teachers used backward build up when practicing dialogue sentences. Backward build up is a technique where you have students repeat a sentence in chunks starting with the end of the sentence. So, a sentence such as “Andy went to the department store with his friends” would be practiced as “with his friends,” “the department store with his friends,” “Andy went to the department store with his friends.” Practicing it this way helps our working memory remember the entire sentence. It is a basic technique used in many teacher training programs. Only one teacher in Osaka used this technique.

Author two.

Reading aloud is not my favorite activity in Korean class because I think it wastes time as it could be done at home individually. However, I found it fun to read sentences by taking turns in class because I paid more attention to pronunciation. This is different from pair work. We listened to one person’s pronunciation in a quiet class environment. This also gave

us a chance to learn how to read complicated words (with diphthongs) and words where the original pronunciation changes when combined with different Hangeul.

Teacher's Personal Stories

Author one.

I enjoyed listening to our teacher's personal stories, especially our conversation/homeroom teacher. And on top of her stories, she sometimes presented information as if it was a real story. For example, in order to introduce prepositions of place, she told us she and the other teachers had gone dancing. She then taught us a dance that had us using the prepositions. It may have been my language ability, but it was only half way through the dance that I realized she had not gone dancing with the other teachers but was just teaching us the prepositions in an interesting way. Although I laughed at myself, I found it a very interesting technique.

Author two.

My students like to listen to my personal stories in class. I now understand why. I also like to hear my teacher's personal stories because I come to know my teacher better. This creates a good relationship between a teacher and her learners. However, sometimes I have no idea what the teacher is talking about because it is out of the textbook context. In order to make these stories more accessible to students, the context and key words should be given to learners first.

Tests

Author one.

I was very disappointed in how evaluation was conducted in Seoul. As mentioned above, students had to pass all areas in order to proceed to the next level; this made evaluation high stakes. While I was only there for one semester, others were there to increase their proficiency with the goal of being able to take classes at the university level. We only had a midterm and final exam and initially there was little review—I asked our teacher to give us a review to help us prepare for the test. Without that, there may not have been any review.

As mentioned earlier, listening was conducted at a fast pace and the exam was no different. This caused me to fail the test which in and of itself was not unexpected or necessarily bad as it showed my level. What was bad in my opinion was due to my score on the midterm, it became impossible to pass the listening portion of the course even with a perfect score on the final. This was very demotivating and led me to see that evaluation must not only be done in such a limited nature—quizzes and other forms of alternative assessment are important too. Fortunately, in Osaka we do mini-quizzes almost every class either writing out the dialogue or practicing conjugating verbs or working with adjectives. And the tests are not as high stakes.

The approach to testing in Seoul was very different than the approach to testing in the

Chinese program I took where within the test were hints as to the answers of some questions. This could be seen as “bad” test writing or it could be seen as using the test as a learning tool with support built in to help beginners. Another interesting approach was with vocabulary quizzes, which we had every day. At the end of the quiz, we had one minute to check and change any answers—and we could ever use our textbook. This changed what might have been a stressful event into a low stakes event.

Author two.

Tests are necessary in language learning for two reasons. One they give us time to review what we have studied and they help us see our progress. In my Korean class each term a mid-term and final quiz were given to test vocabulary and grammar. Although it was not easy for me to prepare perfectly for the test each time because I work full time, it was important for me to have a test because I needed to remember new vocabulary and review grammar. We often say to our students that vocabulary must be learned in context. This was underscored for me when I prepared for the test as a language learner. Even though I tried to memorize each word listed in the vocabulary list, that alone did not help me remember the words. By reviewing the words used in readings and listening scripts, I came to acquire them. I often wondered why some students do not do well in quizzes and tests in my EFL classes. Sometimes I wonder if it is a lack of review? A lack of time?

When I did not do well on the tests, I came to realize that I had not fully acquired the basic rules of the Korean language. One time, I intensively reviewed points of which I was not confident using the grammar book. The most difficult thing for me was the various conjugation rules. Once I understood them, I did not have to depend on memorization, but could utilize the rules. This makes me think that it is necessary for language learners to understand what they have trouble with and how they can solve or master it. I also realize that I can do so because I am a linguist and language teacher, but how about young college students? As an EFL teacher, I often wondered why some students miss important tests. I now understand why some students do not show up for a test. If they are not ready, they do not wish to take it. For various reasons, if I cannot make myself ready for a test, I do not want to go to the lesson because I know I will not do well. I do not wish to see a bad score. I also realize that students need to learn how to review properly. For example, they need to make their own notes to review the target grammar. I make my own review notes focusing on the important things before the test. Learners need to create these notes in their own way. There are also ways of dealing with vocabulary. Although memorizing the meaning of each word is important, it is necessary to see how each word is used in reading. The test preparation I started doing made me wonder if my students know how to review or prepare for tests effectively. In order to deal with this, it is necessary to have individual consultations with students to help them overcome each problem.

Intensive Study

Author two.

As mentioned earlier, I took an intensive course in Seoul after I completed two years of Korean study in Osaka. I had two specific objectives for this. One was to see whether or not a short intensive course is effective for learning Korean because I never had such an opportunity when I studied English. Another reason was whether or not it is effective for language learners to take intensive course because some of my students take short courses in an English speaking country. I felt more competent after spending three weeks in Seoul because I had a number of opportunities to use Korean besides sitting in a classroom. For example, I was able to do things like going shopping, sight seeing, and taking a taxi. I do not usually use Korean in my daily life in Osaka. When my spoken Korean worked with ordinary people in Seoul, I felt I had accomplished something. Although I could have used English, I tried not to use it with people who spoke English. From my professional view, it is up to each individual student. If learners do not take advantage of the opportunity, it will be just an experience of being there. However, we need to be careful about drawing a conclusion for young students. I did this as an adult learner. Young students may have different benefits from spending time in the target language country.

Discussion

Both authors took the poll that McDonough (2002) prepared and the results are in the Appendix. What is interesting about the poll is how their beliefs changed by taking a language class. Their beliefs changed in these areas: Competitive games (both went from being in favor to being against this belief) and Reading children's books (both went from being against, to being in favor). Another change was that author one went from disagreeing that teacher stories were good to agreeing. And author two went from disagreeing about pair work (with students of different levels) to seeing it as being helpful. Both authors have completely changed their attitudes toward reading aloud. Author one ended up seeing it as being useful and author two ended up not seeing it as useful. They also changed on their attitudes toward the use of concrete awards. Author one ended up seeing them as not being good and author two ended up seeing their benefit. Their opinions about decontextualized grammar lesson were opposite and did not change with author one disagreeing and author two agreeing that they should be part of a class.

Both authors became more aware of their learning preferences and as trained teachers could see how different teaching techniques were or were not effective with their learning styles. Their sensitivity to students' situations was raised and as will be seen below, both changed their opinions about whether or not some techniques would work or not. Fortunately, for these teachers, they work in a context similar to the context they studied in.

This means that there may be more possibilities for transferring what they were exposed to to their teaching contexts. For both of these teachers, their classes are more than a short-term teacher training exercise; they have both spent several years in the language classroom as students.

Some things to consider for language classes in the future are:

- Make sure we are not wasting students' time. Author two mentioned how she felt reading aloud was a waste of time as it could be done for homework. At the same time we can see that different students may have different reactions since author one enjoyed reading aloud. However, context is important as author one's reading aloud was conducted differently than author two's.
- Consider how we construct and use evaluation and assessment techniques. Students should be prepared for different types of quizzes and tests and should be given many opportunities to show what they know and can do. The higher the stakes on any quiz or test, the more preparation we should help our students with.
- Personalize our classes. Students want to know more about their teachers and so we can use this desire to a) provide them with L2 input and b) help create good relationships as we share our interests with them.
- Students enjoy doing things with the language. Therefore, coming up with appropriate projects or tasks can both help motivate our students and also give them practice activities that are fun to do and help them improve their language proficiency.
- Use routines. Students enjoy routines such as dialogue work and so even if we feel that memorization and drilling are not communicative, it may have its place especially with students just starting to study, but also with students who are trying to improve fluency.

Conclusion

This paper has presented many of the benefits that teachers can obtain by becoming language learners. It has done so through the narratives of two veteran teachers who took it upon themselves to learn a new language. In conclusion, what comes out of this paper is the importance for teachers of experiencing both language and language classrooms as learners.

Experience a Language Classroom

By actually taking a course, we can experience what it is like to have to deal with the pressures of balancing homework with life outside the classroom. We can understand how it feels to have to study for a quiz and exams and know how it feels to go into an exam underprepared. We can feel the satisfaction of doing well and also the disappointment when we cannot perform as desired. We can see what it feels like to have to only use the L2 (if our teacher has a strict L2 only policy). And we can see how it is to work in a pair or be assigned to a group of other students each with their own reasons for taking the course, and each with

their own levels of preparedness, ability, and motivation.

Experience a Language

We can also see how it is to learn a language. Rather than being something we teach, it becomes something we experience. Rather than giving students advice on how to learn vocabulary, remembering vocabulary becomes something we actually do to varying degrees of success. We can find out first hand whether all those techniques that we suggest students try (vocabulary notebooks, word cards, keyword techniques, etc.) actually work. And this goes for the other areas of language learning: speaking, listening, reading, writing, and also pronunciation and grammar. As we actually learn a language we can see how even though we understand a grammar point, or can recognize some vocabulary item, it is hard to apply them when we have to have a conversation with a classmate on what we did over the weekend, or what our plans are for after class.

And we can also examine many of the theories and techniques that we think about or use daily. What does interlanguage look like from the inside, is L1 interference really an issue, does I +1 really exist, does comprehensible input work, are cooperative learning groups all they are cut out to be?

This paper is structured around the authors' personal experiences; in the future it might be good to include others' voices. Future research might examine their classmates' views and experiences. For example, do teachers have different reactions to classroom techniques than other students without an education background? And finally, of interest to both teachers and non-teachers alike, is the question of what makes a good language learner and how can we become one!

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Appendix

Beliefs About Language Teaching (McDonough, 2002)

Do you Agree or Disagree with the following statement.

Statement	Author One Before & After	Author Two Before & After
1. Reading aloud is generally not a helpful class activity.	Agree → Disagree	Disagree → Agree
2. Students should be discouraged from using a pocket bilingual dictionary.	Disagree → Disagree	Disagree → Disagree
3. It is useful to incorporate pairwork as a regular aspect of language teaching.	Agree → Agree	Agree → Agree
4. Decontextualized grammar lessons should be a regular part of most lessons.	Disagree → Disagree	Agree → Agree
5. It is useful to do listening practice using audio tapes.	Agree → Agree	Agree → Agree
6. It is not a good idea to use competitive games with adults.	Disagree → Agree	Disagree → Agree
7. If they are used, it is fun to give concrete rewards such as chocolate bars.	Agree → Disagree	Disagree → Agree
8. In pair work it is helpful to have students of different levels working together.	Agree → Agree	Disagree → Agree
9. It is helpful to have students copy out chunks of text from the board.	Disagree → Disagree	Disagree → Disagree
10. Personal vocabulary books recorded in bilingual columns are a good aid to learning.	Agree → Agree	Agree → Agree
11. Sometimes it is a good idea to read children's stories with adults.	Disagree → Agree	Disagree → Agree
12. It is helpful for the teacher to spend some time in class talking about themselves, for listening practice.	Disagree → Agree	Agree → Agree
13. In general, translation between L1 and L2 is not to be encouraged.	Agree → Disagree	Agree → Agree

