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Ximena Miranda 3

Learning Kiswahili with Nia

When Nia began saying Kiswahili words and phrases, I noticed that the rhythm and melody were somehow musical, and so the learning style that came to me naturally was that of learning the lyrics of a song. I have noticed that it's very hard for me to learn the lyrics of a song without reading the words, but if I can both read them and hear them, the tones and temporal patterns that come with a song or in this case, with Kiswahili, combined with the visual image of the word, help me learn. So it was very helpful that Nia gave me my own copy of several dialogues, so that I could read them while she taught me.

The historical background Nia gave me was also very important for me to build an image in my mind that would help me place the language and the dialogue. Nia described Kiswahili as a "trade language", and thinking about trade in Africa helped me build that image. I also think Nia was very smart to teach me just the first greetings, because when learning something new, the feeling that I was able to absorb the whole class was very rewarding, but I might have been frustrated if we tried to achieve too much in a short while.

Choosing dialogues also helped me, because we actually had to act and use the language, not just memorize it. The methods used by Nia "fit" my learning style and really helped me absorb the first words of a new language.

Identifying trees with Student 2

A couple of hours before I met Student 2, I walked through Cambridge Common looking at the trees, taking samples, and trying to identify them, to remind myself of past experiences with tree identification. I thought that the best way to teach how to do it was to demonstrate the actions involved in the process, using real trees. My goals for Student 2 were that he would learn which are the most important clues you have to look for in a tree to be able to identify the species, that he would know how to use a basic identification key, that he would enjoy the process of identifying a tree, and that he would value tree identification because of the multiple interesting questions that arise on the way about plant growth and structure.

Student 2 asked many questions, and I didn't know the answer for many of them, so we tried to figure out some of the questions by looking at the plants and, if we couldn't answer them with what we had, we thought of possible ways to answer them. After a while of working together with some of the samples, I sneaked away to bring another plant. But actually I wanted him to look at the plant without me being there because for me much of the learning happens when you're left alone with a tree or a sample, or anything you're learning from. I guess I was thinking more of my own way of learning when I planned how to teach Student 2 about plant identification. I don't think I can tell exactly what Student 2's learning style is like, but he was eager to explore the samples and understand them, he seemed to enjoy tree identification, and he had many interesting questions that were beyond tree identification.