

My Life in America

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Today, I will be talking about my experiences in the United States.

When I was 8 years old, I moved to the United States for my dad's job. Back then, I was still in 3rd grade, and didn't even know a word of English. The only words I could speak or understand were "yes" and "no". Despite my low English level, in September of 2017, I started attending the local public school in Connecticut. Connecticut is a very small state on the East Coast of the United States, under the state of Massachusetts. The environment was mainly filled with nature, and there wasn't a hint of foreign culture in the state. It was not the typical LA or NY city lifestyle you would see in an American drama or a TV show. Therefore, I struggled a lot with my English. So many people around me, especially my teachers, were doing their best to help me out with everything. However, because of my low English level, I still had a very hard time communicating with others at school. In addition, I wanted to make friends, but didn't know how to join in, so I would usually spend time alone at recess. Going to school was a complete torture for me. I remember crying before or after going to school almost everyday, from the pain of having to go to a place where I felt so out of place. But then, I started taking ESL classes, which are special classes just for foreign students learning English as their second language. This is what changed everything. Everyday at school, while my classmates are taking lessons inside our classroom, I would go to the ESL classroom and study English with my ESL teacher. We read many picture books, and often took English proficiency tests. Although it wasn't easy, overtime I was able to grow my English to a much higher level than I was before, and eventually graduated from the ESL classes at the end of 4th grade. Nevertheless, it was still hard for me to make friends. American culture was so different from Japanese culture, that even once I was able to fully understand what American culture was like, it was still a struggle for me to fit in as a Japanese kid. Because I was able to fully

understand English by then, I now faced the problems of interpersonal relationships. When I first started going to the school, I thought that being able to speak English fluently will make everything perfect, yet the reality was way different than what I had imagined it to be. Though I was starting to be able to do well academically, that was different from having many friends to hang out with. I realized that you won't be invited to play if you are just standing there. You would actually have to go up to them and join for yourself. Unlike Japan, America was all about assertiveness. Since I was lacking in that skill, it took a while for me to actually be able to do that. Once I got used to it, every recess I would go ask many different friends if I could hang out and play with them. Before, I thought that they would never say yes to me, but they were actually really nice, and were always willing to hang out together. By the middle of 5th grade, I finally felt like I belonged there. It took a long time and endurance, but it was totally worth it. And after that, although there were still ups and downs, for the most part I enjoyed living in America.

What I learned from my experience in the United States was a treasured memory that I will keep forever. Even with all the struggles and pain that I had to go through, all of the efforts I made to fit in as a member of the community was never a waste. Looking back, I'm really glad that I was able to have such a valuable and precious experience in my life. I hope that I can carry on the lessons I learned throughout my 5 years in America.