

3 Language Learning Histories (LLHs)

1. Ikuko (Never been abroad)

I entered junior high school to start English. Not like some classmates, I was happy to learn English because I was interested in speaking foreign languages. It was just because it seemed so nice to me that one can speak a foreign language fluently. I remember that I was impressed when I spoke out a simple sentence by reading the sentence by myself, "This is Tom." I was so happy that I talked about it to my family. At that moment I had an interest toward English more. In my school days I had been taught English that consisted of mainly grammatical use. But when I was in the first grade of junior high school, I enjoyed English classes. The students did a lot of activities using English. For example, as now we do in university there was much more talking time with classmates than in high school. As another example, we did a little play using English. I decided to be an English teacher in an elementary school or a cram school. After a couple of years of teaching in a school, I want to establish my own school. Because I thought students can learn easily with less students than many students. Also I prefer teaching in front of less students to many. At the same time I became a second grade in high school, I started to commute to a cram school. There was a teacher who influenced me to settle my goal of my life. The teacher and I only spoke English because the cram school focused mainly on improving a listening ability. So my ability advanced incredibly. As teachers were one to one student, naturally we became close enough to talk about personal problems. Being stimulated by her, I began to think about going to a foreign university like her. Fortunately I was able to come here. I was surprised that class consists of not many people and almost every class was spoken in English. Also we have to speak in English during class. It seemed to me all my classmates spoke with much fluency. On the other hand, I managed to utter only simple sentences such as, "Yes, I think so" or "I see" in a small voice. So I felt strongly that I study harder than my classmates. For example, trying to write longer journal homework. By writing what I felt that day, I can do a self-evaluation as well as reviewing of the class. However, I think my speaking ability does not improve because I could not be so aggressive in the last year. I was afraid to make mistakes. However, as teachers taught me it is a good way to master English, I feel less afraid to make a mistake than before. It is a harvest for me. Now I will achieve elements little by little to be a good speaker!

—479 words

2. Toshiaki (Been abroad a little)

Why I became to want to learn English strongly is that I went abroad for a homestay for 3 weeks when I was a second grade student of JHS. It is the largest thing changing my mind in my life until now.

I started to learn English when I was a junior high school student. I wanted to learn English before that, but I don't know why. I went to *juku* since my brother had gone. I studied English with a joy as it was my first foreign language. Some of my friends didn't like it very much. In spite of that, I like it. One day of the second year of JHS life, my mother said me to apply to a homestay planned by my city government. The plan was for second year JHS students and the seating of it was 5 students at JHS. I didn't have a enough courage to go abroad but my parents encouraged me and gave me advice and I applied. After that, I passed 2 judges. At last I passed the final judge and got the ticket! I went to Canada and the people living there are very kind and I learned many things from them, for example, difference of culture, tradition and English. Since the things which I learned in JH were very basic, I couldn't speak at all. The things which I studied myself were very useful. I thought that I want to explain my feelings in English well. It was the first strong feeling of interest of English.

I went to HS in near my home in Fukui. I often talked with an American teacher. She taught me English whenever I have questions. One day, my father introduced an Irish woman working with him at the same office. We had a good relationship between us. She is very smart, kind and humorous. She told us not only English but

compiled by Tim Murphey

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also culture, dishes and traditions. Like that, I taught different culture and I was interested in English. Interest of English is the one of the reason why I came to university and the other is interest in movies. Since I like films very much and translating myself, I wanted to be a translator. I prepared for the recommendation and exam and many people helped me. Fortunately, I passed recommendation. I was very happy and looked forward to going to university.

At first, I was surprised and got nervous since the almost of classes are held only in English. But my friends and teachers supported me and I got used to the classes. I sometimes get nervous still. But I'm trying to improve myself. I must not depend too much on the class. I hope I make good use of this university and classes.

—462 words

3. Tomoko (Been abroad a lot)

I started learning English when I was 8 years old. It was because I had to live abroad. My father works at a car company, and he was told to work in Canada. About a half year before going to Canada, I began to learn the alphabet and simple words. On the first day of school in Canada, I was really excited and also anxious. But soon the surroundings relieved my anxiety. All of the classmates came around me and tried to teach me their names. Even though I couldn't speak or understand English, I had a kind of feeling that I could communicate without any words. Naturally, with a great help of my friends and teachers, I was able to understand daily conversations. However, for a few months, I could only say "Yes" and "No." I was afraid of making mistakes, so I didn't have courage to say a sentence. At that time class called ESL helped me very much. The ESL teacher was very kind to me and I have learned lots from her. She told me to start with using "what," "why," "when," "where," and "how." These words were good enough to give me courage to speak English. From then, I felt very happy learning new words and phrases, using it in imitation of my friends. 3 years passed very quickly. People I met in Canada were very kind and friendly. On the last day of my school life in Canada, they made a farewell party for me secretly. I was really surprised. This was one of the most unforgettable scenes in my life. After returning to Japan, I haven't continued to study English particularly. I went to an ordinary junior high school and high school. In junior high school, I studied English only to get a good score in the examination. My English learning experience was helpful when I entered high school. In high school, there is a great difference between students who are good at English and who are not. And from that many people gave up studying it. Although I managed to keep up with the English class in high school, I didn't like the way of studying. It was troublesome and boring just translating English into Japanese. The only thing I thought useful in high school was learning new words, although it was cramming. At first I have never thought of learning English as a specialty. For me, English study was just a ways and means to enter universities. When I become in the third year in high school, my teachers advised me to make full use of my English experience. Then I started to think of going to university that can study English. What I was expecting in this university was to recall my English skill that I have forgotten. I wanted to learn how to communicate. But it was more difficult than I was expecting. The person has to have a strong will to learn English. Gradually, I become to think I want to speak English fluently. At first I felt strange to talk in English with Japanese people in the communicative English classes. But I found that speaking to a person who is at a same English level is a very good way to improve. I could learn lots from my classmates. But I believe that the most important thing is not to be afraid of making mistakes in learning something. I am gradually understanding the necessity of courage to make mistakes.

—582 words