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"Come and take a seat," my teacher said as she pointed to an empty seat in the classroom.

Everyone stared at me and started to whisper but I couldn't understand what they were saying. Left frozen, I remained standing until a girl next to the empty chair used simple words and gestures, inviting me to come sit next to her. That was my first day of school in sixth grade in my newly adopted country.

For months after that, I felt scared and left out. The fear of not understanding, the fear of saying something wrong and the fear of being made fun of quickly turned me into an introvert. When asked a question I immediately became flustered and often forgot what was being asked in the first place.

I missed my school and friends back in Japan- Mao, the shy and calm one who needed to be coaxed to speak and Haruka, the extrovert who often made me laugh until I cried. We had done everything together- played, watched TV, snacked and shopped. I could share my deepest secrets with them and they were always there to listen.

Now, I had no one to talk to and I felt marginalized after being placed in ESL. Feeling miserable day after day, I would return home after school and turn on the Disney channel. There, for an hour or two, I would become totally immersed in the animation and teenage dramas. I loved how slowly the characters spoke in a clear and distinctive voice and how easy it was to understand the stories despite my limited vocabulary. Without knowing it, my language abilities improved dramatically.

I have graduated from ESL and now, I love sharing my opinions in my regular English classes, especially when analyzing literature. I have enjoyed the fantasy series, Percy Jackson and the Olympians and questioned Holden's sanity in *The Catcher in the Rye*.

As English overtakes Japanese as my primary language academically and socially, I will continue reaching new heights and attaining greater fluency as long as there is something new to learn.