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New Language, New Life

In May 2017, I stepped onto American soil for the first time, marking the beginning of a life changing journey. When I first arrived in the United States, the feeling was a mix of joy and nervousness. I was happy to start a new life in this new country that offered various types of opportunities. The experience here in America was my first experience of being in a new and different country where people speak completely different languages. The confusion of hearing different languages around me sounded like an alien and made me feel uneasy because I did not understand anything, but this struggle will eventually come to an end when I get used to this new language.

As a recent immigrant, I had no notion of what other people talked about or how to speak with them. I recall that on my first day of school in the US. When I started my fifth grade here in the US, I had trouble interacting with both teachers and other students. I sat in class, but my teacher's words swirled around me like a jumble of colors. I had no clue what she was saying. "Can you introduce yourself Ashraful?" she asked, My heart raced as I stared at her, hoping to understand even a little, but all I heard was a foreign melody. Why can't I get this? I thought to myself, as frustration was building inside me. I wanted to speak, but the words felt locked away in a language I couldn't reach. The students in the class appeared to be staring at me and did not know who I was. I felt very uncomfortable, it seemed like I was a stranger as if I'm like an

extraterritorial being that nobody had seen before. This isn't something I was familiar with before coming to America.

Back home in Bangladesh I was fine talking to my peers and teachers. It did not feel like I'm an alien. I did not feel excluded. Everybody there interacted kindly and even when there's new students in class, people did not stare at them but instead we would talk to one another and get to know each other better. But here in the US, things were not like back home, things were different. The language barrier made it very difficult for someone like me to engage in conversation and make friends. The feeling is very overwhelming and uncomfortable. It makes me feel I don't belong.

Although I found it challenging to adjust to this new costume, I eventually learned to not give it any thought and taught myself to be tough, and don't let anybody make you feel upset just because of a temporary problem.

By the time I finished fifth grade, I was able to learn English and speak it. I wouldn't have been able to do this without the help from my teacher Mrs. Like some teachers who would just expect me to catch up, she was different from them. She took the time to teach me in ways I can learn and comprehend the new English language. For instance, she would often hand out pictures with words below them to help me understand the situation and these visuals would help me connect the meanings of the words and give me an idea of what is happening in the story. Thanks to her time and dedication, I was able to learn this new language.

Through these experiences, I learned to be tough, and these obstacles made me more motivated in learning and better my understanding. The school incident, for example, motivated me to work hard and learn the language to avoid being treated like an alien. With every mistake, I became

not only smarter but also a different person. I learned to navigate the new world around me but also learned to be stronger as a person, finding strength in my mistakes and learning from these mistakes.