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English Composition 1001

1 October 2019

A Foreigner

From the day we came to America from Nepal, I and my sister stayed at my grandmother's house. The house was nothing like the one we had back in our country. Our grandmother's house was in an urban city in a little town. They used to live in an ashy gray, two stories tall house. The house that we used to live in Nepal were all made up of bamboo, even the roof, with some plastic to avoid rain from getting inside. It was basically a hut if you think about it. During our stay at our grandmother's house, I didn't know when my father left us and went out of state to look for jobs. I wasn't aware of what was going on at that time because I was very young, probably the age of 9.

After a couple of months later, I was sent to NewComer Center in Twin Falls, Idaho. Kids were sent to Newcomer Center to learn basic knowledge to get ready for school. This was the first time I was stepping outside into the real world after coming to the United States. I had a tough time there because I was bullied and criticized by the way I looked and dressed. I was wearing a matching pink shirt and a flare or bootcut pants with white dots on it. I was new to the country, the culture, and the tradition. I didn't know what to look like, how to dress up, and how to be normal. Some of the guys would pull my hair in the playground while I would be on the slides and others would make fun of me because I had a nose piercing.

A few months later, my family moved out of our grandmother's house. We started living in our own apartment because I was ready to move out of NewComer Center and start attending Bickel Elementary School for the first time. When I start to go to Bickel school, I was automatically enrolled in the ELL program to help me through my school and get me ready to be on my own without their assistance in school. In the beginning, it was still hard for me to fit in with the rest of the students in the school. People were still bullying me as they did in the Newcomer Center. I was teased for how I spoke English and made fun of how I looked for example being Asian with small eyes. As time passed by, I slowly started to fit in with the rest of the people. My favorite ELL teacher was Mrs. Meyers because she was so sweet and convincing. I enjoyed being in her class and learning new things every day due to the way she taught us. She and the ELL program had a huge impact on me to learn about the new culture in the new country.

We had a common black HP computer and my brother used it most of the time because he was the oldest sibling. I sometimes got to use the computer and when I was on it, I started learning English through watching videos, YouTube, movies, etc. Every morning before going to school, I would go to my friend's house and wait for her to get ready so we could walk to school together since our elementary school was nearby. While waiting for her, I would watch the morning cartoons "Arthur" that came up on the TV every morning. I found it very interesting to watch and learn new stuff. The cartoon "Arthur" was about teaching kids how to deal with childhood difficulties such as homework, bullies, and teacher. It was a show that taught me to live in this new country. I wanted to be fluent in English and know everything like others in my school.

On the weekends, my sister and I would go spend two days at our grandmother's house who lived with my uncle. My uncle would tell me to read a book as fast as I can in a short amount of time. He would set the timer for 1 min and expected me to read pages during that minute. If I finished reading a couple of paragraphs or a page, he would scold me and tell me to read every day and be able to read a lot in a short time. I don't know if he realized during those times that comprehension is important as well. He also took my sister and me to the public library to check out a few books and expected us to finish reading the book in a week or so. Even though we were all struggling in this new country he pushed us to become a better reader. All he wanted for us was to be a better reader and learn more so we don't get knocked down in this new place.

In *Writing about Writing*, Deborah Brandt talks about Sponsors of Literacy and how people just don't become literate on their own, well uncle was a positive literacy sponsor even though he didn't care much about our comprehension while reading. I am able to see it this way now because I know better know and understand more. He wasn't very educated like the rest of the American families' parents or new much as them because he was in this new country facing similar difficulties as us as well. Despite his own struggles, he took time out for us to take us to the public library and check out books. When he did that he didn't just checked books out for us and told us to read but showed us that there are places where we can learn more things from. My uncle seemed harsh on us about the reading but if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be where I am today. He told us to read the books as fast as we could and pushed us even harder because he didn't want to see us fail and struggle. He wanted us to be at a certain level so we don't get pushed around and bullied because of our struggle to speak and read. He was aware of some

things that they make you do in schools like time reading, writing, and spelling tests. That's why he was pushing us to go beyond what we were capable of. He was preparing us for what was coming up.

Whenever I and my family go on a long drive out of state or to an unknown place, I am the one that puts the GPS and sits in the front seat while my dad drives. I always sit in the front and point out the way and let him know about the directions. My parents are uneducated so they don't know how to read or write. They didn't have the same opportunity in the United States as I do now. They were born in Bhutan and had to flee at a young age to Nepal where I was born because of the government that disliked the Nepali people that lived in Bhutan.

My parents were never educated academically much as I am right now. They are a smart parent with a lot of courage but just academically uneducated because of lack of opportunity during their times. They taught me however much they knew about literacy when I was young and that's why they are huge literacy sponsors of mine. I watched and listened to them that's how I learned to speak. My older brother was always there for me when I needed help. He is the one who shaped my literacy. He prepared me for school by teaching me the basics such as ABC's and numbers. He taught me to read and write as well since he was the only one in our house that was a little bit educated. Teachers play a big role in my literacy skills as well ever since I used to go to a school where I spent 8 hours learning from teachers.

I am the way I am with my literacy skills because of my parents, brother, and teachers. Without them, it would have probably been completely different and difficult. These three are my biggest literacy sponsors for only one reason, which is that I spend the most time with them. I have lived with my parents and my brother for the rest of my life and spent hours in school with

the teacher. Since I spent the majority of my time with these people I am most likely to learn from them. A lot of things besides people have influenced my literacy skills such as traveling from one country to another, living in a new country, going to a completely new school from what I could ever imagine, and living here in the United States for almost half of my life now.