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## Two Languages and Two Cultures

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I had been in America with my family for two years since March 2007, when I was six years old. When I knew that we would move to the U.S. I became very nervous because I couldn't even say "Hello" in English at that time. I don't remember why, but however indeed I thought "Americans should come to Japan so I don't have to move to America!"

During the first few weeks, I got scared of all the circumstances around me. Of course everyone, except my family, spoke in English and everything, except my younger sister's picture books, were written in English. Though I began to learn English reluctantly, my ability to speak didn't quite progress, but I had to go to a public school on September. My homeroom teacher, Ms. Jacobson talked so fast that I couldn't follow her. I had no choice but to copy the classmate everyday because I didn't understand what I must do, but I didn't dislike my school, my teacher, and my classmates because we had many special events such as Harvest Party, Halloween, International Day and Field Day at the school. Then a few months had passed, I came to understand what my teacher and classmates were saying gradually. Meanwhile I begin to feel good for our life in America.

Birthday parties in that country were very fun. In my class, almost all boys and girls held their own birthday parties and invited classmates. They were good experiences for me because I have never seen such a birthday party in Japan. American friendships were quite different from Japanese. Maybe it's because the age was different, but most of the Japanese kids that I met (especially girls) like to be in groups and doesn't let others join their group. American people seem to be individual from their childhood. Such an American style as not having groups, not hanging out with certain people, and being friends with everyone gave me good impression. In this summer, I visited The West Coast of America to join a camp in University of California Irvine. Though the camp was only 5 days and it was a day camp, I made seven girl friends who were 9, 10, 11, and 13 years old.

On the other hand, it seems that Japanese people tend to exclude others that are different from them. It also applies to girls. Then problems about friends were more frequent in Japan. I came back to Japan in March 2009. In April, I went to a Japanese elementary school as a third grader. Everything was strict and tough in my school because it was a traditional private school. I wore a uniform and took a train to get there every day. We had a lot of rules, a lot of homework and a short vacation. I took

a long time to get used to it.

However Japanese elementary school wasn't bad as I thought at first. I had a wonderful experience at that school too. For example, I learned from sports day how important teamwork is. In that event, all children from first to six graders were divided into four groups and competed with each other. In order to win the game, we run as fast as possible, fought as brave as possible and cheered each other as loud as possible. Of course I did my best for the group. We can't forget the system of our school called "PARTNER". It is that one six grader supports one first grader for a year. We spent a lot of time together for playing, singing, studying and so on. I think that Japanese school attaches importance to relationships between different grades. Everyone felt really close to each other at school like a big family.

When I came back to Japan, I was afraid of forgetting English. So I studied English very hard to keep it up. I had an American tutor, Ms. Esther. She came to my house every week to teach me writing, speaking and reading in English. I had homework every week that I must read books that she recommended me and wrote a summary of it. I went to an English class for children whose first language is English on Sunday too. In that class, we did many subjects by English such as mathematics, science, and geography. I also went to a Saturday English school at Doshisha International High School (DIVE). It was like an American school. So after I came back to Japan, I studied English and had fun too.

Many people helped me when we were in the U.S. I am grateful for their kindness. Now it's my turn. I would like to be a person who helps others in need. Even though we live in international society, many people can't communicate with foreigners because of language barrier. I would like to support them and contribute to our society. So I will study and keep improving English to be a person who will be able to do that.