

When I was twelve, I had the chance to go to Utah in the U.S. for a summer homestay — the first time in my life. I had a wonderful time with my host family. I enjoyed talking with them while swimming, camping, or cooking together. These memories are so special that I can still clearly remember every moment.

What excited me the most was hearing many English words and expressions I had never come across before. For example, I heard words like “literally” and “adorable,” and expressions like “Never mind.” Every time I encountered something new, I asked my host family what it meant, and I was able to learn how to use it right away. In this way, I learned new vocabulary much faster than I did in Japan. I was amazed and thought, “This is it! This is how I want to learn English!” Learning English through real-life experiences felt amazing.

However, learning new words and expressions and being able to actually use them in conversation were two different things. I couldn't start a conversation — I was so passive and just waited for someone to talk to me. Also, I didn't have enough vocabulary to express my true thoughts and feelings, so I hesitated to speak. Even when I was happy, all I could say was “I'm happy.” I always used the same simple expressions. Moreover, I couldn't find topics to talk about. It was just so hard for me to keep the conversation going. I felt very sad and frustrated with myself.

Last year, I had another chance to go to the U.S.— this time to Washington. It reminded me of my time in Utah, and I remembered how frustrated I had felt back then. I didn't want to make the same mistake, so I looked for ways to change. I recalled how my host family praised me for small things. They said things like, “I like your black hair,” or “Your writing is pretty cool.” That made me feel so happy. So, in Washington, I decided to do the same and tried to talk to many people. Whenever I met someone, I looked for any small things to compliment. I said things like, “Your earrings are so cute!” or “Your hairstyle is so nice.” It worked! I was able to start conversations more easily. Also, I pushed myself to use the expressions I had learned in Utah. I probably made many mistakes, but I could express my feelings more smoothly, and I no longer felt frustrated with myself.

In Utah, I was able to learn new English words and expressions. But in Washington, I was able to grow by actually using them. I was able to start conversations, express my ideas and feelings, and keep conversations going. My experience and failures in Utah helped me grow in Washington.

Today, we can easily access AI tools. They help us work faster and learn more easily. But still, I would rather choose to make mistakes in face-to-face communication. I read the book, “How do you live?” by Genzaburo Yoshino. There were phrases like, “Regret can be a valuable lesson. Experience is worthy.” This is exactly what I thought. I want to learn from my mistakes and use those failures to grow. I want to learn through real experiences. I want to feel, think, and reflect. That is the most inspiring way for me to learn English. Even if I fail millions of times, I still want to keep trying. I want to be a queen who grows from failures.

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Queen of Failures