

The challenges in learning foreign language

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Georgiy Sichinava Peter Starr Writing 115 10/11/2012 The challenges in learning foreign language The case of being a foreigner while improving your skills is very common in the contemporary society. A lot more people are crossing the border of the home country either to advance their language skills or to get a better education in a certain sphere. Being the part of this reality, I recently moved to the United States to earn a degree. Thus the situation shown in the David Sedaris' essay "Me Talk Pretty One Day" is very close to me. As a matter of fact, I personally know the feelings that author expressed in his essay.

Obviously there are plenty of other things that David & I have in common. To tell the truth, I suppose each foreign student faces almost the same challenges. The biggest one that a foreigner faces is difference in a way of speaking and people's behavior. As a result, international students have problems in interpreting the language and understanding the culture. "My fear and discomfort crept beyond the borders of my classroom and accompanied me out onto the wide boulevards, where, no matter how hard I tried, there was no escaping the feeling of terror I felt whenever anyone asked me a question. (Sedaris 298). In these words David illustrated the hardship of being in a foreign community. Learning second language seems really hard at the beginning. After a while it is getting much easier, but at a certain point you feel that this is it and you will not be able to advance your skills anymore." Over time, it became impossible to believe that any of us would ever improve." (Cedaris 299). Even a dedicated person like David had pessimistic thoughts about his improvements. There is a difference between listening to/hearing the foreign language and speaking the one.

When you are speaking a foreign language you can only rely on the words you know. However remembering these words as well as appropriately using them is not an easy task. When you are listening/hearing you deal with understanding the words and their meaning. The poorer your vocabulary is, the more likely you are to face the difficulties in understanding the words and thus the meaning of the message. Speaking a foreign language is a great achievement. It requires a long process full of obstacles along the way. A person should learn a lot of words. However this does not guarantee that he will start speaking immediately.

As a rule a person has a language barrier. David had that problem. “ Understanding doesn’t mean that you can suddenly speak the language” (Sedaris 299). I had exactly the same experience. Back home I thought I was good at speaking English. But here in the United States the first day of my classes changed my opinion. I found it really hard to understand what people around me were saying. I felt like a black sheep. Even when I understood something, I could not respond correctly just because my vocabulary was far from being enough to express everything I wanted.

Besides difficulties with the language, foreigners deal with challenging situations in understanding the culture and the ways local people are. Expectations and the reality do not coincide in most cases. “ As an added discomfort, they were all young, attractive, and well dressed, causing me to feel not unlike PA Kettle trapped backstage after a fashion show. ” (Sedaris 295). As for me, I found that people think completely different here. The way people think about life, priorities, humor and everything else is very different. The first day of school is never easy.

Even for local students going to a new school for the first time is challenging. And when you do it in a foreign country, you are beyond nervous. This is true about all international students. Obviously David was very nervous on his first day of school. " The first day of class was nerve-racking because I knew I'd be expected to perform. " (Sedaris 295). Unlike David I did not have any expectations about my first class. I was simply nervous and I could not sleep the whole night. It is very common for a foreign student, who is unable to easily express his opinion out loud, to do lots of thinking of his own. I scrambled to think of an answer to what had obviously become a trick question. How often are you asked what you love in this world? More important, how often are you asked and then publicly ridiculed for your answer? I recalled my mother..." (Sedaris 297) Like David, I did/do lots of analyzing during my classes. I was/am trying to digest everybody's messages, comparing them with my own experience. After reading the essay I do believe that the students' attitude toward teacher was extremely negative. She was the only person who made her students hate her because of her taunts from the first day. Although the teacher was not the nicest person in the world and caused lots of confusion and scared students, the author admitted that teacher's behavior motivated him to study harder and achieve better results. " Refusing to stay convicted on the teacher's charges of laziness, I'd spend four hours a night on my homework, working even longer whenever we were assigned an essay" (Sedaris 298). This proves that David had a desire to advance his language, in order to easily argue with his teacher.

In conclusion, I would say that the essay “ Me Talk Pretty One Day” by David Sedaris is a must read story for those who are planning to study abroad. David made a really funny story that shows all the positive and negative aspects of being a foreigner. In fact, being an international student is a really challenging job. But it also the most amazing thing ever happened to me. You rediscover the world, get to know lots of new people and learn new culture. All those eventually help one become stronger and capable of managing the difficult situations.