

# My challenge with english language



Problems are a part of life and they mould our lives in turn. Finding solutions to those problems helps us keep moving and can be rewarding, most of the time. One of the problems that I faced in my life and could successfully overcome was getting on with my English skill after I migrated to US in order to settle here permanently. Because, English wasn't my first language and the American accent was new to me, I had problems conversing with people here. I emigrated from India seven years ago with lots of dreams and the hope to settle in US after marriage.

But initially, I was shy talking to people here as I couldn't express myself clearly due to insufficient English vocabulary. I also had difficulty understanding people with the unusual American accent and different tonal qualities (both of which I was unfamiliar to). Therefore, I was afraid to go in public and tried to avoid outings. The main cause of this problem was: English, not being my first language and as a foreign national in US, the American accent was unusual to me. In the beginning, I didn't think about it seriously as I did have some basic knowledge of English, but not a good vocabulary or grasp of American accent.

Later, as I was out in a public place like, shopping center, bank, doctor's clinic, etc. , or sometimes had to answer phone calls, I couldn't find right words at that instant to explain myself clear enough and thus people would think of me as a confused person. I could neither understand clearly what they would say, because of their accent and tone. All this would put me in an embarrassing situation and I started hesitating to go in public. This situation was a big problem for me because English is the primary language of America besides other languages spoken here.

It is hard to survive in US if one cannot converse in English or otherwise Spanish, the second most common spoken language in US. From a grocery store to a doctor's office, meeting different people at different places, attending phone calls and much more, there is no scope to even find a work without being able to speak English. If stuck in a problem or somewhere out, one cannot ask for help unless he/she can converse properly. Therefore, I realized that trying to stay away from the situation wouldn't help; sooner or later, I will have to face the people here while I work or further study.

In order to avoid an embarrassing situation in public, I would ask my husband, whenever available, to help deal with such situation and sharply observe, how and what all he would say for that particular instance. I also spent some time watching the local channels, trying to follow and get used to their accent. Besides this, listening to other people's conversation was another useful way to learn, where I would try to understand them while also observing, how and what to say in a situation.

So whenever I got chance, I would hear other people conversing in a market place, doctor's clinic, at the school bus stop where I used to drop and pick up my 5 yrs. old nephew. Also, I would converse a little with my nephew without any hesitation and whenever I got time, would read local newspapers and magazines. All these measures did help me and I was able to do some light conversation when required, also answer phone calls with limited conversation; however, a part of me was still inside the shell.

Even though I got better than before, and all my efforts did help me to get the accent, built up my vocabulary and also learn some common American

slang; it wasn't enough to make me a confident person and I wanted to get still better. I decided to look for a job that does not demand much English speaking or any specific qualification. This would give me an opportunity to confront different people and try to be bold and courageous while building up my skill. I thought, a practical application of whatever I learned, would work as a perfect solution. I am glad, it did work the way I had expect.

I got hired as a cashier at a local grocery store; where, I used to see a lot of customers who spoke American English while some others spoke English with still different accent, as they were natives from different parts of the world, settled in US. I got tuned to all those accents and also to different kinds of tone. I became brave and would always try to start a conversation with the customers who were at my register for a check out. By doing so, they would feel comfortable, enjoy the shopping experience and also found me interesting; while it built up my confidence.

The only possible disadvantage was that, if stuck in a conversation problem at work place, I would have to deal with it all by myself and if I couldn't, it would make a negative impression of me and could even risk my job. The advantages on the other hand were manifold. While I developed my English speaking skill and got used to different accents and tone, it also made me feel strong when I dealt with the customers, coworkers and sometimes the administration, all by myself. In turn, people complimented me for my voice clarity, simple speech and impressive social skill, which boosted my confidence.

Besides this, I was making some money, practiced driving and also got some work experience for a future career prospect. Looking back, if I had to work on this problem again, I would take a crash course in American English speaking and writing from the very beginning, besides the other measures I took. Thus, by believing in myself and trying to eradicate the problem rather than avoiding it, I could build up my shortcoming. Today I am really gratified how this problem transformed my life and came out to be so rewarding.