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**The Messy Literacy Journey**

I cannot remember when exactly I started obtaining literacy and speaking English. I have been speaking English for as long as I can remember since it the official language of Ghana. But obtaining literacy through a different language has always been my dream and wish. And I was able to achieve that dream through school.

After I came to the U.S and started attending school, I realized that I was failing a lot in English which was my strong suit and which I have been speaking all my life. I did not understand why but because I had to be in school, I persisted. It was later that I realized that the English I had been taught all my life was British English since Ghana formerly known as Gold Coast was colonized by the British. It was hard for me to speak and to write in US English. I had to always be aware of the words I have to say and to make sure that I say it in a way that people will understand. An example of such a situation is when I wanted to ask a student a question and said, “Is it compulsory to wear the uniform?” The student did not understand me and asked to be repeat it again and I did. But the student still did not understand me. That was when I realized that I had to change my wording to make them understand me. So, I said, “Is it mandatory to wear the school uniform?” That was when the student understood and answered me. That was when I realized the importance of literacy and words.

I loved to read when I was younger. My favorite author was Peggy Oppong and I read all her books which I could get my hands on. It was fun to read and to find unfamiliar words, look up the definition and add it to my vocabulary while dreaming of using them when I start working to impress everyone around. My favorite books of hers were “The End of the Tunnel” and “The Lemon Suitcase.” I read almost all her books till my teenage years. Her books helped me to improve my vocabulary and to love reading. I tried to read whatever I could get my hands on which had an interesting storyline.

As I started growing up, I started losing interest in reading and gained more interest in hearing and watching people speak different languages. It felt foreign to me, but it was fun and educational to watch shows in different languages. I remember Bollywood movies being shown on tv as regular shows and everyone was so invested in them. I also started watching Korean movies and series which started my interest in the Asian culture. There were also Telenovelas shown on tv which also had everyone so invested. Being exposed to so many different languages, really picked my interest in learning a different language and culture. While watching Korean movies, apart from the language, I was fascinated with the food and relationship that everyone seemed to have. I could relate to how they had different honorifics for different people because that is exactly how the Ghanaian culture is. When speaking to someone older, you always must show respect and can never call an older person by just their name, unlike America.

During my time in Junior High School in Ghana, we were required to learn French since most of the surrounding us are French speaking countries. It was fun learning French since I loved to hear and know foreign languages. I did not pay attention to it properly and only learnt it to pass the exam which is just like a state exam. I did not think that there would be any reason for me to use it outside of school and now I regret it a lot. I realized when I came to the U.S. that were a lot of opportunities to use French because there are different nationalities here and you never know who you will meet and be able to help. I tried several times to re-learn it on my own, but it was not working out, so I stopped.

In High school, we were required to take three years of Korean and then take the LOTE as part of the requirement to graduate high school. Learning Korean made me more interested in East Asian culture, the Korean and Chinese culture. That also made me decide my dream job. Though I have graduated from high school, I still teach myself Korean through apps and the little communities I have. Forgetting the little French, I learnt has taught me not to take anything for granted and to cherish whatever opportunities I am given because I never know when I would need it. My literacy journey has been a mess and I am still learning to make it better.

I still love to read but in my spare time and only with books whose story outline impresses me and makes me curious. While in high school in the U.S, my high school always had us read about three to four per term and answer questions on them each night before class the next day. We even wrote our Literature exams based on those books. Because of being forced to read so much I started to lose the little interest I had in reading. I never completed any book assigned to us to read though I always started. I had sites to tell me the summary and what happened in each chapter. I only had to go to the hard copy of the book we were given, to the chapter and scan through for the specific things that were said on the site and what I was looking for. That was how I spent my last two years in high school. Literacy is a particularly important thing that we need to have in our lives and must always cherish the opportunities it brings to us.

**Reflection**

When we were asked to draft a paper on literacy, I could only think about high school and the books we were asked to read. But as I started my outline, I began remembering the little moments which I believe contributed to my literacy journey. I found it hard to write out the ideas I had to make sense for everyone reading. I wrote this Literacy narrative with little aspects of my life that I believe contribute to my literacy. I know that some moments might not be considered as literacy moments but to me they do. I know that my grammar and the tenses are also a mess but then I do not want to edit it and lose the message I am trying to put across. Hopefully, everyone understands my draft. After the feedback, I believe my essay has become better though I might have added some unnecessary parts.