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Beacon of Literacy

My loneliness allowed me to obtain my literacy. I always waited for my mother when I was a child. Since I was five years old, my parents had run a tiny Chinese restaurant named “Chuo-Hanten” in a corner of the largest city of Osaka in Japan. The restaurant was surrounded by various shops, firms, and companies including the Osaka head office of a national newspaper. Hungry working people in the neighborhood came to get to my father’s signature dishes “Chanpon” and “Sara-udon” (soup noodle and fried noodle both with a plenty of fish and vegetables.) My parents’ restaurant always overflowed with their laughter, sighs, and healthy appetites. My father came home around midnight and thus my younger sister and I could talk with him only on Sundays. The busier the restaurant became, the later my mother came home; I remember she would come home at around 8pm when I was 10.

Our house was located in a downtown 20-minute-subway-ride away from the restaurant. There was a shopping arcade lined with 50 or more shops two-minute-walk away from our house, where the town dwellers could buy anything. No sooner did my sister and I go back home from school than we would rush to the candy shop or delicatessen in the arcade, clutching a \100 coin (Mon to Fri) or a \500 coin (Sat) my mother had put on the table.

After Japanese pancakes, croquettes, or a bag of potato chips filled our stomach, my sister usually drew pictures and I read books until my mother came home. Although I often played with my friends at the park near my house, everyone went back home where their mother waited and they enjoyed dinner with their family at around 7pm. Books, which came from various places, were my friends after 5pm. My kindergarten gave the children two books every week on Saturday. They were mainly Japanese old tales and famous stories from Aesop Fables, the Grimms fairy tales, and the works of Anderson. The bookstore in the arcade had delivered two child magazines and a child book containing 7 or 8 stories around the world at home every month after I entered an elementary school. I learned from the funny stories explaining scientific questions in the magazines. I wore an Arabic princess’ dress decorated with jewels, ate a fluffy doughnut of the best bakery at a small town in Russia, and casted a spell to become a dwarf in the child books. I was a regular of the school library and chose a biography, a detective story, or an encyclopedia depending on my mood each day. I read, read, and read but MY MOTHER HASN’T COME HOME YET. I gradually reached over to the novels and magazines in my parents’ bookshelf. I read them while guessing the meaning of the difficult words.

I read books because first I simply loved reading. Second, I probably wanted to escape from my dim silent house without Mom. I was looking for the light that warmed and guided me. Moreover, some adults around me praised me when they saw me reading a book looking difficult for my age. It was very important for me because I wanted to please my mother, loved my parents and their restaurant, and knew my parents worked so hard for us. My mother always looked exhausted although she knew children needs education and Mother. I might have thought that I had to prove that what my parents did was correct and respectable and simultaneously tried to convince myself I was fortunate in a different way from my friends. I wanted to reassure my mother that I did well and enjoyed the time while she was not physically next to me.

My grandparents who had longed for my visit always held my hand during the summer and winter vacations in Nagasaki prefecture 749km (approx. 465 miles) away from Osaka. I read books there too, filled with the warm light they produced. They brought me to a rental library near my grandfather’s office. I traveled with The Three Masketeers or sat in the carriage to Sunnybrook Farm, sprawling on the floor of the cool corridor next to the garden of which my grandpa was proud in summer and in front of the fire in the living room in winter. To my parents’ credit, on Sundays, my mother was stuck in the kitchen and covered the table with various dishes while my father told us some short stories he had tried hard to create. We sometimes dropped by the largest bookstore in the city. They seldom bought me a toy, but said to me “Tell us anytime if you want a book. We’ll buy you it.”

Recently, I have been reading writings in English facing an uphill battle against vocabulary in order to study English. I like Popular Mechanics and the book review in Wall Street Journal. I read “Lost in Yonkers” in this winter vacation. I have a pile of books I have not read or half-finished next to my bed. I am writing by using all the words I have read. I am obsessed with puns, similes, and metaphors to entertain people around me. I would like to go back to work in Japan after I study what writing is and what English is in the United States. I might work as a patent translator again or might be able to think of a new language service, being guided by the beacon of literacy.

Reflection

I wrote this essay based on the followings elements. The genre of this essay is a literacy narrative in which I tell my childhood experience that I had never connected to my literacy before. The audience is my professor and peers. The purpose is to practice English writing to effectively depict what I want to tell to the audience. The media is an electric document for my professor and print documents for my peers. The exigence is that the domestic environment in which I grew was different from my friends’ ones, and I found that it connects with my literacy development, and thought reading is crucial for writing. I wanted to hear my audience review about my story. The stance to the topic is tentative because I wrote a very personal story in a foreign language, English, and I am not sure how my story sounds and looks to my audience.

The assignment helped me achieve the Course Learning Outcomes by that I tried to write this essay not only based on my own idea but also based on what I studied at the previous classes including the information in NFG. In other words, I tried to write it in consideration of rhetorical situations. Especially, I corrected the digression of the fifth paragraph caused by my subjective view that Professor Carr and my peer kindly pointed out in order to stick to describing my literacy experience. The advice on the grammar and sentence structure my peers gave me also helped to make my story clear and appropriate for academic purposes.