The Power of Languages

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We are all studying English at school. But what for? Have you ever thought about it? Many students just want to get good marks. That's what I thought. But then I went to America on a home stay and I realized: I was wrong.

When I got to America, my home stay family really wanted to talk to me. They asked me a lot of questions. I could understand what they wanted to ask, but I couldn't answer. I couldn't even think of what to say. Although my English grades at school were good, all I could say was 'yes' after a long silence. I felt bad.

At that time, I needed to use English to connect with my new friends. I thought, 'if I can speak well, I will have much more fun'. Because I really wanted to say what I was thinking, I said some more words anyway. My host family listened to me carefully, and they tried hard to understand. I was so thankful to them. Little by little, I became able to talk to them, even if my English wasn't perfect. Then I realized that my English score at school wasn't so important. I found out how wonderful it is to use another language to communicate with people.

When I was the U.S. I felt that in English, *'yes'* means *'yes'* and *'no'* means *'no'*. But in Japanese, *'hai'* sometimes means *'no'* and *'iie'* sometimes means *'yes'*. I think this shows that different cultures have other ways of thinking. So, learning languages is a great way to understand cultures.

So now I think: languages aren't only to say our feelings and be understood. Languages have a special power to affect people. A single word can be important. It can decide or change something big. We can encourage someone with just one word. But, it's easy to say the wrong word, and hurt someone. Words have light and darkness in them. If we choose the right word, we can make people happy.

In the world, if we all spoke the same language, would it be a peaceful place? The answer is: I don't know. But I learned that I could get over the language barrier. So, I believe anyone can do it. In the future, I hope to use many different languages to make relationships with people.

What about you? Everyone has something they want to say deep inside their heart. If you have something you really want to say, why don't you tell someone?