

As a child I really had no desire to learn a foreign language, even though I've lived in a multi-cultural town. I live in a small farming town called Brentwood where the majority of the population are Hispanics. Therefore, the Spanish language was used quite often. Because of the fact that I could not understand them it felt as though they were talking about me. I took it personal most of the time. I approached high school and realized that I would be forced to take two years of foreign language. I thought of it as being my chance to understand them.

I asked my mother "Why is it necessary for me to learn a foreign language if I plan to live in the States for the rest of my life?"

She responded with, "I don't know. But I do know that I fully disagree with the schools forcing the student to learn a foreign language. I grew up without it, but times have changed, so it may be for the best."

To understand my mother's opinion a little better I will tell you about the way she was raised. She was brought up in the same town I was. They worked their rears off to make a living back then. They were raised well with a lot of respect and great work ethics. Basically she feels that if she was able to be brought up and able to raise her own family in such an environment without a foreign language that it is not necessary for us to have to learn it. However, she was also taught that it was unheard of to marry or date anyone outside of her race. I have been raised in a completely different generation that okays the dating of different races. I believe that if that's who you really feel that you should be with then so be it, no matter what color. I personally don't see myself dating

or marrying anyone of another race because of the strong beliefs of my parents. I would never disrespect their wishes in such a manner. I was a difficult thing to discuss in my household but we finally made a decision.

I figured that it would be best to try to learn Spanish considering the population of my town. I was given a choice between French or Spanish. We were not forced to take it immediately, but I wanted to get it over with.

At that time I was really excited about learning a foreign language. I took Spanish 1 my freshman year and it was okay. My teacher, Mrs. Meadke, was a really good teacher. She was very fluent in Spanish and had many games that we played to make it fun. As the year went on it got even better. I began getting A's on the test and high scores on the homework's. She started to let us venture out into the public to allow us to interact. At one point she had us buy a recorder and go to a local grocery store to record an entire conversation of two strangers, then try to translate it in class. It was pretty difficult because people that are fluent tend to use a lot of slang, but we got the point of the exercise. The point was to hear and experience the real accent of the Hispanics. She then put us in groups and we went to a Mexican Restaurant, called El Camino. We had to order an entire meal in the Spanish language, and that too had to be on the recorder. Again it showed us another situation in the eyes of the life of another. At the end of the year I was still really excited about moving on to my next year in Spanish.

I had learned a lot in that class. I was actually considering taking the entire four years that my school offered. I figured that if I became fluent in a language that was continuing to be used more and more each day that I would benefit more and excel higher. The time came to choose next years schedule, I signed up for Spanish 2 hoping that the experience would be of equal or more educational value as before.

Spanish 2 started out really bad. I got, not only the worst teacher in Spanish but, the meanest teacher on campus. Her name was Mrs. Shaw. We were in that class for only two weeks and she had us doing two page research papers in Spanish, on the typical

things like wars and writers, then we had to have the translations typed and connected to the back. There was a new class being set up because the classes were too full, and it was my chance to get out. I was able to transfer out.

The next teacher, Mrs. Biggs, was very nice, however, she did not know a word of Spanish. I really don't know how she became a Spanish teacher. I started to wonder whether or not it was a good move to transfer out. There was a student, Bernardo, in the class that spoke fluent Spanish. Mrs. Biggs was constantly asking him how to translate and pronounce words. He basically taught us all year. We were constantly just copying things straight out of the book. Learning should sometimes be fun and this class was just the opposite. She would try to teach now and then, but the longer she went on the more she had to refer to Bernardo. It made it really difficult to learn in that environment. Because the class was so difficult and stressful I got turned away from the language really quickly. I tried my best not to judge the course on that one teacher, however, it was difficult to move on to Spanish 3 because we hadn't learned much that year.

At the end of the second year I was back where I had started. I hated the language but for a different reason now, because I was unable to learn it. However, I did learn that when I heard the people in the stores talking that it probably wasn't about me and I learned not to take such offense from it. I really would still like to learn a second language, maybe even try Spanish again.

When this was all over with my mother asked me if I had learned something?

I answered, "Not really! I was completely illiterate about Spanish but now every once and a while I can pick up one or two words. So the classes weren't completely useless."