

One Day in the New Term

Lily Wang

BEFORE YOU READ: What is one advantage and one disadvantage of online learning and of in-person learning?

Morning: Full of Confidence

February 1 was the first day of the second week of the 2022 spring semester, which is also the Chinese Lunar New Year. When I woke up, I saw the sky outside was so blue. I felt good. I had two classes that day: English 1A in the morning and Communication 1A in the afternoon. I felt full of confidence.

I sat in front of my computer ten minutes before the start of my first class. When I saw the teacher and the students, I greeted them, and I

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felt elated. The class went on pleasantly and smoothly. I was especially happy that the professor wished us a happy Chinese New

Year. When the class was over, I looked out the window. The sky seemed bluer, and the scenery looked more beautiful.

Afternoon: Confidence Crushed

The afternoon Communication 1A class was not online. After two years of online courses, this was my first in-person class. I thought I might learn better in a face-to-face class. But after four semesters of online classes, I did not feel good about going to school.

First of all, I needed to prepare an hour in advance. I had to leave enough time to drive to school and find parking. I had to prove that I was vaccinated and wear a mask at all times. One student forgot to wear a mask and could only sit outside the door of the classroom.



There were more challenges. On Zoom, the teacher shares her screen, and she typed words on documents. However, in person, she wrote on the board. I was not used to seeing her handwriting, and I could not understand some of the words she wrote.

The most frustrating part for me was the last part of the class. She asked people to work in pairs and communicate about their personal background. All of the students in this class (except me) speak English as their first language.

My partner was a young man with an unusual and very long name. When it was our turn to go up in front of the class and introduce our partners, I could not remember

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his name. I said, “Excuse me, I cannot remember my partner’s long name. I am a Chinese student. English is my second language, and I am nearly 60 years old. So I call my partner Handsome Boy.” Then all the students laughed.

Night: A Mental Struggle

I looked at my teacher. Her face was serious and unhappy. I felt awkward. Although I tried to keep the rest of my talk light, it made me lose

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confidence in the class. I went back home and after a night of mental struggle, the next day I decided to drop the class.

To this day, I have deeply felt

the advantages and disadvantages of online and in-person classes. I thought about it carefully and told myself, “I already like online classes. They have become part of my life in just two short years. This is something I didn’t know before. I found a new way to learn.”

AFTER YOU READ:

1. In your own words, describe Lily Wang’s day. What happens in the morning, afternoon, and night, and what decision does it lead to?
2. What does Lily find hard about in-person classes? Be specific.
3. Have you had an awkward or embarrassing moment in class? How did you handle it? How did your teacher handle it? What would have made it less awkward?

Lily Wang is a student at Alameda Reads in Alameda, CA. She came to the United States from China in 2014. One day, three years later, something embarrassing happened because she couldn’t talk with American children in English, so she made up her mind to learn English. She just graduated from Laney College with an Associate’s degree. She continues to study English at Alameda Reads.

Which Way to Go?



Work with a partner and tell the story of a time you had to make a decision. Share the details of how you decided. Take turns listening and talking. When it’s your turn to listen, ask questions so that you encourage your partner to share more details.

After you each take a turn speaking and listening, take notes about what you said.

Write a paragraph or an essay based on your notes.

Share it with your partner for feedback. Revise!