THINK IN ENGLISH, SPEAK IN ENGLISH: MY JOURNEY TO FLUENCY

by:
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My name is Ana, and I used to have a hard time speaking in English. Every time my teacher asked me to recite, I felt my hands shake and my voice fade. I often knew the answers, but I couldn't say them out loud. I always thought in Filipino first, then tried to translate into English. By the time I figured out the words, it was already too late.

One afternoon, after class, my teacher smiled at me and said, "Ana, don't translate in your head. Think in English, then speak in English." At first, I laughed because it sounded impossible. How can I think in English if my mind functions in Filipino? But I decided to try.

I began practicing with simple thoughts. When I felt sleepy, I told myself, "I am sleepy." When I wanted water, I said in my head, "I need to drink water." At first, it felt funny, but soon it became easier. I realized that when I thought in English, I didn't stop too much when speaking, and I sounded more natural.

In school, I started using English during group activities. I wasn't perfect—I made mistakes and my classmates sometimes giggled—but I remembered what my teacher always reminded us: "Mistakes are proof that you are trying." Little by little, I felt braver.

I also discovered that this strategy is supported by studies. According to Wati et al. (2023), learners develop fluency more effectively when they use the language for real communication instead of just memorizing rules. Likewise, Zoubi (2018) emphasized that frequent exposure and active use of English help learners gain confidence and accuracy. This gave me hope that by practicing every day, I was on the right track.

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Now, I no longer feel as nervous when speaking English. I may not be perfect, but I can express myself better. Thinking in English helps me focus on ideas, not just words. For students like me who struggle with English, my advice is this: don't be afraid to make mistakes. Just start thinking in English little by little, and soon, you'll find yourself speaking it more confidently. If I can do it, I believe you can too.

References:

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