

Author Profile

I was born in a mining town in the city of Hitachi, shortly after the end of the US occupation. There were many English signs all over the place, perhaps as many as in present day Japan. People were concerned that there was even a possibility that the English language would become the official language of Japan and that school classes would have to be carried out in English.

When I went to elementary school, teachers were very serious about the introduction of English to school children, although none of them had a good enough command of the language. However, they tried their best to prepare our generation for the seemingly inevitable language change.

The first time I was introduced to the English alphabet was in my third year arithmetic class. The teacher taught us algebra in addition to the curriculum. He said to us that knowing simultaneous equations would be a great help to problem solving. He taught us the letters x, y, z, a, b, and c. We used small letters and capital letters, both in printing and handwriting.

The teacher taught us the set theory and introduced us to the letters U, I, A, G, and so on, explaining what they stood for. I was very young then and so learning the alphabet, Kanji characters, and mathematics were all equally new experiences and I did not have a view of what was foreign to me.

In fifth grade, we were taught romaji. Along with it, we learned the basics of phonetics. We were encouraged to write daily journals entirely in romaji. In sixth grade, we were taught cursive writing and we all kept romaji journals in cursive. When I left elementary school and moved on to middle school, the elementary school introduced English language classes taught by an American. I just missed such an enriched education by just one year.

I believe that my English education in middle school was quite typical, but I could tell that my middle school English teacher was enthusiastic and that he tried his very best to improve his limited language skills. In order to learn correct pronunciation, he made us write all the vocabulary in a small book in three columns: one for the English word, one for the phonetic symbols, and one for the equivalent Japanese word. It was definitely good practice for pulling each sound apart and recognizing the utterances. In third year, we read *The Old Man and the Sea*, by Earnest Hemingway. Though none of us could decipher most of the novel, it was an exciting experience to own a book published in the US. We were so proud that we were reading a novel just like American children.

Between 10th and 12th grade, most of our English education was strictly academic: grammar, reading and writing. We never put any effort into conversation. It was strictly a paper-based education, but my command of English was definitely brought to a higher level of academic English.

I went on to attend a public university and took a couple of English courses. The classes were lecture-style, each housing a great number of students. There, I sat quietly, took exams at the end of the term, and passed. I don't even remember what was covered. English classes in university were just there to earn credits for graduation.

At age 22, I went to England, intending only to have a short break before embarking on a life-long occupation of teaching or becoming a house-wife.

I ended up staying in England for four and half years; first attending a language school for six months, and then going on to study chemistry at university. After graduation, I spent one year in Japan and then left to Canada to pursue graduate studies at a university there.

I am still currently residing in Canada. I have always wanted to return to Japan, but perhaps my wish will always remain a dream. I have been living

alone in the West as Japanese who left her homeland in 1975. I started to realize that there are not many people who are in the same boat as me. I was born as only one of millions of baby-boomers after the war in a hustle bustle mining town. I was brought up in the comfort of being buried in a large mass of people. Now, I noticed that I am perhaps only one passenger in a small boat, drifting around in an ocean of human societal complexities.

There must be some piece of knowledge that I can impart to the people of Japan, giving guidance on the English language and deepening their understanding of the diverse human culture. This is my reason for building this site.