

My life in Taiwan began as an expatriate

TOCHIGI Hiroki (Age 53)

It will be a great advantage to make use of Japaneseness to live in Taiwan.

That's why I want to send my children to high school and university in Japan.



WATANABE Yukinori (Story)
MAEDA Musashi (Manga)

I am from Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture. I moved to Tokyo for my university.



I got a job in Tokyo as well. It was as an engineer at mechanical and machinery company. I learned programming skills there as well.

At the age of 31, I suddenly remembered my long time dream.



I want to live abroad !



But I can't just take leave. My Company won't allow me.

I was worried about how my boss would react.

Study abroad? We are fine, as long as you pay yourself!

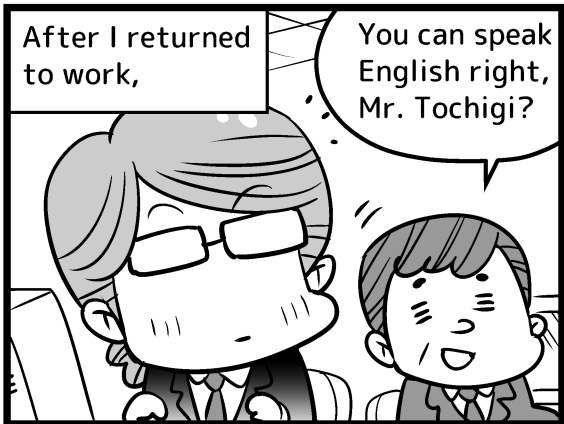


I did not think it was this easy...



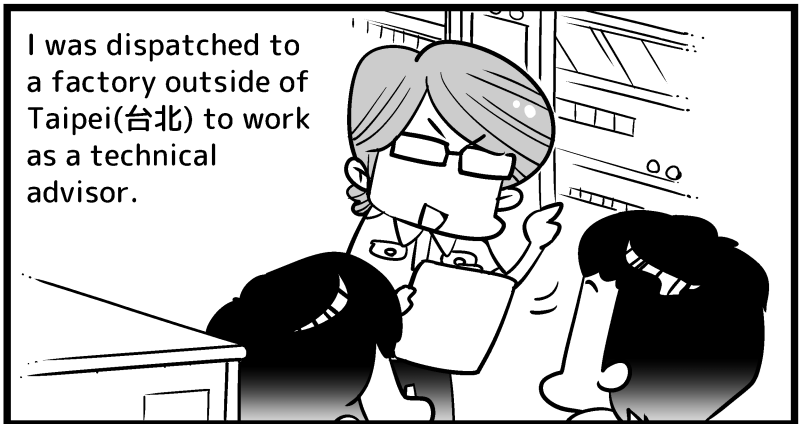
Then, I took a half year off and went to Canada for studying.



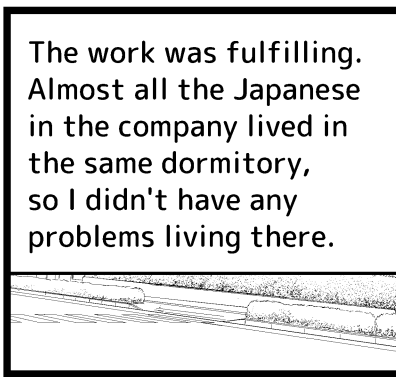


After I returned to work,

You can speak English right, Mr. Tochigi?



I was dispatched to a factory outside of Taipei(台北) to work as a technical advisor.



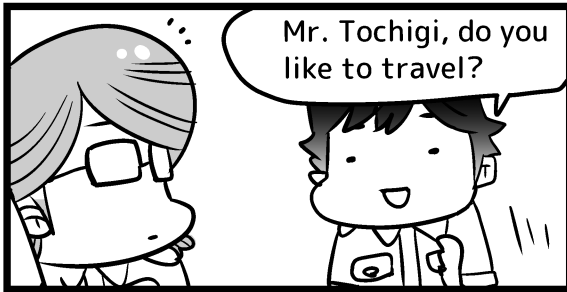
The work was fulfilling. Almost all the Japanese in the company lived in the same dormitory, so I didn't have any problems living there.



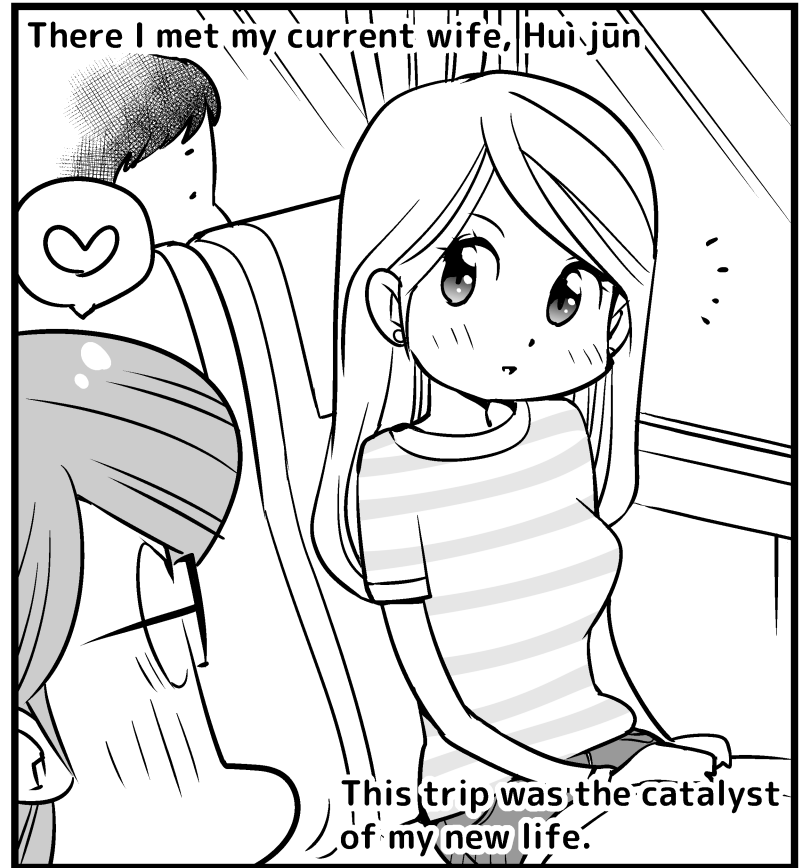
I only had one complaint.



There was no entertainment...



Mr. Tochigi, do you like to travel?



There I met my current wife, Huijūn

This trip was the catalyst of my new life.



I was invited to join a travel club by a Taiwanese colleague.



After this trip, we taught each other our languages. And so the relationship began. In about two years, we decided to get married.



However, there was an unexpected hurdle.

Her family and relatives were vehemently opposed to the marriage...

He's going back to Japan sooner or later!

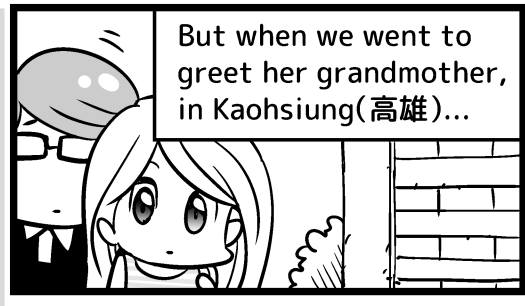
Japanese people are 'Dà nánrén zhǔyì (male chauvinist)', so be careful!

He may not be in Taiwan for long..

Just be careful...



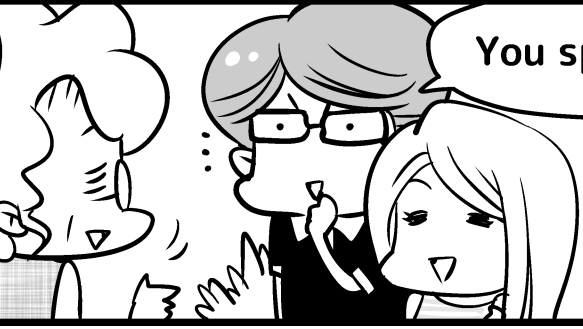
- **Dà nánrén zhǔyì (chauvinistic: 大男人主義)**
- In Taiwanese society, Japanese males are often referred to as Dà nánrén zhǔyì (chauvinistic: 大男人主義). The Chinese word Dà nánrén zhǔyì is usually understood simply as the concept of male dominance over women. However, some fathers claimed that it also includes the idea that males must be the protectors and guardians of the family financially and morally, like the Japanese Daikokubashira (大黒柱).



But when we went to greet her grandmother, in Kaohsiung(高雄)...

It's nice to see you. Congratulations on your marriage!

おめでとう!



You speak Japanese?

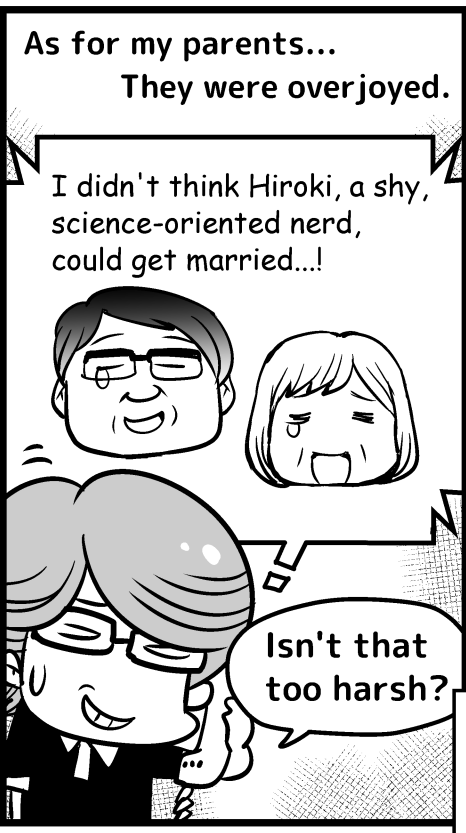
And fluent...

She used to teach Japanese under Japanese rule...



I've lived in Tokyo before.

Oh, really!?



As for my parents... They were overjoyed.

I didn't think Hiroki, a shy, science-oriented nerd, could get married...!

Isn't that too harsh?

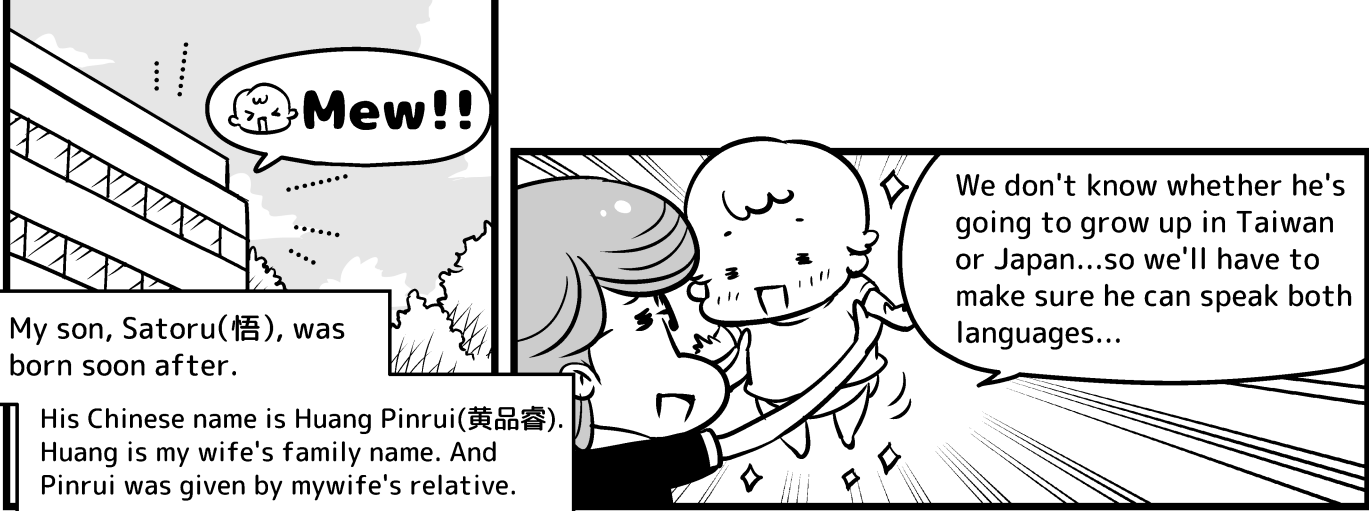


This is how we got married. I was 34 and she was 26.

Shortly thereafter, I was transferred to Taichung(台中)...

Thanks to my grandmother's blessing, other relatives also accepted me easily. Although Taiwan is very pro-Japanese, international marriages were still rare and difficult in those days...



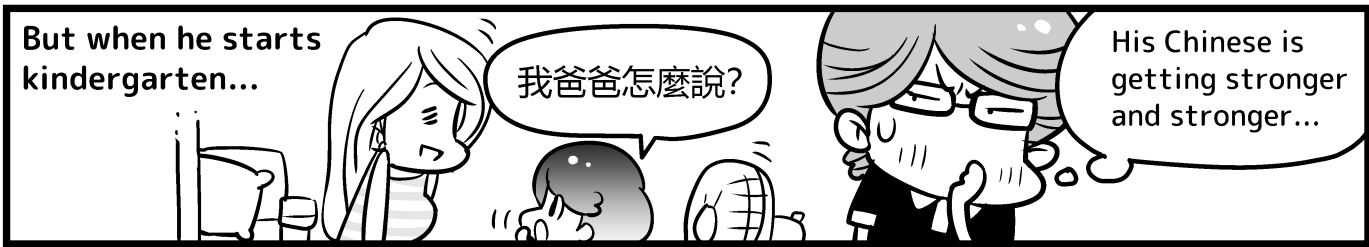


My son, Satoru(悟), was born soon after.

His Chinese name is Huang Pinrui(黄品睿). Huang is my wife's family name. And Pinrui was given by mywife's relative.

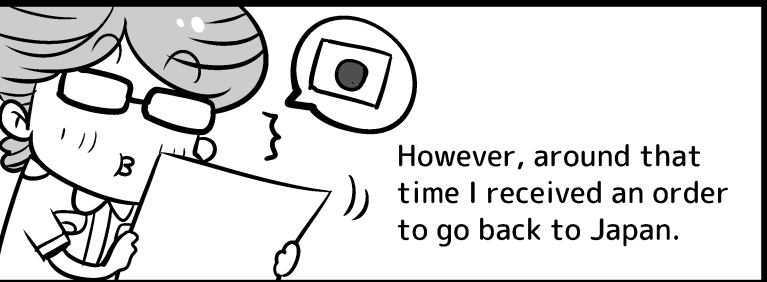


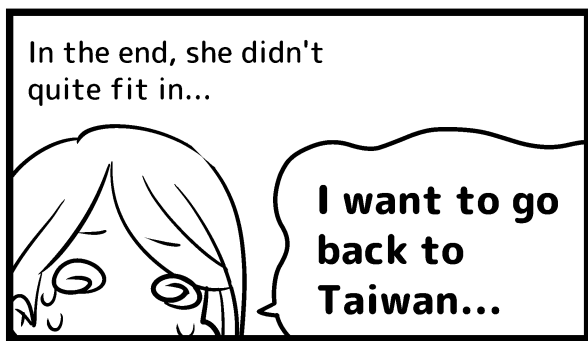
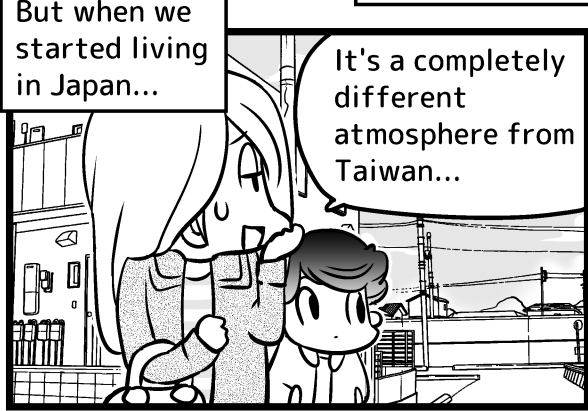
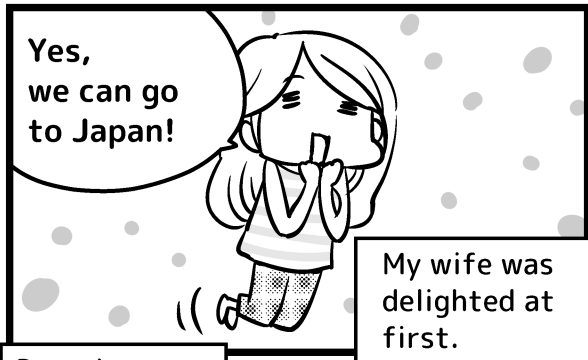
Bilingual in Japanese and Chinese! !
Language education is prioritized for intermarried families from their children's birth. It is perceived that the language(s) to be learned decides the course of a child's life. It was a common practice that, given the presence of Japanese and Chinese members in the family, they tried to make the children Japanese/Chinese bilingual from the beginning.



Because of this, we sent him to a local elementary school because everyone around him went there too!

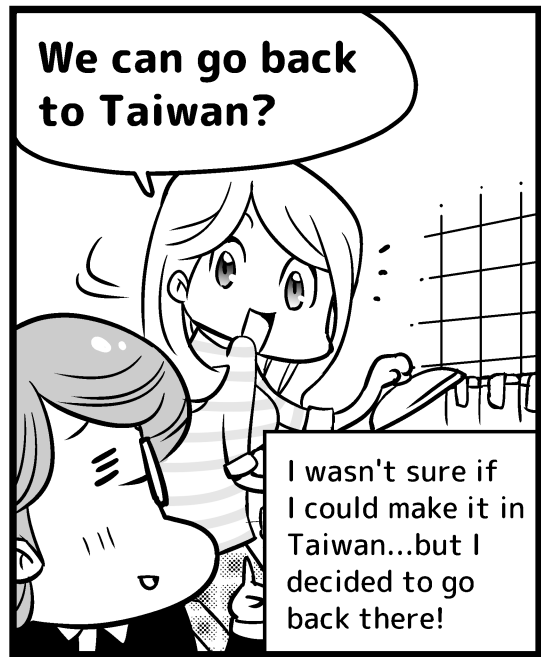
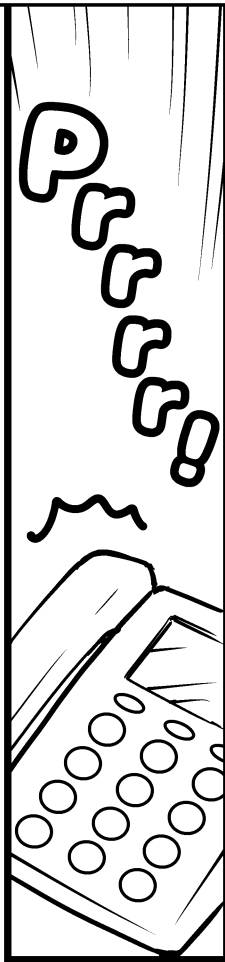
He learned Japanese mainly through manga, books and anime.
On top of that, my wife also spoke Japanese at home, so he could speak Japanese reasonably well.



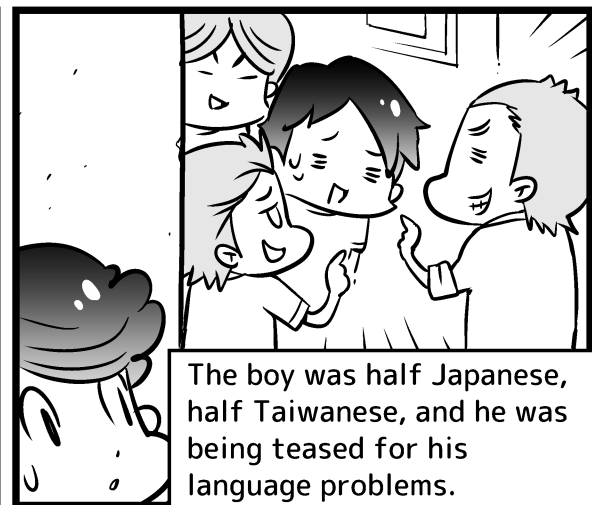
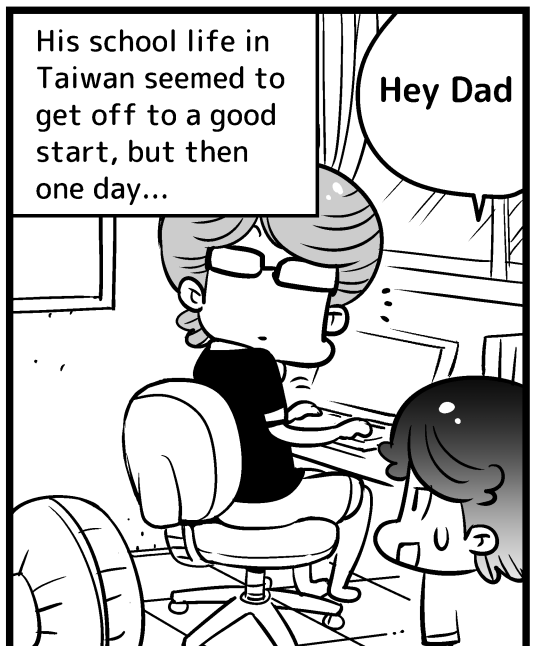


About 3 years later, I got a call from a friend in Taiwan...

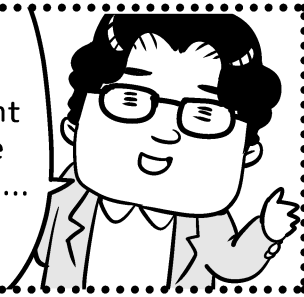
Really! Are you going to start a business?



So I enrolled him in a Japanese school in Taiwan.



Our school environment is the same as in Japan...



By the way, because my son went to a Japanese school, his Japanese is perfect!

In the case of Japanese fathers and Taiwanese mothers, most of the children's main language is Japanese*.



*This is his personal opinion.

The new teacher from Japan often said this. But in reality, it's different, and it can be very difficult. He understood eventually...



But if the mother is Japanese, there are many children who can speak Japanese even though they are attending a local school.



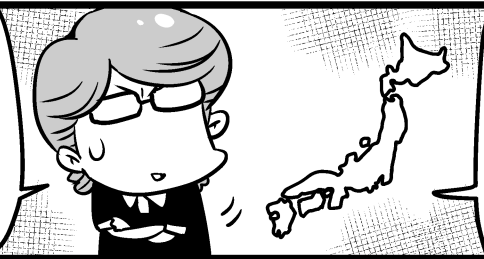
After that, the boy and my son became good friends.



Is your parent's gender a factor in language acquisition?
This seems that the gender of Japanese parent determines the development of the children's language learning. However, when they were asked, they almost always answered, "The parent who spends more time with the child can expose the child to his/her language. Because mothers usually take this role, the mother's language has an advantage in child's language development."

*This is his personal experience.

If you don't send him to a Japanese school, he won't be able to speak proper Japanese.



But the Japanese school is only up to junior high school in Taiwan, so I was thinking of sending him to high school from his grandparents' house in Japan...

The electrical work I do is technically very special, and this job has almost disappeared in Japan. That's why I can't go back to Japan now.



For that reason... I want my children to keep their Taiwanese nationality.

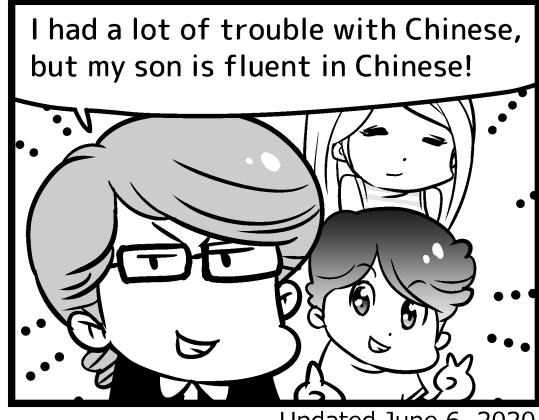
All things considered I think it would be best for my son to come to Taiwan as a Japanese based individual...



Once my son goes to high school in Japan, he will probably go to college in Japan too. If he comes to Taiwan as an exchange student, I think that would be fine.



I had a lot of trouble with Chinese, but my son is fluent in Chinese!



Updated June 6, 2020

Conscription is now a volunteer system...
The common notion of dual nationality is that parents want their children to keep both nationalities until they are legal adults and can decide which nationality to keep. In 2018, the Taiwanese conscription system—which has over 60 years of history—was abolished and changed to a voluntary system. Although four months of military training is still mandatory, this can be divided into two training periods of two months in length. Until this change, some men expatriated to avoid being drafted.