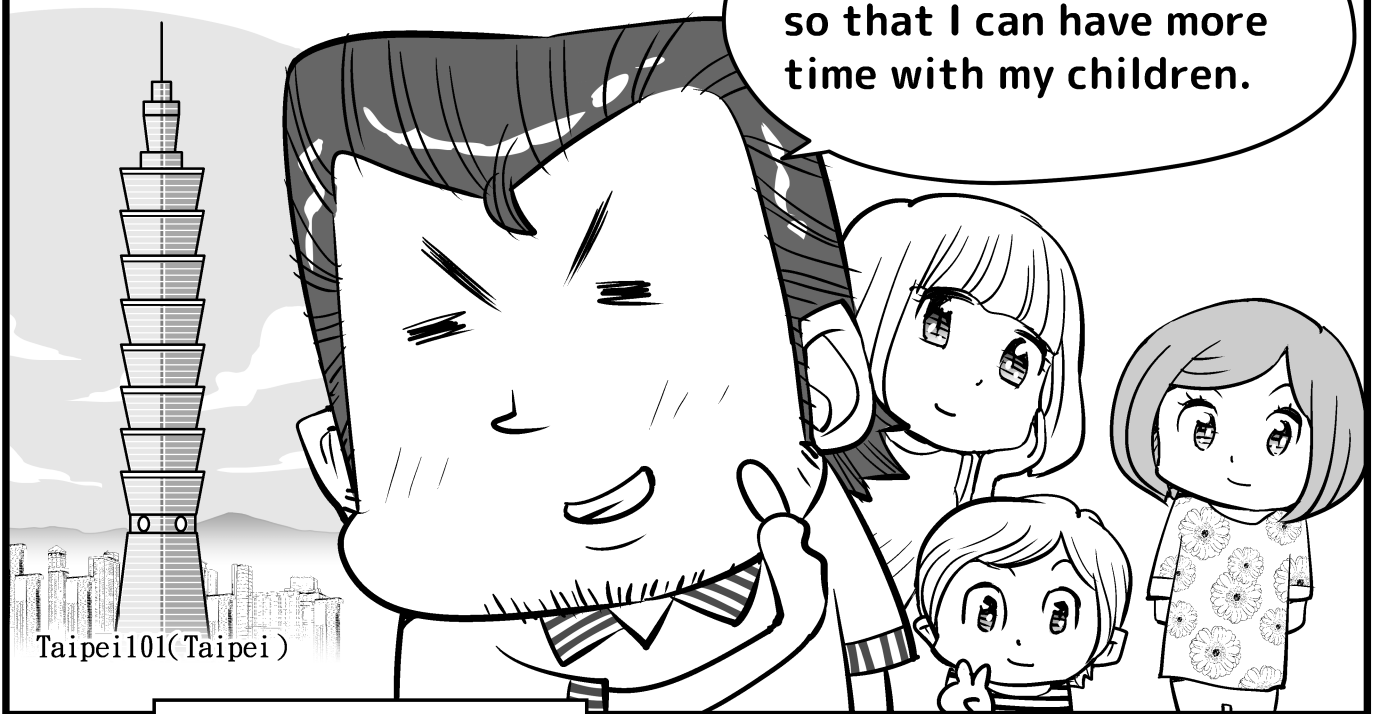


My way of balancing life and work

Mr. KAWADA Kenichi (44)

WATANABE Yukinori (Story)
MAEDA Musashi (Manga)



I am from Hamamatsu City,
Shizuoka Prefecture.

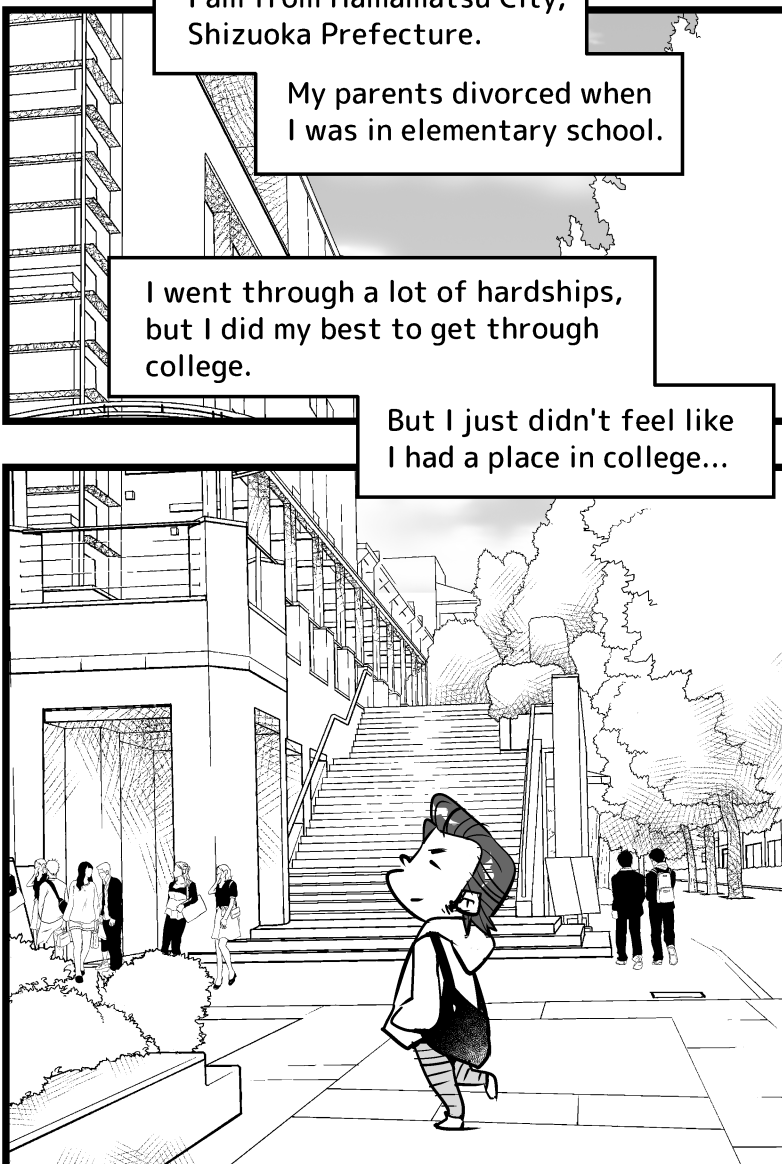
My parents divorced when
I was in elementary school.

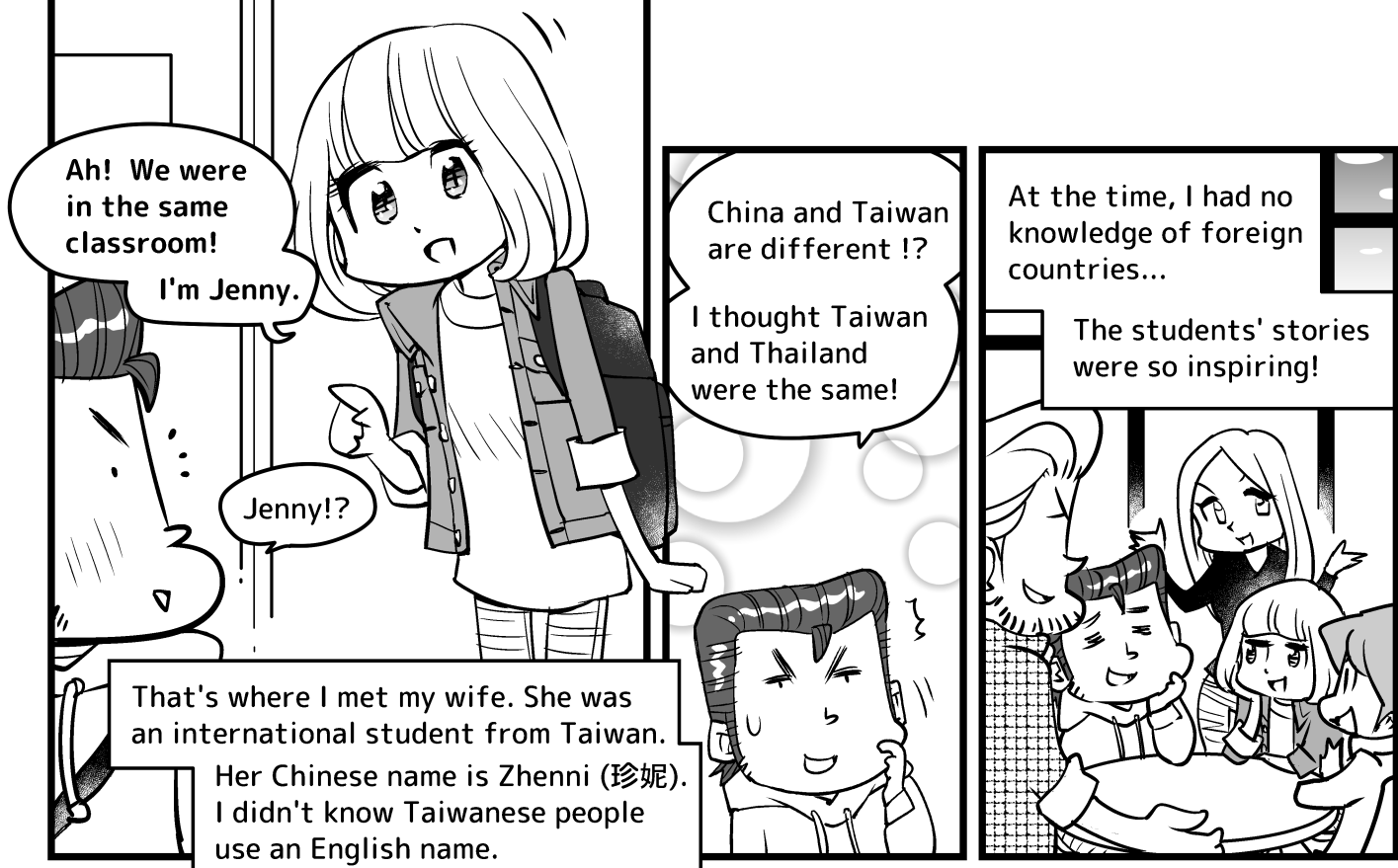
I went through a lot of hardships,
but I did my best to get through
college.

But I just didn't feel like
I had a place in college...

For some reason, I was
hanging out in the
student lounge at my
university.

It just happened to be the
hangout spot for
international students.





Ah! We were in the same classroom!
I'm Jenny.

Jenny!?

China and Taiwan are different !?
I thought Taiwan and Thailand were the same!

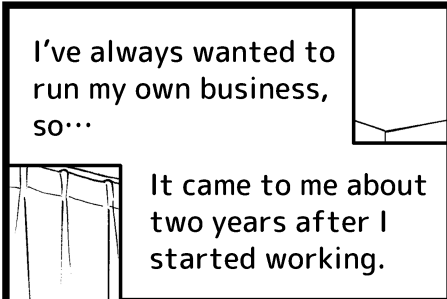
At the time, I had no knowledge of foreign countries...
The students' stories were so inspiring!

That's where I met my wife. She was an international student from Taiwan.
Her Chinese name is Zhenni (珍妮). I didn't know Taiwanese people use an English name.



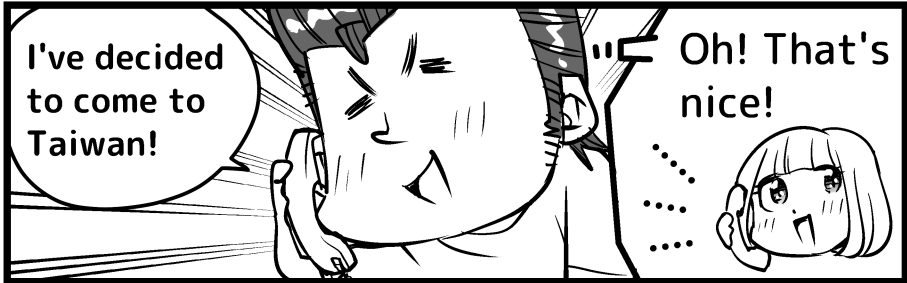
After graduating from college, she returned to Taiwan...

I guess I'll get a job for now.



I've always wanted to run my own business, so...

It came to me about two years after I started working.



I've decided to come to Taiwan!

Oh! That's nice!



Nie Hao! Jenny How are you?

Oh! Kenichi, what's up?



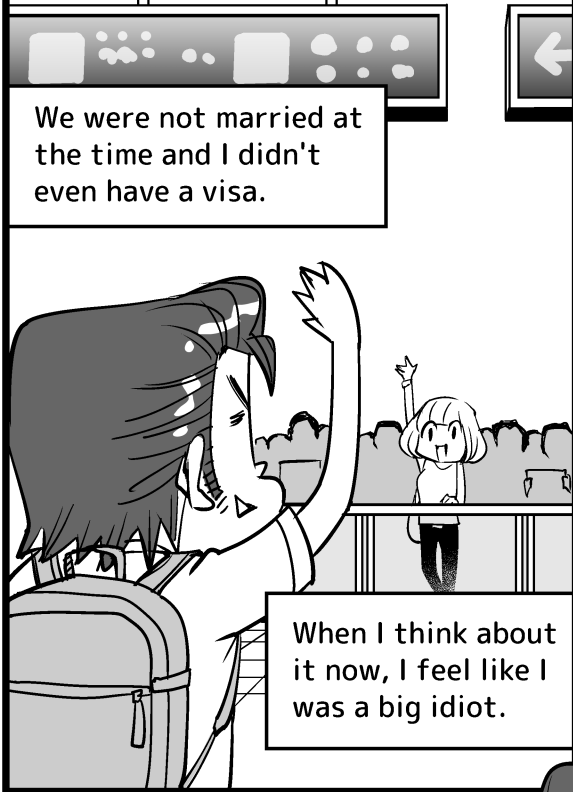
So the next day, I handed in my resignation to my boss...

What!?



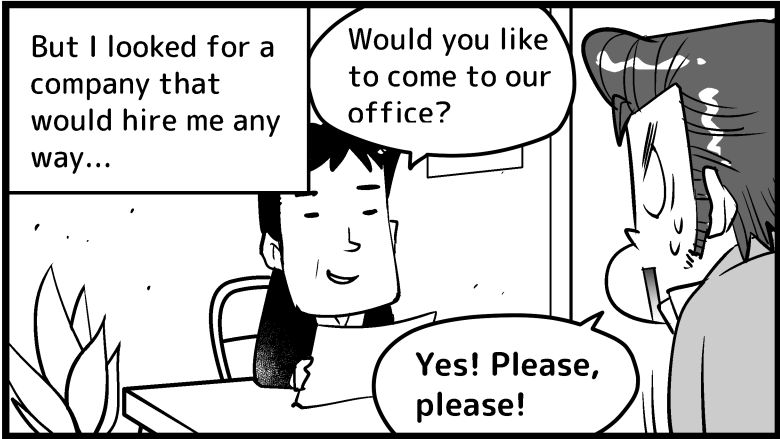
and flew to Taiwan immediately.

Whoosh!



We were not married at the time and I didn't even have a visa.

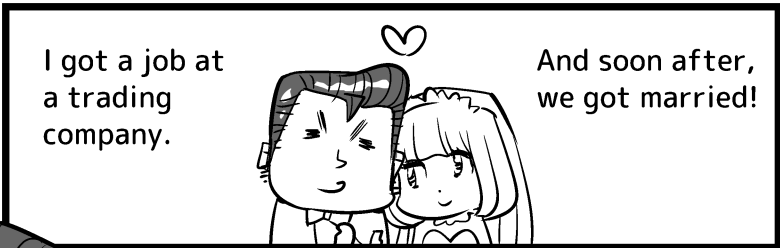
When I think about it now, I feel like I was a big idiot.



But I looked for a company that would hire me any way...

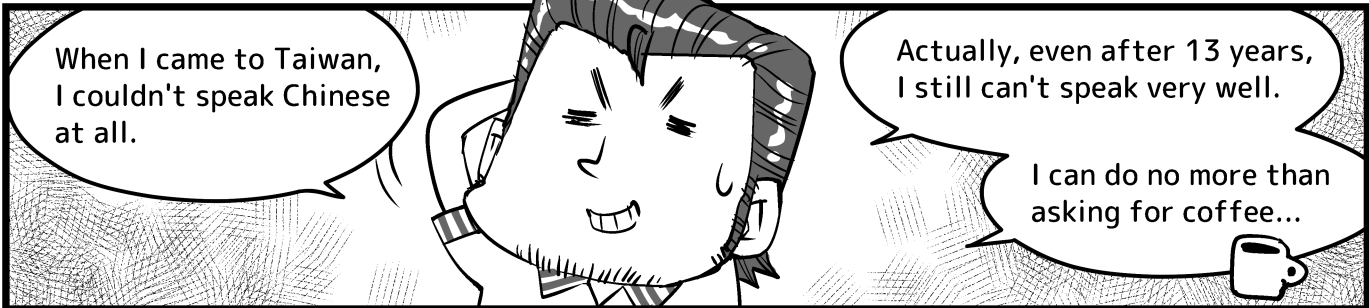
Would you like to come to our office?

Yes! Please, please!



I got a job at a trading company.

And soon after, we got married!



When I came to Taiwan, I couldn't speak Chinese at all.

Actually, even after 13 years, I still can't speak very well.

I can do no more than asking for coffee...

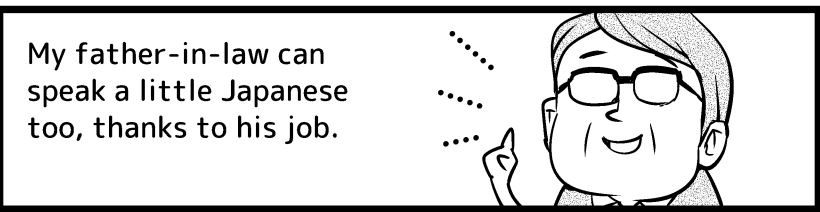


I didn't come to learn Chinese, and...

I came to Taiwan to start a business, so...

I was never interested in studying languages.

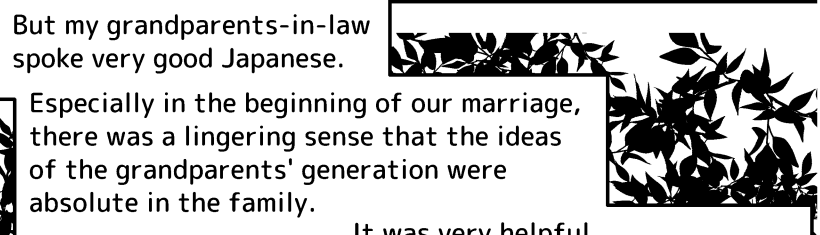
I now run my own company.



My father-in-law can speak a little Japanese too, thanks to his job.



My mother-in-law can't speak Japanese at all.

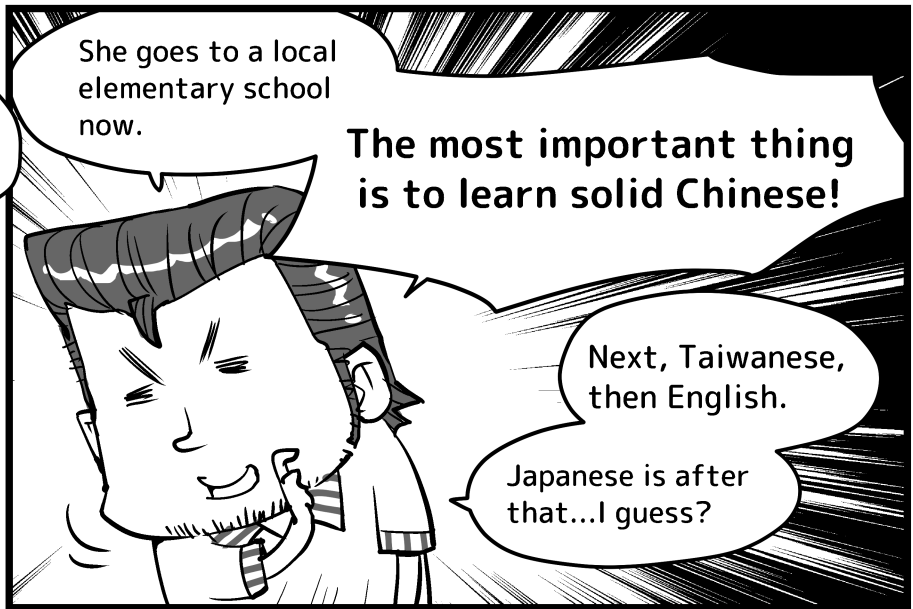
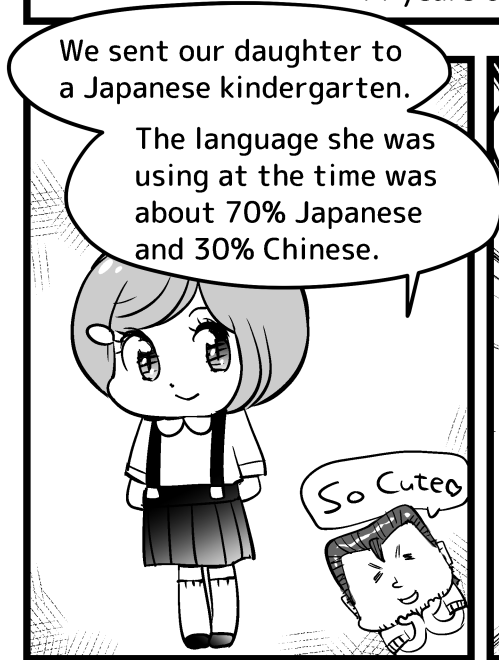
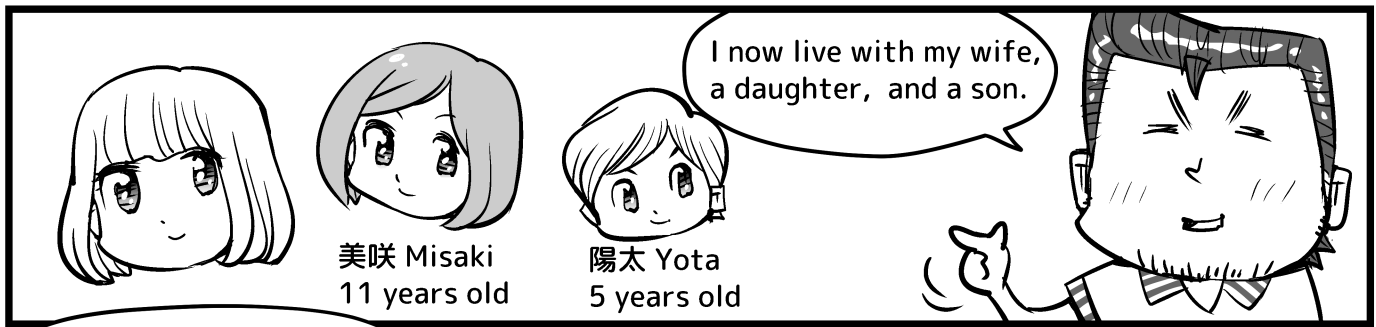


But my grandparents-in-law spoke very good Japanese.

Especially in the beginning of our marriage, there was a lingering sense that the ideas of the grandparents' generation were absolute in the family.

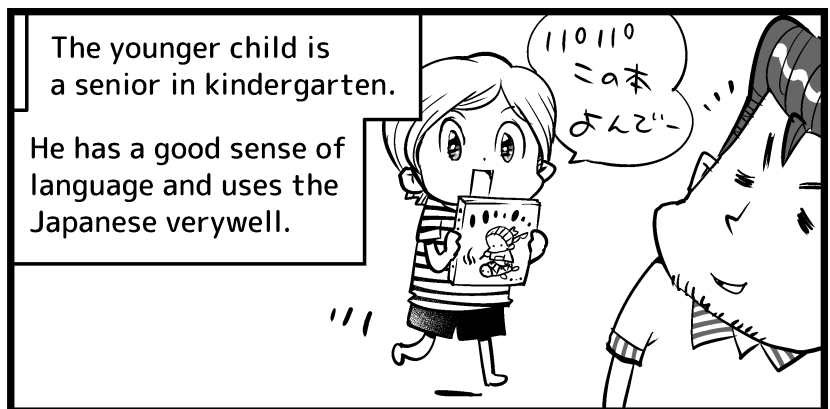
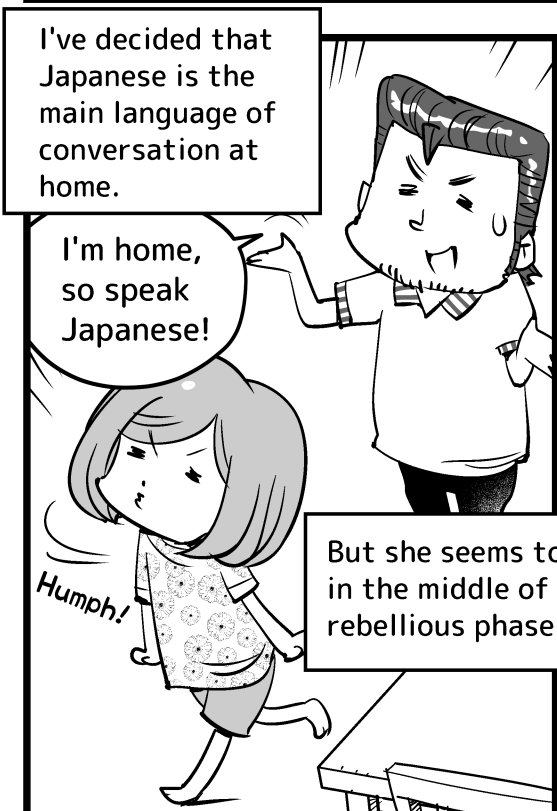
It was very helpful that we could speak with my grandparents-in-law in Japanese.





The Taiwanese Minnan language (台灣閩南語)

The Taiwanese Minnan language, like other ethnic languages, signifies a tool of a succession of ethnic identity, as well as a signal to show that one belongs to the ethnic group that shares the same language.





It doesn't have to be so native kind of Japanese.

At least they can talk and read..., and write a little...



I didn't put a lot of effort into languages, so it was hard.

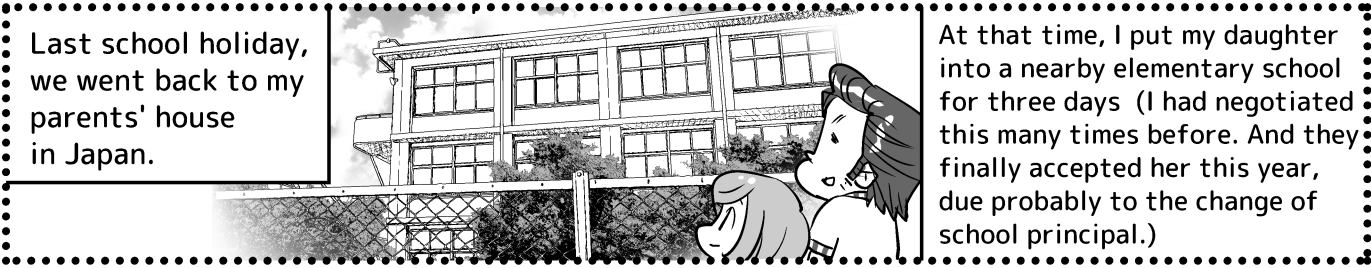
After all, I don't want my children to have the same hardship with languages like I have.

I want to prepare my children for things they might want to do in the future.



In the future, I think it's a good idea for them to go to a Japanese university...

and to use Japanese as a second language



Last school holiday, we went back to my parents' house in Japan.

At that time, I put my daughter into a nearby elementary school for three days (I had negotiated this many times before. And they finally accepted her this year, due probably to the change of school principal.)



Taiwan is very individualistic, for better or worse.

For example, a sports day.

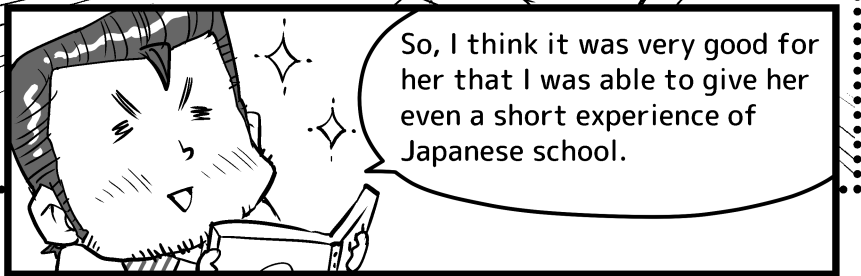


They come at different times, and when their own activities are over, they each go home without watching the others play.



My wife said, the way of holding sports day used to be similar to Japan, but it's changed in the last 20 years.

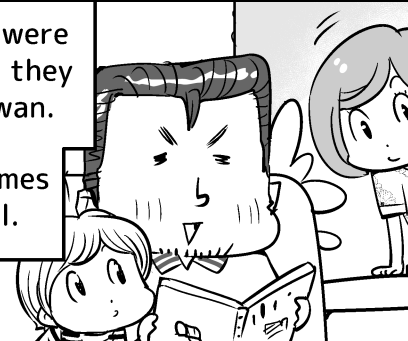
They learn a lot, but they don't even know how to clean, they don't know how to squeeze a rag...



So, I think it was very good for her that I was able to give her even a short experience of Japanese school.

The children's names were in Japanese style and they are so unusual in Taiwan.

So, they were sometimes made fun of at school.



Naming of children

- The naming of children symbolizes parents' thoughts on the child at the time. There are three major patterns, which are as follows: 1) two sets of names (Japanese and Chinese), like Mr. Tochigi's;
- 2) two family names (Japanese and Chinese), and one given name in the same Chinese character, like Mr. Yoshizawa's. In some cases, characters that have similar pronunciation in Japanese and Chinese are chosen; and 3) Japanese names only, like Mr. Kawada's.

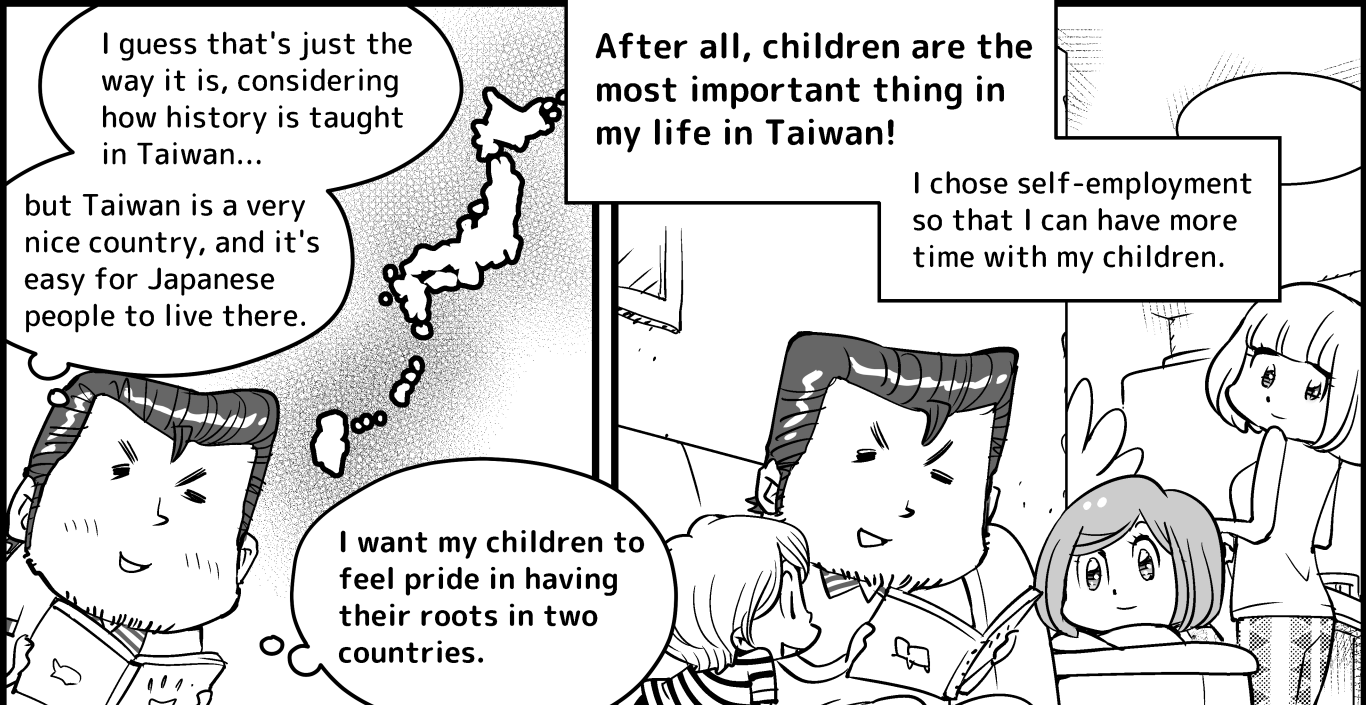
I guess that's just the way it is, considering how history is taught in Taiwan...

but Taiwan is a very nice country, and it's easy for Japanese people to live there.

After all, children are the most important thing in my life in Taiwan!

I chose self-employment so that I can have more time with my children.

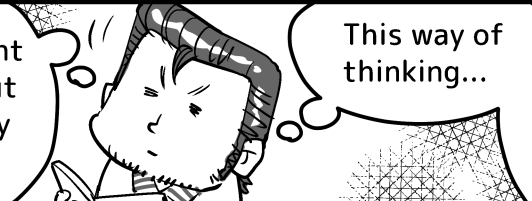
I want my children to feel pride in having their roots in two countries.



I believe that the most important thing parents should think about is the environment in which they raise their children.

This way of thinking...

This way of thinking... I wonder if it has something to do with my own parents being divorced...



When the kids aren't at school, they're with us most of the time.



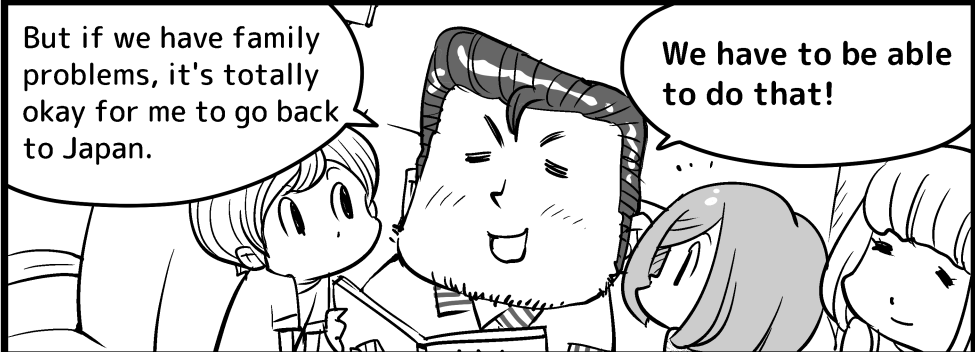
My work is based in Taiwan.

So I have no plans to return to Japan at the moment...



But if we have family problems, it's totally okay for me to go back to Japan.

We have to be able to do that!



Updated June 6, 2020

The "Ikumen" a father who voluntarily takes care of his children

Japanese fathers in Taiwan also share the "Ikumen" discourse. They think they are different from their father's generation, and it is an important role they must fulfill to actively and voluntarily participate in child rearing. Some say they just do it because they like it.