

Part 2
A-bomb led me as an independent technician
(9)
English conversation tutoring for ten years

When I ever think of my life without the knowledge of English language, I feel as if I were not as successful a man as I am nor even had my comfortable life. I would even shudder at the mere thought of that. I tried to aim at being able to speak English with native like pronunciation and intonation from young hood. Hawaii born mother played my teacher as far as those elements are concerned.

The neighborhood mothers came to know of my presence, and they began to come and ask me to teach English conversation to their children. The English class started in the evening after my work at home with some three or four children from the beginning. My reputation invited more and more students and even came the personal lesson inquiries by my visiting the students' home.

“Teaching is learning” is something that I experienced at that time. When I taught high school students, I tried to speak almost in English, which was good for my English speaking practice, too. Many of them told me that that way of teaching them brought good consequences to them the later years.

My experience makes me able to say that English learner's good pronunciation accomplishment depends greatly on their meeting with a good teacher in an early stage of childhood, whether they were taught right or not. On the contrary, when grown up, students become too shy to imitate what the teacher pronounces. The learners must try to pretend to be obedient like a baby who imitates what its mother says.

The well known English conversation radio lesson right after the war was NHK English conversation hour that started with a Japanese children's melody of “Come, come everybody, how do you do and how are you? Won't you have some candy. One and two and three, four, five. Let's all sing a happy song. Sing tra la la la la”. The teacher, Mr. Tadaichi Hirakwa, used to say, “Try to be like a baby when you learn how to speak good English.” I was one of the fervent students of the radio lesson.

This English tutoring experience of mine lasted for about ten years, and did good and epoch making effects in the following years to come.