

# Interview with Cassie

Today I am going to interview an English teacher, Cassie Sampson, working for italki. Cassie, could you first briefly introduce yourself?

Sure, my name is Cassie and I currently live in Tokyo, Japan. I was born and raised in Okinawa, but when I was ten years old, I moved to the United States and everything since then has completely been done in English and so when I moved back to Japan, I decided to become an English teacher and until now I've been working in schools, but recently I decided I should try

working online, so that's how I found italki and that's why I'm here now.

## 1. What's your native language?

My native language is English. Sometimes at home my mom would speak to me in just a little bit of Japanese, but not really because we're in a completely English environment. We lived on the American military base and everything was completely done in English. So the only thing she would really speak to me in Japanese were like kids Japanese, for example, like colors and objects but I never really learned Japanese properly, for example, like how to make a proper sentence. I never learned how to do that.

## 2. How did the teachers teach you English in elementary school?

The elementary school I went to was also on the American military base. So we had an American agenda. For example, they would teach us how to write cursive even though I don't know if that's really taught in elementary schools any more, but we had to learn basically how to write the letters, I guess, kind of like what would be normal for Japanese elementary school students, and then we started a little bit of creative writing, for example, you know, just what you did that day. It would be a little journal entry, so there would be one topic and

you would have to write one paragraph about the topic.

3. What did you learn in junior high school?

In junior high school we really got into creative writing and we had to do a lot of poetry. I remember entering a poetry contest because I really liked to read in elementary school, especially, poetry books. So I entered a poetry contest and I actually won first place when I was about eleven years old.

4. What kind of assignments did you have in high school?

In high school it was kind of like we went back to elementary school and we had to do longer writing sessions, mostly essays, about a specific topic and I think they started wondering more about our opinions. So in high school we were able to form our own opinions and say why we feel the way that we do. So we would have to write essays about that and then we would also read various books and write summaries on those.

5. What did you have to write about in college?

In college it's more about social issues and so for example stereotypes within the world. Why do you think stereotypes exist? And give your three main reasons

for it. So it will be a lot of kind of opinionated essays mostly about social issues. These were more advanced topics and sometimes we'd have to read more literary books, more novels, and then also do write a report on it.

6. Do you ever write in your free time?

Actually I do. I like to play the guitar. When I was about 14, I started writing my own music and so basically just like poetry but also I have a guitar. So when I was younger, I always loved writing poetry. As I got older, it just kind of evolved into something that had more elements to it. And, yeah, I still do until now.

7. How did you meet your husband and how did you get married?

Okay, it's an interesting story. My husband and I met in Osaka. A few years ago we were both living there but not together. So we were just friends at the time. We met in a park in Osaka. And so we were friends and we played pokémon together and then he decided to move to France. He is also a native English speaker. He is from the UK but he taught himself French. So he decided to move to France. And then also at that time I was already thinking about moving to Europe. So about 3 months later, I moved to Germany to do some volunteer work and I told him I was moving to Germany, so

we thought about meeting up. So he said, “Why don’t we meet up in Italy?” And so we spent time in Italy together. That’s when we started dating. And then we decided, because I was living in Germany at that time and he was living in France, we decided to move somewhere together, somewhere a bit warmer, so we decided to move to Spain. We lived in Spain for about a year. And then we decided to get married in Europe and the best way to do it was to go to Denmark. That’s the easiest way to do it. So actually we went to Denmark rather than stay in Spain. So we took a trip to Denmark and we got married and then after that we decided we wanted to move back to Japan, so



that's why we decided to move back to Tokyo.

8. Can you give us an idea of how Japanese people can speak English like you?

Sure. My philosophy about language is that language is unconscious and we're not always thinking about how to make a sentence in our head. It just comes out unconsciously because we've been doing it for such a long time and we're just used to it. So, for example, if you play the piano for a long time, if you play the same song so many times, you can just play it by its own muscle memory so basically, unconsciously and that's how it is for language. So as babies, we can't

read, we can't write, we can't speak, we can't do anything, right? We just listen and then we copy people. So I think that the best way to learn languages, in my opinion, is to do as much listening and input practice as you can. So watching TV, watching movies, listening to podcast, listening to the radio, just going out to a café, if you are in the country of the language that you want to speak, and listen to people interacting with each other in a natural way, and I think that once you do a lot of input practice, then you can start outputting and you'll realize that it kind of comes naturally to you rather than having to think about, okay, where does this word go and what word should I put after it, what kind of

grammar should I use here. Of course you're gonna have to do that with everything, but if you do a lot of input practice, then it'll come more naturally and you'll be able to speak faster.

Great! I'm sure Japanese students have enjoyed listening to your views.

Thank you for sharing your time with us.