

TITLE: Learning English Changed Me From Shy To Active

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys.

My name is Sadako Yokoi.

You might be very surprised that someone my age would compete in this contest.

Now I want to tell you how much I love English.

For example, there are many names of foreign friends in my address book.

I will continue my story and tell you how we got to know each other.

One day, about 30 years ago, I was on an airplane flight to Dallas, Texas, USA with my husband.

In the airplane, on my right side was a lady who looked about 50 years old. She told me her hometown was Dallas, and she was one of a 14 members tour group.

Her group had left USA two weeks before and they had enjoyed Thailand.

She and I met on her way back to Dallas.

Her name was Ms. Nancy. She was on an aisle seat.

So, she and I became friends very soon. But I couldn't speak enough English.

It meant we could not continue our conversation for a very long.

So, I showed her how to make "orizuru" a folded crane. I presented it to her.

She was very pleased. She went to other tour members and showed them the orizuru.

And also, she told them Sadako is making orizuru for all members.

Of course, I wanted to do so, and I had told her that beforehand.

I made orizuru one after another. I finished 13 orizurus and presented them to all

the tour members. They were very pleased to receive my present.

And they said "thank you very much", "it is nice", "I like Japanese" and

"you can speak English".

When I heard their words, I felt very happy. I decided to continue learning English.

After that trip, Nancy and I sometimes exchanged letters and photographs.

There are names of friends from other countries in my address book, too.

They are Australian, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese and German.

I met them all by chance or through my husband's work, and we exchanged greetings

in English with warm feelings for each other.

I really want to tell you that learning English led me to wonderful new friends.

Yes, learning English gave me beautiful experiences and happiness.

Also, learning English changed my character from shy to active.

Thank you for listening. Thank you very much.