Independent Japanese Study

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Max Pensack
Max’s Experience

● No formal Japanese before JET
  ○ No conversational skills
  ○ Learned kana (syllabaries) independently

● Used independent study materials, flashcards, and teachers in Japan
  ○ Studied kanji, and vocabulary first, then focused more on speaking

● Failed high on JLPT N3 in July!
Jonathon’s Experience

- Self-taught Hiragana/Katakana
- 2 years of Japanese at university
  - Conversation-based classes
- 1 year study abroad in Japan
- ALT 3 years
- (Barely) passed JLPT 1 in Feb 2012
- 7.5 years of total study
SLA: Theoretical Background

- Social/ Social Psychological Theories
  - LA depends on your community and social context

Linguistic Theories

- LA is a mental process

Nativist and Empiricist Models

- Grammatical/ Cognitive Structures vs. Input and Performance
Levels (JLPT)

- **N1**: The ability to understand Japanese used in a variety of circumstances
- **N2**: The ability to understand Japanese used in everyday situations, and in a variety of circumstances to a certain degree
- **N3**: The ability to understand Japanese used in everyday situations to a certain degree
- **N4**: The ability to understand basic Japanese
- **N5**: The ability to understand some basic Japanese
Levels (JLPT and Others)

- Basic (N5)
- Beginner (N4)
- Elementary (Low Intermediate)
- Intermediate (N3)
- Proficient (High Intermediate) (N2)
- Advanced (N1)
- Working Proficiency
- Fluent
- Native
- Genius
Beginner’s Guide

- Master Hiragana and Katakana
  - Many resources, I recommend Heisig’s book
- Study vocabulary
  - Keep a notebook
  - Seek out pre-made vocabulary lists.
    - By JLPT level
    - By frequency
    - By textbook introduction
Beginner’s Guide

- Speak as much as possible
  - Make friends
  - Talk at school
  - Chat with random folks
- Be inquisitive
  - Carry pen and paper!
- Put yourself in Japanese-intensive situations and adapt!
Intermediate Goals/Focus

● SMART Goals
  ○ Break these down by skill
    ■ Kanji/ Vocab
    ■ Reading/ Writing
    ■ Speaking

● Focus on your interests
  ○ Professional
  ○ Personal/ Social
  ○ Intellectual/ Creative
Intermediate Goals/Focus

- Work on using “desu/masu” and casual forms correctly
- Drop personal pronouns
- Try to start studying and thinking in Japanese
- Use your “language switch”
Advanced Learners

- If you don’t use it, you lose it
- Find new ways to study
- Study different types of Japanese
  - Keigo
  - Written vs. Spoken
  - Old Japanese
Advanced Learners

- Study certain topics in depth
- Learn some dialects
- Enter a speech contest
- Take tests other than the JLPT
Study Hacks

- Defining your goals helps you know how to study
- Be an active learner
- Be well-rounded
- Find what works for you
- Don’t be afraid to change it up
Study Hacks

- Kanji Specific
  - Learn kanji in a smart order
  - Use radicals or something like them!
  - Learn kanji by common compounds, common meanings, antonyms, and common readings.

- Use Quiz and Recall (i.e. flashcards) for big memorization tasks
Study Hacks

- Use your creativity
  - Draw pictures
  - Create mnemonics
  - Get dirty
- Use mistakes to your advantage
- Ask when you don’t know!
- Supplement active learning with passive learning
JLPT (the boring details...)

[http://www.jlpt.jp/e/](http://www.jlpt.jp/e/)

- **What:** tests proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, reading and listening
- **When:** July and December
- **Where:** Major cities in Japan
  - Kumamoto, Fukuoka, etc...
- **Why:**
  - Gives you a goal
  - Good measure of your proficiency
  - Looks good on a resume
How to study for the JLPT

- Take practice tests
  - www.jlpt.jp/e/reference/books.html
- Focus on your weak areas
- Study with a sempai
- N5-3 “Nihongo So-Matome” series
- N2-N1 lots and lots of reading!
  - Recommend 実力アップ series
  - Reading takes care of vocab and kanji
Max’s Current Books

An Introduction to Modern Japanese

A DICTIONARY OF BASIC JAPANESE GRAMMAR

KANJI IN CONTEXT
Max’s Current Books

1. ジャングル・ブック
2. BREAKING INTO JAPANESE LITERATURE
3. チョコレート工場の秘密
Jonathon’s Favorites
Websites

www.alljapaneseallthetime.com/blog/
www3.nhk.or.jp/news/easy/index.html
www.tofugu.com
www.jisho.org
kanji.koohii.com
www.japanesepod101.com
www3.nhk.or.jp/lesson/english/
www.guidetojapanese.org/learn/
www.alc.co.jp/
www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/cgi-bin/wwwjdic.cgi?9T (Jim Breen WWWJDIC)
kakijun.jp/main/point.html
スマホ Apps/ Computer Apps

- Anki
- imiwa?
- iKanji
- jFlash
- Apple Dictionary
- i-Sokki
- Tae Kim’s Guide to Learning Japanese
- MindSnacks - Japanese
- Mango Languages
- Rosetta Stone
横

side, beside

Show Reading
Show RTK Key Word
Show RTK Story
郊外

suburb

Show Reading
郊外

suburb

こうがい
Japanese People

● Make friends but don’t just use people for practice
● Ask to be corrected
● Make friends who speak little English
● Learn from a variety of people
Uncommon Materials

- Pen and Paper!
- Writing Letters
- Media
  - With reservations
- Boyfriend/
  Girlfriend --------->
Max’s Burnout Tips

● Take breaks!
  ○ Use a timer
  ○ Vacation to English-land!
  ○ Use different resources

● Use BOTH compliments and corrections as motivational fuel!
Jonathon’s Burnout Tips

- Manage your expectations
- Self-reflection
- Don’t compare yourself to others
- Take it slow and steady
Top Ten Signs You Know You’ve Been in Japan Too Long:

- 10 You bow on the phone
- 9 You don’t pull over for flashing police lights
- 8 You think noodles are an acceptable filling for sandwiches
- 7 You point out “gaijin”
- 6 You order a mayonnaise and corn pizza
- 5 You interrupt your friends and family constantly by saying “uh-huh”
- 4 You ask people to “teach” you their phone number
- 3 You wait for the taxi doors to open even when abroad
- 2 When you answer the question “How are you?” by saying, “I’m fine, thank you.”
- 1 When the phrase お上手ですね makes you angry
Q&A

Let's questioning and feedbacking!

I Moustache you a question

But I'm shaving it for later

God why?!

Why did you invent dogs?!
Thank you

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

BUT WAIT THERE'S MORE!
Try Different Tests

- Business Japanese Proficiency Test
  - www.kanken.or.jp/bjt
- Kanken (Kanji Kentei)
  - www.kanken.or.jp/kanken
- Bunshoken
  - www.kanken.or.jp/bunshoken
- Nihongo Kentei
  - www.nihongokentei.jp/info/exam/outline.html
Avoid Textbook Japanese

- Spoken Japanese is very different from written Japanese
- Pay attention to how people actually speak and try to imitate that—drop personal pronouns
- If you study books too much, you’ll probably start to sound like one
- Don’t try to directly translate everything you would say in English—some phrases do not translate well
- Learn how to use phrases that are found only in Japanese (よろしく、お疲れ、お世話になった)
Maximize Speaking Time

- If you find yourself speaking more English than you’d like:
  - Try speaking to yourself in Japanese when doing otherwise mundane, mindless tasks like laundry or dishes (warning: you may start to go crazy)
  - Try speaking to your native English speaker friends in Japanese from time to time for kicks and giggles
  - Pushing yourself to make Japanese friends who don’t know much English will force you to try out your Japanese
Learn the Local Dialect

- Great way to connect with the local community
- Interesting way to know more about the local culture and people
- Almost always brings a smile to the hearer’s face
- Challenge for those who have reached a “plateau” in their Japanese studies
- Learning dialects from around Japan can also be useful
  - The Kansai dialect is popular among non-Japanese in Japan and is used often in TV and movies
Take Notes

● Keep a written record of words you:
  ○ Want to use in daily conversation
  ○ Want to know how to say in Japanese
  ○ Find funny, interesting or inspirational
● Taking notes makes you a more active learner
● Asking about or using words in your notes can lead to interesting conversations and even more words
● Tangible proof of your effort which can be used during self-reflection
Blog, Vlog or Journal

- Encourages you to write or speak frequently in Japanese
- Your text/videos can be checked by a native speaker for accuracy and thus used as a study tool
- Like taking notes, these things are tangible proof of your effort and thus can be looked back on during self-reflection
- A fun way to review what you’ve learned
Read Educational Manga

- As you hopefully know by now, manga can be educational and are a legitimate study tool.
- My recommendations for interesting, insightful manga are:
  - The “日本人の知らない日本語” series
  - 日本人が気づいていないちょっとヘンな日本語
  - 日本人でも知らない！？外国人の大疑問
  - The 大の字 series  by さおり and トニー
Enter a Speech Contest

- The Japan Foundation holds a speech contest in Japan every year, which goes by the name of 外国人による弁論大会
- Speech contests offer you the chance to refine and polish your Japanese to a high level by working with a friend, tutor or professor
- Challenge for those who have reached a “plateau” in their Japanese studies
- You’ll see what your kids go through when they have to memorize English for the recitation contest
Study Pop Culture

- Try watching movies or anime in Japanese with Japanese subtitles--improve your listening and reading skills at the same time
- Listen to music while looking at the lyric booklet (Renting CDs in Japan is common and convenient)
- Read manga, popular novels or magazines
- Watch TV--thankfully for us it often includes subtitles
- Studying pop culture will give you something to talk about with your co-workers and kids as well as improve your Japanese--what a good way to study!
Video Games

- Japan has a huge video game industry
- Try re-playing some of your childhood favorites in Japanese
- Trying to get through a game in Japanese can be good motivation to study
- Video games can become a topic of conversation
- Much more fun than hitting the books
- Good for when you need a break from hardcore studying but still want to do something with Japanese