Practical Guide to Basic Japanese, Lingustics Patterns and Computer Processing

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INDRANIL NATH

Practical Guide to Basic Japanese, Linguistics patterns and Computer Processing

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by

Indranil Nath

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Dedicated to my parents

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PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to teach students with no previous background in Japanese to learn the basic Japanese language, Japanese Information Processing and Culture. It also aims to give the reader studying with a teacher a good grounding in spoken Japanese, enable him to communicate in most simple everyday situations and concentrate on learning the two kana scripts - Hiragana & Katakana, including recognizing Kanji through comprehension. The main topics include being Japanese writing system, the elements of Japanese grammar and other related texts. The book is designed to serve as a text for self or group study and formal Japanese courses. The several features that you will find helpful are;

1. Every grammatical point is illustrated with examples sentences in Japanese, accompanied by translations;
2. English translations are provided for portions of the Japanese exercises and Dialogues;
3. In addition to these, other chapters discuss Japanese etiquette and salutations.

Thus, at every stage, you will be able to gauge your progress and assess your mastery of the writing system, grammar, and daily usage of vocabulary. I have also reproduced one of my papers on Computer Processing of Japanese Language Text published in the Journal of Information Studies, Ranganathan Centre for Information Studies, India, Vol 2 No.3, July 1996. It discusses the Japanese Character sets and encoding methods in computers, which will give some idea of Japanese information processing techniques in one of the chapters while learning Japanese as a language. This book is the basis of various Japanese Language, Cultural and Computer Processing of Japanese text training programs conducted by me. Most of the materials in this book have been class-tested. I am very grateful to the students who, having no previous background in Japanese, laboured many hours to master the material and offered many suggestions for improving the manuscript. Start with Section 1.4 Japanese Syllables to learn the script and then read the book. This book aims to give the reader studying with a teacher a good grounding in general purpose Japanese language and to enable him to communicate in most simple everyday situations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The languages of China and Japan have different origins, and their linguistics are very different. However, since the Japanese had no script of their own, they adopted the Chinese scripts. Modern Japanese is written in a mixture of Chinese characters (Kanji) and syllabic signs (Kana) developed from the characters by the Japanese.

Topics Covered

1. Japanese has a reputation for being a difficult language.
2. Cumbersome writing system, which combines well over 2,000 Chinese characters
3. Two separate native Japanese syllables (Hiragana and Katakana).
4. Simple pronunciation
5. Need not worry about genders
6. Number and the inflexions of the verb are far fewer than in most European languages.
7. Pronunciation of Japanese vowels
8. Japanese Phonology
9. Kana
10. Romanization of Japanese
11. Non-Standard Romanization
12. Japanese Character Set Standard
13. Japanese Encoding Method
14. Code Conversion Techniques

SECTION 1.1 INTRODUCTIONS TO THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE

The languages of China and Japan have different origins, and their linguistics are very different. However, since the Japanese had no script of their own, they adopted the Chinese scripts. Modern Japanese is written in a mixture of Chinese characters (Kanji), and syllabic signs (Kana) developed from the characters by the Japanese. It is usually written vertically, in the column running from top to bottom, and following on from right to left across the page. An equal space is allowed for the writing of each character and kana, but no space is left between words.

Japanese has a reputation for being a difficult language. This difficulty stems from the cumbersome writing system, combining over 2,000 Chinese characters with two native Japanese syllables (Hiragana and Katakana). In other respects, the Japanese language is not particularly difficult to learn. The relatively simple pronunciation makes it possible to produce perfectly understandable sentences after the first few hours of study. There is no need to worry about genders and numbers; the inflexions of the verb are far fewer than in most European languages. With sustained application, you can achieve a surprising degree of fluency in basic conversation in a short time.

SECTION 1.2 PRONUNCIATIONS OF JAPANESE VOWELS

The pronunciation of Japanese vowels is the same as in Italian or Spanish; that of consonants is as in English. Let us look into a few of them.

Short Vowels -

    Example: a   as in father

                e   as in pen

Combined Vowels -

Example:

    ei = e + i   sounded as in day

    au = a + u   sounded as in out

Double consonants (is given the full value of pronunciation)

Example:

    A double c is usually written and always

    Pronounced as tc;

      i.e. Yatta (gave)   =   Yat + ta

         Kitta (cut)   =   Kit + ta

U (is nearly mute in Japanese except where it is the initial syllable. Particularly where "u" follows a 's', it is not articulated.)

Example:

desu as in "Dare desu ka ?" (Who is it ?) is pronounced des, as in desperate.

n (occurring before 'b', 'p' changes to "m" in sound.)

Example:

Shin + bun   =   Shimbun (newspaper)

Shin + pai   =   Shimpai (worry)

JAPANESE PHONOLOGY

The pronunciation of Early Old Japanese (EOJ), the language of the Nara period and slightly earlier, was straightforward. There were thirteen (13) consonants, eight (8) vowels, and a straightforward syllable structure. Virtually every syllable was CV (i.e., consonant + vowel), and so most words had the patterns CV, CVCV, CVCVCV etc. This meant that no two consonants ever came into contact. No two vowels, even, came into contact within a word. Only a handful of words began with a vowel (i.e. V, VCV, VCVCV etc.); in poetry, it was common practice that if two vowels occurred in a row, one would drop, or occasionally the two would fuse to create a single new vowel. Often this 'fusion' was not written, but it is to be inferred. Whenever you see a line with six or eight syllables instead of the usual five or seven, look at it carefully – usually, you'll see two vowels in a row.

CONSONANTS

	Bilabial	Alveolar1	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Nasal	m	n			N2	
Plosive3	p b4	t d		k g4		
Fricative		s z5				h8
Flap		ɾ6				
Approximant			j	w7		

Table 1. Japanese phonemes

1. /t, d, n/ are laminal denti-alveolar (that is, the blade of the tongue contacts the back of the upper teeth and the front part of the alveolar ridge) and /s z/ are laminal alveolar. Before /i/, these sounds are alveolo-palatal ([tɕ (d)ʑ nʲ ɕ (d)ʑ]), and before /u̠/ they are alveolar ([ts (d)z n s (d)z]).

2. /N/ is a moraic nasal, fully a stop before another stop, where it becomes homorganic with that consonant but not achieving full occlusion before fricatives or between vowels, where it is realized as a nasal vowel. Word finally, before a pause, it may be realized as a uvular

SECTION 1.3 SCRIPT OF JAPANESE LANGUAGE

The Japanese script was borrowed from China nearly 2000 years ago, and some two thousand years before that, the ancient Chinese had formed these ideograms or characters from the pictures of things they knew. These pictures were gradually squared off and simplified to make it easier to write, changing their shape both in China and Japan.

KANJI

Chinese characters (Kanji) are ideographs, and since one character represents one monosyllabic word, some special device was necessary to adapt this system to the writing of Japanese.

Two methods of adaption were possible, either the meaning of the character be retained, and its sound rejected or the sound retained and the meaning rejected. In fact, they used both methods. Initially, Chinese sounds were largely retained. Thus, characters used in Japanese have at least two readings, and most of them have three or more. (The ON is literally "Chinese sounds", and the KUN is literally "readings" that indicate the meaning).

KANA

It was not until the ninth century that native Japanese syllables (kana) were invented and adopted, and in this sense, the early Heian period marked the turning point in the writing of the Japanese language. Kana are syllables that were made up in Japan by using each syllable as either some part of a kanji or abbreviated from a Kanji. There are two types of Kana, namely, HIRAGANA and KATAKANA.

HIRAGANA

Hiragana is a symbol in a syllabic derived from the Soosho form of the kanji. They were developed during the ninth century and used in writing letters and Waka (Japanese poetry of 31 syllables). Today, the method of writing is used most commonly in society in general, as well as in the Japanese constitution and law, in a mixture of kanji and hiragana, called

Kana-majiri.

The cases in which hiragana is used are as in particles, copula, ending of verbs, adjectives, pronouns, interjections, etc.

ROMANIZATION OF JAPANESE

The romanization of Japanese is the application of the Latin alphabet to write the Japanese language. This method of writing is known as rōmaji (ローマ字), less strictly romaji, literally "Roman letters", sometimes incorrectly transliterated as romanji or rōmanji. There are several different romanization systems. The three main ones are Hepburn romanization, Kunrei-Shiki Rōmaji (ISO 3602), and Nihon-Shiki Rōmaji (ISO 3602 Strict). Variants of the Hepburn system are the most widely used.

Japanese is normally written in logographic characters borrowed from Chinese (kanji) and syllabic scripts (kana), which also ultimately derive from Chinese characters. Rōmaji may be used in any context where Japanese text is targeted at non-Japanese speakers who cannot read kanji or kana, such as for names on street signs and passports and in dictionaries and textbooks for foreign learners of the language. It is also used to transliterate Japanese terms in text written in English (or other languages that uses the Roman alphabet) on Japanese topics such as linguistics, literature, history, and culture. Rōmaji is the most common way to input Japanese into word processors and computers and may also be used to display Japanese on devices that do not support the display of Japanese characters.

All Japanese who have attended elementary school since World War II have been taught to read and write romanized Japanese. Therefore, almost all Japanese are able to read and write Japanese using rōmaji. The earliest Japanese romanization system was based on Portuguese orthography. A Japanese Catholic named Yajiro developed it around 1548. Jesuit presses used the system in a series of printed Catholic books so that missionaries could preach and teach their converts without learning to read Japanese orthography. The most useful of these books for the study of early modern Japanese pronunciation and early attempts at romanization was the Nippo jisho, a Japanese- Portuguese dictionary written in

1603. In general, the early Portuguese system was similar to Nihon-Shiki in its treatment of vowels. Some consonants were transliterated differently: for instance, the /k/ consonant was rendered, depending on the context, as either c or q, and the /ɸ/ consonant (now pronounced /h/) as f, so Nihon no kotoba ("The language of Japan") was spelt Nifon no cotoba. The Jesuits also printed some secular books in romanized Japanese, including the first printed edition of the Japanese classic The Tale of the Heike, romanized as Feiqe no monogatari, and a collection of Aesop's Fables (romanized as Esopo no fabulas). The latter continued to be printed and read after the suppression of Christianity in Japan.

Following the expulsion of Christians from Japan in the late 1590s and early 17th century, rōmaji fell out of use and was only used sporadically in foreign texts until the mid-19th century, when Japan opened up again. The systems used today all developed in the latter half of the 19th century. From the mid-19th century, several systems were developed, culminating in the Hepburn system, named after James Curtis Hepburn, who used it in the third edition of his Japanese–English dictionary, published in 1887. The Hepburn system included a representation of some sounds that have since changed. For example, Lafcadio Hearn's book Kwaidan shows the older kw- pronunciation; in modern Hepburn romanization, this would be written Kaidan (lit., ghost tales.)

In the Meiji era (1868-1912), some Japanese scholars advocated abolishing the Japanese writing system entirely and using rōmaji instead. The Nihon-Shiki romanization was an outgrowth of that movement. Several Japanese texts were published entirely in rōmaji during this period, but they failed to catch on. Later, in the early 20th century, some scholars devised syllabary systems with characters derived from Latin (rather like the Cherokee syllabary); these were even less popular because they were not based on any historical use of the Latin alphabet. Today, the use of Nihon-Shiki for writing Japanese is advocated by the Oomoto sect and some independent organizations.

SECTION 1.4 JAPANESE SYLLABLES

Japanese contains two syllables alphabets, katakana and hiragana. They both represent the same syllables, but each character is different. Each character corresponds to a syllable consisting of a consonant followed by a vowel. The characters are organized into groups, with each group corresponding to a different starting consonant. Within each group, the trailing vowels are "a" (as in cat), "i" (as in ski), "u" (as in rule), "e" (as in bed), and "o" (as in slow). That would seem to follow an orderly pattern, but unfortunately, there are exceptions

HIRAGANA

Hiragana is a symbol in a syllabic derived from the Soosho form of the kanji. It developed during the ninth century and was used in writing letters and Waka (Japanese poetry of 31 syllables). Today, the method of writing is used most commonly in society in general, as well as in the Japanese constitution and law, in a mixture of kanji and hiragana, called Kana-majiri. The cases in which hiragana is used include particles, copula, ending of verbs, adjectives, pronouns, interjections, etc.

KATAKANA

Katakana are syllable symbols made up of some parts of kanji, often the hen or tsukuri radicals. Now a day, katakana is used all by itself only in books for children, telegrams, etc. Formerly, however, katakana and kanji were used together in official publications, scientific and literary essays and so on. In general use today, kanji and hiragana are used together in orthography. The cases where katakana is used are modern foreign names of places, persons, foreign words or recent loan words, onomatopoeic words and so on.

	Hiragana						Katakana				
	a	i	u	e	o		a	i	u	e	o
	あ [a]	い [i]	う [u]	え [e]	お [o]		ア [a]	イ [i]	ウ [u]	エ [e]	オ [o]
k	か [ka]	き [ki]	く [ku]	け [ke]	こ [ko]		カ [ka]	キ [ki]	ク [ku]	ケ [ke]	コ [ko]
s	さ [sa]	し [shi]	す [su]	せ [se]	そ [so]		サ [sa]	シ [shi]	ス [su]	セ [se]	ソ [so]
t	た [ta]	ち [chi]	つ [tsu]	て [te]	と [to]		タ [ta]	チ [chi]	ツ [tsu]	テ [te]	ト [to]
n	な [na]	に [ni]	ぬ [nu]	ね [ne]	の [no]		ナ [na]	ニ [ni]	ヌ [nu]	ネ [ne]	ノ [no]
h	は [ha]	ひ [hi]	ふ [fu]	へ [he]	ほ [ho]		ハ [ha]	ヒ [hi]	フ [fu]	ヘ [he]	ホ [ho]
m	ま [ma]	み [mi]	む [mu]	め [me]	も [mo]		マ [ma]	ミ [mi]	ム [mu]	メ [me]	モ [mo]
y	や [ya]		ゆ [yu]		よ [yo]		ヤ [ya]		ユ [yu]		ヨ [yo]
r	ら [ra]	り [ri]	る [ru]	れ [re]	ろ [ro]		ラ [ra]	リ [ri]	ル [ru]	レ [re]	ロ [ro]
w	わ [wa]				を [wo]		ワ [wa]				ヲ [wo]
n	ん [n]						ン [n]				
g	が [ga]	ぎ [gi]	ぐ [gu]	げ [ge]	ご [go]		ガ [ga]	ギ [gi]	グ [gu]	ゲ [ge]	ゴ [go]
z	ざ [za]	じ [ji]	ず [zu]	ぜ [ze]	ぞ [zo]		ザ [za]	ジ [ji]	ズ [zu]	ゼ [ze]	ゾ [zo]
d	だ [da]	ぢ [ji]	づ [zu]	で [de]	ど [do]		ダ [da]	ヂ [ji]	ヅ [zu]	デ [de]	ド [do]
b	ば [ba]	び [bi]	ぶ [bu]	べ [be]	ぼ [bo]		バ [ba]	ビ [bi]	ブ [bu]	ベ [be]	ボ [bo]
p	ぱ [pa]	ぴ [pi]	ぷ [pu]	ぺ [pe]	ぽ [po]		パ [pa]	ピ [pi]	プ [pu]	ペ [pe]	ポ [po]

Origin of Kana Characters

Both hiragana and katakana are simplified forms of kanji (Chinese characters). Japan had no writing system before Chinese characters were introduced in the first or second century AD. Initially, the Japanese tried to write Chinese, but since Chinese and Japanese are unrelated languages, they also used kanji to represent Japanese sounds. Hiragana and katakana were simplifications of this system of writing.

The hiragana is based on entire characters written in a style of Chinese calligraphy called sōsho (草書), where each Chinese character is written with a few continuous brush strokes. See Handwritten styles for more about this calligraphy. Hiragana emerged around the ninth century as a form of simplified writing used for informal correspondence.

The katakana is based on parts of kanji. They developed from kunten (訓点), a way of annotating Chinese texts so that the Japanese could read them. The earliest examples of kunten date from the end of the eighth century, and the earliest records of katakana being used as an independent form of writing date to around 951 AD.

Kana Development Chart									
Hiragana 平仮名					**Katakana** 片仮名				
あ安	い以	う宇	え衣	お於	ア 阿	イ 伊	ウ 宇	エ 江	オ 於
か加	き機	く久	け計	こ己	カ 加	キ 機	ク 久	ケ 介	コ 己
さ左	し之	す寸	せ世	そ曽	サ 散	シ 之	ス 須	セ 世	ソ 曽
た太	ち知	つ川	て天	と止	タ 多	チ 千	ツ 州川	テ 天	ト 止
な奈	に仁	ぬ奴	ね祢	の乃	ナ 奈	ニ 仁	ヌ 奴	ネ 祢	ノ 乃
は波	ひ比	ふ不	へ部	ほ保	ハ 八	ヒ 比	フ 不	ヘ 部	ホ 保
ま末	み美	む武	め女	も毛	マ 末	ミ 三	ム 牟	メ 女	モ 毛
や也	ゐ以	ゆ由	江江	よ与	ヤ 也	ヰ 以	ユ 由	ヱ 衣	ヨ 與
ら良	り利	る留	れ礼	ろ呂	ラ 良	リ 利	ル 流	レ 礼	ロ 呂
わ和	ゐ爲		ゑ恵	を遠	ワ 和	ヰ 井	ウ 宇	ヱ 恵	ヲ 乎
	ん无							ン 尓	

Text Reading 2 ようちえんに こどもが おおぜい います。

ようちえんのにはにこどもがおおぜいいます。おとこのこもおんなのこもいます。こども
たちのそばにいぬもいます。

Abe 　　:おとこのこはなんににますか。
Kimura　:ひとり、ふたり、さんにん、よんにん、ごにん、ろくにん、しちにん、はちに
　　　　　ん、くにん、じゅうにん、じゅいちにん、じゅににん、じゅうよにん、じゅご
　　　　　にん。おとこのこはじゅうごににます。

Text 2.1 あなたは まいあさ なんじに おきますか。

sensei 　: 　あなたはまいあさなんじにおきますか。
gakusei : 　わたしはまいあさろくじにおきます。
sensei 　: 　あなたはまいにちなんじにがっこうへきますか。
gakusei : 　わたしはまいにちくじにがっこうへきます。
sensei 　: 　がっこうはくじにはじまりますか。
gakusei : 　いいえ、くじにははじまりません。くじじっぷんいはじまります。
sensei 　: 　がっこうはなんじにおわりますか。
gakusei : 　げつようびとかようびとすいようびともくようびときにょうびはさんじにお
　　　　　　わります。どようびはじゅういちじにおわります。
sensei 　: 　がっこうのひるやすみはなんぷんぐらいですか。
gakusei : 　がっこうのひるやすみはいちじかんぐらいです。
sensei 　: 　まいにちなんじごろうちへかえりますか。
gakusei : 　まいにちよじごろうちへかえります。
sensei 　: 　よるどこかへいきますか。
gakusei : 　いいえ、どこへもいきません。うちにいます。

Exercise 4 れんしゅう 4

Question 質問 1. Fill in the blanks.

1. ここにみかんが........(2) あります。

2. ここにはがきが........(3) あります。

3. ここにじてんしゃが......(1) あります。

4. ここにほんが........(2) あります。

5. ここにえんぴつが........(1) あります。

6. ここにくつしたが........(6) あります。

7. ここにさかなが..........(12) います。

8. ここにとりが............(?) いますか。

9. ここにかみが............(35) あります。

10. りんこがいくつありますか。............(125) あります。

質問 2. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words.

1. あそこにじどうしゃが............あります。

2. あそこにひとが.............います。

3. あそこにいぬが............いますか。

4. あそこにざっしが..........ありますか。

5. あそこににはとりが..................。

質問 3. Complete the sentences with numbers.

1. 五十円のきってを..........(4) ください。

2. ぎゅうにゅうを............(3) ください。

3. くつを..........(2) ください。

4. おかねを..........(350) ください。

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