

LESSON NOTES

# All About #1

## Introduction to Japanese and Top 5 Reasons to Study

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# GRAMMAR

## The Focus of This Lesson is The Top Five Reasons to Learn Japanese

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### Background of the Japanese Language

Japanese is thought to be an isolated language or an Altaic language. It ranks in the list of the top ten languages based on number of native speakers, with around 130 million people speaking Japanese as their native language.

The Japanese language is rich with regional dialects, with some being so radically different from *hyōjun-go* (標準語), the "standard dialect," that even some native speakers have trouble understanding them. The most well known dialect is *Kansai-ben* (関西弁) the "Kansai dialect," which is spoken throughout the Kansai region of Japan. The Kansai region refers to an area in western Japan that includes the major cities of Osaka and Kyoto.

The Japanese written language consists of three alphabets: *hiragana*, *katakana*, and *kanji*. *Hiragana* and *katakana* are phonetic alphabets, with the latter being used primarily for writing foreign words. *Kanji* is a system of characters of Chinese origin used to represent various ideas.

As mentioned above, the Japanese language's writing system has borrowed heavily from that of the Chinese language. Although the number of borrowed Chinese characters is in the thousands, many of them have fallen out of use. The Japanese Ministry of Education has created a list of 1,945 *jōyō kanji* (常用漢字) "common use kanji" made up of characters commonly used in everyday life. Japanese children will have studied all of these *kanji* by the time they graduate from junior high school.

### About Japan

Japan is known as *Nihon* or *Nippon* (日本) to the Japanese, with the two characters meaning "sun" and "origin." This is why Japan is sometimes known as the "Land of the Rising Sun."

### Where Is Japanese Spoken?

Japanese is mainly spoken on the island of Japan, but there are large communities of Japanese speakers all over the world, including China, Korea, Australia, the United States, Canada, and many other regions.

### Why Is It Important?

So why should you learn Japanese? Here are some of the top reasons...

**5.** To communicate with Japanese people! Over 130 million people throughout the world speak Japanese, placing it in the top ten languages spoken in the world. Just imagine all

of the conversations you could have!

- 4.** Japanese pronunciation is easy! Japanese is pronounced just the way it looks, so you can start speaking it right away.
- 3.** You will learn more than just a language. Learning Japanese will give you a great insight into the world of Japanese culture that you just can't get any other way. By learning how the language works, you'll learn more about how the culture works.
- 2.** Japanese is fun! Japan has a lot to offer in the way of pop culture-fun and interesting movies, music, TV shows, comics, games-you name it! Learning Japanese will give you even greater access to the rich world of Japanese pop culture.
- 1.** Learning Japanese makes you smarter! Recent scientific studies show that learning a second language can actually hold off Alzheimer's disease. Learning a second language also increases your memory and makes you stay sharper, helps your attention span, and sharpens your critical thinking skills. What excuse is there NOT to study Japanese now?