

Japanese Language

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February 3, 2015



Have you ever heard any of the following nouns?

haiku, futon, judo, kamikaze, karaoke, karate, ninja, samurai, sayonara, tsunami, sushi, sudoku, typhoon, sumo, origami.

Spoken by about 125 million speakers, primarily in Japan, where it is the national language.



Major Characteristics of Japanese Language

I. Phonology

1. Mora – a simple phonotactics that can be represented by one letter; each letter is equivalent in length to a word.

(example) MacDonald:

ma-ku-do-na-ru-do.



2. Five vowels, each is monophthong; and can be short or long. /a/, /i/, /u/, /e/, /o/

3. Consonants

	Bilabial 両唇	Alveolar 歯茎	Palatal 硬口蓋	Velar 軟口蓋	Uvular 口蓋垂	Glottal 声門
Nasal 鼻音	m	n		ŋ	ɴ	
Stop 破裂音	p b	t d		k g		
Affricate 破擦音						
Fricative まさつ音	(ɸ)	s z				h
Approximant 接近音			j	w		
Flap はじき音		r				

4. Lexically significant pitch accent.

A me (HL) -- rain

A me (LH) -- candy

II. Grammar

1. SOV

2. Nouns: No grammatical number, gender, or article aspects.

3. Particles: Indicates the grammatical function of nouns.

➤ Watashi wa bangohan o tabemasu. (I eat dinner)

➤ Anata wa watashi ni hono o kuremasu. (You give me a book)

➤ Toshokan de benkyooshimasu. (I study at library)

5. Verb: conjugates to show tense and affirmative /negative.

➤ tabemasu, tabemasen

➤ tabemashita, tabemasendeshita

6. Yes/No question sentence: Add “ka” at the end of sentence (and intonation is raised).
Tabemasuka.

7. Three language levels:

➤ Conversational/informal

➤ Polite

➤ Honorific

III. Writing system

Mixture of three writing systems:

- Kanji (Chinese character) – ideographic;
 - Hiragana -- syllabic and phonographic;
 - Katakana – syllabic and phonographic; is used for foreign words and onomatopoeia.
- 私はうちでテレビを見ました。(I watch TV at home.)
- 犬がワンワン吠えています。(A dog is barking.)

Thank you very much for listening. Please feel free to contact for more information :

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