

Interview an experienced learner

Ask others about how they learned to speak Japanese

In starting to learn something new, it is difficult to know whether or not you are going about it the right way. You might not even be clear about what the end point is. Talking to people with experience is a good way to gain an understanding of what's ahead.

Who do you know who is an accomplished learner and speaker of Japanese or another language? Ask them about their experiences. In particular, ask them about the kinds of things that they did to learn that were enjoyable and useful. Also find out what didn't work for them.

When you think over their answers, keep in mind that people respond differently to different learning activities. Try out the successful practices of others and see how they work for you.

Here are some questions you could ask to an experienced learner/speaker. You could, with their permission, make it into a formal interview and record it. In a class situation you could share the language learning stories of the people you interview. Depending on the level of your Japanese, you could prepare to ask some questions in Japanese.

Reasons for learning/motivation

What got you started on learning Japanese/other language?

Did your reasons for learning and using Japanese change over the time you were actively learning it?

What were those reasons? What kept you motivated to continue learning?

Progress

When you started, what were your expectations about how long it would take to learn Japanese and how much effort it would take? Were these expectations realistic?

Describe the pace of your progress?

At what stage(s) did you experience feelings of satisfaction over your progress? At what times did you feel dissatisfied?

Was there a moment when you realised that you were able to communicate using Japanese?

How far do you feel that you have come as a learner? What is your ultimate goal?

Learning activities

Describe the kinds of things that you did to learn and practise Japanese in the early stages? How did your learning activities change over time?

What were the kinds of learning activities that were effective for you? What didn't work for you? Prepare specific questions about areas of interest to you such as learning vocabulary, expressions, speaking conventions, kanji; developing reading, listening, speaking, writing skills.

Are there things that, in reflection, it would have been better if you had done more of in the early or intermediate stages? What do you think was a waste of time?

Using Japanese

Describe your first forays into using Japanese to interact with speakers other than learners. Were they successful and enjoyable? What did you learn from those experiences?

How did you find/make opportunities to use Japanese?

How do you maintain your level of Japanese?

Cultural matters

How did you acquire knowledge and understanding of Japanese culture? Is there reference material that is useful?

Is being in Japan the only way to really understand Japanese culture?

What are some of the most important things to know in order to function effectively in Japanese society?