

LESSON TRANSCRIPT

# Introduction to Japanese #2

## Introduction to Japanese Pronunciation

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#2

Hi!

Welcome to Introduction to Japanese.

My name is Alisha and I'm joined by...

Hi everyone. I'm Risa!

In *\*this\** lesson, you'll learn the basics of Japanese pronunciation.

"Pronunciation" refers to the *\*manner\** in which a word is spoken. So don't focus on *\*reading\** what's onscreen, instead focus on *\*listening\** and repeating.

### The Basics of Timing

Japanese is what is called a "mora-timed" language. What this simply means is that every character in Japanese – which you can think of as a syllable, occupies the same length of time.

すみません

Notice how each character is pronounced for an equal amount of time?

すみません

No character takes up more *\*or\** less time than the other characters. Every character is valued equally and is pronounced evenly throughout.

すみません

English, on the other hand, is a "stress-timed" language. Syllables that are stressed, are valued greater than syllables that are unstressed.

opportunity

The stressed syllable "tu" in "opportunity" is deemed more important, so it's pronounced *\*longer\** than all other syllables. Listen to it again.

opportunity

This gives English a "machine-gun" like rhythm, where the pace is sometimes fast, and

at other times, slow. One last time...

opportunity

Compare this once again with Japanese, which is steady, and even throughout.

すみません

Because equal value is given to each character, there is no word-stress in Japanese. When pronouncing Japanese words, try to imagine a constant stream of syllables flowing out from your mouth.

### Pronouncing Japanese Characters

There are five characters in Japanese that signify a vowel sound...

あ、い、う、え、お

Apart from these five characters, all other characters – except for one that we will cover shortly – is made up of a consonant sound and one of these vowel sounds.

か、き、く、け、こ

さ、し、す、せ、そ

た、ち、つ、て、と

... and so on.

Only this character here, is kind of special. It's a consonant sound, without a vowel sound.

ん

So to recap, a Japanese character could be a vowel...

あ

or more commonly made up of one consonant and one vowel

か

or it could just be this consonant sound on its own.

ん

Now you know the possible sounds that make up a Japanese \*character\*, but let's look at ALL the sounds in Japanese collectively.

## The Sounds of Japanese

In the previous lesson, you realized that you already know 10% of all words in Japanese – which is a miracle!

But are you also aware that you already know roughly 80% of ALL sounds in Japanese too? That means that if you were to simply imitate a Japanese speaker, your pronunciation would be correct roughly 80% of the time!

For example, listen and repeat after Risa.

わさび

Chances are, your pronunciation was pretty spot on. The "W", "S", and "B" sounds are practically identical to English.

The sounds may be the same, but don't forget that Japanese isn't a stress-timed language like English. So instead of stressing the second syllable, like "waSAbi", make it even throughout. Try again.

わさび

Nearly all sounds in Japanese are identical to English, like the "W", "S", and "B" sounds in this example. Since you already know how to pronounce \*most\* of these sounds, we only need to pay attention to the handful of sounds that are \*completely\* new to you. \*They're\* the ones we need look out for.

## The Unique Sounds of Japanese

In the previous lesson, we taught you how to say "thank you" in Japanese. Do you remember what it was?

(3 second pause)

It's...

ありがとう

This word is often romanized like \*this\*

Focus on the second character, it's often written as an "R" and an "l," but don't be fooled!

This character isn't pronounced using an English "R" sound at all!

り

It's like a mixture between an "R" and an "L" sound.

り

There's no such sound in English, but most people would transcribe this using the letter "R", because that's the closest equivalent there is in English. Pronouncing it like an \*English\* "R", however, would be a huge mistake.

To pronounce this sound, lightly tap the gum ridge behind your upper teeth with the tip of your tongue. It should be a quick, striking motion, similar to the sensation you get when pronouncing the "T" in words like "butter", "cutter" and so on. Don't roll your tongue like an English R. Most of the air should go around the sides of your tongue, the same way it would when pronouncing an "L" sound. This is why many people describe this sound as in-between an "R" and an "L" sound.

Listen and repeat after Risa.

り

(pause 3 seconds)

り

(pause 3 seconds)

ありがとう

(pause 3 seconds)

ありがとう

(pause 3 seconds)

Well done! Let's wrap up this lesson by recapping what we've learned.

In this lesson, you learned that Japanese is a "mora-timed" language, where syllables are pronounced for an equal amount of time.

Japanese characters can represent a single vowel sound, a consonant and a vowel, or a single consonant sound. Collectively, nearly all the sounds in Japanese are identical to the sounds in English. And there are only a handful of new sounds that you need to learn.

We've covered only the \*basics\* of Japanese pronunciation. If you're interested in learning more, check out the entire course we created named "The Ultimate Guide to Japanese Pronunciation". In that course, we cover and break down \*every\* single sound in the Japanese language, showing you mouth and tongue positioning, and giving you tips to help you \*perfect\* your Japanese Pronunciation.

In the next lesson, we'll introduce you to the basics of Japanese Grammar, where you'll learn about Japanese word order and how to build basic phrases in Japanese.

See you in the next lesson. Bye!

Bye~!