

Why and How I Learn Japanese

Two years ago, I learned Japanese for two weeks, then I put it away and did other things. Now, I have restarted my journey to learn it. What I have observed is that this time things are much smoother. I can still recognize some Katakana and Hiragana. My journey has just begun, and this time, instead of following any advice, I have used some unique ways to learn. I drive cars to learn. After logging off from work, I drive for 4 hours while listening to Japanese TikTok or some Japanese music. Because driving requires patience. When driving, you can't go faster; you have to wait for the car or traffic light ahead. Driving can also be boring, so it's better to have something to think about. I bought a remote control to hold in one of my hands so I can use one hand to drive and the other hand to remote control my phone, sometimes scrolling down to the next TikTok video.

I remember in 2019, after watching TikTok for three months, my English listening improved significantly. My level grew from only being able to understand a few words the first time I watched to being able to understand most of the words. Although I could read them as text, I couldn't listen to them the first time, especially at that fast speed. However, after watching more than 10,000 short videos, my brain magically changed.

So, while learning Japanese this time, I am more patient and more observant of my current level and the next level I should achieve.

These are the words from "Stay with Me":

わたくし わたくし わたくし わたくし わたくし

あなた あなた あなた あなた あなた

I can recognize half of the Hiragana, but it is still the next level thing I need to learn.

Watashi wa watashi, anata wa anata to

Yuube itteta sonna ki mo suru wa

This is the English translation of it. This is what I am learning. It is much easier to learn and comprehend. So my current plan is to learn it by listening and recognizing its English translation. The good news is that I can say, I can now recognize much more by listening during my leisure time throughout the week.

I still watch some Japanese videos to learn about Hiragana and Katakana. Doing so makes learning more fun. You can also learn interesting things by mastering Japanese, like their food, and their daily life.

Reflecting on how I learned English over the years has helped me learn Japanese faster and better. Our brains are magical; all you need is patience and never stop thinking, and it will automatically do its job.

The basic elements of a language are simple. For example, all Chinese characters can be spelled as Pinyin, all English words are made of 26 alphabet characters, and all Japanese is built on Hiragana and Katakana. So the first thing we need to do is learn these basic elements fluently. Even though Hiragana may be challenging at first sight, we can start by learning its English translation.

I admire some people on the internet who are fluent in Japanese. Nowadays, the world is more connected, and mastering English is easy. Due to curiosity or influencing environments, people learn a second foreign language. The internet is full of language resources, and they are everywhere. Although my TikTok algorithm shows me English Videos, after searching for some Japanese keywords and watching or listening to 1000 Japanese videos, it now recommends Japanese videos.

Before I started learning Japanese, I wondered why these people learn it. Now I understand that learning one more language is easy for them. Also, once you have mastered English, you may find the internet boring, and so you start learning a new language. Your soul needs another culture to be fulfilled. That is why some people like to move to other countries to live.

I have noticed that more young people in global cities are capable of at least three languages by the age of 18. When I moved from a village in China to a big city at the age of 10, after a few years, I became fluent in Hakka, Mandarin, and Cantonese (less fluent but okay to listen to). They are all Chinese, and two are dialects. The same thing is happening to young people today. When their parents move to new countries or global cities, they find it easier to master three languages when they grow up.

To me, it is not just catching up with young people now. It is also that learning new things makes one young again. Why can a kid learn a language, but an adult usually cannot? It is because adults start to lose patience and curiosity. It is because adults are too purpose-driven and too rushed.

The good news is that nowadays, there are tons of tools to help people learn. I have also developed more patience for learning a new language this time. I cherish the feeling when I see tons of Japanese words and think, "What the hell are they talking about?" because I know our brains are magical, and I will soon know them all. The overwhelming time will be short, and I should cherish it.