

Candle wax on a plate



A dear friend in Norway sent me this photo of candle wax dripping on a plate under the candle:

Awesome! I believe it to be a sign from Heaven! Or a coincidence? You decide. Click on the image once, and then one more time to see a closer view.

Making new friends on the way to Isezaki



A scene from Akagi Kogen Service Area

Isezaki City is in Gunma Prefecture and only about 2/3 of the way to Tokyo from my home. I wasn't in an especial hurry to get there because all that awaited me was to check into a hotel for the night. I had to be in Isezaki in the morning of the next day, February 28, for certain important business. I

dislike staying at hotels and rather would stay with friends, but I have no close acquaintances living in that city.

There was relatively little waiting for the first two cars which took me to Sakae Parking on the expressway, but I had to wait nearly two hours for the third driver. In every case, though tiring and taxing on my patience, I find it is worth the wait because God usually sends somebody special. This time it was a kind foreigner, a Russian man by the name of Sasha.

At first I didn't recognize Sasha as a foreigner and spoke Japanese to him, but he told me in English that he doesn't speak Japanese and is from Russia. I then greeted him in Russian and he was so happy! I was happy too because I realized he didn't speak much English, and therefore it gave me a chance to practice speaking again the Russian language that has lain dormant in my mind the past 12 years since living in Russia. I could understand nearly everything he said.

I asked Sasha if he believed in God and he said he is an atheist having been born in Soviet times and was taught atheism. He said he believes the world happened without God. I asked him if he thought his car happened without man, or if he thought the road we were riding on happened without man. I hope I gave him food for thought. Sasha is a very friendly man like most Russians, and our conversation was pleasant the two hours I was with him.

Sasha dropped me off at Komayose Parking area just before Maebashi. Isezaki is about 15 kilometers east of Maebashi. I thought that probably the next car would take me to either Maebashi or Takasaki a bit past Maebashi, and from there I would take a train the rest of the way. But wonder of wonders, 3 young men heading directly to Isezaki picked me up and took me directly to the hotel! Two of them are 24 years old, and one only 22. They really seemed to like me and one of them, Shinpei, invited me over to his house for supper after checking in at the hotel. I accepted and he took me to his apartment. There I met his wife, Tamami. They are still newlyweds being married only 3 months. I had a great time and shared my faith with them and the two other boys, Yuki and Hidenori. Shinpei wants me to visit again someday. I hope I have further business in Isezaki and meet up with them again in the near future.

[Hitch-hike back to Niigata from Saitama](#)



After waiting only a minute at the entrance of the Kan'etsu Expressway in Kawagoe, Mr. Aikawa picked me up and took me to the Takasaka Service area. This was excellent because it is in the direction toward home in Niigata. Often I get picked up by drivers going in the opposite direction, southbound toward Tokyo. I'll go with them as far as Miyoshi Service Area and then walk 20 minutes to get to the northbound area. I was making good time and knew I might be able to even stop for an hour in Tokamachi to see more friends on the way back.



Nobu



Nobu's camping car

From Takasaka, a retired man named Nobu driving a camping car took me as far as Akagi Kogen in Gunma. This was excellent because it is past Takasaki and Maebashi. Often I have to get off at Kamisato, a service area just before these two cities. Many of the drivers will go only as far as Takasaki or Maebashi. I normally reject offers from them to go only that far because I learned from experience it is difficult from those points to get back on the expressway.

Nobu lived 8 years in the USA and spoke good English. His hobby is snowboarding. He said he would travel all the way to Hokkaido in that camping car to go snowboarding. He knew of my friend in Aomori, Simon Bernard (www.hakkodapowder.com), who helped save the lives of skiers caught in an avalanche on Mt. Hakoda in 2008.



Young people heading toward a ski resort

After waiting around 30 minutes at scenic Akagi Kogen, two cars of young people passed me by but then stopped a few feet away. The driver of the second car drove back toward me in reverse and asked my destination. They were going snowboarding to a mountain resort in Shiozawa just past Yuzawa. Both cars were full of both people and luggage. The driver of the second car had to persuade the driver of the first car to take me and part of my luggage which was two cases. After a bit of negotiation he agreed.

I was glad to get to Shiozawa, but it wasn't exactly an ideal location to hitchhike from. There was too few cars in the parking area. I decided to leave the expressway parking area and walk to the regular highway, route 17. From there I knew it would be fairly easy to hitchhike further. But though route 17 was fairly close within eye shot only about half a kilometer away, I didn't see a road leading to it. I was separated by a snow covered rice field. In the summer it may be possible to walk across the banks of the rice field, but not when it is covered with a meter of snow! I had to walk a long circuitous path just to leave the expressway and then walk along a road that went somewhat parallel to route 17 hoping to get to an intersection. But there was none in sight! There was hardly any traffic along that road and the drivers of handful of cars that passed by ignored me. But God sent another angel to rescue me, a lady who at first said she wasn't going exactly the way I wanted to go but decided to take me to the highway later. I probably would have been walking close to an hour in all if she hadn't come.



People in front of a castle from
from snow!

From Shiozawa man heading to Nagaoka took me as far as Muika Machi. From there a family took me to Tokamachi. This city is famous for its deep snowfalls in the winter and it's snow festivals. I saw many well crafted snow sculptures throughout the city. The only other city in Japan where I have seen such snow sculptures is Sapporo in Hokkaido.



Mr. Saito

In Tokamachi I spent an hour with my friends Keiji and Miyoko, and then hitchhiked the remaining 100 kilometers back home – in a single car! The driver, Mr. Saito, was heading to a town right next to mine and dropped me off at a point only a few minutes walk to my house! This is nothing short of miraculous considering the distance involved and the numerous other places a person may be heading to from that point. I walked in the door at 5:15PM, in plenty time for our Sunday evening weekly Christian fellowship meeting.

Talking to a Soka Gakkai truck driver



Miniature Schnauzer

It was good weather and still early enough at 4PM to hitchhike the 48 kilometers down route 16 from Noda to Chiba city. Noda is famous for its production of Soy Sauce, and Chiba is the Prefecture capital. I was on my way to see friends before they leave Japan, perhaps this time for good.

Though the distance involved was not so far, because it is the regular highway, I knew I was taking a risk in my race with the sun. I could wind up standing at some traffic light after dark if I had to wait too long, or if it took too many cars. The likelihood of going to Chiba in a single vehicle was slim – unless it happened to be truck. That's exactly what God provided for me, a kind truck driver. And he had two little dogs, both Miniature Schnauzers for me to pet along the way! I love dogs. I'm also fond of cats and all animals as well.

The driver turned out to be a member of SGI – Soka Gakkai International – radical sect of Buddhism. It is related to two other sects of Buddhism, Nichirenshu and Nichirenshoshu. All three sects are considered by most other Buddhists to be heretical to the basic teachings of Buddha because the founder, Nichiren, was a man of war, not peace and tolerance as almost all Buddhist sects teach.

You may now be able to visualize my reaction when the driver told me he is a member of SGI. But he said it with a smile. □ I always try to open the door to witness to people like these by asking them questions about their faith. In this case, he seemed to be more interested in hearing about my faith in God and Jesus Christ, and of course this made it even easier for him to talk to him. He told me that Buddhism doesn't teach the concept of God as the Creator. I asked him if this fact didn't make Buddhism more of a philosophy rather than a religion? This seemed to be food for thought for him.

I told him my God is Love and love is the main positive power of the universe. God the Father showed His love to us by sending His Son, Jesus, to die for us and pay the penalty of our crimes of not acknowledging or thanking Him for all He does for us. The driver remarked that he could see how quickly his dogs took to me. The female Miniature Schnauzer went to sleep on my lap.

The timing was perfect when I arrived in Chiba because my friend and his wife just happened to be in a gas station only a couple hundred meters from where the truck driver dropped me off!

Adventure hitch-hiking to Saitama



Mr. Watanabe

I had to return to Sayama City in Saitama Prefecture to help my friend Jonas clean his PC from a Trojan. Sayama is just a few kilometers NW of Tokyo. This time it took me 10 rides because it took 5 just to get to the expressway interchange in Sanjo.

One lady who picked me up wanted to take me to a train station in Kamo city, but I insisted I would rather be dropped off on the highway. Sometimes the drivers think they know better than me and want to take me to places I know from experience would not be good for me. I try to reason with them, but when that doesn't work, I usually yield to their wishes. But not if they want to take me to a train station when I don't want to take a train!

Mr. Watanabe, a man who works in an employment agency, took me to Sanjo City from where I could get on the Kan'etsu Expressway heading toward Tokyo. As you might notice from the photo, Mr. Watanabe is a very cheerful fellow! He seemed impressed to hear all the things God has given me the skills to do. Perhaps Mr. Watanabe will continue to be a friend when I return home.

A young man who says he designs tests for junior high school children took me a considerable distance close to Yuzawa, a famous ski resort in Niigata Prefecture. I made the mistake of getting off at a rest stop just a few kilometers before Yuzawa. Normally parking areas are better than expressway entrances to hitch-hike at, but not when there are less than 10 vehicles present! I realized it would have been better to get off at Yuzawa and looked for an exit from the Parking area. It was surrounded by snow too deep to walk through and so I had to find the road that I knew the Service Area workers had to use to get to work every day. My first attempt took me down a road that went nowhere. The low road that runs parallel with the expressway was only 30 meters away but to get to it from where I stood I would have to walk through snow over my kneecaps! I knew there had to be a better way. After backtracking my steps I found it.

But though I was able to leave the expressway Service Area, I realized it was just too far to walk to Yuzawa. It would have taken me over an hour and I was at a race with the sun. Unless I catch the last ride before sunset, it gets progressively more difficult to make progress. After walking 15 minutes or so, a 21 year old lady by the name of Yuka rescued me and took me all the way to Yuzawa!

After only a few minutes wait at Yuzawa, a 38 year old truck driver picked me up and took me all the way to Akagi Kogen in Gunma! He said that I am as old as his father and he was one year old when I first came to Japan.

Now I was making progress and knew for sure I would make my destination by evening. It is quite rare for a truck driver going on the expressway to pick me up, perhaps only as much as once a year.

After that a 24 year old man from Kanazawa in Ishikawa Prefecture took me as far as Takasaka Service Area in Saitama! It just started to get dark when I arrived.

A few minutes later a grammar school principal Higashi Matsuyama took me as far as Tokorozawa! From there it was only a 200 yen train ride to get to Sayama.

February 20, 2009: Today was cold and raining with even snow on the ground! This is quite rare for southern Saitama just north of Tokyo. I took a train to Noda City in Chiba Prefecture just Northeast of Tokyo. My friend's PC needed repair.

I hitch-hiked from Noda city to Chiba city in a single vehicle, a truck with two small dogs. The driver is of the Sokagakkai sect. He asked me many questions about Jesus and was impressed that his dog's took to me so quickly. I told him that the God of Creation is a God of Love. All of His creation can understand love, not only people and animals, but even plants. It could be that even non-living materials can react to love or its absence as well.

Wedding for Nobuo and Miwako



I attended a Shinto wedding ceremony of my good friends from Kashiwazaki, Nobuo and Miwako. I first met Nobuo's father while hitchhiking on August 11, 2006, a very hot summer day. I was making no progress that day on my way to Tokyo and actually purposely caught a car going the opposite direction so that I could at least be in an expressway service area and drink as much water as I needed. It was definitely one of God's setups because that day of suffering a couple of hours in the sun resulted in some of the best Japanese friends I have with every increasing possibilities to make new friends! It has also turned into a possible English teaching job in the near future.

Weeks earlier Nobuo asked me to do a speech at the wedding party so I had much time to prepare. Nevertheless, I dreaded having to do it. Talking to large groups of people is something I don't particularly relish doing but I knew God would give me the grace for it. It would have been hard enough to give a speech in English, but I had to give it in Japanese! The ladies at my table asked me if I was nervous to give the speech, and I replied I was. Nevertheless, I gave it with everything in me and even ad-libbed adding things I didn't even have written down on the paper I was holding. The audience just loved it! The ladies at the table said that I made everybody happy. I told them that was exactly my intention. Nobuo commented, "A perfect speech!"

Please check out the [photos I took at the wedding party](#).

The wedding was traditional Japanese Shinto style. I felt honored to be invited to attend the ceremony. I was the only non-Japanese person in attendance and I'm only a friend of the family. Such ceremonies traditionally are open only to close relatives of the bride and groom.

Watch the YouTube video and you will hear some of the highly unusual music I heard during the ceremony.

The best way to safeguard your PC from bugs and viruses



The best thing any Windows user can do to protect their PC from the getting infected from the Internet is to create a second user account with administrator privileges and to change the working user account to one with only limited user access. I promise you if you do so, your chances of picking up some web-bug, or virus are probably 99% less no matter how good your anti-virus program is. This is because a virus or malware cannot modify your Windows registry, nor can it copy itself into your Windows system folders if you work as a user with *limited* privileges. A simple reboot will kill any virus that may invade into the PC's memory.

The purpose of the Administrator account should be only to install software or to do certain tasks like changing the time or date, or to de-fragment the hard disk. It should never be used to browse the Internet! Probably more than 90% of all Windows users (especially Windows XP users) browse the Internet with Administrator privileges. It's no wonder their PCs get infected, perform slower and slooower, and sometimes come to a grinding halt!

Adventure from Kobe to Kanto



Mr. Notsu from
Matsui

February 7, 2009: I needed to be in Tokyo the very next day and so I hitchhiked to Noda City in Chiba and stayed with friends. It's a long trip of over 600 kilometers but it only took me 3 cars. The longest ride was from Mr. Notsu who teaches mentally handicapped children. He's from Matsui in Shimane Prefecture but lives in Hiratsuka in Kanagawa Prefecture, over 1000 kilometers from where he was raised.



Mr. Fuji from Ashigara Service Area
on the Tomei Expressway

Just a few minutes after they left, a good English speaker, Carl, picked me up took me as far as the Kamisato expressway near Gunma. Carl works as general manager of automotive lighting sales for General Electric.

From Kamisato I got a ride to Shibukawa Parking area which is just past Maebashi city. An older couple, Mr and Mrs. Tomaru, took me. The Mrs. Tomaru was looking at me constantly and always smiling as we talked.

After waiting a relatively short time in Shibukawa Parking area, a man driving a fine car took me as far as Akagi Kogen. He is a owner of a golf club. I asked him how much he pays in taxes every year. He replied their are three separate taxes of 20 million yen each from an average yearly income of 200 million yen.



Mr. and Mrs.
Tomaru

From Akagi Kogen a man took me as far as Echigo Yuzawa. I knew from experience most of the cars from that point would be going back toward Tokyo, and so I decided to hitch-hike on the low road to Muika Machi, about an hour further, and get back on the expressway from there. From before I wanted to visit Muika Machi to check out a job offer. A young man who said he is a road building took me to the company where I left my contact information. After that I walked the rest of the way to the Muika Machi Interchange, a good half hour hike!

From the Muika Machi Interchange a 29 year old man who works in a tool company took me as far as Sanjo. From there it was only a short train ride back home.

The total approximate distance hitch-hiked in this trip was 1917 kilometers or about 1200 miles. The total cost for the short bus and train rides was \$65, and I spent about \$40 for food during the 12 days. I brought back home \$470 made from gifts for my computer work. If didn't hitch-hike but took regular transportation, I surely would have run out of money along the way. Transportation alone would have cost an approximate \$780!

[Adventure to Osaka and Nagoya](#)



Nanami (9) and mother, Mrs. Kondo

January 29, 2009 Today I went to the city of Kashiwazaki to see my friends Nobuo and Miwako. Kashiwazaki is home to the largest nuclear powerplant in the world – built right smack dab on an earthquake fault! The area was hit by a magnitude 6.8 earthquake on July 16, 2007. The nuclear reactors immediately shut down and continue to remain down at the time of this post. It may be several more months before the inspectors are sure the reactors are safe enough to turn back on.

I left home around 9:15AM and walked 20 minutes to the main highway. While waiting at the usual traffic light, a Mrs. Kondo pulled up and asked my destination. Next to her sat her 9 year old daughter Nanami. She offered to take me all the way to the expressway IC in Sanjo – about 20 kilometers out of her way – if I wouldn't mind a slight detour so she could drop her daughter off at school first. I accepted. Mrs. Kondo told me that they returned to pick me up after passing me. Nanami told her, "Mama, there's a man who seems to be in trouble, we have to help him!"

After Mrs. Kondo dropped me off at Sanjo, I took two highway buses to get to the Hokuriku Expressway because I needed to gain some time to make my 2PM appointment with Nobuo. Two drivers took me the rest of the way. One of them was a life insurance salesman. I asked him how any life insurance company can make any money at all when people die and they have to pay out such hefty sums. He replied they invest money in stocks, etc.



Mr. Ohashi, Nobuo and Yuka

In Kashiwazaki I helped Nobuo teach English to his students from 2PM to 8:30PM. It was nice to see Mr. Ohashi again who I met at least 3 times previously, and I got to meet Yuka for the first time. That evening I stayed at Nobuo's parents house.

The next morning after eating a great breakfast, Nobuo's mother took me to the Kashiwazaki expressway entrance. I still didn't know where I would wind up this evening but my general direction was south. The next day I had an appointment to visit friends in Ogaki City in Gifu Prefecture and I had 3 options where to go before that.

Only a few minutes after the first driver picked me up, Nobuo called my cell phone telling me I left my reading glasses! I just had to go back and pick them up. Nobuo's mother kindly went back to the expressway entrance and I got a quick ride back and met her.



Chieko, husband Jun and
baby Shishi

January 31, 2009: Today my destination is Ogaki City in Gifu to see Philip and Maria. I took a bus to the Suita Service area on the Meishi Expressway. The first car was a young couple with a one year old boy. They took me as far as Kyoto. The second driver, a software engineer, took me all the way to Ogaki city – a good 150 kilometers from Kyoto. But he could take me only as far as the expressway bus stop exit. I still had 10 more kilometers to go, a bit too far to walk and the city is not familiar. But I learned I learned I don't really need to learn the roads because the local people know them well.

After a quick lunch, I just went to the road and started hitch-hiking again. A young man picked me up and took me right to my destination. □ He says he makes good money maintaining Bullet train tracks.

Feb. 1, 2009: I went to Nagoya and met my good friend Silvio from Brazil and his Japanese friend Junko. We had a good chat about their projects.

February 2-3, 2009: I visited my Brazilian friend Paulo and his school, 'Escola Sao Paulo' in Anjo City, Aichi Prefecture. He had lots of work for me making sure all the school computers were free of web-bugs, trojans and viruses. I looked at 7 PCs in all, all Notebook computers, and installed Avast Anti-virus on most of them.

Being in the Brazilian school is almost like being in Brazil itself. I had fun picking up Portuguese words and talking to the dear Brazilian people. Most of them cannot speak English, but they all do know some Japanese. Many of them are very good Japanese speakers.



Mrs. Iida

February 4, 2009: Because my business in the Osaka area was not finished, I hitch-hiked from Kamigo Service area near Anjo City back to Osaka in 4 cars. The third car was Mr. and Mrs. Iida and their dog, Rimi. I love dogs and Rimi let me pet her, but she still didn't seem to trust me completely throughout the trip. The Iida family took me as far as Yoro Service Area on the Meishin Expressway. From there a man who works as postal carrier took me the rest of the way to Osaka. He happened to be going to the very area I needed to go, and took me right to my friend's house!

February 5, 2009: I went to Kyoto to help my friend Joseph teach English at his school. Spent all day with him from 10AM till 8:30PM.

[Gathering in Shirone](#)



The fruit of my hitch-hiking adventure on January 15th was being invited to a new year's party in Shirone, a town now incorporated into Niigata city, by the former deputy mayor of the town, Mr. Tsubokawa. I met his friends, mostly ladies, and one gentleman by the name of Mr. Makiguchi. Two of the ladies are Christians who attend the local Lutheran church. All were former English students who like foreigners and especially Americans. Mr. Tsubokawa invited me visit Poland with him and his friends after he learned that my grandparents are Polish! I told him I have no money whatsoever to travel. He said he and his friends would foot all expenses in return for being their interpreter! Let's see if it happens. ☐



Mr. Makiguchi

I also met Mr. Makiguchi who is the director of an agricultural firm that turns vegetables into bio-ethanol. He seemed quite interested in what I had to say about politics in the USA.

Meeting Yoko and Mariko



Yoko

January 20, 2009: **Yoko** and **Mariko**, two ladies in who appeared to be in their 20s, picked me up near downtown Niigata. Yoko lives in Toyosaka and so it was out of the way for her to take me to Akiha Ward, but she did so anyway. Yoko first took Mariko to where she parked her car, dropped her off and then took me home. They work at the Okura 5 star hotel next to Bandai Bridge in Niigata City. Business is much worse this year than it was last year they said. "But" I replied, "the year has just begun!"

Making new friends through hitchhiking



Making a new friend through hitchhiking.

Hitchhike to Tokyo, New Years Eve 2008



Hiromi

I hitch-hiked to Tokyo in 5 cars from Niigata. The third driver was Hiromi, 24 years old from Maebashi, Gunma Prefecture. She took me from Sakae Parking area just after Sanjo in Niigata, to Akagi Kougen in Gunma, a distance of about 150 kilometres. I told Hiromi the Good News of eternal salvation in Jesus and she prayed with me to receive Christ!

The next driver was a 25 year Takayuki from Oita city who took me all the way to Tokyo. I told him about Jesus as well and he also believed! I wanted to introduce Takayuki to Hiromi because they both work in the same city, but this is contingent on whether Hiromi contacts me first. She said she would write me after seeing her photos on my web page, but if she did I may have missed it. I get a lot of spam and a new Japanese address may have been filtered to the spam box by mistake. Maybe she'll still write me later.



Valentin and Yoshiko

In Tokyo I visited my friends Russian Valentin and Japanese Yoshiko. I first met Valentin in 1994 in Khabarovsk, Russia, and a second time in Aomori Japan in 2006. Valentin and Yoshiko work in the national Japanese travel agency.

Interesting facts about the Japanese Language



The character above is the Chinese/Japanese ideograph meaning love.

I've lived in Japan about half my life or about 27 years at the time of this post. I have been called a good speaker of what is considered one of the most difficult languages to learn in the world.

Is there *anything* easy about Japanese?

Yes!

- No verb conjugation!
- No gender of nouns!
- No articles (a, the)
- Number (singular and plural) not important and barely exists!
- Not hard to learn to pronounce as there are only 48 sounds consisting of 5 vowels and 11 consonants!
- Syntax or the word order of a sentence, excepting the final verb, is totally free!

Why then is Japanese considered difficult to learn?

- The written language has 3 methods of writing: Thousands of Chinese characters called *Kanji* and 2 Japanese syllabaries of 48 characters each called *Hiragana* and *Katakana*. Japanese is therefore considered the most complex written language in the world. In order to get barely by, you need to learn all of the Hiragana and Katakana and at least a few hundred Kanji. Kanji is used for words, hiragana for verb endings and particles after nouns to denote the case of the noun, and katakana is used for foreign loan words and names.
- Most words have two roots of pronunciation, a Chinese root and a Japanese root. They are totally different sounds. So learning Japanese is almost like learning the vocabulary of 2 languages at once!



All of the 8 Kanji characters above are pronounced “*shin*” and all 8 of them are totally unrelated to each other in meaning! They are from left to right: God, advance, believe, new, true, stretch, heart, and parent. There are no tones in Japanese as there are in Chinese, and so the pronunciation of *shin* is exactly the same for all the above. Besides these, there are **many more** Kanji that are also pronounced “*shin*”! The Japanese way to pronounce the characters above are, “*kami*”, *susumu*, “*shinjiru*”, “*atarashii*”, “*makoto*”, “*nobasu*”, “*kokoro*”, and “*oya*”. Notice that the Japanese way of pronouncing a word is multi-syllabic, whereas the Chinese way is a single syllable.

- The main verb comes at the end of the sentence. This can result in the meaning of a long sentence being hard to grasp. Imagine a sentence in English like “A storm system plowed through the central Appalachians into the Eastern Seaboard with heavy rain Wednesday, causing flooding that blocked roads and drove some people from their homes” and put the words “plowed through” at the very end of the sentence.
- Particles follow nouns to denote their usage. This is often hard for foreigners to learn unless you happen to be Korean or Mongolian.
- Ideas are expressed in way that is unrelated to European languages.
- Because there is no verb conjugation according to person, the subject of a sentence can be unclear at times. And because the subject is often *assumed* to be already understood, it is frequently dropped entirely adding to the confusion and ambiguity. This is why Japanese is considered by some a “fuzzy” language. One Japanese linguist, however, says that it is not really the language that is fuzzy but the way it is used as a result of the culture.
- There are several levels of polite language to learn. These words are called “*honorifics*”. If you don’t learn them, you will never rise above the rank of “dumb foreigner”.

Is learning Japanese easier for some nationalities than others?

As far as I know, it is easier only for Koreans and Mongolians as their grammar is related to Japanese. It is **not** especially easy for Chinese people to learn. Though the Chinese can already read and understand the meaning of most Kanji characters, they have to learn to pronounce them the Japanese way and learn an entirely new way of expressing themselves using a totally

different grammatical sentence structure.

Is it important to learn to read Japanese?

Yes, if you really want to learn the language well. There are many homonyms in Japanese or words that sound the same but have totally different meanings. (As brought out in the 8 meanings of the word "shin".) Unless you learn to read at least several hundred Kanji (Chinese characters used in Japanese), you cannot understand meanings of words nearly as well as a person who can read Kanji. There is only one sure way you will learn to read Kanji – take a course in a school for at least a year like I did. I just didn't have the discipline to learn on my own. I don't know of *any* foreigner who learned Kanji well without a formal school course.

Is it possible to write Japanese in the Roman alphabet?

Yes, possible but not practical. Japanese written in Roman characters is called *romaji*. Romaji is used primarily for foreigners to study Japanese. If General MacArthur had pushed his will to change the written language to the Roman alphabet, Japan would never have advanced to the technological nation it is today. The immense amount of homonyms in the language would have made technological papers and documents hard to understand. Whereas by using Kanji there is always a specific character available out of the thousands at hand.

Are there different dialects of Japanese?

Yes! Tokyo and Sapporo are considered the main 2 centers of the standard national language but all other areas have their own accents and even different words. The Osaka accent is one of the most recognizable. Once at an airport in Paris France I heard 2 Japanese girls speaking and I could tell they were from Osaka. You should have seen the look of surprise on their faces to hear me, a stranger, tell them so! The Tsugaru area of Aomori is considered to be one of the most different dialects of all the dialects of Japan. It is not necessary to learn the local dialect. Most missionaries don't learn them, only their kids who go to school have picked them up.

Will learning Japanese make it easier for me to learn Chinese later?

Yes! Well, somewhat easier. If you learn to read Kanji, you will be able to already read many signs in either Taiwan, Hong Kong or China even if you never study Chinese. You will be able to communicate basic ideas with the Chinese people just by using Kanji. Most the meanings of the Chinese characters that Japan shares with China are the same.

Some weaknesses of the Japanese language

- Considered a "fuzzy" language. The Japanese people don't like to be blunt or rude. Consequently, they hesitate to express opinions in a strong and clear manner. Politicians like to use this to their advantage!
- Very few words of affection or endearment as in all European languages!

Most Japanese either cannot or will not say “I love you” to their loved ones. These words do exist in Japanese, but are not part of daily vocabulary.

- No such thing as rhyming poetry!
- It takes about twice as long to say something as compared to English. English song lyrics have to be cut in half when translated into Japanese in order to keep the same rhythm.

One strength of the Japanese written language

The cool thing about using Chinese ideograph characters called Kanji is that the meaning of words becomes clear as a bell. There is no need for an etymology dictionary of Japanese words that are written in Kanji. This includes names of people as well. Most first names in any language have meanings that are often forgotten in time and can only be learned through special dictionaries, but nobody in Japan can ever forget the meaning of a Kanji. For example, how many people would know that my name, James, comes from the Hebrew name Jacob which means “deceiver”? But there is no Japanese person who does not know the meaning of famous Ichiro Suzuki’s name. It means “first man” The names of towns and cities, rivers and mountains can also be translated to English or any other language. Of course this applies to the Chinese language as well.

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10 things you didn't know about

Japanese

Some fun facts about the language spoken in the Land of the Rising Sun.



Japanese has many dialects. They're grouped into **Kyoto-Osaka** dialects and **Tokyo** dialects. Mutual intelligibility varies.



9th

MOST SPOKEN LANGUAGE

The majority of the speakers are in Japan or in the Japanese diaspora.

The origins of the language are unknown, since its earliest written records show a fully-formed system.



88 weeks

According to the US Department of State, that's how much it would take for an English-speaker to learn Japanese.

HONORIFICS: suffixes that express the relationship the speaker and person in question have.

- san:** most commonly used, similar to "sir" or "ma'am".
- chan:** An endearing female honorific, used for children of both genders.
- sama:** A respectful way to address someone.

3 WRITING SYSTEMS

HIRAGANA: syllabic, phonetic and used for native words, conjugations and particles.

KATAKANA: used for loanwords.

KANJI: imported from China in the 6th Century AD. Thousands of letters, of which approximately 2000 are most commonly used.



WORD ORDER IN JAPANESE

1	2	3
SUBJECT	OBJECT	VERB

THE FASTEST LANGUAGE..

The average native Japanese speaker produces

7.84 Syllables per Second

The number for English is 6.19 syllables per second.

MIMETICS = words that resemble the source of the sound it represents.



むしゃり (Mushari)
[Taking a big bite]



ぼーぼー (Bo-Bo-)
[fire burning]

...BUT DOESN'T SAY MUCH

A 2010 study concluded that, among the major languages **Japanese conveys the least amount of information per syllable.**



This illustration is courtesy of [Day Translations Inc.](#)

Chemtrails in Japan



These photos were taken in Niigata Prefecture, Japan. Can anyone please explain what these relatively low flying jets are spraying? I know they must be spraying *something*. Chemtrails? I really think so! They surely couldn't be mere vapor trails. Why do I think so? I saw a trail suddenly end while the plane kept flying! Since then I have seen them again several times over the same general area.

Photos taken on October 11, 2002 at just after 11 AM





Information about Chemtrails

Photos taken on June 7, 2005 from 7:39PM to 7:44PM



