日本の Goals and Overview

- Learning Japanese overview:
  - L4 acquisition: For a native speaker of English, one Indian language, and a professionally-fluent speaker of Argentinian-dialect Spanish
  - Approach/structure:
    - Holism vs. reductionism? ⇒ Need both!
    - Self-designed course of study: January 2016 – May 2020
    - Long-term: Pass JLPT N1 with advanced proficiency in July or December 2020
    - Maybe live in Japan eventually!
    - At least one hour per day of dedicated study
  - Long-term path (not necessarily the only one):

Figure 1: A possible path to take while learning Japanese. We will probably use something that is along these lines.

- Celebrate autodidactism!
- Measurement of proficiency:
  - Understanding the language at the same level as a native speaker in a top university
  - THINKING in the target language
  - Can rewrite this entire collection of notes in the target language

• Need to cover Japanese language, literature, culture

• Primary emphasis on following skills:
  − Group 1: Reading, Writing
  − Group 2: Speaking, Listening
  − Need BOTH groups!

• Assume no previous knowledge of Japanese
  − Build from the ground-up (*constructive*)
  − Examine parts of existing structure (*deconstructive*)
  − Emergentism ⇒ a hybrid approach (age old question, age old answer)

• Learning a language is a general skill
  − Can be applied to any type of language
    ◦ Natural languages
    ◦ Logical languages
    ◦ Computer languages
  − Metaphysical: Can be extended to learning anything

• Toolkit: Learning how to learn
  − Need RWLS but also need balanced skillset
  − We need to figure this out for Japanese in particular

• When is learning “complete”, or over?
  − In some sense, never (i.e. a continual process)
  − At full “proficiency” (metric?):
    ◦ How to measure? Two options:
      (i) Introduce a scoring mechanism:
        □ Take JLPT N1, score 150/180+
        □ Alternatives: *kanji kentei*, *J*-test, etc.
      (ii) Self-measurement:
        □ Challenge: can you convert all course notes into the target language?
        □ Can you do so without loss in meaning?
        □ i.e. transliteration vs. romanization
        □ or... the IPA system
        ◦ These are not the only two, e.g. a third might be: Can you teach it?
        ◦ In order to have lossless pronunciation in our self-evaluation, we need to add a standard to our system/toolkit

• How can we achieve lossless pronunciation?
  − Objective: Create a system to pronounce any language’s sounds in a correct, functional manner without any loss in meaning
  − Is there any language for which we can use extended Latin characters to represent all of its sounds?
    ◦ *Sanskrit* (Devanāgarī)
    ◦ IAST: International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration
    ◦ Lossless romanization of Indic scripts using extensions to a Latin script
      □ Interesting: Sanskrit is the ONLY such language for which this is possible!
  − Rest of languages: Use the IPA system!
    ◦ International Phonetic Alphabet
    ◦ Idea: Cannot represent meaningful units of sound (*morphemes*), so we need to instead break down further into fundamental units of sound (*phonemes*) to characterize
    ◦ Can represent ANY language: just sounds, after all
    ◦ Examples from English to jog memory:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>why</th>
<th>war</th>
<th>flower</th>
<th>flavor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td><em>dʒeɪpənɪz</em></td>
<td><em>fləʊər</em></td>
<td><em>fleɪər</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learn</td>
<td><em>lɜrn</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Some English words and their equivalent IPA pronunciations.

◦ May vary with regional accent... use standard IPA for language
◦ Toolkit: We will assume familiarity with standard IPA
  □ If not familiar with system, read up on it and take notes
  □ Useful skillset, allows understanding of pronunciation much more clearly
  □ Cleaner system, as sounds are universal in the human vocal system but words are not (exploit this)
• IPA will come in handy as we start examining the **structure** of Japanese pronunciation

• How to learn a language?
  1. **Syntax**: Writing language constructs
  2. **Semantics**: What do phrases actually mean?
  3. **Idioms**: Typical patterns for self-expression (“features”)
  4. **Standards**: Grammar, exceptions, standard features
  5. **Resources**: Tools made by others to learn more easily (e.g. texts, podcasts, etc.)

• ALL five steps mentioned above are essential
  – Breaking into pieces makes it easier to learn (i.e. this is **HOLISM**... there’s a theme here!)
  – Can learn a lot of things by breaking it down into manageable pieces

• Rule: Don’t complain about syntax (...or exceptions)!
  – Building blocks, fundamental to language, cannot change

• But before we can talk about syntax of whole phrases, we need to develop fundamental units of sound that can be strung together to make meaningful communication units:
  – “Letters”? “Words”? “Sentences”?
  – In time we will cover all of them... this is **REDUCTIONISM** (i.e. we need both!)

• Japanese has **three** writing systems:
  – **Hiragana**, which is cursive writing used for native Japanese words, particles, etc.
  – **Katakana**, which is so-called “fragmented writing” using for foreign/loaned words, grammatical inflections, etc.
  – **Kanji**, which is used for general vocabulary
    o Borrowed from ancient Chinese characters, but differs in meaning
    o Much harder to learn than hiragana/katakana
    o Takes many years to memorize/understand how to interpret meaning of kanji in context
    o Overloaded characters, overridden meanings
  – We will cover **pronunciation** of these words and other ones like them later on

• More on Japanese writing systems (i.e. specific terminology):
  – **Kana**: hiragana and katakana
    o Kana are **syllabaries** (i.e. spoken *exactly* as written, which is helpful)
    o Therefore, no ambiguity if IPA pronunciation is put into place for standard characters
    o Unlike English or Latin or even rōmaji
      □ **Rōmaji**: romanization of Japanese script
  – **Kanji**: lexicographic/pictographic representation
    o No choice but to memorize (Anki, Memrise, etc.)
    o Always reduces to kana, so can always write kanji with kana
    o Sometimes authors put kana above hard-to-recognize kanji to help (called **furigana**)

• Japanese **mixes** all three scripts in a single sentence:
  – **Therefore, need to learn ALL, especially kanji**
  – 皆さん、こんにちは！私のはらドワジ・チラグです。
  – **Translation**: Hello everybody! My name is Chirag Bharadwaj.
  – We don’t know it yet, but this sentence used kanji and both types of kana
    o Certain simple words, like “everybody”, are written in hiragana
    o More complicated ideas, like “the name that belongs to me”, are written in kanji
    o Foreign names, like “Chirag Bharadwaj”, are written in katakana

• So... why is Japanese so hard [to learn]?
  – Kana are elementary: Most of Japanese script (≈ 80%) is in kanji
  – Various levels of kanji proficiency:
    o Standard high school education: ≈ 2200 characters
    o University education: ≈ 5000 characters
    o Total: Between 50000 and 80000 characters in existence today
      □ Impossible to know them all!
      □ Just use a dictionary beyond 10000+ (most authors stop learning extra kanji around 10k)
  – Stroke order matters!
    o Probably the hardest concept to grasp among the aforementioned ones
    o Handwriting must maximize fluidity
    o Retention of knowledge: Follow a set stroke order to avoid memorization for similar-flowing characters
    o cf. English: Not parallelizable
    o Stroke order in English is mostly irrelevant (see example below)
      □ Primary exception: cursive/script writing
      □ Dying art in the current generation
Figure 2: Two-stroke ‘d’ in English, with no extra tail.

Figure 3: Alternative two-stroke ‘d’ in English, with an extra tail and different stroke order.

In English, both of these versions of ‘d’ are considered correct. This type of thing is NOT the case in Japanese! See below:

Figure 4: Two-stroke ‘re’ in hiragana, with the correct stroke order.

Figure 5: Alternative three-stroke ‘re’ in hiragana, with an incorrect stroke order.

- Rule of thumb: top-to-bottom, then left-to-right, then clockwise, then any ornaments
- Formal rules: we will cover this later (somewhat irrelevant these days due to computers)

How will we proceed?
- All kana at the beginning (≈ first month)
- Then develop vocabulary/grammar with kanji
- See plan-of-action above and detailed schedule for full understanding of work/rigor expected daily
- Journey begins here!