

An Introduction to

Modern Japanese

by Osamu Mizutani
Nobuko Mizutani

日本語

The Japan Times Ltd.

An Introduction to Modern Japanese

by
Osamu Mizutani
Nobuko Mizutani

The Japan Times, Ltd.

INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

This book is intended for those who want to learn modern Japanese. It is designed to give a foundation in Japanese sufficient to handle everyday, practical conversations as well as discussions concerning his own interest or occupation. After studying this book thoroughly and carefully, you should be able to read all of the *hiragana* and *katakana*, recognize about 450 basic words in *kanji*, and have a good knowledge of basic grammar.

The Japanese introduced in this book is up-to-date and standard; it is the language actually used by educated people and acceptable to Japanese everywhere regardless of age, sex, or occupation. Also, it covers different levels of conversation from rather polite and formal ones to more intimate ones between friends or family members.

This book consists of 30 lessons in 5 units. Each lesson consists of the following:

- Dialogue (accompanied by English and romanized equivalents)

- Explanation

- Drills

- Reading Comprehension

- Aural Comprehension

- Pronunciation Practice

- Writing Practice (in Lessons 13 through 29)

The Dialogue is a short conversation in modern, standard Japanese. The Explanation gives all necessary information about the Dialogue. The Drills reinforce this knowledge; the Reading and Aural Comprehensions provide a chance to both apply and check one's mastery of the material. The Pronunciation and Writing Practices are basic exercises.

Each lesson is integrated so that the student will acquire an all-around language ability—to be able to understand both written and spoken Japanese, to speak, and to write in *hiragana*.

This book can be used for both classroom and independent study. The instructions for the drills are designed so that if an experienced instructor is not available a Japanese friend or acquaintance can serve as a drill partner. In either case, with or without an instructor, you can profit greatly by using the tapes which accompany this book.

Grammatical explanations and meanings are given in English. The drill instructions are given in English in the first part of the book, in both English and Japanese in the middle section, and only in Japanese in the last six lessons.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Dialogues

The dialogues in this book are based on actual conversations heard in the offices, homes, and streets of Tokyo. Although those conversations may be more complex, the conversations introduced here are portions taken from the natural flow of everyday conversation. To make the dialogues “come alive,” they should be practiced with a teacher or some other partner, memorizing whenever possible. (It is not necessary to memorize the dialogue before going on to the drills; an equally effective method is to return to it for memorization after completing the lesson.)

As for the orthography of the dialogue, those words that are usually written in *kanji* (Chinese characters) are written in *kanji* with the reading *hiragana* beneath them. By introducing the *kanji* for vocabulary items as they appear, you will not have to later learn the characters for words you already have a spoken command of. The characters in the early lessons are those most commonly used; later lessons include more difficult ones. (*Kanji* are only taught for recognition in this textbook.)

The dialogue in each lesson is written in *hiragana* on the assumption that the student has spent sufficient time on the sections entitled

THE JAPANESE SOUND SYSTEM AND ITS ROMANIZATION and HIRAGANA AND KATAKANA and can therefore read *hiragana* before beginning Lesson 1.

The translations of the dialogues are not exact line-by-line equivalents but rather an attempt to put the Japanese into natural English; they are meant to provide the meaning of the conversation as a whole.

A romanized version of the dialogue is also provided. This text serves two purposes: to aid the reading of the *hiragana* text and to show which part of the sentence should be spoken with more stress. The part with ▲ on top should be spoken with a higher pitch. For example,

▲*Doko-ni arimasu-ka.* (Where is it?) should be pronounced as

Doko-ni

arimasu-ka.



The context determines which part is emphasized. In the following sentence, emphasis shifts from *Doko-ni* to a different phrase.

Ja, ▲*ginkoo-wa doko-ni arimasu-ka.* (Where is the bānk, then?)

Explanations

Most language textbooks have separate sections for vocabulary, grammar, and other explanations. This book, however, has a single section in each lesson which combines explanation of vocabulary, grammar, and usage. In the classroom situation with a traditional textbook, the instructor reads each sentence, explains the grammar and gives the meaning; in this sense the “Explanation” section in this book takes the place of an instructor. Most questions that may rise about the dialogue should be answered in this section. Additional comments at the end of this section has been made as brief as possible.

In Lessons 1 through 24, each sentence in the Explanation is accompanied by its romanized equivalent. It is recommended that you cover the romanized portion and try to read the sentence in Japanese, using the romanization as a check. Newly introduced words are accompanied by marks which indicate the accent.

In the earlier lessons almost every sentence in the Dialogue is explained, but as the student's knowledge increases, self-explanatory sentences are omitted. Further, example sentences are given illustrating meaning and usage; these are accompanied by English translation. These should be read aloud for reading practice.

Drills

The drills in this book are divided into two types—structure drills and usage drills.

The structure drills are designed for practice in proper sentence structure. Their purpose is to train the student so that he can make grammatically correct sentences. Sometimes you will be required to practice saying sentences that differ slightly from those that occur in actual conversation. For example, English native speakers will answer the question "Did you go there yesterday?" in various ways such as "Yes," "Sure," "Yes, yesterday afternoon," and so on; they do not always say "Yes, I went there yesterday." But a student of English has to learn the basic sentence "Yes, I went there yesterday" before he is able to give these other answers. The same is true in learning Japanese.

The usage drills illustrate the way the basic sentence patterns learned in the structure drills occur in natural conversation. They are written as natural exchanges of conversation. As the lessons progress, the drills change from simple question-and-answer exchanges to conversations of several lines. The shorter conversations should be memorized to give the student the freedom to act them out, pointing to objects as he speaks about them and bowing in situations where a Japanese person would bow. For these exercises you will need a partner; this partner should be a native speaker but he does not have to be a professional teacher.

Living conversation in any language is not something that ends with one or two exchanges. This book is designed to introduce longer, naturally-flowing conversations.

An effective method to review using this book is to concentrate on the drills, particularly the usage drills.

Pronunciation Practices

The exercises in each section entitled "Pronunciation Practice" is designed so that the student can shift naturally from the sound system of English to that of Japanese. A good method of studying this section is to do all three parts, A, B, and C, for a few minutes at the beginning of each study period.

Part A consists of groups of meaningless syllables. These exercises are designed for practice in keeping each syllable approximately the same length and in avoiding stress on any particular syllable. In Lessons 1 through 12, where the pronunciation exercises are romanized, the individual syllables are separated by hyphens. This is to remind you to pronounce each syllable distinctly and of equal length. The exercises in part B are made up of individual words and phrases. Here careful attention should be paid to not only the length of each syllable but also to the accent. Part C has practice sentences. Here attention should be paid to the marks indicating intonation. Only when the student can pronounce entire sentences correctly has he really completed the pronunciation exercises.

Reading Comprehension

This section consists of a short passage using vocabulary and grammar introduced in the lesson. If you cannot read or understand some part of it, it is best to review the lesson.

This passage is not a dialogue but an ordinary text; it may be taken from a diary, a letter, an essay or an expository article.

It also differs from the rest of the lesson in that it is written without spaces between the words, the way Japanese is usually written. Practice in reading this type of passage will help prepare you for more advanced stages where you will probably have to read this type of writing all the time.

Writing Practices

Exercises in writing *hiragana* are given in Lessons 13 through 29,

starting with single *hiragana* and advancing to words, phrases, and sentences in *hiragana*.

There are no exercises in writing *kanji* or *katakana*; in this book these two are introduced for recognition only.

Aural Comprehension

Here you are asked to listen to a taped conversation and then answer the questions found in the textbook. These conversations are a departure from the usual "textbook" conversation in that they more closely resemble actual conversation. Each conversation is a short exchange utilizing the vocabulary and grammatical patterns learned in the lesson, spoken at a natural speed and with various emotions. You should not try to catch each word in isolation but to understand the meaning of the conversation as a whole.

Since the primary aim of this section is to drill the student in comprehension, the answers can be given in English, although Japanese is preferred. (In the first twelve lessons the questions are given in English; in Lessons 13 through 18 in both Japanese and English; from Lesson 19 on all questions are in Japanese.)

The answers to the questions can be found at the back of the book.

Quizzes

The thirty lessons in this book are divided into five units, with a quiz to check your progress at the end of each unit. If there are any questions which you cannot answer, it is recommended that you review the unit. The answers to these questions are at the back of the book.

THE JAPANESE SOUND SYSTEM

AND ITS ROMANIZATION

Japanese is usually written in a combination of *kanji* and *hiragana* with foreign loan words and certain other words written in *katakana*. Ideally the student should begin by reading Japanese as it is commonly written, but romanization can be effectively used as an aid until the *hiragana* are completely mastered.

Of the several systems for romanizing Japanese, the *Kunreishiki* system ("Official System") can be considered the most systematic, but the Hepburn system is easier to use for the native speaker of English who is learning Japanese; it is easier to switch from the sound system of English to that of Japanese with this system. In addition most Japanese-English dictionaries use the Hepburn system. Therefore this book employs a slightly modified version of the Hepburn system.

The following description of the sounds used in Japanese includes, 1) *hiragana* for a Japanese sound, 2) the romanized equivalent, and 3) a description of its pronunciation.

Vowels

- | | |
|-------|--|
| あ (a) | is roughly equivalent to the "a" in "father," but the mouth is not opened as wide. |
| い (i) | is similar to the vowel in "eat," but is short and slightly strained. |
| う (u) | is similar to the vowel in "look" except that the lips are spread rather than rounded. |
| え (e) | is like the vowel in "egg" but the mouth is not opened as wide. |
| お (o) | is similar to the first part of the "o" in "go" with less lip-rounding. Be careful not to pronounce the Japanese <i>o</i> as you would an English diphthong, as in "home." |

Consonant plus vowel sounds

か (*ka*), き (*ki*), く (*ku*), け (*ke*), こ (*ko*)

These are the combination of the consonant sound “k” with the five vowels, *a*, *i*, *u*, *e*, and *o*. When pronouncing them remember:

- * The force with which they are pronounced is not as strong as in English. This is true of most Japanese consonants so that the Japanese sounds seem lighter than their English equivalents.
- * The “k” in *ki* is pronounced slightly forward in the mouth because of influence from the “i.”
- * The vowels in *ki* and *ku* often become “whispered syllable.” In Japanese “i” and “u” often sound as if they are being whispered when they occur between the voiceless consonants “k,” “t,” “p,” “s (or sh),” and “h (or f).”

Examples: *shita*, *kusuri* (The underlined vowels are voiceless.)

かゝ (*ga*), きゝ (*gi*), くゝ (*gu*), けゝ (*ge*), こゝ (*go*)

The first sound in these syllables is similar to the “g” in “go” when it occurs at the beginning of a word. When used within a word or as a particle, it is close to the “ng” sound of “king.”

さ (*sa*), す (*su*), せ (*se*), そ (*so*)

The consonant in these syllables is similar to that in “son.” The initial sound in し (*shi*) differs, being close to the consonant in the word “she” with less lip-rounding. The initial sounds in *sa*, *shi*, *su*, *se*, and *so* have less aspiration than do their closest English equivalents; that is, the corresponding English sounds are followed by a stronger puff of breath than in the Japanese sounds.

ざ (*za*), ず (*zu*), ぜ (*ze*), ぞ (*zo*)

The sound at the beginning of these syllables is like the “z” in “zone.” However, when *za* or *zu* comes at the beginning of a word, a sound like “d” precedes the initial sound, producing a sound like the end of “roads.” し (*ji*) also has a “d” sound at the beginning, making it sound like the “j” in “jump” rather than the “s” in “television.”

た (*ta*), て (*te*), と (*to*)

These syllables begin with a sound like the “t” in “time.” In making the Japanese sound, the tip of the tongue touches both the back of the teeth and the gum behind the teeth. (The English “t” is pronounced further back in the mouth.) ち(*chi*) is similar to the first part of “cheese” but without any lip-rounding. つ(*tsu*) The initial sound here is like that of “ts” in “it’s.” *Chi* and *tsu* become often voiceless. Remember that in the Japanese *ta*, *chi*, *tsu*, *te*, and *to* the pressure is not as strong as that for the corresponding English consonants.

だ (*da*), で (*de*), ど (*do*)

The position of the tongue is the same in the initial sounds of these syllables as it is for the Japanese “t” described above. It is similar to the “d” in “dime.”

There is no distinction made between ち and じ, and between つ and ず in modern Japanese.

な (*na*), に (*ni*), ぬ (*nu*), ね (*ne*), の (*no*)

The initial sound in these syllables is similar to that in “note.” However, the “n” sound in the syllable *ni* is pronounced slightly further back in the mouth because of influence from the “i.”

は (*ha*), へ (*he*), ほ (*ho*)

Though transcribed with an “h,” the initial sound here is much weaker than that of the English “h” in words like “hat” and “home.” ひ (*hi*)

The “h” before an “i” is pronounced by raising the tongue close to the hard palate and producing friction, somewhat similar to the German “ch” as in “ich.” ふ (*fu*) This consonant differs from the English “h” or the “f” of “fox.” It is made by bringing both lips together as if blowing hot soup and producing friction. The lips are not rounded, and the teeth do not come in contact with the lips.

ば (*ba*), び (*bi*), ぶ (*bu*), べ (*be*), ぼ (*bo*)

This consonant is similar to that in “boy.”

ぱ (pa), ぴ (pi), ぷ (pu), ぺ (pe), ぽ (po)

This consonant is like the “p” in “pie,” but is not as strongly aspirated.

ま (ma), み (mi), む (mu), め (me), も (mo)

The initial sound here is like that in “my” but with less force behind it.

や (ya), ゆ (yu), よ (yo)

The consonant in these syllables is like the first sound in “yes.”

The sounds *yi* and *ye* do not exist in standard Japanese.

ら (ra), り (ri), る (ru), れ (re), ろ (ro)

The Japanese “r” is made by flicking the tip of the tongue against the gum behind the upper teeth. (There are variations in the pronunciation of this sound but the one described here is the standard pronunciation.)

わ (wa)

When pronouncing *wa* in Japanese, the lips are more relaxed than in English; sometimes it sounds very similar to *a*.

The sounds *wi*, *wu*, *we*, and *wo* do not exist in standard Japanese.

Sounds with -ya, -yu, and -yo

For the following syllables a sound like the “y” in “yes” is pronounced after the initial consonant and before moving into the vowel sound.

きゃ (kya), きゅ (kyu), きょ (kyo)

ぎゃ (gya), ぎゅ (gyu), ぎょ (gyo)

しゃ (sha), しゅ (shu), しょ (sho)

Here the initial consonant is the “sh” in “she.”

じゃ (ja), じゅ (ju), じょ (jo)

The first sound in “jump” followed by *a*, *u*, and *o* forms these syllables.

ちゃ (cha), ちゅ (chu), ちょ (cho)

The first sound in these syllables is similar to the first sound in “cheese.”

にゃ (<i>nya</i>),	にゅ (<i>nyu</i>),	にょ (<i>nyo</i>)
ひゃ (<i>hya</i>),	ひゅ (<i>hyu</i>),	ひょ (<i>hyo</i>)
びゃ (<i>bya</i>),	びゅ (<i>byu</i>),	びょ (<i>byo</i>)
ぴゃ (<i>pya</i>),	ぴゅ (<i>pyu</i>),	ぴょ (<i>pyo</i>)
みゃ (<i>mya</i>),	みゅ (<i>myu</i>),	みょ (<i>myo</i>)
りゃ (<i>rya</i>),	りゅ (<i>ryu</i>),	りょ (<i>ryo</i>)

Syllabic consonants

ん (*n*)

The sound represented in *hiragana* by ん is not always the same sound. It always is pronounced through the nose with the length of a full syllable; but according to its location *n* will have one of the following sounds:

- 1) before *m*, *p*, or *b* —it is pronounced “m” as in “my.”
- 2) before *n*, *t*, *d*, or *z* —it is pronounced “n” as in “night.”
- 3) before *k*, *g*, or *ng*, and at the end of a word —it is pronounced like the “ng” in “king.”
- 4) before vowels or sounds other than those mentioned above —it is pronounced by emitting air through the nose without the tongue touching either the roof of the mouth or the gums.

In the Hepburn system of romanization, *n* is represented by *m* before *m*, *p*, and *b*. Although this is close to the actual pronunciation, for consistency this sound is represented by *n* (for example, *shinbun*) in the romanization used in this book.

っ (*p*, *t*, *s*, *k*)

The sound that is represented by small っ between two syllables in Japanese is written with double consonants in romanization. The first of the two consonants in the romanized transcription is given the length of a full syllable.

Example: やっぱり (*yappari*); もって (*motte*)
 しっかり (*shikkari*); まっすぐ (*massugu*)

HIRAGANA AND KATAKANA

(Katakana in [])

あ[ア](a) い[イ](i) う[ウ](u) え[エ](e) お[オ](o)
 か[カ](ka) き[キ](ki) く[ク](ku) け[ケ](ke) こ[コ](ko)
 さ[サ](sa) し[シ](shi) す[ス](su) せ[セ](se) そ[ソ](so)
 た[タ](ta) ち[チ](chi) つ[ツ](tsu) て[テ](te) と[ト](to)
 な[ナ](na) に[ニ](ni) ぬ[ヌ](nu) ね[ネ](ne) の[ノ](no)
 は[ハ](ha) ひ[ヒ](hi) ふ[フ](fu) へ[ヘ](he) ほ[ホ](ho)
 ま[マ](ma) み[ミ](mi) む[ム](mu) め[メ](me) も[モ](mo)
 や[ヤ](ya) ゆ[ユ](yu) よ[ヨ](yo)
 ら[ラ](ra) り[リ](ri) る[ル](ru) れ[レ](re) ろ[ロ](ro)
 わ[ワ](wa) を[ヲ](o)

が[ガ](ga) ぎ[ギ](gi) ぐ[グ](gu) げ[ゲ](ge) ご[ゴ](go)
 ざ[ザ](za) じ[ジ](ji) ず[ズ](zu) ぜ[ゼ](ze) ぞ[ゾ](zo)
 だ[ダ](da) ^{**}ぢ[ヂ](ji) ^{***}づ[ヅ](zu) で[デ](de) ど[ド](do)
 ば[バ](ba) び[ビ](bi) ぶ[ブ](bu) べ[ベ](be) ぼ[ボ](bo)
 ぱ[パ](pa) ぴ[ピ](pi) ぷ[プ](pu) ぺ[ペ](pe) ぽ[ポ](po)

きゃ[キャ](kya) きゅ[キュ](kyu) きょ[キョ](kyo)
 しゃ[シャ](sha) しゅ[シュ](shu) しょ[シヨ](sho)
 ちゃ[チャ](cha) ちゅ[チュ](chu) ちょ[チョ](cho)
 にゃ[ニャ](nya) にゅ[ニュ](nyu) にょ[ニョ](nyo)
 ひゃ[ヒャ](hya) ひゅ[ヒュ](hyu) ひょ[ヒョ](hyo)
 みゃ[ミャ](mya) みゅ[ミュ](myu) みょ[ミョ](myo)
 りゃ[リャ](rya) りゅ[リュ](ryu) りょ[リョ](ryo)
 ぎゃ[ギャ](gya) ぎゅ[ギュ](gyu) ぎょ[ギョ](gyo)

じゃ〔ジャ〕(<i>ja</i>)	じゅ〔ジュ〕(<i>ju</i>)	じょ〔ジョ〕(<i>jo</i>)
びゃ〔ビャ〕(<i>bya</i>)	びゅ〔ビュ〕(<i>byu</i>)	びょ〔ビョ〕(<i>byo</i>)
ぴゃ〔ピャ〕(<i>pya</i>)	ぴゅ〔ピュ〕(<i>pyu</i>)	ぴょ〔ピョ〕(<i>pyo</i>)
ん 〔ン〕 (<i>n</i>)		

* This を is used to show the particle o. See

** The “ji” sound is usually written with じ.

The use of *hiragana* for two successive vowels

"aa"	ex.	Aa (Oh!) ああ	; <i>okaasan</i> (mother) おかあさん
"ii"	ex.	ii (good) いい	; <i>sabishii</i> (lonely) さびしい
"uu"	ex.	suu (to smoke) すう	; <i>isshuukan</i> (a week) いっしゅうかん
"ee"	ex.	eega (movie) えいが	; <i>sensee</i> (teacher) せんせい
		(with a few exceptions where it is written ええ)	
"oo"	ex.	otoosan (father) おとうさん	; <i>tabeyoo</i> (I'll eat) たべよう
		(with a few exceptions where it is written おお)	

The particles in Japanese are written in the following *hiragana*:

(I am a student.)

(I went to school.)

(I read a book.)

Katakana

Katakana as well as *kanji* are accompanied by *hiragana* equivalents in this book so that you need not memorize the *katakana* before beginning Lesson 1. However, you will probably be able to read almost all of the *katakana* by the time you finish the book. In Lessons 28 through 30 there is a section to check your mastery of the *katakana*; if you cannot read some of them, their romanization can be found on the right-hand side of the page.

ENGLISH SYLLABLES AND JAPANESE SYLLABLES

In Japanese the syllable plays a different role from that in English. The relatively equal length that each syllable receives is an important feature of Japanese. Each *hiragana* symbol, including ん and the small つ, is given a beat of approximately the same length. The only exception to this rule is a syllable like きゃ and しゅ, where the combination of the two *hiragana* has one beat. Care should be taken that no syllable is any longer or shorter than any other one. When two vowels occur together the second vowel does not change; it does not become weak as in a diphthong in English.

The fact that each sound unit has a whole beat distinguishes the Japanese sound system from that of English where some syllables are lengthened and some shortened. A true understanding of this concept is essential for the student who wishes to fully master Japanese pronunciation. Part A in the "Pronunciation Practice" section of each lesson is designed for practice in this feature of the Japanese sound system.

ACCENT

Accent in Japanese is a pitch accent in contrast to the stress accent in English. Each word in Japanese has a set accent, that is, certain

syllables have a high pitch and others have a low pitch. We say that syllables within a word are either high or low, but this is a matter of *relative* rather than absolute pitch.

The accent patterns shown in this book are those of standard Tokyo Japanese, which has relatively simple accent patterns. The following accent patterns occur in Tokyo speech.

two-syllable words



three-syllable words





four-syllable words



five-syllable words



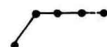
The first two syllables of a word are always different in pitch. Therefore, accent patterns like  and  do not occur in standard Japanese.

In this book the mark \frown is used to show where the pitch rises within a word and the mark \smile to show where the pitch falls. For example, the marks on the following words indicate the corresponding accent patterns.

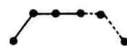
nihongo (Japanese)



nihongo-de (in Japanese)



nihongo-desu (it's Japanese)



toshokan (library)



toshokan-e (to the library)



toshokan-desu (it's a library)

