

## WHY STUDY JAPANESE? TEN REASONS

### **1. Be Part of the “Global Conversation” and Be Ready for the Future: Sharpen Your Language Learning Skills**

In today’s world we all need to be skilled language learners, so why not begin with a language you are interested in and passionate about? This will make you an expert learner who can take on a third or even fourth language. The “language du jour” may not turn out to be the language you need in a future work environment. Learning languages, like learning anything else, takes dedication and effort. You will soon realize if your heart is not in the learning process, so be true to yourself!

“The MLA regards the learning of languages other than English as vital to an understanding of the world . . . Anyone interested in the long-term vitality and security of the United States should recognize that it will be detrimental for Americans to remain overwhelmingly monolingual and ill informed about other parts of this increasingly interdependent world.” (See the complete statement from the Modern Language Association about the importance of foreign language learning at <http://www.aatj.org/advocacy/MLALanguagesPolicyStatement.pdf>.)

### **2. The U.S. and Japan are allies, and both are among the top five economies in the world. Japan is a gateway to other Asian cultures.**

Although other countries are important to the U.S., such as our close neighbors Canada and Mexico, not to mention the rise of other Asian nations in the Pacific Rim, the U.S.-Japan economic relationship continues to be strong with close connections that show how deeply integrated our trade and national-security interests are.

“Japan and the United States are the two largest economic powers. Together they account for over 30% of world domestic product, for a significant portion of international trade in goods and services, and for a major portion of international investment. This economic clout makes the United States and Japan potentially powerful actors in the world economy. Economic conditions in the United States and Japan have a significant impact on the rest of the world. Furthermore, the U.S.-Japan bilateral economic relationship can influence economic conditions in other countries.” (See the complete report from the Congressional Research Service on the US-Japan relationship at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL32649.pdf>.)

### **3. Knowing Japanese will set you apart from the crowd. You’re learning how to navigate and fish in less traveled waters.**

Studying a language such as Japanese shows that you have what it takes to be successful in life. You possess determination, patience, and absolutely no fear of challenging yourself. The majority of people who learn a foreign language choose a European language like Spanish, French, German, or Italian, because it is familiar. You can show that you have a multicultural perspective that goes beyond the familiar. You are adventuresome! Whether it is a resume for a job or an application for a prestigious fellowship, noting that you have studied a less commonly taught language will make you a memorable candidate. It will show that you are up to any task that may be put before you.

#### **4. The Japanese are innovators, designers, and creative engineers in cultural exports.**

Anime, sushi, Sony Playstation, Nintendo, Hello Kitty, Sudoku, karaoke, manga, martial arts, origami and more – just think about how our daily lives are enriched and entertained by products from Japan. The Japanese are known for their love of design, precision and mastery. Whether it is designing electronic gadgets or high-end fashion clothing, the Japanese value craftsmanship, quality, and pleasing the consumer. Japanese pop culture has a universal appeal around the world. Some say Japan has reinvented the concept of “soft power,” and if something is created or made in Japan it is part of “Cool Japan.”

#### **5. “I Love Japan!” Japan is an ideal study-abroad destination.**

Japan is one of the best study-abroad destinations for students who are venturing abroad. It is one of the safest countries in the world, with its low crime rate, secure borders, and renowned transportation system. The Japanese have a profound respect for learning and are proud of sharing their language and culture with international visitors and students alike. Internet access is non-censored and the Japanese, who are constantly on the move, are linked to the world through mobile devices. They are likely to know the weather in New York as well as that in Tokyo. Most students who spend some time in Japan want to immediately turn around and return to study, work, or simply visit. There is something that resonates within each individual, whether it is the neon lights of Akihabara, the upward soaring glass skyscrapers, the glistening moss in the garden of an ancient temple, or the delicate beauty of a carefully arranged boxed lunch.

#### **6. Jump on the bandwagon! The number of people studying Japanese language in the world continues to grow. The Japanese language teaching profession in the U.S. is one of the most highly developed in the world.**

You are not alone in your interest in Japanese. There are many people just like you who love the language, culture and history of Japan.

Take advantage of having skilled teachers of Japanese in K-16+ who are dedicated to inspiring, motivating, and supporting learners of all ages. AATJ is very proud of providing professional development opportunities such as national conferences, regional workshops, online teacher training, and a host of other activities that keep teachers of Japanese highly trained and connected to important educational agendas in the U.S. The education of teachers of Japanese has a long history in this country.

You will likely never forget your first Japanese "sensei" who initiated you into an entirely different world of sounds, writing systems, and visual excitement.

### **7. What should you know about the Japanese language?**

One, it's not as hard as you think! Two, part of being an able communicator in Japanese means that you can read a host of non-verbal cues and you will quickly understand how language is not always spoken or written. Awareness of self and others is a vital part of communication in Japan. Competency in a language such as Japanese means you have the skills to travel the globe. Speaking and understanding the oral components are just one small part of a dialogue.

**8. Many “critical competencies” – the kinds of learning identified by leaders in business, industry, and government as critical for citizens and workers in the years ahead – can be obtained while studying Japanese. The following list of competencies comes from Lion Gardiner’s 1994 book *Redesigning Higher Education*:**

- conscientiousness, personal responsibility, and dependability
- the ability to act in a principled, ethical fashion
- skill in oral and written communication
- interpersonal and team skills
- skill in critical thinking and in solving complex problems
- respect for people different from oneself
- the ability to adapt to change
- the ability and desire for lifelong learning

. Studying a language involves commitment, discipline and self-motivation. Language is all about communication skills and learning how to speak with other people. (See ACTFL's Standards for Foreign Language Learning at <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3324>.)

**9. You will be exposed to multiple perspectives and learn how to effectively relate to people different from yourself. You will become skilled at processing new ideas that are different from your own.**

In other words, you will better understand the diversity that defines the U.S. and how a global perspective actually makes us better fellow citizens in a country that was founded by immigrants from around the world. Whether you end up working here in the U.S. or abroad, studying a language other than your own is just one way to understand how perspectives shift according to ethnicity, gender, generation, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background.

**10. Who am I? Learn about yourself.**

The fact that the Japanese rarely use the word “I” in daily conversation, and yet clearly understand who is “you” and who is “I”, tells you much about their world. The fact that it is almost impossible to sustain a conversation in English without the word “I” tells you about your world. Understanding your place in the world at any given time or in any given place is the most important lesson in life. Want to know more? Study Japanese!