Japanese

"Japan, one of the largest world economies, attracts people for its beautiful nature, history, technology, and other rich cultures (such as food, music, fashion and anime/manga).

Although Japanese language is spoken mainly in Japan, it is used and heard across many countries thanks to technology and globalization and nearly 36 million people are learning it worldwide. Whatever your reason for learning our language, knowing Japanese will enable you to appreciate what Japan can offer to you at first hand and to broaden your horizons. It will also enable you to see different aspects of Japan which are rarely taken up in the media.

The University of Birmingham has three full-time members of staff for Japanese, one of whom comes from the southern part of Japan called Fukuoka and the others come from the central area near Tokyo (Kanagawa and Gunma). Having different background and experiences (my experience is mainly at the UK universities, while others have teaching experience in various countries such as Mongolia or Russia or/and institutions such as adult education or secondary school for over ten years), we share the passion and dedication to help you to be able to communicate in Japanese and to deepen your understanding on Japan and its culture. Having 'communication' as our main focus in class, we will guide you step by step so that you can express yourself in both spoken and written Japanese."

Junko Ogawa (/staff/profiles/lfa/ogawa-junko.aspx), BA (Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language), MA (Education) Language Co-ordinator for Japanese

Is Japanese difficult to learn?

No! Although Japanese is a bit different from European languages, it is certainly not a complex language. Grammar is much simpler than European languages (e.g. no gender, no singular nor plural, flexible word order, only past and non-past tense) and pronunciation is relatively easy with only five vowels (a, e, i, o, u). A lot of foreign-origin words are used in Japanese (e.g. kamera for camera, chokorēto for chocolate) so you can probably guess the meaning of some words from their sounds. Japanese has its own writing system called Hiragana and Katakana. They are introduced in class little by little and you can remember each script by associating it with an English word as portrayed on a picture card which we use in class. We use alphabetized Japanese until you learn all the basic scripts. This means that you start learning Japanese to improve all the skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) from the start. A student with no previous knowledge of Japanese will usually be able to read and write a simple text in Japanese by the end of the course.

You can study Japanese as a Minor Subject in a BA Major/Minor degree:

- **BSc Economics with Japanese (/undergraduate/courses/econ/economics-japanese.aspx)**
- **BSc International Business with Japanese (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/undergraduate/business/international-business-lang.aspx)**
- **BA Modern Languages (/undergraduate/courses/lang/modern-languages.aspx)**
- **BA Modern Languages with Business Management (/undergraduate/courses/lang/mod-lang-business.aspx)**

These are four-year programmes with study abroad in your third year. You study Japanese intensively along with your major subject. The length of stay in Japan varies from 4 months to 10 months, depending on your degree programme. The programme aims at complete beginners but could accommodate post GCSE Japanese students.

You can take one of our Japanese courses or, if you are a student here, study Japanese as an MOMD:

- **Summer courses (/facilities/cml/summer/index.aspx)** - a great way of trying out a new language from scratch or coming back to a language you have studied previously. There are no assessments and no books to buy, just lots of language practice in small groups.
- **Open Access (/facilities/cml/iwlp/open/index.aspx)** - available for all who wish to study a language; students, staff, and members of the public.
- **Modules Outside the Main Discipline (MOMD) (/facilities/cml/iwlp/momd/index.aspx)** - reserved for undergraduates who wish to take a language course as part of their degree
- **Free course (/facilities/cml/iwlp/free/index.aspx)** - for all full time undergraduate students who are not taking a language as a MOMD

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