

Japanese Progress

Dylan Robertson

14MAY2020

Previous Experience

1. Had taken 1 course in college during the fall semester that covered:
 - a. Hiragana and Katakana
 - b. ~200-300 vocabulary (maybe it covered more but I didn't remember much beyond the basics)
 - c. ~100 Kanji
 - d. Halfway through Nakama 1 in terms of grammar
 - i. Verb & Adjective Conjugations: Polite & Plain forms, て form
 - ii. Basic particles: は、が、で、に、の、と
 - e. I think language classes are ineffective: they're slow, cost a lot of money, and making something mandatory almost always kills the fun.
2. I Did 0 Studying/Immersion during Spring semester
 - a. Engineering Major and Naval ROTC commitments. Ended the year with a 3.85 though, so that's nice.
 - b. Came across Matt vs Japan's youtube channel and watched some of his old videos (AJATT era) and thought that the concept was interesting; he had the results to back it up.
 - c. Saw that OhTalkWho Dave made good results using the method with a busy lifestyle as a Naval officer (relevant to me)

1 Month Recap

1. Kana

- a. I was still able to recognize the Kana despite not studying after ~5 months.
- b. Used Realkana.com to review for 2 days for about ~5 min each (250 reps each day).
- c. Didn't bother after that as they appeared so often while reading JP subs or youtube/instagram comments.

2. Recognition RTK

- a. Covered 1000 Kanji, and ~250 primitives from May 17, 2020 to May 30, 2020
- b. Pace: 50 cards for the first 4 days, and then 100 cards for the remainder.
 - i. Maintained a high pace due to wanting to blast through it and get to "actual Japanese".
 - ii. Motivation was high due to being able to recognize significantly more Kanji during immersion each day.
- c. Average retention rate: 95%
 - i. Surprisingly higher than I thought- just goes to show that you are capable of a lot more than what you think you are.
 - ii. I think that timeboxing helped to improve retention
- d. Reviewed first thing in the morning for about 40-60 minutes.
 - i. Averaged around 200-250 reviews per day.
 - ii. Overall time on anki each day was anywhere from 1.5-2.0 hours.
 - iii. Would write out each kanji during review
 - iv. Did passive immersion during the review time
- e. Timeboxed learning the new Kanji with active immersion

- i. 5-10 min of Active Immersion and then 5-10 new kanji. Rinse and repeat until finished
- f. I wrote down each kanji in a notebook along with the keyword
 - i. Didn't bother writing down Primitives
 - ii. I think this helped w/ retention as well.
 - iii. After I finished learning all of the new cards, I would wait 20-30 minutes and then cover up each keyword in my notebook (with my hands) and see if I could remember the keyword. Otherwise, I let the SRS do the work for memorization.

3. Tango N5

- a. May 30, 2020 to June 07, 2020
- b. Throughout the deck I encountered words that I already knew due to previous experience/immersion; I would just suspend these cards.
- c. Total new cards: 867 (so I suspended a little over 100 words)
- d. Pace: 100 cards a day
- e. Average retention rate: 92%
- f. Learning 100 vocab words takes more time & effort than learning 100 Kanji in RTK.
 - i. I would fail cards if I remembered the meaning of the word/sentence but not the reading.
 - ii. Found the vocab cards w/o sentences harder to learn than those that had sentences. I would try to include a picture for these cards.
- g. Overall thoughts: the sentences weren't that difficult and I essentially never had to look up grammar points while going through this deck.

4. Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar

- a. Attempted start of May 31, 2020 (pushed back to later date)
 - i. I started this when I knew about 300 words from the Tango N5 book.

- b. Initially I tried to do 20 pages a day but time in Anki started to pile up.
 - i. Reviewing RRTK, Tango N5, and DoJG (which I also had to create cards for)
 - ii. Summer classes started (Differential Equation, Linear Algebra)
- c. Decided to go back and read through all of a basic grammar guide first

5. Sakubi Grammar Guide

- a. Read through Parts 1-3 in one night (mainly review)
- b. Read parts 4-5 the next day.
- c. Finished the guide (part 6-7) on day 3.
- d. This was probably about 45-60 minutes a day of just reading through the guide.
- e. Doesn't have a lot of example sentences (usually only 2-3).
- f. "Quick and Dirty". I used this guide more as an exposure to material rather than trying to memorize all of the various grammatical constructions and rules.
- g. Overall Thoughts
 - i. Pretty much just a watered down Tae Kim- less explanation, less example sentences, etc.
 - ii. Probably could just go straight to Tae Kim if you knew more words.

6. Tango N4

- a. Learned 795 new cards from June 08, 2020 to June 15, 2020
- b. I suspended cards that were repeats from the N5 deck (about 120 cards)
- c. Pace: 100 cards per day
- d. Average retention rate: 80%
 - i. Being around 80% feels like you're failing a lot more cards than being around 90%.
 - ii. Failures were largely due to forgetting the reading of words and not the meaning.
 - iii. After finishing the deck my retention rate increased to 90%+

- e. Screen layout while learning new cards
 - i. Anki on the right side of the screen
 - ii. Left side of the screen is split between the DoJG search engine and the MIA Dictionary add-on to allow me to look up unknown words and grammar points with ease.
- f. Leap in grammar difficulty between N5 and N4 deck. The deck doesn't explain the grammar points so you have to look them up yourself.
- g. Overall thoughts: a good bit more difficult than N5 in terms of grammar and sentence complexity but quite doable if you dedicate time to looking some things up. I found that after a couple hundred cards I didn't have to look up the grammar anymore.

7. Tae Kim Grammar Guide (DJT Version)

- a. Done concurrently with the Tango N4 deck.
- b. Used the guide more as an overview to understand content and not trying to memorize anything.
- c. Did not mine the example sentences
- d. I broke up the reading into various times of the day whenever I was interested.
- e. Day 1: Sections 1-50 including the DoJG references linked. About 3 hours.
 - i. Having a larger vocabulary makes it a lot easier to go through than before as I can focus on the actual grammatical structure instead of looking up words and readings.
 - ii. DoJG references are very in depth... lots of example sentences and multiple uses/nuances of "basic" particles.
- f. Day 2: Sections 51-86. 1.5 hours
 - i. This is all stuff that I have read before so the content is familiar, but going through the DoJG references take quite a bit of time.
- g. Day 3: Sections 87-114. 1.25 hours

- i. A lot of this grammar pops up in the Tango N4 deck. I put the grammar explanations on the back of the cards when needed.
- h. Day 4: Sections 115-148. 1 hour, 10 minutes.
 - i. Largely did not understand the という section because it was so abstract.
 - ii. DoJG reference link was to the advanced version so the example sentences were largely incomprehensible.
 - iii. Slang is probably just something I'll have to get used to by exposure.
- i. Day 5: Sections 149-189. 2 hours
 - i. Passive sentences will take some getting used to as the construction isn't used much in English. It also having the same conjugation as the potential (at least for 一段 verbs) doesn't help much either.
 - ii. Seeing Honorific/Humble forms is interesting but I feel that it is a topic for once I already understand conversational Japanese first.
- j. Day 6: Sections 190-202. 45 min
 - i. Example sentences were largely incomprehensible due to the complexity and vocabulary involved. I skimmed ahead a bit and saw that the entire Advanced section is like this.
 - ii. Considering this my "finish" of reading through TK.
- k. Overall Thoughts
 - i. Useful grammar given in a straightforward way without any extra linguistic fluff.
 - ii. I highly recommend the DJT version as the DoJG reference links made the material a lot easier to understand by giving plenty of example sentences + has a "night mode" (easier on the eyes than the original website)
 - iii. I would not buy a textbook for beginner grammar when you have this resource for free.

8. Audio Immersion

- a. Got 3-5 hours a day of Active Listening (Netflix and Youtube)
- b. If I got bored then I would just switch to another show, or JPN youtuber
- c. Tried to keep 50/50 in terms of raw audio/JPN subs (never ENG subs).
- d. Listening comprehension was essentially just picking out words I knew at this stage and decoding the sounds of the language: being able to hear words even if I don't know the meaning.

9. Passive immersion during Anki and summer classes

- a. Time in Anki was about 2 hours a day
- b. Summer classes took about 3-4 hours of studying each day

10. Created a separate Youtube channel solely for immersion in Japanese

- a. Bought Youtube premium (w/ student discount) for ease of use with Iphone.
- b. Changed location and language to Japan

11. Reading Immersion

- a. Reading was essentially non-existent besides following along with JPN subtitles and looking up words in a J-E dictionary.
- b. Started trying to read NHK Easy articles about halfway through Tango N5
 - i. I like the format of the site because I can read the article while using Yomichan (which was used liberally) for the first time and then I can play the audio and follow along during the 2nd read through.
- c. Read my first chapters of Manga: 鬼滅の刃, Dragon Ball
 - i. The use of slang made it harder to understand.
 - ii. Found that sometimes I would not be able to understand words that I learned in Kanji form because they were written in kana in the manga.

12. Thoughts on Pace

- a. I went quite fast- looking at other people's progress it seems that this is normally the 6 month mark (if you do 20 cards a day for RRTK and Tango N5/N4).
- b. However, I was also studying all day for the entire month: 3-4 hours of active Japanese study (Anki + Grammar), 3-4 hours of summer classes, reading a couple articles a day, and 3-5 hours of active listening immersion, and then passive immersion for the rest of the day.

2 Month Recap

1. Tango N3

Started June 16, 2020

Pace: 25 cards per day.

Average retention rate: 83%

I suspended all of the listening cards.

Immersion is for improving listening comprehension

Audio is still on the back of the sentence cards.

I suspended the cards that don't have sentences to accompany the vocab words.

Kanji-fied each sentence since Tango has it set up to where they only include N3 Kanji.

Better to include them and not need them than the other way around.

Not a big fan of the formatting of this deck compared to the MIA decks, but I'm too lazy to change it. Features I don't like:

Focus word on front; no focus word on back.

Number and chapter in the actual book; I haven't referenced them once.

Back of card uses the same sentence from the front instead of having one sentence without furigana (front of card) and one sentence with furigana (back of card)

I do like that this deck includes pitch accent information (Number to indicate drop)

Overall the cards just aren't as "clean" as the MIA ones.

I don't really care about making the cards perfect because this is just a stepping stone to sentence mining. They get the job done (and be retired eventually), and that's all that matters.

Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar

June 16, 2020 to July 07, 2020

409 new cards

Pace: ~10 sentences per day

The amount of grammar points this takes varies daily: if I'm already very comfortable with the grammar and there are no new words in the sentence then I will at least read it but I won't make a card out of it.

I started making cards in advance for the next day.

Once I got 75-80% of the way through the book I started doing 25-30 sentences a day to just finish it; during this time I did not add any new cards out of the Tango N3 deck.

Average retention rate: 96%+

I think you learn new cards more easily when you have to manually make them as you have to go through the process of searching for the new sentence, typing everything out, looking up definitions, etc.

A lot of the time you will find that when you first learn a card you remember the majority of it from when you created it the previous day (a kind of built in SRS)

I mainly used the website version on itazuraneko as it is more convenient than the actual book.

Physical books have an awkward size that causes them to not stay open.

I wish they didn't use romaji: just use kana instead. At least this is fixed in the later two books.

Overall Thoughts

Consolidated a lot of the information that I saw in Tae Kim that I might have glossed over or forgotten (most of the information was seen before in TK).

Very in depth explanations of each grammar point with lots of example sentences.

Audio Immersion

Remembered that I had some Sennheiser headphones laying around. Audio quality is way better than the apple earbuds, noise canceling features, more comfortable, and bluetooth capabilities (which I figured out how to use after 1.5 hours of pressing the wrong button in order to enter pairing mode).

Theory

Watched Matt's long 3 hour AJATT video; puts things in perspective when you see his thoughts/ideas now compared to how he was back then.

Contains all of the core ideas for the method: Immersion, Reading, SRS

Interesting to see how his methodology has evolved over time

Lazy Kanji (RRTK), Pre-made decks, Graded readers

Also shows the potential downsides of dedicating your entire life to one thing to avoid deeper issues.

It takes hard work, discipline, and grit.

Be consistent and build habits; if you find it enjoyable then it will be easier to do.

Have the right reasons to learn a language (or any skill).

Personal health/wellness comes first.

Read the Antimoon website

Interesting to see one of the original websites that popularized the immersion based learning style.

Very clear to see that MIA and AJATT are heavily influenced by this website: the core method is the same and only the surface details are different.

Lots of input through reading and listening

Use of the SRS to supplement immersion

Extensive use of monolingual dictionary

Pace

Going at a more steady pace feels a lot more manageable time-wise, but it's also not as motivating as blasting through a lot of material since the progress is slower (seeing rapid gains makes you want to keep working hard).

Current Anki time is about 80-90 minutes for reviews and learning new cards.

Reading the DoJG and making cards for the next day probably takes another 30 minutes (I haven't timed this so it may be anywhere from 20-45 minutes depending on the day).

Tracking progress/stats is helpful for motivation as it lets you see how far you've come.

Starting to understand more of my immersion; you become more engaged with the material and makes you want to keep immersion (positive feedback loop).

Deleted my RRTK deck about 45 days after starting it (1 month of reviews after finishing)

Didn't feel a benefit from continuing my reps after I stopped writing the Kanji out.

Haven't really noticed any negative effects

Lack of comprehension stems from vocabulary and grammar- not being unable to discern what the characters are. I'd say the deck did the job that it was supposed to do (get you comfortable with the most common kanji).

3 Month Recap

Tango N3

Finish: August 09, 2020

Pace: various

Started at 15 sentences per day for the first 2 weeks (along with DIJG cards)

Did 4-5 days of 50 sentences a day but it was too much time in Anki

Reduced DIJG sentences to 0 during this time

Doing any more than 90 minutes in Anki is just not a fun time

Finished the deck doing 25 sentences per day

Average retention rate: 83%

Started trying to use monolingual definitions for the target word if possible

If I don't understand the definition then I will just use the provided J-E definition.

Sometimes the definition of the target word is also a 1T sentence. I will include that sentence on the back of the card with the J-E definition of the unknown word in the monolingual definition.

I always grab the pitch accent information for the word (because otherwise you don't know how to pronounce it).

Dictionary of Intermediate Japanese Grammar

Pace: 10-15 sentence cards

Only takes about 4-5 pages to get my sentences for the day (~2 grammar points)

Reduced to 0 during the last 2 weeks of the month until I finished Tango N3

Retention: 85%

Example sentences are a lot longer (multiple clauses) and use a much wider vocabulary

Some examples contain 3-5 unknown words (don't bother learning)

Sentence Mining

Grabbing 1T sentences from my immersion

Mainly doing to get into the habit of mining for when I finish Tango N3

Save the sentences in Notepad++ so you can make the cards later that day

Get 10 sentences (minimum) to make that day.

Can save more for the next day or just enjoy your immersion

Don't save up a giant backlog of sentences

Takes forever to go through

You might forget where you mined them from (loss of context)

I have experimented with using ShareX to grab audio from anime

Mainly mining from written mediums however: news and novels

Trying to make my cards monolingual if possible

Transition phase: some cards are bilingual, and others are monolingual

I imagine this is going to be a gradual shift over a couple of months: slowly, a higher percent of the cards I make will be monolingual.

Audio Immersion

Following along with Japanese subtitles has made understanding shows a lot easier and more enjoyable.

A lot of shows on Netflix don't have Japanese subs so I just watch them raw, when I do find a show with subtitles though I do use them.

Reading

Having some lo-fi beats on in the background at a soft volume makes reading quite relaxing and enjoyable.

Looking up Nujabes will send you down the right path.

[My personal playlist](#)

News

Lack of Cultural Knowledge

Names of people, political groups, prefectures & cities

Lots of domain specific vocabulary: politics, economics, disaster relief, etc.

FNN プライムオンライン

Wide variety of subjects

Doesn't require a subscription

NHK Easy News

Usually only have to look up a couple words per article now

Manga

うまるちゃん

Read the 5 chapters available on the bilingual manga website

Quite easy to understand and follow the story

よつぱと

Read 28 chapters; didn't finish the last 4 because I got bored of the storyline

福娘童話集

Reading a couple folk tales each day

There is a mix of easy and more challenging content to choose from

The variety of stories makes it a good switch up from other easier content

Novels

夏目漱石

[吾輩は猫である](#)

Extensive Yomichan required

Reading the first chapter took 1 week (about 30-40 minutes each day)

君の名は

Bought the physical book and read about ~20 pages

Looking things up takes a lot longer without Yomichan

About 10-15 unknown words per page (very intensive)

Going to push back to a later time and this is just exhausting to go through

<https://ncode.syosetu.com/n8672gi/>

Fantasy story that is enjoyable to read through

The pages are a moderate length so it's not too bad to read a few each day

Immersion Comprehension

Audiobooks and podcasts are usually a level 2. I am able to pick out words from the sentences, but often I am just completely lost as to what is happening. This is probably just a result of a low level of comprehension across all domains. I'm usually able to follow along with the sounds but I just don't know the meaning of what is being said.

Anime is usually a level 3 if raw (for easier anime, not stuff like Fate or Evangelion). I am able to follow the general idea of what is being said, but I often don't catch the details.

Comprehension is in between a level 3 or 4 if there are JPN subtitles to follow along with.

Reading comprehension varies depending on the difficulty of the source

NHK Easy is somewhere in between level 4 and 5. Able to follow along with most everything that is being said but sometimes I will have to look up technical vocabulary relating to politics, economics, disaster relief, etc. This is also probably made easier by the fact that most articles are related to the Corona virus in some way and I have been reading this same content for a while (focusing on one domain).

Fukumusume is between level 3 or 4 depending on the story. I'm able to follow along with the general gist of the story but often there are details that I miss because of the wide range of vocabulary that can be used in these folk tales. The short stories from the Edo period are usually the hardest.

News and Novels are between a level 2 and 3. Often there are multiple unknown words per sentence but occasionally there is a sentence that I understand completely without having to look anything up.

Phonetics

Watched Dogen's entire pitch accent series in one day and took notes

Wanted to become aware of the information so I can try to listen for it during immersion
Also went through OJAD and noticed patterns in Verbs/Adjective conjugations
Anki reps took longer for a couple days as I was testing myself on hearing the pitch accent.

Each pitch has a characteristic sort of feel to it
Similar to learning relative pitch in music (hearing intervals, chord types, etc)
Not right all of the time but you improve your “phonetic batting average” over time by testing yourself and seeing if you heard the word correctly.
I feel that learning pitch will be easier if you already understand the content
Focus solely on how it is being said rather than what is being said
Useful to listen to the same thing repeatedly in order to deeply ingrain the patterns
Discerning sentence level pitch accent is still quite difficult as there are just so many words whose pitch I don’t know.

Geography

Learning the various regions and prefectures so that I can have a general idea of where things are taking place when they come up in immersion (usually in the news).
Also learning the various wards of Tokyo since they come up so often in Terrace House.

Overall Reflection

I accomplished my summer goals: RRTK, Tango N5-N3, Tae Kim & DBJG
Got high As in my Differential Equations and Linear Algebra classes
Scored 100% on multiple tests.
I think that the difficulty of these classes are hyped up a bit too much by others
Average time in Anki is 90 minutes per day.
I’m honestly not sure how I managed to do 100 new cards a day for the first month because there is no way that I could do it again for more than a day or two.
I tried to do 50 for a couple days and I just couldn’t really force myself to spend that much time doing flashcards.
I think that 20-25 cards/day is a good spot for my current level.
At the beginning I thought that my comprehension would be a lot better than it is now, but I am still nowhere close to a native level (no use comparing myself to other foreigners).

I wonder what comprehension would be like at a comparable point in a romance language such as Spanish, French, or Italian; I imagine that it would be a lot higher and that progress would overall just be faster.

5 Month Update

School

Semester started on 24AUG20

I was up on campus a week earlier because I was a facilitator for the incoming freshmen class in NROTC so I had a full schedule from the 17th.

Time management skills: dividing my day between Classes, Japanese, NROTC, and having a social life.

I often wake up early (0530) to finish my Anki reviews/new cards and get in 60-90 minutes of immersion before classes start.

I like to plan out a list of all the things that I need to get done on my phone.

Online classes

It's nice that I don't have to leave my work space in order to go to class

Gives me more time to fit in immersion when I can

Overall quality of teaching is lower; requires more individual study

Anki

Decreased amount of new cards per day to 10 (~60 minutes).

Currently at ~4500 sentence cards.

Had a 2 week break during the last few weeks because I got sick and then had midterms the following week.

Getting caught up on reviews was a pain (Anki debt is real).

Retention was like 50% the day I went through the backlog of reps.

Dictionary of Intermediate Japanese

Stopped going through the book; I went through approximately 200 pages in total.

Would rather sentence mine from my immersion than read through the dictionary.

If I were to go back through a grammar resource then I would make sure that everything is in Japanese; most likely I would just go through a JLPT checklist and mine example sentences for every grammar point. I don't plan on doing this for a while as I feel that vocabulary is what is limiting me currently, not grammar.

Sentence Mining

Started grabbing images and audio for my sentence cards using ShareX.

Using the MIA Deluxe note type now as has word audio, sentence audio, and images. I like having both the word and sentence audio on the back of the card.

Usually takes me 30-40 minutes to create 10-15 new cards for the next day

Creating cards as I am immersing since I am including audio and images.

Most of the extra time is just from reading through monolingual definitions and having my cards be entirely in Japanese (including recursive definitions on the back of the card).

If I am mining from a written medium then I still type/copy & paste the sentence into notepad++ and make the card at the end of the day.

Bought the Tango N2 book in order to save time on sentence mining

Will do a hybrid approach in order to save time on mining- some cards from Tango, some from immersion.

Listening

I aim to get at least 2 hours of listening minimum.

Some days I am able to get anywhere from 4-6 hours; it really just depends on my academic schedule that week.

Mostly watch with JPN subs now in order to boost comprehension.

Language Learning w/ Netflix is a great plug-in

Animelon has a large selection of anime with subtitles

I have found that I enjoy watching Let's Plays of video games more than anime.

I do think that raw listening (with full attention) is the best way to train your listening ability

Subtitles are great for increasing overall comprehension but your true listening ability will lag behind.

Still using podcasts from Youtube as my main form of passive listening

Reading

I aim to get at least 60-90 minutes of reading per day.

I have mainly focused on reading the news and history articles.

I set a consistent schedule of daily reading to accomplish.

All NHK easy news articles

1-2 longer news articles (NHK or FNN)

3-4 short news articles (NHK or FNN)

1 history article

Additional reading from fukumusume or 小説家になろう (if I have the interest that day)

I want to start and finish reading my first novel.

I read an article about how many novels you need to read in order to naturally acquire 1000 words based upon their frequency, and I need to be reading a lot more if I want to get to an advanced stage.

Probably will just read 夏目漱石 because that's what I want to do.

Comprehension Level

I am able to enjoy most of the content that I immerse myself in; I know enough to understand what is going on, but I still miss out on specific details.

I'm good enough to be able to do what I want in the language as long as I have a dictionary on hand (and a lot of mental effort); there's still a long way to go in order to have a native like grasp of the language however.

Anime with subtitles is usually around a level 4-5 (depending on difficulty and genre).

Obviously Sci-Fi and military shows are a lot harder to understand (level 3).

Reading the (actual) news is usually a level 4 as long as it is not about Economics or Politics.

Raw listening to podcasts is generally in between a level 3 and 4.

Overall Thoughts

The intermediate plateau is real (or at least it feels that way).

Progress is slower as the words you learn start to become more domain specific and contribute less and less to your overall comprehension.

Stick to daily goals and be consistent: making progress is about managing the mundane.

Your progress is the culmination of every day that you work towards it. More days working towards your goal means you will make progress.

Your rate of progress can be adjusted higher or lower depending on your free time.

I plan on boosting my Anki reps to 20/25 new cards during winter and summer breaks when I will have the free time to dedicate to Japanese more wholeheartedly.

Immersing with content that you enjoy is how you stay motivated; don't force yourself to watch something that you don't want to.

I have found that varying my content has helped me a lot in staying interested. Progress is most likely slower as I am not sticking to one domain, but I also don't want to only watch/read one thing everyday.

Enjoyment > efficiency. It's not efficient if it makes you quit.

All goals require sacrifices.

The seeming lack of progress has been somewhat demoralizing; I'm not progressing as fast as I used to or as much as I want to be.

The daily grind sometimes makes you lose sight of the overall goal and why you started.

It is good to step back and remember why you are willing to give up other activities for this pursuit.

The language starts to lose its "charm" as you become used to it. It no longer is mystic and full of wonders- it's just this tiny amount of stuff that I do understand and an ever increasing amount of material that I don't.

Rip MIA. I got the t-shirt and I'll continue to rep it because the logo is sick. Looking forward to what Matt does in the future however. I could care less about the politics that happened between him and Yoga; I'm just here to get good at Japanese and they both offer useful services.

7 Month Update

School

Got absolutely destroyed this semester trying to balance an 18 credit hour semester in Chemical Engineering, Immersion, and ROTC requirements.

Dropped Chemical Engineering and switched my major to Physics with a minor in Math.

I don't have to take summer courses anymore.

Wasn't enjoying my ChemE courses

I have more intrinsic interest in Physics and actually enjoy studying the material

15 less credits to complete my degree (an entire semester worth of classes)

Average semester workload went from 18 credits to 15.

Generally I would wake up at 0530 to get Anki reps, new cards, and ~90 minute of Immersion before my classes started for the day. About 6-7 hours of sleep on average (some days less, some more).

Anki

Did about 8 cards per day on average throughout the semester. I aimed for 10 cards per day, but I had a good 2 week period where I didn't add any new cards because I was sick and the next week was midterms. The last 2-3 weeks of November I only added about 5 cards per day.

Anki time dropped from ~60 minutes per day to ~30 minutes per day.

Currently I am doing 15 cards per day during Winter Break

Anki time is back up to about 50-60 minutes per day.

Coming up on 5000 sentence cards (tango decks, grammar deck, sentence deck).

I deleted like 200 cards (the geography deck, the monolingual dictionary deck, and some others) so I probably already reached this number superficially.

All new cards are monolingual (they have been for about 3 months).

I tried doing the Tango N2 deck alongside sentence mining but I stopped.

The sentences aren't that high quality.

I'd rather just immerse and sentence mine from the material that I am actually enjoying.
Lots of editing the format of the card to make them into monolingual cards.

Grammar

I have started sentence mining [grammar resources](#) again, except this time the explanations are all in Japanese.

I usually only do this a couple days per week (like 1-3) and only add about 5 cards.

Usually grammar isn't the problem for me, and lack of comprehension usually stems from a vocabulary issue.

Pitch Accent

Haven't done any specific training or study on this topic: I have just been letting my ears get used to the intonation (perception).

I include the pitch accent coloring on my anki cards but I haven't been testing myself on memorizing the pitch of the words I know.

It seems like Matt's current advice is to not build up a "monitor" and to instead just let your ear acquire it by paying attention to the speech that you hear and becoming able to recognize all of the downsteps in a sentence. I think he has realized that even though he has a conscious model of what pitch accent should be, he hasn't fully acquired it (conscious learning vs acquisition).

This might be something that I will focus on later on in my journey; it's not my highest priority right now. I have scans of the NHK and 新明解 accent dictionaries so maybe I'll read through them in the coming months.

Reading

During the semester I consistently read 1 [history article](#), and 2-3 news articles per day from NHK or FNN. This was probably about 60-90 minutes of reading every day.

Read through various sections of the [Bible](#) (not religious but just did it for fun)

ヨハネ

創生

マルコ

Started reading articles on [Buddhism](#) (generally 1 article per day)

I tried reading through [永日小品](#) by 夏目漱石 and it was pretty rough.

Only got a couple of chapters in before going back to my other reading material.

Currently I try to read for 2-3 hours per day.

History, Buddhism and novels.

Read through [トカトントン](#) in 1 day.

Took about ~90-120 minutes.

I just finished my first light novel: [この素晴らしい世界に祝福を！](#)

It took about 7-8 days to read through.

The book wasn't that difficult and was quite easy to read through with the occasional use of Yomichan. I plan to read more of these volumes.

This is the first time I was able to follow along with a story and visualize what is happening in my head while reading along (getting into the flow state).

Finished the second volume in about a week as well!

Listening

Sentence mined/Deep dived multiple anime throughout the semester. I mainly used Animelon and Netflix to watch these shows. I used ShareX to capture the sentence audio and image, sometimes I would have to go to [Forvo](#) to capture the word audio if the MIA Japanese add-on did not have the audio for it.

Death Note

Attack on Titan (seasons 1 and 2)

Sword Art Online

Bakemonogatari

Hunter x Hunter

Currently watching Bleach.

Most anime was watched with Japanese subtitles

This facilitated easier sentence mining as I could read along with the show

Increased my comprehension of the show since I have multiple mediums to experience the language: written, auditory, visual.

[Ghost of Tsushima](#)

Hilarious Let's Play

[フェルミ研究所](#)

Youtube channel that posts short comedy mangas that are fully voiced out.

[Utaco 4989](#)

Podcast that has transcripts

I'm pretty sure I rewatched a lot of Terrace House, again.

Boys and Girls in the City is the best season.

Currently I'm watching the original season.

During the semester I got about 2-3 hours of listening per day

During Winter Break, I am aiming for 3-4+ hours of listening per day.

Comprehension

Most reading content is generally at least a level 4 in terms of comprehension.

My reading stamina is increasing and I am finding that I am starting to be able to read more comfortably for longer periods of time.

Watching anime with subtitles is closer to a level 5 than it is a level 4.

I would bet that raw listening would be between a level 3 and a level 4.

I haven't really done listening without subtitles much these past 2 months honestly.

Overall Thoughts

Thankful that it is winter break and that I can chill from school until February

Well, actually I have to take a winter course in Politics 110, but that should be super easy.

A lot of motivation for classes was lost during the month of October-November.

Mainly my chemical engineering courses

The process ever continues: Immersion + Anki

It's not a hard methodology to understand, but the progress is incremental and has ever diminishing returns.

More time per day = faster progress. I'm going to try to maximize this off time that I have and really focus on getting better in these coming months.

I am only planning on doing 15 anki cards per day because doing any more than that doesn't seem to have any benefit over just reading more.

On days that I don't read I don't really feel as if I have done that much, even if I've watched anime for 4-6 hours. I really think that reading just supercharges your progress because of how much more difficult the language is. Reading a lot is probably the quickest way to become better.

[Refold](#) is a much better website than MIA was, but the name is worse...

I'm excited to see the stage 3 and 4 guides and to see what is different about those stages compared to what I am currently doing.

8 Month Update

Anki

I have been doing 15 cards per day on most days; some days I will do 18-20 if I am especially motivated but usually I don't want my reps to grow too big.

Average time spent on Anki is ~50 minutes per day (reps + new cards).

Generally I have around 100 reviews and spend about ~20s per card.

Making my 15-20 sentence cards for the next day usually takes 20-25 minutes.

I am mainly mining from Novels.

I will sometimes also mine 1 anime show.

This is the only show that I will watch w/ JPN subs; all others I watch raw.

Currently at ~5400 sentence cards.

If I continue doing 15 cards per day then I will be at 10k cards around the 18 month mark (the big goal).

Reading

I have been reading novels for 1-2 hours everyday (aiming for 90 minutes each day).

Stopped reading the history, buddhism, and news articles in order to solely focus on reading actual books for about 3 weeks but then I realized that reading only novels was kind of exhausting and making reading not as fun as it used to be so I added them back into the mix.

I finished:

この素晴らしい世界に祝福を！3

限りなく透明に近いブルー

Currently reading:

人間失格 (over 50%)

ペンギン・ハイウェイ (over 25%)

I have also been playing マブラブ (a visual novel).

I use [texttractor](#) + yomichan to look up unknown words (very easy setup and it allows me to use my monolingual dictionaries).

My goal for this year is to read 35-40 Novels.

Listening

I have been averaging close to 4 hours of listening per day.

I finished:

斉木楠雄の災難 (5 seasons)

Terrace House: Boys and Girls in the City (the original season)

Terrace House: Behind Closed Doors (the movie)

今際の国のアリス (one of the rare dramas in Japanese that I actually found good)

鬼滅の刃 (I thought this was a bit overhyped- I didn't particularly enjoy it)

ナルト疾風伝 (Season 1)

ハイキュー！ (Season 1)

ドクターストン

I have also been watching a lot of Youtube lately; mainly people just playing random games and talking: Fall Guys, Among Us, Wii Party games, Mario Kart, etc.

[花江夏樹](#) (famous voice actor plays games)

[キヨ](#) (as always)

Comprehension

Reading novels is generally a level 4.

I can follow most of the plot and what is happening, but occasionally I miss out on some sections. Overall, reading books has become enjoyable and doesn't feel like that much of a grind anymore.

I'm finding 人間失格 exceptionally more difficult than the other books, and this is making me kind of dread reading it because I'm not really understanding what's happening (even if I know all the words in the sentence). I'd say that this book is around a level 3 comprehension.

I've worked around this "dread" by not forcing myself to read it everyday, but instead only when I want to (generally every other day or so). I am still aiming to finish by the end of the month.

Generally I've found that forcing myself to read/watch certain content everyday has made immersion less fun overall so I've changed my tactic to just immerse with what I want and make sure to hit my reading and listening goals for the day.

Watching anime w/ subtitles is close to a level 5 when I am going through it intensively and looking things up (generally when I am sentence mining a show).

If I am not looking anything up (but still watching with subtitles) then comprehension is anywhere from level 4-5 depending on the show/content.

Youtube is generally a level 3-4.

I am able to follow along with the main idea of what is being said and can get the gist of the content, but I miss out on more things than I would like to because people are talking over each other, blurry audio, etc.

Raw listening is definitely my weakest area because I have been watching shows exclusively with subtitles for the past months and they have become somewhat of a crutch.

Pitch Accent

I just bought the NHK 日本語発音アクセント新辞典 and I am excited to start reading through it in order to learn the rules of pitch accent.

I messed around with doing some musical [ear training](#) in order to help attune my ear to perceiving pitch accent but I'm not sure I saw any direct correlation between the two so I stopped doing this.

I have found that I am able to start picking out the correct accent of some words in my immersion; this generally happens with words whose accent I have memorized.

I think that just paying more attention to pitch accent in immersion, and trying to recall the information when grading sentence cards in Anki will help the acquisition process.

I'm not failing my cards if I don't remember the accent of the target word though, I simply treat it as a reminder.

Output

Not planning on outputting for the foreseeable future (at least not for this entire year).

I am still subscribing to Matt's "critical mass" hypothesis and I don't think this will happen until I can fluently read novels, and listen to podcasts with near perfect comprehension.

Other

Messed around with some Mandarin Chinese for about a week.

Learned pinyin, bopomofo, tones, and the tone change rules.

I'm not really invested in this for now because I still want to focus on my Japanese, and I know that when school starts back up I won't have the time to focus on both.

I also had some Spanish novels laying around my house and it's encouraging that I can read them at a level 2-3 comprehension without having done any Spanish since middle school classes (over 6 years ago).

These "ventures" into other languages were solely just me messing around with an L3 to avoid burnout in Japanese and also to see what they are like if I plan on learning them in the future.

I finally got a [VPN](#).

American Netflix is severely lacking in interesting content so I'm hoping that Japanese Netflix will have a lot more options (so far I am seeming to enjoy the wider variety of content).

Starting to read through the AJATT website.

I'm digging Khatz' writing style: it's direct, to the point, and he doesn't bullshit his way around things.

I do think that some people have taken his musings/rants/exaggerations too seriously; take the mindset and motivational bits and pieces and then filter all of his advice by thinking about what is actually useful for you.

I finally started tracking my time spent immersion using Stevi's spreadsheet.

Passive Immersion

I really haven't been doing any of this lately.

I left all of my headphones up at school by accident so I currently don't have any.

Grammar

I barely mined that website I linked last month as this is honestly pretty boring to go through.

I think that my knowledge of grammar will just continue to improve as I keep reading more.

If I notice a grammar point that I don't know then I can just look it up in the monolingual dictionary (or some japanese blog/yahoo answers, etc) and make a sentence card for it.

General Thoughts

I can enjoy content in Japanese and learn the language entirely in Japanese.

However, I am still nowhere near where I want to be as I still need to use a J-J dictionary quite often in order to understand most things.

Generally with novels there are 1-2 unknowns every couple sentences (人間失格) or 1-2 unknowns every couple of paragraphs (ペンギン・ハイウェイ).

12 Month Update

[Reddit Post](#)

This covers everything tbh.

Overall

Japanese is pretty much just a part of daily life now.

Progress in a day is non-existent; progress in a year is substantial.