

Introduction to Japanese Language and Culture
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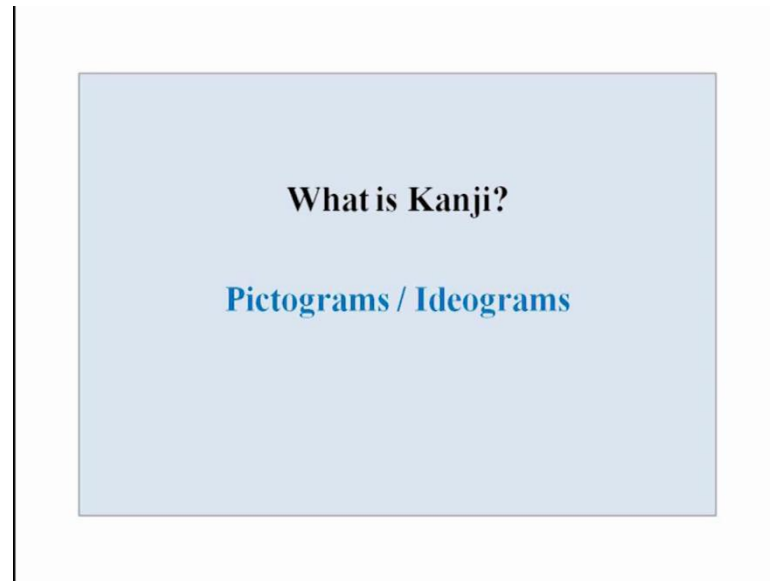
Lecture –39
Basic Kanji

Hello everybody, and welcome to the class once again, we have been doing a lot of grammar in our previous classes, and learning a lot of [FL] proverbs, doing a lot of vocabulary, learning a lot of expressions, but that will not suffice actually, that is not all that we have to do. I have also been doing kanji's with you, and those are the pictograms, we have been covering a lot of them, we have covered a lot of them in our classes.

And today we will talk about kanji. We will talk about what kanji is, how it came into being, what are the different ways, different methods in which we can divided into sections, how it is to be written, what is stroke order, what are the [FL] and [FL], how it came into Japan. So, all those things, we are going to talk about today, and not do grammar or conversation practice.

So well, there are lot of things that I want to tell you. What actually is kanji? What do you, what comes to your mind, when you think of kanji, when someone tells you, this is kanji or this is a character, this is a Chinese character, what comes to your mind first and foremost, what exactly it is, what does it show.

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Kanji characters are pictograms, they are ideas, they are representation of a certain idea, a certain pictogram, a certain concept, in line form, in vertical and horizontal lines. What you think, what idea comes to your mind, when you look at a certain thing, and how you would depict that idea, how you would show that idea in lines is what kanji is all about.

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For example, I think, I told you in the beginning as well, when you look at a mountain, what comes to your mind, how do you make a mountain, well for us if as we are not Chinese, we would make mountains like this. And the moment you see something like

this, automatically you know in your mind, that we are talking about mountains, or if I show what if I show something like this, what comes to your mind, everybody will say this is water that we are talking about water.

If I draw this picture in front of you, what does it look like? You will not say, this is a flower, you will always say it is a tree. So, how do you depict all of this, how do you show all of this in lines is what, kanji is all about that is what we are going to do today. Now, when we talk of pictograms, these are the pictures that come to our mind, and we show them in lines. But kanji is a not only pictograms, they are also ideas. You look at something a certain idea comes to your mind, and then you want to show it in lines, so that is what we are going to do today.

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What is the origin of kanji?

It is said that some 5000-6000 years ago a Chinese historian thought that words could be expressed in Kanji-these are legends-

- First Kanji characters were seen in the 16th century BC on bones and tortoise shells.
- Between 3500-4000 years ago.
- Interestingly by then it was clear that the characters had undergone a lot of modification.

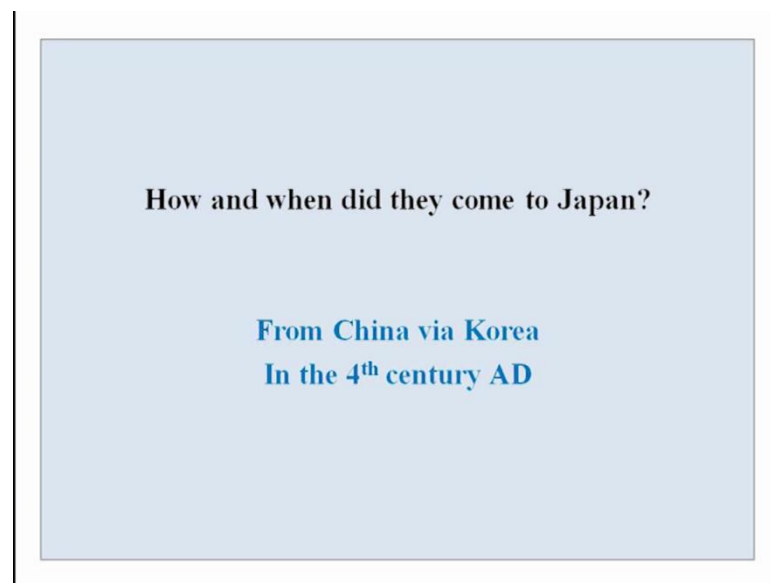
Well, how did kanji come into existence. As we all know are aware of that earlier, when there were, no scripts, when we could not writes how did we communicate? Well, we were communicating with pictures most of the time, we would draw something, and try to communicate to the other person, what we were feeling, or show our feelings by mode of pictures. Draw something, show it; make something, show it; and the idea was conveyed.

Now, there are a number of theories, number of legends, how actually kanji's came into being. Kanji's are basically from China, one of the Chinese historians long long back may be about six thousand years ago, may be even more thought that why not show these

pictures, these ideas in lines. And that is how, the concept of kanji, came into being. Now, whether this is actually true, whether actually this happened, nobody knows, but well there is a story like this, there is a theory and people feel, that may be this is what happened. But what is known is that about 4 thousand years ago. The earliest kanji characters, that was seen, that were found, on tortoise shells on copper plates on stones were quite modified actually, where had undergone a lot of change from their original form, they had been changed, they had been modified, they had been simplified, and were being used by the people.

Now, this happened in, somewhere in the sixteenth century BC, the seventeenth century BC. Now, the country that we see is even more simplified, even more systematic, and easy to understand. Now, you would want to know, how and when these characters came into Japan; interestingly, Japan did not have a writing system before kanji came into Japan.

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And this happened somewhere in the, 4th century AD. So till then there was nothing Japan did not have a script of their own. Now, how did it come into Japan is very simple, they were straight going on, people were moving about, travelling a lot, going to places, carrying their goods from one place to another, doing business with other countries. And that is how, via Korea in the 4th century AD, through paintings, through ((Refer Time: 07:56)), through cloth, these kanji characters entered into Japan.

Now, when the Japanese people saw this, they found it very interesting, because they could say whatever they wanted, they could write something in some kind of a script, some kind, some form it could be documented. Otherwise, they could speak the language, they could understand the language, but there was nothing, they could write it down in. So, this was a very welcome change, which they felt they needed to do.

Now, when the script, the Chinese characters, or the pictograms, ideograms came into Japan, well the Japanese, had a language of their own. The Chinese sent or somehow the characters landed into Japan. Now, how do you write something in Japanese, so what the Japanese did was initially, they used these characters, phonetically, that is whatever was being said was written.

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For example, you know this character [王], [王] means country, we all know that, you know the character also for [王], like this, this is how it is made a closed area and you put a kanji over here, a small something in lines over here, and this means, it is a country. But it has two sounds to it [王] and [王]. So, if some characters are coming from china, and have this reading [王] and [王], that is what was put for [王].

Now, what the character was, is very simple, [王] and [王], [王] and [王], this is what was used for [王], which means country. And the character that is used now, is this character [王]. Now the problem with this system using kanji characters, phonetically, was that each character would have a number of such characters, such sounds, and that

would make it very, very complicated, very, very difficult to remember, and to understand. For example, words like [FL] or even bigger words, would have 3, 4 kanji characters, and that would make it very, very difficult.

So thus, this was dropped at sometime, this was changed. And then characters were used, as an idea, ideographically meaning that Japanese meanings Japanese meanings were put for certain characters, without considering their Chinese meanings or words. So, initially it was phonetic, then it was as an idea, you would just use the Japanese reading for a certain character A, which also had a reading over here in Chinese, but that was not considered, and only the Japanese meaning with the character was considered. This was done for a very, very long time, and it was used.

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How were they used?

Initially used phonetically as alphabets without any meaning
kuni old reading /new reading explain 国

久 尔

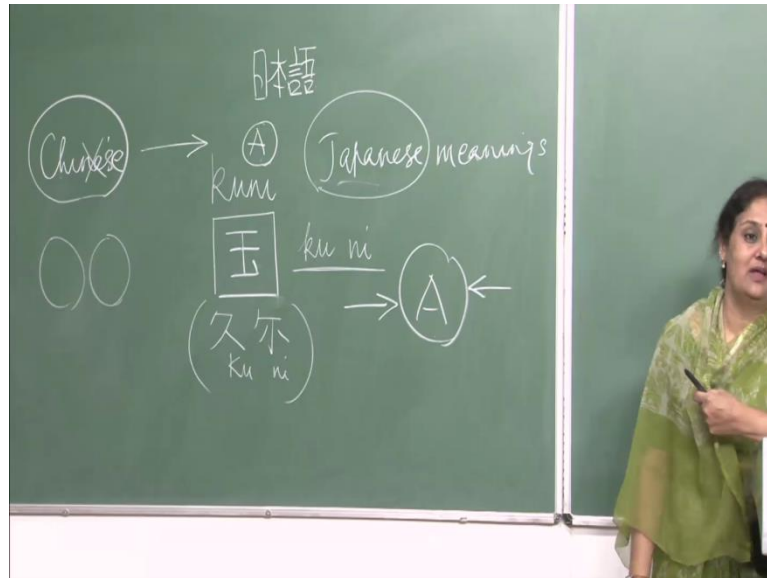
- Characters were used ideographically
- To represent Japanese words of the same meaning
- For a long time kanji and hiragana katakana were used independently

Also even after the Chinese characters came into Japan, [FL] and kanji, were used independently. Of course, now you would have seen, and we have done also over here in our lessons, that all three scripts are used together, you must have noticed that [FL] and kanji, all are written together, and the language is incomplete without the other. But earlier for a very, very long time, all three were used independently, and the whole language could be written in either of the scripts.

And now of course, the total number of Chinese characters that are used in Japan are about 1945. And it is interesting that the students in Japan, are supposed to read, are supposed to study these characters, over a total period of 12 years, till class 12, they do a

certain amount every year, and then towards the end they are able to master, all the 2000 or approximately 2000 characters.

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Now why it is difficult or it is difficult for the foreigners is because each character will have minimum two readings. Now, why two readings, because one will be a Chinese reading of course, there will be a Chinese reading, and then there will also be a Japanese reading to a certain character probably A, there is one reading over here, and there is one reading over here. So minimum two readings are there, and then of course you can imagine, the combinations with 2000 characters of these readings.

And of course not only two readings, but minimum is 2, but sometimes you may even have readings up to 4, may be even 5 with some special readings. So, it becomes extremely difficult, if you do not see these characters every day, you do not practice them every day, do not read them every day, it becomes a little difficult to remember them.

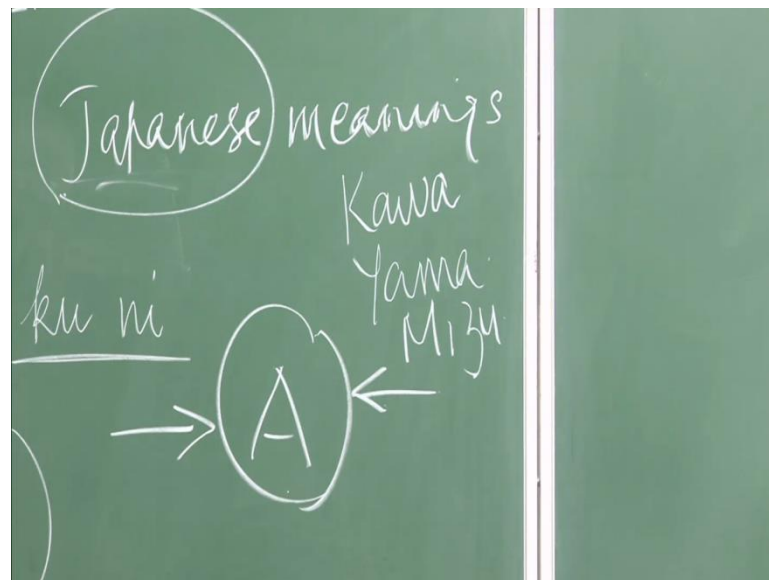
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Kanji Division

- **Pictograms**
objects seen physically yama 山 / kawa 川 / sun 日
first characters developed from simple illustrations of objects
- **Ideograms**
idea ue 上 / shita 下 / naka 中
- **Complex characters**
join two basic pictograms ki 木 / mori 森 / hayashi 林

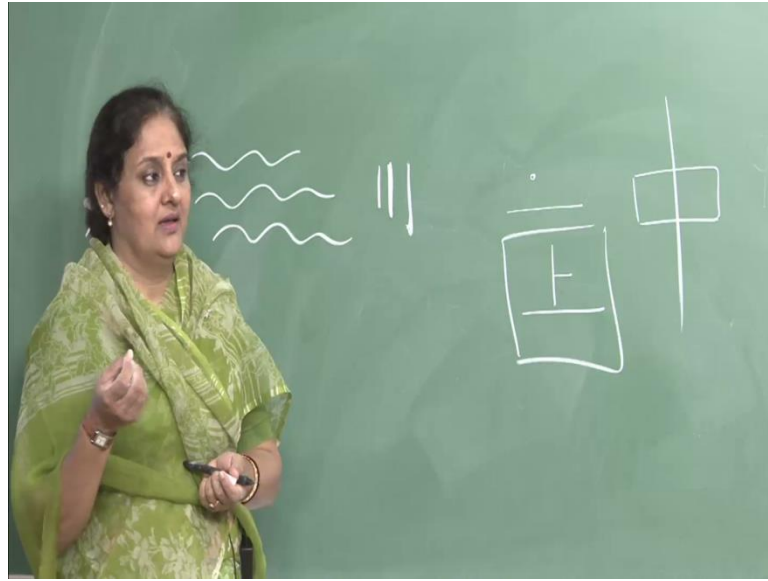
Well, now of course a lot of kanji's are simplified, and they are used now in Japanese; these kanji's can be divided into pictograms, into ideograms, into complex characters.

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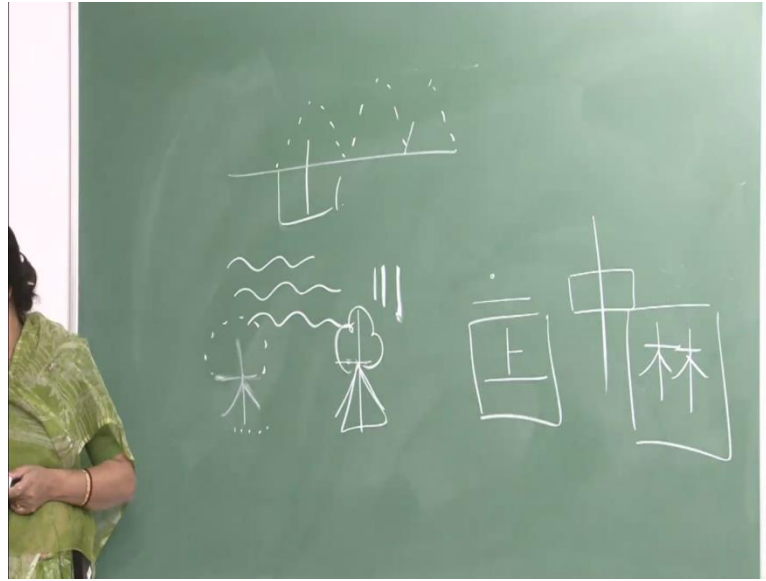
As we did just now you could see the pictograms over here for, [FL], for [FL], for [FL], the three I showed you just now, [FL] [FL] and [FL]. These are simple, you look at something, and that picture comes to your mind, and you draw the picture in lines, and it is very, very clear.

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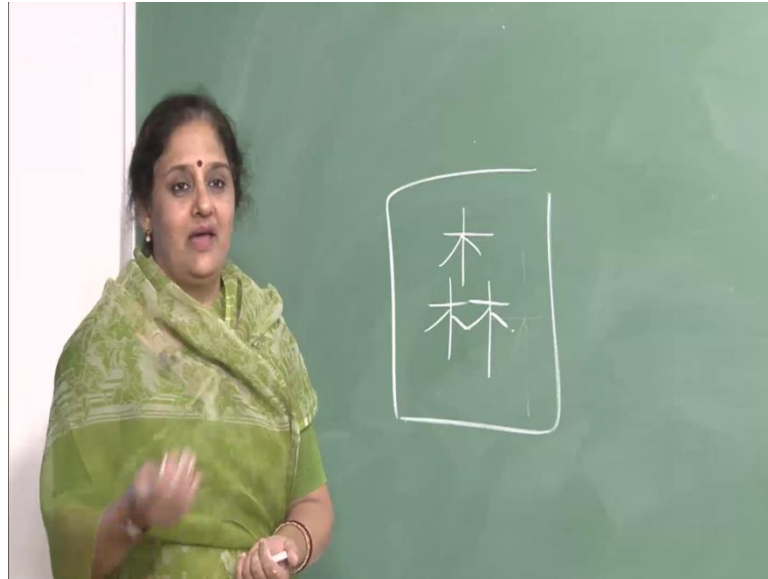
I have also done it in class, but what about ideas, see a [FL] is like this, you see something running like this, you will automatically say it is a river or ocean. So how would you depict this, in straight lines it would be like this 1, 2 and 3, like this. But if you are talking about some idea, for example say on top of my hand, under my hand or inside like this. Then how will you show that, now that becomes a little difficult to show, those could be seen or could be shown very clearly, for example on top of something. So, you cannot make a dot over here, and say on top of something and this means, upper above. You will have to show it in lines, so above the moment you look at this character, you know that it means on top. If you look at this character, this is a box, a simple box, if you do like this, it means inside or passing through [FL]. So, these are some of the simple ideas that you can show in kanji form, then you have also you have complex characters, you can also join a number of characters, and then make your kanji.

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For example, I just now did this character with you of a tree, so how will you make a tree now. We have done it in class, simple, 1, 2, and then this. So, if you look at this, character of a tree, just and this reminds you of a tree. If you look at this one, this makes a mountain, and that exactly what we did for mountains over here. So this character when you look at it, it is a mountain, when you look at this, this is a river generally, and in kanji form, this is a river. If you look at this, this is a tree, and make a character out of it, this is how is going to be made. Now, this tree, if you want to show, it is woods, it is a jungle, then what do you do? A jungle has lot of trees, so you need to show or make two trees like this, and this character immediately would mean, that it is a small jungle, it is not a very dense forest, but it is a small jungle, it is a small forest.




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Now, if you want to show that it is a very big jungle, what do you do? Again these characters are joint, and put them like this, and this makes it a very, very big, a dense, forest or a jungle, that is how you generally join characters, and you show your kanji, you make your kanji. Now, all this is about ideograms and pictograms, how would you write kanji, what is the easiest way of writing kanji.

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How to write Kanji

- Horizontal lines are drawn 
- Left to right 
- Vertical or slanting lines top to bottom 



Now, there are lines only in the vertical, and in horizontal, and sometimes as you just now saw in [FL], some of the lines are slanting. So, how would you write, there is a set

pattern to write kanji characters, you cannot just start from anywhere from any line, anywhere, and end it anywhere there is a set pattern for doing it.

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There is a system of doing it, if there is a block like this. One thing is very essential before you even think of drawing any lines, your last line should end in this corner, why? Because you need to write another character over here, and it is easy to go from this place to this place. Your pen or your brush will take you immediately from here to here. So, always have to remember this, that whatever the stroke order, it has to end in this corner. Now how does that happen? For example, if we draw this very simple, make this very simple character over here, this one [FL] 1, 2, 3, and see it will end over here in this block. And to make another [FL] quickly, I can immediately go from here to here, so that part is important.

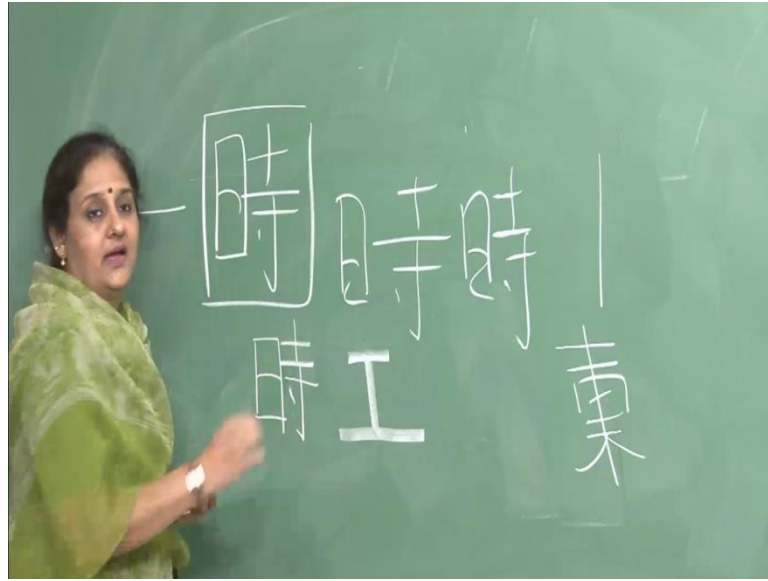
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Now there are lot of do's and don'ts about writing kanji, as kanji characters are lines, straight lines, and vertical lines. One has to remember that always the straight line will come first, all the time, any kanji character that you begin, you have to make the straight line first. Then comes the vertical part, the second line will generally be vertical. If you have two straight lines, well two straight lines will come first, and then the vertical stroke will be made. As is the case over here, 1, 2, then as we need to end it over here naturally, this side will come first, and then this side will be made.

Always try to make on a graph sheet, because you have lines drawn, very nicely, and proportionately, and you can choose a block, and then try to make your character like this. So, it is very, very proportional and balanced. There are a lot of other things that we need to remember about these kanji characters. For example as I told you just now kanji has to be always written with the horizontal line coming in first.

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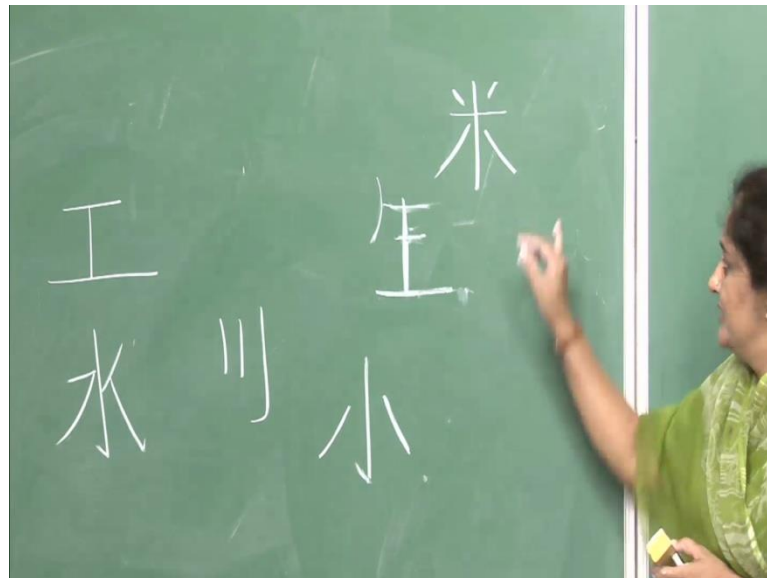
Now, you have done a character like this. If you remember, what is this? This is time [FL]. So what have I done? Have I started the character from here like this, and then going on like this, and making it here or may be just making here, and then here, and then coming here, no, there is a set pattern. You first make this character, then make this one, then do this one, and then this one, so this is how, it is to be written, it goes from top to bottom all the time.

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Stroke order	
• Top to bottom	工 / 生 / 寺
• Left to right	川 / 時
• Middle first	小 / 水, 米, 当, (火)
• Horizontal stroke first before vertical	十, 土, 七 (生·王)
Exception	(田, 口)
• Centre stroke last	中 車
• Horizontal strokes passing through are written last	女, 子供, 大学
• Enclosure is done first	国, 肉, 内

The first stroke has to be here, then here, then something may come here, something may come here, and may be something like this, though this is not a character, please but I am just trying to tell you, that this is how it should be made. The first character is horizontal from top to bottom, like this, thi is how it is made?

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Look at this character here, 1, 2, and then 3; this character has something to do with construction with making something, you have done a lot of such characters. For example, you have done this one, like this. So 1, 2, 3, 4, and then 5. So, always the first

top one will come first, horizontal, vertical, and then ending over here in this column. Also you always write from left to right, as you just saw with [FL] 1, 2, and 3 [FL]. Also you have done with [FL], the center one will come first, and then this one, and then it will end over here.

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Stroke order	
• Top to bottom	工 / 生 / 寺
• Left to right	川 / 時
• Middle first	小 / 水, 米, 当, (火)
• Horizontal stroke first before vertical	十, 土, 七 (生·王)
Exception	(田, 口)
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So now, you can see that it comes from top to bottom, it comes from left to right as we did just now, and then it comes from the middle, the middle stroke has to be done first. For example, for the middle stroke, you have also done [FL], [FL] which is water, you have also done other strokes, like [FL], [FL] rice, the horizontal, the vertical, 1, 2, and 3, and 4, so it will end over here. This means [FL] [FL] is rice, incidentally this character is also used for America for the United States, as it is considered the rice country.

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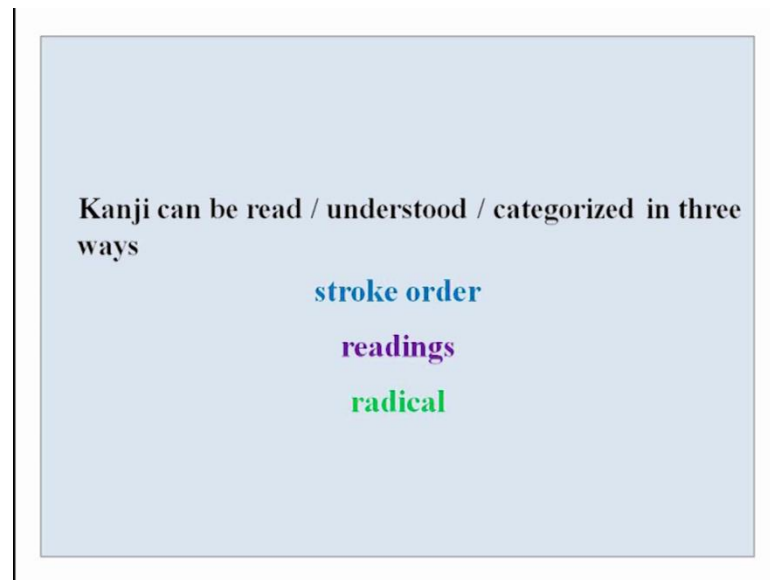


You have also done another one with [FL] 1, 2, 3, and 4. With a horizontal stroke, I just told you that the horizontal stroke comes first, there are a few exceptions yes, with any of these actually, there are exceptions with the horizontal stroke. One exception, which you have done is [FL], so you will see that first you have the vertical stroke, and then the other strokes follow.

And there is another one here, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, so you can see this is a field over here, in these two characters, the vertical stroke comes first. Then in certain kanji's, where the character is cutting the kanji, horizontally or vertically both in such a case, it comes in the end. We just did it, this one, like this, this is a vertical stroke, which comes in the end, after you have written the character.

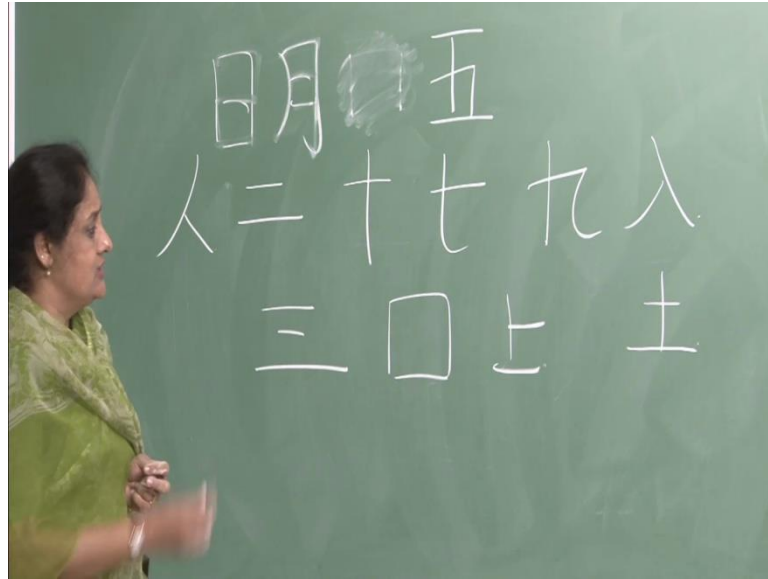
In case of a horizontal stroke, which cuts the character completely is [FL], again on top, and that stroke, comes in the end. You have so many kanji's, as I have already told you and different ways of writing it, there are certain rules, but of course, exceptions are also there. Now, there are certain kanji's, which are written enclosed, for example, we just did this character of [FL] like this, so you have a character here, and then something written inside. So, this is how kanji is written, it is easy to write it like this, it is simpler, if you try to memorize stroke order, it is essential also that you memorize the stroke order, because it is easy to write, and go to the next character quickly.

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Now, we have been talking about kanji's, but how do we divide kanji's? How do we separate them, how do we categorize them? There are strokes, there is stroke order to remember, there is reading of the character to remember, and then there is ready to remember. So, we will deal each of these very, very quickly, but first and for most... Let us talk about strokes, so you have done characters with 2 strokes, 3 strokes, 4 strokes, and so many of them, some even 11 strokes, and 12 strokes we have done.

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For example, 2 strokes [FL], so many of these with 2 strokes [FL] 2 strokes, [FL] 2 strokes. Then we also have with 3 strokes - 1, 2, 3, [FL] of course, then we have [FL], we have [FL], then also we have a number of other characters also. For example, we have [FL], we have [FL], which you have done as like this, so there are 3 stroke characters. You also have 4 stroke characters, like and most of them you have done, [FL]1, 2, 3, 4; then you have [FL] 1, 2, 3, 4, and you have 1, 2, no, this will not work, this is a 5 stroke character, 1, 2, 3, 4, go, so these are some characters which are 4 stroke characters.

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Strokes		
Number of strokes till 23 strokes		
2 - strokes	hito/ni/ shichi/kyū person/two/seven/nine	ひと/に/しち/きゅう 人、二、七、九
3 - strokes	san/ue/shita/kuchi/tsuchi three/up/down/mouth/soil	さん/うえ/した/くち/つち 三、上、下、口、土
4 - strokes	go/tsuki/ nichi/ mizu five/month/day/water	ご/つき/にち/みず 五、月、日、水、
5 - strokes	hon/kita/furui/ta/me/ book/north/old/field/eyes	ほん/きた/ふるい/た/め 本、北、古、田、目
6 - strokes	hyaku/iku/na hundred/go/name	ひゃく/いく/な 百、行、名

So, this is how you have been doing in class, and this goes on till 23, though of course 23, 22, 21 characters are very few. And a generally not used in a generally most of the time, not used in conversation. So this is stroke order, which is important, and you can see there is a pattern over there, which you need to know.

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For example if you have a 5 stroke character like, 5 over here. There is a pattern - 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. You cannot write 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5; there is a set pattern, this is how you are supposed to write. Then you also have may over here, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5; you cannot write

1, 2, 3, 4 and 5; that cannot be done. So, stroke order is extremely important. Then why is it that we have so many readings for a character, we are always worried, we always our flustered over this is to why a certain character needs to have so many readings.

As I told you earlier two readings are extremely essential as, one is a Chinese reading, and one is a Japanese reading. But beyond that also number of characters will have two readings. So, the reading that is of the country, that is Japan is [FL] is the way you read it.

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Why do we have so many readings for kanji characters			
Kun yomi	人	ひと	person
	日	ひ	day
	大	おおきい	big
On yomi	人	じん	person
	日	にち	day
	大	だい	big

And the reading that is Chinese is the [FL]. So, that is the reason, and the combinations of these characters lead to more readings all the time.

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Readings	
火/日	hi/ひ fire/day
九/口/区	ku/< nine/mouth/ward
生/性	sei/せい living/gender
木/気 (元気 天気)	ki/き tree/mood (genki/tenki)
千/先	sen/せん thousand/ahead

For example, we can divide characters, by the readings, also you have done this character [FL].

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You have also done this character for [FL], though both are very different, they are very, very different, they are not same at all, but both have the same reading. For example you have done [FL], [FL], you have also done [FL], this is mood, this is tree. So, this can again we put into the same readings section, that it has a similar reading, and can be divided with readings. For example, you have done another character [FL], which is

1000, and [FL] also you have done, this means earlier or before, so these are some of the readings that you can see very clearly as you have done these, and you can understand how kanji's can be put into a certain section by grouping it into same readings. So, this was a little introduction of kanji to you, and still there is lots more to do in the kanji section, also we have radicals, which give a basic meaning to the character, which tells you about the character, which from which you can also gather and make some other kanji's, and some associated meanings also you can understand.

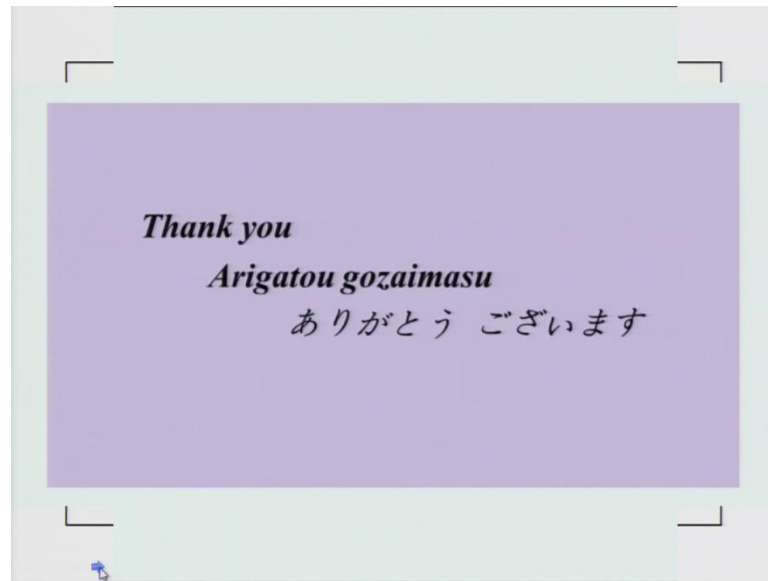
So, this radical part, we will do in our next class, try to digest what we have done today, try to read it again. And see try to find some more similar kanji's which have similar readings, try to group some of the kanji's with their stroke order. And try to group them in one section, try to group a few with readings.

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And then we will meet again next time, and try to discuss radicals in our next class. Till then [FL].

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[FL]

Thank you.