

Hello and welcome to Naruhodo Japan, the podcast for learning about the language and culture of Japan from a Nikkei perspective. I am your host, Mariko.

ようこそ。 「なるほどJAPAN」が^{はじ}始まります。日系人の^{にっけいじん}観点から^{かんてん}日本語と日本の^{にほんご}文化を^{にほん}学ぶためのポッドキャストです。ホストのマリコです。

This being the first episode, I would like to introduce why I started this podcast and what I hope to achieve with it. I am Nikkei, Nisei, haa-fu. What these words mean are that I am of Japanese descent, second generation, and half Japanese. Since I have lived in America and Japan, the countries of both of my parents, I often find myself in a position where I can teach one side of my heritage to the other. Whether it's teaching friends in Japan about America or the reverse. This has led me to consider becoming a Japanese teacher professionally and with this podcast I hope to experiment that possibility. I also enjoy sharing the culture of Japan to those outside of Japan. Instead of teaching straight Japanese lessons or giving examples of life in Japan, for which there are already several podcasts, I want to discuss these things from a Nikkei perspective. Of course there will be Japanese lessons but I think that sharing the lives of Japanese living abroad is a unique point that I can offer. Certainly I don't know everything about the language and culture so in future episodes I plan to have some fellow Nikkei join me on the program. If you are learning Japanese or have an interest in Japan, perhaps I or my guests can shed some light on a few matters so please leave comments and questions on the web site. I am also hoping to have a few video podcast episodes. There will be some segments or episodes in Japanese to help those who are learning hear natural sounding Japanese from native and fluent people. Please note that if I repeat sentences in English and Japanese, it will usually not be a word for word translation. Just as I am about to do right now.

きょう今日は「なるほどJAPAN」の^{だいいっじゅう}第一集なので、どうしてこのポッドキャストを^{つく}作ったかとか^{じこしょうかい}自己紹介をしたいのです。私は^{わたし}日系、^{にっけい}二世、^{にせい}ハーフ。おや^{おや}親は^{にほんじん}日本人と^{じん}アメリカ人なので^{わたし}私は^{わたし}日本にも^{にほん}アメリカにも^す住んだ^{こと}事があります。日本の^{にほん}友達に^{ともだち}英語と^{えいご}かアメリカの^{ぶんか}文化を^{おし}教えたり、^{がいじん}外人の^{ともだち}友達にも^{にほんご}日本語と^{にほん}か日本の^{ぶんか}文化を^{おし}教えてるので^{にほんご}日本語の^{せんせい}先生になろうかなと^{かんが}考えています。このポッドキャストでは^{にほんご}日本語の^{せんせい}先生になれる。ま^{わたし}私は^{にっけい}日系だし^{にほん}ハーフだから^{ことすべ}もちろん日本の^わ事全て^わ分らないなのでこの^{ばんぐみ}番組にも^でゲストが^{ときどき}出ます。時々^{たの}ビデオポッドキャストも^{たの}やるつもりなので^きお楽しみにしてね。もし^{みな}聞いている^{にほんご}皆さんが^{にほんかんけい}日本語について^{しつもん}かまた日本関係の^{しつもん}質問があれば、どうぞ^{ねがい}ウェブサイト^{ねがい}にコメントを^{ねがい}よろしく^{ねがい}お願いします。

Now the first thing I want to teach is what the title of the show means. Naruhodo is what you say when you learn something new. In English you might say, "I see". As you learn about various things, when your brain makes connections between the pieces of information, you might find yourself saying "Naruhodo". Now, let's talk about Japan. ^{にほん}日本の^{こと}事を^{はな}話しましょう。

I've been giving some Japanese as a foreign language learning advice online at Yahoo Answers and a question often asked is how long does it take to learn or master Japanese. That is difficult to answer as everyone learns at their own pace. It really depends on how devoted you are to your studies and your passion for acquiring the language. I am a firm believer in immersion as that is how I learned, by living in Japan as a kid. Even though my mother is Japanese and we live near a decent-sized Nikkei community complete with Japanese tv and radio, and I attended Japanese language schools in America for several years, I did not pick up the language because I didn't want to. As a kid I would have much rather watched cartoons or play with my friends than learn a language I can only use with a few people. That is how it came to pass that we moved to Japan and learned the language and culture first hand. I admire those of you who are able to learn a foreign language from books instead of through immersion. That takes a lot of dedication. Even more amazing are those who study Japanese on their own. My only concern with that is that if you start to develop bad habits in pronunciation or learn something about sentence structures incorrectly, it might be something that will be difficult to correct later on. Just to be sure I'm covering all the bases, let's go over the Japanese alphabet.

When learning Japanese, I think pronouncing the vowels is much more important than the consonants. If you cannot pronounce the 5 vowels correctly, you are not going to be able to pronounce any word correctly. The vowels are A-I-U-E-O. All of the alphabet is based upon these vowels. The one consonant to be aware of is R or L. It is a romaji issue, or how Japanese is transliterated into Roman letters, the same ones used in writing English. It is a very soft R, pronounced more like L. I've practiced saying a few words in English and Japanese to describe the differences in the tongue's position in your mouth when you pronounce words beginning with R or L. In English, the tongue doesn't touch anything when a word begins with R. [Practice words that begin with R.] With words that begin with L, the tongue touches the back of the front teeth and it touches it quite a bit. [Practice words that begin with L.] In Japanese, the tongue touches higher up towards the palette and it touches only a little bit. [Japanese words as an example.] The way Japanese remember the alphabet is by reciting the top row of letters and this is how things are alphabetized in Japanese as well. A-Ka-Sa-Ta-Na-Ha-Ma-Ya-Ra-Wa-N. The entire alphabet is: [alphabet]

a i u e o	あいうえお
ka ki ku ke ko	かきくけこ
sa shi su se so	さしすせそ
ta chi tsu te to	たちつてと
na ni nun e no	なにぬねの
ha hi fu he ho	はひふへほ
ma mi mu me mo	まみむめも
ya yu yo	や ゆ よ
ra ri ru re ro	らりるれろ
wa wo n	わ を ん

On to the next segment.

Since my mother was born and raised in Japan, sometimes she can help clarify things much more than I, so we are going to give her her own segment on the program called “Kaa-chan Corner”. Kaa-chan is a nickname for a mother so you might say it means “Momma”. My kaa-chan is from Okinawa prefecture, or the state/province of Okinawa, so sometimes we will talk about specific aspects of Okinawan culture and language. Today however I would like her to explain a word I’ve come across several times on the internet when reading about Japan but I never noticed this word while I was living in Japan so I am not sure if it’s common or outdated.

Today’s topic on Kaa-chan Corner is: burakumin

[Kaa-chan Corner]

After recording that piece for Kaa-chan Corner, my mom was unsatisfied with her responses and went out on her own to interview someone about burakumin. She spoke with Kinomura-san, who was also born and raised in Japan.

[Kaa-chan interviews Kinomura-san]

Thank you Kaa-chan for embracing podcasting and becoming a field journalist. I asked one more person about Burakumin and the more you ask, the more you know. So please listen to one more explanation. This is my interview with Kura-san.

[interview with Kura-san]

Well that’s it for this the first episode of Naruhodo Japan. Thank you for listening. This podcast was created by your host Mariko, including the Naruhodo theme song. Please tune in again for the next episode. Yoroshiku onegaishimasu!