

Introduction to Japanese Language and Culture - II

Vatsala Misra

Foreign(FL) Language Program
Indian Institute of Technology - Kanpur

Lecture: 35

Kyūjitai and Shinjitai

旧字体 — 新字体

Konnichiwa minasan / こんにちは みなさん(FL) and welcome to the class in the second lecture series on Introduction to Japanese Language and Culture. So, in the course I have talked a lot about kanji we have studied a lot of kanji we have done probably 300 to 400 characters with different readings and from words as well. I did not tell you much about the origin of kanji or where it has come from or what are radicals, what is the reading *yomikata* / よみかた(FL) all of that or how it is made what is the stroke order I did not talk about that at all. Because we have done that in our first series on Japanese Language and Culture and also in my Hindi series which is on Swayam Prabha, I will also give the link to you; you can go check it out over there.

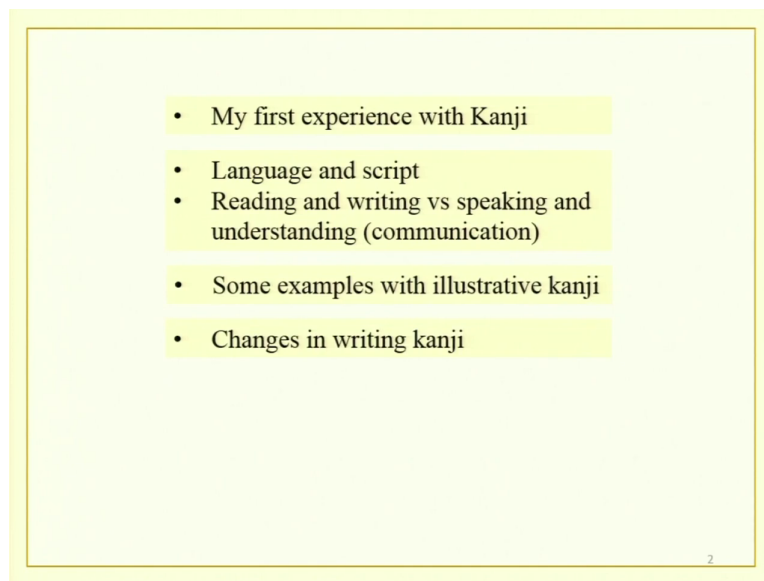
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Kyūjitai	Shinjitai
國	国
學	学

Now today I have something different for you just to give you a different perspective of kanji, how it is written, how it has evolved, where it has come from? So, I have requested professor Sudhir Misra from the Department of Civil Engineering IIT Kanpur to talk to you about kanji how it has changed over the years. And his experience with kanji, how he learned kanji and what his experiences are about kanji on kanji and a different perspective on language learning, so, listen to his *kaiwa* / 会話(FL) and I hope you enjoy it.

Hello namaskar *konnichiwa*/こんにちは(FL) it is a pleasure to be talking to you once again in this series of lectures on the Japanese Language and Culture. And today my discussion with you is my understanding of the kanji script in the Japanese language. And as you can see I am from the Department of Civil Engineering at IIT Kanpur and therefore no language expert. And what I am sharing with you is more or less a story of how I learned kanji to some extent learnt the Japanese language and what I learned from it other than the fact that it was just a simple language.

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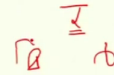


So, now my discussion today I would like to divide it into a couple of segments let us say. The first thing is my first experience with kanji, the second aspect is that of the language itself the concept of language the role of the script, what does it mean to be able to read and write and how is it different from being able to speak and understand? And then in the larger sense the whole communication, written communication, oral communication, communication through power points, communication through sign language if you want to call it and so, on.

The third thing we will deal with today is some examples with illustrative kanji on how I looked at this concept of language or this idea of kanji's in that sense and finally some changes in the writing of kanji's and very interesting things about the Japanese language and that is what we are going to be talking about today.

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My first experience with Kanji



- In 1984 I was oblivious of a pictographic script !!
- Had seen different languages in India, and had spent some time in different parts of India
- Going to Japan and the experience with Kanji helped me get an entirely different perspective on 'language' and its components

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So, starting our discussion with the first bullet my first experience with kanji; the first brush was in 1984 when I went to Japan and I was quite oblivious of a pictographic script I did not know that there can be a language at least a language today which used pictograms or ideograms whatever they are where a particular picture or a particular diagram if you want to call it represented an idea.

What my experience was with India? I had studied English by knew Hindi I had been in different parts of the country and new bits and pieces of some other languages, but all of them and those of you who are from different parts of India would probably understand this better. We do understand that there are different languages. We do understand that each language has a script, but none of them at least to my understanding and knowledge is really a pictographic script they are all kind of phonetic scripts.

There may be differences here and there. So, for example when I was learning Malayalam and I was there in Kerala for a couple of years, one of the very interesting things that I figured out there was that in my own name in Hindi they would write it as Sudhir at the end of it which would be a *r*. When I talked to my Malayali friends who spoke Malayalam they said that if this was to be written in Malayalam it would be read as Sudhira.

And therefore if the word is ending with the *ra* sound; then the letter to use is something like this and the *ra* (PL) is probably something different. So, there are differences in the Indian languages this just one illustrative example but at the end of it; it was phonetic again going

back to the Malayalam example I could figure out that something like this was a *ma*(~~FL~~) and the fact that if you modify it with some kind of a sign at the left it would become *mi*(~~FL~~).

So, this to me was pretty similar to what we do in Hindi we write a ma and add a qualifier to it, it becomes *mi*(~~FL~~). Now that was my understanding of language and this script all this changed when I went to Japan the experience with kanji helped me get an entirely different perspective on language and its components the script the pronunciations and so on.

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•Language and script
•Reading & writing VS speaking & understanding (listening)

- A child cannot read or write – but understands and speaks perfectly well
- A language can be written in practically any script –
- But will it be understood??
- Examples of relationship between some Indian languages

पाकि पाकि ✓ → ○
 x → x

Devanagiri
 READ
 (READ)] A
 HINDI ✓
 MARATHI ✓
 ○ READ ✓
 → → UNDERSTAND ✓

x READ →] B
 (x) READ →] B
 HINDI] B
 URDU] B
 UNDERSTAND ✓

And now let me come to the second part the role of the script reading and writing speaking and understanding listening. Now if we look at it in a very simple way a child cannot read or write but understands and speaks perfectly well. In fact this is not true with the child alone it could be true with a person who has not gone through school does not have formal education in a particular language that does not mean that the person does not know that does not mean that the person cannot articulate his thoughts or her thoughts.

Sometimes they can do it pretty well but if they are asked to put those thoughts in paper they will find it difficult they may just not be able to do it because they do not know the language; it is in that sense they do not know how to read and write, they can speak, they can understand but they do not read and write we have a word for it called illiterate. So, you are illiterate but at the same time you know part of the language.

Then we must understand and keep at the back of our mind that after all a language can be written in practically any script. Now that is a very bold statement; the issue is will it be

understood for example I can write p a n i and say this is pani, I am writing Hindi in roman script if I write it the way it is written like this in Hindi everybody understands what I am talking about.

But if I write it as this neither the people in Hindi nor the people in English will understand what I am talking about the people who understand English know the roman script will know that this is a word which is possibly not there in the English language something else is being written in that script and therefore the whole thing falls flat. Having said that now let me give you a couple of more examples within the Indian languages to put this discussion in a little bit of clearer perspective.

There are several Indian languages which are written in the Devanagiri script Hindi is one of them, Marathi is another. So, what happens is that if I write something in Devanagiri and it is in Hindi the words are Hindi words then there is no problem; I use the same script to write Marathi words. Now what happens in this case is that a Hindi speaker can read this a Marathi speaker can read this but whether they are able to understand what it means or not is a different question.

Now this is example a where two people speaking different languages can read but may or may not understand; *sankaku* / さんかゝ (FL) a triangle as an offshoot let me give you another interesting tidbits about Japan. In Japan instead of the tick we often use a circle; the cross that is across alright and somewhere in between they use what is called a triangle. So, in this particular example what I was explaining to you the read here I will put a circle because both these people can read it as far as understanding is concerned I am putting a *sankaku* / さんかゝ (FL).

So, therefore it is questionable it is not necessarily a cross because it may be understood. So, that was a tidbits. Now moving on and looking at it from another perspective in another situation. We have Hindi and we have let us say Urdu. Hindi is written from left to right it has a certain script Urdu is written from right to left it has a certain different script. In these two languages if something is written a Hindi speaker cannot read what is written here. Urdu speaker cannot read what is written here but the chances that they will be able to follow each other if these words were spoken that is pretty high. So, the chances of being understood are pretty good maybe not 100% depends on the kind of word that you are talking about but a lot

of times they will be able to follow each other. So, Now what is the difference between these two? Let us say this is example B.

In example A the script is the same therefore people with different languages can read it they may not be able to understand it. In example B the scripts are different the words are contextually culturally there are reasons for it the same and therefore it may be understood. So, the understanding part being able to speak, being able to listen and understand is quite independent as a matter of fact from your ability to read and write. So, that was the bottom line as far as this discussion on languages is concerned.

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Some examples with illustrative kanji

- Each Kanji has a meaning or represents a thought or idea
- A Kanji can have multiple readings
- There can be more than one Kanji with the same reading
- The readings (pronunciation, or, sound associated with a kanji does not have a meaning) but the kanji has !!

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Now let me go to the third bullet, which talks about some illustrative examples with kanji. Before I get into the discussion with illustrative examples let me recapitulate a couple of things which I am sure you would have done in this class. The first thing is each kanji has a meaning or represents a thought or idea. There is something which you are probably done somewhere in this class at the beginning. A kanji can have multiple readings there are reasons for it and I am sure you know about it the *kunyomi*(~~PL~~) and the *onyomi*(~~PL~~) and so on. There can be more than one kanji with the same reading. So, what we are talking of is a situation where you have a particular kanji it has several readings R 1, R 2, R 3 and for any reading you can have kanji's K 1, K 2, K 3 and these kanji's will have different meanings. This kanji has a unique meaning though it has different readings may be different words associated with that particular reading.

Here in this case the reading is the same but the kanji's are different and the meanings are different this is what we are going to bring out through illustrative examples. The reading pronunciation or sound associated with the kanji does not have a meaning but the kanji itself has a meaning. So, Now that is the basic difference between a language or I should say a script which is phonetic and a script which is ideographic and so on.

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上手
じょうず (skillful, skilled)

上
うえ (above, up)

上げる
あげる (to give, to raise)

Food for thought:
Joushi: superior/boss

Now let me come to the first illustrative example this is a very simple kanji I am sure you have done that *ue*/*うえ* (FL) which means up or above. Now some of the readings associated with it are *jou*/*じょう* (FL) which is used with this word which means *te*/*手* (FL) or hand in another case here it is pronounced as *jou*/*じょう*, *jouzu*/*上手* (FL). Now *jouzu*/*上手* (FL) means skillful, that means you have a good hand and upper quality hand. So, this upper here above is also having the connotation of being expert at something as against this.

Let us look at another word *ageru*/*上げる*, (FL) here the reading of this character is *a*, this of course is written in hiragana you can read it *ageru*/*あげる* (FL) which means to give or raise and here again the whole concept is that something is being raised up. So, when you give something that raises the stature of the things you use the word *ageru*/*上げる* (FL) as a homework I am leaving to you to look at the kanji for the word *joushi*/*じょうし* (FL). Now this *jou*/*じょう* (FL) is coming from the same *jouzu*/*上手* (FL) it is a different *shi*/*し* and this word basically means a boss in your office.

He is the one who supervises your work. So, that is *joushi* / じょうし (FL). Now *joushi* / じょうし (FL) the *jou* / じょう (FL) means this person is in a position superior to yours. So, the whole idea of this kanji is something which is up above and so on.

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せん
sen

千
先
戦
洗

Food for thought:
1. Other kanji with this reading
2. Other similar examples

Now looking at the situation the other way around; let us look at the word *sen* / せん (FL) the combination of two letters *se* / せ (FL) and *n* / ん (FL). So, *sen* / せん (FL) now *sen* / せん (FL) per se does not convey any meaning that is the very interesting part of Japanese language; *sen* / せん (FL) per se does not convey any meaning but when we look at different kanji's associated with *sen* / せん (FL) which have the readings of *sen* / せん (FL) are pronounced as *sen* / せん (FL) there is one of them and I am sure you know what it means.

Similarly I am sure you know this *sen* / せん (FL) there are two kanji's I am giving you two more this is another *sen* / せん (FL) and another more there is a fourth *sen* / せん (FL) and that is not the end of it there can possibly be more think about it and that is the food for thought. Try to figure out other kanji with this reading *sen* / せん (FL) and not only *sen* / せん (FL) there will be hundreds of other examples. The example that comes to my mind is a simple kanji like entering what you use in *iriguchi* / 入口 (FL) try to find out different words with *iri* / いり (FL) and now let us try to create words with these different kanji's and you will realize how they are conveying entirely different things?

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The slide features a central box with a yellow background. On the left, the kanji 'せん' is circled in red, with 'sen' written below it. On the right, four kanji are listed vertically: '千円' (senen), '先生' (sensei), '戦争' (sensou), and '洗濯' (sentaku). Each kanji has its reading in romaji below it. A red arrow points from '千円' down to '先生'. Below the list, there is a yellow box with the text 'Food for thought:' followed by two numbered points: '1. Other words with different kanji' and '2. Other similar examples'. The number '102' is circled in red at the top right of the slide.

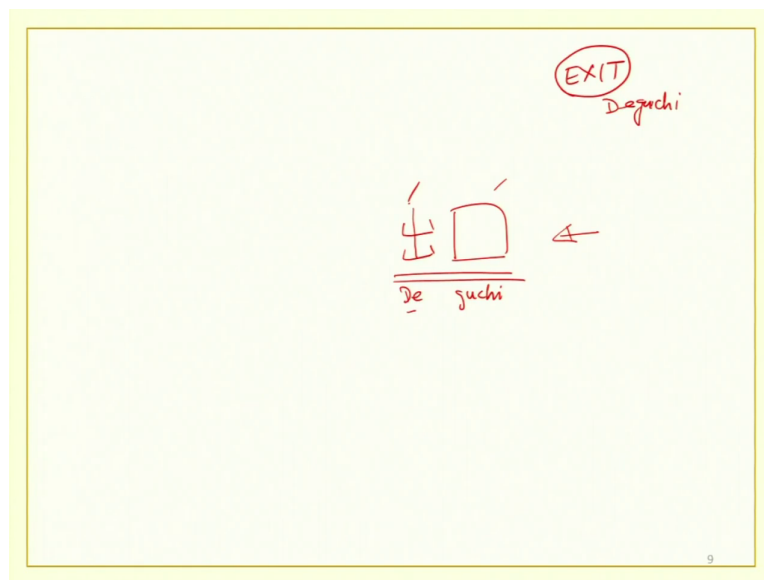
For example if that was the *sen* / せん (FL) we talk of *senen* / 千円, (FL) ~~yen~~ what is the meaning of the word *sen* / せん (FL) here? This kanji basically refers to one thousand and this of course yen the Japanese currency and therefore we are talking about 1000 yen or if we put something else 2000 yen and so on and so forth. So, this kanji represents the thought of 1000 which is not the case for this pronunciation or the sound *sen* / せん (FL).

Because the similar *sen* / せん (FL) if we use this *sen* / せん (FL) we have the word *sensei* / 先生 (FL) and there the *sen* / せん (FL) is quite different, the meaning is different the word *sensei* is different and I am sure you know all about it. Similarly let us look at this *sen* / せん (FL) and the word that I am giving you is *sensou* / 戦争 (FL) and *sensou* / せんそう ~~so-and-so~~ is a war and what does this *sen* / せん (FL) mean? I am leaving it to you to look up and educate yourself. *Sentaku* / 選択 (FL) this is another *sen* / せん (FL) this is the *sen* / せん (FL) and this is the *taku* / たく, *sentaku suru* / せんせんとく する, *sentaku mono* / せんたく物 (FL) these are the words that are coming from this *sentaku* / 選択 (FL).

So, basically the thought that I gave you in the beginning that this *sen* / せん (FL) does not have a meaning but these *sen*'s (FL) all of them have meanings and whether you can pronounce it or not the meaning still remains the same and that is something which is a very unique relationship between the Chinese and Japanese languages because after all kanji was imported from China into Japan. And now the homework for this slide one part is other words with different kanji try to find out if there are more kanji's which have the reading *sen* / せん (FL).

And try to create words with that and then try to find out other examples that will be an interesting homework for you to do if you want to understand kanji from a more interesting perspective rather than just trying to see how they are drawn and so on ok. So, now let me share with you a small anecdote which happened to me when I visited china and I did not of course speak any Chinese. I got lost at some place and I needed to go to the exit.

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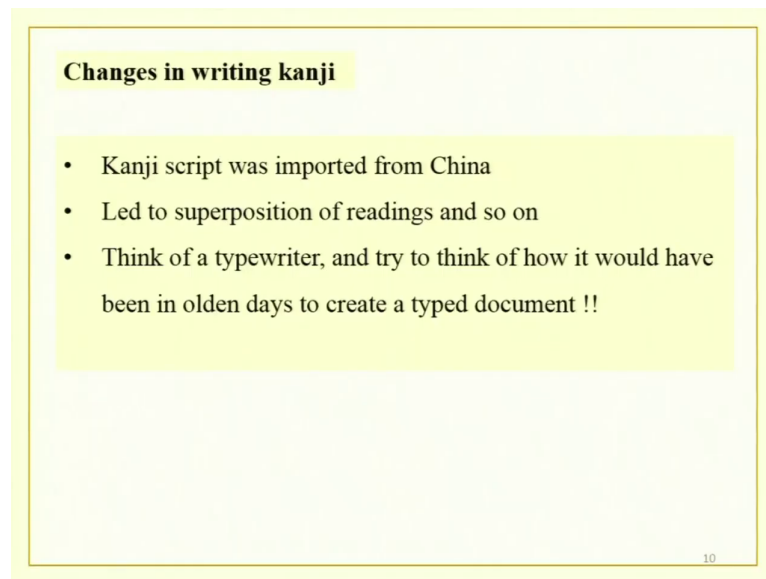
So, what I was trying to do was to find out where is the exit, because that is the place where I was supposed to meet my tax drive. I tried to ask the guards there and the people there exit I tried my Japanese and I am sure you know the word in Japanese for exit is *deguchi* / 出口 (FL). So, I tried to tell them *deguchi* / 出口 (FL) they did not understand and then I said well why not try kanji. So, low and behold when I drew *deguchi* / 出口 which is possibly drawn something like this, this is the *de* / 出 (FL) part of it and this is the *guchi* / 口 (FL) part of it.

This they understood immediately they said well you are talking of an exit of course the Chinese pronunciation with these two kanji's are different I thought this was *deguchi* / 出口 (FL) I would have said this is *de* / で (FL) and this is *guchi* / ぐち (FL) but the idea here is to go out and this is the mouth. So, there is the exit. So, the Chinese guards there understood and they guided me to the exit. The lesson that I learned was the kanji's have a meaning and not the reading.

So, interestingly the Chinese and Japanese can more or less read each other's newspapers and understand what is being said except that they cannot read it aloud. The moment they read it

aloud and they try to create sounds or they impart sounds to those characters then the whole game is lost.

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Changes in writing kanji

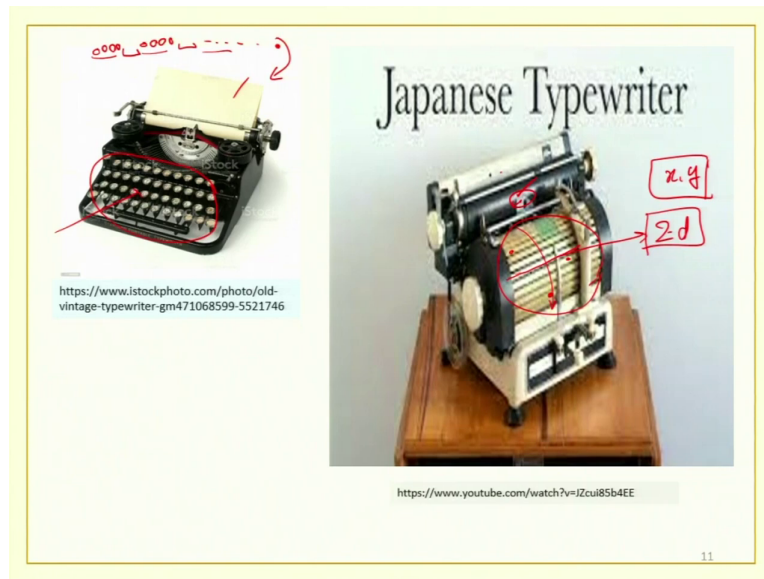
- Kanji script was imported from China
- Led to superposition of readings and so on
- Think of a typewriter, and try to think of how it would have been in olden days to create a typed document !!

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Now moving forward coming to the last part of our discussion today the changes in writing kanji and that is a very interesting part to me and I hope you enjoy it as well; kanji was a script imported from china in Japan led to superposition of readings and so on. Now let me see you think of a typewriter and try to think how it would be in olden days to create a type document in Japanese or for that matter in Chinese.

Of course with Chinese I am just not familiar but yes Japanese I can say that it was very, very difficult it would be very difficult because you are dealing with let us say two thousand two thousand five hundred kanji characters and now if you take a step back you realize that how does a typewriter actually work think about it we will come to it just now.

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So, this is the good old typewriter how does it work it has this keyboards all our alphabet is listed here and here is the paper on which these alphabets will be printed as one key or the other is pressed and there is a spacer bar somewhere which introduces space between words. So, what you do is you type letters you put a blank you type letters again you put another blank and so on you go till you reach the end of the sentence and then you go to the next line. So, that is how a typewriter worked in the good old days.

This works nicely till such time as you can have these well defined words and all these words are made up of characters which can be accommodated on a reasonable sized keyboard. Now in Japanese this is a version of an old fashioned typewriter. So, this here is a set of all the kanji characters and whatever other characters were required to be used if you are creating a type document and this whole thing worked on a two dimensional principle that is there would be characters in this line and there are several such lines which needed to be operated up and down depending on which character you want to punch in there is a paper somewhere here and then depending on what engineers would call the x y coordinate of course in this case it is not really x and y depending on what line you are in which place you are in this particular character or this particular character or this particular character that is brought in front of the cursor which is going to be hit and that will be reproduced here. So, Japanese typing was an extremely laborious painstaking task and was not easy to do.

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Kyujitai	旧字体	“old character forms”
Shinjitai	新字体	“new character form”

- ‘*Kyujitai*’ are the traditional forms of the Chinese Kanji
- After World War II, simplified character forms was adopted
- This simplified style was called ‘*shinjitai*’

Food for thought:

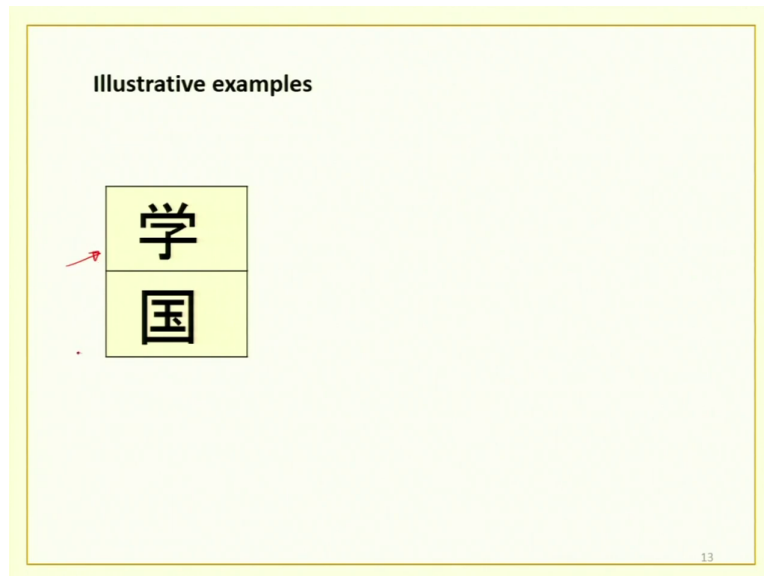
1. When was this simplification carried out
2. Was it carried out only once
3. Was it carried out only in Japan (or China also)
4. Teaching Kanji in schools

So, with this backdrop I want to talk to you about *kyujitai* / きゅうじたい (FL) and *shinjitai* / しんじたい (FL). Now what is it? Now *kyujitai* / きゅうじたい (FL) is written like this and *shinjitai* / しんじたい (FL) is written like this and it refers to old character forms and new character forms. So, again the old story that each of these characters has a meaning this *kyuu* / きゅう (FL) means old this is a character and this is the form; *shin* / しん (FL) again you know this word which means new. So, it is a new character form.

Now *kyujitai* / きゅうじたい (FL) are the traditional forms of the Chinese kanji after World War II simplified character forms were adopted and this simplified style was called *shinjitai* / しんじたい (FL). Now what I am leaving to you out of this discussion in our informal or formal class today is more factual information like when was this simplification actually carried out what years I have already given you a hint it was after the Second World War was it carried out only once or is it a continuing process and was it carried out only in Japan or in china too and how do the Japanese children learn kanji? After all there are two thousand five hundred kanji’s; which are to be learned and all of them cannot be learnt in a day, go back to the discussion that we had earlier a child can speak but may not be able to read or write and that is true with the Japanese children as well. When is it that a Japanese kid or a youth is able to read the newspaper fully; if you are in class 2 or class 3 you just do not know enough characters to be able to read a newspaper. So, that is something which you can think about study and learn from the internet that how is the kanji teaching done in the schools and you will realize that you are doing more or less the same thing when you are trying to learn Japanese now.

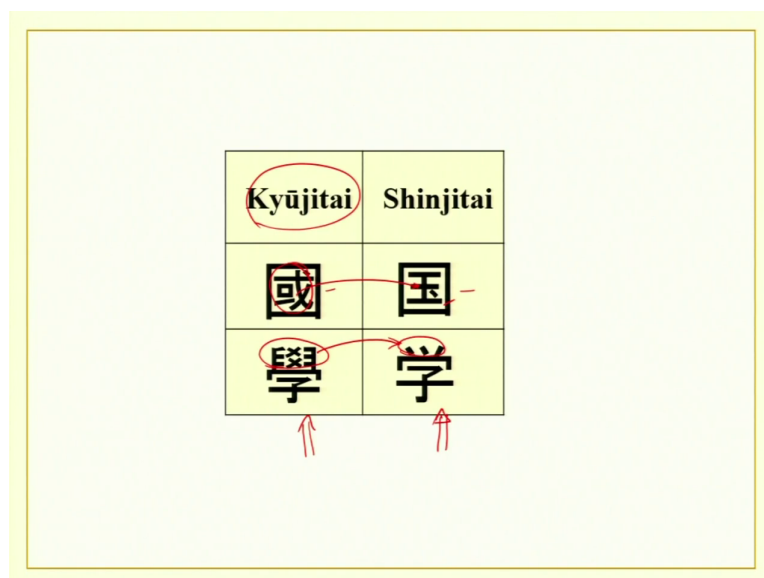
You know a few characters you will probably learn more on your own or perhaps in this course as you go along and only then, you will be able to have enough ability to be able to read Japanese.

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So, now let me give you illustrative examples such as these two this kanji I am sure you know this is *gaku* / がく (FL) and this kanji is *kuni* / くに (FL) you know what they mean? Learn and country, now this is exactly what is called the *shinjitai* / しんじたい (FL).

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So, this is how we write them now, we teach them now. Their original forms are these and this is the *kyūjitai* / きゅうじたい (FL) for these characters. So, you can see that the *kuni* / くに (FL) is quite different this part the interior of this the internal part of this character has been modified and simplified here in this case the top part here has been largely simplified.

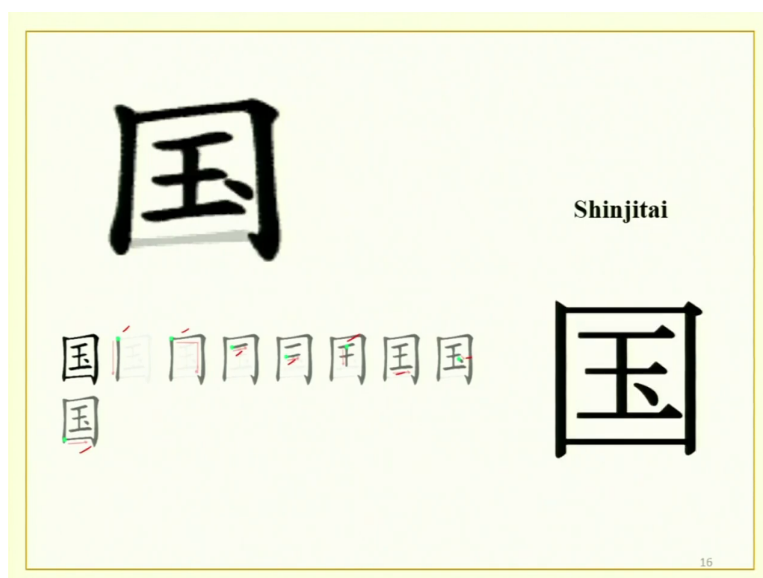
So, this has gone to this, this has gone to this. So, this is the kind of modification that has happened as part of the standardized revision of kanji characters in Japan. So, the homework to you was when did this happen. So, now let us look at this a little more closely.

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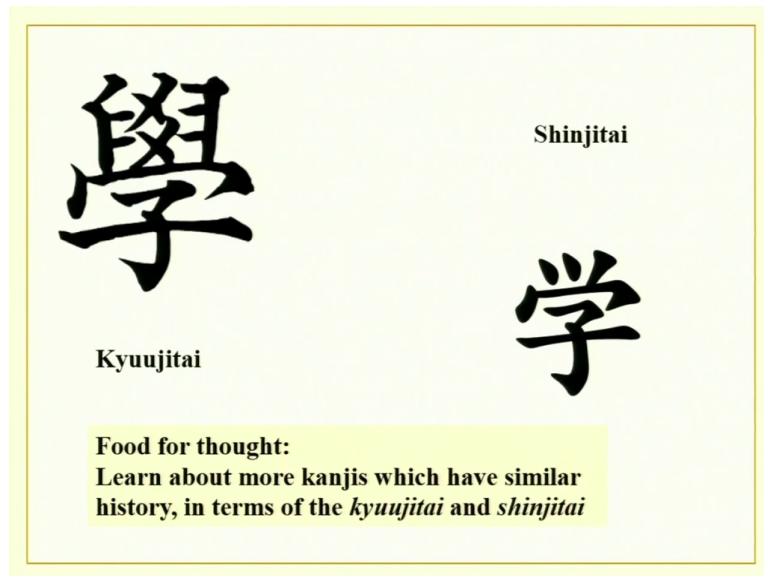
So, this is the character *kuni* / 國 (PL) which is the old character and you see how it is being written the whole stroke order play it out to you once again I am leaving it to you to see what the stroke order is and the number of strokes and if you look at it from your perspective this how you do this is the first stroke, the second stroke, the third stroke, four, five, six, seven well after this you go to eight, then you go to nine, ten and eleven. So, this is eleven stroke character the way it is drawn this is the *kyuujitai* / きゅうじたい (PL) for the kanji *kuni* / くに (PL).

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So, this is the *shinjitai*/しんじたい (FL) for the same character and it is much simpler. So, this character instead of the 17 stroke character or the 16 stroke character which we saw just now, this just one two, three, four, five, six, seven and eight. So, this is a gross simplification for the character which is *kuni*/くに (FL) and that is how it appears in print.

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A similar exercise can be done with respect to *gaku*/學 (FL) that is the *kyuujitai*/きゅうじたい (FL) and this is the *shinjitai*/しんじたい (FL) as it stands today. Now with this I have to give you some homework learn about more kanji's which have similar history in terms of *kyuujitai*/きゅうじたい and *shinjitai*/しんじたい (FL) that is the old form of the kanji and the new form of the kanji. This characters that we took up today that is *kuni*/くに (FL) and *gaku*/がく (FL) they are not the only ones which have been modified there are several others and that is what you have to find out. With this we come to an end of our discussion today *doumo arigatou gozaimashita*/どうも ありがとう ございました (FL).

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