

Reference – Q&A on Japanese Language and Employment

Olha Vdovenko

Q: Since arriving in Japan, how many hours per day have you been spending studying Japanese?

A: I study with a teacher twice a week (once in person, once online), and each session is one hour. I am also making an effort to study on my own in addition to those lessons.

Q: Were you able to speak even a little Japanese before coming to Japan.

A: No, I had no interest before I came here.

Q: Can you speak English?

A: I am fluent in English.

Q: Is Japanese difficult?

A: It was very difficult at first, because it was a language I knew nothing about.

Q: Are you able to converse with Japanese people?

A: I cannot communicate beyond simple conversations. In general, I only use Japanese in stores, the hospital, and at my child's day care.

Q: Have you learned words through conversations with Japanese people?

A: Yes, I've learned many everyday words through conversation.

Q: Do you share the Japanese you've learned with other evacuees?

A: Yes.

Q: What obstacles other than language do you experience in your life in Japan?

A: In the beginning I had difficulties because of the different mindset and procedures for submitting forms (waiting in line for a long time, not being able to do them online). Now I have gotten used to it.

Igor Kulemza

Q: Since arriving in Japan, how many hours per day have you been spending studying Japanese?

A: Right after we arrived, we struggled to get used to life here. We are retirees. We tried the Japanese classes offered by Adachi Ward but there was much we didn't understand, so we weren't able to learn. We are taking lessons now, learning *hiragana* characters and conversation. We also practice writing and study vocabulary at home. We study for about two to four hours per day.

Q: Were you able to speak even a little Japanese before coming to Japan.

A: No, we didn't speak any Japanese.

Q: Can you speak English?

A: No we cannot.

Q: Is Japanese difficult?

A: At first it was difficult and we couldn't understand, and our studies now are difficult but also very interesting.

Q: Have you learned words through conversations with Japanese people?

A: Yes, we have.

Q: Do you share the Japanese you've learned with other evacuees?

A: We do if we meet other evacuees.

Q: What obstacles other than language do you experience in your life in Japan?

A: We have gotten used to life here, and there are no obstacles other than the language.

Yulia Vatsyk

Q: Since arriving in Japan, how many hours per day have you been spending studying Japanese?

A: I am taking classes at university. Now it is spring vacation, but classes will resume from April. I am also studying for my degree in Ukraine (Ph.D. course at the Institute of Philosophy), so I do not have much time, but I study about two to four hours per week.

Q: Were you able to speak even a little Japanese before coming to Japan.

A: I had never studied Japanese. I only knew familiar words like *konnichiwa* (hello) and *arigato* (thank you).

Q: Can you speak English?

A: Yes, I speak English.

Q: Is Japanese difficult?

A: It is a very difficult language. It is not a European language, so I cannot get hints through association. You have to make an effort to learn basic vocabulary. Learning *kanji* characters requires time and effort. At this point, grammar is not very difficult.

Q: Have you learned words through conversations with Japanese people?

A: Of course. I've learned young people's way of speaking in particular. We were taught to say *sumisen* to apologize, but in casual situations like playing tennis I learned that you can also say *gomen*. That's a small detail, but it's something I didn't learn in class.

Q: Do you share the Japanese you've learned with other evacuees?

A: Yes I do. We are interested in each other's experiences.

Q: What would you like to do if the language barrier were eliminated?

A: I was doing cultural work in Ukraine. Now I am studying philosophy, but I am interested in cultural projects. If it weren't for the language barrier, I might start a philosophy club like at a research institute. Or I could give lectures on my own research themes. Now, we've started a club for cross-cultural communication through watching *anime* (Japanese animation with English subtitles), and we meet once a month and cook traditional foods, listen to music, and talk in a relaxed atmosphere. I might become involved in more activities like this.

Q: What obstacles other than language do you experience in your life in Japan?

A: I have a health issue. I'm not sure if I will be able to get the medicine I need in Japan. The medicine I have will run out in March. That is my biggest problem right now.