

# TEACHING AND TESTING

## Words are going around the globe

### Using familiar Japanese names/words in language classes

Junko Tomooka, ILANZ National Adviser, Japanese

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#### Introduction

One day I found Nashi pears in the nearby supermarket. Next to the Nashi pears, there were big juicy Satsuma mandarin oranges. I bought some Wasabi and a pack of Sushi rolls and walked out to the parking area. There are many cars with the names of Toyota, Honda, Subaru, Mitsubishi, Nissan and also motorbikes with the name of Kawasaki. On the way home, I passed the marina where lots of yachts and boats with motors which have the name, Yamaha.

At night, I turned on the TV and lay on a sofa watching commercials for Fujitsu and Daikin. Then I called my daughter in Japan and found out that my granddaughter's birthday is coming soon. So I decided to send her a Nintendo game as a birthday present.

Thanks to globalization, there are so many Japanese words or names which we can see and hear in our everyday life.



Why not use them in our language classes? There are many ways to make most of those familiar words/names. Here is a tip for the teachers of Japanese.

#### Kanji Characters in Japanese Names

How are these familiar names originally written in kanji? TOYOTA, HONDA, SUZUKI, KAWASAKI and YAMAHA are all their company founders' family names. MITSUBISHI, NINTENDO and NISSAN are created as company names.

#### Family names of the founders of the companies

TOYOTA (豊田)	豊 : とよ = rich 田 : た = rice paddy field (Level 2)
HONDA (本田)	本 : ほん = origin, main, book (Level 1) 田 : た = rice paddy field (Level 2)
SUZUKI (鈴木)	鈴 : すず = bell 木 : き = tree (Level 1)
KAWASAKI (川崎)	川 : かわ = river (Level 3)

YAMAHA (山葉) 崎：さき = cape/headland  
山：やま = mountain (Level 2)

SHIMANO (島野) 葉：は = leaf  
島：しま = island (Level 3)  
野：の = field

Created as company names

NINTENDO (任天堂) 任：にん = to leave, to entrust  
天：てん = heaven, sky, super power (Level 2)  
堂：どう = hall, sometimes refers to shops

MITSUBISHI (三菱) 三：みつ/みっつ = three (Level 1)  
菱：ひし/びし = diamond shape

NISSAN (日産) 日：にち・に(っ) = sun (Level 1)  
産：さん = to produce

Abbreviation of long company names

DAIKIN (大阪近代工業 = 大近) 大阪：おおさか = Osaka (Level 1)  
近代：きんだい = modern (Level 2)  
工業：こうぎょう = industry

FUJITSU (富士通信機製造 = 富士通) 富士：ふじ = Fuji  
通信：つうしん = communications (Level 2)  
機：き = machine  
製造：せいぞう = production

TOSHIBA (東京芝浦電気 = 東芝) 東京：とうきょう = Tokyo (Level 2)  
芝浦：しばうら = Shibaura  
電気：でんき = electricity (Level 2)

(SUBARU is an original ancient Japanese word and preferred hiragana or katakana writing is すばる or スバル)

Activities

### 1. Matching cards

- Make two cards for each name, one in kanji and the other in romaji
- Mix those cards on the table
- Your students can make pairs using their knowledge of kanji readings.  
\*DAIKIN and FUJITSU have Level 2 Kanji, but the readings are different.  
Teachers should explain the different readings prior to the activity.

### 2. Finding kanji in the names of cities and towns in a map of Japan

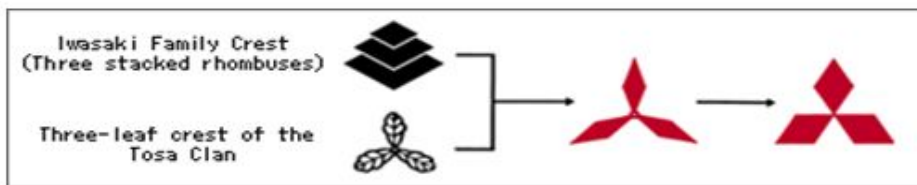
- Give a map with Japanese characters to each group.
- Compete between groups in finding a certain kanji which is given by the teacher. One kanji is given for one match. One finding gets one point. Students mark the kanji with a highlighter.
- Count total points each group get.

### 3. Stories to tell

#### ○ Mitsubishi

The name "Mitsubishi" refers to the three-diamond emblem. "Mitsubishi" is a combination of the words mitsu and hishi/bishi. Mitsu means three. Hishi means a diamond or rhombus shape

Yataro Iwasaki, the founder of the company, chose the three-diamond mark as the emblem for his company. It was a combination of the three-leaf crest of the Tosa-Samurai Clan, Yataro's first employer, and also of the three stacked rhombuses of the Iwasaki family crest. Traditionally, every Japanese family has a crest which you can find on formal kimono.



#### ○ Nintendo

The name came from the word Riga Ninten. (離我 任天 りがにんてん)

This is a Chinese word which refers to an ideal state of mind. Ri (離) means to detach and Ga (我) means myself. Riga refers to the state of mind which is free from self-centeredness. Ninten (任天) refers to entrustment to Ten (天), the superpower which rules the whole cosmos. Therefore, Riga Ninten is a philosophical word which represents a free soul. The founder of the company chose this word for his small toy shop in Kyoto, which later became an international computer game giant. Do(堂) is a kanji which means a hall and often attaches to the end of shop's name.

#### ○ Subaru

Subaru is a beautiful Japanese word for the Pleiades, a cluster of stars. The first president of the company gave this name to his first passenger car as he had a definite opinion : Japanese cars should have Japanese names. Now you can understand why the Subaru emblem is a cluster of stars.

Junko Tomooka

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