Hi. I’m this guy.
I taught myself Japanese

Over the last five years I've learned to speak, read, and write Japanese pretty well.
I will teach you how to be fluent in Japanese.

Today I want to teach every one of you how to be fluent in Japanese.
in 5 minutes

in just five minutes!
I know what you’re thinking. Who does this guy think he is trying to teach us Japanese?
Most importantly, of course, is that I’ve beaten NetHack in Japanese.
In May 2010 I gave a talk in Japanese. It was at an XS meet up so I talked about Inline::C because that’s much saner than XS.
In late 2011 I wrote an article for the Japanese programming magazine WEB+DB Press. It was about metaobject protocols, specifically the one that powers Moose.
So I’m published in Japanese but not English.
OK, so maybe I know my shit. But how am I going to teach you Japanese?
There are two rules. If you follow these rules, you will become fluent in Japanese in no time. Most importantly, have fun. This is generally good life advice, but it applies particularly strongly for language learning.
Rule the Second

...in Japanese

But here’s the catch: you must have fun in Japanese.
Delete every single mp3 of English music.
NO ENGLISH SUBTITLES.
Change your operating system to Japanese. For whatever reason it continually surprises people when they see my phone is set to Japanese.
Anything that’s English in your life, remove or at least reduce it.
I know what some of you are wondering. You’re thinking to yourself, “What fun is?” Let’s review.
This is a Japanese textbook.
It’s assuredly not fun.
Fun
“Professor Tanaka does not intend to come to school tomorrow.”

Professor Takahashi... does not intend to... what the fuck ever.
Not fun.
Fun

"Fear is the mindkiller."

恐怖は心を殺すもの。

Fear is the mindkiller.
Now that's some real shit. You have a real emotional investment in Paul Atreides’ knife fights.
Next. Kanji drills.
Definitely not fun.
You know what’s even more fun than kanji drills? If there is such a thing?
Suplexing a death train.
By the way, use a phoenix down here. Spoilers.
Spending time with my crazy pug? That's actually fairly fun.
But even more fun is spending time with my crazy pug while playing Pokemon in Japanese.
I know Moose is watching the livestream and I’m blowing his lil meatball mind right now. “That’s me!”
What “Japanese” is?

OK, I feel we’ve got “fun” down pat. Next you’re thinking “but what about rule #2?” What Japanese is.
I want to go back to this Japanese textbook. Here’s the Japanese in this textbook. And here’s the English. The ratio is not very good. So this textbook is not actually even Japanese. It’s linguistics. And it most definitely fails the “fun” criterion.
Now here’s a Japanese book worth reading. It has a great joke you’d understand after only a couple weeks of studying. In your second language jokes are about ten times funnier. And if it’s too difficult right now, at least you can look at the pictures.
Not Japanese ✗
Japanese

アクセラランド

チャールズ・ストロス
酒井昭伸

MACERANDO
Have fun…
...in Japanese

So these are the two rules. Think you can handle that?
Sounds easy enough right?
I’m lazy

Only problem is... I’m lazy. It’s easy to just, like, not do these fun things.
To keep myself on the ball I use a site called The Daily Practice. It was built by Jay Shirley whom some of you know. It tracks habits in the way that Seinfeld suggests you “don’t break the streak”.
I have a bunch of daily activities like read an article, learn a word, as well as less frequent habits like play a game, watch a movie, learn a lyric for karaoke. The numbers on the right are streaks. I highly recommend this site, not just for Japanese but for improving your life.
However, even with TDP I’m still lazy. I don’t watch as much Japanese media as I really should be. Since the goal is immersion, even a couple hours a day is not enough. And there’s just too much friction to keep Japanese media playing all day.
Move to Japan

This would be the ideal way to learn Japanese, right.
Turn on the TV
Don’t turn it off for two years
By the way, how many of you have one of these Raspberry Pis? You should really pick one up. You’ll find a use for it. It’s a smartphone-class computer with a couple USB inputs, ethernet, and HDMI output. Runs Debian. You can do some really cool things with it. It’s only $35 so just go buy one already. It’s effectively a disposable computer. And that is some real, next level, science fiction shit.
Here’s what my Pi is plugged into. Its HDMI port is connected to my TV. Ethernet is hooked up to the router. And it has claimed a terabyte external drive for its own dark needs.
Right then. Back to how lazy I am. I should clarify: I’m lazy in the programmer sense. What is the software running on the Pi doing? So. At 9:00 in the morning, cron fires off an HTTP request to a Twiggy server I’ve written, all running on the Pi.
A few seconds later, my television is now turned on automatically. It is also now set to the correct input device, so it'll display whatever’s coming in from the Pi HDMI. And, most importantly, it is now streaming a random Japanese video, either TV or movie.
About 25 minutes later the first TV episode is done. The video player process exits, which the Twiggy server notices. It then automatically selects another Japanese TV show at random and plays it. Maybe this time it happens to pick a dub of the Simpsons.
A couple minutes later I notice that I’m not really feeling the Simpsons today. So I pull out my iPhone and launch a sister app that I’ve started putting together...
... and just by tapping, queue up a few episodes of 北斗の拳 which is about a guy who beats up tanks and shit. Then I hit fast forward to close out The Simpsons episode and start Fist of the North Star. By the way, I’m a metadata junkie, almost as much as our government is, so all these videos are indexed in SQLite including what languages they’re in (including both spoken and subtitle), as well as how many times I’ve viewed each. And even what time I stopped a video, if I didn’t watch it all the way through.
The Pi continues streaming for the entire day. Now it’s half past midnight so it’s probably time to go to bed.
And so I turn the TV off to go read a book. Which of course will be in Japanese.
Have fun

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Thank you very much for your attention!