

Using TLF learning objects in a Japanese Moodle online course at Huonville High School, Tasmania.

Joe Stanny Year 8 Japanese teacher at Huonville High School in Tasmania firmly believes that organising his Japanese curriculum in a learning management system has had a positive effect on his teaching and student learning of the language. With only one double period per week, through the use of his *Moodle* online course, Joe provides a flexible, student-centred learning space which overcomes many of the difficulties associated with the limited time allocation for Japanese. Each week Joe holds one face-to-face period in a standard classroom and for the second, the students move to the school laboratory with one-to-one computer access. The Moodle online environment has also enabled him to take advantage of the new interactive digital content made available by The Le@rning Federation.

Student access to all activities for a semester is a feature of the learning space Joe has created. This space is not just for the lab session however, it is available to students anytime anywhere – even from home. From his Year 8 *Moodle* space, students can view all the course instructions, learning activities, interactive digital resources, internet links and the assessment tasks required. Students can make ongoing notes and reflections on their learning; submit completed tasks for assessment on line, use the voting tools to express their individual views and immediately see the whole class response. The course management tools: eg ongoing record of student on-task activity and assessment tasks; ability to have one-to-one communication with students on progress following electronic submission of work, enables Joe to better monitor the learning progress of all the students while making his recording and reporting responsibilities less onerous. Not only does his online course extend the classroom walls, but in Joe's opinion it enables a more engaging and satisfying learning experience for the students.

In his early exploration of the content for Japanese available from The Le@rning Federation, Joe has concentrated on using the 'Cracking the code' learning objects with their focus on supporting students to understand the Japanese writing system. In the future however, he plans to incorporate objects from the 'Close encounters' project which provide immersive communicative language experiences in aspects of Japanese culture.

Learning about Japanese script: an example of a unit of work in a Moodle environment

In a unit on understanding the Japanese writing system, all associated learning and assessment tasks and resources are linked from the course space.

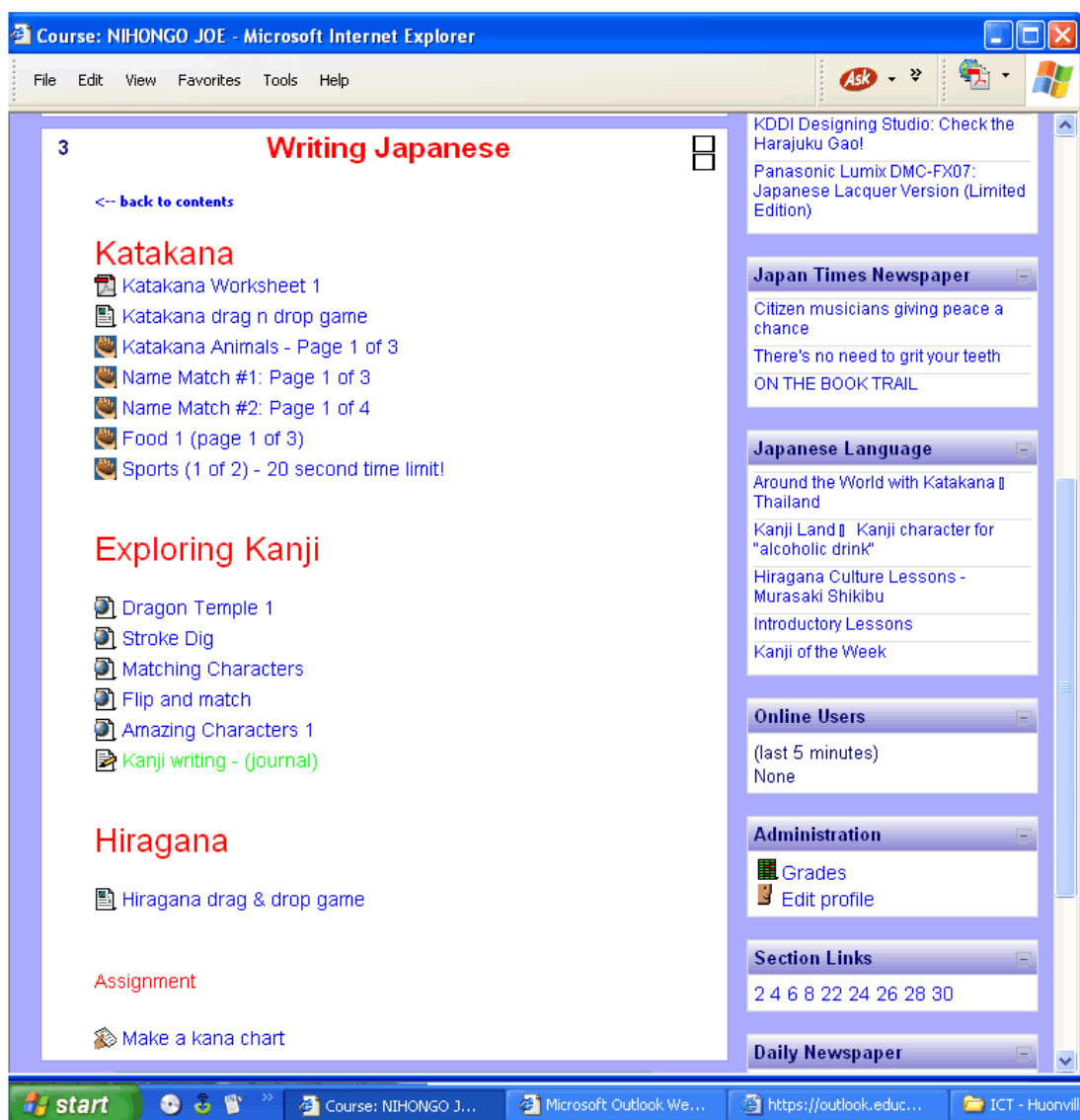
Students are provided with the framing assignment questions and can work through the many and varied learning tasks at their own pace, submitting tasks for assessment when completed. Teacher-led whole class discussion and student reflection on learning tasks are also embedded in the course design.

Figure 1 Framing questions

Try out the learning activities about using Kanji, and then make comments on the following questions:

1. How did the Japanese/Chinese writing system originate?
2. What are the main differences in writing method between the Japanese system and our own?
3. Are there any ways in which writing in kanji (Japanese or Chinese system) is better than our own system? Explain.
4. Are there any ways that our own writing system is better than using kanji? Explain.

Figure 2 'Writing Japanese' unit in the Moodle online course

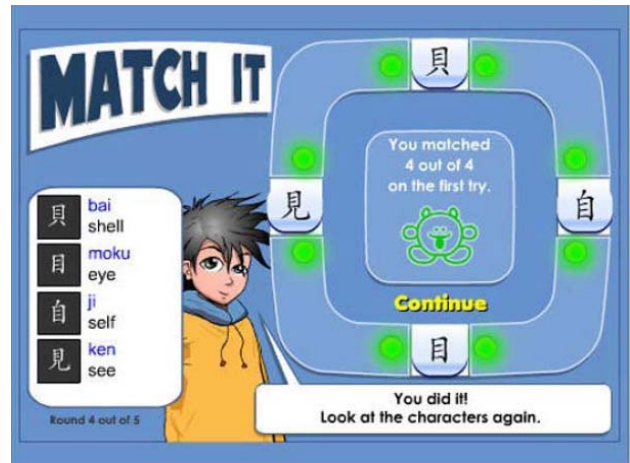


Learning objects

Among the varied range of teaching and learning resources Joe uses are a selection of learning objects from The Le@rning Federation's Japanese 'Cracking the code' project. These multimedia interactive resources in game-like format enable students to explore aspects of Japanese writing including character formation, stroke order, sound and meaning. Some examples of TLF learning objects used:



The Stampede learning objects demonstrate that characters have either a basic or compound structure and that compound characters have a range of structures



In the Match it learning objects students match characters in sets of similar characters by identifying subtle stroke differences.



The Stroke dig series introduces stroke types and their role in defining the order of writing strokes in Japanese characters.



The Dragon temple series helps students understand that each character is different and has its own meaning; basic characters can be joined to make components and that components must be joined in a particular order.



The Quiz show series of learning objects assists students to deduce the meaning of compound words from the meanings of the individual characters.

Joe believes these learning objects offer engaging learning experiences about Japanese writing in ways not normally possible with traditional resources and that they work particularly well when students can access them in flexible ways:

My main interest is in allowing students to work at their own pace, the objects are great for this ... They engage students; I find my students are able to work more productively when

they can complement their learning with access to these resources. It is easier to provide individual attention when students work at their own pace.

Students indicate they like the game formats for learning; finding them fun and engaging even though they may not continue to study Japanese. Some boys in particular although saying they were just clicking through the task, still believed they were learning something about the Japanese form of writing: different types of strokes; stroke order; character structure.

Future plans

Joe indicates that an interactive whiteboard (IWB) would be a valuable addition to his face-to-face class and would complement the online learning space he has created. Some of the reasons he cites for this:

- An IWB would be very helpful in making learning dynamically more explicit especially with more difficult concepts and language. For example The Le@rning Federation object Moshi moshi, a language immersion task using a virtual mobile phone, would lend itself well to a whole class approach for some of the time, due to the complexity of the language and the language support necessary to use it effectively. Particularly so as his students are only in their second year of language learning and only have two periods per week
- It would allow for active adolescents to legitimately move around classroom to participate in learning tasks.

Jo has demonstrated that creative flexible use of ICT infrastructure, incorporating high quality digital content in tandem with face-to-face class time has enabled him to offer a richer teaching and learning space than otherwise would be possible.

Note: You can read descriptions of all Japanese learning objects made available by The Le@rning Federation, in addition to the learning objects referred to here, in the Japanese catalogue available on the TLF website (www.thelearningfederation.edu.au).