

Student Essay on Japanese and Chinese Language

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Essay

Although the Japanese language originated from Chinese, there are many differences between them. This may help people that can't decide which language is more interesting to study. The first difference is script. Chinese has characters from the ideographic script called hanzi (TWBE, 1987). According to Katzner, "The Chinese writing system uses characters instead of an alphabet. Each character is a symbol that represents a complete word or syllable" (2003). In contrast, Japanese has three different characters, which are kanji, hiragana and katakana. Kanji came from Chinese but there are differences in meaning. Each hiragana and katakana character stands for a single rather than a whole word (JFBP, 1990). The second difference is distribution. There are a number of people in other countries using Chinese such as, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam. The total numbers who speak Chinese is 1.1 billion in the Republic of China (Katzner, 2003). However, there are much less people speak Japanese. According to Katzner, "Japanese is spoken by more than 125 million people in Japan and ranking is among the top ten world wide language" (2003). The third difference is tense. Chinese is spoken with no tense. For example, "the sentence Ta shi xuezhe could mean he is a scholar or he was a scholar, depending on how it is used" (TWBE, 1987). On the other hand, Japanese has tenses. According to Hooker, "A Japanese verb can express a.) non-past continuing action b.) a tense that describes an action that has been completed c.) a tentative action" (1996). In short, Chinese is probably the better choice to study because of the above differences.