

While I am in college, I decided to refresh my memory on Japanese (I took it in high school) and take a class on it. It just so happened that when I took this class the pandemic started and I lost half of my year to online courses. I've noticed so far that most of my classes after converting online was a lot easier since now I could just log on instead of waking up almost two hours before my classes to get ready and run on campus. This however, does not work well with Japanese or any foreign language, according to some of my friends, because when it's digitalized you lose a lot of important aspects. For one you lose emotions. It's a bit like talking on the phone versus texting. When you text someone you don't know exactly the connotation in which the message is being said. This is why some people feel like others are mad when they send a one-word message instead of maybe they're busy but want to let you know they're trying to include you in their day. It's different for each person. Usually people say talking on the phone is better for explaining emotions but not in general since some of the younger generations find it's a bit nerve wracking. This all applies well if you know the language fluently but for those trying to learn a language it's hard because you lose the aspect of visuals. When people talk, they usually use hand motions and gestures to help describe what they're saying or how they feel about it. Gestures help explain a lot of what is important in conversations which is communication. Communication comes from eye-contact and other well-known gestures that help the speaker know if the listener understands what is being said. When moving to an online class format you lose a big part of that aspect since now, you're looking through a screen. You can't really make eye contact and the gestures sometimes get cut off by the screen and the camera. There are also internet freezes where if you get cut out and come back in you have to repeat yourself which usually makes someone lose confidence and possibly lose time. This was incredibly important in my class since I only had 50 minutes a day four days a week to make sure to touch on every subject we had to. This was especially hard during the final as well since instead of the technology we could use in the computer lab at Sacramento State University to all record an interview portion together we now had to meet one on one with the professor and do it directly, face to face with him. This cause a lot more pressure and anxiety in students who have performance anxiety. All in all, online learning caused some issues when learning the language but it also helped in some ways to. Since we were now on Zoom, the break out rooms were not recorded so it allowed students to feel less pressure of what was being heard and what could be said. It made it easier to have discussions and make mistakes because now it was working together to fix a problem instead of the entire class waiting while the teacher tried to guide you to the right answer. It also allowed my classmates and I more time to talk about how certain words and grammar points could be remembered without a professor there to remind us that we should not be talking in English. As for tests, it made it a bit harder to do vocabulary, kanji, and grammar tests. Now we had to grade ourselves but that also meant we had less time to take the tests because there was no passing out period. It was a lot of copying and fast writing in two minutes instead of five minutes to truly look over everything. All in all, I think it had advantages and disadvantages but it's important to recognize what gets lost when human contact is absent. When you no longer have a physical human in front of you it's hard to know if they understand what you want to say or if they are even paying attention. Communication is a large part in language and it should be understood that learning a new one is difficult when you don't have interactions. So, if you want to learn a language during quarantine have someone, who's willing, learn it with you and you will see how easier it is when you have the human interaction instead of just a robot voice and vocabulary.