**LITERACY TOPIC TASK: KATAKANA NAME READING**

**EXPECTED TIME TAKEN**

2 x 40 minute periods, either a double or spread across two singles.

**LITERACY TOPIC OVERVIEW**

In this topic, students will discover how written Japanese works, be able to write and read a few words relevant to themselves, and be able to compare and contrast the Japanese writing system to other languages they are familiar with.

**PRIOR LEARNING**

None required, but few greetings and some classroom language can be recycled during the task as appropriate.

**TASK DESCRIPTION**

The aim of this task is for students to be able to identify their names and the names of their classmates when written in Katakana.

i) The task is begun with a quick overview of different types of Japanese script, using a sample sentence or phrase such as 日本語のクラスへようこそ！ Teacher explains there are three alphabets in this simple phrase! Students are asked if they think they can identify which characters are similar to each other.

ii) Teacher gives a broad overview of how the kanji in this phrase work (representing concepts, which we can attach sounds depending on which language we speak) versus the kana (phonetic, like English, sounds build together to make words, which have a meaning in a specific language).

iii) The class moves to a focus on the katakana sheet. Teacher explains the five vowel sounds, students recite the sounds after the teacher, focusing on pronunciation. Teacher explains the first sound in the next column, elicits what the next sounds will be. Proceeds through the full sheet, having students repeat carefully and listening for correct pronunciation.

iv) Teacher explains that we can use these sounds to make Japanese equivalents of foreign words and names. Writes an example simple name on the board (could be アン). Students to figure out what name it is, without shouting it out (so that everyone has to figure it out for themselves). Proceed with one or two of the easier names in the class. Then ask students to figure out how to write one or two of the simpler names in the class, emphasizing they need to think of the names in terms of their sounds and NOT the spelling in English. Work through on the whiteboard.

v) Using marugotoweb take one name from the class which is simpler and contains some more common characters and go through the characters used in that name (pronunciation, how to write, words which contain this sound)

vi) Students take time to try to figure out how to write their own names in katakana (this can be given as homework if task is split across two different periods). Teacher may explain that some names are more difficult than others and may mention some students whose names are tricker – they should just try to identify some sounds that could be used.

vii) Name list is handed out. Students practise writing their names. Teacher circulates to check understanding and to provide explanation and guidance for those with less straightforward names. Homework is assigned (to practise writing their own names and be able to do it without looking at the list).

viii) Activity to check their recognition of their own names and ability to decode others. Pre-prepared name badges can be used. Firstly they have to find their own. Students can practise their self-introductions using their new names. Badges can be pooled and students pick one, they have to return it to its rightful owner. An opportunity to use chunks of the target language.

**KEY SKILL(S)**

* Information processing
* Critical thinking and creative problem solving
* Communication
* Working with others

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

* Students can read and write their own names.
* They can use the katakana sheet to decode other relevant words written in katakana.

**RESOURCES**

* Katakana sheet (best one is from Nihongo Kantan (latest edition), Katakana Kantan one does not have the pronunciation hints for the less obvious characters.
* Marugoto web. <http://a1.marugotoweb.jp/basic_training.php?p=kt>
* List of students first names and their katakana equivalents, including romaji pronunciation.
* Katakana Name badges or similar.

**COMMENTS**

Students could create their own name badges. Alternatively to badges, a word matching exercise could be used for students to link the names with katakana versions (also a useful tool for AFL follow up).

**SCAFFOLDING ACTIVITIES**

Teacher checks students understand how katakana sheet works by pointing at certain characters and asking class to pronounce at whole class level. Follow up with checks at an individual level as required.

If ipads are available, students can individually use marugoto to look up the katakana characters in their own names.

Students whose names are easy and/or who are quicker at this task should also learn how to write the names of their friends.

**KEY LANGUAGE**

(This is a very early lesson, so existing TL would be very limited)

Kanji, katakana, hiragana, romaji

Nihongo

An opportunity to teach:

Muzukashii, kantan

(Watashi wa) …..desu. …san desu ka.

Dozo!

For badge decode exercise we can recycle basic greetings such as Hai! Arigato or in Saturday class we can use this to work on self-introductions as students won’t know each other well at this point.

**CONTRIBUTOR**

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