

**Learners, Communication and the (Internet-Based) Diaspora:  
Literacy and Communication in Japanese as a Second Language in the Computer Age**

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This paper examines the impact of information technology on the changing nature of literacy, literacy acquisition and communication in Japanese as second language in the age of the internet. It examines the role of computer software, internet-based resources and cyber-communities in changing the nature of literacy and communication in Japanese, and at the same time opening up new opportunities for language learning. It argues that to a large extent reading and writing in Japanese for second language learners now takes place via the computer, rather than using pen and paper, and that literacy for reading and writing on-line requires different skills, and relies on different tools to traditional literacy, long seen as particularly difficult for learners with non-character based language backgrounds to acquire. Using instant glossing and translation programs, students are accessing materials well beyond their competence to read in hard copy, and thus creating extra opportunities for acquisition. The growth of email, chat programs and on-line communities has also greatly expanded opportunities for interaction with native speakers, and the possibilities for learning that accompany this. The implications for Japanese language teaching of these developments will also be discussed.