I started learning Japanese as a third language when I entered the foreign language high school. There were Japanese, Chinese and German as a third language that we could choose and learn. The main reason I chose Japanese was that the tone of speaking Japanese is more fascinating than others. By studying Japanese for six years, I’ve met three Japanese teachers. There were the things they did which I think were helpful and unhelpful in learning Japanese.

Thinking of the first teacher from whom I learned Japanese, one of the helpful things was that he had a good handwriting. Contexts on the board looked well organized and I felt the subject matter also gets well organized in my brain. His handwriting was easy to read, so it was good to write down the notes. Also he was very humorous that he attracted attention from all students. High school students are always tired so they get bored easily even if they don’t want to. When the class atmosphere gets full of boredom, he used to make practical jokes. For example, he asked us, ‘What is the number that makes everyone here stand up?’ and the answer was ‘five’. The reason of this answer is that pronunciation of the word ‘five’ in Korean also means ‘stand up’. Even if it aroused feigned laughs, it was very affective to shake off sleep and to concentrate again.

There were also unhelpful things and shortcomings of this teacher. He followed very traditional teaching style as an explainer. He usually focused on grammar and reading rather than speaking. What I think the most important in learning language is practicing speaking in that language. For that reason, it was easy to forget how to pronounce the words I learned on that day. Also, it was a teacher-centered class that I couldn’t have any chances to read out dialogues loudly or to have a discussion with classmates. It was very lecture-based so that the teacher was the only one who was speaking during the class. I hoped to have even five minutes in the class to talk in Japanese about what I did on the day before. By speaking, we can practice rapid thinking and organizing the words in a grammatical order.

I met the second teacher in the academy when I was in the age of becoming an adult. I remember her as the most unhelpful teacher of the three teachers. First of all, she appeared to be unenthusiastic about teaching Japanese. Her voice was so listless and it made me to lose passion to learn. She was just a conveyor of the knowledge of Japanese grammar and words. In addition, she didn’t show any interests to students. I become more internally motivated by getting closer to the teachers and communicating with them. She was a very independent being. She did only the lecture and didn’t talk about anything unrelated to the class.

The last teacher from whom I learned Japanese very recently was the best teacher I have ever met. There were many things helpful that she did. Above all, she was bright and passionate as much as I could feel. She was also careful of students’ emotional variables. These really affected the atmosphere of the class positively. Also, before the class, she always asked us what we did yesterday and made us to answer in Japanese. This kind of questions showed her interest to us and made chances to communicate in Japanese. She was very close to the modern teaching style. She induced us to be more active in the class. For that, she focused more on communication and acted as a guide. When reading dialogues, students needed to read out loud and interpret ourselves before the teacher tells the correct interpretation. By improving my verbal intelligence, I enjoyed reading out Japanese sentences and making sentences with words. On the other hand, the only thing unhelpful was that she cared excessively about how much of the content are students catching up. Sometimes for this reason, I felt the input is more than one step behind my current Japanese ability.

If I learn Japanese again, I will learn it from the last teacher who had the modern teaching style. Also I feel I learned the most in a short time with her because she had more helpful things than unhelpful things for me to learn.