

Japanese calligraphy

Teacher Material

Step 1: Discovering Japanese calligraphy

Resources: Internet access

Focus on content: Discovering another writing system

Focus on language(S): Pronouncing sounds from other languages

Notes for the teacher:

The teacher should create a context to help the young students to understand the katakana characters. He/She may e.g. shortly introduce to Japan, the Japanese language and calligraphy to the students.

1. The teacher talks and shows some pictures on the internet about the Japan, Japanese language and calligraphy. Then he/she shows the short video “How to read and write Katakana Alphabet” shown on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rf-n_qI2occ (the explanations are in English). The video shows you how to write and pronounce Japanese characters.
2. The teacher shows again the short film and now asks the students to practise reading/pronouncing some katakana characters while listening to the short film on YouTube.
3. The teacher initiates a discussion with the students about the katakana characters. They share in the classroom whether any of these sounds remind them of something and what they think about these characters: Are there any similarities with sounds in their home language(s) or any other language they know? The teacher may provide more examples through internet based on the childrens’ references or in order to include other languages of the world.

STEP 2: Let’s study Japanese

Material required: The Katakana table. Short history of this syllabic alphabet.

Resources: Document 1, Katakana table

Grouping:

Notes for the teacher:

1. The teacher explains in a very simple way what is demonstrated in the list in Document 1. He/she provides the students with some information about the table. For example, he/she explains that the table is read from right to left and from top to bottom. He/she brings examples from other languages, such as Arabic, that are constructed likewise. (5-10’)
2. After the brief introduction the teacher asks the students to choose one character and try to draw it each by himself/herself. Then the student may try to pronounce it and present it to his/her classmates. The teacher might assist the students when they need some help.

3. The teacher calls each time two groups in the middle of the classroom. The students of the first group demonstrate the katakana character with their bodies and the other group need to find the character, show it in the table and if possible, try to pronounce it. Then the same is repeated from the other group respectively.
4. Finally, the students reflect on what they have learnt and share their reflections in the group.