
Rick's Place

Notes, Thoughts, and Random Musings on the Online Experience

by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

The Japanese word for cell phone -- *keitai*, meaning "something you carry with you" -- provides a hint about its role within Japanese culture. Over time, mobile devices in Japan have come to be perceived not so much as bundles of technical features, or tools for replicating PC functions from the road, but personal accessories that help users sustain constant social links with others.

Xeni Jardin

How Mobile Phones Conquered Japan

Welcome back, friends. I hope you've had a restful summer re-creating your energies and enthusiasm for this year's season of song. Our starting place in this year's explorations is the realm of personal communications technology.

Many of us 'older' teachers are often confused by our student's apparent addiction to their telephones and digital music players. Their thumbs seem to be adapted for text messaging and their ability to multitask - listen to music, talk on the phone, carry on a conversation, shop and eat amazes us. How times have changed.

Perhaps many will recognise my principal's experience this summer. He purchased an iPod for himself, and had to receive lessons from his ten year old son on how to download music, how to transfer the music to his iPod, what the best format for compression was, how to find the album covers and how to insert the album covers into iTunes. I purchased a new phone that doubles as a computer. If I were a bit more masochistic I could write this missive on it using the built in thumb keyboard. I also could turn on bluetooth and use a full size keyboard to take some pity on my typing digits. The phone is also a Pocket PC running Pocket Word, a version of that industry standard Microsoft Word. I could then attach it to an E-mail message and send it to Church Farm House or my iBook. I could just save it to the memory card and transfer it the same as I would a digital picture, or I could just plug the Pocket PC into the computer and synchronise, matching my addresses, appointments and selected files on both computers.

Speaking of digital images, the new phone also is a camera. Not the best quality in the world, but good enough for 'snaps'. I took pictures of our new house and posted them on the web so family back in the States could see the new place. Whilst it won't replace my iPod, it also could carry digital music. It only has 128 Mb of internal memory and I have added a 256 Mb card.

Many of you will find that your personal communication device can perform many of these functions, if not more. The Japanese are the fabled 'early adopters'. They were freed from restraints by their language. For us, the name mobile telephone sets a picture of what the equipment *is*, not what it *should be*. We forget that Alexander Graham Bell initially imagined the telephone as a method for transmitting concerts and lectures. What an open-ended description; "something you carry with you". No limits. It can perform what tasks you wish and is not limited by a pre-existing name.

We can do with remembering that part of what we wish to teach this year is to make music a *keitai* for our students - a personal tool that will help them sustain a constant and social link with others. May you and your students and audiences have a brilliant year communicating!

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