



## Kaimono—Shopping and Personal Finance

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**Ages:** 16–19 years old  
**Level:** Advanced  
**Culture:** Japanese department stores; personal finance  
**Japanese:** Review of shopping related expressions  
(*Learn Japanese*, Lesson 1)



### Objectives

The following lesson plan includes two activities which I developed along the theme of *kaimono* for my Japanese III/IV combination class this year. Due to a huge variation in students' levels of ability and in how much text material they have covered, I needed to develop non-text-based activities which serve as both a review and a challenge.

In the first activity, students learn what types of products are likely to be found in a Japanese department store and where they are likely to be located. They also learn about the etiquette of department store employees and politeness levels in speech and body language. In the second activity they also learn about the savings habits, credit card use, and spending habits of Japanese men and women.

We had already completed many other shopping activities, such as viewing original video footage of department and grocery stores and trying to locate various shopping list items by floor using a department store floor guide. In order to successfully complete the first activity, students should have a working knowledge of ...*kai* counters for floors, a strong knowledge of *katakana*, and some ability in giving and understanding directions. The second activity requires only a general knowledge of *kanji* (not the specific *kanji* in the vocabulary list) and of basic money-related terms like *kaimasu*, *karimasu*, *okane*, and *motte imasu*.

This class helps to bring students' understanding of Japanese culture down to a more personal level. They can see many products that they buy—even

the same name brands—for sale in Japanese stores. By bringing in a discussion of and examples of prices and typical salaries on other dates, the personal spending figures seem more real and may also be discussed in terms of gender and fiscal inequality in both Japan and the U.S. To me, these figures make a greater impression than blanket statements about "the position of women in Japanese society." It would also be interesting to compare spending habits by age, marital status, geographical location, etc., and to get similar figures for the U.S.

Although these two activities are related, they do not necessarily have to be done together or in this order. Done with full discussion and a large class, they may take more than one 50-minute period to complete. However, several parts of these activities may be omitted or adapted based on the teacher's goals and the students' abilities.

My lesson plan stimulates student interest in Japanese culture by presenting situations and ideas relevant to students' own lives, comparing and contrasting these situations in Japan and the U.S., and motivating students to consider the spending habits of their own society. The students can also see clearly that they are being prepared for a skill which they will use in real life.

## Materials and Procedure

### A. Activity 1: Role-playing of customers, salespeople, and elevator women in a Japanese department store

Ideally, students have been prepared by having seen pictures and videos of Japanese department stores, and by having compared and contrasted them with American department stores.



1. Materials: Copies of department store floor plan, shopping lists.
2. List examples of various department store goods on the board and ask students on what floor they would expect to find them. Next, ask students whom they could ask and what they would say to find these items if they could not understand the floor guide. Also review direction words.
3. Assign roles to students. One or two students with good *keigo* should be the elevator women. These students should be instructed in phrases such as *Ue ni mairimasu* and *...kai de gozaimasu*. They should also be given a list stating which items are on which floor.

Assign one or two students per floor to two or three floors of the store as salespeople. These students should receive a floor map of their own floor with all sales areas written clearly in Japanese. If *katakana* reading is weak, you may wish to highlight all areas which customers are likely to ask about and allow them time to study the map first.

The remaining students are customers and should receive a list of things they need to buy.

All customers should be given a slightly different list so that they must find their items on their own. They should also receive a floor plan with 3–5 items whited out on each floor.

4. Begin role play. Customers enter the store and are

greeted by the elevator woman with *Irasshaimase*. They must ask her in Japanese what floor one of their items is on and then get off the elevator at that floor (by walking to a different area of the room).

Once on the right floor, students must ask a salesperson exactly where the item is sold. The salesperson must explain without looking at the customer's floor map or allowing the customer to look at his. Once the customer has located the item, he writes it on his map and then goes back to the elevator and continues this process until all items have been found and written in.

### Sample Dialogue

Student A (posing as doorway greeter):

*Irasshaimase.*

(Student A and Student B, posing as customers, head toward the elevator.)

Student A (posing as "elevator girl"):

*Ue ni mairimasu.*

Student B (customer):

*Sumimasen ga, shatsu wa nangai ni arimasu ka.*

Student A:

*Sangai de gozaimasu.*

(third floor)

*Hai, kochira wa sangai desu.*

Student B (To the third floor salesperson):

*Sumimasen ga, shatsu wa doko ni arimasu ka.*

Student C (third floor salesperson):

(pointing with full hand)



*Pantsu (-uriba) to sūtsu (-uriba) no aida ni arimasu.*

Student B:

*Hai, wakarimashita. Dōmo arigatō.*

B. Activity 2: Reading graphs depicting Japanese personal finance habits (savings, credit cards, etc.)

1. Materials: Vocabulary handout, dictionaries, graphs from an article in a magazine.
2. Show students a variety of English to Japanese, Japanese to English and *kanji* dictionaries, teaching them how to use each one. Provide students with the vocabulary list and have them search for the words in these dictionaries. For more advanced students capable of using *kanji* dictionaries, the *hiragana* versions of several words may be deleted from the list.

*Handout: 買い物 Vocabulary List*

毎日	まいにち
財布	さいふ
金額	きんがく
未満	みまん
貯金	ちよきん
以上	いじょう
給料	きゅうりょう
自由	じゆう
何枚	なんまい
支払う	しはらう

3. After students have found these words, ask them what they expect the article to be about. Next, ask them questions about their own and their parents' finances, such as:

*Chokin o shite imasu ka.*

*Kurejitto kādo o motte imasu ka.*

*Amerikajin no kyūryō to nihonjin no kyūryō to dotchi no hō ga takai to omoimasu ka.*

4. Allow students time to read and discuss the charts.

## Student Response

In Activity 1, the interaction varied greatly based on students' ability level. This role play was done

toward the beginning of the year before most honorifics had been formally introduced. Generally, most students used ...*masu* forms with the "elevator girl," a specially selected student of high ability who used some simple honorifics such as *de gozaimasu* and perhaps *mairimasu*. Ideally, the salespeople on each floor should use honorifics too, and this could be done at a higher level, but my students tended to fall back on ...*masu* forms. Although this was not totally authentic, insistence on totally authentic speech in terms of politeness levels would have overloaded several of the students. The "customers" were allowed to use whichever forms they were most comfortable with, most students relying on ...*masu* forms.

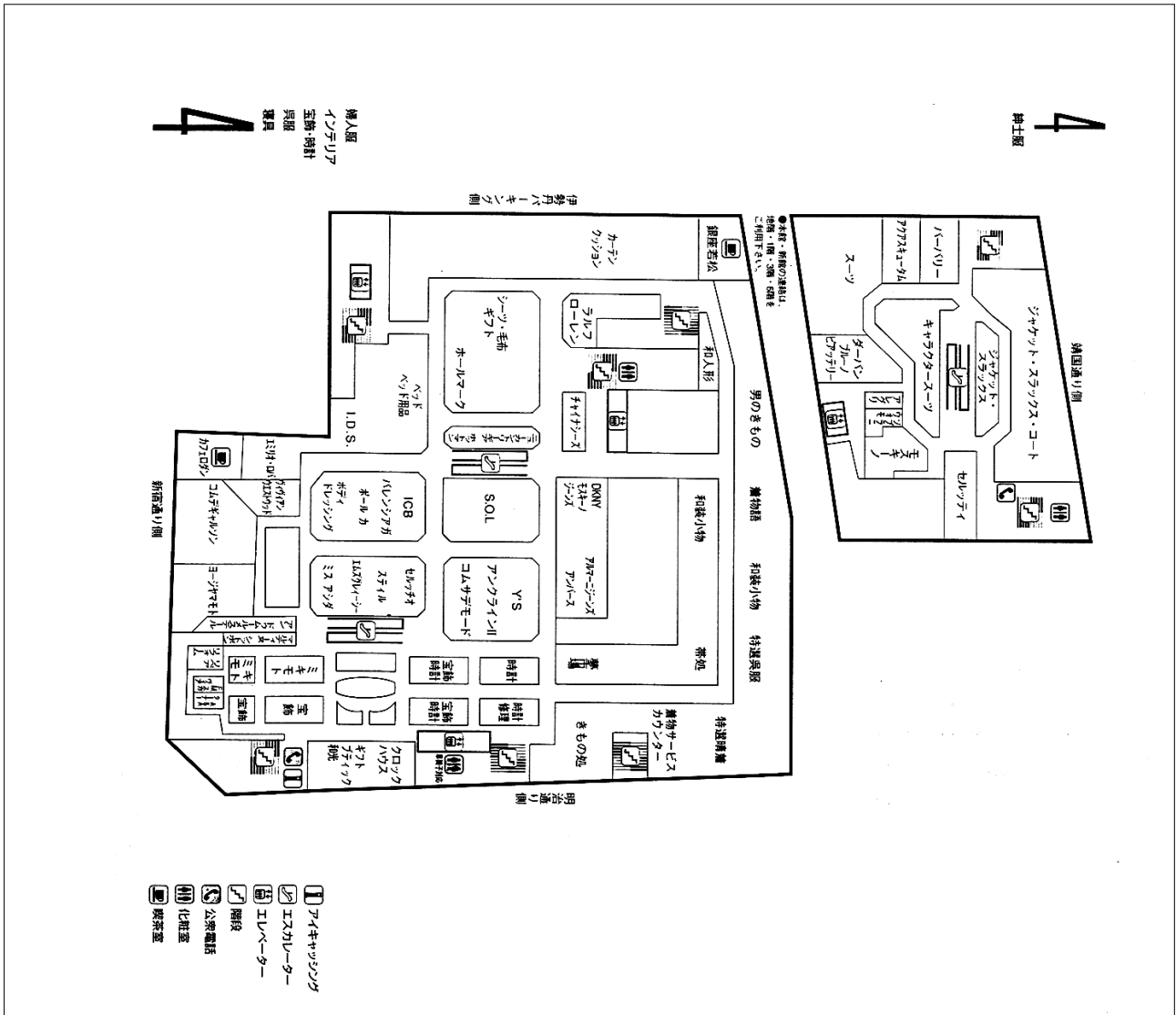
I modeled both sample speech and body language for all students beforehand. Discussion of body language was probably limited to eye contact and proper bowing levels for different roles. Thinking back, I should have also discussed the difference between the way Americans and Japanese point to something and the fact that Japanese salespeople would likely be more thorough in guiding customers.

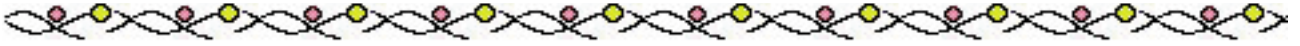
## Culture and the Foreign Language Class

Whether my students go to Japan as tourists, business people, exchange students, or teachers, they will definitely need to know how to shop. It is a basic life skill, and one with which high school students can definitely relate. A unit on medical problems may not interest students who are currently healthy. All students, however, will shop. Not only can they relate this unit to something in their lives, but it is something they enjoy doing and look forward to doing in Japan. Since shopping involves products from all over the world and takes place in so many different environments, it relates to many different review areas (*katakana*, *hiragana*, *kanji*, counters, object names, clothing, colors, adjectives, directions, etc.). I did many other activities on the theme of "shopping" that I have not included here.

Department Store Floor Plans and Shopping Lists

customer





Department Store Floor Plans and Shopping Lists

the forth floor salesperson

4  
紳士服

伊勢丹 6 丁目 5 丁目 側

4  
婦士服

●本館 4階 婦装のフロアは、エレベーターで移動してください。

●本館 4階 紳装のフロアは、エレベーターで移動してください。

■ 紳士服 婦士服

■ 和装小物 和装小物 特選呉服

■ 特選呉服 特選呉服

■ 靴 靴

■ 小物 小物

■ 紳装 紳装

■ 婦装 婦装

■ 靴 靴

■ 小物 小物

■ 紳装 紳装

■ 婦装 婦装

■ アニキヤックス

■ エスカレーター

■ エレベーター

■ 階段

■ 公共電話

■ 化粧室

■ 喫茶室

二かい:

レディース  
ブラウス  
スカート  
ワンピース

四かい:

靴  
タオル  
Tシャツ  
カーペンター

Elevator Women

## Comments from the Feedback Committee

### **Educating for Cross-cultural Understanding**

While the language objectives are clearly defined in Activity 1, the cultural objectives are not as clear. Perhaps if the discussions include a comparison of the different attitudes of a customer and a shop assistant in Japan and the U.S.A., a sociolinguistic viewpoint could be added. Some distinguishing aspects of store clerks' behavior might include that there is little eye contact in Japanese shops. Clerks rarely smile, and they certainly hardly ever say "Have a nice day!" at the end of a transaction. There is a desire to help, but only if the request falls within the realm of the "possible." If something which is requested cannot be carried out, there will be plenty of "Yes, just wait a little please," but no action. This, of course, is frustrating to the non-Japanese person who wants a straight response.

Other aspects of culture which may be relevant and interesting to the students include: the way clerks count money, especially large sums of money; the summer and winter gift-giving seasons; the wrapping that accompanies any purchase and with it the *gomi* or garbage problem; shopping as an activity for students—hanging out in Harajuku, for example; or the difference between shopping at a department store and in the local shopping street.

Other questions could be about who does the shopping and how often. Floor maps of department stores in the students' local area could be compared with those from Japan. If there are some exchange students from different countries, it would be very interesting to talk about and compare the appropriate attitudes of shop assistants in each society. As an extension, perhaps an assignment about Japanese nonverbal communication, explaining its history, for example, in order to deepen understanding, could be given.

Concerning Activity 2, I can't help but think that these figures would be more interesting to university students or adult learners. Statistics on how teenagers in Japan get, save and spend money would probably be interesting to high school students. Data on *otoshidama* would be relevant here.

### **Language Learning**

This lesson has at least two main tasks: practicing new words and sentence structures and reading *katakana* words and names. As both tasks are important, it will be more effective if the teacher decides which should take priority at which times. This is a very good opportunity to introduce how foreign English words are said and written in *katakana* in Japan. It may sound strange or feel uncomfortable for some people from an English-speaking background, but they need to learn to say these words properly to make themselves understood in Japan or speaking with a Japanese person. It is best for the students to learn the changed pronunciation as soon as possible.

To further bolster this lesson, the teacher might add other sentence structures. Adding a few more tasks would also be interesting, such as asking for something at a counter, choosing one item among many, or asking for gift wrapping.