



Survey Project

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Age: 15–18 years old
Level: Beginning (Level 2: mid-novice level)
Culture: Any aspect of Japanese culture students are interested in
Japanese: Writing hypothesis, questionnaires, and survey results in Japanese



Objectives

This activity enhances not only the four language skills but cultural awareness among students. I want my students to find out about what they are interested in about Japan. Through their surveys students learn that there are many different types of Japanese people. Students learn that sometimes their preconceptions about Japan are wrong. The class sees the differences between Japanese people and themselves. Actually communicating with Japanese people through e-mail and interviews stimulates the students' interest.

Procedure

A. Lesson Plan

1. Divide students into groups of three to four students. Each group decides on a topic or theme of their interest to investigate. Then, have students discuss the topic and create a hypothesis in Japanese. The use of Japanese is encouraged.
2. Have students create more than ten questions regarding the theme and the hypothesis in Japanese and compile the questions into a survey. Students type their surveys in Japanese using a Japanese-capable computer. I used a Macintosh running Japanese Language Kit. Each questionnaire should include a brief introduction of their project, the date by which they

need to receive the answer, questions and names of students all typed in Japanese (see attachment #2). As a pre-activity, teach Japanese word processing skills in class by actually using a Japanese-capable computer.

3. Send students' surveys to Japan through the Internet. When I did this activity, I was the only person who had an e-mail account; therefore, I found Japanese people who are capable of receiving and sending Japanese messages. Their messages were sent to some college students, some college professors, some high school students, and some personal friends in Japan. Most of the contacts I found were through my personal contacts, but some contacts were found through a listserv called Japanese Teachers and Instructional Technology ("JTIT-L@psuvm.psu.edu" You can subscribe to this list by sending an e-mail message "subscribe JTIT-L" to "listserv@psuvm.psu.edu".) If students have their own accounts, they should be able to find Japanese contacts by themselves.

At the same time, have students find at least one Japanese person to orally interview their survey. (In a place like Hawaii, it is easy to find a Japanese person.) Have students record their interview on an audio tape for their oral grade.

4. After gathering answers from at least 10 Japanese people, including e-mail respondents, students analyze and interpret the results in



both Japanese and English in preparation for their oral presentation.

5. During the oral presentations, each group talks in Japanese about their hypothesis, results of their survey and discuss if their hypothesis was correct. The quality of the presentation is graded; students are encouraged to use visual aids for their presentations.
6. Also have students submit a written report in Japanese about the survey (attachment #3). Each student turns in an oral interview and a brief English written reflection on the project.
7. The last activity is to write a thank you note to respondents (attachment #4). Students type their letters in Japanese; the notes are sent to Japan electronically.

B. Notes

1. Choosing a Topic

Students were allowed to select any topic they wanted, but many groups chose from among the examples I provided or subjects that they had read about in class. Thus far the most popular themes have been sports, school life, music, food, and the like. Some of the more unusual ones have been ghosts, gangsters, and the sarin subway poisoning incident. I first advised the students to select topics that would allow them to set up hypotheses easily and then to frame their questions so that the validity of their hypotheses would be immediately apparent—and to phrase them in simple Japanese. Students were directed to think in Japanese when drawing up their hypotheses and questions. If they think in Japanese, the topics, hypotheses, and questions seem to fall naturally at the students' level of competence.

2. Choosing an E-mail Recipient

At the time this project was conducted, I sent and received the messages. Use of the Internet was still limited, so I sent them to any Japanese

who was willing to cooperate. Being in a position to check the mail coming from both directions enabled me to clear up any difficulties that might occur, such as the use of slang or expressions that might lead to misunderstanding based on cultural differences, by explaining the problem to both parties. This provided a great many real-life lessons in cultural differences.

Today the number of schools using the Internet has increased, so, for most topics, it seems best for high school students to correspond with other high schoolers. Rather than sending messages to individual students, however, it seems that the chances of getting a proper response are better if messages are addressed to a teacher in the other school who will get students in his or her class to answer. To make this a learning opportunity for students in the partner school, as well, replies can be in either English or Japanese.

3. The Difference Between E-mail and Postal Correspondence

I think e-mail tends to be more informal than letters and comes closer to spoken language, so it gives practice in speaking as well as in writing. E-mail provides faster feedback and makes simultaneous exchange of messages possible.

4. The Advantages of E-mail

E-mail has the advantages of prompt feedback; convenience; providing practice in writing, reading, and speaking; and allowing direct contact with the contemporary culture of the language being learned. Particularly when learners are studying a second foreign language, fear of making mistakes frequently makes them reserved; this sort of indirect method makes it easier for shy or quiet students to express themselves.

5. The Disadvantages of E-mail

One disadvantage of e-mail lies in the so-called "frame problem": The recipient is invisible and the sender can use a pseudonym, so some peo-

ple write very rude messages. Another potential problem is that writing messages on the word processor means fewer opportunities to do actual writing on paper, so some students may become incapable of writing Japanese without a word processor.

C. Attachments

#1 Student Handout

Two-hour Japanese, 4th quarter project and portfolio (100 task points)

1. Group Project (Group of 3 or 4)

This is a research project. Follow the directions below:

- a. Choose an appropriate topic to research in your group.
- b. Write a hypothesis in Japanese. (10 points)
- c. Write at least 10 questions regarding the theme and your hypothesis in Japanese. (10 points)
- d. Everyone in the group must ask those questions to Japanese by oral interviews and e-mail. Include at least one oral interview by each member. For the oral sample for your grade, you have to interview a Japanese tourist from Japan whom you do not know. You can find many Japanese tourists at Ala Moana Shopping Center and Waikiki. I suggest that at least two of you go to such a place for an interview. Ask their permission first. Be polite. If you do not understand their responses, tell them "*Sumimasen ga, wakarimasen. Mō ichido itte kudasai.*" or "*...wa eigo de nan to iimasuka*" etc. Try to communicate. If Japanese tourists are too impolite, quit the interview by saying "*Dōmo arigatō gozaimashita*" and ask someone else and let me know what happened. The number of interviewees should be at least 10 Japanese per group (including e-mail responses).
- e. Discuss the results in your group in English outside of the class.
- f. Discuss the results in your group in Japanese in the class.
- g. Write a report in Japanese. (25 points) (up to



three pages) Your report should include the reasons for choosing the topic, the result of your survey, reflections on your hypothesis (if it was confirmed or not; if not, what would be your new hypothesis.)

- h. Oral presentation. (25 points) Present your group project orally in class within five minutes. You will receive group points (15 points) and individual points. (10 points) Your group will be evaluated by the clarity of the presentation, the content, and the teamwork during the presentation. Individuals will be graded on accuracy (grammatical and speaking) and poise.

2. Portfolio (individual)

Your portfolio should include the following:

- a. Your best written sample with its draft. (10 points) Please rewrite your best written sample. I am looking at how much you have improved.
- b. Your oral sample (interview to tourist)—one oral interview for the above project. (10 points)
- c. Your reflections on the project and portfolio. Include a brief explanation of how you participated in the project, your reflection on your interview with a tourist(s), and the reasons for choosing the best written sample. No longer than two pages. Double space typed. (10 points)

3. Schedule

- a. Draft of your group's hypothesis and questions are due 4/10.
- b. A typed questionnaire is due on 4/21. Questionnaire will be sent to Japan this weekend. Please include what this questionnaire is



for and by when you need the responses.

c. Oral presentation on 5/22.

d. Turn in your group project and individual portfolio no later than 5/24.

#2 Example of Students' Topic, Hypothesis, Questionnaire and Answer from Japan

1. Topic and Hypothesis

(original Japanese)

トピック：のりもの

かてい：日本は とても 小さくて、いそがしいですから、たくさんが います。ですから、ラッシュアワーが わるいでしょう。日本の とおりが たくさん こんでいます。そして、マイカーが 少なくて、ふべんでしょう。日本人は いろいろの のりもの を 使います。新かんせんや 地下つや バスや電車や タクシーや じてん車やマイカーなど があります。でも、日本の のりもの の中で 新かんせんが 一番 人気でしょう。新かんせんは 早くて、べんりですから。日本の のりものと ハワイの のりものが ちがいます。ハワイで 電車や 新かんせんや 地下つやなどが ありません。そして、日本の のりものが おもしろいです。

(English translation)

Topic: transportation

Hypothesis: Japan is a very small and busy country, and there are many people. Therefore, roads would be heavily crowded during the rush hour. Streets in Japan would be very crowded. Individually owned cars would be few, so it would be inconvenient. Japanese people would use various means of transportation, such as a bullet train, a subway, a bus, a train, a taxi, a bicycle, and a car. However, probably the bullet train is the most popular means of transportation because they are fast and convenient. Means of transportation differ between Japan and Hawaii. In Hawaii, transportation in Japan is interesting.

2. Questionnaire and Answer from Japan

(original Japanese)

今日は。リージャンと レッドベターエミリと しょうじエレンと 金増、マリサは 日本語の レポートを しなければ なりません。トピックは 日本の のりもの です。しつ問を 聞いても いいですか。五月十二日の まえに 私たちに へんじを ください。これは 私たちの しつ問です。どうも ありがとう ございます。

しつ問 一： たいてい 何の のりもの を のりますか。なぜ

使いますか。

こたえ： 自転車。自転車が好きだから。

しつ問 二： なぜ ほかの のりもの を 使いませんか。

こたえ： じてんしゃがすきだから。

しつ問 三： 毎日 のりものは いくら ですか。

こたえ： のりものは いくら？ どういう意味ですか？

しつ問 四： 家から しごとか 学校まで どのくらい ありますか。

こたえ： 2キロくらいあります。

しつ問 五： どのくらい かかりますか。

こたえ： 10分くらい。

しつ問 六： 毎あさ 何時に 家から 出かけますか。何時 家に 帰りますか。

こたえ： 朝、早いときは8時45分ころ、遅いときは昼の1時ころ。

しつ問 七： ラッシュアワーは いつ ですか。

こたえ： ありません。

しつ問 八： おそかったら、タクシーに のりますか。

こたえ： 乗りません。

しつ問 九： 日本で どんな のりものが ありますか。

こたえ： 自転車、車、バイク、電車、地下鉄、バス、タクシー

しつ問 十： どの のりものが 人気が ありますか。

こたえ： 車かな？

しつ問 十一： 一番 あぶない のりものは 何 ですか。

こたえ： バイクかな？

しつ問 十二： 新かんせんに のると ちかてつに のると どちらの方が早い ですか。

こたえ： 地下鉄はそんなに長い距離を走っていませんから、新幹線と比べられないと思いますが。

しつ問 十三： 新かんせんに のると 電車に のると どちらの方がべんり ですか。

こたえ： 行く場所にもよるでしょう。遠い所に行くのなら、新幹線の方が早く着きます。

しつ問 十四： あなたの 一番 好きな のりものは 何 ですか。

こたえ： 自転車です。

しつ問 十五： 日本の のりものが いいですか。わるい ですか。なぜ ですか。

こたえ： よくわかりません。

(English translation)

Hi, we have to write a Japanese class report. Our topic is Japanese transportation. May I ask you questions? Please reply by May 12. These are our questions. Thank you. Jane, Emily, Erin, and Melissa.

Question 1: Generally, what means of transportation

- do you use? Why?
 Answer: Bicycle. Because I like a bicycle.
- Question 2: Why don't you use other means of transportation?
 Answer: Because I like a bicycle.
- Question 3: How much do you spend for transportation everyday?
 Answer: What? I do not understand your question.
- Question 4: How far is it from your house to your work or school?
 Answer: About 2 kilometers.
- Question 5: How long does it take?
 Answer: About 10 minutes.
- Question 6: What time do you leave your house in the morning? What time do you come home?
 Answer: When I have to leave early, I leave around 8:45, otherwise, around 1:00 P.M.
- Question 7: When is the rush hour?
 Answer: There is no rush hour around here.
- Question 8: If you are late, do you use a taxi?
 Answer: No.
- Question 9: What kinds of transportation are available in Japan?
 Answer: Bicycle, car, motorcycle, train, subway, bus and taxi.
- Question 10: Which means of transportation is popular?
 Answer: Maybe a car.
- Question 11: What is the most dangerous means of transportation?
 Answer: Maybe a motorcycle.
- Question 12: Which is faster, riding a bullet train or riding a subway?
 Answer: I do not think we can compare the two because subways do not run such along distance as bullet trains.
- Question 13: Which is more convenient, riding a bullet train or riding a subway?
 Answer: Depends on where you are going. If you are going far, a bullet train arrives faster.
- Question 14: What is your favorite means of transportation?
 Answer: Bicycle.
- Question 15: Is the Japanese transportation system good or bad? Why?

Answer: I do not understand your question.

#3 Example of Report Written by a Group of Students

(original Japanese)

けっか

日本で たくさん のり物があります。自てん車や 電車や バスや 車や 地下てつや バイクや 新かんせんや タクシーなど あります。そして ひ行きと ふねが あります。毎日 たくさん 日本人は 家から し事が 学校まで 自てん車に のります。自てん車に のることが やさしいと 安いですから、35%は 自てん車に のります。そして 30%は 電車に のります。毎日 少しだけ バイクと 新かんせんと タクシーに のります。毎あさ 6時30分から 8時45分まで 日本人は 家から 出かけます。あさの ラッシュアワーは 7時から 9時までです。日本人の 家から し事が 学校まで 1キロから 30キロまでです。だいたい 10キロくらいです。家から し事が 学校まで 10分から 90分まで かかります。だいたい 40分ごろです。毎日 のり物の りょう金は 0円から 400円までです。だいたい 200円くらいです。毎晩 4時から 8時30分まで 日本人は 家に帰ります。そして 晩の ラッシュアワーは 5時から 8時までです。日本で 自てん車と 電車と バスと 地下てつと 車は べんりのり物です。たいてい ほかの のり物は ふべんと 高いです。ときどき ほかの のり物があります。だいたい 日本の のり物は とてもいいです。

おそかったら、23%の 日本人は タクシーに のって 77%の 日本人は タクシーに のりません。100%の 日本人は しんかんせんに のるのは ちかてつに のるより はやいですと こたえました。そして 73%は しんかんせんは 電車より べんりですと こたえました。みんなは しんかんせんは ながい所に行く時に つかって、電車は 近い所に行く時に つかいます。

(English translation)

In Japan there are many means of transportation, such as bicycles, trains, buses, subways, motorcycles, bullet trains, taxis, planes, and ships. Everyday many Japanese use bicycles to go to their work or school from their houses. Because riding a bike is easy and cheap, 35 percent of Japanese use a bicycle. And 30 percent use trains. Only a few use motorcycles, bullet trains, and taxi. Every morning Japanese people leave their houses between 6:30 A.M. and 8:45 A.M. The morning rush hour is between 7 and 9 o'clock. The distance between their houses and their work or school is between 1 kilometer and 30 kilometers. It is generally 10 kilometers. They spend 10 to 90 minutes daily for commuting. The

average is about 40 minutes. The everyday cost for transportation ranges from 0 yen to 400 yen and the average is about 200 yen. Every evening, they go home between 4:00 and 8:30. The evening rush hour is from 5:00 to 8:00.

In Japan bikes, trains, buses, subways, and cars are convenient vehicles. Others are inconvenient and expensive. Sometimes other means of transportation are not available. The Japanese transportation system is generally very good.

When they are late, 23 percent use a taxi. All Japanese answered that riding a bullet train is faster than riding a subway. Seventy-three percent answered that a bullet train is more convenient than a regular train. They use a bullet train for long distance trips and regular trains for short trips.

#4 Example of a Thank You Note (original Japanese)

てがみ ありがとう ございます。私たちは 日本語の レポートを しなければ なりませんでしたから、しつ間を ききました。たくさん こたえを もらいました。たくさん 日本の のりものを 習いました。けっかは とても おもしろかったです。私たちの レポートは とても よかったです。どうも ありがとう。

さようなら、 マリサ

(English translation)

Thank you for your letter. We had to write a report for the Japanese class, so we asked you questions. We received many answers. We learned a lot about Japanese transportation. The results were very interesting.

Our report was very good. Thank you.

Goodby. Melissa

Student Response

I used this activity last semester in my 2-hour Japanese classes (attachment #1). According to the students' reflections, they truly enjoyed this project. Most students reacted very positively to the e-mail part of this project. They were amazed to receive answers from Japan so quickly. Many of them liked the freedom of choosing their own topic. Teachers may suggest appropriate topics according to their level, yet it seems like a good idea to leave the decision up to students. Almost all students liked the group part, too. They often mentioned that because this was a group project, it was much easier and much more fun.





Comments from the Feedback Committee

Educating for Cross-cultural Understanding

A project centered on a survey is a favorite student activity. Students are actively involved in the process since they are able to choose their own topics to investigate.

The inclusion of an opportunity to discuss the questionnaire results in English is important as it allows students to process this information before having to do so in Japanese where they may not have all of the language structures or vocabulary to express their understanding, questions and conclusions. It is also vital that students clearly state what cultural information they hope to find out before beginning this discussion, otherwise it will be very difficult for them to draw inferences and state conclusions in either English or Japanese.

It is very important that the teacher has carefully analyzed the functional language needed to carry out such a discussion and has provided students with opportunities to learn and practice a minimum of these patterns before expecting them to carry on a discussion in Japanese. I assume this discussion would provide the basis of the written report.

If the students are learning how to write a thank you letter, a teacher could have them compare Japanese and American views on such letters: when they should be sent, in what situation (what requires a letter of thanks), to whom, in what style, and whether they should be written longhand or typed. The students could debate the issues (the issue of what language to use in a debate depends on the level of the students), research them, or do a survey project on the question. In this way the class teaches about culture as it teaches about language.

Lesson Plan

The strength of this lesson plan lies in the way it gets students to use their Japanese for real communication. Most people learning Japanese overseas have no outlet for using it in any practical sense (Hawaii is, of course, an exception). People in different countries have different degrees of access to the Internet, but introducing its practical application to language education through this lesson plan will spur development of new teaching methods.

This lesson plan contains one more idea that I would like to share with other teachers: to use a portfolio for evaluation. In devising a lesson plan, it is easy to overlook the issue of how to evaluate students on what aspects of the lesson. It is very hard to evaluate group project work, for instance, or the study of culture in a language class. But this lesson plan is excellent because it comes equipped with a method of evaluation, the portfolio, that provides standards by which hard-to-evaluate work can be sized up, although the feedback students get to their written and oral questions carries a completely different level of meaning than a test score or essay grade.

Language Learning

I envision this activity as a culminating activity, requiring students to apply a number of language patterns, vocabulary, and culturally appropriate behavior in a real life situation.

Ms. Ady has already included word processing as a prerequisite. I have found Nisus Writer with the Japanese Language Kit very user friendly for students of Japanese. If students have any familiarity with word processing on a computer, they can very easily transfer their skills and produce impressive Japanese documents.