



THE DAILY LIVES OF JAPANESE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

—Understanding through a Photo Collection—



Liu Shuyan

Norman Bethune University of Medical Science
Jilin, China

PURPOSE

This lesson focuses on the everyday lives of Japanese high school students, a topic in which the class is quite interested. The aims of the lesson are to deepen the students' understanding of Japanese high school life and society, and dispel their stereotypes and misconceptions about them, by learning about the everyday lives of Japanese their own age. The students compare the Japanese students' lifestyles with their own, identifying points of similarity and difference. At the same time, through discussion, a short test, and other activities, the students learn practical Japanese expressions relating to everyday life and improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

POINTS TO BE STUDIED

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVES

TARGET FUNCTIONS

- ♣ Expressing one's own thoughts and impressions
- ♣ Describing one's own daily life

TARGET EXPRESSIONS

- ♣ れる, ~られる, ~ことがある (ありません), ~ようです, ~と思います, 気が向く

TARGET VOCABULARY

- ♣ 時間割, 組む, まなざし, 普段, 落ち着く, 身につける, 強制, ペア, ミステリー

CULTURAL OBJECTIVES

- To gain a deeper understanding of Japanese high school students
- To reflect on one's own daily life
- To identify points of similarity and difference between one's own lifestyle and that of others

SOURCE MATERIALS

Work sheet (Handout #1*)

Five photographs of Hino Takashi (Handout #2*) or the photo collection *The Way We Are*¹

Tape: Comments of students portrayed in the photos
Tape recorder

Reference about Hino Takashi (pp. 6-9 of *The Way We Are*)

1. This collection is comprised of 26 winning entries in the "Daily Lives of Japanese High School Students Photo Contest," sponsored by the Japan Forum in 1997. The first volume of the series was published in 1998.

PROCEDURE

Previous study

1. The students write a composition roughly 300 characters long about their own daily lives.
2. The students read the column in Lesson 15 of the textbook 『日語』 Vol.2 (People's Education Press), which describes various aspects of the culture and everyday lives of Japanese high school students.
3. The teacher leaves a copy of *The Way We Are* in the classroom for students to peruse, and points out to them that it shows Japanese high school students as they really are.

1. Introduction (2 mins.)

After exchanging greetings with the students, the teacher indicates the photo collection that had been left in the classroom and ask them questions about it in Japanese.

Teacher:

これらの写真を全部見ましたか。どの写真に興味がありますか。自分の毎日の生活はどうでしょうか。話してください。(Did you see all these photos? Which ones are you interested in? How about your own daily life? Tell us about it.)

2. Students' presentation their compositions (10 mins.)

The students learn about their classmates' daily lives.

3. Explanation (3 mins.)

The teacher describes high schools and high school students in Japan with regard to the following points.

1. On Japanese high schools

There are both public and private schools. High schools may also be classified according to the type of curricula they offer, such as general education and vocational/technical schools. One difference from the Chinese high school

system is that Japan has part-time and evening schools in addition to regular full-time schools. The part-time system prescribes an annual minimum rate of school attendance, and students attend classes at night or other times convenient to them. Takashi attends such a school. Another feature of his school is that, instead of following a prescribed course for a set number of credit points, Takashi can choose from a wide range of elective subjects. He can thus decide for himself how to build up the required credits for graduation, just like at university. However, although Takashi's school employs this elective system, such schools are quite rare even in Japan.

2. On the daily lives of Japanese high school students

(Describe the daily lives of high school students in Japan using the photo collection, the article in the textbook 『日語』, and other materials.)

You might imagine Japanese high school students to be under a lot of pressure, constrained by rigid rules and university entrance exam studies. In reality, however, they are no different from you in that they enjoy school life and strive to meet its challenges each according to their own unique personalities. They experience the same joys, hardships, and so on as you do. While it's true that studying for important exams is one aspect of Japanese high school life, the students also busy themselves with club activities and special events such as school festivals. Some pursue interests in art or music, others get into judo or perhaps photography. After school, they enjoy themselves in various ways, such as chatting with friends and family, playing video games, or finding other fun things to do.

4. Introduction of new vocabulary (10 mins.)

The teacher introduces new vocabulary from the commentary in the photo collection.

5. Short test (15 mins.)

The students answer questions while viewing photographs of Hino Takashi from the collection:

1. The teacher distributes the question sheets and allows students to read through the questions quickly.
2. The teacher plays the tape. The students write their answers as they listen to the tape.
3. The teacher distributes the handout about Hino Takashi. The students check their answers with their neighbors while reading the passage on the handout. Each student grades his neighbor's test sheet and hands it in to the teacher.

6. Discussion (10 mins.)

The students discuss the daily lives of high school students in Japan with regard to the following questions:

1. What image did you have of Japanese high school students before you saw the photos?
2. In what ways are Japanese high school students similar to and different from you?
3. What do you think about the daily lives of high school students in Japan? Which kind of lifestyle do you prefer, theirs or your own?

7. Further study

The students view photos of various other Japanese high school students portrayed in the photo collection and write a short composition about one who catches their interest.

neat, including the desks and chairs.

- Some high school students in Japan have jobs. They earn their spending money and school fees by themselves. This is good because it helps develop their independence.
- Until now I imagined most Japanese high school students to be stern-faced and serious-minded, but after seeing the photos and listening to the tape, I realized that their lives are just as rich in diversity and individuality as ours.

From the committee

Although in its present form this lesson is conducted entirely in Japanese, it could also be adapted to include more activities in the students' native language, with appropriate changes to the target learning points, depending on the students' level. The lesson could be limited, for example to expressions, sentence patterns and vocabulary related to daily life. Even if Japanese were not used to conduct the class, the subject matter taken up in this plan spurs the students' interest and motivation.

STUDENT RESPONSES

- Normally only universities adopt the elective credit point system; I didn't know that in Japan some high schools also use it. Such schools may be rare even in Japan, but in China they are completely unheard of.
- The classrooms in Japanese schools look clean and

THE DAILY LIVES OF JAPANESE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS — HANDOUT #1

名前 _____

1. What is the age span of most high school students in Japan?
2. In Takashi's school, many students are older than:
A. 15 B. 16 C. 17
3. Who is Takashi talking with in the classroom?
4. About how many students are there in each English class?
5. What does Takashi want to be in the future?
A. A mystery writer B. A movie actor C. An athlete
6. From what time to what time does Takashi attend classes?
7. Where does Takashi work?
A. A restaurant B. A gasoline station C. An automobile factory
8. Do many of Takashi's friends have jobs or only a few of them?
9. Does Takashi often cook?
10. What does Takashi read while soaking in the bath?

PHOTOS OF HINO TAKASHI



Chatting with the English-conversation teacher during a break in class. At our school, English classes are taught by a Japanese teacher working together with a native-speaker teacher. There are about 40 students to a class, but fewer in some cases.



For a performing arts festival being put on by the evening-school students, Takashi took the part of a former boxer who has gone blind. But Takashi says he wants to become a mystery writer, not an actor.



Takashi works the 10-hour night shift at a 24-hour gasoline station, 10:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. 3 days a week. He earns ¥1,000 an hour. He attends classes from 1:00 to 7:00 p.m. before going to work. At our school, most students have to supply their tuition and spending money themselves, so almost all our friends have jobs.



A school friend comes to stay over, so Takashi makes his specialty, fried rice. The secret is the whipped egg, mixing it thoroughly with the rice. Still, he lives with his family, so he only cooks when he gets the urge.



When Takashi takes a bath, he soaks for no less than 40 minutes, and more often up to 2 hours. People tease him for spending so much time in the bath, but he says nothing is more calming and comfortable than reading his favorite mysteries and manga while soaking in the tub.

Photos by Nakanishi Yūsuke

—Photos and texts are reprinted from *The Way We Are* (Tokyo: The Japan Forum, 1998), pp. 6-9.