

Notes on Japanese Culture and Communication

The objective of Pimsleur's Japanese programs (I, II, & III) is to introduce you to the language and culture of another country primarily through your ears, and only secondarily through your eyes. This approach is based upon the fact that more than 95 percent of our lives is spent in listening and talking - and less than five percent in reading and writing. The most effective and productive way to begin acquiring these necessary communication skills is by actually working with the "language in use," as demonstrated by native speakers of the language being learned.

Efficiency is greatly increased when what you learn first is the most-frequently-used structures and vocabulary, so that you practice with the basic communication tools you require every day. This carefully-selected "core-language" keeps you focused entirely on the vocabulary and structures you need for daily communication. This is self-motivating because you will begin to speak immediately and successfully.

As you learn the language you are absorbing the culture. Language and culture are so closely intertwined that learning them separately can make you literally "culturally-deprived" and unable to produce appropriate and meaningful language. For this reason you must carefully notice the different (read "cultural") ways the Japanese "act" in the various situations you will experience as you proceed through the units of this course. Being sensitive to "who is doing what to whom, and why," is what you have learned to do almost unconsciously in your native tongue - you will have this same sense of "awareness" as you gain proficiency in your new language.

This implicit instruction will come from the audio sessions, as you learn to identify the intonation and melody of the speakers. We provide this booklet to provide additional explicit instruction to further confirm what you have learned.

Acquiring the culture, "the map of the territory," is like acquiring the terminology of a subject: it enables you to operate as a fellow member in that society. Your success in working with native speakers of Japanese will depend upon how sensitive you become to the accumulated heritage that is Japan.

Unit 61

***tsuyu* - The Rainy Season in Japan**

tsuyu is the word which refers to the annual rainy season in Japan. The beginning of the rainy season varies, depending on the region. In Okinawa, where it begins earliest, you may expect to have a lot of rainy days from early May to early June. In the southernmost island of Kyushuu, it starts about one month later, i.e., from early June to early July. If you go all the way up to the Tohoku region, the northernmost part of the island of Honshu, the rainy season begins in mid-June and ends a month later. The northernmost island of Hokkaido does not have a rainy season. Unlike the rainy season in Southeast Asia, where they get heavy rain every day for a set time, the Japanese *tsuyu* is characterized by many consecutive drizzly days, with occasional days of severe weather. Heavy rains sometimes cause floods and landslides, and several casualties are reported every year. Although the description of such weather sounds rather gloomy, the rain is essential to growing rice, the Japanese staple. The amount of rainfall during the *tsuyu* affects not only the farmers, but the entire national economy. The rain is welcomed, despite the gloomy feelings and the possibility of disaster it can bring. You may enjoy yourself far more, however, if you can avoid traveling to Japan during the rainy season.

Unit 62

Self-Introduction, Japanese-Style

When Diane Jackson introduced herself, she said the name of her company first, followed by her name: *mitsubishi ginkoo no Diane Jackson to mooshimasu*. In the past, Japanese society tended to place attainment of the company goal above the individual's. This tendency, however, may often be over-stressed in cross-cultural comparative analyses, as in fact it seems to be changing rapidly in today's Japanese society. The long-standing social habits are persistent, however, and you will notice that most Japanese people will announce their company or school names followed by their individual names in self-introductions.

It may be hard for you to understand what the person actually does in the company, since asking his/her title, position, or rank, is not easy. That is one of the reasons why the Japanese almost always exchange their business cards immediately upon meeting someone. The company name, the person's position, and the individual name are all written on the small piece of paper, and the Japanese feel comfortable letting the card represent them.

The business card, *meishi*, is extremely important in all business situations. It is absolutely necessary to have a stack of *meishi* at all times. Having your *meishi* made in two languages, one side in English and the other in Japanese, will be very useful. Normally, a younger or lower-ranking person will offer his card first, turned so the other person can read it immediately. After exchanging your *meishi* with someone, you need to carefully - and slowly - study the information on the card you have been given. It is also considered good manners to leave the other person's *meishi* on the table throughout the meeting so you can always refer to the information on the card.

Unit 63

Making Compliments in Japanese

In the beginning conversation of this unit, Mr. Jameson was complimented on his Japanese: *Jameson san, nihongo ga jozu desu ne!* He, of course, responded "No, not yet." This type of exchange is used in a variety of situations. It is considered proper etiquette to compliment someone you know, particularly when the relationship is formal and still in an early stage of development.

You will find that the Japanese are very good at finding things to praise: the place you live, your garden, your clothes, your haircut, hairdo, and even hair color, as well as many other things that are not necessarily the outcome of your own efforts. The Japanese will often compliment you on your use of chopsticks since they believe that Westerners never eat with chopsticks. They are most likely to say how good your Japanese is even when you say only a few, fundamental words. In all cases it is both appropriate and polite to respond with a humble disclaimer.

***kokusaika* - The International Boom in Japan**

In today's age of internationalization, the exchange of goods, information, and people on the global scale has become quite common. Living in an island country with no shared borders, it is only recently that the Japanese have begun to explore trade relationships with people from other parts of the world and to value the technology and people skills that will facilitate such interactions. This growing trend accounts for the Japanese interest in *kokusaika* or "internationalization."

You will notice that there are many English conversation schools in the cities and towns. Many colleges and other educational facilities, such as community centers, also place their focus on developing English language skills. People who actually possess appropriate skills and experiences are highly valued. Being a native speaker of English, you may even be approached in the street by complete strangers who would like to test their ability to communicate in English.

Unit 64

Asking and Answering a Question with an "Incomplete Sentence"

Taylor san, oshigoto wa? literally translated, asks "Mr. Taylor, your job...?" This is not a complete sentence, but rather the first half of *Taylor san, oshigoto wa nan desu ka?* In Japanese communication, seemingly incomplete "sentences" are often used and,

in this case, *nan desu ka* is left to be understood. The full sentence sometimes is considered too formal and rigid in casual conversation. Such a question might sound to the Japanese as though Mr. Taylor were being questioned in court. Since incomplete sentences are a Japanese communication skill, you will do well responding to another person as soon as you have recognized the question, rather than waiting and expecting him / her to finish the sentence.

Unit 65

Friendly People in Service Industries

People in service industries in Japan, such as department stores, restaurants, hotels, and travel agencies, are generally very kind and eager to help their customers. They try to please you by smiling and speaking in polite language. They greet you by saying *irasshaimase* meaning "Welcome," or "Thank you for coming." In a department store, you will find an elevator operator who will greet you as you step in, ask you what floor you would like to go to, and press the button for you.

Sometimes American visitors to Japan mistake the professional courtesy as a personal offer of friendship. You should remember that it is generally a "service makeup" and may not always represent personal interest in you. Misreading someone's friendly facade may sometimes lead to an embarrassing situation.

Beer in Japan

Beer has become the most popular drink in Japan. You will find it served in virtually every restaurant, whether casual or formal; in small food stands at such places as baseball stadiums and train stations; and even in the street. There are many vending machines for beer as well. Some restaurants favor one brand of beer over another, and you may not always be able to find your favorite brand. There are not nearly as many different brands of beer in Japan as there are in the U.S. The most popular are: *Asahi*, *Kirin*, *Sapporo*, *Suntory*, and *Yebisu*. In each brand there are several kinds available, such as lager, draft, and dark draft. Draft beer is particularly popular in Japan. Most breweries have restaurants attached to their plants where fresh draft beer is served. Another interesting thing you will find is "beer gardens," usually on the roofs of buildings in large cities. They are usually open from May to October, and they attract a large number of people on their way home from work. Drinking beer with your Japanese acquaintances may help develop personal and business relationships.

Unit 66

English Loan-Words

In this unit you heard *nooto* (notebook) and *booru pen* (ballpoint pen), words that were taken from English, which have been adopted in Japanese. In conversations between business associates, there are likely to be a number of such words. It is sometimes difficult to recognize these words, as they are pronounced very differently; the words are often shortened; and they often have slightly different meanings than in English. *kopii* can refer to a photocopy of a document, a copy machine, or even advertising copy. *pokeberu* is a "pocket bell," a Japanese expression for a pager. *eakon* is short for air conditioner, *apo* for appointment, *purezen* comes from presentation, and *nego* from negotiation. *naitaa* is a combination of "night" and "er" and is used for a night baseball game. Although these words originally come from English, they are often difficult for native speakers of English to understand. This is sometimes frustrating to the Japanese speakers who believe that they are using "English words" as they would be used in communication among native speakers of English.

Unit 67

Vacations in Japan

Traveling and camping are some of the typical ways for the Japanese to spend their leisure time. There is a major difference, however, in the way vacations are perceived in Japan and in the West. In Japan, most vacations are taken throughout the country during three "vacation periods" which coincide with three major national holidays. The first one is from the end of April to the beginning of May, which is actually a series of different national holidays and is known as "Golden Week." The second vacation time is in the middle of school summer vacation in mid-August and coincides with the "Obon festival," a Buddhist holiday to worship dead souls. And the last one is at the end of the year when people return to their hometowns to celebrate the beginning of a new year with their relatives. You may want to think twice about traveling to Japan at these times as it is extremely hard to make reservations for transportation or lodging then.

Unit 68

onsen

In this unit you were introduced to the *onsen* or "hot spring." The Japanese are very fond of bathing in hot springs. The hot water that comes out of each spring is classified by its content, varying in such qualities as the amount of iron, sulfur, and magnesium it contains, as well as the degree of transparency. You will find a number of hotels, with various other leisure facilities, established around the hot springs, which serve as tourist centers. They are advertised according to the effects that the hot springs are expected to bring. Some of them are said to be good for the treatment of neuralgia, rheumatism, and healing external wounds; some are expected to help you keep your skin youthful and moist. Many Japanese enjoy a relaxing overnight trip to a hot spring resort with their families, a group of friends, or co-workers.

As a visitor to Japan, you need to be prepared for your first trip to a hot spring. Before you jump into the bath, you have to thoroughly wash your body outside of the bath, and only after that can you go into the swimming-pool-size bath which is shared by many other people. The temperature of the water is around 105 ° F, considerably hotter than in America, and, as in hot tubs, one generally should not stay in too long.

Unit 69

Staying in a *ryokan*, a Japanese-style Inn

While in Japan you may want to consider staying at a traditional Japanese-style inn called a *ryokan*. While there are many Western-style hotels in the urban areas across the country, in the remote resort areas, you will find primarily *ryokan* and very few hotels.

After checking in at a *ryokan*, you will be escorted to your *tatami* (straw mat) room by a kimono-wearing woman who will carry your luggage for you. She is usually assigned to several rooms and is in charge of making the guests' stay as comfortable as it can be. In your room she will serve you a cup of tea as a welcome and give you basic information about the hotel, such as the locations of fire exits and other facilities. Before leaving the room, she will then ask you what time you would like to have dinner. If you wish to tip, this is the right moment to do so. You are tipping for the hospitality in advance rather than for the service already provided.

Dinner is usually delivered to your room, and it consists of a number of small dishes of fish, meat, and vegetables that are specialties in the particular area. You will be asked what you wish to drink. After dinner you may choose to take a walk, watch TV (which you will find in your room), go to a bar, or do some shopping in a souvenir store in the *ryokan*. In most *ryokan*, particularly in hot spring resort areas, there is a large public bath. You may go native and try relaxing along with other Japanese tourists. Should you decide not to use the public bath, however, you may use the one in your room.

In the evening, the "futon crew" will set up a futon in your room (a Japanese-style mattress which is spread on the floor). Your hostess will ask you what time you wish to have your breakfast the next day. Most *ryokan* in Japan are quite hospitable, offering extended personal services to their guests, and the price for a night in a *ryokan* is comparable to staying in a Western-style hotel. The bill will typically include a one-night stay, dinner, and breakfast.

Unit 70

Communication Technologies in Japan

Rapid technological advances in the communications field have been noticeable in Japan in recent years. While many people in America carry cellular phones, you will notice that in Japan an even wider range of people, including high school students, do so regularly. The PHS, an acronym for "personal handy phone system," has become readily available at a low cost, and now one out of every five Japanese has a portable phone.

Fax machines can be seen in many households, and even small children sometimes exchange their homework with friends via fax. Computers are also readily available at prices roughly equivalent to those in the U.S. Since the machines are designed to function in Japanese as well as in English, you can imagine how much more complicated the machine has to be with all the characters!! In addition to the popular machines such as IBM and Mac, you will find several Japanese-made computers that include Fujitsu, NEC, and Hitachi. They are Windows or Mac compatible, and you should have no trouble finding a machine that allows you to use your American software.

Many young people, particularly female high school students, have "pocket bells," a Japanese term for pagers. They not only allow you to page another person who has the pocket size machine, but also to send a brief message from a regular phone by pressing buttons that correspond to letters. A special chart is needed to figure out the appropriate buttons to use. You may be startled to see youngsters madly pressing the buttons of a pay phone. You will be even more surprised to find out that they sometimes make friends by randomly dialing numbers that are likely to connect them to someone's pager, and they may continue their "friendship" by exchanging brief messages without ever meeting each other in person! The technological advances in communication hardware have certainly introduced a new dimension to personal relationships in Japan.

Unit 71

goro/gurai

In this unit, the woman asked the man how to get to the American Embassy and also how long it would take to get there. She asked, *dono gurai kakarimasu ka?* and the man responded *nijuppun gurai desu*. *gurai* means "about" or "approximately," and it is used in a variety of contexts. It has been stressed a number of times that the Japanese tend to be flexible in their communication. *gurai* is another example. It can be used both in questions, such as *dono gurai kakarimasu ka?* and in responses, such as *nijuppun gurai desu*. Rather than expressing a lack of commitment or an uncertainty, this indicates that the answer is probably correct, but is subject to other outside influences beyond the speaker's control. Thus, when a Japanese says, *nijuppun gurai desu*, she implies, "I believe that it will probably take about twenty minutes, but I could be wrong because of the traffic and other conditions. If I am wrong, I am sorry."

goro also means "about," but it is used only in conjunction with telling time: *hachi ji goro* or "about eight o'clock."

Unit 72

Calling Home from Japan

You are likely to make phone calls to someone in the U.S. while you are in Japan. Credit card calls are not readily made from Japanese pay phones. Instead, you are encouraged to purchase prepaid "phone cards." There are several kinds of cards available, depending on how much credit you would like to purchase. The most popular are 500 yen and 1,000 yen cards. Some

convenience stores sell 3,000 yen and 5,000 yen cards specifically for international phone calls. You must use the gray pay phones to make international calls. The green ones which you will find in many places are for domestic calls only. In order to place a call, you first insert the prepaid card. The amount of credit that is left on the card will be displayed on the phone. Then you dial 001 for an international call, followed by the country code (1 for the U.S. and Canada) the area code; and the number. The connections are usually very good and you will find it very easy to call abroad.

Unit 73

The Weather as a Topic for Small Talk

As is the case in conversation between Americans, the weather makes a nice topic for small talk that helps break the ice and makes it easy to initiate a conversation with just about any Japanese, including a complete stranger. Generally speaking, Japan has four distinct seasons, and the climatic change from one season to another is usually predictable.

While the Japanese ordinarily use the Western calendar system, they tend to follow the lunar calendar for traditional festivals, for rice farming, and as a guide for seasonal changes of weather. For instance, February 4 on the lunar calendar marks the beginning of spring, when in fact it is in the middle of winter. It is a good month before it actually gets warm in many parts of Japan. Psychologically, however, many people in Japan feel relieved on that day, prepared to welcome a warmer and more colorful season than the cold, damp, gray winter that they have put up with until then. From that day on, *ataakaku narimashita ne* or "It's gotten warmer, hasn't it" is an appropriate expression for greeting someone.

Likewise, August 7 is considered to be the beginning of fall, although it is still very hot in Japan, except in the northern regions such as Hokkaido. The Japanese exchange mid-summer post cards, inquiring how their friends are doing and wishing one another good health during the hot summer. After August 7 the card is called a "late summer greeting card," instead of "hot season inquiry card," which is the name used for the card through August 6. In sum, the Japanese are generally keen on weather, and it makes a good topic for an initial conversation, with slight variations in temperature being noted and commented on.

Unit 74

Getting Sick in Japan

Jones san in this unit was not feeling well. She seems to have a cold with a headache and also a sore throat. Getting sick in a foreign country, where you do not have sufficient language ability to communicate effectively, may add to your anxiety. Here are some useful words you may need to use when describing your symptoms to a doctor, pharmacist, or friends. When you have a cold, you can simply say *kaze desu*, which literally means "It is a cold." *kaze* also means a wind, and the Japanese may associate the typical winter disease with strong winds. *itai* means a pain or "hurts," so when you have a pain or an ache, you say *itai* after the part of your body that hurts: *atama ga itai* (head hurts - "I have a headache"), *nodo ga itai* (throat hurts - "I have a sore throat"), *onaka ga itai* (stomach hurts - "I have a stomach ache"), *ashi ga itai* (foot or leg hurts), *ha ga itai* (a tooth hurts), etc.

There are, of course, other symptoms that are more complicated and difficult to describe. When you have a fever, you say *netsu ga arimasu* ("I have a fever"). Note that in Japan the temperature is given in Centigrade, and the normal temperature of 98.6 degrees F translates into 37 degrees C. If you have diarrhea, you need to say *geri desu*. *benpi* means constipation. If you got sick and vomited, you would say *modoshi mashita*, which literally means "I have returned it." You do not want to have to use these expressions while in Japan, but not knowing them at all when you have to is even worse. You should try to remember the minimal expressions.

Unit 75

***kaigi* (Meetings) in Japan**

As is sometimes the case in U.S. organizations, Japanese business meetings are frequent and long. But given the Japanese people's concern for harmony, avoiding face loss, and their indirect manner of communication, their meetings are often much longer than their U.S. counterparts. These meetings can be stressful for Americans seeking rapid resolutions to questions and problems. If you are to conduct business with the Japanese, you should be prepared for what often appears to Americans to be a waste of time and manpower. Since direct confrontation is not the Japanese way of dealing with conflict, meetings are viewed as places providing the opportunity to sense the general direction of people's ideas, rather than as places for argument and debate. The Japanese view a decision as something that emerges by itself after a long discussion, whereas Americans tend to think they "make" decisions. The Japanese say *kimaru*, which is a passive form for "make"; they seldom say *kimeru*, the active form. You may at times be frustrated by the Japanese people's seemingly slow process toward a decision, but to succeed in business in Japan you will have to adopt a similar style.

Unit 76

tokorode

tokorode is a word used to introduce a new topic in a conversation. Its closest English translation is "by the way." *tokorode*, however, carries a subtly different nuance than that of "by the way." Not only does it introduce a new and different topic, but it also implies to the listener that the new topic may be somewhat uncomfortable and displeasing. Since the topic is likely to be annoying, the speaker attempts to prepare the listener for it by signifying with *tokorode* that the topic may not be mutually pleasing. You need to pay specially close attention to what a Japanese speaker has to say following *tokorode*, as this is yet another communication device that many Japanese use in their interpersonal relationships to avoid causing loss of face.

koban

Today there are police boxes in every city and town in Japan, and they are a major factor in the world-renowned safety of Japan's streets. Besides watching over what is going on in their neighborhoods, the policemen stationed in the *koban* also serve as sources of information for people looking for addresses in the area.

Unit 77

Male/Female Patterns of Speech

Gender affects the manner of communication in any culture. However, the sex of the speaker is reflected more clearly in Japanese communication than in English. There are some small gender differences in English, such as more frequent use of tag questions (confirming questions, such as, "Doesn't it?") and equivocal expressions by female speakers than male. However, in Japanese you can tell almost immediately whether the speaker is a man or a woman, as there are features specifically used only by either a male or a female speaker. A Japanese woman's speech is considered to be more "polite." To illustrate, when a sentence ends with *wa* as in *kyo wa ii tenki da wa* (Today is a fine day), it is said by a woman. A male speaker would leave out the *wa* at the end of the sentence and simply say *kyo wa ii tenki da*. *kashira* at the end of a question is also typically used by a woman: *kore karite ii kashira?* (Is it all right if I use this?) The male counterpart in the same situation would ask, *kore karite ii kana?* Women also tend to attach the polite "o" at the beginning of many words which men do not feel necessary. Women say *ohashi* for chopsticks and *ogenkan* for an entrance to the house, just to name a few. With the influence of the younger generation, however, the distinction between male and female patterns of speech is becoming less clear in Japanese society. You, as a foreign speaker of the Japanese language, do not need to worry so much about making gender related mistakes, and the expressions you have learned in this course are gender-free and may be used by both male and female speakers.

Unit 78

Traveling in Groups

You may have noted the Japanese preference for doing things in groups. This tendency is prevalent in many social contexts: education, business, politics, and recreation as well. You will notice that almost everywhere you go in Japan, people travel in groups. While many Americans take advantage of package group tours, the Japanese do so far more frequently when traveling abroad. They generally find it more secure and comfortable to travel with a group of friends, co-workers, alumni from the same high school, etc., especially to a place where they have never been before. Though comfortable and secure, such groups tend to only make brief stops at famous spots filled with other tourists, to allow the group members to stay only at hotels where there is Japanese speaking staff, and to eat at restaurants where the food is not extremely "foreign," which sometimes means eating at a sushi restaurant in New York City, for instance. You may wonder to what extent, if at all, they can experience the culture through direct contact with the local people. It is difficult and they usually end up speaking Japanese to one another, eating Japanese food, and even reading Japanese newspapers while away from home. If you encounter such a group in the U.S., you may get a very positive response if you try out your Japanese language skills on them.

Unit 79

Ancient Capitals: Nara and Kyoto

In this unit we visited the city of Nara, which is located 25 miles east of Osaka, or some 250 miles west of Tokyo. Nara was the capital of Japan between 710 and 784. The city still retains the atmosphere of ancient Japan. Many Buddhist temples and artifacts, including the Daibutsu of Nara, or Great Buddha, a 72-foot giant statue dating from the eighth century, attract many foreign and Japanese tourists. Its relatively serene atmosphere is particularly attractive during the fall when the leaves turn bright yellow and red.

Another well-known place to visit in the same region is Kyoto. It was the national capital as well as the place of residence of the Japanese imperial family for more than 1,000 years, from 794 to 1868. Kyoto is indeed the center of Japanese culture and of Buddhism in Japan. Many Buddhist temples and shrines that have been meticulously maintained over the years are easily accessible by bus or taxi. One of the most famous is Kinkakuji, or the Temple of the Gold Pavilion, which is literally covered with gold leaves.

Kyoto is only two and a half hours away from Tokyo by the Shinkansen Bullet Train, and Nara is another thirty-minute ride from Kyoto. When you visit Japan, be sure to visit at least one of the ancient capitals.

Unit 80

Commuting to Work in Japan

In this unit two colleagues were talking about commuting to work. In large cities in Japan, such as Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, and Osaka, figuring out the best way to go to and from work is a serious matter. Riding a crowded train for two hours each way is not unusual in the metropolitan Tokyo area, since the price of land is extremely high and people are forced to live in the remote suburbs. If you decide to commute by car, which may give you more privacy, finding a parking space in the center of a large city is both difficult and very expensive. With the heavy traffic, it may take you as much as half an hour to go just a few miles during the rush hours. A popular alternative for many people is a bicycle. Many people ride their bicycles from home to the nearby station, leave them in a bicycle parking lot for which they pay a monthly fee, and change to a train. The parking lot is much like "Park & Go" in the U.S. You will see some people resorting to yet another alternative: running. Both for pragmatic and health reasons, there are some people who run to and from work, carrying office clothes in backpacks and changing after they get to work.

Unit 81

hanami

You have learned in this unit that the Japanese word for flower is *hana*. *miru* means "to see" and *mi* is the stem of the word. *hanami*, therefore, means "seeing flowers." Japanese people welcome the spring every year by celebrating the blossoming of the trees, particularly the *sakura* or cherry blossoms. They enjoy *hanami* when the cherry blossoms bloom by having parties underneath the trees in parks across the country. Since Japanese law does not prohibit drinking in public parks, the parties do include alcoholic drinks, a variety of food items, and most often nowadays karaoke. Japan stretches lengthwise from the north to the south, which means that the time when the cherry blossoms bloom varies dramatically, depending on where you are in Japan. It is one of the Meteorological Agency's prime duties to predict when the cherry trees will bloom in each part of the country, and they announce when the *sakura zensen* or "cherry front" reaches the major cities of Japan. In Okinawa, the southernmost part of the country, the flowers bloom as early as in January, and the *sakura zensen* works its way up north, reaching Hokkaido, its final destination, in the beginning of May.

Visiting a Japanese House

When visiting a Japanese house, etiquette usually requires that you bring some small gifts, such as *okashi* (sweets). When you present the gift you will say it's nothing but a small thing, regardless of the value of the gift. This is another way of humbling yourself and elevating your host. When serving dinner, a hostess will say something like, "There's not anything delicious, but please eat." Don't take this literally. Dinner will invariably be delicious, but again she is behaving according to the Japanese custom of being humble. When entering a Japanese house, taking your shoes off is required.

Unit 82

bijutsu kan

In this unit you went to visit a *bijutsu kan*, or an "art museum." *hakubutsu kan* means "museum" in general, while *bijutsu kan* refers specifically to an "art museum." The *kan* at the end of these words means "building," and in general, a word that ends with *kan* usually means a building for some specific purpose. *taiiku kan* is a gymnasium, *toshokan* a library, and *ryokan* a "travel house" or a Japanese-style inn. In most large cities in Japan you will find quite a few museums, and they house Japanese as well as international art. In Tokyo, for instance, you could spend an entire week just visiting various museums. Although you may find their size is quite modest, there are museums in virtually every historical spot across the country, exhibiting uniquely local artifacts, including the excavated remains of ancient culture such as plates, bowls, jewelry, and agricultural equipment. Some of the oldest date back to several centuries B.C.

Unit 83

Recreational Activities in Japan

In addition to the nationwide vacation time, referred to in the notes for Unit 67, the Japanese place much value on year-round recreational activities. On weekends, many families go out camping, fishing, mountain climbing, or whatever outdoor sport is available. The number of recreational vehicles such as mini-vans, station wagons, and a variety of four-wheel drive cars has been rapidly increasing in recent years.

Tennis and golf are also very popular among a wide range of people. High schools have tennis clubs as part of their

extracurricular activities, and it is one of the most popular sports among students. There is a drawback, however. The scarcity of land is a major cause of many problems. Most tennis clubs, for example, are private in that you must either join the club or be accompanied by a member. You need to make a reservation, sometimes as much as a month in advance. The same is true of golf courses. Most golf clubs have strict rules about giving tee-off times to members only on weekends. A lifetime membership in some golf courses in the Tokyo area is well over \$300,000, and a member still needs to pay some \$100 per round for the caddie fee, for the use of a locker, tax, etc. If you are not a member, you can still play as a visitor, but the greens fee is as high as \$300. The tee-off time can be reserved by phone one month in advance, and whether it rains or shines, you'd better play. Otherwise you must pay a cancellation fee.

Unit 84

Japanese Names

Throughout the course you have heard several popular Japanese last names, including *tanaka*, *ito*, *yamada*, and *suzuki*. Other popular names include *nakamura*, *saito*, *yoshida*, *yamamoto*, *inoue*, and *mori*. They are all made up of one or two, sometimes three, Kanji. Most of the characters used for people's names refer to things in nature. *tanaka*, for example, literally means "in a rice field." The character used for *tanaka* is the second Kanji and it is read *da* in *yamada*.

As you guessed, *yama* means a mountain. *mori* is made up of just one word, meaning "a forest." Interestingly, there are *omori* (a large forest), *nakamori* (a medium forest), *komori* (a small forest), and just *mori*.

Initially, Japanese names may seem difficult to you, but once you've learned several popular names, you will note the short syllables and the similarity of the patterns and find them not as difficult to remember as they first seemed. Japan is a far less ethnically varied country than the U.S., and the names reflect this. Historically, there were only a few common first names, such as *taro*, for a male, and *yoko*, for a female, equivalent to John and Mary in the U.S. First names, however, have become much more varied in recent years, and a wide range of individual names now exist.

Unit 85

Money Matters

When you travel to Japan or any other foreign country, where and how you can exchange U.S. dollars to the local currency can be sometimes a tricky and somewhat intimidating issue. The Japanese currency, as you know, is the yen. You may purchase yen at the major international airports in Japan: Tokyo, Kansai (an international airport near Osaka), Nagoya, Fukuoka, and Sapporo. A bank in town, of course, is also a place where you can exchange your money. When you are pressed for time, you can do the same at the front desk of your hotel. The exchange rate at a hotel, however, may not be as good, since you are charged a small service fee.

Given that Japan is a cash society, it is important that you have some yen immediately after your arrival. You must, for example, pay cash for your limousine bus ride from the airport to the hotel. A ride from the Tokyo (Narita) International Airport to downtown Tokyo is 2,900 yen (approximately U.S. \$25).

Only recently have credit cards started to become acceptable in restaurants and stores. The most widely recognized international credit cards in Japan are Visa and Mastercard. American Express is not as popular in Japan as Diners International, which is not as well known in the U.S. When you use a credit card, however, there is the possibility that the exchange rate will fluctuate between the time of your purchase and when you receive the bill.

Japanese Cake

Japanese cuisine, as you know, is considerably different from American. A number of dishes have been introduced through Japanese restaurants in the U.S. such as *tempura*, *sushi*, and *sukiyaki*. You will encounter many other dishes while in Japan, however, some of which you may find are definitely acquired tastes. The small quantity of food in each serving will also be

another discovery you will make. Yet another finding which may be surprising, is that the Japanese are not as big on desserts as the Americans are. Japanese meals typically end without any desserts. Occasionally you may have some fruit, or small portions of Japanese cake. Uniquely Japanese cakes that you would not find in the U.S. include *manju*, a bun with a bean jam filling; *mochi*, rice cakes that come in a wide range of colors and textures; and *senbei*, or rice crackers flavored with salt, soy sauce, or sugar. You will find many Japanese enjoy these cakes with their afternoon tea as well as after dinner. If your sweet tooth gets the best of you, you can now find a wide variety of Western style cakes, cookies, and chocolates sold at many places including bakeries and supermarkets. In recent years Western pastry has become increasingly popular and many different kinds of cakes are now readily available, although still not served in traditional restaurants or homes.

Unit 86

Yes/No/Definitely

Johnson san was asked in this unit by Suzuki san whether he had been to a new nearby coffeeshop, and if he wanted to go there with her sometime. He responded by saying, *ee, zehi*. This reply indicates strong affirmation to the inquiry, and is equivalent to "definitely" or "absolutely." It is always used to express the speaker's affirmation or to stress a request as in, *zehi tabete kudasai*, or "Please eat it, by all means." It is never used for negation.

In English "yes" is always positive and "no" is always negative, but in Japanese it is sometimes quite the opposite, depending on how the questions are formed. It is not uncommon therefore for Japanese people to make a mistake when using English, as does the English speaker in Japanese. For example, suppose you ate breakfast at 10 o'clock and now it's 12 o'clock. You are asked *onaka ga suite imasen ne?* literally, "You aren't hungry are you?" (The questioner is assuming that you are not hungry.) The English response would be either, "No, I'm not," or "Yes, I am." To answer that in Japanese, however, you can either say, *hai, suite imasen*. (That's right, your assumption is right, I am not hungry.) or *ie, suite imasu*. (No, your assumption is wrong. I am hungry.) Since the Japanese respond to how the question is asked, negative questions are tricky for non-native speakers.

Unit 87

"Fillers" in Japanese

The male speaker in this unit says *anoo*, as he tries to get someone's attention in a bank. As in any language, there is a wide variety of utterances in Japanese, known as "fillers," that the speaker can use in order to fill the vacuum in conversation.

In English you may say, "you know," "I mean," "uh," etc. to indicate to the other person that you have something to say, but are not quite ready to say it. *anoo* does not have any literal English translation, but you will hear everyone in Japan say it quite often. Another filler that you will often hear is *eeto*, and it is close to "let me see" in meaning. If you want to show that you are listening carefully to what another person is saying and generally agree with what s/he says, you may say *so desu ne* or, more informally, *so, so*. These expressions will come naturally as you progress in your Japanese conversational ability. They may in fact be a barometer of your accomplishment, as you begin using them instinctively in situations.

Unit 88

Reading, a Popular Japanese Hobby

A recent survey has shown that the average Japanese adult spends approximately \$130 per year on books. While the prices of books vary, depending on their size, degree of technicality, etc., you can find a popular novel in paperback anywhere from \$7.00

to \$12.00 in Japan. Reading is a popular hobby among the Japanese. You will find many large bookstores in big cities, as well as in suburban areas in Japan. Japan is a homogeneous culture, in comparison to the U.S., and the people share a general knowledge and information concerning social affairs. Books, as well as a variety of magazines, are an important source of such knowledge. The fear of being left out in society because of a lack of certain information may be at least part of the driving force behind the interest in reading. Given this social trend, once a novel by a popular or controversial writer is published, everyone wants to read it! The books will literally sell like pancakes. The late Matsumoto Seicho, mentioned in this unit, was a very popular mystery and suspense writer. His well-thought out and controversial stories have kept him on the list as one of the best read Japanese authors.

Unit 89

Learning New Skills in Japan

The speaker in this unit arrived at work early in the morning and studied a language before starting work. This is not unusual and many Japanese people, young and old, do tend to have a strong motivation to learn new skills. You will find English conversation schools in virtually every town across the country. There are multitudes of schools for specific purposes, such as computers, accounting, tax laws, and estate management. Schools that specialize in traditional Japanese arts, such as the tea ceremony, flower arrangement, and calligraphy are also abundant.

Due to the interest in fitness, there are also many schools that offer lessons in aerobics, swimming, yoga, and various forms of dance. Going to one of these schools is considered to be not only instrumental in helping people accomplish their goals, but also an end in itself. It is a place where you can socialize with others who share common interests. Some of these schools are especially popular among older adults who have retired and have not only time and money to spare, but also are looking for company. Given the increasing percentage of people who are 65 years and older in Japan, the popularity of these schools is likely to grow. If you are a foreigner residing in Japan for some time, you may find a course at one of these schools an interesting social and educational experience.

Unit 90

Traditional Japanese Clothing

James san in this unit decided to buy a *yukata*, a cotton kimono frequently worn in the summer, as a souvenir for his wife. The *yukata* is certainly a piece of traditional Japanese clothing, but people in Japan today do not wear it as frequently as people in former generations did. There are only a few occasions when the Japanese, especially women, routinely wear kimonos. January 15 is a national holiday in Japan, celebrating all the people who turned twenty in the past year and reached the age of maturity. On this day many women go out in traditional kimonos to ceremonies, often held by the municipal government, and later to parties with their friends. The kimonos worn by women up to the age of twenty are called *furisode*, meaning "long hanging sleeves," which is a sign that the woman is unmarried. The sleeves are actually long enough to reach the wearer's ankles. Married women, and those who have passed the age of twenty, wear kimonos with regular length sleeves, which are half as long as the *furisode*. Other occasions for Japanese women to wear kimonos include New Year's Day, wedding receptions, and a mid-summer festival where they go out to watch fireworks. Of course they wear *yukatas*, rather than the heavy, multilayered kimonos, on that occasion.

You can purchase a formal kimono, which is quite expensive, to take back to the U.S. However, before making such a purchase, you must be reminded that putting one on is a specially trained skill. The difficulty in putting on a kimono is that you must use several *obi*, sashes, to hold the kimono properly. Each *obi* also needs to be tied in a special manner. Generally, you will need a professional assistant to get fully and properly attired. In Japan, you often make an appointment for a special beautician to help you in your kimono with the sashes and all the other accouterments. A similar beautician would probably be very difficult to find in the U.S. A *yukata* is much easier to wear and generally does not require assistance from others.

Acknowledgments

Japanese 3

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Digital recording made under the direction of

Christopher Best

at Simon & Schuster Studios, Concord MA

Recording Engineer: *Peter S. Turpin*

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