Overview of Support for Japanese Language and Culture Teachers: The AP Japanese Language and Culture Exam and Resources for Teacher and Student Success

Dan Carolin, Kennedy High School
Motoko Tabuse, Eastern Michigan University

ABSTRACT

The Advance Placement (AP) Japanese Language and Culture program and examination can be viewed as common the framework between high school and college-level teachers. We will introduce the exam format and provide sample responses and commentaries. In addition we will provide useful resources for Japanese language educators.

Keywords: Assessment, Standards-based, proficiency-oriented instruction, Differentiated instruction, Backward Design, Articulation

1. The AP Japanese Language and Culture Exam

1.1 General information about the AP Japanese Language and Culture Program and Exam

The AP program offers college-level language instruction at the high school level. In 2012-2013, there were 34 subjects being offered at the AP level across schools in the United States. The AP Japanese Language and Culture program is firmly rooted in Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (Standards) and the program articulates its goals in terms of the Standards’ three modes of communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational. It is also proficiency-based and aims at the development of the Intermediate-Low to Intermediate-Mid level proficiency using the ACTFL Proficiency Scale. Students who score 3 or above in the
AP Japanese exam are considered to have achieved the equivalent of roughly 300 hours of college-level instruction. Many US colleges and universities honor the AP Japanese exam scores, making it possible for students to receive an average of anywhere between 3 and 15 credit hours in Japanese.

1.2 Exam Overview

There are two sections in the AP Japanese exam. Section I consists of multiple-choice questions that assess communication skills in the interpretive mode by requiring the student to answer questions about different types of listening stimuli and reading texts. Section II, the free-response section, assesses communication skills in the interpersonal and presentational modes by requiring the student to produce written and spoken responses. The interpersonal writing section requires students to respond to a series of linked questions as part of a simulated exchange of text-chat messages. The presentational writing section requires students to write an article for the student newspaper of their sister school in Japan. Students are asked to describe at least three aspects on the topic and highlight the similarities and differences between the two items. They are also asked to state a preference and give reasons for it with 300-400 words. They have 20 minutes to write/word-process using the です/ます or だ style.

The interpersonal speaking section requires students to respond to a series of linked questions as part of simulated conversations. The exam also assesses speaking in the presentational mode by requiring students to make a presentation discussing a given cultural topic. They are given 4 minutes to prepare the speech and 2 minutes to deliver it. (For more information about the AP Japanese exam including the most recent free-response topics and past exam items, please visit
the AP Central Japanese site:


### AP Japanese Language and Culture Exam Format

#### Section I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Question Type and Knowledge/Skills Assessed</th>
<th>Number of Questions and % Weight of Final Score</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part A: Listening</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
<td>70 questions, 50%</td>
<td>1 hour and 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Listening Selections | Sample Stimulus Types:  
- Conversation  
- Debate  
- Instructions  
- Message  
- Presentation  
- Public announcement  
- Radio broadcast | 30–35 questions, 25% | 20 minutes (Response time: 12 seconds per question) |
| Knowledge/skills:  
- Interpretive communication  
- Comprehension; inference | |
| Part B: Reading | Reading Selections | 35–40 questions, 25% | 60 minutes |
| Sample Stimulus Types:  
- E-mail  
- Instructions  
- Letter  
- News article  
- Short story  
- Travel brochure | |
| Knowledge/skills:  
- Interpretive communication  
- Comprehension; inference | |
## AP Japanese Language and Culture Exam Format
### Section II, Part A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Question Type and Knowledge/Skills Assessed</th>
<th>Number of Questions and % Weight of Final Score</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part A: Writing</strong></td>
<td>Text Chat</td>
<td>4 tasks 50%</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge/skills:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interpersonal communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Informing; describing; explaining;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expressing preference; elaborating;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>justifying opinion; requesting;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inviting; suggesting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 questions 12.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Response time: 90 seconds per question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compare and Contrast Article</td>
<td>1 question 12.5%</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge/skills:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presentational communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Comparing; contrasting; describing;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>justifying opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## AP Japanese Language and Culture Exam Format
### Section II, Part B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Question Type and Knowledge/Skills Assessed</th>
<th>Number of Questions and % Weight of Final Score</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part B: Speaking</strong></td>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>4 questions 12.5%</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge/skills:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interpersonal communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Participate in conversation by</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responding appropriately</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 questions 12.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Response time: 20 seconds per question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Perspective Presentation</td>
<td>1 question 12.5%</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge/skills:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presentational communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describing and expressing opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about a Japanese cultural practice or</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>product</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 question 12.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Preparation time: 4 minutes Response time:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 minutes)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3 Computer-based examination

The AP Japanese exam, unlike most other AP subjects, is a computer-based exam. The students, thus, need to perform the tasks described in Section I and II above with a computer. This means that teachers need to carefully plan the entire Japanese program to include computer-related skills and offer ample practice opportunities for students to develop word processing skills in Japanese, including control of the IME, how to distinguish between long and short vowels and consonants, and how to select the correct kanji when inputting Japanese. The teachers also need to ensure that students develop related study skills such as how to take notes, how to formulate and deliver speeches and written texts in Japanese, and how to outline presentations.


Teachers are encouraged to utilize a thematic approach, backward design, authentic materials and technology in the creation and implementation a curriculum that develops skills in the three modes of communication.

Recent research indicates enhanced learning when students link, connect, and integrate ideas and learn in authentic contexts, taking into account their perception of real-world problems (Brandford, J., Brown, A., & Cocking R., 1999; diSessa, 2001; & Linn & Hsi, 2000). With a common goal to educate students who can communicate effectively in real-life settings, the College Board’s Curriculum Frameworks for AP World Languages and Cultures focus on instructional design structured around the following six themes: Global Challenges, Science and Technology, Families and Communities, Contemporary Life, Personal and Public Identities, and Beauty and Aesthetics.
Backward design (Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J., 2005) is a process that clearly defines learning goals and then focuses assessment before planning for learning activities. Traditional curriculum design often begins with books and activities we want to teach with some kind of assessment at the end. With backward design, teachers set the essential understanding of the curriculum or unit, determine what students need to do to provide evidence of their learning, and plan learning activities to help students learn what is needed to be successful.

Authentic materials are defined as materials made by native speakers for the native speaking audience. They are to be used at the linguistically appropriate level.

3. Sample responses and Commentaries

In this section we will introduce sample responses (high, mid, low scores) of the four free-response items: Text Chat (90 sec to respond to each of 6 prompts), Compare & Contrast Article (20 min to write), Conversation (20 sec to respond to each prompt), and Cultural Perspective Presentation (4 min to prepare & 2 min to present).

3.1 Text Chat

Directions: You will participate in a simulated exchange of text-chat messages. Each time it is your turn to write, you will have 90 seconds to respond. You should respond as fully and as appropriately as possible.

You will have a conversation with Hiro Kawada, your pen pal, about commuting to high school.

Respond.

あなたは通学に、どのくらい時間がかかりますか？
The following indicate high, mid, and low scores to this response:

High

**Text Chat 1**  
**Sample A**

私はクバティノという町に住んでいて、家から学校までは15分ぐらいかかります。通行がいい日は12分しかかかりませんが、通行止めとかがある日は25分もかかることがあります。

Mid

**Text Chat 1**  
**Sample B**

私は学校に行く時に30分ぐらいかかります。家をちょっとというのでバスを乗って行きます。

Low

**Text Chat 1**  
**Sample C**

私はいちくらにかかりました。

For rest of stimulus, responses, and commentaries see appendix A

3.2 Compare & Contrast Article
The following indicate high, mid, and low scores to this response:

High

**Compare and Contrast Article**  
**Sample A**

これから、日本語を手で書く事とタイプする事を比べてみます。両方が日本の授業のために、いるのに、類似点も相違点もあります。

まず、一つ目の相違点は日本語でタイプする事の方がやさしい事です。日本語のレポートをタイプしたら、手が痛くないです。しかし、手でレポートを書いたら、一時間の後で手が本当に痛くなります。

二つ目の相違点は、日本語でタイプする事の方が早い事です。このレポートを手で書いたら、四五分ぐらいかかります。なぜなら、間違ったら、消しゴムで直して、もう一度書かなければなるからです。しかし、タイプしたら、二十分だけかかります。

一つの類似点は両方をしたら、日本語を上手になる事です。日本語の先生はいつも「皆さん、練習したら、べらべらになりますよ。」と言わせました。だから、日本語での書く事を練習したら、日本語を上手になります。そして、タイプする事と手で書く事は同じ結果をもたらします。

結論として、日本語でタイプする事も手で書く事も好きです。しかし、タイプする事が好きです。なぜなら、痛くないし、早いし、日本語を上手になれるからです。

Mid

**Compare and Contrast Article**  
**Sample B**

日本語のタイプと日本語の書くは違う所がたくさんありますが、同じ所もあります。今日、違う日本語の書き方について話します。

まず、日本語自分の手で書くのはやさしいです。コンプターがいりません。そして、自由で紙に好きなことを書くことができます。ペンしかいりません。ペンとえびの人が気いです。

日本語をタイプをする時、漢字とカタカナとひらがなのバトンがあったら、使いにくいです。でも、もしコンプターを使うのは上手ですから、問題ありません。そして、タイプの方が早いです。時々、コンプターが追われたら、タイプが出来ません。違うスタイルで選んで、書くことが出来ま

どちらも使うのはも自分書きたい字です。私は手で書く方が好きです。なぜなら、私はタイプが出来ません。そして、間違った時、消しゴムを使う方はやさしいと思います。もし、私がもっと練習したら、私も日本語をタイプすることが上手になります。
Low

Compare and Contrast Article
Sample C

日本語タイピングと日本語のかくは、時々おなじ時々違うです。よくアメリカ人のさいとは、「日本語はむずかしい」とおもいます。よくかくときアメリカ人生徒は、日本語のかくが和から
ない。タイピングとき時々見えは、カリクタがきがしています。それからどちらむずかしいです。で
も日本語タイピングはカリクタがまばなばなければなりませんのでやさしいです。日本語のかくは、たくさんかんじをかきなければなりません。それは、ながいときです。それから日本語のかくは、むずかし
です。私は、日本語タイピングが好きです。タイピングは、少し早いです。でもよくアメリカ人の日
本語は、とてもはやくないです。アメリカ人は、日本人の日本語がとてもはやないとおもうします。

3.3 Conversation

The following text is the recording script for the audio portion of the task shown in the previous screen
image. Students heard this audio during the exam administration, but this text does not appear in the
exam and is provided here for reference only.

N: You will have a conversation with Yumiko Tanaka, your friend, about club activities.

Speaking Question 1 of 5
WA: クラブのボランティア活動のことはだけ、公園のそうじをするのと小学生的の勉強を手伝っ
てあげるのどっちにする？

[TONE]

(20 seconds)

High

Sample: A
Score: 6

Transcript of Student’s Response
どうぞよろしくお願いします。[name of candidate] と申します。あの、私は [name of school]
の高校三年生ですから、あまり時間はありません。でも、私はアルバイトのことに、あの、興味があ
りますから。
3.4 Cultural Perspective Presentation

The following text is the recording script for the audio portion of the task shown in the previous screen image. Students heard this audio during the exam administration, but this text does not appear in the exam and is provided here for reference only.

**Speaking Question 5 of 5**

**N:** Present your own view or perspective on annual Japanese cultural events. Discuss at least FIVE aspects or examples of annual Japanese cultural events.

Begin with an appropriate introduction, give details, explain your own view or perspective, and end with a concluding remark.

**N:** You have four minutes to prepare your presentation.

(240 seconds)

**N:** You have two minutes to record your presentation.

[TONE]

(120 seconds)
Sample: A
Score: 6

Transcript of Student’s Response
はじめまして、私は[name of candidate]で、これから、日本の文化イベントをuh
について話します。uh はじめに七夕です。七夕はしごつ七日にあります。uh
たくさん日本の町に、祭りがあります。そして、「お盆：m お盆祭りです。uh
お盆に、お盆は、夏にあります。そして、おもしろい盆踊りを、踊ります。um
次に、お正月です。お正月は、uh お正月にたくさん日本の家族と、uh 家族と um
お寺と神社へ行きます。そして、日本人はお願いを書きます。年賀状を書いて、友達と家族に送ります。um
四番目は、クリスマスです。日本のクリスマスとアメリカのクリスマスがとても、たくさん違います。
uh 日本人は uh 日本のクリスマスケーキを作りますから、uh
そしてクリスマスデーに食べます。uh そして、日本人はたくさんプレゼントを贈ります。最後に uh
ホワイトデーです。ホワイトデーと uh
アメリカのバレンタインデーが違います。その日に女子は好きな人が、好きな人に um
チョコレートを uh もらいます。um そして、日本の文化イベントとアメリカの uh
文化イベントがたくさん違うことがあります。とてもおもしろいと思います。ありがとうございます。

Sample: B
Score: 4

Transcript of Student’s Response
はい、日本人の文化は、はなし、について話します。一番最初で、体育の日に、生徒たちは、赤チー
ムと、白チーヌに、ベ、別々にします。それぞれにお正月に、寺や神社に、神社へ、いつ、行きます。
そして、子供の日に、あの、こいのぼりを uh うち uh
うちの外で、飾ってあります。それに、七夕、七夕の時に、ゆうか uh
ゆうかた、の時に、祭りがあります。最後で、成人の日に、お年寄りひとりに、ほめる、ほめることが
できます。日本人は、いろいろな、文化フェスティバルがあります。一日に、アメリカの、アメリカ
、よりちょっと、文化のフェスティバルがあります。日本人は、日本人の文化は、あのう、長い間から
、なが、長い間に、って uh
文化はとてもだいじっと、だいじっと、だいじです。この、このホリデーは uh いつ、uh
いつも、たのし、uh 楽しいで、あの、おもしろいと思います。日本へ行ったなら
、私は、そんなに、uh 私は、そんなに文化フェスティバルに、えー uh
を経験してみたいと思います。ゼロー

Sample: C
Score: 2

Transcript of Student’s Response
uh 日本の、文化イベントに、ついてを、話します。uh まずは、紅白歌合戦です。uhh
テレビの番組です。uhh たくさん歌手です。とっても、楽しいと思います。えっとお。uhhh [pause]
umm 春祭りです。あの uh [laughter] たくさん・uhh たくさん花びらですね uh
とてもきれいです、と思います。uhh [long pause] [laughter] umm [pause] [laughter] umm [long pause]
umm えっとお、uh おわったあ。[laughter] oh, my god [sigh]
4. Resources

There are many resources that provide useful information about the AP Japanese Language and Culture program and exam for secondary and post-secondary instructors.

The following is the list of some resources:

1. **AP Central**: a plethora of information regarding the AP Japanese Language and Culture program and exam can be found in this site including the course description, past exam items, and

2. **AP Japanese Teachers Community**: this is an online community for sharing resources and discussing teaching strategies. Anyone can join this community.

3. **AATJ AP SIG**: This SIG consists of both high school and college level educators to discuss various issues and teaching strategies.

4. **AP Summer Institutes and AP One-day Workshop** These usually take place at different location across the country and are conducted by College Board certified consultants.

References


College Board. (2010). *Presentational Communication in Pre-AP World Languages and Cultures. Leader’s notes.*


About the authors

Dan Carolin teaches Japanese and is the Co-chair of the world language department at Kennedy High School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He holds an MA from the University of Sheffield in Advanced Japanese Studies. He currently serves Co-chair of the AP Japanese development committee for the exam and has served as a reader for the AP Japanese Language and Culture Exam.

Motoko Tabuse is a professor at Eastern Michigan University. She received her PhD. in Foreign Language Studies from The Ohio State University. She is currently serving as President of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese, Co-Chair /Chief Reader Designate of the AP Japanese language and examination development committee, AP syllabus reviewer, as well as professional development consultant for the College Board.