



Student Performance Q&A:

2016 AP[®] Japanese Language and Culture Free-Response Questions

The following comments on the 2016 free-response questions for AP[®] Japanese Language and Culture were written by the Chief Reader, Motoko Tabuse of Eastern Michigan University. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student performance in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

Interpersonal Writing Task: Text Chat

What was the intent of this task?

This task evaluates writing skills in the interpersonal communicative mode by having students respond as part of a simulated exchange of text-chat messages. The prompt comprises a statement in English identifying an interlocutor and conversation topic, and a series of six brief messages to which students respond. Each message consists of a chat entry in Japanese and a brief direction in English that provides guidance on what is expected in the response. Students have 90 seconds to read the message and respond at each turn in the text-chat exchange. Each of the six responses receives a holistic score based on how well it accomplishes the assigned task, and all six scores count equally in calculating the total score.

How well did students perform on this task?

The mean score of the Standard Group¹ was 21.78 out of a possible 36 points. The mean score of the Total Group was 24.67.

As in the case of the 2015 exam, the text chat exchanges comprised the most difficult portion of the four free-response questions on this year's exam. Most students seemed familiar with the topic of environmental protection but some may not have been as familiar with this topic in the context of a Japanese classroom. Nonetheless, most students were able to perform the task fairly well. All of the six prompts were expressed in straightforward language focusing on the aspect of recycling and the language was at the appropriate level.

What were common student errors or omissions?

The following were errors and omissions specific to each of the six prompts.

¹ The Standard Group does not include students who hear or speak Japanese at home or who have lived for a total of one month or more in Japan or a country where Japanese is the language spoken predominantly. Decisions on cutoff scores are based on the Standard Group.

Text Chat #1 — Respond. 今日は。リサイクルやかんきょうについてお聞きします。よろしくお願ひします。

Responses revealed several patterns of errors, including structural errors (おもしろいそうです instead of the similar phrase おもしろそうです), inappropriate phrase errors (リサイクルがたくさんあります instead of よくリサイクルをします), particle errors (質問がききます and 興味をあります), and orthographic errors (よるしこ, こにちわ, リサイケル, リサイタル, 大臣 for 大事). Many students responded to the formulaic phrase よろしくお願ひします by simply repeating どうぞよろしくお願ひします without talking more about themselves or expanding on the recycling or environmental protection.

Text Chat #2 — Give at least one example. あなたの学校ではどんなものをリサイクルしていますか。

Most students did well on this aspect of the prompt. However, some had difficulties distinguishing between intransitive and transitive verbs and produced sentences such as 箱に入ります instead of 箱に入れます. Students attempted to create *katakana* versions of English for words they did not know such as カードボード for ダンボール. Orthographic errors include *kanji* errors (髪 for 紙), *katakana* errors (ペートボーテル for ペットボトル), and combinations of *kanji* and *katakana* errors (ゴム場工 for ゴミ箱).

Text Chat #3 — Give your opinion. 学校でリサイクルすることについてどう思いますか。

Instead of stating an opinion about recycling at schools, many students wrote about recycling in their homes or in their communities. They also described how they recycle in schools without stating their opinions. Grammatical errors include omitting the copula だ where it is necessary (大切と申ひます instead of 大切だと思ひます). Many students had difficulty using the verb+たい form and inappropriately used ほしひ instead (地球をきれいにするほしひ). Frequent use of inappropriate adjectives were also observed in many responses (～するのが好き/面白ひ instead of ～するのは大切だ/大事だ).

Text Chat #4 — Give at least one example. リサイクル以外に、かんきょうのために何をすればいいと思ひますか。

In this section, many responses did not appropriately address the prompt, resulting in lower scores. For example, responses included examples of how students recycle regardless of the fact that the prompt had the phrase リサイクル以外に (“besides recycling”). Responses also appeared to copy the prompt and simply replace 何を in the prompt with nouns resulting in incomplete sentences (かんきょうのためにゴミをすればいいと思ひます). In addition, the word 動物園 (“zoo”) was used with unexpected frequency. Students seemed to want to express a relationship between animals and nature (environment).

Other errors include particle errors (車に乗らない), structural errors (ごみをひろってほうがいい instead of ひろったほうがいい), and sentence-ending errors (公園をきれいにしますです). Orthographic errors include creating *katakana* versions of English words (カンス for “cans” and ビン for “garbage can”), *katakana* errors (ボレンテア instead of ボランティア), and errors with *hiragana* (かんきゅう for かんきょう).

Text Chat #5 — Give your opinion. リサイクルについて学校で発表するんですが、ポスターとビデオと、どちらを使ったほうがいいでしょうか。

Most students understood the task and responded with a comparison between a poster and a video. However, some students responded by suggesting something that was not one of the two choices in the prompt (リサイクルのことを話し、学校の前に発表する).

Many responses started with *なぜなら(ば)*, but did not complete the pattern appropriately. Orthographic errors included *ビーデオ* for *ビデオ* and *ポースタ* for *ポスター*, though they were written in the prompt.

Text Chat#6 — Ask a specific question. 日本のかんきょう問題について、何か聞いてください。

Many responses consisted of a statement about protecting the environment (日本の環境が好きです、環境問題はよくだと思います) instead of asking a question, suggesting that students did not carefully read the direction of the prompt. In addition, responses without key words and additional information were difficult to comprehend, including some sentences that asked questions (日本のごみは難しいですか? and 日本の環境は何をしていますか?)

Structural errors included those with the verb + *方がいい* form (*リサイクルします方がいい* for *リサイクルした方がいい*), the incorrect inflections of *i*-adjectives and *na*-adjectives before nouns and noun phrases (*大切こと* for *大切なこと*), and the insertion or omission of the copula *だ* where necessary (*きれいだと思います* for *きれいだと思います* and *おもしろいだと思います* for *面白いと思います*). Other errors included particle errors (*日本人をリサイクルしますか*), and a variety of orthographical errors (*緩急* for *環境*, *リシイクル/リサクル/レサイクル* for *リサイクル*, *どな* for *どんな*, *どおもいますか* for *どうおもいますか*). Some added irrelevant statements or greetings such as “Thank you” and “See you” both in Japanese and English.

The common errors observed in most of the six prompts were orthographical errors with *katakana* (*リセイクル/リシイクル/レサクル* for *リサイクル*, *ペットボッテル/ペートボーテル* for *ペットボトル*) and the creation of their own *katakana* versions of English words (*カードボード* for *ダンボール*, *ビン* for *ゴミ箱*). Most of the orthographical errors were not serious enough to cause communication to breakdown, though they negatively affected readability of the responses and thus received lower scores. Other common errors involved the insertion or omission of the copula *だ*, and the inflections of *i*-adjectives and *na*-adjectives before nouns and noun phrases.

Based on your experience of student responses at the AP® Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?

This year’s text chat exchanges dealt with environmental protection. The topic appeared to be difficult, but most of the students were able to respond to the prompts. Many used vocabulary and structures familiar to them and used strategies such as circumlocution and paraphrasing effectively. Teachers should continue to encourage students to use the communication strategies described above with familiar words and structures. Teachers should continue to provide opportunities for students to interact with authentic materials that are slightly above their proficiency level on a variety of topics, and encourage students to guess unknown words and expressions from the context. The use of online resources that are connected to Science and Technology and/or Global Challenges themes — two of the AP themes for World Language and Culture Curriculum — can be incorporated into effective teaching strategies to cope with recurring *katakana* word errors. In addition, teachers should take time to review the structural patterns and orthographic errors identified in the past as problematic for AP students. Examples of this include the use of the copula *だ* and the verb + *方がいい* form.

For more ideas on ways to enhance your students’ interpersonal writing skills, please visit the AP World Language and Culture Interactive Online Module — Interpersonal Communication: Developing Writing Abilities at <https://cb.collegeboard.org/ap-training-modules/world-languages-cultures/developing-interpersonal-writing-abilities/>.

Presentational Writing Task: Compare and Contrast Article

What was the intent of this task?

This task assesses writing skills in the presentational communicative mode by having students write an article for the student newspaper of a school in Japan. It comprises a single prompt in English, which identifies two related topics and details how they should be discussed in the article. Students are given 20 minutes to write an article of 300 to 400 characters or longer. The article receives a single holistic score based on how well it accomplishes the assigned task.

How well did students perform on this task?

The mean score of the Standard Group was 4.16 out of a possible 6 points. The mean score for the Total Group was 4.57.

Most students were able to perform the task very well. Although the concepts of “indoor” and “outdoor” were rather difficult to express in Japanese, the students were generally able to write a school newspaper article on this topic.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Many responses included all of the required elements (i.e., introduction, body, and conclusion), describing three aspects of comparison and expressing preference and reasoning, but some omitted one or more of these parts. The following points highlight errors or omissions most commonly observed in the presentational writing task.

- This year, students appeared to struggle with how to express the ideas of “indoor” and “outdoor.” While some responses were able to correctly use words such as 屋内 and 屋外/野外, others used overly simplistic terms such as 中/外. Students who attempted to use the English loanwords for “indoor” and “outdoor” often struggled to produce the correct *katakana* for those terms (インドア・アウトドア). As in the case with text chat prompts, orthographic errors with loanwords were a very common occurrence among the responses.
- The notion of “activities” referenced by the writing prompt also presented many students with a challenge. More skillful responses correctly used Japanese terms such as 屋内活動/野外活動 (“indoor activities”/“outdoor activities”), but these responses were relatively few in number. Most responses either attempted to use the English loanwords “activities” written in *katakana* (アクティビティー) or substituted another more familiar Japanese term such as “sports” (スポーツ), “exercise” (運動), “play” (遊び), “hobby” (趣味), “game” (ゲーム), or phrases like “doing things” (する事) in place of higher-level Japanese vocabulary. Orthographic errors in writing the loanword アクチヴィチー “activities” and インドー “indoor” were particularly common.
- Effective and skillful writing tended to include a range of vocabulary used in complex sentence structures that varied sufficiently throughout the response in order to sustain reader interest. Some responses instead tended to employ formulaic comparative structures or phrases in a repetitive fashion. Repetition of structures, phrases, and vocabulary in this manner resulted in strained expressions that reflect a lower level of writing ability.
- Some students did not use any AP *kanji* or, indeed, any *kanji* at all in their responses, resulting in responses that were composed completely in *kana* orthography. Text comprised only of *kana* greatly reduces readability. Many students used AP *kanji* inconsistently — for example leaving a word in *kana* in one sentence yet converting it into *kanji* in the next.
- Grammatical errors with particles were very common. Among the most frequently seen errors this year was the use of *に* as in 野外にスポーツをします instead of the correct particle *で* to specify the

location of an action. While most students appeared to use particles freely, some others omitted needed particles altogether.

- Responses that merely listed examples of indoor and outdoor activities without undertaking a direct comparison of the two occurred frequently among the lower score levels. These responses indicate lack of sufficient vocabulary and/or the inability to properly utilize syntax for comparison.

Based on your experience of student responses at the AP® Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Teachers should continue to remind students to read and address all aspects of the prompt carefully in their responses. Teachers may also encourage students to use tools for organizing their essays such as cognitive mapping, outlining, and making a checklist before beginning to write their responses to the prompt.

Teachers may continue to encourage students to continue expanding their repertoire of vocabulary, idioms, *kanji*, and grammar patterns (e.g., nominalization, relative clauses, complex and compound sentences, particle use, and verb conjugation), which will help them achieve natural, easily flowing expression of their ideas.

Although responses with excessive spacing between words (分かち書き) have been decreasing in number, teachers may continue to give students regular and frequent opportunities to type Japanese early enough so that they feel comfortable switching between *hiragana* and *katakana* and converting to *kanji* correctly. Also, teachers who use Apple computers need to ensure that students become familiar with the Windows format when typing Japanese.

Teachers may introduce short passages that are slightly above the students' ability, thus utilizing the notion of "comprehensible input." In other words, teachers may instruct students to read short articles, newspaper articles, and essays (preferably authentic materials) to enhance their interpretive reading ability as well as presentational writing ability. Higher-level writing samples are important input for the development of students' writing skills.

Error analyses of the 2016 exam indicate that the following specific approaches may be particularly helpful:

- **Task Completion:** In addition to continued use of contrastive transitional devices such as 一方 and 他方 and ordinal cohesive devices such as 一番目の点は, 二番目の点は, 結論として, teachers should encourage students to use common transitional elements such as そして, それから, その上, しかし, and その反面 to organize the flow of information.

Students need to fully understand the importance of closely reading and following directions for full task completion. Many responses written at a higher level of proficiency unfortunately did not include a statement of preference and reasons for it — as called for in the last part of the directions — resulting in lower scores. In addition, teachers may ensure that students are familiar with the differences between the Compare and Contrast Article and the Cultural Perspective Presentation. In the Compare and Contrast Article, students describe at least three aspects based on their own personal experience. The primary focus of this task is not describing Japanese culture.

- **Language Use** (grammar and structure): Error analyses from the past exams provide useful hints for teachers as to which structures tend to be problematic for AP students. As was the case with past exams, the 2016 exam error analyses revealed the need to review how to nominalize verbs. For example 外で野球をすることができます should be 外で野球をする事ができます. Also crucial is the difference between verb+の and verb+事, where 家でゲームするの and 家でゲームする事 are correct, but ゲームするの事 is incorrect. Teachers may also wish to continue reviewing structures that express hypothetical situations such as 雨が降ったら外で遊べないので, comparison

statements such as 家の中にいるより外でスポーツをする方が好きです, and listing of activities such as A や B や C as well as A をしたり、B をしたり、C をしたりします。

- **Language Delivery:** Teachers need to continue reminding students to use AP *kanji* whenever possible. Students need to be reminded that typographic errors can result in no *kanji* or the wrong *kanji*. Teachers also need to provide ample opportunities for students to be exposed to a variety of *katakana* words. *Katakana* words found in textbooks are not sufficient to cover topics under the six themes of the AP World Language and Culture Curriculum. Using authentic materials and Internet-based activities such as Web-based research projects would be beneficial for students.

For more ideas to enhance your students' presentational writing skills, please visit AP World Language and Culture Interactive Online Module — Presentational Communication: A Focus on Writing at <https://cb.collegeboard.org/ap-training-modules/world-languages-cultures/presentational-communications-writing/>.

Interpersonal Speaking Task: Conversation

What was the intent of this task?

This task evaluates speaking skills in the interpersonal communicative mode by having students respond as part of a simulated conversation. It comprises a statement in English identifying an interlocutor and conversation topic, and a series of four related utterances in Japanese. Students have 20 seconds to speak at each turn in the conversation. Each of the four responses receives a holistic score based on how well it accomplishes the assigned task, and all four scores count equally in calculating the total score.

How well did students perform on this task?

The mean score of the Standard Group was 15.09 out of a possible 24 points. The mean score for the Total Group was 17.53.

Most students were able to perform the task relatively well. The topic seemed to be a familiar one to most students, and they were able to respond on the topic of a Japanese language camp. Some students responded as a camp counselor and some responded as a camp participant.

What were common student errors or omissions?

The following were errors or omissions specific to each of the four prompts:

Conversation 1 —はじめまして、日本語キャンプの鈴木です。まずはじめに、簡単に自己紹介をしてください。

Self-introduction is one of the first things students learn in a Japanese language class. Even if a student did not understand the phrase 自己紹介, he or she could most likely still guess that it was a first-time encounter since Mr. Suzuki was stating his name. Most of the students performed well with this prompt. However, some responded by repeating はじめまして。(name) です without talking more about themselves or about the Japanese camp. Some students responded by talking about the Japanese camp without introducing themselves, which was not culturally appropriate (このキャンプに来て、すごく楽しみです and Japanese キャンプは昔から行きたかったなので、期待しています).

After introducing themselves, some students ended the conversation with a sentence 何でも聞いて下さい (“please ask me anything”), which was not culturally appropriate for this prompt (はじめまして。私は__ (名前) です。日本のキャンプは楽しみにしています。あの、何でも聞いて下さい).

Conversation 2 — ありがとうございます。どうしてこの日本語キャンプに入りたいと思ったんですか。

A considerable number of students did not explicitly state reasons for wanting to enter Japanese language camp (日本語は楽しいです and 今日日本語を勉強します). Whether such answers were deemed as completing the task or not depended on other factors, such as language use and delivery.

Frequently observed grammatical errors were (1) the incorrect insertion and omission of the copula *だ* for the *～と思います* structure (*いいだ* and *大丈夫* and *大丈夫* and *大丈夫* respectively) and (2) the reversal of the cause and effect ideas with the subordinate conjunction *～から* (“because”), as in *キャンプに入りたいから、日本語が好きです*. The most common orthographic error was the misspelling of the word “camp” (キャンプ for キャンプ) regardless that the word was in the prompt.

Conversation 3 — そうですね。では、このキャンプではどんなことをしたいですか。

A noticeable number of students described just a desired goal or gave a vague response (日本語が上手になりたいです “I want to improve my Japanese” and 色々なことをしたいです “I want to do all sorts of things”), rather than talking about a specific activity they wanted to do at the language camp. Some responses stated activities that were not related to the Japanese language camp at all (東京の上野公園に行きたいです “I want to go to Ueno Park in Tokyo” and 動物園に行きたいです “I want to go to the zoo.”).

Conversation 4 — 分かりました。ではこのキャンプについて何か質問をしてください。

Most of the students asked questions about the camp and thus successfully completed the task. However, some responses did not ask a question about the camp but, instead, further described their goals of Japanese language study (日本語が上手に話したいです “I want to speak Japanese well”). Some responses asked questions, but they asked about Mr. Suzuki himself (どんな食べ物が好きですか? “What kind of food do you like?”). Others asked questions about Japanese culture (日本人はなぜいつもあいづちをしますか “Why do Japanese always use *aizuchi*?”). Such responses did not receive high scores since the prompt instructs them to ask a question about the camp (キャンプについて何か質問をして下さい).

Based on your experience of student responses at the AP[®] Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Students should read and listen very carefully to the conversation prompt and then respond as fully and appropriately as possible each time it is their turn. They should fully utilize the 20 seconds by adding as much detail as possible instead of giving only a succinct response.

Teachers need to give students situations where students want to ask questions using a variety of question words (なぜ, どうして, どのように, どれ, どちら, etc.) in order to sustain conversation. Communicative activities such as interviews and speed dating encourage students to use questions to obtain information from their classmates. Teachers may instruct students to pay close attention to whatever precedes the expression *～について質問してください* (please ask about ~) and have students formulate questions on the topic.

Teachers may also encourage students to expand their responses by giving an explanation or adding specific examples. For example, instead of simply saying 日本の文化を習いたいです (“I would like to learn Japanese culture”), students can give specific examples such as 盆踊り, 書道, 折り紙 to further describe the Japanese culture. Teachers may also have students regularly read and listen to passages with loanwords and frequently assess students’ pronunciation of them as well as their ability to correctly type them.

Teachers may also periodically assess frequently used grammatical forms and conjugation rules to express one’s opinions and advice. Those forms include the insertion or exclusion of *だ* before *na*-adjectives and *i*-adjectives in stating something is important or good as in 大事だと思います and とてもいいと思います; the verb conjugation rules for using the *～て* form to list activities; and the verb conjugation rules for using the *～方がいいです* to give advice.

For more ideas to enhance your students’ interpersonal speaking skills, please visit the AP World Language and Culture Interactive Online Module — Interpersonal Communication: Developing Speaking Abilities at <https://cb.collegeboard.org/ap-training-modules/world-languages-cultures/interpersonal-communications/>.

Presentational Speaking Task: Cultural Perspective Presentation

What was the intent of this task?

This task assesses speaking skills in the presentational communicative mode by having students give a presentation on a cultural topic to a Japanese class. It consists of a single prompt in English, which identifies a cultural topic and details how it should be discussed in the presentation. Students are given 4 minutes to prepare the presentation and 2 minutes for its delivery. The presentation receives a single holistic score based on how well it accomplishes the assigned task. In addition to language skills, the score reflects the level of cultural knowledge exhibited in the presentation.

How well did students perform on this task?

The mean score of the Standard Group was 4.13 out of a possible 6 points. The mean score for the Total Group was 4.79. Most students were able to perform the task relatively well. Students were able to speak on the topic covering a wide range of choices, including *kendama*, a traditional Japanese toy, *shiritori*, a Japanese word game, and *Pokemon*, an anime-based Japanese video game.

What were common student errors or omissions?

The topic of the 2016 exam seemed to be very familiar to most students. Even those students who were not able to express their own view or perspectives in Japanese sentences could list game software company names such as 任天堂 “Nintendo” and ソニー “Sony” and game software such as 遊戯王 “Yu Gi Oh” and ポケモン “Pokemon.” However, various errors and omissions were found. They included the following:

- Some students talked about 山登り (mountain climbing), 部活 (school club activities), 俳句 (*Haiku* poems) that were neither about toys or games. Such responses received low scores even though the presentations demonstrated relatively high proficiency in other respects.
- Although students were asked to present their view or perspective on Japanese toys and/or games, a considerable number of responses compared Japanese toys/games with American toys/games, and described three aspects of each and gave their preference. These tasks are akin to those of the Compare and Contrast Article.
- Many students talked about their own experiences (日本のゲームをしたことがあります), preferences (日本のゲームがアメリカのゲームより好きです), and some students talked about their wish to work for a Japanese game company (日本のゲーム会社で働きたいです) in the future.

- Many responses used ordinal cohesive devices such as 第一に、第二に、次に、最後に effectively to organize their presentation. However, at the same time, a considerable number of responses switched around the sound segments of those transitional cohesive words and resulted in use of the wrong word (いちだいに, にだいに, さんだいに).
- Several responses merely added one or two short statement(s) after the ordinal cohesive devices using simple structures such as 第一に日本のビデオは人気です。第二にアニメーションはきれいです。第三にビデオゲームはおもしろいです resulting in a short presentation without much content.
- The most common grammatical errors pivoted around stating reasons. The errors include (1) the misuse of ~です as in なぜならば、ゲームが好きです, (2) the reversal of the cause and effect ideas as in ゲームをしますから、アニメが好きです, and (3) the incorrect use of から and ので as a connector of two separate sentences (~が好きですから、おもしろいです).
- Some responses mixed the ~です/ます style and ~だ style in the two-minute speaking presentation.
- Pronunciation errors that stood out were related to *katakana* words such as ガイム for ゲーム and ジャンラ for ジャンル.
- Some responses attempted to use English words with English pronunciation in the sentences (日本語の toys は kids が好きです).

Based on your experience of student responses at the AP® Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Teachers need to ensure that students are aware of the different requirements between the Compare and Contract Article and the Cultural Perspective Presentation prompts and should give students ample opportunities to practice addressing all the requirements.

Teachers may continue to remind students to outline their ideas for all requirements before beginning their speech. Teachers may encourage students to create cognitive mapping (“thought maps”) or a simple table to help them think about and organize the five aspects and examples for the test-specific task. Students should also be encouraged to expand their ideas by adding one or two things.

Teachers should continue to encourage students to use common introductory expressions such as これから ~についてのスピーチをします or 今から ~について話します and use common concluding expressions such as 以上です or これで ~についてのスピーチを終わります as well as using the ordinal cohesive words such as まず最初に or 第二に to list five aspects or examples.

Teaching strategies to prepare students for the oral presentation portion of the exam may include (1) providing ample opportunities of timed presentations for students on a variety of Japanese cultural topics, (2) giving frequent formative feedback on their performances, (3) having students use the common expressions mentioned above in their presentations, (4) encouraging students to use Japanese hesitation sounds such as あのう and えっと instead of “um” and “uh,” and (5) having them listen to short speeches that are slightly higher than their proficiency level.

For more ideas to enhance your students’ presentational speaking skills, please visit AP World Language and Culture Interactive Online Module — Presentational Communication: A Focus on Speaking at <https://cb.collegeboard.org/ap-training-modules/world-languages-cultures/presentational-communications-speaking/>.