

JLPT Bulletin

2014

Three JLPT test-takers living in Japan talk about Japanese language, culture and the JLPT!



Location: Japanese Teahouse Shikoh-An

The Speakers



The Shikoh-An cat, Mii-chan

Vietnam



Vuong Thi Nguyet (28)

From Hanoi. Came to Japan in 2010. Got a job in Japan after attending a Japanese language school for a year. Currently works at a vocational college. Enjoys watching Japanese TV dramas on her day off.

China



Syu Ensen (27)

From Guangdong. Has lived in Japan since studying at a Japanese graduate school in 2008. Currently works for a trading company in Tokyo. Loves J-pop.

Poland



Anna Śmiątek (23)

From Kraków. Majored in Japanese at a Polish university, and has been studying at a university in Tokyo since October 2013. Her dream is to make Kabuki known more widely around the world.

My First Encounter with Japan



Vuong Thi Nguyet (V): I got interested in Japan when I was 17. I made friends with a Japanese girl who was visiting Vietnam. We became pen friends and I started to study Japanese because I wanted to understand more of what she was saying. We're still good friends today.

Syu Ensen (S): That's really nice. Japanese culture made inroads into China early on and the TV dramas starring actress Momoe Yamaguchi were popular among my parents' generation. I really got into J-pop when I was 12, and that made me want to know more about Japan. I'm off to a Morning Musume's concert today.

Anna Śmiątek (A): I got interested when a friend of mine told me about Japanese pop culture. I liked the anime "Gin Tama" and would watch it very often.

Why the JLPT is Worth It



S: I majored in Japanese at a university in China and we had to pass the JLPT Level 1 (the old test) to graduate. I found it hardest to study for the listening section. In those days I didn't have much chance to hold conversations in Japanese, and a lot of the test questions were from everyday conversation, so it wasn't just the grammar. I tried to get a grasp of Japanese daily life and culture, for example, by watching Japanese TV dramas.

V: I was bad at kanji, so I used to answer the practice questions for the test over and over again. In addition to that, I used to read Japanese news on the Internet and read Japanese books, trying to boost my exposure to kanji.

A: Kanji was my weakest point as well, so I made flash cards and studied every day. I would write down a kanji, its pronunciation and the phrases that include it. I wrote more than 2,000 kanji in my flash cards and memorized them.

V and S: 2,000!!

A: I'm really glad I worked so hard at it. I believe that I got into my first choice of university in Japan, partly thanks to my JLPT certification.

S: I was asked about my JLPT level when I was job hunting in Japan, too, not just when I was applying for university. A JLPT certification is important for



getting a job as well.

V: In Vietnam, there were a lot of companies that give you an extra salary allowance if you have a JLPT certification, so it's also useful if you want to get a good job in your home country.

S: And the things I learned for the test are really helpful for my daily life now in Japan.

V: I think so, too. The grammar I studied for N2 is really used a lot in everyday conversation, and when I'm talking with people at work I often think, "Hey, that's straight out of an N2 paper!"



Phrases that Represent Japanese Culture



V: What amazed me when I came to Japan was how often I hear the phrases "I'm sorry" and "thank you." Those two phrases are not used lightly in Vietnam. In Japan, parents even use them to their children.

S: We don't use them much in China either. For example, we use the phrase "sorry" only when we are clearly in the wrong. When I was back in China and inadvertently used it to attract the attention of a shopkeeper like I would in Japan, well, it completely floored him.

A: We use both of those phrases a lot in Poland. Like in Japan, we use them both casually and seriously. Different countries really do have different ways of using phrases, don't they?

S: I really like the Japanese phrases for "I'm sorry" and "thank you" because they connote consideration for the other person.

A: And it's not just the phrases. I get the impression that in Japan people place far more importance on consideration for others than they do on their own. I was amazed that nobody utters a word of complaint even when they're being crammed into a packed train.

V: I used to ride on packed trains a lot and the station staff would always be pushing the passengers on.

A: Yeah, that happens a lot, doesn't it?

S: In China, people don't think twice about talking on a mobile phone or eating snacks while on the train. There are lots of rules in Japan and it was hard to remember them at first. But observing the rules makes for a pleasant way of life,



because you don't cause any bother for other people and they don't cause any bother for you.

A: I couldn't agree more. Rules make life much easier.

My Great Discoveries in Japan



S: I like the residential areas in Japan. In China, most people live in apartments, and only the wealthy people own detached houses as their residences or holiday homes. Japanese detached houses may be small but they are well looked after, and the rows of those houses look so cute. I really like the peaceful scene of an old lady cleaning up the street in front of her house every morning. That's why when my parents come to Japan I want to show them the street where I live more than the Tokyo Tower.

V: There's no litter in the streets of Japan and the towns are really clean. And I really admire the way that the Japanese always keep their homes so clean. In Vietnam, there's a lot of litter in the streets, so it's been a good lesson for me.

A: I like going for a stroll through the Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden. It has a big, peaceful Japanese garden, and is really relaxing. I've just arrived in Japan, so I'm really looking forward to seeing and experiencing lots of different aspects of Japan. I haven't tried a hot spring bath yet, so that's something I want to do.

V: I really recommend that. They make you feel so good. Mind you, I was embarrassed at first because we have no custom of bathing in public without swimsuits in Vietnam.

A: We do have hot springs in Poland, but we wear swimsuits when we use them. At the moment I'm still too busy with my classes to go on a trip. I have to study hard for the moment.

S: I'm going to work hard in Japan, too, and one day I want to have a detached house of my own in Japan!



日本語能力試験
JLPT Japanese-Language Proficiency Test

2014 JUL.6 (sun) DEC.7 (sun) *Some cities only offer one date. Contact the city's host institution for details.

The Japanese-Language Proficiency Test is a test to evaluate and certify Japanese language proficiency for non-native speakers. In addition to evaluating language skills, it is used for various purposes, such as gaining admission to schools, finding a job, getting a raise or promotion, and getting qualifications, etc. Japan Educational Exchanges and Services conducts the test in Japan, and the Japan Foundation conducts the test overseas with the cooperation of local host institution. In Taiwan, the JLPT is co-organized with Interchange Association.



the Official Worldwide JLPT Website → <http://www.jlpt.jp/>