

+++ title = “Japanese” description = “Japanese language and culture notes”
[taxonomies] tags = [“language”, “japanese”, “notes”] +++

Japanese language notes

Particles

A particle is character that marks a part of a sentence with grammatical meaning, such as the subject of an action verb, the topic of discussion, or the location of where something is or will take place. Particles allow for parts of a sentence to be moved around in a way that in English might not sound so grammatically correct. For example: - (literally “I on Sunday at 3 PM a movie at a theater watched.”) - (“A movie on Sunday at 3 PM at a movie theater I watched.”) - And any other permutation...

All translate equivalently to:

Sunday at 3 PM I watched a movie at a movie theater.

(topic)

- Marks the preceding noun as the topic of discussion. For example, to describe oneself, needs to mark (myself).
I am a university student.
- Is used when contrasting between things that can and cannot be done.
I can speak japanese but I cannot write it.

(object)

- Marks the preceding object (not necessarily tangible) as what an action is being taken or took place upon.
I ate breakfast this today. I studied Japanese yesterday.

(time, location)

- Following a time, denotes when a verb occurs.
I wake up at 7:30.
- Following a location, denotes where something is with or .
Next to the department store is a movie theater.
- Or following a location, denotes the destination of a movement verb.
I return home.

(topic, subject, “but”)

- Can replace as the topic marker of a sentence.
I’m Nils.

- When following a noun, marks it as the subject for certain verbs.
I need my coffee.
 - Following a sentence (but before a comma or period), functions as “but”, joining the sentence to whatever sentence follows.
I think my aunt will like the apartment too, but
can we show it to her?
-

Homework

L5 Script

Thankfully, my semester isn't very hard.

But I have class Monday through Friday.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday I have Japanese, conducting and math.

Tuesday I have Japanese at 9:30 AM.

But Monday and Wednesday I have Japanese at 9:00 AM.

In addition I have conducting at 11:00 AM.

Then math at 12:00 PM.

All of these classes are online.

But on Monday I also have choir on campus at 2:00.

After my math class I ride my bike to get to school.

It takes around thirty minutes to go to campus.

And it's around seven miles.

The trip isn't too hard, but cars are scary.

Additionally, Monday night I have a Zoom meeting with my math research partner and advisor.

Wednesday I have a Zoom meeting with all the math research groups.

But, I don't need to study much, so (therefore) I'm fine.

- -
-

102 Presentation

The hobby that I have had for several years is singing.

I started singing at Mesa College in 2013 when I took a voice class with some friends (Mesa College is a community college here in San Diego).

(I started at SDSU in 2018, so I've been a college student for a long time.)

My major was computer science, but when I transferred it had become music and applied mathematics. (But foremost I am a programmer.)

Japanese culture notes

City Pop

In the landscape of modern Japanese music, City Pop (シティポップ) was a glitzy, short-lived and fairly loosely defined genre of music which reflected the optimistic state of Japanese metropolitan life in the eighties. Throughout the years, city pop has been criticized for being vapid, adored for being optimistic, and fairly recently has had a resurgence in popularity due to nostalgia.

The post-war miracle

Following the second World War, Japan faced incredible difficulties in rebuilding its economy as well as its social identity. The entire Japanese colonial empire had been dissolved; in 1974 a new democratic constitution was established; in the mid fifties Japan finally regained its autonomy and joined the United Nations. However, the Japanese economy throughout the fifties and seventies experienced what is now known as the “Japanese economic miracle”, resulting in Japan skyrocketing in prosperity to become the second largest economy in the world, second only to the United States. This shocking ascent was the result of Japan’s rapid technological advancements and resulting domination of the world’s consumer electronic sector. Much of seventies and eighties pop-culture throughout the world is remembered through the popularity of Japanese exports like Sony’s Walkman and boomboxes (also dominated by Japanese brands). As a result of the economic miracle, metropolitan Japan exploded into technological, neon-tinted wonderlands, and the middle class expanded dramatically. Seemingly everyone was living a life of relative luxury, and musical appetites prompted a new genre which would convey the general feeling of optimism.

The birth of City Pop

As a genre, City pop is very loosely defined. At its earliest, the sound was an adoption of American (or specifically Californian) bands like Buffalo Springfield (which in themselves were adaptations of rock-and-roll into psychedelic and folk rock, in a revolutionary/reactionary anti-Vietnam fashion). The 70's Tokyo based band Happy End is an often cited example of such a band; their capability in turning this fairly new American sound into a distinctly Japanese one was immensely influential upon the burgeoning landscape of Japanese music. In the late seventies, city pop songs would become more expansive in their songwriting and instrumentation, drawing especially from jazz (in particular jazz-fusion) and soul genres in their use of dominant seventh and major seventh harmonizations and progressions, and use of instruments like jazz guitar, organ, percussion (kit, bongos, tambourine, shakers, etc.) and electronically synthesized sounds.

Perhaps a bit ahead of her time, Taeko Ohnuki began to produce jazz-fusion soul ballads characterized by solos for flute and guitar, a soul backing chorus, synthesizers, jazz piano, and jazz progression schemes. Music like hers hit popular highs in the eighties, providing a sympathetically upbeat soundtrack to Tokyo city life. Another pioneer of the genre was Tatsuro Yamashita. Yamashita saw massive popularity, and is now considered the “king” of the genre in its entirety. His music truly evokes the glamor of the eighties: miami nights but in Tokyo, well captured in the art of Eizin Suzuki. Backed by this new sound, the optimism and comfort of the eighties felt like a never-ending party. However, the good times were not to last.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Eizin Suzuki Office (official) (@eizin_office)

The lost generation, and what's followed

In 1991 Japan saw the burst of its asset price bubble, and the decade which followed is now referred to as the lost decade/generation (失われた十年). The overly optimistic city pop sound no longer reflected the general outlook of the Japanese population, reeling from the downturn both economically and in a drastic reducing in growth demographically (see Japan's drop in birth rates and rapidly aging population). As such the genre faded into obscurity; a relic of the eighties which symbolized capitalist frivolity and decadence, at odds with the hard reality of economic decline. Given its identical kana pronunciation, シティポップ became “shitty pop”.

But as years have passed, and the economic situation has generally stabilized (although growth has stagnated), eighties nostalgia has led to a return in the popularity of city pop. As distinct products of our ever evolving internet culture and nostalgia for all things eighties, genres like vapor-wave and outrun harken back to the effortlessly optimistic, albeit largely imaginary and rose-tinted, music and visual styles of the eighties. Modern bands like Lamp, Kirinji and Tricot

utilize a lot of the same expansive song writing techniques as the city pop bands of the eighties. The music by Lamp especially has a nostalgic quality to it; see the music video for their song 1998 below.

As such, a lot of modern music which draws inspiration from city pop is coated with a layer of skepticism; remembering and longing for decades past, while recognizing where we are today and how far we've come. But sometimes taking a pure, unadulterated nostalgia trip is fun, and as such city pop lives on in popularity throughout the niches of the internet. The old city pop sound has become new again, and in its image is much of the music, movies, and TV programs of modern popular culture which we enjoy to this day.

Sources: - *The Guide to Getting Into City Pop, Tokyo's Lush 80s Nightlife Soundtrack*. Arcand, Rob & Goldner, Sam (January 24, 2019). Vice. - *The Musical Almanac: Japan's City-Pop*. Diego (November 21, 2015). zZounds. - *Japanese 'City Pop []': A Dreamy Trip back to Japans Capitalist Fantasy of the 1980s*. O, Safia (August 23, 2017). Bearded Gentlemen Music. - *City pop, Lost Decade (Japan)*, Japan. Wikipedia.