
Fukuda, Hiroko. *Jazz Up Your Japanese with Onomatopoeia: For All Levels.*

Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2003. ISBN: 4-7700-2956-X. Pp.238. \$19.

Onomatopoeia and mimesis are vital in Japanese communication. *Jazz Up Your Japanese with Onomatopoeia: For All Levels*, previously published in Kodansha International's Power Japanese series under the title *Flip, Slither, & Bang: Japanese Sound and Action Words* in 1993, is an excellent introduction to Japanese onomatopoeia and mimesis, and is a great supplementary material for students of Japanese at all levels. All the Japanese sentences in this book are written in a mixture of *kana* characters (Japanese syllabary symbols) and *kanji* characters (Chinese characters) with *furigana* (pronunciation aid using *kana*), which are followed by their transliteration in *romaji* (Romanization) and their translation into English.

This book has two major parts. The first is a clear and easy-to-understand linguistic overview of onomatopoeia and mimesis. It starts by revealing to the readers the fascinating unconscious phonological intuitions used in the creation and usage of onomatopoeia and mimesis in language, and gives many English examples such as *plop*, *bop*, *bang*, *splat*, and *squeak* to help the readers understand

the concept. Then it thoroughly explains the phonological uniqueness of Japanese onomatopoeia and mimesis, giving a variety of examples. It discusses how their syllable structures and sound properties such as vowel height, voicing, sonority, nasalization, and manner of articulation are associated with their meanings, how they are shaped into words and placed in sentences, how productive they are, and how they are essential and vital for Japanese communication.

The second part of this book is a collection of eleven situational dialogues, which can be read in any order. Each one is preceded by an inviting illustration that shows the setting of the dialogue. Each situational dialogue is between adults in a real-life context: an office worker and his boss at a bar, a hairdresser and her customer, two married women talking about their husbands at a fitness club. These situational dialogues are all lively and interesting, and some of them are very comical. They reflect a number of modern Japanese cultural, social, pragmatic, and linguistic facts such as bowing, systems of address, negotiation strategies, popular dating venues, drinking customs, and even the Osaka dialect, and all of them are thoroughly explained in notes. Furthermore, these situational dialogues all come in a natural, authentic, and colloquial speech style, containing interjections, sentence fragments, contracted forms, gender-specific sentence endings, and, of course, onomatopoeia and mimesis. Each dialogue includes about ten examples of onomatopoeia and mimesis, and their meanings and functions are explained in detail along with the connotation specification, G (good), N (neutral), or B (bad), to show whether they are used positively or negatively. A few additional sample sentences are provided for each item. A quiz follows that contains about twenty fill-in-the-blank questions. Their answers are provided at the end of all eleven units. A bibliography, an onomatopoeia index, and a general index are provided at the end of the book.

One of the strengths of this book is that the first part (overview of onomatopoeia and mimesis) and the second part (situational dialogues with onomatopoeia and mimesis) complement each other to make this book most effective for learning onomatopoeia and mimesis: the first part offers the phonological and morphological knowledge that students can apply for understanding onomatopoeia and mimesis that are used in the dialogues in the second part, where students can see how vital they are for expressing ideas clearly, vividly, and precisely in real-life contexts. Another strength of this book is the cultural knowledge that students can gain. The dialogues are realistic and fun to read, and notes and explanations are useful for learning Japanese culture, society, and communication patterns. The author does not focus on traditional Japanese culture, which few Japanese nowadays bother with anyway. Instead, she tries to show real-life situations in Japan through lively dialogues. Translation may have some limitations in conveying the precise degree of informality and subtle nuances. Nonetheless, readers can capture these pragmatic subtleties by placing themselves right in the communicative situation provided by the dialogues.

The question is whether this book is truly appropriate for all levels of the Japanese curriculum. The dialogues and sample sentences include advanced grammar such as passive, causative, and conditionals, and advanced vocabulary such as “*dokan desu*” (“I feel the same way”). Perhaps this was inevitable since the author’s intention was to provide real and colloquial Japanese rather than more formal textbook-style Japanese. However, some of the grammar and vocabulary found in this

book is too difficult for beginners to analyze, though they will not have any difficulty understanding the content because all the Japanese sentences are accompanied by their *romaji* transliteration and English translation. They can learn the Japanese speaker's phonological intuition, approximately 200 onomatopoeia/mimesis vocabulary items, and Japanese culture and communication patterns. Due to the fact that the dialogues are mainly between adults, this book is most practical for adult students, but younger students can also enjoy reading this book and can learn from it.

I feel confident concluding that *Jazz Up Your Japanese with Onomatopoeia: For All Levels* is a stimulating, enjoyable, and useful supplementary text for students of Japanese at all levels. With the knowledge and vocabulary acquired from this book, students will learn to describe things, people, feelings, and ideas more naturally, and understand conversations in films, animation, novels, and *manga* (comic books) more easily.

Eriko Sato, Ph.D., Lecturer
Department of Asian and Asian American Studies
State University of New York at Stony Brook
Stony Brook, New York