

Unit 11

The Pressures of Being A Teenager in Japan¹

ในบทนี้นักศึกษาจะได้อ่านเรื่องของเด็กชาวญี่ปุ่นที่ได้รับความกดดันจากพ่อแม่ในเรื่องของการเรียน รวมทั้งผลที่เกิดขึ้น จุดมุ่งหมายของการอ่านเรื่องนี้คือต้องการให้เนื้อหาของเรื่องเป็นตัวอย่าง หรือเป็นบทเรียนกับผู้ที่ต้องเกี่ยวข้องกับเด็กที่อยู่ในวัยกำลังเล่าเรียน เช่น พ่อ แม่หรือ ครู ได้นำไปเป็นข้อคิด และพิจารณาหาวิธีที่จะอบรมสั่งสอนเด็กให้เกิดความเหมาะสม นอกจากนี้ต้องการให้นักศึกษาบอกความแตกต่างระหว่างข้อความเป็นความจริงกับข้อความเป็นความคิดเห็นได้ และแสดงความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับชีวิตเด็กในวัยเรียนว่ามีอุปสรรคอะไรบ้างที่มีผลกระทบต่อการเรียนหรือ ต่อความประพฤติของเขา รวมถึงสิ่งที่เด็กต้องการจะให้ครู และพ่อแม่ปฏิบัติต่อพวกเขาอย่างไร

Japanese students work very hard but many are desperately unhappy. They feel unbearable pressure from their parents to do well in school and in college. Most students are always being told by their parents to study harder so that they can have successful careers. Although this may be good advice for those students who are very bright, it can have disastrous results for many students who are not so gifted.

¹ Heaton, Brian. *Topics in English: A Reading Skills Course 1*, Longman Asia Limited, 1994, PP. 167-170

Tragically, a number of students actually commit suicide. Others seek comfort in sniffing glue or paint-thinner. Some students, however, join gangs and turn to crime. Many of them have tried very hard at school but, in spite of their all efforts, have failed in certain examinations and have disappointed their parents. Such students feel that they are inferior to everyone else they meet and become dropouts.

It is surprising that although most Japanese parents are anxious for their children to do well at school, they do not help them in any way. Many parents feel that they are not capable of helping their children academically and that in any case it is the teacher's job to help their children. To make matter worse, a lot of parents send their children to special schools called *Juku*—cram schools. These schools are open during the evenings and on weekends, and their only purpose is to prepare students to pass exams; they are not intended to educate students in any real sense of the world. It thus comes as a shock to realize that almost three-quarters of the junior high school population attend these cram schools.

Ordinary Japanese schools usually have rules about everything from the length of students' hair to their underwear and the contents of their schoolbags. Child psychologists now think that such strict rules often lead to a feeling of insecurity and an inability to fit into society. They regard this kind of discipline as being harmful to the development of the individual. They argue that no sense of moral values is developed and that students are given neither guidance nor training in becoming responsible citizens. The results of a survey carried out by the Japan Youth Research Institute support this view. Almost 40 % of the

students questioned in the survey said that no one had taught them anything about justice, patience, love for others, generosity or individual responsibility

Word Study

desperate (adj.)	= lose all hope and may become violent
unbearable (adj.)	= unpleasant, upsetting
disastrous (adj.)	= of the nature of a disaster causing great damage
commit suicide (v)	= kill oneself
sniff (v)	= draw in air through the nose, smell
glue (n)	= sticky substance used for joining things together
disappoint (v)	= fail to satisfy the hopes or expectations
inferior (adj.)	= lower rank, status; less important
anxious (adj.)	= uneasy in mind; showing anxiety
strict (adj.)	= exact or precise (antonym : flexible)
insecure (adj.)	= feel unsure, not confident
moral (adj.)	= relating to beliefs about what is right or wrong
generous (adj.)	= very kind, friendly

Word Building

คำนามบางคำสามารถสร้างได้จากคำกริยา และคำนามบางคำมีรูปเดียวกันกับคำกริยา หรืออีกนัยหนึ่งคำศัพท์บางคำเป็นได้ทั้งคำนามและคำกริยา ดังเช่นกลุ่มคำที่ปรากฏอยู่ใน Vocabulary Exercise ดังต่อไปนี้

Vocabulary Exercise

The underlined words in sentences 1-10 are verbs; the blanks in sentences a- j need to be completed with nouns. Complete each blank with one of the words underlined in sentences 1- 10, using either the singular or plural form of noun.

1. Alice and Annie love listening to classical music and buy classical records whenever they can. Even Alice's younger sister is growing to like the classics.
2. I hope the army doesn't rule the country until there is a new government.
3. The old woman tried to comfort us by telling us that she knew our parents were safe.
4. It doesn't matter what Paul does. It won't make any difference because his teacher doesn't like him and is convinced he is no good.
5. The soldiers wanted to survey the whole area before they attacked. Their desire to examine the surrounding countryside, however, was to prove a great advantage to them.
6. Why don't you start reviewing now? Then you won't need to cram the night before the exam.
7. I didn't enjoy going to college, and dropped out after the first month. Now that I no longer go there, I feel much happier and have succeeded in getting a fairly good job.
8. Why does everyone want to gang up on me to prevent me from entering the competition? Even my friends and brothers have tried to persuade me not to enter.

9. I warn the little boy not to sniff the glue but he didn't take it away from his nose.
10. Don't pressure me into deciding now. I need time to be quiet and to think calmly.
- a. The newspaper article was based on a _____ of people's reading habits.
- b. Have a _____ and tell me what the smell reminds you of.
- c. I find it hard to understand the _____ of English spelling.
- d. Stay at school until the end of your course and don't be a _____.
- e. The fact that he was drunk at the time made _____ worse than they already were.
- f. David's _____ of photography was an important part of his life.
- g. The special colleges which prepare students for exams are called _____ schools.
- h. I found a lot of _____ in what he said to me after the terrible accident.
- i. Poor Samuel couldn't bear the _____ of his new job and left for a position without so much responsibility.
- j. The tourists were attacked by a _____ of youths with sticks and knives.

Comprehension Questions

A. Give the short form of the Yes-No questions. The first one has been done for you.

1. Are a lot of Japanese students happy at school?

No, they aren't

2. Do their parents encourage them to study hard? _____

3. Is this good advice for students of above average ability?

4. Do some students become criminals because of their failure at school?

5. Do many feel that teachers should help rather parents?

6. Do cram schools provide a good education for students?

7. Does the writer think that a lot of strict rules are good for students?

8. Is there a lot of freedom for students in schools in Japan?

9. Are such qualities as kindness and love for others usually taught in schools? _____

10. Does the writer think that Japanese school system could be improved?

B. Decide whether the following statements are *facts* or *opinions* according to the text. Write “F” for a fact statement and “O” for opinion.

1. Although Japanese students work very hard, many are very happy. _____
2. Most parents tell their children to study harder. _____
3. This advice is good for bright students. _____
4. Some students commit suicide and others sniff glue. _____
5. Some even become criminals. _____
6. These dropouts are inferior to other students. _____
7. Most Japanese parents feel unable to help their children with their studies. _____
8. Matters do not usually improve when students are sent to cram schools. _____
9. There are a lot of very strict rules in Japanese schools. _____
10. These strict rules result in students feeling insecure and unable to fit into society. _____

Grammar Points

กริยาวลีที่ใช้แสดงความสามารถมีหลายรูป ดังโครงสร้างต่อไปนี้

be capable of + Ving หรือ

be + (un) able to + V1 หรือ have the ability to + V1

Example:

Q: Why don't many students' parents help them with their schoolwork?

Ans: 1. They are not capable of helping them.

2. They are unable to help them.

3. They do not have the ability to help them.

Activity 1.

Answer each of the following questions, using the word in parenthesis in your answer.

1. Why do some students drop out of college? (capable)

2. Why do such students sometimes feel inferior? (unable)

3. Why do some students arrive late for class? (cannot)

4. Why do some people work in low paying jobs? (ability)

5. Why do some students fail to get into a college or university? (able)

6. Why do a lot of people take their cars to a repair man if there is something wrong with them? (incapable)

7. Why do young people wear water wings or small life jackets when they go in the sea? (able)

8. Why do young children ask their parents to read stories to them? (ability)
