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WATCHING **JAPANESE TV NEWS** VIDEOS

by Martie Jelinek

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I. ABOUT JAPANESE TV NEWS

What is Japanese TV News like?

Watching Japanese TV News has much in common with reading a Japanese newspaper and with listening to Japanese radio news; in some ways it is a combination of the two. Obviously the announcer reads most of the news out loud, so you need listening skills. And television also provides images to help us deduce meaning from context. But why liken TV News with reading a newspaper? This is because, on Japanese TV news, a vast amount of written information is provided on screen. On NHK news almost all of the news is printed at the bottom of the screen so you can see the written version as it is read out. This may appear off-putting to learners who find written Japanese difficult, but in time it proves to be enormously helpful. **See READING CAPTIONS.** So we can use Japanese TV news broadcasts to work on listening and reading skills, as well as learning about current issues in Japan.

Language

Speed of delivery varies but newsreaders speak clearly and pronounce each syllable

distinctly, so that by repeating the video, it should be possible to pick up the sounds. Interviewees, politicians and other spokespeople are of course another matter. They may use dialect, speak very fast, or use difficult formal language. In these cases it can be helpful to stop the video tape and read the text provided. Very often an entire interview is subtitled. **See READING CAPTIONS.**

It is worth noting that the TV news often uses relatively long sentences, and is especially heavy in *kanji*-based vocabulary. Rare or overly complex grammar does not tend to occur, but students need a good knowledge of standard Japanese grammar to an upper intermediate or advanced level to follow news programs. Perhaps more significant is the quantity and breadth of vocabulary which comes up. Many students have studied everyday conversation but have limited vocabulary in areas like business, politics and so on, so this can prove overwhelming. Beginners and lower-intermediated may be better served by watching TV dramas or documentary programs first, before tackling the news. However, because news broadcasts are intended to be understood by the broadest possible cross-section of Japanese adults they are an excellent source of language – all the constructions and phrases are very useful. See **'II. LINGUISTIC FEATURES'** for more detail on the type of language used in news, and useful grammar.

Contents

News stories typically carry over for several days, and very little explanation is given when an ongoing story is pursued. So do not be dismayed when you switch on the TV news or watch a video for the first time and cannot understand what is going on; chances are that many of the items have come up in previous days and weeks so knowledge of the background is assumed. An item may be difficult even for a native speaker to put in context if watched out of the blue. If you can, make use of archived recordings to trace a story back. Typical categories in NHK news bulletins are: politics, economics, society, international news, regional news and sport. Not even native speakers will be familiar with all topics; it is best to focus on a small area for study purposes, so you can make progress without getting overwhelmed. See **III. HOW TO STUDY** and **IV. NEWS TOPICS.**

II. LINGUISTIC FEATURES

- A. What to look for
- B. Newspaper language
- C. Kanji Compounds
- D. Abbreviations
- E. Headlines
- F. Similar Sounds
- G. Common Phrases
- H. Proper Nouns
- I. Suffixes
- J. Prefixes

A. WHAT TO LOOK FOR

When they first watch the news, most people find themselves overwhelmed by a torrent of speech, images and text. What should you look for?

- ★ **Topic, marked by は.** As you know, the noun or phrase marked by は is usually the topic of a sentence or paragraph – it tells you what the rest of the sentence is about. If you find a news item very difficult, why not watch the tape once and aim only to catch the topics? Remember that も can sometimes replace は in this role.
- ★ **Main verb – at the end.** Japanese places the main verb at the end of the sentence. Try listening to a news bulletin to identify the main verbs.
- ★ **Subject of the verb.** The subject of the verb will either be the topic or a noun (or noun phrase) marked by が or も. Again, when you have identified the main verbs, try rewinding the tape to identify the subject.
- ★ **Repeated sounds/words.** Anything which is repeated is bound to be important! Jot down unknown words which reoccur, and look them up. Bear in mind that these may be names.

B. NEWSPAPER LANGUAGE

At the start of this article I compared watching TV News to reading a newspaper. This is not only because of the vast amount of written information we find in TV news. *The language used in Japanese TV news is very similar to newspaper Japanese.* For this reason I would recommend “How to read a Japanese Newspaper” KIT, 教材開発グループ. Some of the main features are:

- ① Similar verbal phrases and sentence endings appear in TV news broadcasts and newspapers. See **COMMON PHRASES**.

② Even newspaper headlines are replicated in the TV News headlines; they are often splashed across the screen at the beginning of bulletins, and in NHK BS News they are listed at the beginning and end of each bulletin. See **HEADLINES**.

③ Both TV news bulletins and newspapers contain a lot of proper nouns, names of institutions and abbreviations. See **PROPER NOUNS, ABBREVIATIONS**.

④ A lot of *kanji* compounds!

Useful news compounds are listed in *1000 Newspaper Compounds* by Tadashi Kikuoka (Tuttle).

STUDY TIPS:

★**Don't forget to learn meanings of individual kanji separately**, not just in compounds, so that you can deduce new combinations.

For example if you know 海 うみ 'sea' and 面 めん 'surface', it is not difficult to deduce 海面 かいめん 'the surface of the sea'.

Or if 陸 りく means 'land-mass' and 軍 ぐん 'army', what might 陸軍 mean? Compare it with 海軍 and 空軍.

★**Remember to learn both the *kun*' and *on*' readings of *kanji***. For example, you may be listening to a weather forecast and hear 'ゆき'. No problem – I'm sure you know what that means. But what if you heard せきせつ? Would you understand it? Maybe not on first hearing, unless you knew that せつ is the *on-yomi* of 雪 (ゆき) and せき is 積 (つむ) meaning 'to pile up' or 'accumulate'. So 積雪 (せきせつ) is 'fallen snow' i.e. snow which settles on the ground.

C. **KANJI COMPOUNDS**

These form the bulk of news vocabulary – the news tends to be very *kanji*-heavy. I suggest you make your own list of useful *kanji* compounds, which will vary according to the news topics you concentrate on. *1000 Newspaper Compounds* by Tadashi Kikuoka (Tuttle) lists the most common compounds found in newspapers, in order of frequency. See **IV. NEWS TOPICS** for lists of compounds found in the most common news categories. Knowing *kanji* compounds or 'pairs' will also help you to deduce longer pieces of vocabulary, for example if you know that 比例 (ひれい) means 'ratio' or 'proportion' and 代表 (だいひょう) 'representation', you can work out the meaning of 比例代表. Likewise 憲法 (けんぽう) and 改正 (かいせい) are combined to form 憲法改正.

EXERCISE:

Work out the meaning of the following four-*kanji* compounds by combining the meanings of the pairs making them up:

In a political context, ^{せいさいけつぎ} 制裁決議

Here is an example sentence where this phrase is used:

国連安全保障理事会は 12 月 23 日、満場一致でイラン核活動に対する制裁決議を可決した。

In an item relating to crime, ^{ぎぞうぼうし} 偽造防止

Here is an example sentence where this phrase is used:

新紙幣には、偽造防止のために新たな技術が用いられています。

Compounds have been added before and after 偽造防止 to form 紙幣偽造防止対策.
Can you work out the meaning?

And finally in a bulletin on education, ^{ひっしゅうかもく} 必修科目

For example:

生物学は自然科学部の必修科目である。

D. ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations are very common, and can be confusing! Four-*kanji* compounds are often abbreviated by taking the 1st and 3rd *kanji*. For example: 生命保険 (せいめいほけん) meaning 'life insurance' is abbreviated to 生保 (せいほ).

憲法改正 (けんぽうかいせい) 'reform of the constitution' is abbreviated to form 改憲 (かいけん) and is used as a verb, 改憲する 'to reform the constitution'.

Some abbreviations are complicated. In the following case a long phrase, actually containing 7(!) *kanji*, is abbreviated using *kanji* 1 and 3:

東京証券取引所 (とうきょうしょうけんとりひきじょ) 'the Tokyo Stock Exchange', becomes 東証 (とうしょう)

Here is a similar example:

経団連 (けいだんれん) is short for [日本]経済団体連合会 (にほんけいざいだんたいれんごうかい), The Japan Federation of Economic Organisations;

What might 国連安保理 (こくれんあんぼり) stand for?

Well 国連 is the Japanese for the United Nations and 安保理 an abbreviation for 安全保障理事会 (あんぜんほしょうりじかい). 7 *kanji* have been abbreviated to 1, 3, 5. So what about the meaning of the whole phrase? Literally 'The United Nations

Security Guarantee Executive Committee' 国連安全保障理事会 or 国連安保理 is the "United Nations Security Council."

I presented the abbreviation 電監審 (でんかんしん) to a group of Japanese native speaking students, and even they were puzzled by it. This stands for 電波監理審議会、the 'Radio Regulatory Council'. In cases like this, the abbreviation will usually be explained during the news bulletin.

Katakana terms are also commonly abbreviated. Here are some examples:

マスコミ mass communications

パソコン personal computer

ファミレス family restaurant (even though you might guess this is someone without a family!)

リモコン remote control

アニメ animation

デパート department store

関テレ かんてれ = 関西テレビ (かんさいテレビ)

STUDY TIP: add to this list as you come across *katakana* abbreviations.

Single *kanji*, or sometimes *katakana* symbols are used to represent countries. This you will more often see written than spoken on the news, but it is useful to know. For example, 日 is used to indicate Japan and 中 China, so 日中関係 (にっちゅうかんかい) means 'Sino-Japanese relations'.

Other examples include:

France: 「仏」 ふつ; Germany: 「独」 どく; Holland: 「蘭」 らん; Italy: 「伊」 い;

India: 「印」 いん、South Korea: 「韓」 かん; North Korea: 「朝」 ちょう; Russia:

「露」 ろ; Taiwan: 「台」 たい; the U.K.: 「英」 えい; the USA 「米」 べい;

the Philippines 「比」 ひ.

E. HEADLINES

Although we are discussing TV news it is worth looking at the structure of Japanese newspaper headlines, as the news is often presented in headline form at the beginning and end of each bulletin. BS News for example, which is broadcast on JSTV several times a day (currently 14.00, 16.00, 17.00 and 21.00 GMT) shows headlines on the screen at the beginning and end of each bulletin. At the start of the bulletin these are left on screen for several minutes while the news is read out, and each headline is highlighted as the newsreader discusses that topic. Note that headlines are

abbreviated; they often miss out the main verb or leave out particles. You have to mentally complete this yourself to understand the headline.

For example: こいずみしゅしょう だんごうさいはつぼうし ぜんりょく
小泉首相 談合再発防止に 全力 (5/2/06)

The newsreader actually says something like

小泉首相 は 談合再発防止に 全力 を尽くします。

Here is another headline, where 東横イン is the name of a hotel chain:

しょうがいしゃだんたい とうよこいん こうぎぶん
障害者団体 東横インに抗議文

Again the verb is omitted from the end of the phrase:

障害者団体 は 東横インに抗議文 を出します

Have a look at these three examples:

- i) ロボットを学校の防犯対策に
- ii) ファン教授 8億円余不正管理
- iii) 医療改革関連法案 国会に提出 (10/02/06)

How might the 'spoken version' sound? Here are some ideas:

- i) ロボットを学校の防犯対策に 使います
- ii) ファン教授 8億円余り が 不正管理 されました。
- iii) 医療改革関連法案 は 国会に提出 されます

Here is a list of headlines from a news broadcast of November 2006. Complete the sentences to work out the meaning:

1. ひっしゅうかもく いちぶこうこうこうしほしゅうかいし
必修科目 一部の高校で補修開始
2. ははおや じぜん そうだん こうちょう つた
母親の事前の相談 校長に伝わらず
3. ぶらじる だいとうりょうせん けっせんとうひょうはじ
ブラジル大統領選 決選投票始まる
4. につかんはつ あふり かしげんきょうどうかいはつ
日韓初のアフリカ資源共同開発
5. でんしはいきぶつ こくがいうしゅつ ちょうさ
電子廃棄物の国外流出 調査を

F. SIMILAR SOUNDS

The *kanji*-heavy nature of the news means that there are many WORDS WHICH SOUND IDENTICAL! Only the context and written captions will enable you to distinguish these. Here are some examples – look up any you don't know.

しもん 諮問

しもん 指紋

さいけつ 採決

さいけつ 採血

そうてい 想定

そうてい 装丁

そうてい 漕艇

はんい 犯意

はんい 範囲

はんい 叛意

And also some WORDS WHICH SOUND VERY SIMILAR:

さいけつ 採決

さいけつ 採血

Politicians often lose these two things at the same time :

にんき 人気

にんき 任期

G. COMMON PHRASES:

Some phrases are hardly ever used in everyday speech, but occur a lot in TV news broadcasts.

★STUDY TIP: Familiarise yourself with these “news phrases” and you will find comprehension much easier. Why not add your own phrases to the list as you come across them?

* 再発防止 さいはつぼうし ‘preventing something from reoccurring’ or ‘making sure sth does not happen again’. You will often hear this phrase, particularly from those in authority when things go wrong! 再発 means ‘reoccur’ and 防止 (ぼうし)

means 'prevention'; not to be confused with 帽子 (ぼうし) 'hat', which sounds the same! This situation will often occur when 熟語 (*kanji* compounds) are spoken, so beware that things might not mean what you first assume! That is another reason why it helps to keep an eye on the subtitles.

So, now you know 再発防止, what do you think 再発防止策 means?

* 平行線 (へいこうせん) をたどる 'to run along parallel lines'. This phrase is often used to indicate that negotiations between two parties are getting nowhere.

* 幕を閉じる まくをとじる to come to an end

* Plain-form sentence + 模様 (もよう) です。

模様 (もよう) is a noun meaning 'look' or 'appearance' and can follow a sentence to mean 'it appears that', 'one gets the impression that'.

A very similar expression is Plain-form sentence + ようです。 This translates as 'it seems that..', 'it looks as though...'

* NOUN+ 指摘する to point to X, point out X

e.g. 大きな欠陥と指摘される be pointed out as a major flaw

*をともなっている。accompanies/ goes along with/ is accompanied by....

* ...と言わざるをえない。 I must say that...

★STUDY TIP: Some frequently used sentences are worth learning *en bloc*:

*A さんは記者団に対し次のように述べました。

Ms/Mr.A said the following to reporters.(記者団 きしゃだん, literally 'a gathering of reporters'. You will also find 記者会見 きしゃかいけん, 'a press conference'.)

* Aは「、、、」考えを示しました。

'A' said that // expressed the view that.....

*A さんは次のように答弁しています。

Ms. A responded/explained/defended him/herself by saying,....

* ~かどうか/~は 予断を許さない。 We cannot predict whether.... ;it still open to conjecture.

* 説明を拒む (せつめいをこぼむ) refuse to provide an explanation

^{たいせい} ^{とどの}
* 体制が整いました。 'a system is in place', 'things are organised (such that...)'

* 全力を尽くしていきたい。

I/We will try our best to...// I/We will do what we can to....

* 対応に全力をあげる。

...do our/their best to respond

* Another common phrase used when a scandal or mishap has occurred is

信頼を回復する re-establish trust // regain credibility

for example ,,に対する国民の信頼を回復する restore the public's confidence in

....

The two phrases above may even come together:

E.g. [信頼を回復するため、全力を尽くしたい]

Or [再発防止に全力を尽くしたい]

Work out what these last two phrases mean and read them aloud a few times so that you will recognise them immediately when they come up.

H. PROPER NOUNS

Names of institutions, personal and place names are amongst the most difficult things to decipher in Japanese, and crop up very frequently in the news. Do not feel that you have to remember every name that comes up. It is often sufficient just to identify an item as a proper noun. When you hear/see an item of vocabulary you do not recognise, always bear in mind that it might be a place-name, company or personal name.

Suffixes often follow proper nouns and provide us with a signal that 'this is a place name' or 'this is a personal name'. Suffixes to personal names are very helpful in identifying a person's role in a news story. See **SUFFIXES, PEOPLE'S TITLES** below.

I suggest you make lists of names, divided into groups like Japanese cities, government departments, foreign names and so on. See **III. HOW TO STUDY** and **IV. NEWS TOPICS (Politics)**.

Also, if you wish to familiarise yourself with Japan's main geographical areas without getting bogged down in detail, I suggest the weather forecast

is a good source. All place names mentioned there will be of general interest, and worth putting in a glossary.

I. SUFFIXES:

The following suffixes can serve as a marker – ‘This May be a Proper noun’:

Place-name indicators:

村 そんな or むら； 町 ちょう or まち； 区 く； 市 し； 府
ふ； 都と； 県 けん； 荘 しょう or そう can indicate the name
of a house or villa.

Geographical features:

、、、川 かわ River
、、、島 しま or とう Island
、、、半島 はんとう Peninsular
、、、山脈 さんみやく Mountain Range
、、、湖 こ Lake
、、、海 かい Sea
、、、湾 わん Bay or Gulf, for example ペルシャ湾 ‘the Persian
Gulf’.
、、、沖 おき means ‘offshore from...’, for example ハワイ沖 ‘off the shore of
Hawaii’.
、、、国境 こっきょう border (with), for example フランス国境 ‘the French
border’.

Educational institutions: (look up any of these you do not know)

、、、小学校 しょうがっこう
、、、中学校 ちゅうがっこう
、、、高校 こうこう
、、、大学 だいがく

Public institutions: (look up any of these you do not know)

市役所 しゃくしょ
警察署 けいさつしょ
博物館 はくぶつかん
美術館 びじゅつかん
裁判所 さいばんしょ

Others

百貨店 ひやつかてん
テレビ、ラジオ、放送局 ほうそうきょく
丸 まる often follows the name of a ship.

院 いん often suggests a proper noun, for example 東横イン どうよこいん is the name of a hotel chain in the news recently, whilst 平等院 びょうどういん is the name of Buddhist Temple.

線 せん 'line' often follows a transport route, for example 京浜東北線 けいひんとうほくせん, 'the Keihin Tōhoku Train Line'.

People's Titles

As you know, the Japanese hardly ever call a person by his or her 'bare name'. The name will almost always be followed by a title, indicating that person's status or position. The most common titles are さん and 氏 (し), which are very neutral and tell us nothing about the person named. There are, however, many others which will define that person's role in a news story.

Notable suffixes to a name are:

先生 *sensei* for a teacher

医師 *ishi* medical doctor

選手 *senshu* after the name of a sports competitor or athlete;

被告 *hikoku* indicates a person accused of a crime;

容疑者 *yōgisha* indicates a person who is a crime suspect (but not yet formally accused).

教授 *kyōju* follows the name of a university professor

総理 *sōri* is the title of the Prime Minister (short for *sōridaijin*)

大臣 *daijin* is a government minister, for example 外務大臣 *gaimudaijin* the foreign minister

大統領 *daitōryō* means 'president' for example ブッシュ大統領.

代表 *daihyō* representative

社長 *shachō* company president

部長 *buchō*, 課長 *kachō* head of a department or section

STUDY TIP: Add to this list when you see other suffixes to names.

Grammatical Suffixes

These are one of the most useful tools to increase your understanding: often a string of *kanji* is actually a phrase followed by a suffix. Learning the most common of these will aid comprehension. It is also necessary to do this as you will not be able to look these phrases up *en bloc* in a dictionary – you will need to recognise the suffix.

Common grammatical suffixes include:

NOUN+上 ----じょう from the standpoint of

e.g. 教育上 from an educational standpoint/viewpoint, educationally

e.g. この町は歴^{れき}史^し上^{じょう} 重^{じゅう}要^{よう}な町である。 This town is important from a historical standpoint. // This town is important historically.

NOUN+性 ----せい quality of (forms an abstract noun)

e.g. 重要な important > 重要性 importance

NOUN+力 ----りょく power of

NOUN+感 ----かん feeling of...

X 以前 ----いぜん before X

X 以後 ----いこう after X

X 直後 ----ちよくご immediately after X

X 以外 ----いがい apart from/other than X

----数 ----すう number of----

----率 ----りつ the rate of----

----中 ----ちゅう during----

----用 ----よう for the use of-----, used for-----

----期 ----き period of...

X化 ----か 'X-isation', 'becoming X'

X化する 'make X' or 'make into X', or 'X-ize'

e.g. 産業 industry > 産業化 industrialisation > 産業化する industrialise

----学 ----がく the study of----

e.g. 言語 language > 言語学 linguistics.

----高 ----たか or だか level, quantity of.....

...気味 ----きみ or ぎみ a touch of..., a hint of..., slightly...,
e.g. 疲れ気味である he's a little tired

----あたり in the region of ----, round about ----

J. PREFIXES

These are perhaps a bit less common, but also useful:

いわゆる+NOUN called, known as ----

ある+NOUN a certain ----

生---- なま----- conveys the idea of 'raw', 'immediate', 'live',
e.g. 出演 is an appearance on stage or in the media so 生出演 means a live appearance.

再---- (する) さい----- do X again **Note** also 再び ふたたび again
e.g. ^{さいはっけん}再発見する rediscover; ^{さいかい}再会 reunion, meeting again

無---- む---- without..., not...
e.g. 無意味 (な) meaningless (意味 meaning)

両--- りょう---- both... e.g. 両国 both countries; 両首脳 both leaders

EXERCISE:

If 国会 (こっかい) means parliament, what does 休会 (きゅうかい) mean?

If 学校 (がっこう) means school, what might 下校 (げこう) mean? And 両校 (りょうこう)?

収賄 (しゅうわい) = bribery, or accepting a bribe. What about 収賄事件 (しゅうわいじけん) and 収賄者 (しゅうわいしゃ)?

単純 (たんじゆん) = simple; what about 単純化する?

What is the meaning of 再開する?

If 地震 (じしん) means earthquake, what does 地震学 mean?

関係 (かんけい) means 'relation' or 'connection', what about 無関係?

III. HOW TO STUDY:

Here are some strategies you might employ to study Japanese from recorded news:

i) Follow a story over time: pick a single news story when it comes up for the first time, and follow it for several days or weeks. Start by picking up and looking up key words, that is, words that are repeated and/or come up in the headline (see HEADLINES). Once the key words are familiar, you can go on to search all unknown vocabulary. This is very good way to study as each time the main outlines of the story are repeated vocabulary is reinforced, and items learnt the previous day will resurface and be consolidated. If you do not understand the story despite stopping and reviewing the tape, I suggest reading in English to back-up your viewing. (See iv below, and web sites listed in **NEWS TOPICS (Politics)**).

ii) Concentrate on a single subject area. Select a subject area that interests you, for example the environment, media, social services, manufacturing, schools, farming & fishing...and focus exclusively on this area. Look up key words first to get the gist of each story, and only then move on to details. Bear in mind that unknown vocabulary will contain a mixture of specialised terms and general Japanese, as well as proper nouns. This approach works well if you select a subject of particular interest to you; your knowledge of the subject will help you to work out meaning from context. Again, use English websites to help get the facts if you are really stuck, but do try and extract as much as possible from the Japanese first, winding back the tape and reviewing as often as necessary. Remember that it is not necessary to understand every word in order to get the gist of a story.

iii) Make your own glossaries. The process of looking up terms and actually making a glossary helps you remember vocabulary. I have found Microsoft Excel a good format for vocabulary lists as you can order your words in *kana* order or alphabetical order. And of course electronic glossaries are very convenient to search for vocabulary. I suggest that you include the pronunciation of words in your glossary (as well as a *kanji* term & English meaning) because you will need that the next time you hear the term and want to search for it.

iv) Read the Captions.

Japanese TV news is not only spoken aloud by the newsreader, it is very often printed along the bottom of the screen like a subtitle. This happens in many news broadcasts, even where we would not expect to find a subtitle.

STUDY TIP: Do pause the video and take time to read the captions. The vocabulary appearing in captions is usually composed of key words and so is a very good place to start. However, beware that there will also be many proper nouns and abbreviations.

Why do the captions on screen help?

1. Often *kanji* compounds only become clear only when you see them; you may know individual characters but not have heard them used together before.
2. There may be words which sound the same, so can only be distinguished when you see them written. **See II. LINGUISTIC FEATURES.**
3. Some interviewees have a strong accent, and even Japanese viewers are expected to use the subtitles to understand what is said.
4. Japanese news editors sometimes distort the voices of interviewees to disguise their identity. The spoken word is then very difficult to understand – again, we are expected to listen and read at the same time.
5. Questions addressed to an interviewee are often just printed on screen and not spoken aloud at all. We only hear the answer. You may find a question appearing vertically at the side of the screen, whilst horizontal subtitles give the respondent's speech.
6. When excerpts are not in Japanese, subtitles are used. This occurs more often on Japanese TV than in the UK.

I know that many students find written Japanese difficult. The idea of reading as well as listening might seem to make things worse! But remember that you do not have to be able to read everything, any more than you have to understand every word that is spoken. Pausing the tape to read the captions enables you (i) to check and confirm anything you wish, for example the verb-form or the topic, and (ii) to see new vocabulary and learn how it is written.

★ ***STUDY TIP FOR CHINESE SPEAKERS:*** Are you relying *too much* on the written material? Test yourself by listening first without looking at the screen, and only then read the subtitles.

v) Prepare material before listening and/or follow-up afterwards.

One website you may find useful is <http://www3.nhk.or.jp/news>. This site gives transcripts of NHK radio news bulletins, either a very short summary or a longer version (click on ‘もっと詳しく’). The top menu allows you to select a topic: politics,

economics, society, international news, regional news or sport. The most recent news story will come up on screen, and you can also refer to previous stories by clicking on any headline in the right hand column. This page is a very valuable resource, as the wording and content is largely the same as NHK television news, so it provides a close written equivalent of material on the video news tapes. You could use it in a variety of different ways, like looking up a story or selection of stories to learn the main vocabulary items and prepare for video watching, or looking back to find a written version of a story you wish to follow up, or picking up difficult passages and studying them at your leisure.

You can also read the news in English on various websites. The NHK site mentioned above has an English page, <http://www.nhk.or.jp/english/> and many other sites provide Japanese news in English including Yomiuri News: <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/>, Nikkei Net: <http://www.nikkei.co.jp/> and Asahi news: <http://www.asahi.com/english/index.html>.

IV. NEWS TOPICS

Of course the variety of news topics is huge, but the NHK news is roughly divided into categories of: Politics, Economics, Social news, International news, Regional news, and Sport, followed by the Weather Forecast. Longer broadcasts, like the hour-long lunchtime news or ‘おはよう日本’ on weekday evenings, also include features on culture, health and lifestyle, science or the arts.

Politics

Often the first item in a news bulletin this is a very difficult area to follow, even in your native language! Special terminology is used for parliamentary proceedings, and there are many institutions and formal titles to deal with. **I have supplied a list of vocabulary including many tricky terms which came up in political news of 2005 - 2007.**

Let's have a look at a typical political news item, taken from the NHK news, 5/2/07:
自民役員会 柳沢氏続投を確認.

自民党は役員会を開き、愛知県知事選挙などの結果を受けて、柳沢厚生労働大臣をめぐる問題について、青木参議院議員会長が「安倍総理大臣の方針に従う」と述べるなど、

柳沢大臣を続投させる方針をあらためて確認しました。

First the headline gives the gist of the story in an abbreviated form. (See HEADLINES.)

自民 is short for 自民党 (first line of article) , the Liberal Democratic Party. 役員会 is clearly a committee of some kind and 役員 are ‘directors’, so we can guess at the meaning. 柳沢氏 must be the name of a person, and two *kanji* compounds 続投 (with を marking a direct object) and 確認, the latter clearly being used as a verb. 続投 actually means ‘remaining in power’ or ‘continuing in office’ – perhaps 続く (つづく) gives us a clue. 確認 かくにん is a very frequent and important compound, meaning ‘confirm’, ‘affirm’, or ‘verify’. Is that enough to give you the meaning of the bulletin? Well, reading through the paragraph above will fill in the details. Notice the other pieces of vocabulary that come up:

愛知県	Aichi Prefecture [a place name]
知事	Governor
選挙	election
結果	result
柳沢	Hakuo YANAGISAWA [personal name, a politician]
厚生労働大臣	Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare
問題	problem, issue
青木	Mikio AOKI [another politician]
参議院議員会長	Chairman, General Assembly of LDP Members in the House of Councillors
安倍	Sinzo ABE [Japan’s prime minister from September 2006]
総理大臣	Prime Minister
方針に従う	follow a policy, pursue a course
述べる	to say, speak (very commonly used instead of 言う)

As you can see from this short example, political news contains a lot of personal names (3 in this passage), place names and names of institutions (2 here), job titles, ministries and committees (3).

STUDY TIP: If you are interested in following political news, I suggest that you combine TV-news watching with reading. Make use of online resources such as Wikipedia, available in both Japanese and English, to research institutions, laws, and other proper nouns. Politicians and political parties all have their own web pages, as do trades unions, companies, political pressure groups and so on. Many of these are translated into English, but it is often easier to google-search in Japanese first and then use the English link on the web page if available (you might have to look hard – this is often tiny!)

It is difficult to catch names and titles of institutions in a single viewing; the easiest way to learn the key words and names in a bulletin is by pausing the tape and reading the printed headlines on screen. See **HEADLINES** and **III. HOW TO STUDY**. The following websites may be useful for background information and vocabulary on Japanese politics:

The NHK news page <http://www3.nhk.or.jp/news>

A dictionary of abbreviations: <http://www1.nisiq.net/~cpulot/Dic.htm>

Yahoo Japan news topics: <http://dailynews.yahoo.co.jp/fc/>

Trends in Japan: <http://web-japan.org/trends/>

Google Japan for general searches: <http://www.google.co.jp/>

The 'recent news encyclopaedia': http://www.toonippo.co.jp/news_hyakka/index.html

Yomiuri News: <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/>

Nikkei Net: <http://www.nikkei.co.jp/>

Asahi news: <http://www.asahi.com/english/index.html>

Radio Japan Online: http://www.nhk.or.jp/rj/index_e.html

Japan today: <http://www.japantoday.com/>

For government agencies, committees and titles:
<http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/seisaku/hourei/name.pdf>

Political news also includes particularly tricky sub-categories like constitutional affairs and parliamentary proceedings. I would suggest that you avoid these initially – these are challenging even for many Japanese viewers!

Economics

Japanese TV devotes a lot more time to economic news than UK television does. It appears that Japanese viewers have a better knowledge of financial affairs and take more interest in this area. Students not interested in business may sometimes find this field difficult and technical, but if you learn the principal financial vocabulary and phrases, you can get the gist of stories without necessarily understanding all the details.

Many stories are related to trade and business. This is a typical one:

“支援で品質管理の改善を”

パンメーカー最大手の「山崎製パン」から菓子事業全般にわたって品質管理の技術的な支援を受けることを決めた「不二家」の櫻井康文社長は5日夜、記者会見を開き、「山崎製パン」の支援を受けることで品質管理面を早期に改善したいという考えを強調しました。(NHK, 6.2.07)

First of all a vocabulary check:

支援 help, assistance

品質管理 quality control

改善 improvement; the を in the headline suggests 改善をする

最大手の giant, huge

「山崎製パン」Yamazaki Baking Co., Ltd (like most companies, you can easily find the webpage for this)

菓子 pastry, sweets

事業 business

技術的な technical

「不二家」Fujiya Co., Ltd, another proper noun.

櫻井康文 a personal name, Yasufumi Sakurai

社長 company chairman

記者会見 press conference

早期に speedily

強調(する) to stress

Again, three proper nouns come up but the grammar and vocabulary are manageable. However, you would need to research this story to find out why these measures had been taken. (Fujiya had actually been affected by a scandal involving the use of out-of-date ingredients in its cake products).

Many financial stories are more difficult than this, as they involve banking or legal terminology. **A file of difficult financial vocabulary which came up in 2006 and 2007 is supplied.** You may wish to refer to this or update it as you work.

Japanese business stories often involve financial misconduct. I collected vocabulary appearing on the news over a 3 month period, and am amazed how many words relate to scandals, bribery and fraud!

共謀 きょうぼう conspiracy, collusion

改竄 かいざんする cook the books, alter, tamper with, falsify, doctor (the evidence)

詐欺 さぎ fraud, scam, con, deception, swindle

詐取 さしゅ cheating // obtaining by deception

偽装 ぎそう camouflage

作る つくる [in this context may be used to mean] fabricate, invent, concoct

だまし取る rip off, defraud, swindle

偽造	ぎぞう	forgery, counterfeit
騙す	だます	deceive, cheat
横領	おうりょう	usurpation, embezzlement, misappropriation
着服	ちやくふく	embezzle, pocket
流用	りゅうよう	diversion, (mis)appropriation
油断	ゆだん	neglect, negligence, carelessness
虚偽	きょぎ	falsehood
盗用	とうよう	embezzlement, misappropriation, theft
偽る	いつわる	tell a lie, lie, deceive
共謀	きょうぼう	collusion, conspiracy
不正	ふせい	unjust unfair, unlawful, wrong, dishonest
仮名	かめい	a fictitious name, pseudonym
否認	ひにん	denial (by accused etc)
談合	だんごう	collusion, price-fixing
捜査	そうさ	investigation
未遂	みすい	attempted...
掻い潜る	かいくぐる	dodge one's way through, avoid being caught

Society; Regional News; Culture

These categories are probably the broadest. The '**society** 社会' section of NHK news includes almost anything which does not fit into other categories, and '**regional news** 地方' can cover any topic whatsoever. The advantage of studying these categories may be that you avoid very specialised items on politics and economics, and can concentrate on a range of standard Japanese vocabulary. These categories will also include a good variety of items. Local stories in particular are often covered once and once only; they do not necessarily run on for days and weeks like national ones. Note that place names occurring in the regional news will often be given with *furigana* in the captions if the locations are so small that Japanese people would not be expected to know them, and if they are difficult to read. I do suggest though, that you invest the time to learn the names of all Japan's prefectures and major cities, as these will recur. See also **Weather** below.

Many people find **cultural news** items the most interesting but they are not easy to prepare for or summarise. This is because their scope is so wide: from the arts to food, from flower arrangement to student exchange programmes. It is almost impossible to give a list of vocabulary relating to these areas, as one might do for economics or business. However, it is well worth concentrating on cultural items, especially where you have a particular interest in the subject matter – they will prove very rewarding.

STUDY TIP: Scroll through the pre-recorded tape to select the item of most interest

to you and study a short section. Do not try to use the whole of the hour-long news recording.

★ Note that the lunchtime (UK time) NHK news hour has a lengthy ‘society’ item about halfway through each broadcast. I recommend this feature for study: the pace is a little more relaxed than the regular news section, and time is taken to look into an issue in some depth. Previous programs have included features on environmental and cultural projects, health and disability issues, food, travel, and education.

★ ‘おはよう日本’, broadcast on weekday evenings (around 9pm) on JSTV, includes a regular item called 街角情報 (まちかどじょうほう) which is usually a simple and practical report on grass-roots developments in Japan. The focus is on consumer issues: recent items featured, for example, new services offered by convenience stores and chemists, innovative designs in calendars, and new remote-control toys.

International News

This is an interesting area with its own challenges. International news items will often carry over for months or years so you can follow up a topic for a long period of time. International stories are also well covered in the British press making it easy to back up your Japanese news viewing with information in English. The difficulties in this area are twofold: (i) the assumption of background knowledge and (ii) the large number of non-Japanese names.

(i) Long-running stories such as relations with North Korea assume that the viewer knows a lot of background; I feel that these are difficult to use as language learning material.

(ii) Most foreign names are in *katakana*, derived from the pronunciation in the language of origin, so Paris, for example, is パリ in Japanese, not パリス. Usually this is not a problem, but English speakers should beware that the Japanese version of a name can vary from the English version: プラハ for example, is taken from the Czech – Praha – not the English version, ‘Prague’. Likewise モスクワ and so on.

Some Asian names, particularly Chinese and Korean ones, are more difficult. In most cases they are pronounced according to the Japanese *on-yomi* of the characters. It is often difficult to match the pronunciation which appears on English-language news with that on Japanese news, making identification of people and places a particular problem. I have no easy answer to offer, although online searches can be very helpful. Finally, single syllables are often used to represent countries, for example *bei* 米 for the USA and *ro* 露 for Russia. See the list in **LINGUISTIC FEATURES-ABBREVIATIONS**.

So I suggest that you use international stories for study if either: you are particularly involved or knowledgeable about the area or: the story is relatively new and relates to, for example, the UK or your home country, so you can easily double check names and facts.

Here are a few Chinese and Korean names which have cropped up in 2006-7:

北京 ぺきん Peking, or Beijing. [A recent news bulletin about Beijing included the phrase 京都の行政; notice that this referred to the authorities in Beijing, not the city of Kyoto in Japan!]

上海 しゃんはい Shanghai

黄河 こうが Yellow River

江西省 こうせいしょう Jiangxi sheng; Kiangsi Province, China

胡锦涛国家主席 コキントウこっかしゅせき Chinese President Hu Jintao

人民元 じんみんげん Chinese currency, *yuan*

長江 ちょうこう Yangtze River, China (also pronounced Chang Jiang)

釜山 プサン Pusan

盧武鉉 ノ・ムヒョン S Korean President Roh Moo-hyun

金正日 キム・ジョンイル N Korean Leader Kim Jong Il

Sport

This might be considered a specialist area but can be useful for comprehension if you are familiar with a particular sport. A short list of sports vocabulary follows; I suggest you add to this and make a full glossary for your favourite sport.

引き分け ひきわけ a draw

平泳ぎ ひらおよぎ breast stoke

選手権 せんしゅけん championship

決勝 けっしょう final(s)

FA エフ・エー free agent (baseball)

(野球シーズンの) 開幕 opening of the baseball season

交流戦 こうりゅうせん inter-league games

守備 しゅび fielding, defence

黒星 くろぼし a defeat; 黒星を取る be beaten

投球 とうきゅう pitching, throw

球団 きゅうだん pro baseball team

登板 とうばん appearances as a pitcher

安打	あんだ	a hit (in baseball)
盗塁	とうるい	base stealing
右四つ	みぎよつ	right-handed belt grip (sumo)
兄弟子	あにでし	sumō – older wrestler in the same stable
負け越し	まけこし	have more losses than wins
大関	おおぜき	sumō wrestler of the second highest rank
準決勝	じゅんけんっしょう	semi-final
準々決勝	じゅんじゅんけっしょう	quarter final
世界記録	せかいきろく	world record
暫定王座	ざんていおうざ	interim champion (boxing)

Weather can be a good place to start your news watching. This is because phrases tend to be repetitive and the range of possible meanings is limited. You also have the weather map and symbols to help you. I feel that the weather forecast is a good comprehension exercise for beginners and lower intermediate students who feel overwhelmed by the range of Japanese occurring in the main news bulletin. It is also interesting, as Japanese does not have a future tense of the verb, to note the expressions used to refer to the future. These include ...でしょう ; ...だろう ; ...みこみです ; ...と予想され; ...の恐れがあります there is a risk of... .

Note that you can also use the weather forecast, along with the map, to familiarise yourself with the main regions of Japan.

Here are some vocabulary items you may find in the weather forecast:

晴れ	はれ	clear skies
蒸暑い	むしあつい	hot and sticky
熱波	ねっぱ	heat-wave
小春日和	こはるびより	warm autumn weather, 'Indian summer'
曇り	くもり	cloudy weather
雨	あめ	rain
雷	かみなり	thunder
雷雨	らいう	thunderstorm
風	かぜ	wind
暴風	ぼうふう	violent wind, storm
突風	とっふう	sudden gust of wind
大しけの	おおしけの	turbulent
高気圧	こうきあつ	high pressure
低気圧	ていきあつ	low pressure

前線	ぜんせん	a weather front
竜巻	たつまき	tornado
波	なみ	waves
波浪	はろう	waves
高波	たかなみ	high waves
	ぐずつく	be unsettled
局地的に	きょくちてき	locally, in some areas
ところにより		locally, in some areas
雪	ゆき	snow
降雪	こうせつ	snowfall
積雪	せきせつ	snow cover
霰	みぞれ	sleet
霰	あられ	hail
気象庁	きしょうちょう	the weather centre, Meteorological Office

Martie Jelinek, June 2007