

# *On the Effective Use of Broadcast News as Teaching Materials for University English Classes*

大学の英語授業における放送英語の効果的な利用法

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外国語学習者向けの市販教材の多くは、CD、DVDなど付属メディアを利用することで、英語音声进行学习できるように工夫されている。しかし、その音声教材の大半は、録音スタジオで英語母語話者が学習者の理解度を考慮して読み上げたものなので、発話速度を落としたうえ自然な英語発音に付きものの音声同化現象などが省かれていることがある。そのような教材のみを利用した学習者は、英米の地で実際に話されている英語が十分理解できなくて、がく然とすることがあると聞く。英語の中・上級学習者は「本物の英語発音」に慣れておく必要があるのではなかろうか。本論では本物の英語発音のひとつである放送英語を利用した効果的な学習方法を提案する。本論の一つ目の目的はアメリカのテレビニュース英語の特徴を分析することで、二つ目の目的は大学の英語授業における放送英語の効果的な利用法を紹介することである。

## Key words

Broadcast news (ニュース), speech rate (発話速度), ABC news materials (ABC放送ニュース教材), course goals (授業の目標), news journal (ニュース・ジャーナル)

## 1. Introduction

In recent years an abundance of textbooks and other resources aimed at teaching spoken English to Japanese learners has become available, based on a wide variety of sources. These can be broadly grouped into two categories: the first incorporates spoken English geared to beginning or intermediate level learners while the second is focused on so-called authentic English. The audio components of materials in the first group are generally recorded by native English speakers at a slower speech rate to ensure that learners can practice listening skills without too much difficulty. The model speech tends to be clearly articulated, often without sound changes such as assimilation and elision which are normally observed in English spoken at natural speed. The fact that many Japanese students of English have been taught in a

“greenhouse” with speech tailored to suit their level of proficiency may be one reason why even intermediate and advanced learners experience difficulty when encountering authentic English in North America or the U.K.

Teaching materials in the second category are therefore essential in order to provide learners with exposure to natural English. Authentic English can be drawn from a variety of sources including movies, TV shows, documentaries and news broadcasts. Brinton (2001) notes that authentic materials serve to strengthen the direct relationship between the language classroom and the outside world for students. Movies and TV dramas are attractive for learners and may enhance their motivation. However, Willis (1983) cautions that “it [a movie] carries an aura of entertainment which can keep students quiet and relatively contented whether they are learning or not.” The implication here is that what students find to be entertaining may not necessarily promote genuine learning.

Broadcast news, on the other hand, may not be as entertaining as some movies and TV shows, but it does have several distinct advantages. S. Yamane (2001) suggests that visual information facilitates learners’ comprehension of spoken English. His experiment involved two groups of students with homogeneous listening abilities. One group of students listened only to the audio component of a news story, while the other group viewed the visual image of the same news story projected onto a screen while listening to the audio. It was found that those learners who were watching the news could obtain statistically more bits of information than those who had access only to auditory information. The result suggests that visual images help learners to grasp the contents of the news story. The following factors were also cited as advantages of broadcast news: 1) each news clip lasts only a few minutes, which is an appropriate length of time for learners to maintain concentration; 2) the English is authentic, i.e., the speech rate is not deliberately controlled to suit the needs of non-native speakers; 3) news stories include a rich variety of topics and are informative, enabling students to learn about such issues as international affairs, politics and the environment as well as gaining exposure to cultural and social background; and 4) they are not overly entertaining like some movies and TV shows.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the current study is twofold. First, we will discuss how the materials are created and examine some of the salient characteristics observed in the English of American news broadcasts. Following that, we will suggest some effective ways of using broadcast news as

teaching materials for university English classes. Our present research is based on a long-selling series of textbooks published by Kinseido. The textbooks are compiled and written by the authors using news stories broadcast by the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) based in the U.S. Details of the publications will be explained in the next section.

## **2. Broadcast News as Teaching Materials**

### **2.1 Creating Teaching Materials from TV News**

In 1987 the authors, aware of a gap in the market, determined the need for authentic materials based on television news broadcasts—at the time, a novel idea. Through negotiations with Kinseido Publishers and ABC News in New York, it was decided that a new edition of the textbook and accompanying video for classroom use would be published biannually. Ten years and five books later, the format and exercises were revamped, incorporating suggestions from teachers nationwide who had been using the materials with their students. With the series gaining in popularity, the decision was made to begin publishing new editions on a yearly basis. In 2009 came another significant change: the inclusion of a DVD of the news stories with each student text. Although the competition from other publishers gradually began to increase, the ABC News series has remained popular and at this writing, work is currently underway on the seventeenth book in the series. The textbook was presented the LET Award for Innovative Teaching Materials in 2011, an immense honor for all associated with the project.

Technological innovations have made every step of the production process easier, including communication between the ABC representative in New York, the editor in Tokyo and the authors, even when they are in different countries. In order to have access to the full news shows, an arrangement has been made to have ABC World News recorded over a period of several months each year and then sent to Japan. On average, between 48 and 60 news broadcasts covering 24 to 30 hours of tape are previewed and indexed in preparation for each textbook. Recording normally begins in February to ensure that the books and accompanying materials are ready for April classes the following year.

A rating system has been developed that assigns one, two or three stars to stories that are felt to be most appropriate for the textbook. Author A reviews the stories first and then they are passed on to and reviewed by Author B, and then the editor. The final decision on which 15 stories and several spares are selected is a collaborative effort. General guidelines include the need to find stories that will appeal to young learners of English and to create a good balance in terms of topics and level of difficulty. In addition, many of the more popular stories at the

time of assessment will be old news by the following spring when the book goes into use. Likewise, stories involving such topics as elections and political unrest are likely to be resolved before the book goes to press, and are therefore avoided. Every effort is made to include a good cross section of topics ranging from economic and political to legal and health-related news, along with lighter human interest stories, often related to American culture. News is intrinsically challenging so achieving the right balance of stories is essential.

A further consideration is copyright. When the list of stories requested is sent to New York, it is the ABC representative who determines which stories or which sections of the stories cannot be used. The regulations have changed over the years, seemingly in line with changes in personnel. In the past clips of Major League sports events, brand names and logos, popular songs and personal photos have been cut. In recent years, however, stories have been used which included clips from the television shows *The Brady Bunch* and *Modern Family* with no eyebrows raised. Once the news clips and transcripts arrive from New York, the stories are formatted and we begin work on the exercises.

The set of materials for students includes the textbook and DVD. Instructors also have a CD recording of the news stories and exercises for classroom use. In addition to answer keys for the exercises, the Teacher's Manual also includes full transcripts along with Japanese translations and, as of 2013, vocabulary quizzes for each unit, which can be photocopied. Actively eliciting feedback from teachers using the materials in a variety of educational settings has been indispensable in the on-going effort to improve both the quality and support provided.

## 2.2 Format of the Teaching Materials

The basic format of the textbooks has remained fairly consistent over the past ten years. Following the index, each book opens with a two-page map of the U.S., identifying the locales where the news stories in that edition take place. That is followed by a six-page introduction to characteristics of American television news entitled *TV nyusu toha* ("Characteristics of Broadcast News"). An awareness of the unique features of U.S. news, linguistic and otherwise, is helpful for students, especially those challenging authentic materials for the first time. Finally, there is a list of commonly used abbreviations along with their meanings and Japanese translations, which currently runs to five pages. From AAA to WHO, this list is a valuable resource for students, and they should be advised to consult it regularly.

The format of each chapter is also consistent throughout the book, with chapters divided into three sections: "Before You Watch the DVD," "News Story," and "After You Watch the DVD." Each unit opens with two preview questions designed to get the students thinking about the

topic of the news story. These questions are intended to be general enough that most students can answer them after viewing the news clip just once. Having the students collaborate by answering the questions in pairs or small groups reduces anxiety during the early weeks of the course. Following that there are two short vocabulary tasks based on five words from the news story. Vocabulary items used in these exercises are considered to be important for general use. The news stories themselves generally run from about two to three and a half minutes. They are followed by a list of vocabulary items and phrases that students are apt to find difficult with Japanese translations. A large percentage of items glossed in this section are names of people and places appearing in the news story and more technical vocabulary specific to that story.

The first of the post-viewing exercises is a listening task with six to nine phrases deleted from the story. By challenging the students to watch the DVD prior to listening to the CD recording for Exercise A, they are apt to be pleasantly surprised by how much they are able to catch. This is also a good tool for shadowing practice, with more advanced students encouraged to do at least part of the exercise with the book closed. That is followed by post-viewing content questions, in either a multiple choice or true/false format. Although these questions check comprehension of details as well as main points of the story, students should be encouraged to first try to answer without looking back at the news transcript. Exercise C is a dialogue which recycles some of the vocabulary and phrases from the news story in more informal language. Students are asked to translate three sections of the conversation and then practice it in pairs. Next is a summary practice, in which students are given first-letter hints to aid them in finding the missing words to complete a summary of the news story. Each unit concludes with two or three discussion questions that require the students to reflect on some aspect of the news story, to do an Internet search or to interview friends to gather additional opinions on a given topic. In some cases, one or more of these questions may serve as a good lead-in to the news topic and instructors may choose to use them prior to viewing the DVD.

Beyond this basic format, some chapters include additional sections. One type is a task in which students are asked to match pictures of speakers with lines from the news story. Other chapters have a "Background of the News" section in Japanese to bring students up to date with some of the more complex issues and topics. This can also be used to practice translation and summarizing skills. Finally, at the end of some units there are special sections entitled "Useful Grammar from the News" and "Pronunciation Hints from the News." These supplementary sections draw the students' attention to linguistic patterns that will help strengthen their speaking and listening skills. Over the years the ABC News/Kinseido team has experimented with other patterns, but the current format has been found to work well with a wide range of

Japanese university students. Following a discussion of the characteristics of news English in Section 3, in Section 4 we will consider some specific ways that the textbook is being used in two different classroom environments.

### 3. Characteristics of News English

#### 3.1 Format of the News Program

Figure 1 below summarizes the basic news components of a typical story. The news story begins with a lead-in passage by the anchor which briefly explains the main story. This is usually broadcast from the studio. In some special cases, such as the March 2011 Great Tohoku Disaster, the anchor introduces the story from the actual site where the news is unfolding. In either case, he or she then introduces a news reporter who is normally on site. The reporter elaborates on the story, often interviewing people connected to the story. They may be experts in a certain field or local people asked about their personal experiences or opinions. If the clip by the reporter has been previously recorded, the story is discussed by the anchor and the reporter in the studio. Each news clip lasts just a few minutes.

<p>LEAD Introduction ... Anchorperson Introduction of the reporter</p>
<p>Main Body ... Reporter  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· News story</li> <li>· Interview</li> <li>· Discussion in the studio</li> </ul>                     Closing remarks by the reporter</p>

Figure 1. News components cited from Yamane and Yamane (2014: viii) with some modifications.

#### 3.2 Basic Data

All texts elicited from the anchors and reporters (excluding interviews) in the 15 news stories compiled in Yamane and Yamane (2013) were examined. As shown in Table 1 below, the total number of words numbered 4,715, divided into 327 sentences, with the average length of one sentence 14.4 words. Tanaka (1996), in his examination of the language style of printed media, found the mean length of one sentence in *The Japan Times* English newspaper to be 23.2 words. Thus, in spoken media such as broadcast news, significantly shorter sentences are

used.

The use of the passive voice was determined to be four percent, which was not as high as expected. The readability level of the news stories was examined using “Flesch Reading Ease” which divides the reading difficulty level into seven categories ranging from “very easy (90–100 points)” to “very difficult (0–30 points).” The readability score of news English was calculated to be 64.3, which is ranked as a “standard” level. Thus, the reading difficulty level of this spoken English was judged to be at an intermediate level for native speakers of English.

Table 1  
*Basic Data*

items	<i>M</i>
Total number of words	4,715
Total number of sentences	327
Average length of one sentence (words)	14.4
Percentage of passive voice	4%
Readability (Flesch Reading Ease)	64.3

The level of difficulty of the vocabulary used was also analyzed using the *JACET8000* vocabulary list. All of the text data was fed into an online analysis site (Someya, 2006), producing the results shown in Table 2. Seventy-three point three percent of the vocabulary used in the TV news was within the *JACET1000* level, which is the lowest level of difficulty. Listed in this category as being among the 20 most frequent words are *the, a, be, to, and, of, in, for, have, that, it, this, you, as, on, we, they, make, but, and at* in order of frequency. It

Table 2  
*Word Level in JACET8000*

Word Level	<i>N</i>	%
1000	3,454	73.3
2000	254	5.4
3000	156	3.3
4000	91	1.9
5000	50	1.1
6000	43	0.9
7000	24	0.5
8000	29	0.6
Subtotal	4,101	87.0
Unknown	614	13.0
Total	4,715	100.0

was found that 87.0% of the vocabulary in TV news was included in the JACET8000 vocabulary list— that is, the basic 8,000 words which Japanese learners should aim at learning (Aizawa, et al., 2005). A further 13% of the words categorized as “unknown” include considerably more difficult words as well as proper nouns such as uncommon person and place names.

### 3.3 Grammar

#### 3.3.1 Use of loose sentences

Yamane and Yamane (2014 : ix) identifies as one characteristic of television news English the frequent use of “loose sentences” in which verbs and subjects are omitted. The following are some of the examples from Yamane and Yamane (2014). The (∧) marks in the sentences indicate that some elements are considered to be missing.

- I knew I had dozed off a couple of times but what was stunning, ∧ I'd actually micro-slept 22 times and never knew it.
- The big difference, ∧ size. This is a one-year-old Atlantic salmon, ∧ dwarfed by the new genetically altered salmon of the same age.
- And now, ∧ our conversation about gun violence in America.
- And ∧ one thing to keep in mind. Post Offices like the one behind me will remain open on Saturday.
- ∧ Out on that renowned stage, after telling me this.

In TV news English where visual information is provided on the screen, fully grammatical sentences are not always necessary. Itemized short phrases suffice to convey information effectively to the viewers.

#### 3.3.2 Use of present tense

Writers of media English are often advised to use the present tense when writing manuscripts (Tuggle, et al., 2006). A news event reported in the present tense gives listeners a vivid impression about the news, even though the event probably occurred prior to the time when it is being introduced on the news. Yamane and Yamane (2014: x) found that present and present progressive tenses occupy 46% of all tense types in TV news sentences. Some examples from Yamane and Yamane (2014) are listed below:

- But Tiffany **says** they **are** not Tiffany diamonds and **alleges** Costco had been



calling them that for years.

- And how **do** the sanitizers compare in a showdown with soap? Well, tonight, our chief medical editor Dr. Richard Besser **puts** them to the test and gets some real answers.
- Postal officials **point** to polls that **show** that 70% of Americans **support** ending Saturday mail service. They **say** they **have** no plans to cut back even further.
- The President **faces** a big uphill fight on this in Congress from Republicans who **say** that raising the minimum wage would only send the unemployment rate higher.
- She **tells** us she **is** an orphan who lost both her mother and father to the fighting with the Taliban.

### 3.3.3 Use of contractions

Unlike in written forms of news media such as newspapers, in American broadcast news a friendly and casual atmosphere between the anchor and reporters seems to be an important factor for maintaining the attention of the viewers. One sign of casual speech is the use of first names rather than family names with titles when addressing one another. Another is the frequent use of contractions. Tuggle, et al., (2006) claim that the use of the full form, such as *it is* rather than the contracted form *it's*, may make the anchor sound stiff and advise the use of contractions “because [they] are a big part of sounding conversational.” Yamane and Yamane (2014) contains examples of contractions used both by anchors and reporters, as in the following:

- In this season of flu and so many other germs, **we're** told again and again that hand sanitizers and soap are the best defense.
- **We've** seen gorillas groom their young, carrying them for their first 18 months, nursing them for up to three years.
- **They've** even set up a school nearby.
- Today, they **can't** afford to call home, so, we lend them our phones.
- Tonight, the mayor of New York says **it's** time to send out an alarm.

Tuggle, et al., (2006) further commented that the use of the three contractions “*that'll*” for *that will*, “*it'll*” for *it will*, and “*there'll*” for *there will* should be avoided, since “[they] don't roll off the tongue very smoothly” when reporters read the script out loud.

### 3.4 Speech Rate

It is widely recognized that the speech rate influences learners' understanding of spoken English. A slower speaking rate generally facilitates learners' understanding, whereas faster speech creates an extra burden for learners in speech recognition, thus making it more difficult for them to understand. According to Field (2004:150), native speakers of English speak on average at a rate of 150 wpm (words per minute). Torikai (2003) reported that VOA special English, which is aired primarily for non-native listeners of English, has a mean speech rate of 106 wpm. VOA special English is a popular listening source from which many textbooks adopt materials for novice Japanese learners of English since it is basically copyright-free. On the other hand, the speech rate of the 2010 listening test component of the exam administered by the National Center Test for University Admissions averaged 155 wpm (Komori, 2010). Tasks with various speech rates are therefore used to suit the aims of the listening tests and the proficiency levels of the learners.

In this section of our current study we will consider the speech rate of broadcast English. Seven people were randomly selected from among the anchorpersons and reporters who appear in Yamane and Yamane (2013, 2014) and their speech rates were calculated. It was found that the rate varied depending on the speaker, ranging from 163.2 wpm to 257.2 wpm with a mean rate of 181.8 wpm. In broadcast news, the anchorpersons and reporters are reading prepared manuscripts, thus alleviating the need to insert the hesitation pauses often observed in spontaneous speech. This may account for the relatively faster speech rate of broadcast news.

### 3.5 Intonation and Stress

The important syllable in a tone unit, a segment sometimes referred to simply as "a chunk," is pronounced louder, longer, and with a change in pitch, making the syllable more prominent than the others in a given tone unit. This syllable is referred to as the (*intonation*) *nucleus* (Collins & Mees, 2008; Roach, 2009). The anchor usually introduces a new topic with a relatively short sentence at the outset of each story. Figure 2 below shows the results of acoustic analysis applied to one of the lead sentences using "Praat," a widely used software application program. The audio was taken from the DVD component of Yamane and Yamane (2013), saved as a digital file in order to be used for acoustic analysis. The upper figure indicates the waveform of the lead sentence, "It turns out American pilots are in huge demand in China." as uttered by the anchorperson, while the lower figure depicts its intonation contours. As the intonation contours indicate, major pitch changes are observed in the stressed syllables *turn*, *American* and *huge*, the key words of the story. It was reported in this story that the demand

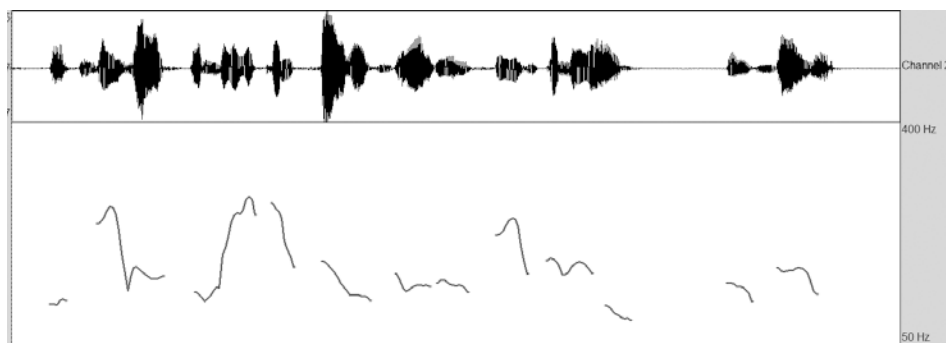


Figure 2. Waveform and intonation contours of “It turns out American pilots are in huge demand in China.” (Yamane and Yamane, 2013: 51).

for American pilots was increasing in China due to its booming airline industry. At the beginning of each news story the most important information is conveyed to the viewers by making the key words prominent.

The following are some examples of other lead sentences from Yamane and Yamane (2014). The stressed syllables of the key words have been capitalized.

- And NOW, our converSAtion about GUN Violence in aMERica.
- The POSTal SERvice announced toDAY that SATurday deLIVery of LETters will soon END in AUGust.
- And NOW, to an ABC NEWS exCLUsive, with the inSPIRing young GIRL TARGeted by the TALiban, just beCAUSE she WANTED GIRLS to GO to SCHOOL.

#### 4. Using Broadcast News in Class: Two Approaches

The ABC News materials are primarily used at the university level for a wide range of classes including Communication, *Jijieigo* (Current English), Listening, American Culture and General English. They have also been adopted by numerous high schools, junior colleges, graduate schools and language schools. Having identified some of the salient features of television news in Section 3, in this section we will discuss how this broadcast news series is used in two different teaching environments, focusing on the authors’ goals for classes in which they are using ABC World News as well as some specific activities they use to attain those goals.

#### 4.1 Goals of Author A's Class

Author A has been using the ABC World News materials with a group of highly motivated juniors and seniors at a women's university. Most of the students are majoring in Linguistics or Literature, and the course is required for students working towards a teaching license for English. The instructor's personal goals for the course are as follows: to motivate the students to regularly follow the news and be better informed; to help the students learn to make effective use of visual clues and to develop a range of other strategies to glean meaning from the broadcast news stories; to help students enrich their vocabulary in English; and to help students develop the skills necessary to think critically about news issues and to become more adept at discussing the news and related issues. The students themselves tend to be motivated by a desire to increase their TOEIC/ TOEFL scores and to be better prepared for job hunting, where an awareness of current issues can be hugely beneficial. Many also cite building their vocabulary as an important goal. Also weighing in are the full-time faculty members who regularly remind the instructor to provide feedback on the students' writing, as all seniors are required to write a graduation thesis in English.

Careful consideration has been put into creating a syllabus that incorporates meaningful outside assignments that build on the tasks done in class. The instructor intentionally varies the way that she uses the text from week to week and semester to semester, so there is no "typical" lesson. There are, however, certain activities regularly incorporated as an integral part of the course to help achieve the goals. During the first half of the course in particular the instructor wants to have full control over the presentation of both the news story DVD and the CD. The initial viewing process is set up in such a way that students are encouraged to maximize use of visual and contextual clues and to build on these skills throughout the course. One of the most important "take-homes" of the course is for students to learn to pick out what they know, use clues intelligently and develop inferencing skills, with closely controlled supervision by the instructor. The students are therefore discouraged from looking ahead and previewing the stories prior to class. Some of the basic strategies include predicting vocabulary prior to watching the news story and watching all or part of the news story with no sound, and then having the students tell the story in their own words based on the visuals. In some cases, challenging passages from the news story are projected onto a screen or written on the board without the pre-teaching of any vocabulary. The students, in pairs or small groups, are asked to determine the meaning of the underlined words through focusing on contextual clues. The three passages below are examples used in class.

1. That's something that 17-year-old Tom Mulvaney and his 73-year old grandfather found out when their canoe capsized in icy waters. Their wet cell phones didn't work, but somehow, they could still text relatives.
2. ... one Marine overcome with emotion after Sandy Hook, decided to do something on his own. He stands guard outside his daughter's school in Nashville, praying his uniform will be enough to deter the unthinkable.
3. Gunmen entered her van and shot her at point-blank range in the head. She was medevacked to England in critical condition, but she refused to die.

With the more difficult stories towards the end of the textbook it is not always possible to rely on contextual and other clues but to the extent possible, the instructor attempts to avoid a pattern of routinely pre-teaching all of the unfamiliar vocabulary in favor of focusing instead on strategies that will help her students become better autonomous learners who will continue to challenge broadcast news in English after the course is over. Through vocabulary quizzes, retention of those items whose meaning was determined through context was found to be very high.

#### 4.2.1 Getting started: "News Blast !"

One of the regular in-class activities is the **News Blast**, which occupies the first 15 minutes of each lesson. Students are expected to keep up with the news on a weekly basis and are challenged to consult a variety of news sources and mediums. As students enter the classroom they form groups of four to five students. The instructor writes an equation on the blackboard at the sound of the chime. "3X4" signals to the students that they should select three news stories and prepare four facts about each. Sometimes the emphasis is on more factual information, in which case the equation might be 2X6 or even 1X10. They are allowed to consult dictionaries and to write notes, but not to write out detailed sentences. When the instructor announces that time is up groups volunteer to share a story. Because every group must contribute and a news story cannot be repeated, students are eager to volunteer. Key vocabulary from the stories is noted on the board and incorporated into future quizzes. This activity gets students to class on time, wakes them up and the peer pressure element ensures that they do not come unprepared and unable to contribute.

#### 4.2.2 Activity: News listening journals

As part of the effort to keep students connected with English and to keep up with the news outside of class, students are required to keep a news journal throughout the year. Early in the

semester the instructor distributes a list of online listening sources including CNN, VOA, BBC and CBS and encourages the students to listen to news stories each week and to write them up. This is an on-going assignment, the only break being twice during the term when heavy writing assignments are due.

The students are initially expected to work on one story per week building up to three, and may listen to the stories selected as many times as necessary. A sample entry is shown below in Figure 3. The student must first indicate the title, date and source of the news story. Following that, difficult vocabulary items from the story are to be explained in English. The main part of the journal entry is a summary of the story in the students' own words. It is important to emphasize that this is not a dictation exercise (although some students initially treat it as such). Paraphrasing and summarizing are important skills for the students to master yet surprisingly, the majority seem not to have had much experience prior to taking this class. At the end of the report the student is asked to react to the story and to share her opinion.

Students are asked to prepare about one page for each news story but many tend to write more, necessitating a reminder that the main focus of this assignment is to practice listening skills. From the instructor's point of view it is preferable to write in less detail about a larger number of news stories. Students are encouraged to vary their news sources and the topics they choose. As an added twist, students may be asked to access news from a country where English is a second or official language rather than the mother tongue, such as India or Kenya. Stillwell (2008) notes that this type of task can be easily carried out by students due to the 24

<p><b>Sushi feeds a passion for crafting</b>  <b>Source:</b> CNN News Broadcast /<b>Date:</b> February 8, 2012  <b>Vocabulary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· cuisine ... a particular style of cooking</li> <li>· marvel (s) ... something or someone that is extremely skillful</li> <li>· replica ... an exact copy of something, especially a building or a work of art</li> <li>· embrace ... to put your arms around someone and hold them in a friendly or loving way</li> <li>· quirky ... unusual, especially in an interesting way</li> </ul> <p><b>Summary:</b> Some sushi lovers are extending their passion for Japanese cuisine into the world of arts and crafts. As sushi lovers, they made wonderful works from idea of sushi. From clothing to candles and jewelry to children's toys, rice rolls and sashimi are inspiring all manner of crafts. Especially, Carolyn Caffelle's hand-made sushi clothing is so interesting. The picture shows her baby dressed as a raw salmon, rice-nigiri. Her one hundred costumes sold out last Halloween.</p> <p><b>Opinion:</b> When I heard this interesting news, I was sure sushi has great power to inspire people all over the world. Sushi's beauty makes exciting progress through art and crafts. Especially, I cannot stop being fascinated by these clothing for babies.</p>
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Figure 3. Sample news listening journal entry.

-hour availability of online news as well as the unlimited range of topics. A small number of students who were preparing for overseas study were encouraged to increase the frequency to six or seven stories per week and expressed the opinion that it was an excellent way to develop their listening skills.

#### 4.2.3 Activity: Reaction papers

The meatiest assignments required of the students in Author A's courses are the reaction papers, with two assigned each semester. As the name suggests, a "reaction paper" is a written assignment that includes the student's personal reaction to news-related issues. There is always a choice of two to three topics from which to choose, generally including news stories from the textbook or topics that are currently in the news. Students are encouraged to write at least three doubled-spaced pages initially and to build to five pages over the course of the academic year. The paper should be divided into three parts: the Summary, Reaction, and Application sections. The first section should contain a one- to two-paragraph summary of the news story in the students' own words. That is followed by a personal reaction to the material, including key impressions along with the student's opinion. Finally, at the end of the paper, a two- or three- paragraph Application section should be added, addressing the topic more deeply. Here students are asked to write about how the material relates to their own life experience, to interview someone about how it relates to their life experience or alternatively, to do an Internet search on an extended or related topic. Students are given two weeks to complete these papers, with no other homework assignments due during that period except to keep following the news. Although there is some grumbling about the amount of work required, most students feel that it is a big boost to their English.

#### 4.2.4. Final presentations

The last two weeks of the semester are allotted for student presentations, which are prepared entirely outside of class time. Throughout the semester the students are regularly challenged to develop their listening and writing skills but this final assignment is the only graded oral work required for the course beyond class participation. Depending on the size and composition of the class, the students might be asked to do individual or pair presentations on a choice of topics. The option of a five-page paper in lieu of the presentation is offered for students who are particularly uncomfortable speaking before a group, although few have selected that option. With a class of only 12 students last fall, the assignment was to "Take Ten." Each student in the class had ten minutes to share something with the class following the reaction paper format of

**Abandoning Babies: Animals and Humans**

ABC News reported that at a Texas zoo, a mother gorilla rejected her baby. The baby was sent to the primate experts at the Cincinnati Zoo, who named her Gladys. Gorillas, as well as orangutans, have DNA so similar to that of humans that the experts can become their surrogate parents. They are now teaching Gladys how to be a gorilla, including stretching and strengthening her neck muscles so that she can get used to life like in the wild. Ron McGill, one of the experts, says, "It's not uncommon at all for first births especially to be rejected by some animals because they've not been raised in an environment that had shown them to be a good mother." They are trying to mother Gladys so that her real mother might accept her.

That news interested me very much, because I am a psychology major. I am particularly interested in McGill's explanation. He said that animals often give up their children because of the environment. However, in the case of humans, they neglect parenting not only because of the environment but also their mental or economic problems.

In connection with this news, there is an interesting story from BBC about a mother penguin and a pair of gay penguins in the Kent Zoo ...

Figure 4. Sample reaction paper.

summary, opinion and application. They were encouraged to be original in their choice of topic and to feel free to draw from issues currently in the news, topics from their major field of study, or something more personal. The presentation was to be prepared as a PowerPoint with one A4 handout and prepared note cards. Following each talk five minutes were allotted for questions and discussion. With topics ranging from blue grass music to pragmatics to science and ethics, it was felt that giving the students the freedom to explore a topic of their choice made for a stimulating and meaningful ending to the course.

### 4.3 Course Questionnaire Results

In this section the results of class evaluation surveys will be discussed. Surveys were conducted by the instructor in late January but as most students took both the spring and fall semesters, comments covered the whole course. The survey asked for feedback on the following: overall satisfaction with the course; overall satisfaction with the textbook; skill areas in which the student most improved throughout the duration of the course; and most popular news stories.

First, student satisfaction for the course in general as well as for the textbook (*ABC World News 14*, *ABC World News 15*) was high. As seen in Figure 5, on a scale of one to five with five being the most favorable, all students evaluated the course and text as four or five, with ratings of four outnumbering five by a slight margin. There were no scores of average (three) or below among the students who participated in the two classes.

As for the perceived improvement in language skill areas shown in Figure 6, the students



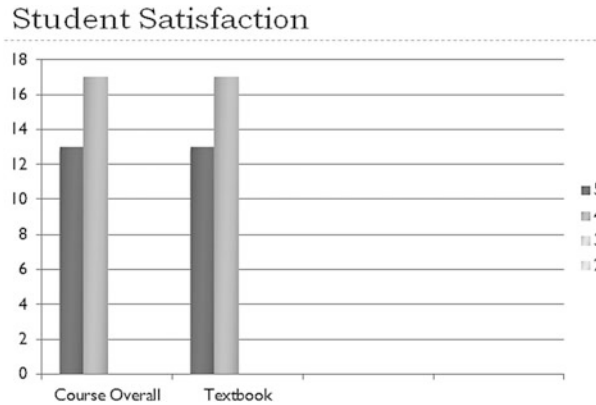


Figure 5. Results of student satisfaction survey.

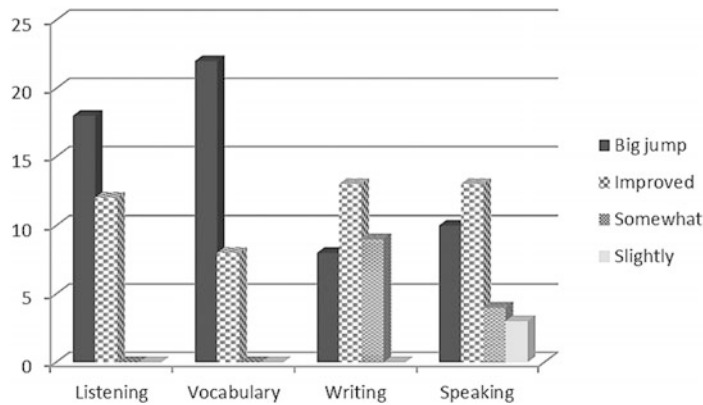


Figure 6. Students' perception of improvement in four skill areas.

felt that the biggest improvement was found to be in vocabulary acquisition, with listening skills following closely behind. About half of the students indicated that they felt that their writing skills also improved as a result of preparing the reaction papers. On the other hand, no students in either group felt a big jump in their speaking skills, although about two-thirds noted some improvement. These results are somewhat surprising given the nature of the course but not given the instructor's personal focus on weekly reporting of news stories and regular quizzing of vocabulary. During the current academic year the instructor is more firmly requiring students to watch the DVD at home so it is expected that that will impact the next round of survey results. Overwhelmingly the students indicated that they felt their English improved during the course. Nearly every year, a few students who have already successfully completed the course return to take it again for no credit, even completing the homework assignments, reaction papers and listening journals.

Finally, students were asked to indicate their favorite news stories. The results for *ABC World News 14* are shown in Figure 7. The stories that received the highest ratings are from the first half of the textbook and can therefore be assumed to be less challenging than some of the later stories. Furthermore, the students voiced a strong preference for humorous stories such as *Lady Liberty*, a story about the wrong Statue of Liberty featured on a U.S. postage stamp, and human interest stories such as *Happiest Person* and *Siblings*. Not surprisingly, due to the fact that the survey was conducted at a women’s university, stories about women such as *Working Moms* were also strongly favored.

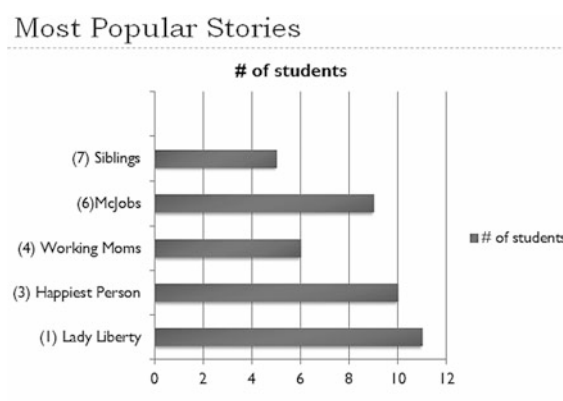


Figure 7. Most popular news stories from *ABC World News 14*.

Positive comments voiced by the students included the fact that using the text was good preparation for the TOEFL/TOEIC exams and also for job hunting. Many also claimed to have become more aware of world events, and expressed an intention to continue keeping abreast of world news. On the negative side, some students noted that even with serious practice in the classroom and at home, watching English news broadcasts was still very challenging.

#### 4.4 Author B's Approach

This series of textbooks can be successfully used in classes with various types of teaching goals. Author B has been using these teaching materials for more than 25 years in university classes which had a variety of course goals. They can be categorized as follows: 1) a listening course; 2) a course aimed at having students acquire a balance of the four skills; and 3) a reading class.

In all three types of courses Author B aimed to have students get accustomed to authentic spoken English using the teaching strategies which will be explained in detail in the following

section. It should be noted that this textbook can adequately meet the needs of classes with multiple course goals if the instructor adjusts the way the materials are used. Author B, for instance, is using this textbook in one of his classes in 2014 in which the primary goal is to have students strengthen their reading ability. Students can watch the news story before they read the broadcast news. As was explained at the outset of this paper, in the case of broadcast news, visual information facilitates learners' comprehension of spoken English. Equipped with dual-mode information — that is, written text and visual images — this textbook series can easily be used to assist students in grasping the contents of the news story in reading classes.

#### 4.4.1 Reading aloud with speed

Reading aloud is a popular learning method widely used in Japanese universities as well as in high schools. Its effectiveness in learning English has been reported in previous studies (Miyasako, 2007; Suzuki, 1998; Takeuchi, Ikeda, & Mizumoto, 2012). As previously mentioned, the speech rate of broadcast English is rather fast compared to other types of spoken English. Though aiming to speak at the same speech rate as professional anchors is not a realistic goal for Japanese learners, it is nonetheless beneficial for students to attempt to practice reading aloud with speed. Yabuuchi and Satoi (2001) asked 10 native speakers of English to evaluate recordings made by Japanese EFL learners reading English passages aloud. They found that the learners who were judged to be “good readers” were inclined to read the test passages in the following manner: with a broader and more variable pitch range; with a more variable highest pitch; with a more appropriate pause location; and at a faster speed than those assessed as weak readers. The poor readers read the passages rather slowly and monotonously. These results suggest that learners' ability to read English aloud with speed is crucial in order to be judged as good readers.

When students are asked to read the news passages aloud either in chorus or individually, they often read them slowly and in a soft voice, looking down at their textbooks. One way of encouraging them to read aloud in a louder voice and at faster speed is to make them look up from the textbook. If a screen, projector and PC are available in class, “Microsoft PowerPoint,” a popular software program, is a useful tool. By selecting a “typing color” in the “animation” function of the pull-down menu, the words in a sentence can be made to disappear one by one, from left to right. The learners are thus required to look up and read the passages aloud before the words and sentences disappear from the screen. This activity also enhances the learners' concentration. The speed with which words disappear can also be controlled to suit the proficiency level of the learners.

#### 4.4.2 Reading aloud with meaning

It may be possible for the learners to read passages aloud without thinking of the meaning. One way to make them aware of the meaning is to mask some key words of the news sentences while they read, as illustrated in Figure 8 below. Using the “animation” function of PowerPoint, each mask can easily be taken away one by one from the screen as soon as students successfully read the sentences.

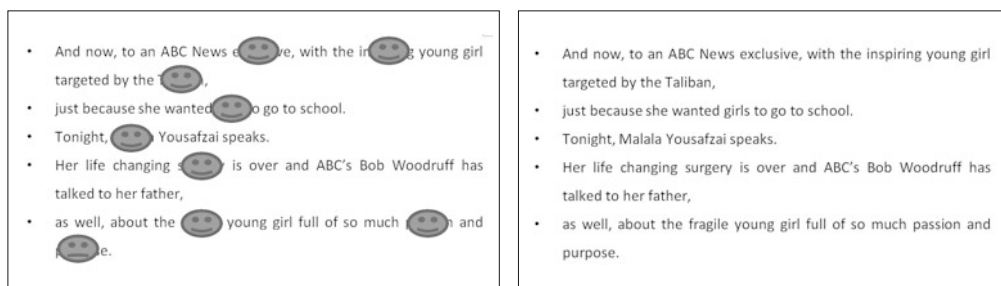
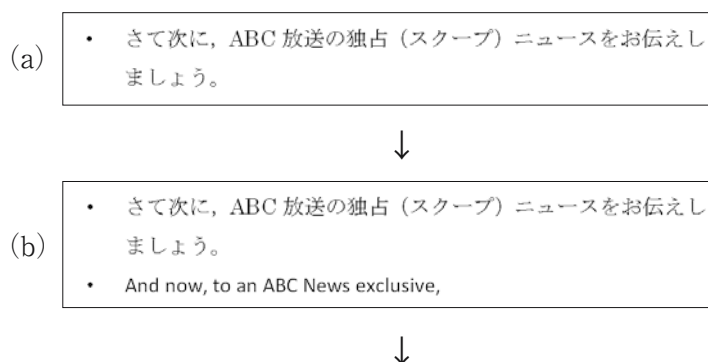


Figure 8. Reading aloud with meaning: sentences with masked key words (left) and those without (right).

#### 4.4.3 Oral translation

Passages in the news stories can be used as an oral translation practice, after learners fully understand the meaning of the story. As shown in (a) in Figure 9, in this activity, first shown on the screen is a Japanese sentence, which learners translate into English either in chorus or individually. After a sentence is translated, a model answer will be shown on the screen as in (b). Students are not always expected to translate in exactly the same way as in the model



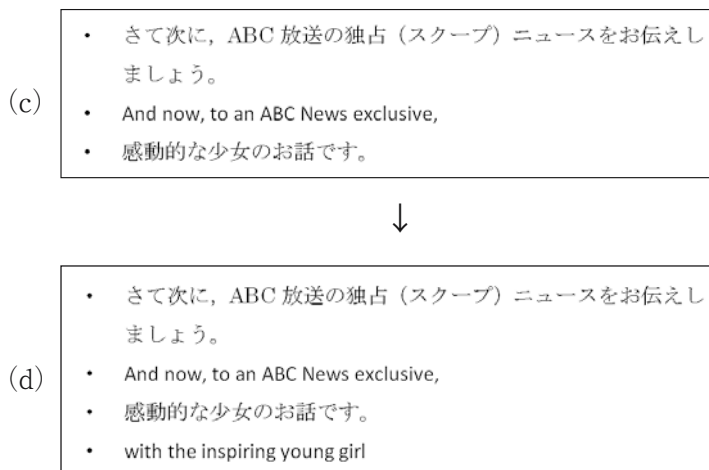


Figure 9. Oral translation activity.

sentence. They are encouraged to translate it in their own words if they cannot recall the exact wording. Note that this activity can also be conducted as an English-to-Japanese translation exercise.

## 5. Conclusion

Back in 1987, no one associated with this ABC News project imagined that the series would have such longevity and touch the lives of so many Japanese students. It should be clear from these pages that there are many benefits to adopting authentic materials for classroom use, and many ways to successfully implement them in our individual teaching situations. It has hopefully been shown that in addition to being a powerful way to build English skills, the use of broadcast news also addresses the growing need to help Japanese students become more knowledgeable about world affairs and to develop critical thinking and discussion skills, necessary for all young people in today's increasingly interconnected world.

### Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 38th Annual International Conference of the Japan Association for Language Teaching, Hamamatsu, Japan, on October 14, 2012.
2. This research was supported by Kansai University's Overseas Research Program during the 2013 academic year.

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