

Using News Broadcasts in Japan and the U.S as Cultural Lenses

Japanese Lesson Plan
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Deborah W. Robinson

Purpose:

Watching network news in Japan and in the U.S. offers initial views on culture.

Essential Questions:

1. What can be learned about a culture by viewing a news broadcast even without understanding the language?
2. What is the role of anchor people in Japan and in the U.S.?
3. How do field reporters act during the news in Japan and in the U.S.?
4. What is the level of detail on each story in Japan and in the U.S.?
5. Are there multiple means of hearing/viewing/seeing the news in Japan and in the U.S. during the broadcast?
6. How are commercials used in Japan and in the U.S. in relation to news broadcast?

Rationale:

Visual and media literacy are important means of developing cross-cultural understandings.

Materials:

1. Videotape or DVD of a news broadcast from a Japanese TV network. See “Japanese TV” sheet for a brief description of Japanese TV and a list of Web sites for TV stations. Tape off satellite TV or international channels. On the computer, visit, for example, www.so-net.ne.jp/streaming or www.mediahopper.com/portal.htm and choose Japan.
2. U.S. network news program to be watched at home.
3. Work sheets for use during viewing of U.S. and Japanese news.
4. Scoring rubric for news broadcasts.

Activities:

Before beginning this lesson, have students jot down their impressions of Japan. If they are having difficulties coming up with ideas, give them categories to jog their thinking, such as the weather, dress, whether they think of Japan as a traditional or modern society, or what sports they know about from Japan.

Have students watch the evening news on a major U.S. TV network for homework. Have them complete the viewing guide as they watch. Tell them to bring their notes to class.

In groups of three or four, have students compare their notes.

Play a video or DVD of a news broadcast off Japanese TV. Have students complete the second viewing guide. Play the broadcast twice, though not necessarily on the same day. During the second viewing, have students add details about such aspects as the studio set, reporters' clothing and accessories (e.g., glasses, ties), and whether the news segments seem staged or capture what is happening at the moment.

Have students compare their viewing guides about the Japanese news broadcast in pairs. Ask them to fill in gaps in their own guides and correct misinformation as they work with their partners.

Lead a class discussion on the perceived similarities and differences between U.S. and Japanese news broadcast as students consult their viewing guides. After discussing similarities and differences in the set, field reporting, and the like, ask questions that go beyond obvious differences such as,

- Why might Japanese news broadcasts rely on captions even if viewers can hear? (Possible answers: so that families in small spaces may watch without disturbing each other; so that people in noisy public places can still follow the news stories; to provide a concise written-style version of the speech; to reflect the editor's stance by graphically highlighting certain parts of the speech)
- Would you say that individuals in Japanese society prefer to blend in or stand out? What about in our society. Justify your answers. (Glasses, ties, hairstyles, clothing usually are conservative from what we've seen on Japanese TV. People seem to conform. On U.S. TV, we see more personalizing of clothing with a variety of glasses, ties, scarves.)
- What can be gleaned about such aspects of Japanese culture as the environment, health concerns, the weather, social practices such as greetings, international relationships, sports? (Answers will vary depending on the segments students view. They will probably see that there is a great importance put on reporting the weather, that some people wear masks in public, and that much of the news revolves around relationships with other East Asian nations. Financial news about the stock market is also important.) Again, probe students' thinking. Why would people wear masks? They don't want to get sick, pass germs to others, contract a disease such as SARS. Have students research why some or all of the possibilities would apply in Japan.

Finally, have students confirm or reject their initial impressions of Japan.

Assessment:

In groups of three or four, have students story board, prepare wardrobe and props, and deliver a culturally appropriate Japanese style-news broadcast. Rate the story board (see handout) based on logical sequence, time allotment, level of detail, and correct presence and use of captions and commercials. Use the rubric to score their presentations (see handout). Videotape their performances so that students may rate themselves at a later time.

Grade Adaptation:

This lesson targets Grade 7

Students who have studied Japanese for four or more years in high school should be able to discuss this lesson in Japanese and be encouraged to deliver the broadcast in Japanese.

State Standards:

English Language Arts

Standard: Communication: Oral and Visual

Benchmark F: Give presentations using a variety of delivery methods, visual materials and technology.

Indicator 9: Deliver formal and informal descriptive presentations that convey relevant information and descriptive details.

Social Studies

Standard: Social Studies Skills and Methods

Benchmark D: Work effectively in a group.

Indicator 4: Reflect on the performance of a classroom group in which one has participated including the contributions of each member in reaching group goals.

Foreign Language

Standard: Cultures

Benchmark C: Investigate, discuss, and report on products and perspectives of the target culture.

Indicator 4: Discuss impressions and perspectives gleaned from film and video (e.g., how people treat each other, the ways they view their families, the places where they live).

Visual Art

Standard: Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts

Benchmark C: Demonstrate knowledge of historical influences on contemporary works of art and make predictions about influences on the future of visual art.

Indicator 4: List sources of visual culture in society (e.g., television, museums, movie theaters, internet and shopping malls).

Japanese TV
(from <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2075.html>)

Watching television is very popular in Japan and probably almost as integrated into everyday life as in the United States.

In Tokyo, one can receive about five private and two national NHK channels with a room antenna. The number of channels may be a little bit lower in other areas of the country. Satellite and cable television are nowadays gaining in popularity.

Dramas, news, sport programs and shows are the most popular program types.

The concepts of many Japanese shows are very original. Furthermore, many shows contain an educational component concerning nature, history, science, or other cultures. It is not uncommon that the most popular entertainers appear during prime time in rather scientific programs on commercial channels.

"Wide Shows" are programs for housewives and are broadcasted during the whole morning and afternoon on various channels. They offer a variety of topics like fashion, celebrity news, etc.

Imported movies and series are mostly broadcasted on pay TV channels. Many of them can be watched in either Japanese or the original language. A few news programs, too, are broadcasted in two languages. Some older television models, however, are not equipped with the bilingual mode which is needed to watch the programs in English.

[A Partial Guide to Broadcastings in Japan \(The Web Kanzaki\)](#)
General information about television in Japan.

TV stations:

[NHK \(Japan Broadcasting Corporation\)](#)

[TBS \(Tokyo Broadcasting System\)](#)

[NTV \(Nippon Television Network\)](#)

[Fuji Television](#)

[TV Asahi](#)

[NHK World](#)

International NHK television and radio station.

[SKY PerfectTV](#)

Satellite TV provider.

[TV Japan](#)

Japanese Pay TV service for North America.

Internet TV Guide Japan

Current programme listings.

NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai)

TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System)

NTV (Nippon Television Network)

TV Asahi

Fuji TV

TV Tokyo

Nagoya Broadcasting Network

Kansai Telecasting Corporation

WOWOW

Sky PerfecTV

Satellite TV provider.

TV Japan

Japanese Pay TV service for North America.

Worksheet
Viewing Guide for Japanese News Broadcast

Watch the Japanese news broadcast. As you watch, note the start time for each segment of the program and write a brief description of what is happening. It is not necessary to understand the words. Be sure to note the role of the anchor(s), how field reporting is conducted, how much detail there seems to be about each story, the use of captions, when commercials appear, and the like. During the second viewing, add details about the set, clothing, whether segments seem staged or capture what is happening, and details about the general culture.

Time	Description

**Storyboard a Culturally Appropriate Japanese News Broadcast
Assessment, Part A**

In groups of three or four, plan a news show based on your observation of the Japanese news broadcast you watched in class. Be sure that the anchor person(s), news segments, use of commercials, and captioning follow the culturally appropriate ways that news is delivered in Japan. Your stories may come from school, local, state, national, or international news. You may wish to use sticky-back notes to draft the flow of the program and then transfer your agreed-upon ideas to this sheet. Submit one final storyboard per group and all members' drafts. Group members:

**Japanese News Broadcast
Assessment, Part B**

Perform your newscast in keeping with culturally appropriate Japanese broadcast style.
You will be rated as follows:

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Below Expectations
Appearance, including dress and mannerisms	Business attire; good posture; friendly, but business-like mannerisms.	Neat attire; good posture with an occasional relaxed moment; friendly with an occasional slip into adolescent mannerisms.	Sloppy attire; casual, relaxed posture; mannerisms reflect adolescent culture.
Cultural appropriateness of anchor's role	Takes role seriously; reports to inform or entertain as called for by the story.	Takes role fairly seriously; may mix up when it is appropriate to inform or entertain on a story.	Does not take role seriously; reports more to entertain than to inform.
Cultural appropriateness of field reporter's role	Gives accurate, informed descriptions of what is happening. Off camera.	Gives fairly accurate, informed descriptions of what is happening. May be on camera.	Gives inaccurate, uninformed descriptions of what is happening. On camera.
Length and amount of detail in each news segment	News segments are long enough to provide main ideas with sufficient details to support story.	News segments are adequate to provide the main idea, but may lack sufficient detail to ensure support story.	News segments are too short. Viewers only get the main ideas. Insufficient details to ensure understanding.
Use of captioning	Captions are clear and easy to read. Used to enhance the presentation.	Captions are mostly clear and easy to read. Most of the time, they enhance the presentation.	Captions are not clear or easy to read. They do not enhance the presentation.
Placement and nature of commercials	Commercials appear at the end of the show and grab the viewer's attention.	Commercials appear at the end of the show and are fairly entertaining.	Commercials may appear in places other than the end of the show and are not entertaining.

Teacher discretion as to overall length of news broadcast to enable students to demonstrate their understanding of Japanese style broadcasts. The author recommends five to seven minutes, with times and content proportional to the longer broadcast students viewed.