**LITERACY TOPIC TASK: NAVIGATING JAPANESE NEWSPAPERS**

**EXPECTED TIME TAKEN**

About 25-30 minutes

**LITERACY TOPIC OVERVIEW**

In this topic, students will discover how written Japanese works, be able to write and read a few words relevant to themselves, and be able to compare and contrast the Japanese writing system to other languages they are familiar with.

**PRIOR LEARNING**

Students should be familiar with how the Japanese writing system works and the different alphabets. They should already be read and decode some simple words written in katakana, and to recognise and understand the word 日本 (Japan written in kanji), also knowing that 日 means sun or day (which will help them in decoding dates, perhaps with a little nudging by teacher). Depending on the timing of the class versus the New Year, they may or may not already be aware of the Imperial system of numbering years.

**TASK DESCRIPTION**

In this task, students will navigate Japanese newspapers, identifying key markers such as the front and back of the newspaper, the headline, the date, and leveraging their previous learning to recognise and decode a number of words in context.

1. Students work in groups of 2 or 3. One newspaper per group.
2. Teacher goes through tasks before handing out materials (tasks as per worksheet, NB verbally highlight request not to write on newspapaers)
   * What is different about how Japanese newspapers are laid out?
   * Where is the headline?
   * Can you figure out what is the date of the newspaper?
   * Find the word 日本
   * Find a katakana word that you can translate
   * Find an advertisement and see how much you can tell about what the subject and the message is.
3. When distributing the newspapers, put them down in front of the students opened up to a middle page or neutrally folded up (NOT with the front page facing forward, as one the key things they need to figure out is where the front page is, this is quite an active discovery process involving discussion and hands-on teamwork and can be interesting to observe).
4. While students are working together on this teacher walks around and helps them with the tasks as required.
5. Findings are pooled at a class level. As required, teacher supplements as we confirm learning that the pages of newspapers are read in a different order, Japanese can be read vertically or horizontally. Teacher identifies a headline, explains that we figured out the use of the characters 日 (already known) plus 月 and 年 to form dates. Teacher assesses awareness of the fact that Japan has an emperor and moves to making mention of the imperial calendar system for numbering of years. Students introduce katakana words and ads they have decoded to the class.

**KEY SKILL(S)**

* Information processing
* Critical thinking and creative problem solving
* Working with others

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

* Students understand how the Japanese writing system is laid out in authentic formal printed materials (vertical and horizontal formats, reading direction of sentences and front and back of publication).
* Students will also learn how to read Japanese dates, be able to recognise a known kanji word in different contexts (日本) and be able to decode simple katakana words in context (with the aid of a katakana alphabet sheet).
* They become aware of that Japan has an emperor and learn that the reign of the emperor is connected to their indigenous system of counting years.

**RESOURCES**

* Copies of Japanese newspapers (ideally recent, but from a mixture of dates/days, and with some interesting photos or famous people
* Katakana alphabet sheet
* Newspapers task sheet (embedded)



**COMMENTS**

Newspapers might sound boring to teachers but on first exposure, Japanese newspapers are actually quite exotic and different for students and so this activity is usually quite successful. Most students enjoy working in teams to solve the challenges and often find interesting and funny ads (like for multifunction toilets etc) .

This class could be linked with a class on the imperial family and/or the New Year (year change).

Students will often remark that the newspapers are read ‘backwards’ or even the ‘wrong way around’. This can be an opportunity to talk about cultural sensitivity and/or relativism (teacher could suggest the use of the term ‘different’).

**SCAFFOLDING ACTIVITIES**

When introducing the tasks, teacher should assess level of recall of 日本and of the individual meanings of the characters. Could use the opportunity as AFL.

Teacher needs to circulate to keep students on task and point them in the right direction/guide them to adverts or pictures which may aid them in decoding their task. It can be interesting to point out the weather forecast or TV listings (日本テレビ、first program of the day おはよう日本) and get them to figure out what they are looking

**KEY LANGUAGE**

(This is an early lesson, so existing TL would be very limited)

Kanji, katakana, hiragana, romaji, nihongo

Classroom language:

Muzukashii, kantan, Omoshiroi, Dozo!, Onegaishimasu, Arigato, Dekimashita

**CONTRIBUTOR**

Gretta Daly