

[論文]

Interpreting Current Topics, Reading *Time* : A Method of the Extension Lectures to Citizens

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Introduction

English media has had a long history in Japan, extending through the Edo-Meiji era. In 1861, Englishman A. W. Hansard began publishing Japan's first English newspaper, *The Nagasaki Shipping List & Advertiser*, for foreign businessmen living in Nagasaki and Yokohama. The first English newspaper for Japanese readers was *The Japan Times*, launched in 1897 by ZUMOTO Motosada under the support of the first Prime Minister ITO Hirobumi and the founder of Keio University, FUKUZAWA Yukichi.¹⁾

Now Japan's oldest and largest English-language daily, *The Japan Times* has since debuted *The Japan Times ST*, a weekly paper launched in 1951, and *The Japan Times Alpha*, a bilingual weekly launched in 2018. The Asahi Shimbun Company published the *International Herald Tribune* from 2001 till 2011, formerly the *Asahi Evening News* (1954-2001). *The Japan News*, formerly the *Daily Yomiuri* (1958-2013), is one of Japan's largest English-language dailies. Another, *Mainichi Daily News* was also published in 1960, and online as *The Mainichi—Japan Daily News* since 2001.

These weeklies have been often used for educational purposes at universities, sometimes for entrance examinations and business materials. There are also English-language news magazines published, including the Asian edition of *Time* (1923), *Time Asia*, and *Newsweek* (1933).

Not surprisingly, media-based English as a second language (ESL) classes are

popular, with universities offering extension lectures to the general public in many cities in Japan as continuing education. Generally, Japanese university classes comprise 15 lectures per semester, but extension courses often cover several themes and have multiple instructors, so each teacher has only a few classes. Given the limited class times and the students' varied educational backgrounds, teachers conducting media-based ESL extension classes need to distill the content to cover the basics of both English and media. Thus, they must cover the English-language basics, such as the types of stories and the articles' composition, grammar, and word usage. They must also discuss the topics.

This article describes how the university conducted one media-based ESL class. Its primary English-language resources focused on international affairs. It must be useful for the students in the continuing education class to read the magazines from overseas, in order to understand the current topics from the global point of view. They read *Time* magazine, with a weekly newspaper published for English-language learners, *The Japan Times Alpha* (formerly the *ST* or *Student Times*) as a supplementary material.

Section 1 describes the teacher's introduction to English media, briefly discussing article types, composition style, headlines, and diction (word usage). Section 2 introduces *Time* magazine, discussing media bias, basic academic competencies, and the reading method used. Section 3 provides an overview of extension learning, describing lectures, seminars, and presentations.

1. Overview of English Newspapers/News Magazines

Since not all the students had prior experience reading English print media, the course began with a brief introduction to English newspapers and news magazines. This was a short review of the basics rather than an in-depth comparison, because the main purpose was to prepare the students to read the articles rather than provide an exhaustive explanation of specific publications' rules.

1.1 Article Types

The ESL course's articles are roughly classified into three groups: straight news, human interest stories, and commentary.

Straight news covers the latest local or global happenings in politics, foreign affairs, society, the economy, disasters, weather, events, incidents, accidents, and government; it can also include sports, entertainment, business, and sports. Straight

news stories answer the 5W1H questions: who, when, where, what, why, and how.

Human interest stories discuss people and issues from an emotional perspective, including their background and influence—often described as “the story behind the story.” Common human interest stories might focus on individuals’ lives, developments in art or science, interviews, and other “soft” topics that interest or amuse readers.

Commentary includes editorials, opinions, evaluations, and judgments on news articles; it asks readers about their thoughts and feelings.

1.2 Article Composition

The course then covered elemental news article composition. Most news articles have three essential parts: headline, lead, and body.

Headlines are article titles set in a larger point size than the general text. The most important story is often set with a banner headline stretching across the width of the publication, often in all capital letters. Most newspapers capitalize the first letter of all major words (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and almost always lowercase conjunctions and prepositions.

Technically, a part of the body, the *lead* is a critical component. It is the introductory section of a news story and is intended to entice readers to continue reading. The first paragraph, the lead summarizes the indispensable 5W1H information.

The *body* is the text of the article and provides details and context for the headline and lead.

Most readers start with the headline: if that arouses their interest, they read the first paragraph. If they are still interested and want or need more information, they read the rest of the article. News articles generally follow the *inverted pyramid* or *inverted triangle* style, placing the most newsworthy information at the top.

1.3 Grammatical Rules of Headlines

Headlines are usually written in the present tense, even if the incidents happened in the past. To save space, they generally follow a compressed telegraphic style, omitting function words as conjunctions, most articles (*a, an, the*), some prepositions (e.g., *the on* before a date).

The most important grammatical rules concern the *be* verb.

1. To show the future tense, they use the word *to* with an infinitive.

e.g.) “Italy [Is] to Lock Down for COVID-19 Mar. 8.”

2. To indicate ongoing events, they use the progressive form.
e.g.) “Many Students [Are] Studying Spanish in CA.”
3. They leave out auxiliary forms like *were* or *have been* for passive voice.
e.g.) “8 Students [Were] Killed in University Shooting.”

Headline writers use punctuation to shorten sentences.

1. Replacing *and* with a comma
e.g.) “Biden, Suga Discuss Trade”
2. Separating clauses with semicolons
e.g.) “Senate Approves Funding Bill; Shutdown [Was] Averted”
3. Using colons for *by* or *according to* or to indicate an outcome
e.g.) “Macron: State-Funded Therapy Starts Next Year”

Some ESL textbooks collect headlines and leads to familiarize readers with the rules of grammatical features of headlines.

1.4 Word Usage

To save space and attract people’s attention, writers often make words and phrases shorter.

They often use short synonyms for common words in headlines. While this practice can expand ESL learners’ vocabularies, it can also require using the context to infer the original meaning.

e.g.) *ban* for *prohibit*, *pact* for *agreement*, *nix* for *refuse* or *say no*, and *probe* for *investigate*

Understanding newspaper and news magazine headlines requires ESL readers to familiarize themselves with common words’ synonyms.

They also use abbreviations, including acronyms.

e.g.) *UNSC* for *United Nations Security Council*, *Int’l* for *International*, *Radar* for *Radio detection and ranging*, *GATT* for *General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade*

Avoiding repetition is not always unique to the media English. Writers of various fields tend to do that to show their rich vocabulary or enjoy the word play by using synonyms. And most newspaper and magazine writers use this method.

The course covered much more about word usage, but the above points were critical for the attendees of the extension lectures, most of whom were beginners.

2. Reading *Time*

Time debuted in 1923, and *Newsweek* debuted in 1933. Both are still popular weekly news magazines in the United States. Readers in Japan can subscribe to *Time Asia* based in Hong Kong and also the Japanese version of *Newsweek* first published in 1986.

As for topics for English learners in Japan, *Time Asia* has more than *Newsweek* in English²⁾ because of the regions where they are published.

2.1 Media Bias

The course also covered media bias: the failure to report the news from a neutral perspective. Readers must be aware that most news magazines have political biases, even if they strive for impartiality. Neutrality might be the ideal, but it is not the reality.

Time magazine shows a regional media bias. For example, it publishes portraits of criminals (age 18 and over) and photos of mass casualties in disaster and battlefield reports. This would never happen in Japan.

In an interview as early as October 5, 1965, former US ambassador to Japan, Edwin Oldfather Reischauer³⁾ criticized Japanese newspaper reports on the Vietnam War⁴⁾. He said that he thought the Japanese public was getting a biased (pro-North Vietnam) view of the war from the Japanese newspapers *Mainichi Shimbun* and *Asahi Shimbun*. He compared their reports with the newspaper reports from the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia and India, whose political ideas and systems were similar to Japan. He said he intentionally omitted the reports of South Korea, Taiwan, and Cambodia, which strongly opposed the Communist countries as the United States, in order to be fair and neutral in his aspects in this comparison.

Ambassador Reischauer said that the reports of the two Japanese newspapers went into Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) in South Vietnam with some doubts and prejudices, but when they visited Hanoi in North Vietnam, they repeated the Communist government's propaganda and information.

Reischauer noted that nothing had been said in the Japanese newspapers about the visit of the former prime minister of South Vietnam two or three weeks earlier, or other visits by several delegations from South Vietnam. Only one newspaper mentioned something about the visit of the foreign minister of Thailand, who had given an excellent speech in Japan. He attributed this to the biases held by the

United States and Japan, their different thoughts about and experiences with ‘peace’.

The United States has two main political parties: Republican and Democratic. A recent website survey on media bias, including TV programs, confirmed that Americans think differently about the fairness of articles and reports depending on which party they support.⁵⁾

2.2 Basic Academic Competencies

Before reading English-language newspapers and magazines, Japanese readers need some knowledge of the articles’ contents. Reading Japanese articles about what is happening in the world can help them understand the English-language articles more fully and infer the meanings of words they might not know.

MATSUMOTO Michihiro, author of *Reading “Time”: How to Learn Living English*,⁶⁾ recommended that readers spread their “frame of references” by reading relevant articles in Japanese quickly to make it easier to understand the contents of the English-language version of *Time*. Knowledge about the subject matter makes it easier for ESL readers to understand English articles sufficiently.

In his book *Reading English Newspapers: Getting to Know the World by Practical English*, SHIMIZU Yoshitsugu, a longtime editor for the *Asahi Evening News*, offered similar advice.⁷⁾ He wrote that understanding the news in the mother tongue first is indispensable for reading English newspapers and magazines, emphasizing the need to obtain the relevant knowledge and information from Japanese media. SHIMIZU pointed out that people who could read and comprehend English newspapers properly and thoroughly were evaluated higher than those who could only speak English fluently.⁸⁾

The author of *Ten Steps to Reading “Time”*, MINAI Yoshiro, also talked about the usefulness of background information for understanding the English in *Time*.⁹⁾ He strongly recommended that readers acquire knowledge of English grammar. As the writing in *Time* is logical and composed according to English grammatical rules, readers without the knowledge of proper English grammar find it challenging to interpret the articles’ content correctly.¹⁰⁾ MINAI considered the English in *Time* to be outstandingly logical among magazines, and said that if we could not clearly understand the meanings of the articles in *Time*, the fault was ours, not the magazine’s.¹¹⁾ In the past, understanding English newspapers and news magazines required being conversant with the Christian Bible, but now news magazines (including *Time*) cover topics from a more global and inclusive perspective,¹²⁾ that

tendency has been disappearing.

ESL readers of *Time* need basic academic competencies, logical thinking skills, and some understanding of English grammar.

2.3 A Reading Method

The course recommended a reading method, using the example of a *Time* article on a meeting between then-US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore on June 12, 2018. The article “The ‘Dare Me’ Doctrine: President Trump’s defiant diplomacy” was written by Brian Bennet from Singapore and published in *Time* issue of June 25, 2018.¹³⁾ The summit described in the article was focused on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Kim wanted Trump to suspend the US and South Korean military exercises in and around the peninsula, and Trump agreed. As the headline suggested, the reporter and *Time* were not admirers of the Trump administration’s foreign policies.

In the print version, the first paragraph (lead) was set in a larger point size than the body. The next eight paragraphs of the report (body) stated how the Trump administration aggressively pursued his foreign policies, as follows:

1. “It was exactly the kind of shoot-from-the-hip move they hate in the pin-striped confines of the State Department. But the moment was classic Trump.”
2. “The war-game concession was just the latest in a series of surprising turns in what may ultimately prove to be a historic moment.”
3. “Now, in less than a year, Trump has gone from threatening Kim with annihilation to the first face-to-face talks between a sitting US president and a North Korean leader.”
4. “The summit theater was the latest and most dramatic example of how the impulsive president is upending the global order.”
5. “Early on, Trump heeded his top aides when they urged caution. But in the past six months, he has taken increasingly dramatic risks—especially in foreign policy.”
6. “The populist famously bristled at convention. ‘If you go into a meeting and say we can’t do that, or that’s not the way it’s been done, you can be assured he’s going to want to do it,’ says one senior National Security Council official.” (This second sentence was also set as a displayed quotation in large letters.)
7. “There may be short-term benefits in abandoning the US’s decades-old

commitment to strategic predictability.”

8. “Nowhere are the stakes are higher than in North Korea, where diplomatic failure could set the course for renewed military confrontation.”

As this example shows, reading the first (and second) sentences of each paragraph can be an effective way for readers to get the outline of a story. (If they want more explanation, they can read the rest of each paragraph.)

After providing some anecdotal descriptions of Trump, the article explained how he got his way: firing personnel frequently.

Trump promised Kim that the US would suspend its joint exercises with South Korea. Despite Trump’s dramatic performance, Kim promised nothing in return, only mentioning his commitment to denuclearization.

The article continued with a map and several illustrations, including a timeline: “A History of Broken Promises.”¹⁴⁾ The illustration showed how the three North Korean generations had made a promise and broken it by launching short-range, mid-range, and intercontinental ballistic missiles and implementing nuclear tests. The map gave readers information about the number of active troops of North and South Korea and the US forces and bases in South Korea. Several graphs showed the economic state of North Korea after the US sanctions. Visual information (e.g., illustrations, maps, graphs, photographs) appeals to readers and provides background for the text information.

To give readers multiple points of view and perhaps to prove that the reporting was not biased, *Time* supplemented the article with four commentaries¹⁵⁾: “One Real Summit Win” was written by Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, who approved of the “cessation of US-South Korea war games”; “The Machiavellian Mr. Kim” was written by journalist Charlie Campbell, who focused on Kim’s dictatorial scheming; “Trump Swaps Friends for Foes” was written by Ian Bremmer, who suggested that although “treating friends as enemies and enemies as friends” appealed to his supporters, it was unlikely to be good for the nation; and “‘War Games’ Are Nothing to Toy with” by retired US Navy Admiral James Stavridis, formerly the 16th Supreme Allied Commander at NATO, who argued that Trump failed to understand the “coherent whole that creates a network of allies and coalition partners around the world” and suspended a critical operation with South Korea for no benefit.

The article was much longer than the excerpts here suggest, but the time allotted to extension lectures is limited. Therefore, the course teacher worked with a shortened

version, giving explanations for each paragraph for the ESL students from various educational backgrounds.

3. Extension Lectures: From Learning to Interpretation

Generally, Japanese universities' extension lectures are lecture-based. That is understandable, given that the attendees vary in their educational backgrounds and ESL achievement levels, and are limited only to ages 18 and over. It would be difficult for teachers to lead such students in a seminar-style course. Therefore, the attendees receive input from the teachers but rarely have the opportunity to commit actively to the class or discuss the lectures. Sometimes, not always though, the content differs so much from what the attendees have learned or studied before that they require some preparatory teaching. The following paragraphs describe some sources for this.

3.1 Lecture: Background (Other Materials: *Japan Times ST*), Opinions

Articles from *Time* magazine are among the difficult texts used in ESL extension lectures in Japan. Sometimes teachers need to avoid diving straight into the articles and prepare the students first by reading the headlines and leads from other sources to get accustomed to the grammatical features of English-language media.

Brief bits of text such as opinions, illustrations, and photo captions can be useful, written either in English or in Japanese. They would attract attentions of the attendees to the topics.

Also helpful are other articles written about the same topics in English. For example, a short article appeared on June 22, 2018, in *The Japan Times ST (Student Times)* covering the same summit as the *Time* article. It also included some tips written in Japanese at the bottom of the page.¹⁶⁾ It was a short one, which gave readers precedent knowledge that helped them with the English version.

3.2 Seminar: Participation

During the media-based ESL courses, it sometimes becomes evident that the students have knowledge of and opinions about the article being discussed. In such cases, the teacher can change the lecture into a seminar-style course by posing questions, asking the students to join the conversations, and listening to the students' opinions. Class participation is a bridging step toward active commitment to the class.

At the end of a class, some teachers give the students homework. In the course

described here, the teacher assigned four students one of the four commentaries from different viewpoints mentioned in 2.3, supplementing the Trump-Kim summit article for the next class. Homework should not be underestimated; it helps establish positive and active attitudes toward learning. Giving people responsibility improves their motivation and results in their achievements.

3.3 Presentation and Interpretation

The four students responsible for the homework commentaries gave presentations during the next class. They did a great job, summarizing their assigned reading and expressing their opinions clearly. After the class, some of them continued the discussion.

Their presentations included their interpretations and analyses. Preparing and delivering a presentation about an article, even a short one, helps ESL learners organize their thoughts and assess the English words closely for their nuanced meanings based on the knowledge gained during the extension lectures. This is one of the ideal goals of the extension lectures that involve reading *Time* together in a class.

Conclusion

University extension lectures have tight time constraints, a few classes for each teacher, so teachers must focus on the basics. The classes should be accessible for students from varied educational backgrounds. The only condition for the classes is of ages 18 and over, which indicates that the students are supposed to be at least high school graduates.

Interpreting international affairs is an engaging topic for learners of English language. Students read current topics in English-language news magazines like *Time*. Once the students learn a little about news writing (e.g., the inverted pyramid, headline grammar), they can enjoy reading the news with a global perspective. Source materials written specifically for ESL learners, such *The Japan Times Alpha* (the *Student Times*) can help them prepare for reading and understanding the topics in *Time*.

A short survey to the attendees of the extension lecture described here¹⁷⁾ revealed that the degree of satisfaction was divided. Some students thought the lectures were interesting, but others thought the content was too difficult. This suggests they need to establish the basic academic competencies before delving more deeply into the

articles.

Students who have interests in the current topics are to commit their knowledge and experiences to the class and express their opinions through the presentation of their assignments. Such university extension lectures as described here might be a good inducement to further reading of English newspapers and magazines as daily habits.

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Notes

- 1) "History of *The Japan Times*," October 23, 2019. <http://mellow.na.coocan.jp/JThistory.htm>. Accessed September 11, 2021.
- 2) *Time Europe* covers Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America and is published in London. *Time Asia* covers Asia and is published in Hong Kong. *Time South Pacific* covers Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific Islands and is published in Sydney. *Newsweek* (in English) has a US version and an international version, which is divided into different issues for the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America. The content and compositions of the magazines vary according to the regions they cover.
- 3) Ambassador Edwin O. Reischauer (1910-1990) was the first US ambassador to Japan who actually spoke Japanese; he was appointed by President John F. Kennedy. Although Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, Reischauer continued as ambassador until 1966. He had to face the anti-Vietnam War movement in Japan.
- 4) 斎藤眞、永井陽之助、山本満 編「日本のベトナム報道に関するライシャワー大使発言」(1965.10.5) 『戦後資料 日米関係』、東京：日本評論社、1970年、388-392。[SAITO Makoto, NAGAI Yonosuké and YAMAMOTO Mitsuru, eds. "Remarks by Ambassador Reischauer on Japan's Vietnam Coverage," in *Japan - US Postwar Documentary Sources* (Tokyo: Nihon Hyōronsha, 1970), 388-392.]
- 5) <https://www.businessinsider.jp/post-174331>. Accessed September 23, 2021
- 6) 松本道弘、『「タイム」を読む 生きた英語の学び方』、東京：講談社現代新書617、1990、67-68。[MATSUMOTO Michihiro, *Reading "Time": How to Learn Practical English* (Tokyo: Kōdansha Gendai Shinsho 617, 1990), 67-68]
- 7) 清水義次、『英字新聞を読む 生きた英語で世界を知る』東京：丸善ライブラリー、1999、10-11。[SHIMIZU Yoshitsugu, *Reading English Newspapers: Getting to Know the World by Practical English* (Tokyo: Maruzen Library, 1999), 10-11]
- 8) Ibid., "Introduction."
- 9) 栗袋義郎、『TIMEを読むための10のステップ』、東京：研究社ブックス、2004、10。[MINAI Yoshiro, *Ten Steps to Reading "Time"* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha Books, 2004), 10]
- 10) Ibid., 34-35.
- 11) Ibid., "Introduction."
- 12) Ibid., 2-3.

- 13) Brian Bennet, "The 'Dare Me' Doctrine: President Trump's Defiant Diplomacy," *Time* (June 25, 2018), 20-30.
- 14) *Ibid.*, "A History of Broken Promises," 24-25.
- 15) *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, 26-27, 29-30.
- 16) Reuters, "Trump-Kim Summit Produces Vague Plan on Denuclearization," *The Japan Times ST* 68, no. 25 (June 22, 2018).
- 17) This paper is based on extension lectures to Japanese citizens at Aikoku Gakuen University in 2018.

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概要：『タイム』誌で時事問題を読む

伏見 親子

生涯学習という観点から大学の公開講座を見れば、半期15回という通常授業とは異なり、一つのテーマについて2、3回という回数制限の中で、教育歴が異なる「18歳以上」の成人に対して教育を行うという問題がある。

日本ではなく、海外で書かれた英字新聞・雑誌は、日本とは異なる視点、グローバルな視点で、国際問題を伝えてくれる。また、メディアには偏向があることを理解し、批判的に記事を読まなければならない。

成人教育として大学の公開講座で英字新聞・雑誌を扱うには、英語は母語ではない第2言語(ESL)なので、まず見出しと時事英語特有の文法・語法を教える必要がある。それには受講者に英語の基礎学力があることが前提となる。

『タイム』誌にはアジア版があり、『ニューズウィーク』よりも日本人になじみのある題材が多く、また日本発行の英字新聞などを副教材とすれば、語彙と背景の説明などがあり、学習者は予備知識をもって内容に入れることができる。

限られた時間内で題材を絞り、講座の流れの中で学習者が講義を聴くだけの受け身の姿勢から、積極的に授業に関わるように、講義から演習、発表へと授業形態を変えていく方法をとることとする。

事例として、2018年の四街道市市民大学講座を取り上げる。2018年6月にアメリカ大統領(当時)ドナルド・トランプ氏が北朝鮮の金正恩総書記とシンガポールで行った会談に関する『タイム』誌アジア版の記事を題材に、副教材として日本の学生向け英字新聞『ジャパントイムス・アルファ』の同一テーマを扱った記事を使用した。

時事英語の基礎を講義した後、この記事の構成を説明し、記事に示された地図やグラフ、イラスト、異なる立場の人々からのコメントを取り上げながら、講義形式から演習、更には発表による記事の解釈へと進めていった。特に国際的な時事問題に興味がある受講者は、自らの知識と経験をもとに、発表を通じて意見を述べ、積極的に授業に関わるようになった。