

What a disaster!

LINKS TO:

Stage 3, Module 12

Learning Object 3: *On the other hand*

Exercise 1

1.1 Summarise, in English, the main ideas from each paragraph.

Introduction

Two survivors have been found nine days after the tsunami and earthquake.

Body paragraph 1

The survivors were an 80-year-old woman and a 16-year-old boy.

Body paragraph 2

The survivors have been sent to hospital.

Body paragraph 3

The survivors are Jin Abe and his grandmother Sumi Abe.

Body paragraph 4

They survived because Jin Abe could get food from the refrigerator.

Body paragraph 5

Jin Abe was cold and had an injured leg when he was rescued.

Body paragraph 6

The earthquake had a magnitude of 9.0. 21,000 people are missing or dead. The area affected is in the northeast of Japan.

Body paragraph 7

There was one other man found alive, but it turned out he had not been in the area during the disaster.

Body paragraph 8

Snow and cold have hampered rescue operations.

Conclusion

The boy and his grandmother were found in Miyagi prefecture, which was the worst hit area. The death toll there is 4882.

1.2 Were there particular words or phrases you found difficult to understand? What strategies did you use to understand these words or phrases, or to understand the text as a whole despite not being sure what some words meant?

I used several strategies to understand words or phrases I found difficult. First of all, for those without affixes, such as *luluh lantak*, *dahsyat*, *ambruk*, *lanjut usia*, *pengungsi*, I consulted the dictionary to find out their meaning. I tried to understand the words or phrases from the context, and the simple words or phrases are easy to find in the dictionary. For words like *penyelamatan*, I had to determine the base word first. I consulted the grammar notes provided in *New Land New Language* to confirm that the word has a prefix *peN-* and a suffix *-an* and from there I deduced that the base word would be *selamat*.

1.3 When did the earthquake occur?

The earthquake occurred on March 11, 2011.

1.4 Which area of Japan suffered the most damage in the tsunami?

The Miyagi prefecture, which is in the north-east of Japan.

1.5 What is the relationship between the two people who were rescued?

The two people who were rescued are a boy and his grandmother.

2.6 How many people, in total, were rescued?

According to the news report, these are the only two people who have been rescued so far.

Exercise 2

2.1 What or who is the main focus of the news story? Why do you think this is the case?

The main focus of the story is the rescue of the boy and his grandmother. I think this is the focus because it provides hope that other survivors will be found. The story is also about family, and is an example of someone (the boy) showing courage and strength in helping his grandmother to survive. The focus provides human interest for the story, and is very moving. Although it is reported in objective language, the story is quite heart-warming.

2.2 What evidence does the journalist provide to support the story? How reliable is this evidence? How relevant is it to the focus of the story?

The journalist provides quite a bit of factual data in the story, although no sources for this information are provided. For example, he writes that the earthquake was magnitude 9.0, but does not give the source of this information.

The journalist includes two quotes from people working at the scene: a policeman in the Miyagi prefecture, and an announcement given by army troops working in the area. These two quotes provide direct evidence about the boy and his grandmother, and about the other man who was found alive in the area.

The data about the magnitude of the earthquake, and the numbers of people who are missing or dead, are highly relevant to the story. They provide a context for the event, and emphasise how amazing it is that the boy and his grandmother survived.

2.3 Are there any underlying assumptions that inform the way the text has been written?

The report is written in fairly neutral language, without any highly emotive elements. The focus on the survivors does assume that people will be more interested in the stories of survivors than in those who are missing or dead. That is, even though the report is about a natural disaster, the focus is on a good news story. This perhaps relies on an assumption that readers will prefer a good news story to one that contains no positive or hopeful elements.

There is no direct comment on the relationship between the boy and his grandmother. It is clear from the subtext that the boy was found in better condition than his grandmother, and that it was the boy who got food for her so that she would survive. I would infer from this that the boy has taken care of his grandmother, ensuring her survival.

This perhaps reflects my own assumption that a boy in this situation would take the responsibility of caring for his injured and elderly grandmother, because in Japanese culture the elderly are treated with respect by younger people.