

LESSON NOTES

Japanese Culture Class #61

New Word and Buzzword-of-the-Year Grand Prix 2009

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CULTURAL INSIGHT

新語流行語大賞 / New Word and Buzzword-of-the-Year Grand Prix

Kanji	Hiragana	Rōmaji	"English"
新語	しんご	<i>Shin-go</i>	"New word"
流行語	りゅうこうご	<i>Ryūkō-go</i>	"Buzzword"
大賞	たいしょう	<i>Taishō</i>	"Grand prix"

What Is the New Word and Buzzword-of-the-Year Grand Prix?

A publishing company called *Jiyūkokumin-sha* (自由国民社) and a related education company called U-Can annually present the New Word and Buzzword-of-the-Year Grand Prix. This event awards the words or phrases that reflect social conditions and have had a strong impact on society. The votes of readers of *Gendai Yōgo Kihon Jiten* (現代用語基本辞典), meaning the "Modern Term Dictionary," which *Jiyūkokumin-sha* publishes, nominate words or phrases for the awards.

The awards were established in 1984 and are usually held during the first week of December. Major newspapers publish the results, and television shows discuss them a lot as well.

The Winning Buzzword of 2009

***Seiken kōtai* (政権交代)**

Seiken (政権) means "political administration" and *kōtai* (交代) means "change." When put together, *seiken kōtai* (政権交代) means "regime change."

In the election for the House of Representatives held on August 30, 2009, the opposing Democratic Party of Japan won in a landslide victory against the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, resulting in a regime change. The Democratic Party of Japan came into power, and Yukio Hatoyama became the new prime minister. This landslide victory ended the

fifty-four-year reign of the Liberal Democratic Party, which became the defining event in Japan in 2009. Because of this, the phrase 政権交代 became the buzzword of the year.

Sample Sentences

1. 自民党から民主党への政権交代が実現した。
Jimintō kara minshutō he no seiken kōtai ga jitugen shita.
"A regime change from the Liberal Democratic Party to the Democratic Party of Japan took place."

Some of the Top Ten New Words/Buzzwords of 2009

Sōshoku danshi (草食男子)

Sōshoku (草食) means "plant-eating" or "herbivorous" and *danshi* (男子) means "boy," so together, *sōshoku danshi* (草食男子) literally means "herbivore boy."

"Herbivore boys" may want to be in a relationship but do not actively pursue one. They are not that concerned with love and being successful in life; instead, they are the type who is content with staying home and enjoy cooking and cleaning. On the other hand, men who are outgoing and actively pursue women they are interested in are called *nikushoku danshi* (肉食男子).

Sample Sentences

1. 恋愛に消極的な草食男子が増えている。
Ren'ai ni shōkyoku teki na sōshoku danshi ga fuete iru.
"Herbivore boys' who have a dim outlook on love are increasing."

ファストファッション ("Fast fashion")

"Fast fashion" refers to fashion brands that put out new, trendy, cutting-edge fashions at a reasonable price. This word is modeled after the phrase "fast food": food that is both fast and cheap. Japanese brands Uniqlo, Shimamura, and g.u. were faring relatively well with their popular "fast fashion," but foreign brands H&M, ZARA, and Forever 21 soon moved in,

drawing a lot of attention and setting off a fierce "fast fashion" battle among the brands.

Sample Sentences

原宿に、たくさんのファストファッションのお店ができた。

Harajuku ni, takusan no fasuto fasshon no o-mise ga dekita.

"A lot of 'fast fashion' stores have cropped up in Harajuku."