

July 26, 13:00~14:30: Sophia Symposium, Room 2-1702

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“Disaster Information Across National Borders: Role of broadcasters in times of disasters from a survey on foreign residents in Japan”

Key words

disaster information, earthquake in Tokyo, foreign residents, social media, broadcast

Abstract

The presentation analyses the changing role of broadcasters in times of disasters in this era of globalization. In Japan, NHK, the sole public broadcaster, has a duty to report disaster-prevention information accurately and promptly. Public broadcasters are fundamentally domestic in grounding and orientation. NHK's mission statement says disaster reporting has its objective "to protect the lives and property of the (Japanese) nationals". However in this interconnected world where influence of disaster is global, roles and responsibility of broadcasters should change accordingly.

In the aftermath of the 3.11 disaster, one of the conspicuous problems faced by foreign residents in Japan was "vacuum of information" or "being at a loss for trusted sources of information", according to a questionnaire survey on foreigners by NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute in 2012. The results illustrate that many of them turned to the multiple channels of information sources to seek necessary information but ended up relying on "word-of mouth" with conflicting and confusing messages, which created an atmosphere of uncertainty. Another noticeable finding was that many foreigners in Japan made their decisions on post-disaster actions based on information from their home countries; the media reports, advice from their families and acquaintances and the governments' advisories, which in fact were influenced by the Japanese media reports. In the multi-media environment disaster information circulated in complexity, traveling out of national borders and then again having influence back on the people inside the country. The survey reinforces the necessity of considering the unique needs of foreigners in Japan to improve information dissemination for future disasters.

At the time of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami disaster, 2.07 million foreigners were in Japan, almost half of whom resided in and around Tokyo. As a huge earthquake is expected in Tokyo with 70% probability within 30 years, we should anticipate more destructive confusion.

The author conducted a follow-up survey in March 2014, in-depth interviews on foreigners living in Japan to find out what kinds of information are needed to overcome the

vacuum of information and clarify the current problems of the Japanese media if an earthquake in Tokyo Metropolitan area should occur. Based on the survey, the presentation claims the importance of the role of broadcasters to provide disaster information to ethnic minorities within Japan and across geographic boundaries to international audiences.

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TANAKA TAKANOBU (Ph.D. 2009, Graduate School of International Development, Nagoya University) is Senior Researcher of Broadcast Culture Research Institute of NHK. Tanaka joined NHK as a news announcer and reporter in 1988. A broadcast journalist for nearly 25 years, Tanaka has covered various natural and man-made disasters such as the earthquake in Kobe, Japan (1995), 9.11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. (2001) and Indian Ocean tsunami disaster (2004) in Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka. At the time of the Great East Japan earthquake (2011), he was stationed in Radio Broadcasting Center in NHK headquarters and went to the disaster struck areas in Tohoku to provide coverage. He moved to BCRI in 2011. His main research themes include disaster broadcast and international co-operation and Public Service Media in Europe and Asia.