

Re: Jorden at MIT

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang.japan/2004-09/1272.html>

From: Bart Mathias (*bartmathias_at_verizon.net*)

Date: 09/13/04

Date: Mon, 13 Sep 2004 21:19:24 GMT

Jed Rothwell wrote:

> [...]

> *The other day I heard a sentence with genuine ambiguity: "kami o kiru." That
> could be hair or paper. I think a native speaker would resolve it by
> specifying "kami no ke" for hair.*

"Kami" is a good one for the list, for sure. I especially like Japanese ones—it's too easy to put a couple kanji together and get a homophone.

There are so many "sei" and "sen" and "kou."

Not to mention "ka" and "mi." The akusento would be different, but I wonder if you could write something like "kami-o kiru" intending "I'm gonna limit/cut out the seasoning"?

What I was interested in in this case was the question of whether "kami-o kiru" would really be ambiguous between cutting paper and getting a hair cut. I haven't spent enough time, perhaps, in a Japanese speaking environment, but except in special contexts I would automatically take "kami-o kiru" as "I'm going to get a haircut." One just doesn't say "I'm going to cut some paper" very much. "Kami-no ke-o kiru" makes me think maybe somebody has a handful of hair and is going to cut it shorter or something.

Bart