

Framing Biases and Language Choices

How the Japanese Media Broadcast Foreign Aid Policy for Africa

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Document Version

Accepted author manuscript

Published in:

Critical Perspectives on International Business

DOI:

[10.1108/cpoib-04-2022-0023](https://doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-04-2022-0023)

Publication date:

2023

License

Unspecified

Citation for published version (APA):

Hatani, F. (2023). Framing Biases and Language Choices: How the Japanese Media Broadcast Foreign Aid Policy for Africa. *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 19(5), 640-660. <https://doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-04-2022-0023>

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Framing biases and language choices: how the Japanese media broadcast foreign aid policy for Africa

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Hatani, F. (2023), "Framing biases and language choices: how the Japanese media broadcast foreign aid policy for Africa", *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, Vol. 19 No. 5, pp. 640-660. <https://doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-04-2022-0023>

Abstract

Purpose

This paper aims to investigate how the Japanese media conveyed the country's foreign aid policy and analyse how framing biases in the news differ depending on which language (either Japanese or English) was used in the broadcasts.

Design/methodology/approach

This study uses a qualitative single case-study design and conducts a content analysis. The study uses news videos about the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development aired on YouTube by the Japanese media using Japanese and English.

Findings

The findings reveal subtle but notable differences in the patterns of the framing biases in the Japanese media's news aired in Japanese intended for the domestic audience, and in the news on the same topic broadcast in English to the international audience.

Research limitations/implications

The limitation of the study is the rather small data set used for the single case study of one event.

Social implications

Framing biases could lead the general public in a monolingual society to a more skewed view of their government's policy and its activities abroad. This could be an obstacle to developing a common ground for global issues and cross-border policy agendas.

Originality/value

The study explores an under-researched function of language in international affairs. It highlights how the mass media in a non-English-speaking country uses a dual approach to framing news while addressing different audiences. To the best of the author's knowledge, the context that this paper deals with is novel because there are limited studies on the nexus between the influence of language choices and media logic in the field of international business.

Keywords

Framing bias; Language choice; Media logic; Foreign aid policy; YouTube; Japan

Language choices and different framing biases: How the Japanese media broadcast foreign aid policy for Africa

1. Introduction

The relationship between government policy and business activities has long been identified in international business (IB) studies (e.g., Dunning, 1997; Sauvant, 2021). However, language was often neglected in IB (Marschan *et al.*, 1997; Welch and Piekkari, 2006), especially in the policy–business nexus, despite the fact that the language used in discussing socioeconomic issues has a distinctive function in policies (Edelman, 1977). It should also be noted that while language still serves as a barrier to information exchange across borders, the internet has drastically increased the global flow of news (Larson, 2004). With the rapid growth of social media platforms alongside the progress of multimedia, policymakers across the world are becoming aware that a country’s policies are being exposed to a significantly wider audience, even outside their home territory (Brammer *et al.*, 2021). A notable phenomenon in this context is mediatisation, a dynamic process of increased media influence on social and cultural institutions across different contexts (Dreher *et al.*, 2016; Falasca, 2014; Hjarvard, 2008). Political news can be mediatised when media content is governed by media logic, which refers to “the particular institutionally structured features of a medium, the ensemble of technical and organisational attributes which impact on what gets represented in the medium” (Dahlgren, 1996, p. 63). In other words, what is interesting for the audience to hear, or commercially viable for the media to convey, surpasses what is important for the audience to know (Falasca, 2014; Strömbäck, 2008). Online media has contributed to this through its news framing.

Framing can be defined as “the subtle selection of certain aspects of an issue by the media to make them more important and thus to emphasise a particular cause of some phenomenon” (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p. 64). The way in which news is framed invites people to read it in a particular way and in a particular cultural and institutional context (Redden, 2011). The problem with the media’s framing is that it imposes a systematic bias upon media logic in political news and potentially undermines other important factors related to the news by accentuating certain elements of the whole story. While media logic and biases in news framing have been researched mainly in terms of voting at elections (e.g., Kaid and Strömbäck, 2008; Zeh and Hopmann, 2013), the media’s influence on the public policy domain is still under-researched (Hajer, 2009).

Foreign policy presents a significant complexity because it involves multiple aspects (Lord Jay of Ewelme, 2008). The way in which the media will frame a nation’s foreign policy has a substantial influence on the public’s understanding. The analysis is also complicated because of the repeated redefinition and renegotiation of a given foreign policy (Bovens and Hart, 1995). As a consequence of

these factors, it can be difficult to comprehend the policy agenda clearly, and foreign aid policy in particular involves this characteristic. Due to the wide-ranging issues and various projects that foreign aid policy deals with, there can be several different interpretations, even of a specific aid project (Krohwinkel-Karlsson and Sjögren, 2008). Moreover, when the domestic media conveys a multidimensional policy in different languages (e.g., using the national language other than English in a domestic context, while using English when broadcasting via satellite and online channels), this can create further multiplicity in the media's news framing.

Using Japan as a unique example that underscores this issue, the paper investigates how the Japanese media conveyed the country's aid policy and what type of bias is present in the news, depending on which language (either Japanese or English) was used in the broadcasts. The study qualitatively explores framing biases in the news coverage of Japan's aid for Africa, which has been highlighted through a series of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). Focusing on the TICAD held in Japan in 2013 (the so-called "TICAD-V [five]"), this paper examines how the Japanese media framed the news on TICAD-V and associated socioeconomic issues differently when broadcasting the news in Japanese and English respectively. Propensities in framing biases in the news on TICAD-V are analysed in light of the four types of framing biases.

2. Literature review

IB policy research has pointed out the importance of socio-political dimensions to better understand their impacts on multinational enterprises (MNEs) (Buckley, 2018). Language can be seen as a social practice in the socio-political context (Janssens and Steyaert, 2014). In line with this view, previous studies analysed cross-border activities, such as foreign direct investment (FDI) and management in multilingual contexts focusing on language. Existing research has tended to approach language-related issues at the firm level and/or from a cross-cultural perspective (Berman *et al.*, 2017; Brannen *et al.*, 2014). However, given that language is an institution that influences a wide range of socioeconomic aspects (Berman *et al.*, 2022; Tenzer *et al.*, 2017), it should be regarded as a variable in its own right, rather than a subset of culture (Brannen *et al.*, 2017; Santacreu-Vasut *et al.*, 2014).

To explore the role of language in an international setting, it is useful to draw on theoretical frameworks outside the field of IB (Brannen *et al.*, 2017). An important upward trend in this stream of research is the study of the influence of language choices in mass media, including social media (e.g., Graham, 2007; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The communication discipline has conducted media-oriented research extensively, and framing theory, among numerous communication theories, is the most central, bridging other sub-fields of communication such as social cognitive models, and mass and interpersonal communication (Chung *et al.*, 2013). The main tenet of framing theory highlights that a news item can be constructed from various perspectives, generating multiple values and meanings (Chong and

Druckman, 2007). With attention paid to the speaker's presentation style, however, framing studies have concentrated on the media's message design and specific frames used for a certain topic (Borah, 2011), having evolved separately from the analysis of language choice. In this paper, I integrate these key areas by using a bilingual setting to compare framings in two languages and examine how the choice of language affects framing biases in news on international affairs.

2.1 Conceptual framework: Framing biases in media

The media constructs "reality" through its logic by processing and transmitting information (Hjarvard, 2008) in different styles of presentation and with a focus or emphasis on particular characteristics of a topic (Altheide, 2013; Strömbäck, 2008). Broadcasting via multimedia, such as television and online news channels, is a powerful form of media communication because of its ability to combine different formats including text, audio and visual information. Since no single actor can control the autonomous agenda of the media in a democratic society, media logic and its news framing are not entirely under government control (Jensen and Seeberg, 2015). As a result, there are now more varied media logics and news framings than ever before because each medium frames news with its own priorities and preferences. Accordingly, there can be various types of bias, in terms of "systematic tendencies" in presentation, depending on the news producers' intentions and viewpoints (McQuail, 1992).

Bennett (2005) identifies four news biases: fragmentation bias, dramatisation bias, personalisation bias and authority–disorder bias. First, fragmentation bias refers to the isolated reporting of related stories or reporting partially by detaching an element from its wider contexts (Bennett, 2005; Strömbäck and Shehata, 2007). Due to the limited time available to elaborate on associated issues within a news clip, fragmentation in news may be unavoidable to some extent. However, a caveat relating to fragmentation bias is that fragmented information can drive the audience to supply its own interpretations of a given subject (Bennett, 2005). Second, dramatisation bias is the simplification of news content into a theatrical story (Bennett, 2005). Broadcast media prefers to portray serious issues in a dramatic fashion; the news value of a public policy can be enhanced by framing conflicts, crises and particular narratives (Bennett, 2005; Hajer, 2009). Given the increasing accessibility of international media sources, however, a dramatisation of international affairs can be a risky media tactic since countries respond to political and economic issues differently because of the varying institutional standpoints (Campbell and Pedersen, 2015; Guillen, 2001). Third, personalisation bias occurs when the media focuses on the people involved in a certain issue rather than on the issue itself. The media often frame stories in this way because storytelling that draws on human interest – for example, by focusing on specific politicians – can capture potential audiences more easily, rather than providing sufficient policy analysis (Bennett, 2005). Finally, the media's deliberate negative news coverage of political authorities is referred to as authority–disorder bias (Bennett, 2005; Korthagen, 2015). A drawback resulting from this bias is that since most people

rely on the media for political information, the audience may have become more cynical about the authority (Kleinnijenhuis *et al.*, 2006).

These four biases are often interrelated. In the process of framing the news, the media selects thematic categories that it considers to be newsworthy, and emphasises and synthesises samples of events, scenes, actors and their actions (Bennett, 2005; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). The way that policy issues are framed is critical because the media's interpretation can influence policy objectives (Kern *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, the media offers an interpretive framework for society and creates a space for discussion in which members of the society can decide upon matters of shared interest (Hjarvard, 2008).

2.2 Language choices as a framing device

Individuals in society are influenced by various factors in a given context, and the media's framing plays a significant role in their ways of thinking (Jackson and Brammer, 2014). In this vein, Hjarvard (2008) suggests that questions about the effects of the media need to consider the specific context. Individuals' knowledge and attitudes towards socio-political issues tend to derive from what the media disseminates (Swedberg, 2007). Language is a key element in the complex whole of society as this is the avenue through which we obtain our means of understanding, and ordinary language in our daily lives prioritises mutual understanding and agreement, generated through its mediatisation (Livingstone, 2009). This phenomenon is growing in democratic industrialised societies such as Australia, Europe, Japan and the US (Hjarvard, 2008). However, there is very limited research on media logic in Japan, where the penetration of the English language into society has been much more shallow than in other industrialised countries.

In highly bilingual/multilingual countries in Europe, there is a likelihood that the domestic audience will receive news in different languages when the local media makes the news available in that way. This can provide the audience with more diverse perspectives. However, when the domestic media of a monolingual country transmits news in different languages, the news is normally distributed separately through different outlets; for example, the news in the national language through domestic media channels for citizens, with English being used on international channels. When the Japanese media disseminates news in English, presumably it has international audiences in mind (another potential audience could be, to a much lesser extent, foreigners who may be visiting or residing in Japan). In computer-mediated communication, especially on social media, the media's language choices are likely to be determined by expectations around the primary audience (Bell, 1984). This means that when the media uses different languages, it is addressing different types of audiences.

In addition, news content in the national language is not necessarily an unbiased and accurate interpretation of the actual state of affairs (Jack and Westwood, 2006). It is noteworthy that Japanese

politicians commonly adopt different attitudes; honest opinion and idealistic rhetoric (“*hon-ne*” and “*tatema*” in Japanese), when conversing about public affairs (Feldman, 2021). Given the presence of news biases and media logic engineered by language choices, the following questions are raised: When the domestic media broadcasts news on foreign affairs in two languages, is the news content framed differently? If so, how does a framing bias differ? These questions are worthy of consideration because the media plays an increasingly important role in influencing public opinion and the policy agenda. Figure 1 outlines the analytical framework that guides this study.

Figure 1. Analytical framework for this study

*** Figure 1 here ***

3. Japan’s Foreign Aid Policy and the TICAD Initiative

Japan provides a unique research setting for media framing of foreign aid policy. In the post-World War II period, Japan adopted a comprehensive approach to foreign aid through official development aid (ODA) and Japanese firms’ direct investment. However, although it is one of the major donor nations in the world, the Japanese government was historically reluctant to take the initiative in the international political arena, mainly because of bitter memories of its imperialist past (Calder, 1988). Nevertheless, the donor community’s pressure on Japan, and more notably China’s expansion into Africa, have compelled Japan to adopt a more proactive attitude towards foreign aid (Lehman, 2010). Amid donor fatigue worldwide in the early 1990s, the Japanese government launched TICAD in 1993 to “promote high-level policy dialogue between African leaders and development partners” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010). TICAD is a multilateral forum, co-organised with the United Nations (UN), the World Bank and the African Union Commission (AUC). Since Japan’s ODA had been largely concentrated on Asian countries, the TICAD initiative was a turning point in its foreign aid policy. TICAD can be seen as Japan’s deliberate effort to become more involved in Africa, the world’s most deprived region (Hatani, 2016). Another underlying factor in the birth of TICAD was Japan’s ambition to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council and support from African nations is a vital factor in achieving this goal (Alden, 2002; Cornelissen, 2012).

From its inauguration in 1993 until 2016, the TICAD meetings were held in Japan every five years (subsequently, Japan and African countries agreed to hold a TICAD every three years). The first TICAD hosted delegations from 48 African nations alongside international organisations and non-governmental organisations. Although the conference has grown in size over time, the series of TICAD meetings did not result in any meaningful upturn in Japan’s ODA to Africa (Hughes, 2009). Because of the lack of tangible outcomes from the TICAD meetings, there has been increasing scepticism among African nations, and TICAD was even described as just a talking shop (Cornelissen, 2012). Moreover, outside the circle of the main TICAD stakeholders such as government officials and scholars, the TICAD

dialogue and Japan's foreign aid policy for Africa had not been adequately recognised due to the limited visibility of Japan's presence in Africa (Lehman, 2010). The activities of TICAD were rarely heard about in civil society, even in Japan, because of the geographical and psychological distance between Africa and Japan (Ohbayashi, 2007). Against this background, TICAD-V took place in 2013 with the overarching theme of "Hand in hand with a more dynamic Africa". The following sections explore how the Japanese media framed it.

4. Methodology

To identify and compare subtle differences in the Japanese media's framings of the news broadcast in Japanese and English, this study employs a qualitative single case-study design. Compared to multiple case studies, a single case study can provide a richer story and deeper contextual insights into the dynamics of phenomena (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991; Logemann and Piekkari, 2015; Piekkari *et al.*, 2009). Although single case studies are often considered to be weak in terms of generalisability (Eisenhardt, 1989), Śliwa and Johansson (2014) argue that the inherent subjectivities of observations enable us to gain an interpretive insight. In particular, a single case study is appropriate when a case is unique, critical or revelatory, because by studying such a case, we can obtain new insights that were not previously available (Ghauri, 2004).

For this study, TICAD-V was chosen as the subject matter rather than other TICAD meetings as it marked TICAD's 20th anniversary. To conduct a focused and in-depth analysis, it is advisable to use a specific policy issue transmitted intensively through one medium during a particular period. In this regard, TICAD-V provides an ideal setting for this study. Thanks to heavy promotion by the Japanese government, there was much greater media attention afforded to the conference than ever before. TICAD-V was critical in TICAD history in terms of augmenting the positive image of its contribution to Africa because it was held in 2013 when the Algerian hostage crisis had just happened. In this incident, 10 Japanese workers at a gas plant in Algeria were killed. TICAD-V also became a crucial juncture in the organisation of TICAD. Although all the previous TICAD meetings had been held in Japan, AUC requested alternate hosting of future events in Japan and Africa, and subsequent TICAD meetings were hosted by Japan and one of the African nations in turn. Thus, TICAD-V is positioned as the last in a series of the first five TICAD meetings consecutively held in Japan.

The data used in this study consist of news videos of TICAD-V in the Japanese language and the English language, both of which were produced by Japanese news producers. Sample videos were collected from YouTube. Analysing the content of media accounts produces several advantages; for example, media statements can be a more reliable source of analysis than individuals' memories or impressions, and media accounts exhibit clearer refraction of the issue as they have been purposely constructed to shape a particular logic (Bandelj, 2008). To focus on the framing biases of online broadcasting,

traditional media channels (e.g., newspapers, TV and radio) were excluded. Compared to traditional media, YouTube has a unique feature whereby news can be disseminated on a wider scale through viewers' search and recommendation algorithms, which increase the serendipitous discovery of the news content by potential audiences (Schmitt *et al.*, 2018; Vergani and Zuev, 2011).

For this study, the news videos about TICAD-V, which were posted by the Japanese media between March and October 2013, were collected, but most of the news was concentrated around June 2013 when TICAD-V took place. The first round of searches hit several hundred video clips associated with the keyword "TICAD-V" and its variations (e.g., "the 5th TICAD" and "TICAD-five"). However, these materials contained numerous duplicates and unusable data, such as a large number of short pieces extracted from the same longer clips and brief teasers of TICAD-V (e.g., site tours of the conference venue and a summary of the event schedule). With regard to qualitative research, Welch and Piekkari (2017) highlight the importance of carefully selected data, which are typically limited in number, because the strength of a qualitative study is in its capacity for depth of insight. Similarly, it is essential for qualitative video analysis to be selective with data in order to provide in-depth analysis with a clearly defined focus (Hatani, 2015; Rovio-Johansson, 2007) because a broad coverage of samples and a number of associated topics could rather desensitise us to subtle differences of particular issues (Collins *et al.*, 2006). Thus, in the second round of searches, all news videos were perused and selected by focusing on (a) complete video clips that provided adequate expressions about TICAD-V for content analysis, and (b) news that explicitly portrayed key issues relating to TICAD-V and/or Japan's foreign aid for Africa. Following this filtering process of the source materials, 21 news clips, approximately 4 hours in total, were selected for the analysis. Table 1 summarises the composition of the data.

Table 1. Composition of sample data

*** Table 1 here ***

The lengths of the news videos vary greatly, ranging from a relatively short video clip of a few minutes' duration to full coverage of the press conference on TICAD-V, which lasted an hour. All videos were transcribed through the Konch platform and coded in the original language (either English or Japanese) by using a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) package, MAXQDA, which can be regarded as the most capable of maintaining the linguistic features of non-English languages (Schönfelder, 2011). Throughout the coding process, the original language was retained, and only the results were translated into English for analysis in this study. This is in line with Czarniawska's (2004) strategy, which can minimise losses of the subtlety of the original language and negative effects on the analysis caused by rough translation in the coding process.

The data analysis took place in three stages: open, axial and selective coding, as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998). In the open coding process, emergent concepts were generated directly from text segments. In the axial coding, concepts obtained from the open coding process were classified into larger categories. Since the news on TICAD-V tended to be framed in the light of the pre-set official themes of the conference, axial coding was carried out by taking account of those themes, namely, (1) “robust and sustainable economy”, (2) “inclusive society” and (3) “peace and stability”. The axial coding process also revealed other categories, such as “Japan’s leadership” and references to “China”. Relationships between the main categories were formalised in the selective coding stage. Here, data were reorganised into two sets, Japanese and English, depending on the language that the Japanese media used when broadcasting each item of TICAD-V news. Table 2 provides an overview of the first-level categories of code segments, organised under two master headings, “Achievements of TICAD” and “TICAD-V main themes”. Both categories contain three second-level categories, which are further classified into more specific codes.

Table 2. Overview of main code systems

*** Table 2 about here ***

5. Findings: Framing biases in two languages

Both the Japanese-language news and the English-language news on TICAD-V had more or less a similar content structure; for instance, they typically began with a panning shot of a newscaster and then proceeded to a live report at the conference venue. However, a closer look at the news content reveals notable differences in how the Japanese media framed TICAD-V in Japanese and English. The findings are explained in light of the four biases of framing described above. Figure 2 presents a code matrix obtained from the data by using a visual tool of MAXQDA. It provides an overview of the distribution of major code segments in the news on TICAD-V broadcast in the two languages on the Japanese media’s YouTube channels. Circle nodes in the vertical line under “In Japanese” and “In English” refer to topics covered in the news aired in Japanese and English respectively. The size of each circle node indicates the frequency with which the coded segments appeared in the data.

Figure 2. How the Japanese media framed TICAD-V

*** Figure 2 about here ***

5.1 Fragmentation bias

Both the Japanese-language news and the English-language news on TICAD-V showed fragmentation bias, but in different ways. The Japanese-language news frequently framed elements relating to “Achievements of TICAD” (as shown by large circle nodes in sub-codes under this category in Figure

2), although TICAD's achievements and its renown have been quite modest by international standards. Some of the Japanese-language news typically began with an opening statement such as this:

Newscaster: This year marks the 20th anniversary of TICAD. Many things have been achieved [in the past 20 years]; Japan pledged to double its ODA to Africa and this was realised. [...] TICAD is attracting attention from all over the world.

(Translated from Japanese by the author. All English quotes from the Japanese-language news are the author's translation.)

The emphasis on Japan's achievements was, to some extent, predictable because the news was produced by Japanese news agencies. However, this tendency was prevalent only in the Japanese-language news. The Japanese news also framed FDI, as shown at a second-level category in the TICAD-V main theme 1, "robust and sustainable economy", and the main theme 3, "peace and stability". While there was a strong presence of the word "FDI" in the Japanese-language news, this was often accompanied by statements relating to "obstacles to FDI", casting a spotlight on the Algerian hostage crisis. For example, one item of Japanese-language news reported TICAD-V by framing only this dimension.

Newscaster: Today at TICAD-V, [the Japanese] Prime Minister Abe announced the decision to provide further assistance [to Africa] to prevent conflict and terrorism, considering the Algerian hostage crisis, which happened in January.

Correspondent at the TICAD-V venue: Prime Minister Abe regards the promotion of private companies' investment in Africa as a top priority. He emphasised the importance of safety in Africa, which is a prerequisite [for Japanese firms' investment].

Meanwhile, TICAD-V news, which was broadcast in the Japanese language, provided limited elaborations of "robust and sustainable economy" and "inclusive society", although the word "sustainable" was mentioned frequently. The theme "inclusive society", in particular, was covered scantily in the Japanese-language news (only mentioned in relation to "human development" in general). Compared to these themes, the theme "peace and stability" was framed more extensively in Japanese.

Conversely, the English-language news focused heavily on the first theme, "robust and sustainable economy". The news broadcast in English highlighted the role of the Japanese private sector in the development of Africa through public-private partnership (PPP). Subsequent to the previous TICAD meeting in 2008, the Japanese government had emphasised that Japan would increase FDI and engage in PPP in Africa with "a sense of urgency" (Watanabe, 2008). The English-language news appeared to reflect this policy agenda, also suggesting the potential for large-scale infrastructure businesses in Africa. When framing PPP, the English-language news displayed multiple elements rather abruptly, as illustrated by the following examples (the original in English):

Voice-over in the news: Japan proposed public-private cooperation where [sic] the government will develop infrastructure for public companies to utilise in order to promote

growth in Africa. In addition, doubling the production of rice is also a crucial thing to increase Africa's food self-sufficiency. Japanese technological capabilities will be applied to the development of agriculture.

Japanese Ambassador for TICAD-V (speaking at the international press briefing): The main messages of TICAD-V are... PPP and the role of the private sector [...]. The priority area is infrastructure [...], another priority area is agriculture. And we are still talking about MDGs [Millennium Development Goals], as most African countries have not met [the targets] yet [...], and we also emphasise women and youth...

Another characteristic of the English-language news on TICAD-V was the relatively limited framing of the theme "peace and stability" and associated aspects such as security risks. Only a couple of samples of the English-language news framed security risks explicitly, and one of them did so by quoting what the then UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon said during his visit to Africa ahead of TICAD-V, rather than by the newscaster's spoken scripts. This is in contrast to the framing in the Japanese-language news, in which the newscasters and correspondents spoke about security issues in Africa more directly.

5.2 Dramatisation bias

There is notable dramatisation bias in the Japanese-language news on TICAD-V, whereas it is not significant in the news in English. It is noteworthy that dramatisation is observed in reference to China in the Japanese-language news although there was no Chinese involvement in TICAD-V. When emphasising Japan's leadership, the Japanese-language news contained several remarks that distinguished Japan from China in terms of their aid policies for Africa, hinting at a political drama between the two countries. Some of the Japanese-language news framed the Day-1 activities of TICAD-V with reference to China:

Correspondent: What was highlighted today is that Japan is different from China, which [i.e., China] has been taking the lead in aid provision [to Africa]. Japan will support Africa in a way that will benefit Africa [...] and many countries welcomed Japan's commitment.

News commentator: There are so many civil wars in Africa. Nonetheless, it is right for Japan to invest in the most deprived area. This can be seen as a proactive policy to help [Africa] get rid of China's influence.

This framing reflects the fact that the Japanese government has utilised TICAD as a diplomatic instrument (Cornelissen and Taylor, 2000) because Japan has lagged behind China in its aid to Africa. In fact, China's growing presence in Africa was part of the backdrop to Japan's TICAD diplomacy (Alden, 2002). In this regard, media framing played a role in generating the exaggerated image of Japan's active contribution to Africa. However, the problem with this framing is that the Japanese media's dramatisation bias regarding the political rivalry between China and Japan presented a rather

confusing picture of the purpose of TICAD to the ordinary news audience and blurred the main objective of Japan's aid for Africa.

Dramatisation bias in the Japanese-language news on TICAD-V is also related to Japan's FDI and security concerns in Africa. When the Japanese-language news framed FDI in Africa, it was frequently linked to security issues in African countries. In Japan's foreign aid policy, historically, peacebuilding was a controversial area because Japan has constitutional restrictions on its military engagement overseas. Because of this, the Japanese government had been reluctant to include its contribution to peacebuilding in TICAD's agenda (Osei-Hwedie, 2011). As a result of external pressures, together with requests made by African countries, peacebuilding and conflict resolution were included in the agenda for TICAD-III in 2003 for the first time. Yet, over a decade, this policy agenda rarely hit the headlines in Japan until TICAD-V in 2013 when the Algerian hostage crisis had suddenly drawn the Japanese people's attention to the security problem in Africa. Since this incident had occurred a few months prior to TICAD-V, the Japanese media repeatedly linked the news about TICAD-V to the Algerian hostage crisis and overgeneralised security issues in Africa. Some of the Japanese-language news dramatised Japan's involvement in Africa by equating it with a risky bet:

Newscaster: Today is Day 2 of TICAD-V. Prime Minister Abe announced further support measures, and the priority is the Sahel region located in the south of the Sahara Desert. This area has become a base for terrorist organisations. In Algeria, which is nearby, there was the Japanese hostage crisis in January. Today, Japan decided to provide an aid package of 100 billion yen to this region. What is the purpose?

Correspondent: The Sahel region is one of the worst regions in Africa, with widespread arms and drug smuggling. This region has become a hotbed of terrorism, [but] Prime Minister Abe envisions that Japan will improve the environment of this region and Africa as a whole.

Many of the Japanese-language news videos included a soundbite from Prime Minister Abe's emotional speech at TICAD-V, which painted Japanese firms' FDI as a sacrificial mission:

Prime Minister Abe: "If we don't invest [in Africa] now, when will we? If we don't invest now, can we be proud in the future that we have sown the seeds of growth? I repeat, Africa will grow, and now is the time to invest in growing Africa!"

Notably, the Japanese media's news in English rarely framed TICAD-V in this way. The problem with dramatisation bias is that drama employed in news gives people – in this case, the Japanese audience – a misguided sense that they understand politics in such a manner and makes them react emotionally without adequate knowledge of other important issues or a holistic viewpoint (Bennett, 2005).

5.3 Personalisation bias

Overall, there was limited personalisation bias relating to specific politicians in both the Japanese- and the English-language news on TICAD-V. This is probably due to the nature of TICAD as a multilateral forum rather than a bilateral negotiation between Japan and a particular African country. One notable exception was the portrayal of the then Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe. News coverage of TICAD-V in both English and Japanese highlighted Abe's speech at the conference by quoting the following phrases, with the latter appearing to refer to China:

“Japan is a reliable country that keeps its promises. Japan will accomplish what it says. To prove it, I myself will visit Africa as soon as possible.”

“We pledge our support for Africa. We will not simply take out Africa's natural resources.”

Since Japanese politicians rarely make bold statements on the international stage, Abe's words were deemed newsworthy. Yet, this raises an issue relating to personalisation bias, the so-called “self-mediatisation” through which political actors stage an event and instrumentally use it to gain media attention and achieve political goals (Esser, 2012). While the media has its own logic and resulting framing biases, politicians also utilise the media as a tool for self-promotion.

While personalisation bias is not so significant in the news on TICAD-V, an issue linked to a common effect of personalisation bias is an ethnocentric framing in the news. A lack of understanding of the whole picture of foreign affairs will give people a “me first” view of the world (Bennett, 2005). In this regard, “my country” is emphasised, and it is especially observable in the Japanese-language news. The emphasis on Japan's achievements and its self-proclaimed leadership in Africa was much stronger in the news broadcast in Japanese than in the English-language news. While the Japanese media appears to be sensitive enough to avoid an ethnocentric framing in its English-language news and instead frames the news from a more international perspective, this is not so much the case when the news is broadcast in the native Japanese language. This subtle duality in news framing gives the ordinary Japanese audience an erroneous impression that Japan's contribution to Africa is greater than it actually is.

5.4 Authority–disorder bias

Authority–disorder bias usually addresses domestic authorities and their shortcomings. This type of bias was not significant in the TICAD-V news overall. Japanese media's tone was mostly neutral in the English-language news, simply reporting the Japanese government's aims in Africa and how they would be achieved through TICAD-V. This can be partly due to the notion that foreign aid is a moral obligation of the donor nation (Lumsdaine, 1993). Given that the English-language news addressed the international audience, there was no strong reason for the Japanese media to criticise the Japanese government about its commitment to foreign aid through TICAD-V. More importantly, the less prevalent authority–disorder bias in the TICAD-V news seemed to be related to the time when TICAD-

V took place. The degree of authority–disorder bias usually correlates to the economic and political situation of the country at a given time. If the domestic economic environment is unfavourable, this bias tends to be strong and could even outweigh other biases. Around the time of TICAD-V, however, the Japanese economy had experienced a short-lived sign of recovery from a long recession. The relatively positive atmosphere for the Japanese economy at the time appears to have mitigated authority–disorder bias in the Japanese-language news. This finding is in stark contrast to a number of Japanese people complaining about TICAD-8 in 2022 – many resentful comments surfaced on Japanese social media sites – claiming that the Japanese government should help Japanese citizens first (NewsTwit, 2022).

Still, the Japanese-language news about TICAD-V highlighted, albeit moderately, some authority–disorder bias. This again involved the security issues in Africa. The Japanese-language news placed a greater emphasis on violence and terrorism in Africa than the English-language news did, which prompted some concern about the inadequacy of the Japanese government’s response to these issues and cast doubt on the role of TICAD. For instance, while the news in English made a rather positive statement about TICAD-V – saying, “This is a conference to strengthen peacebuilding [...], committed to strengthening good governance and abolishing conflicts” – the news in Japanese expressed concerns over Japan’s further involvement in Africa. One example came in the closing lines of the Japanese-language news:

Correspondent: Although Africa is a growing market, there has been increasing demand by Japanese firms for the [Japanese] government action to ensure safety in the local context. Otherwise, security issues will increase business costs.

Newscaster: Whether or not Japanese investment will increase in Africa, where the danger of conflict and terrorism is continuing, is still uncertain.

The nature of this type of framing bias is similar to a “negativity bias”, by which news underscores an unfavourable aspect of the content (Patterson, 2000). The danger of negativity bias, which is also associated with dramatisation bias in the case of TICAD-V news, is that news puts a spotlight on pseudo-issues rather than reporting the topic in a more comprehensive way (Bennett, 2005). This could divert the audience’s attention away from the Japanese government’s policy to local issues in Africa.

6. Discussion: Framing patterns of the Japanese media

As noted above, the Japanese media exhibited different propensities in framing TICAD-V depending on which language it used in the news. Fragmentation bias and dramatisation bias were significant in the Japanese-language news, whereas the English-language news exhibited a more balanced framing. Table 3 summarises the patterns of framing biases identified in the data analysis.

Table 3. Comparison of framing biases in Japanese and English

*** Table 3 about here ***

Fragmentation bias in the news in Japanese is mainly linked to dramatisation bias. The Japanese-language news framed topics that were not necessarily central to TICAD-V (e.g., China, obstacles to FDI and the hostage-taking in Algeria) while cutting back on the coverage of the main themes of TICAD-V. Dramatisation bias is most evident when the Japanese media linked Japanese firms' FDI with security concerns. These framing biases often accompanied logical jumps or a shift of focus in the news. This can be hazardous in political news as the bias simplifies complex factors and undermines other issues pertaining to socioeconomic aspects. Furthermore, while personalisation bias and authority-disorder biases are less significant, there is some negativity bias concerning Africa, which is stronger in the news in Japanese than in English.

The differences in the Japanese media's framing when using Japanese and English lead us to consider the reasons and underlying motivations. The Japanese-language news on TICAD-V tended to be fragmented and dramatised portraying some degree of ethnocentrism. Speaking more bluntly in the Japanese-language news while making a pretence in the English-language news could also be explained, in part, by classical social conventions in Japan, i.e., the use of "*hon-ne*" and "*tatema*" as mentioned earlier. Nonetheless, the different framing biases resulting from language choices suggest that those differences are not driven only by a mere cultural tendency but also by a more deliberate scheme to differentiate the target audiences; namely, the domestic audience and the international audience. On the one hand, since the TICAD-V news in Japanese addressed the home audience, the Japanese media used negative connotations about external factors (e.g., security issues in African countries) more often than about internal factors (e.g., the Japanese government's policy agenda). Given a less accessible language such as Japanese, thus presuming that international audiences would not understand such statements in Japanese, framing in the Japanese-language news on international affairs is prone to be biased towards negative factors of foreign entities involved. Through framing biases in this way, the local media, and possibly politicians, could justify shortcomings in the home context when a political agenda does not make progress as expected.

On the other hand, when the Japanese media produces news in English, it is likely to take a more cautious approach to political news, assuming a diverse international audience. In the case of TICAD-V, the news in English was more aligned with the main themes of the conference. Nevertheless, framing only less controversial aspects of a news topic is another characteristic of fragmentation bias, because inadequate information about risk factors will give the audience an optimistic and shallow outlook on key issues. Failing to provide a fuller picture due to fragmentation bias is called "bias by omission" – in which one side of a viewpoint of a given subject is intentionally left out to avoid reporting certain issues (Baker, 1994; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). The media uses this bias for agenda-setting by

transmitting only what the target audience finds interesting, rather than what they need to know. The Japanese media's framing bias toward PPP and business activities in the English-language news made broadcasting the TICAD-V news more like a political campaign, addressing the international audience to promote the positive image of Japan's contribution to Africa.

This duality in online media using the national language and English can also be seen in other countries. At individual or organisational levels, the discrepancies in expression in a bilingual context have been identified by recent studies. Tuters (2020) highlights a stronger hyper-partisan tendency in the Dutch-language YouTube space compared to the Dutch-speakers' English-language spheres. A study by Laaksonen *et al.* (2020) on an anti-immigration movement in Finland shows differences in framing between a Finnish-language channel and an English-language channel. At a county level, broadcasting political news using different languages serves not only self-expression opportunities but also a mechanism to include or exclude particular groups in the political agenda. For example, the Chinese government uses online English-language media (mainly via its Central Television) as an attempt at soft power activities to broadcast its discursive images (Alvaro, 2015). Even North Korea has been utilising a YouTube channel for propaganda purposes, disseminating the images of the communist regime that "resemble those of 'normal' countries" to the international audience (Park and Lim, 2020).

Using English as a global language can maximise the opportunity to reach out to a wider international audience while differentiating messages to the international audience and the national audience whose mother tongue is not English (Holland, 2006; Seargeant *et al.*, 2012). In the case of TICAD, however, generating news in Japanese and English with different framings will not necessarily bring about the positive outcome that news producers and policymakers may desire. When the media utilises different news framings depending on bilingual code choices in the news, the domestic and international audiences will have substantially different understandings of the policy agenda, even though the news source for both audiences is the local Japanese media and the news is openly aired. As a result, different framings based on language choices could hinder the national audience from acquiring an international perspective. Furthermore, if Japan continues to fail to deliver what TICAD promised, the TICAD process, as well as all the messages transmitted via online news internationally, will become "a crude public relations gimmick" to advance Japan's national interest (Eyinla, 2018, p. 12). This will not only exacerbate African countries' distrust of Japan and negatively affect Japan's future activities in Africa, but it will also impair the country's credibility within the international community.

7. Conclusion

This study has explored how the Japanese media's framing bias differs between the two languages. It is noteworthy how the mass media in a non-English-speaking country such as Japan uses a dual approach to framing in news broadcasting. When the media recognises an event as newsworthy – as

was the case with TICAD-V – its framing biases could define a pseudo-reality for a certain domain of foreign affairs in which most citizens lack direct access to the information about what actually happened or is happening (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). In particular, foreign aid policy is influenced by a complex power balance involving various stakeholders across borders, including recipient nations and other donor nations, as well as business actors and non-governmental organisations in an international arena. Given the multiple issues and actors involved in foreign aid, a lack of common ground between the participants could cause difficulties in policy coordination (Peters, 2013). Without adequate input from both local and English sources, there is a risk that the general public in a domestic context could be isolated from global debates (AlMaghlouth *et al.*, 2015).

The patterns of biases highlighted in this study are illustrative examples, and the Japanese media may not necessarily exhibit such a duality on every occasion. Also, it is unlikely that the media is completely free from bias since mediatisation is bound to cultural context (Krotz, 2007). However, the study has revealed differences between what the domestic audience and the international audience may perceive on the same subject through online news media reporting, depending on what language has been used. In this, language can be a powerful device to direct certain information and messages to particular addressees. Furthermore, this also suggests that MNEs need to be aware that they are confronted with global stakeholders whose expectations and opinions are profoundly different and shaped by social media (Brammer *et al.*, 2021). It will be interesting to see how language choices in media can influence different issues and contexts.

This study has attempted to explore the potential of research into the role of language in media in an international setting. Nevertheless, there are, admittedly, several limitations. One shortcoming involves the limited utilisation of the data. Following the concepts in framing theory, which centre around speech in the media, this study analysed news videos focusing on spoken language broadcast on YouTube. However, videos can provide visual information such as various images, speakers' facial expressions and camerawork, and qualitative studies can utilise them for in-depth analysis (Hatani, 2015; Steyaert *et al.*, 2012). Although most of the videos used in this study tended to have a similar structure, visual information about particular issues or individuals could enrich word-oriented analysis (e.g., Vergani and Zuev, 2011). Another shortcoming is the degree of generalisation commonly associated with the qualitative case study method. While this study offers a thematic analysis of framing one event, it is important to consider the broader social forces and regimes of power, because each single event is embedded in those context-specific factors (Piekkari *et al.*, 2009). An investigation into a series of events and their trend over time would open up the possibility of longitudinal studies through periodisation or comparative analysis between different time periods (Tung and Verbeke, 2010; Welch, 2020). Future research could also compare different viewpoints on a specific socioeconomic issue expressed in the media in different languages. The effect of the media varies from country to country,

and it largely depends on the relationship between a given country and its counterpart on a specific issue (Dahlgren, 1996; Hjarvard, 2008). Hence, there will certainly be plenty of room for deepening our understanding of the combined impact of language and media on global issues to enhance the critical analyses of international activities.

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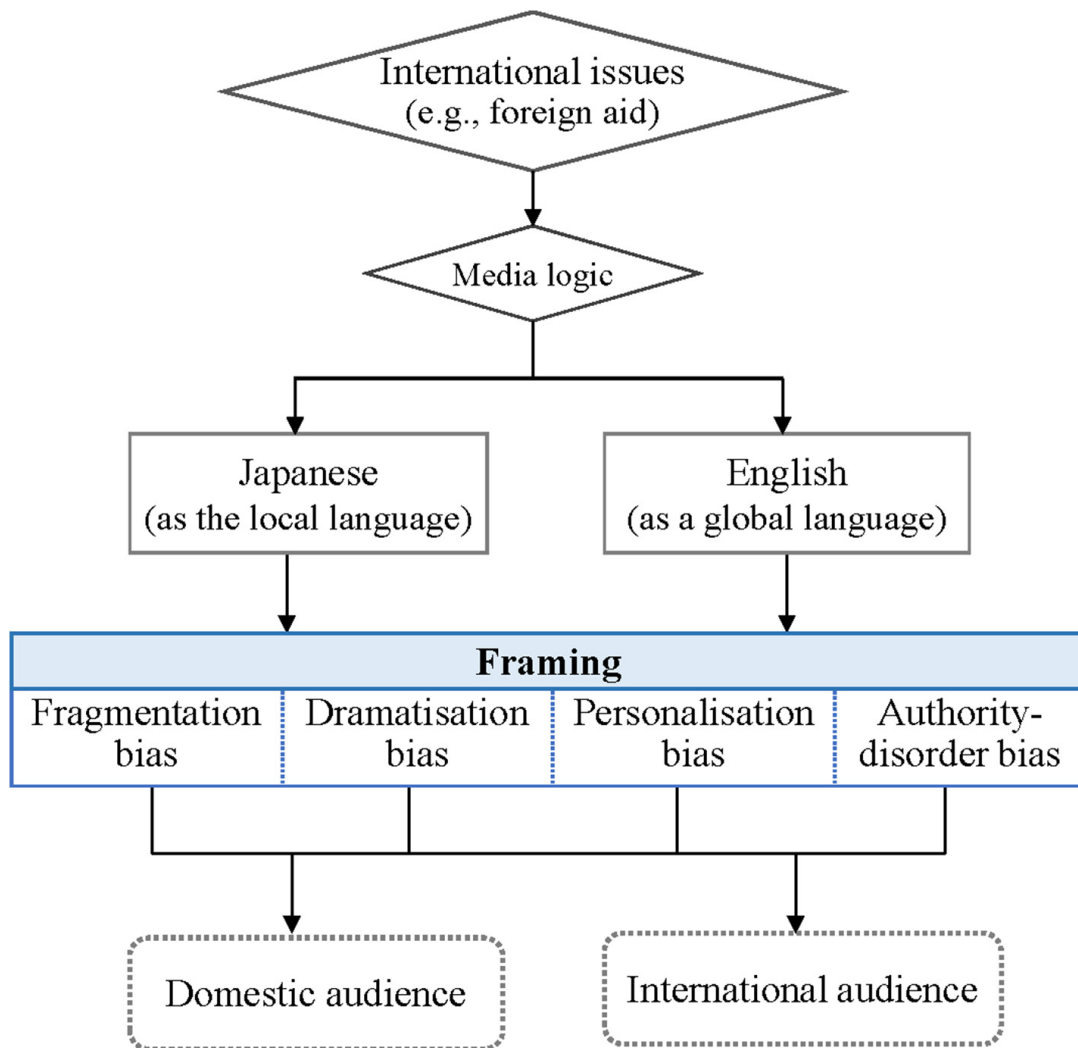
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Figure 1. Analytical framework for this study



Source: Figure by the author

Figure 2. How the Japanese media framed TICAD-V

Code System	In Japanese	In English
[-] Achievements of TICAD		
[-] Africa-Japan partnership	●	●
[-] Japan's leadership	●	●
[-] 'We keep our promises'	●	●
[-] Distinguishing Japan from China	●	●
[-] Problems of China's approach	●	●
[-] TICAD-V main themes		
[-] 1) Robust and sustainable economy		
[-] The role of the private sector	●	●
[-] PPP	●	●
[-] FDI	●	●
[-] Obstacles to FDI	●	
[-] Africa as a growing market	●	●
[-] Infrastructure	●	●
[-] Water and energy	●	●
[-] Transport	●	●
[-] Medical care	●	●
[-] 2) Inclusive society		
[-] Human development	●	●
[-] Education	●	●
[-] Youth employment	●	●
[-] Women	●	●
[-] 3) Peace and stability		
[-] Peacebuilding/counter-terrorism	●	●
[-] Algeria hostage crisis	●	
[-] Sahel region	●	
[-] Somalia	●	●
[-] Sudan	●	

Table 1. Composition of sample data

Language used in the news	No. of video clips	Total length of sources
English	11	2:03:11
Japanese	10	1:53:58

Source: Table by the author

Table 2. overview of main code systems (by category)

Main themes	No. of codes in each category	
	Japanese-language news	English-language news
<i>Achievements of TICAD</i>		
Africa–Japan partnership	24	9
Japan’s leadership	16	4
Distinguishing Japan from China	17	2
<i>TICAD-V main themes</i>		
Robust and sustainable economy	49	74
Inclusive society	13	19
Peace and stability	20	8

Source: Table by the author

Table 3. Comparison of framing biases in Japanese and English

Type of framing bias	News broadcast in the national language (Japanese)	News broadcast in a foreign language (English)
Fragmentation bias	Emphasis on the achievements of the government policy and its support; one-dimensional framing (such as security issues)	Focus on PPP and related business opportunities; tendency to showcase multiple elements, but the framing of negative aspects is limited
Dramatisation bias	Strong dramatisation bias (e.g., the Algerian hostage crisis; China vs. Japan)	Less significant
Personalisation bias	Minor personalisation of the Prime Minister; frequent quoting of his speech	Minor personalisation of the Prime Minister
Authority–disorder bias (incl. negativity bias)	Less significant, but a relatively more frequent framing of a negative side of African countries	Less significant

Source: Table by the author