



A study of speech style: Japan's Princess Aiko's first press conference

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Abstract

The present paper examines the speech style of Japanese princess Aiko during her first official public appearance and her first-ever solo press conference for Japanese society. The 20-year old princess and member of the Japanese Imperial family answered questions from the media and addressed the general public. This examination studies the linguistic strategies she used during the 30-minute speech at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, Japan. One finding is that Aiko's speech style achieves high marks from the public for her polite manner and eloquent composure. Her modest charm and smile appealed favorably to the majority of Japanese viewers. Another finding notes Aiko's use of an emotional strategy, characterized as "rapport talk" or sympathy talk, which helped convey her message and proved beneficial in connecting with her audience. For her first official moment in front of the media and the general public, this praise is significant and perhaps unexpected.

Keywords: Emotion, Frame, Gratitude, Greeting, Japan, Princess

1.0 Introduction

This paper examines the linguistic skills of public figures in formal settings. In particular, it will focus on a rare but intriguing case involving Japan's Imperial family and the first official press conference of the young princess Aiko (e.g., Daily Mails 2022, FNN Prime on-line 2022, Japan Forward 2022, Kuno 2022, Kyodo News 2022, Miyazaki 2022, Takahashi 2022, TBS 2022). Being the only child of Japanese Emperor *Naruhito* and Empress *Masako*, princess Aiko participated in her coming-of-age ceremony at the Imperial Palace in central Tokyo on March 17, 2022. A coming-of-age ceremony is celebrated in Japan to honor those who have reached the age of 20, the official age of adulthood in Japan. The commemorated event was Aiko's debut as a new adult member of the Imperial family. Members of the Japanese royal family are not able to carry out public duties until after reaching the age of 20.

An undergraduate student at Gakushuin University, Aiko is studying Japanese literature. The coming-of-age ceremony was scheduled to avoid any conflicts with her ongoing schoolwork. At the press conference event, Aiko looked polished and regal wearing a simple, cream, knee-length tea dress paired with a matching jacket. She appeared to be in good spirits.

Given that she has never participated in any official meeting or spoken publicly, the press conference event carried significant expectations and potential implications for her beginnings as a royal family member. Because this is her first formal speech opportunity, it is a unique and intriguing chance to examine, from the very commencement, the development of her speech style. How did she perform? Was she successful in conducting her new public duty as a princess? How well was she received by the Japanese public? Specific focus will examine how and why the princess spoke in the way she did. What motivated her speech and what were the key features? Several aspects of her speech will be identified and discussed. Thus, the present study is an attempt to understand the linguistic aspects and speech style of a member of the Japanese Imperial Family as she performs in this unprecedented, historic speech event.

Due to the recency of the press conference event (held just a month before the writing of this paper), the method for this study relies heavily on media reports from magazines, newspapers, the internet, and TV stations. In particular, I have focused on the 30-minute tape recording made by the Empress and the media reporters (TBS 2022).

2.0 Who is Princess Aiko?

Japanese princess Aiko was born on December 1, 2002 in the Imperial Household Agency Hospital in the Tokyo Imperial Palace. She is the first and only child of the then-Crown Prince (present Emperor) *Naruhito* and Crown Princess *Masako* (present Empress). Aiko, the princess's personal name, is written using the characters for love 愛 (*ai*) and child 子 (*ko*) which mean a "person who loves others." The name is well-suited for someone who shows emotion and love to others. The name selection appears to accurately reflect Aiko's behavior toward her Imperial household family members as well as the general public.

During Aiko's early education years, she experienced some bullying – in Japanese *ijime* - from boys in her elementary school. As a result, she stayed away from school and was taught at home. Eventually, Aiko returned to school, on a limited basis several years later, upon advice from a doctor at the Crown Prince's household. After turning age 16, Aiko began accompanying her parents at public appearances, even though she was ineligible to attend any of her father's ascension ceremonies in person as she was still a minor at the time. In February 2020, Aiko was accepted to study at Gakushuin University. The university has a reputation as one of the most highly respected institutions of higher learning in Japan. In January 2022, Aiko attended the New Year celebration at the Imperial Palace for her first non-speaking public appearance as an adult working member of the imperial family. Her first press conference, the focus of this paper, took place on March 17, 2022.

Princess Aiko's birth in 2002 sparked debate throughout Japan regarding whether the Imperial Household Law of 1947 should be changed to allow a woman, as a firstborn child, to inherit the Chrysanthemum Throne ahead of a younger brother or male cousin. Under the present law, the system of agnatic primogeniture to absolute primogeniture is in place. The debate still continues among the Japan public and is a controversial issue. However, it seems unlikely, at present, that the law will be change, partially due to the fact that on September 6, 2006, Princess *Kiko* (the Emperor's younger brother *Fumihito*'s wife) gave birth to a son named *Hisahito*, who is now third in line to the Chrysanthemum Throne. *Hisahito* is the first male heir to be born in the imperial family in 41 years. Therefore, at present, the inheritance line is considered as follows: the Emperor, next the Emperor's brother, then his son *Hisahito*, and then finally *Aiko*. One of the major Japanese newspapers, Sankei Shinbun, has suggested that many Japanese people still support Aiko's ascension to the throne. The debate will continue among the general public, although currently, the chance for Aiko to ascend to the throne seems less likely.

2.1. A polite, eloquent and assertive manner

Throughout the press conference Aiko displayed a genteel, amiable and friendly personality smiling at the end of each utterance. It is important to note that she exhibited a polite and gracious manner throughout the entire event. Multiple reporters asked Aiko how she can be so polite and friendly. Aiko directly replied that she refined her talking style based on advice from her father the Emperor. According to Aiko, the Emperor taught her two things: first, look each person in the eye and convey your sincerity; and, second, show a desire to actively communicate with each person, including listening in an active and assertive manner (more than passively).

Aiko has also learned that adding humor during a speech makes it more enjoyable and memorable. She cited the Emperor's advice as follows:

(1)

Emperor: *Jibun no tsutaeyou to iu kimochi o motte hanashite ikukoto ga taisetsu desu.*

(You should speak to the audience with your strong will to let them listen attentively, understand and appreciate what you have to say.)

This advice emphasizes the need for a speaker to be active, positive and assertive to ensure listeners understand their message. A critical contrast we see in Japan's present-day Imperial family members is this very active attitude about speech. In the past era, the members of the Imperial family have pursued a more passive role, holding with tradition.

A sociologist and a respected professor at Keio University, Noritoshi Furuichi, observed the entire 30 minute speech and made the following comment (Miyazaki 2022):

(2)

Furuichi: *Konna hatachi imasu? Tte iu na soregurai ni shikkari shita kaiken de odoroi ta n desu keredomo*

(Is she really 20 years old? I am so surprised with her well-polished perfect speech.)

Prof. Furuichi was very impressed by Aiko's well-balanced and well-organized speech. Given that she is just 20 years old, he thought she exceeded expectations. He praised her performance of her official duties at the press conference. Apparently, there were many others who shared Prof. Furuichi's viewpoint. A majority of media reporters as well as much of the general public who watched the entire event via television or internet, or read about it in newspapers, agreed (e.g., Miyazaki 2022).

To summarize, it seems Aiko's speech was well-received by the media and the public. Her performance went unmatched in politeness, eloquence, and assertiveness, for someone her age without any previous official speech experience. It is also important to note that Aiko spoke during the entire event without referring to any written notes. She was very "polite, courteous, and respectful" in her fluency (e.g., Takahashi 2022). She performed her entire speech so well with a modest and friendly "smile" (e.g., Japan Forward 2022). We can say that Aiko's speech was viewed by many as a successful debut.

3.0 Discussion

In what follows, we examine several linguistic devices Aiko used at the official press conference. Each device must be viewed from the perspective of a 20 year-old student who has had very little training in speech making. The speech event was very unique to Aiko as well as to the audience since the majority of Japanese persons have never experienced this particular type of event before from a member of the Imperial family.

3.1. Greeting – Eye Contact

One of the noteworthy aspects of the press conference was the way the princess used polite yet direct eye-contact to greet her audience. The princess did this while treating all members of the press the same, employing politeness and cordiality. Perhaps, direct eye-contact is often expected in many western countries (e.g., America and Europe) at an event such as this. However, in Japan, it is not as commonly used by public officials. Instead they often prefer to avoid any direct eye-contact or face to face confrontation in order to prevent awkward situations of complaints, disagreements, or criticism (Brown and Levison 1987).

Let us examine the very beginning of Aiko's speech. In particular, we will focus on the polite exchange between the princess and a member of the media. The following is an exchange between them:

Reporter: *Socchoku na goiken ya okangae o okikase negaereba to omotte orimasu. Yoroshiku onegai itashimasu.*
(I am wondering if you could tell us your honest thought and opinion.)

Aiko: *Yoroshiku onegai itashimasu (smile and bow to the reporter and the audience individually)*
(I humbly ask you for favorable treatment.)

The reporter asked Aiko for her opinion in a very polite but straightforward manner. Note that the reporter used a very polite style of *onegai itashimasu* instead of simple *onegai shimasu*. Adding the prefix *ita* (humbly) to *shimasu* (do) indicates the speaker's extra politeness, showing respect to the princess.

Perhaps more interesting and intriguing was the reply from the princess. Given the fact that Aiko is a highly respected figure among Japanese people, she surprised everyone with an atypical, straightforward yet polite behavior. She responded to the reporter while using direct eye-contact. In fact, Aiko first stared directly at the reporter and then stared directly at the gathering of media representatives, about 20, who attended the event.

Typically, any official Japanese public figure in this situation would have broadly and briefly looked at the audience without any "direct" eye-contact. Direct inspection with overt straight-forward eye-contact may actually be interpreted as being "aggressive" by many Japanese people (e.g., Yonehara 2016). "In-direct eye-contact is therefore considered more polite and appropriate. Yet, the princess "stared" politely twice, once at the reporter and again at the audience, using direct-eye-contact.

Surprisingly, the princess' behavior of staring, though usually considered impolite, was received in a very positive way by the media and the Japanese people. There were no noticeable complaints. Instead, most people accepted the direct eye-contact in a very open and positive manner (e.g., Japan Forward 2022). The princess' smiley and friendly manner, combined with the direct-eye contact, conveyed a sincere and humble approach of gratitude which gave a favorable impression to the audience and press reporters who greeted the princess at this unique press conference event.

3.2. Tennoo heika (Emperor)

In a question from the media about her official behavior, the princess interestingly chose to use the very polite and official word of *tennoo heika* (emperor) instead of *chichi* (father). For the princess, when she referred to her father (who happens to also be the emperor), she could have used "my father" or *chichi* (father). However, she intentionally avoided using the informal word *chichi* to distance herself, given the formal occasion of the press conference. Keep in mind that the conference was broadcasted to the entire nation of Japan through various media channels.

The important aspect here is that the princess is purposefully "dislocating" herself through the formal expression of *tennoo heika* (emperor), as opposed to the more informal, natural and friendly expression of *chichi* (my father). Let us examine specifically what the princess said.

(4)

Aiko: *Jookoo heika ga ori ni furete osshatte ite, tennoo heika nimo uketsugarete iru, koohitsu wa kokumin no koofuku o tsune ni negai, kokumin to kuraku o tomo ni shinagara, tsutome o hatasu to watashi wa ninshiki shite orimasu.*

(As *Jookoo heika* (i.e., His Majesty the Emperor Emeritus) has often said, and the emperor also inherited, *koohitsu* (Japanese Imperial Family) hopes for the happiness of the general public, and working together with the general public, we will perform our duty. As I understand, this is our task.)

Aside from the formality of the comment, note that the princess deliberately chose the word *tennoo heika* (emperor) instead of *chichi* (my father). The purposeful transition from father to Emperor clearly indicates the princess's willingness to associate herself with her formal and official role as a member of the imperial family. In other words, Aiko is portraying herself as a member of the royal family, instead of the simple father-daughter kinship relation.

We can see how Aiko's deliberate word choice places her in the more formal role. She is clearly selecting her public persona over her private persona by choosing *tennoo heika* (public life), instead of *chichi* (private life). While both are important for her, she is opting for the public life reference in front of the media to emphasize her public life as the most important aspect at that moment.

Another important observation is Aiko's intentional determination to select her public figure (*tennoo heika*) over her private figure (*chichi*). Although she could have shown herself to be a conventional, private person (which some might have expected), she decided instead to personify herself as a noble member of the imperial family. This utterance of *tennoo heika* (emperor) becomes crucial when we consider the fact that the princess actually used *chichi* (father) once in her speech. Observe the following statement by the princess.

(5)

Aiko: *Mukashi kara karada o ugokasu koto ga suki desu node, chichi to issho ni shikichi nai o jogging shitari, izen wa kazoku sannin de tenisu o shitari.*

(Because I enjoy moving my body a lot, I sometimes jog the Imperial Palace garden with my father. In the past, I played tennis with my family.)

Note that the princess indeed chose the word *chichi* (father) when she referred to her father in a personal family context (when in the garden and playing tennis with family). The official title *tennoo heika* (emperor) was not used. The choice becomes quite understandable when we consider that the princess is using *chichi* to personally refer to her family.

In order to better understand the shift between *tennoo heika* and *chichi*, we can use the concept of "frame." Lakoff (2004), a cognitive psycholinguist, argues that "frames" are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. According to him, all words are defined relative to the conceptual "frames." Lakoff suggests that when we hear a word, its frame (or collection of frames) is activated in our brain, and "reframing" can occur when a new language/word is introduced. From this perspective, we can see that in Aiko's speech, she "reframes" her world by changing or shifting her word.

Thus, the shift from *chichi* to *tennoo heika* is a linguistic strategy of "reframing" used to adjust the princess's viewpoint from private to public life within her role as a member of the Imperial family. In other words, we may understand that the princess actively shifted her role from private to public life through the "reframing" strategy. The literal shift between private and public life was Aiko's way of "reframing" between the two worlds.

3.3. Choosho (Positive points)

At this point, let us consider Aiko's comments to the media about the personal aspects of her life. When we compare Aiko's speech references of her private life to those of her public life, we notice Aiko describes her private life in a unique manner for this setting. For instance, Aiko's use of words/phrases about her private life are rare for a member of the Imperial family. Most public figures usually make generic references to their private lives, speaking about their own personal name, for example, or commonly accepted hobbies such as taking a walk or reading books, but not much more. These are quite simple and commonly expected replies. However, in this instance, the princess made an unexpected comment about her hobby, something a "public figure" usually does not do. Observe the following reply from Aiko.

(6)

Aiko: *Shiite mooshiageru nara doko demo nerareru tokoro deshoo ka. (smile)*

(I would say that I can sleep anywhere I prefer.)

If this statement were made by a common citizen, it would be understandable without giving it a second thought. However, the fact that princess Aiko, a highly-respected, visible member of the Imperial family spoke this so naturally and in a straightforward manner, is unique and unexpected. The princess went on and added another remark. Observe below.

(7)

Aiko: *Izen nasun no goyootei ni iki, sono tsuita ban ni engawa ni aru sofa de nete shimai, sonomama asa o mukaeta nante koto mo gozaimashita. (smile)*

(In the past, I went to the imperial lodge in the city of Nasu. On the night of the arrival, I went to sleep until the next morning on the sofa, which is located at the edge of the veranda.)

Note that this statement was made by the princess, smiling, while she looked directly at the audience. Again, this statement may be perfectly natural if it were made by an ordinary person, but when made by the princess, it attracts attention since a member of the Imperial family does not often say such honest, humble, and modest statements at an official event. Observe below additional comments made on this occasion by the princess regarding her private life.

(8)

Aiko: *Saafu boodo o umi ni ukabete, sokode sannin de suwaru choosen o shite, migoto zennin de rakka shita koto nado ohanashi shidasu to hi ga kurete shimau kamo shiremasen. (smile)*

(In the sea, we (Emperor, Empress and princess) surfed on surfboards and interestingly, we all fell off our boards into the water, and it was fun. There is no end of these funny stories. I can talk forever.)

The princess appears to enjoy sharing funny, entertaining episodes. Stating such stories openly to the audience is an unexpected and amusing element of her speech. Although the event itself is designed to be a more formal affair, the princess seems to speak freely and openly of her personal life, as if she were speaking to the public in a more informal setting.

One interesting observation related to these personal statements is seeing the reaction of the reporters in the room. Most of them were quiet and did not smile or laugh at princess Aiko's comments, although she meant them to be amusing. Perhaps this is due to the ongoing period of the pandemic in Japan when most people are still expected to be modest and humble. The reporters stayed calm because the corona virus was still a major concern for the majority of the reporters (Miyazaki 2022). Aiko's comments, though meant to be funny, received no corresponding and expected reaction from the reporters.

3.4. Tansho (Challenging Points)

We have discussed positive points of Aiko's speech above and we will now focus on parts where she mentioned various difficulties. When Aiko was asked about her challenges, she made the following remarks:

(9)

Aiko: *Jiyuu ni nobibobi to sodatta yoode, sukoshi my pace no yoona tokoro ga aru tokoro da to jikaku shite orimasu.*

(Because I grew up without worries, I often feel that I tend to go at "my pace.")

When Aiko made this comment, she acted very timid. She described herself shyly using the English words "my pace." Because she was raised in isolation as a member of the Imperial family, she grew up in a very different circumstance than most ordinary citizens. In addition, we understand that she experienced bullying at elementary school for a period of time. The bullying was so terrible that her parents finally withdrew her from school entirely. Prior to withdrawing, and for a period of time during the bullying, Aiko asked her mother to accompany her to her classes. Sometimes her mother joined her during the two-day school trips with other students. This unusual activity lasted for several years. Some of the media and the general public criticized this behavior, but Aiko and her mother insisted this was necessary and the only way to protect Aiko from being bullied. Eventually, Aiko overcame this challenge and her schooling returned to normal. Possibly, this early intervention by her parents helped Aiko to overcome this issue.

Furthermore, this difficulty in her early life perhaps gave Aiko confidence to progress at "my pace." She gained personal strength through solving this and other problems independently and with the support of her family and other friends and relatives. This challenge may have helped prepare her for other difficulties she will face in later stages of her life.

A psychologist and professor at Rikkyoo University, Rika Kooyama, made the following point (Jyosei Jishin 2021).

(10)

Kooyama: *Nani ga attemo oya to shite zettai ni musume o mamoru to iu koto o mi o motte shimesareta.*

(Her mother emphasized that she would do whatever to protect her daughter, Aiko.)

This firm resolve from Aiko's mother offered the strong support that Aiko needed to navigate this and other challenges. Her mother played a major role in helping Aiko regain her "self-confidence." It is important to keep in mind that Aiko's mother, at the time, also suffered from her own health issues. Aiko's mother's treatments for "adjustment disorder" complicated Aiko's situation at school. Yet, eventually, Aiko was able to return to a normal school life with the assistance of her mother, as well as her father and other helpers.

3.5. *Unde kurete arigatou* (Thank you for giving birth to me)

Another linguistic device used by Princess Akiko in her speech was her expression of gratitude to her mother. Princess Aiko said this in a way unexpected for the general public. One reporter asked the princess about her mother's comment "*umarete kite kurete arigatou*" at the occasion of Aiko's birth in 2002. This statement means "thank you for being born." The statement itself is significant considering the Emperor and Empress did not have any children for a lengthy period of time and suffered one miscarriage.

When the Empress finally saw her new baby Aiko for the first time, she was so glad that she uttered the remark *umarete kite kurete arigatou* with surprise and joy. When the reporter mentioned this event to Aiko and asked her to reply to the comment, Aiko responded enthusiastically stating "*unde kurete arigatou*" (Thank you for giving birth to me). Aiko reacted to her mother's comment in an interesting parallel of equal thankfulness.

The Empress's expression *umarete kite* (being born) is from the Empress' perspective who gave birth to her child. However, *unde kurete* (being given birth) is from Aiko's perspective who was given birth. The same birthing event was explained from the perspective of two persons, the Empress and the princess, using different phrases. This simple yet significant event formed a focal point for the Empress and princess and the general public and media seemed pleased with the comment. Aiko, in particular, used the exchange to show her boldness and willingness to speak differently than expected, and the remark seemed to be well-received.

3.6 *Pauses*

A final linguistic device observed from the speech was the frequent use of pauses by Aiko. Pauses are a powerful tool in public speaking because they provide benefits for the speaker and the audience. Some benefits include: the additional time to collect thoughts, to calm nerves, to get back on track, and to eliminate filler words.

All of these benefits can be easily identified in Aiko's speech, but one aspect we noticed is the length of Aiko's pauses (more than 2 seconds) and the frequency of their use. Furthermore, Aiko's pauses correlated more to truthful speech rather than deceptive speech. Observe the following statement from Aiko's speech:

(11)

Aiko: Koremade no keiken wa (2 seconds), kore made no arayuru keiken wa (2 seconds), ooku no kata no (3 seconds), sasae ya gokyooryoku ga atte nashieta mono to kanjite orimasu

(Up until now the experiences (2 seconds), up until now all experiences (2 seconds), thanks to (3 seconds) everyone's support and advice which helped me reach this stage of getting ready.)

Aiko was referring to her lifetime experiences. In her description, she used several pauses to collect her thoughts in her own way. Aiko was trying to arrive at her own truthful speech in her own way, and she had to rely on several pauses for this process to be completed.

It is true that pauses can function in various ways, but it appears that Aiko was trying to be as authentic and effective as possible by using pauses as shown in (11). Pauses also play a communicative function from the viewpoint of the listener. Indeed, pauses are a natural part of any conversation, and using them appropriately can allow the speaker to come across as trustworthy and genuine (e.g., Grosjean 1980). In our case, Aiko's pauses can be interpreted as making her a reliable, honest, and congenial speaker. This is evidence that appropriate pauses can convey thoughtfulness, confidence and credibility of a speaker.

3.7 *Emotive speech*

We have examined several linguistic devices which aided Aiko in delivering a well-received speech and press conference for the media as well as the general Japanese public. It is also important to examine Aiko's linguistic devices in the context of emotive speech. She gave a full-hearted effort to make her speech understandable and to resonate emotionally with her audience (e.g., Azuma 2021, Tannen 1991, 2007). For example, Tannen (2007, 46) argues that "emotion and cognition are inseparable. Understanding is facilitated, even enabled, by an emotional experience of interpersonal involvement." Tannen emphasizes the fundamental importance of emotion in our understanding of anybody's speech. With this viewpoint in mind, when we examine Aiko's speech, we realize that she used various strategies that involved emotional content. For example, Aiko's careful style of greeting her audience as well as her giving individual attention to each person can be viewed as one part or form of her emotional style. It can be characterized as a style of "rapport talk" or sympathy talk, which focuses on emotion, rather than a style of "report talk" which focuses on conveying mere facts and information (Tannen 1991). In other words, we may describe Aiko as being quite successful in her "rapport talk" style as well as her "report talk" style.

Let us examine the details of her speech in more detail with the **emotion** aspect in mind. At the very beginning of the press conference, Aiko stated she was heartbroken by the loss of so many precious lives in Ukraine, referring to the Russia-Ukraine political and military conflict and invasion (e.g., Kwai 2022). In addition, she made it clear she strongly believes in peace by referencing her visit to Hiroshima as a junior high school student.

She recalled seeing the terrible images of the atomic bombing on display at the peace museum there. She also referenced the heartbreaking and devastating disasters of the great-eastern earthquake in Tohoku as well as the nuclear power plant calamity in Fukushima. Aiko expressed her sincere empathy for the residents in disaster-hit areas, including those still recovering from the deadly March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Through referencing these disasters nationally and internationally, Aiko emphasized the value and importance of staying emotionally close and connected to the people of Japan. She stated “it is important as a royal family member to fulfil my duty while praying for the people’s happiness and sharing in their joy and sorrow.”

We might ask how Aiko was able to make her first-ever speech and press conference so successful and pleasing to the media and the general public. It seems that a critical element witnessed by all was her heartfelt and emotion-filled expressions of “gratitude,” which help connect her with the audience. Everyone seemed to support her performance and warmly congratulated her on her coming of age. In particular, she expressed her humble gratitude to the Emperor and Empress and her supporters, and spoke freely about her life as a college student under the pandemic as well as her hopes for peace. Princess Aiko’s “determination” to fulfill her duties as an adult member of the Imperial family, also came through as sincere and authentic. She conveyed her commitment to attending each official event with a sense of responsibility.

Aiko also communicated her willingness to extend her hope and desire beyond the Imperial family to the general public. She considered this event as a way to express her “gratitude” to the people of Japan.

We tend to expect that any royal person, such as princess Aiko, might assume his/her duties in a nonchalant and casual attitude. However, Aiko surprisingly seems to maintain an unusual determination to counter expectations, and to have respect, gratitude and hope throughout her life, no matter what difficulties she may face (e.g., Kyodo News 2022, Miyazaki 2022, Takahashi 2022). This is a remarkable attitude and approach she portrays, and many Japanese people seem to appreciate her strong determination.

4.0 Conclusion

In summary, it seems clear that Aiko has used various linguistic devices to effectively communicate her message to the media and the public in her first-ever press conference. Her expression of **emotion** in her speech appears to have also aided in creating acceptance and admiration of her performance by the Japanese public (e.g., Daily Mails 2022).

In her analysis of discourse strategies in conversation, Tannen (2007) points out that various conversational involvement strategies such as repetition, dialogue, and details are crucial for an audience to be moved and eventually accept the speaker’s ideas. Furthermore, citing her idea of “humanistic linguistics,” Tannen (2007: 187) argues that “there is no reason that scientific, in the sense of rigorous, disciplined, and systematic, investigation must exclude the **personal and the particular**.” “The scientific study of language,” she argues, “must include the close analysis of particular instances of discourse as they naturally occur in human and linguistic context.” The present study has shown one instance of discourse through a close examination of the Japanese princess Aiko’s speech at her press conference. Princess Aiko was effective and well-received by using useful linguistic devices coupled with her honest and trusting conversational behaviors (e.g., rapport talk, reframing, emphatic pauses), to the extent that many members of the audience were emotionally connected. In the end, Aiko seems to deserve a round of applause for her hard work and remarkable performance, which many Japanese people hope to see continue into Japan’s future.

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