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# **ANALYZING JAPANESE MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT: A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF ONLINE SOURCES**

**Shoji Azuma<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of World Languages and Cultures, University of Utah, USA*

## **Abstract**

This paper examines Japanese media coverage and analysis of the recent Israel-Hamas war. Specifically, it argues that the Japanese public, media and government are being exposed to a distorted view of Islam and Muslim countries. For instance, Japanese academia seems captivated by anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism, leading to the radicalization of students. This, in turn, results in distorted perspectives on Muslim affairs for the Japanese people, media and government. This paper will focus on a case study from YouTube conducted by Akari Iiyama, a Japanese author. It will illustrate how her analysis unveils a distorted perspective of the Israel-Hamas war. Further, this study suggests that media reports play a crucial role in our comprehension of language dynamics in contemporary everyday life. It aims to enhance our understanding, especially in the context of Israel-Hamas war reporting, of the theory of speech style in socio-linguistics. Specifically, the theory of “involvement” will be discussed in relation to Japanese web-based data.

## **Keywords**

Israel-Gaza war, Japanese media, Middle East crisis, Speech style, YouTube

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## **Israel-Gaza War**

On October 7, 2023, Hamas initiated an unprecedented assault on Israel from the Gaza Strip, resulting in 1,400 casualties and more than 200 hostages. This event took the Middle East region by surprise. Subsequently, Israel responded with retaliatory strikes on Gaza. According to the health ministry run by Hamas, the death toll has exceeded 8,000, encompassing both innocent civilians and military personnel, and is increasing. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that his ground forces entered Gaza to “dismantle” Hamas and rescue hostages. The BBC reported that the Israel Defense Force (IDF) eliminated dozens of Hamas terrorists who had barricaded themselves in buildings and tunnels. The IDF continued to conduct airstrikes on hundreds of Hamas targets (BBC News, 2023a).

The Israel military has deployed tens of thousands of soldiers along Gaza’s perimeter fence, supported by tanks and artillery. Approximately 300,000 reservists, in addition to a standing force of 160,000, have been activated. Hamas, in its military wing, is estimated to comprise about 25,000 members. The organization maintains an extensive network of underground tunnels across Gaza, connecting its command centers, spanning an impressive distance of 500 km or 310 miles (Asahi Shinbun, 2023a, Asahi Shinbun, 2023c).

## **Method**

In terms of methodology, this paper encompasses several key areas of analysis. Firstly, it introduces the terrorist group Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Secondly, it briefly discusses an analysis of the Japanese media in contemporary Japan. Finally, and most significantly, it provides a detailed discussion of YouTube analysis based on the work of Japanese scholar Iiyama Akari, complementing the earlier linguistic speech style analysis. The specific YouTube internet video under scrutiny is titled “Iiyama Akari’s Ikari Channel,” initiated approximately a year ago in November 2022. For this study, eight videos with a theme centered around speech style analysis during the months of October and November 2023 have been examined. The focal point is the concept of “involvement” in linguistic

speech style studies. Each video has a duration of approximately 35-45 minutes. Since the original video is in Japanese, an equivalent English translation is provided for clarity.

## Who is Hamas?

Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) is a Palestinian terrorist group that has governed the Gaza Strip since 2007. Its primary objective is the complete destruction of Israel, to be replaced by an Islamic state. Engaging in numerous wars with Israel since assuming power in 2007, Hamas has launched thousands of rockets into Israel, along with carrying out numerous deadly attacks. In response to Hamas attacks, Israel has conducted repeated airstrikes on the organization. Additionally, in collaboration with Egypt, Israel has blockaded the Gaza Strip for security reasons. Hamas has been designated as a terrorist's group by Israel, the United States, the European Union (EU), the UK and other nations. Notably, Iran has supported the Hamas group by providing funding, weapons and military training. In summary, Hamas, recognized as a terrorist group, relies on Iran as crucial support, despite opposition from many democratic countries, including the U.S.

As known, Hamas is primarily recognized for its armed resistance against Israel. Launching a substantial surprise attack, Hamas caused the death of over 1,400 people and took dozens more as hostages. In response, Israel declared war on Hamas, expressing a clear intent for a prolonged campaign to eliminate the organization entirely. The aftermath of the October invasion remains uncertain. Some individuals raise questions about whether Israel will pursue a comprehensive invasion and reoccupation of Gaza. There are concerns about Israel's plan for governing territory post-Hamas. If Israel merely attacks Hamans and withdraws, the terrorist organization may regenerate. Presently, there is no clear response to this speculation. Notably, on October 31, President Netanyahu of Israel emphatically stated Israel's commitment to an ongoing war against Gaza (Jiji, 2023a).

An important development is the speech by UN Secretary-General Guterres at the Security Council on October 24. During the meeting, he emphasized, "It is important to recognize that the attacks by Hamas did not



happen in a vacuum," further stating, "The Palestinian people have been subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation." Interestingly, on October 25, Israeli ambassador Erdan accused Guterres of "justifying terrorism" and called for his immediate resignation. Erdan reiterated the UN secretary distorted reality and insisted that Guterres resign from the position of the General Secretary (ANN News, 2023, BBC News, 2023b).

Additionally, a noteworthy event is the recent resignation of the UN High Commissioner Mr. Craig Mokhiber, the director of the New York Office of UN Commissioner of Human Rights. He resigned in protest over the organization's inability to stop the genocide in Gaza.

Mokhiber stated, "Once again, we are seeing a genocide unfolding before our eyes, and our organization appears powerless to stop it" (Middle East Monitor, 2023). Moreover, a representative from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) revealed that there are an astonishing 50,000 pregnant women in the Gaza Strip, with 5,500 expecting to give birth in October 2023. However, they are not getting even basic health care in the besieged Gaza. Many of them are in the last trimester of pregnancy, facing various physical complications due to the lack of necessary clothing and hygiene, facing various complications. The representative called for aid and humanitarian supplies to be allowed into the enclave (Barta 24, 2023).





In the United States, a noticeable trend is the inclination of people, in particular, the younger generation, who tend to have an anti-Israel attitude. One of the major Japanese newspapers called Mainichi Shinbun recently published an article highlighting strong voices against Israel's attack on Gaza (Mainichi Shinbun, 2023a). The accompanying image indicates a prevalent anti-Israel sentiment among individuals protesting during a U.S. Senate committee meeting. In the photo, Secretary of State Blinken is in the foreground with audience members with red-stained hands in the background, underscoring

the division of opinions in the U.S. Indeed, perspectives on this matter are varied around the world, even within the United States (CBS News, 2023).

The images depict a disruption during Secretary of State Blinken's testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee, as protesters called for a cease-fire in the Gaza strip (also reported by Nippon Hoosoo, 2023, Bunshun Online, 2023).

Another photograph reveals the tragic incident of the death of a Palestinian TV reporter Mohammad Hatab in an Israel attack at Nasel Hospital in Gaza. Similar reports have been conveyed regularly by various media outlets, including CNN Japan (2023a), Kyodo News (2023a), Jiji (2023f), and Kyodo News (2023b).

### Japanese media

The conflict in the Middle East is a significant global issue impacting politics, business, and economics. The question arises as to how Japanese people perceive the Hamas-Israel crisis, considering Japan's substantial trade relations with the Middle East, including oil exports. Are the Japanese people pro-Israel or pro-Palestine? How do they view the global issue concerning the Middle East situation, and what is their stance toward the UN, the United States, and other democratic countries like Germany, France and England?

It appears that a common perspective in Japan is that Israel is experiencing internal cohesion issues, leading to external conflicts. Many Japanese people seem to treat the conflict as an external matter, suggesting a balance in the number of casualties on each side. However, there is an implicit argument that Israel is perceived as being in the wrong if there are more casualties in Gaza than in Israel. It is noteworthy that a significant number of people in Gaza have been killed or wounded compared to those in Israel. According to Amnesty International's report, since October 7, 3,793 Gaza residents were killed by Israeli forces, while about 1,400 people were killed in Israel by October 20 (Amnesty International, 2023).

How does the Japanese media report this substantial imbalance? Who is held responsible for or against it? Should support for Israel continue amid the ongoing Gaza-Israel war? Japan has made it clear that it urged Israel to suspend its assault on the besieged Gaza Strip to allow humanitarian assistance. Japan's foreign ministry stated that Japanese measures would freeze assets belonging to individuals who have helped fund Hamas, the governing authority in the Gaza Strip. How does the Japanese media report on such a stance, as well as the overall Gaza-Israel crisis?

The following picture shows Japanese people protesting the Gaza-Israel issue. Many protesters are expressing their opinions arguing for the cessation of genocide and restoration of peace in the region. The picture was taken by Sanken Shinbun, one of the major newspapers in Japan (e.g., Sankei Shinbun, 2023a, 2023b, 2023d).



## Iiyama's argument

While it may appear that the Japanese media leans toward supporting Gaza over Israel's actions, there are scholars who argue that Gaza constitutes a group of severe terrorists responsible for significant harm to the residents of the Gaza Strip. One such scholar is Akari Iiyama, a specialist in Middle-East religion and society, recognized as the leading public-facing scholar of Islam and Muslim politics in Japan. Her research focuses on Islamic thought and Islamic law.

Born in Tokyo in 1976, Iiyama earned her undergraduate degree in history from *Sophia University* (Tokyo) and pursued further research at the graduate school of *Tokyo University* attaining her highest academic degree. Her notable books include *Isuramukyo no Saikyoo* (Re-examination of Islamism, Iiyama, 2021) and *Orokamono* (A Fool, Iiyama, 2023). Additionally, she has authored numerous articles on Islam, displaying fluency in Arabic and substantial experience working and living in Muslim countries. Her book *Orokamono* has garnered positive reviews from Japanese readers, earning continuous praise in Japan. Her latest book *Hamas, Palestine, Israel* achieved the top rank in the Amazon Ranking Survey for 2023 (Amazon, 2023).

Some translated Japanese comments include:

I'm a fan of Iiyama-sensei, so I pre-ordered it; it won't disappoint, it's fun and easy to read. (July 8, 2023)

Cheers to Dr. Ikari (Akari Iiyama), who is sharp and knocks down people who make false statements while holding up authoritarianism! (July 8, 2023)

I had missed it on YouTube, but when I read it in print, I was able to understand this kind of thing. (July 9, 2023)

I knew it on YouTube, but I was able to understand the content well in print. I'm impressed by the author's consistent assertions, accurate analysis, and deep knowledge. (July 4, 2023)

Reverend Takahara Goichiro, an evangelist in Japan known for his ministry on YouTube, asserts that Iiyama is a Middle East specialist and believes that she is a researcher who "sekai ni tsuuyoo suru chuutoo mondai no kenkyuusha da to omoimasu" (holds a world-class reputation in the study of central global issues). Takahara holds Iiyama in high esteem as a talented expert who is acknowledged not only in Japan but also globally (Go channel, 2023).

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that a minority of academicians holds a dissenting view of Iiyama. Professor Satoshi Ikeuchi of *Tokyo University*, for instance, asserts that Iiyama is a "kyogen heki kojiraseta influencer" (a consistent spreader of falsehoods) (Iiyama, 2023h). Ikeuchi contends that Iiyama's actions are consistently characterized by deception, a viewpoint that may appear unconventional. Furthermore, Ikeuchi argues that he is "gathering a large number of people to launch an attack on a sole individual named Iiyama Akari" (Iiyama, 2023i). Furthermore, Professor Hideaki Satoshi of the *Tokyo University of Foreign Studies* openly suggests, "Iiyama Akari ni kuso ripu o tairyoo ni okutte kudasai" (Please send a large number of critical responses to Iiyama Akari). Additionally, Japanese journalist/professor Ikegami Akira suggests that "Hamas wa minshuu no hiirou teki sonzai datta" (Hamas was a heroic group for the people in Palestine) (Iiyama, 2023j). However, it is crucial to emphasize that these viewpoints are not widely shared.

Moving forward, this paper will focus on Iiyama's remarks and comments from a linguistic viewpoint, rather than delving into political, religious, or historical perspectives. Specifically, the paper will examine the linguistic speech styles in her analysis, exploring how she engages Japanese audiences through internet-based communication, primarily utilizing YouTube as her platform under the channel name Iiyama Akari's Ikari Channel (2023a). This YouTube channel runs about 35-45 minutes for each lecture. The aim is to understand her communication strategies that attract a wide and unexpected audience in Japan.

## Theory of speech style

Before delving into the analysis of Iiyama's perspective as seen through YouTube internet comments, it is crucial to establish the linguistic strategy underlying her speech style. Sociolinguists have identified various features that warrant examination when considering linguistic speech styles (e.g., Chafe 1982, Gumperz 1982, Elias 1987).

One prominent scholar in this field is Professor Deborah Tannen, a distinguished University Professor in the Linguistics Department at Georgetown University in the U.S. Her research focuses on the language of everyday conversation, exploring how speech patterns influence relationships, including those between men and women. Among her publications are sociolinguistic books and scholarly articles, such as *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (Tannen, 1991), *Conversational Style: Analyzing Talk Among Friends* (Tannen,

2005) and *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue and Imagery* (Tannen, 1989). Her latest book is *Finding My Father: His Century-Long Journey from World War I Warsaw and My Quest to Follow* (Tannen, 2021).

Tannen's studies, particularly her analysis of genderlect (differences in male vs. female conversational styles) suggest that, for men, conversation is a mean to establish status in a competitive world, while women view the world as a network of connections, utilizing language for seeking and offering support. This gender difference, known as genderlect, is closely related to speech style itself.

Moreover, Tannen extends her analysis to include the theory of involvement in conversation. In her words, involvement is "an internal, even emotional connection individuals feel which binds them to other people as well as to places, things, activities, ideas, memories, and words" (Tannen 1989: 12). According to Tannen, the idea of involvement is created and maintained in conversation through various discourse strategies, such as (1) repetition of words and phrases, (2) frequent use of images, (3) short story-telling, and (4) attention to detail. These concrete strategies enhance the coherence of connected discourse and trigger participants' involvement by highlighting the coherences. In essence, involvement revolves around emotional connection and its persuasive influence, created in different conversations (see also Asher, 1994).

Bateson (1972) argues that involvement sends a metamessage of rapport between the communicators (i.e., speaker and listener), fostering a shared understanding of communicative conventions and a common world of discourse. Bakhtin (1981) further asserts all language is dialogic, emphasizing the shared discourse goal of involvement as a joint venture between speakers and listeners (see also Duranti, 1986). It is essential to note that understanding in conversation is indeed facilitated, even enabled, by an emotional experience of interpersonal involvement (Friedrich 1986). In essence, conversation is a dialogic joint venture between participants, with rapport and emotion playing significant roles.

The next question is how these conversational strategies are employed in Japanese media, concerning the theory of involvement. Let us examine actual examples of such strategies using the internet communication style from Iiyama's YouTube content.

### Iiyama's YouTube analysis

In this section, let's explore some aspects of Iiyama's speech style based on the theory of involvement. Several discourse styles are evident in the pictures taken from Iiyama Akari's Ikari Channel (Iiyama, 2023a).

#### **Repetition**

One of Iiyama's strategies is the use of repetition in her speech. In other words, she repeats statements consecutively. Consider the following statement (Iiyama, 2023c), with an English translation provided after the Japanese portion:

*Kishida Seiken wa Slime Gekika wa toro soshiki Hamas no happyoo dake o unomi ni shite, sore ga mattaku zenbu uso de aru nimo kakawarazu. Sore o zenbu unomi nishite seifu to shite no kooshiki kenkai o shite imasu. (pause) Hamasu no itte iru koto dake o unomi ni shite,,, choo yabaku nai to iu hanashi nan desu. Jissai, yabai n desu. Hijyoo ni yabai.*

(The Kishida administration appears to rely on reports from the Hamas organization for their perspective, dismissing other sources. Kishida's acceptance of this report as an accurate representation of reality is criticized here. The comment strongly expresses a negative opinion of Kishida, emphasizing the belief that his stance is misguided and strongly disapproved of.)

Here, Iiyama argues that Kishida is a politician who unquestioningly accepts whatever Hamas says as correct and realistic. The word *unomi* (gullible) is deliberately repeated to emphasize Kishida's gullibility, reinforcing the psychological impact on the audience. Another interesting repetition is the use of *yabai* (terrible) in the discourse, a slang term in Japanese. The repetition of this slang term not only emphasizes Iiyama's viewpoint that Kishida is a terrible politician, but also adds a lively appeal to the audience (Jiji, 2023g, Iiyama, 2023e, Iiyama, 2023f). This strategy of repetition can be observed in historical speeches, such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech at the March on Washington on August 23, 1963. In Dr. King's speech, the repetition of the phrase "let freedom ring" effectively created a sense of common ground among participants, echoing the message in both the speaker's and listeners' minds. The concluding words of Dr. King's speech are as follows (Tannen, 2007):

And if America is to be a great nation,  
this must become true.  
So let freedom ring  
from the prodigious hill tops of New Hampshire.  
Let freedom ring

from the mighty mountains of New York.  
 Let freedom ring  
 from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.  
 Let freedom ring  
 from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado.  
 Let freedom ring  
 from the curvaceous slopes of California

As demonstrated in Dr. King's speech, employing positive repetition strategies effectively influences audiences, evoking strong emotion. Similar to Dr. King's speech, Iiyama's performance employs repetition of words and phrases to underscore the gravity of Kishida's role as the Prime Minister of Japan.

Indeed, Kishida is a terrible politician in Iiyama's mind, but more importantly the word reinforces the psychological meaning in listeners' minds as well. Kishida, after hearing Iiyama, will be remembered in the minds of Japanese listeners, as a terrible minister. Furthermore, as I have discussed, the word *yabai* or *yabaku* is considered to be slang in Japanese and this fact catches the audience's attention.

Another instance of repetition in Iiyama's speech involves citing an actual report from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Specifically, she refers to the formal report from Minister Kamikawa regarding the recent incident where a large number of people were killed in Al Alila hospital in Gaza. She states (Iiyama, 2023d):

*Gaimu daijin de aru Kamikawa san ga koo iu seimei o dashite iru n desu. Gaza chiku ni okeru koogeki (pause) ni tsuite. Koogeki ni tsuite. Hakkiri itte iru n desu yo. Koogeki ni tsuite. Are wa koogeki nan da to. Tsumari, koogeki, Gaza chiku ni okeru koogeki (long pause). Tsumari, kore wa Israel no koogeki datte ichatte ru n desu yo.*

(Ms. Kamikawa, the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, made a report regarding the hospital attack in Gaza. She explicitly and directly states that the incident was indeed an attack, attributing it unequivocally to Israel, based on my understanding.)

Once again, the word "attack" (*koogeki*) is repeated seven times in this brief speech. This repetition creates a sense of emergency and solidarity among listeners, fostering a shared understanding that the attack on the hospital was perpetrated by the Israel forces. The eloquence in Iiyama's repetition reinforces the idea that blame lies with Israel, not the people in Gaza Strip, creating a sense of dignity, respect, and compassion for the people affected. In summary, repetition in Iiyama's speeches serves to reinforce the message, evoke emotional responses, and create a shared understanding among the audience. The technique enhances the impact of her statements, contributing to the persuasive power of her discourse.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that the frequent use of "koogeki" (attack) instills an imaginative response among the audience. There is a collective awareness that the repetition of "koogeki" conjures a vivid mental image, leaving a profound impression on the listeners. They universally perceive "koogeki" as evoking a powerful and disturbing image, portraying Israel engaging in acts of violence against innocent individuals in Gaza. The audience vividly envisions the harrowing display of force by Israel's military, emphasizing the stark contrast between the formidable Israel forces and the vulnerable population of Gaza.

### ***Another aspect of Iiyama's speech***

There are several more conversational strategies Iiyama uses which support the idea of involvement. One of them is, as we have briefly discussed, the frequent use of images which involves short story-telling. She talks about a reporter whose name is Mr. Sukagawa Hiroshi. He is a reporter from TBS (i.e., Tokyo Broadcasting System) television. Iiyama considers Mr. Sukagawa as one of the craziest Japanese media reporters. Observe her comment (Iiyama, 2023b).

*Sukagawa Hiroshi to iu kisha ga orun desu ne. De, Sukagawa ni tsuite wa desune, kekkoo nannen mo suunen mae kara desu ne. Choo usotsuki da. Kisha no kuse ni, mechya henkoo shite iru to. Moo, gutaiteki ni nankai mo, nankai mo kosutte kita n desu yo.*

(There is a reporter named Sukagawa Hiroshi. Over the course of many years, he has earned a reputation as a real fool. Despite being a TV reporter, he is noticeably biased. I have expressed this sentiment repeatedly over the years.)

According to Iiyama, the reporter, Sukagawa, has been politically biased for quite a few years. She continues her speech by introducing a picture titled *Senjyoo Kisha* (war correspondent). The picture shows a reporter (presumably Sukagawa himself) standing at some war zone as a TV reporter. However, it turns out the

picture is not taken in a war zone at all, even though it claims to be taken in a war zone. Observe the following speech from her.

*Kore ne. Sukagawa ga shi ga Sukagawa kisha ga, jibun shuen, jibun kantoku de totta eiga ga arun desu yo. Doon! Senjyoo kisha. Do doon! Kore ga jibun na wake!*

(This is Sukagawa, Mr. Sukagawa, portraying himself as the main character and director, capturing the photo entirely on his own. Wow. This is himself.)

Iiyama shows the picture of Sukagawa who claims he was responsible for the photo and was the main person featured in the shot. What is the surprise? She continues her speech as follows.

*Kore mita shunkan. Are! Aha! Kore senjyoo jya nai yan. Kore Lebanon no. Jiko genba shasin yan. Sugu ni kizuitan desu yo. Minasan. Ikarichan chuutoo suraimu no senmonka dakara. Ezura mitara daitai dokka tte wakaru. Wakarun desu yo. Are! Kore senjyoo jya nai ya n. Kore. Lebanon no minato de okita jiko genba shashin ya no.*

(As soon as I saw this picture, I was taken aback. This isn't any typical war photo, is it? It's Lebanon. I quickly realized that it has nothing to do with the war itself. Well, everyone! As someone specializing in Middle Eastern issues, it suddenly dawned on me that this picture has no connection to a war zone. Surprise! This picture is related to the accident at a port in Lebanon, not a war zone per se. What a revelation!)

She promptly identified that the image didn't depict a war zone but rather the port in Lebanon, situated far from the Hamas-Israel conflict area. In essence, she concluded that the picture was a clear example of misinformation. It was revealed that Mr. Sukagawa, a TBS reporter, deliberately misrepresented the image, presenting it as if it were from a war zone. Listeners paying attention to her comment easily gasped the deception perpetuated by Sukagawa, a product of a major media outlet like TBS. This revelation raised doubts about the trustworthiness of the Japanese media system, particularly Japanese TV media.

Additionally, she alleges that the Japanese TBS broadcasting system made a false statement in their popular program, Sunday Morning, as indicated in her statement (Iiyama, 2023f).

*Ikari chan TBS ni, Kanshoo shimashita. Ano (pause), TBS, Kanban bangumi desu yo. Ano, TBS. Are ga. Fake news. Mitomete! Ayamattandesu yo! (pause)*

(Ikari (Iiyama Akari) achieved a resounding victory over TBS. Well! TBS, the broadcasting TV company, known for their flagship show, Sunday Morning, aired fake news. (They admitted) that the picture was false and issued an apology for their mistake.)

TBS revealed the falseness of a different picture depicting a person from Hamas during their Sunday Morning show on November 5, 2023. This occurrence involved one of Japan's highly regarded TV companies presenting what can be characterized as "fake" news to the Japanese audience, utilizing their broadcasting privileges. Iiyama reiterated her assertion that TBS was engaged in disseminating misleading information. Notably, Iiyama identifies other instances of such false statements in various comments (Iiyama, 2023d).

*Nihon no hoodoo no amari no katayori ni bikkura kokemasu yo. Kitto! Sore gurai ijyoo desu yo. Hakkiri itte! Tabun ne sekai de ichiban ijyoo da to omoimasu yo.*

(You will be astonished at the false information portrayed by Japanese media. I hope you understand. Japanese media's behavior is abnormal, even bordering on bad. I firmly believe that Japanese media is among the most abnormal in the world.)

She intensifies her assertion, accusing Japanese media of being influenced by the erroneous notion that Hamas is in the right. According to her, the Japanese media seems to exhibit a pro-Hamas and anti-Israel stance overall.

She further elaborates on this perspective in her comment below. (Iiyama, 2023d)

*Tokoro ga nihon de wa. Booei daigakkoo! Booei daigakkoo desu yo! Booei shoo no eliito kyooiku suru tokoro de sho, koko? Booeishoo tte nani nihon no kokuboo ninau shoochoo de sho. Soko no eliito kyooiku suru gakkoo no kyoojyu ga desu yo. Hamasu no koto nante itte iru ka shitte masu?*

*(pause) Koo itten desu yo! Hamasu wa osoraku Gaza no hitobito ni sukoshide mo yoi seikatsu o teikyoo suru tameni, hitojichi nan ka o baageninngu koodo ni shite iru to omoun desu ne. (big pause) Tte itte iru wake desu!*

(However, when you consider the Japanese situation, you'll notice the National Defense Academy of Japan (NDA). I mean, the National Defense Academy of Japan! As I see it, this academy is where elite education is provided. Am I right? The Ministry of Defense is the place where elite education is provided, correct? It's the institution where Japan ensures its national security. Do you know what the professor at the academy says about Hamas? (pause) She (the professor) states the following: Hamas might be taking hostages as a bargaining tactic to help ensure the well-being of the people in Gaza. (big pause) That's what Hamas might say!)

The information provided suggests that Chie Ezaki, a tenured professor at the National Defense Academy of Japan, openly supports Hamas, a group that has been engaged in attacks against Israel. According to Iiyama, Ezaki is allegedly influencing students at the institution to potentially hold pro-Hamas views in the future, utilizing a publicly supported platform. Iiyama questions why the Japanese people should endorse a group like Hamas, emphasizing the ongoing conflict between Hamas and Israel and the resulting human suffering on both sides.

*Nande, Gaza no jyuumin ga sunde iru futsuu no shigaichi ni rocket lanchi o okun desu ka? Nande, hitobito o nigasanai yoo ni site, tonneru no naka ni nigekonde irun desu ka? Nande gaza no gakkoo ni, kodomo tachi ga kayou gakkoo ni desu yo, soko ni buki takusan shimaikonde, bukiko ni shite irun desu ka?*

(Why does Hamas place rocket launchers in areas densely populated by civilians in Gaza? Why does Hamas take refuge in tunnels to prevent people from escaping? Why do they store weapons in schools where many young children study?)

The passage describes how Iiyama poses straightforward questions to Japanese listeners, prompting them to consider why Hamas keeps rocket launchers, hostages, and military weapons in certain locations. She suggests that these questions aim to highlight what she perceives as protective measures by Hamas in the conflict with Israel.

Furthermore, Iiyama discusses bias in Japanese media, pointing out alleged partiality in major companies like Asahi and Mainichi newspaper companies. Despite her differing views from other scholars and TV reporters, she claims to have received no invitations from media, portraying herself as an unpopular figure. Iiyama continues her statement as follows.

*Ikarichan, dooshite terebi ni denain desu ka, tte yooku kiite kuru hito irun desu kedo. Sonna yobarenai kara ni kimatte run desu yo. Dare mo koe kakenai n desu yo, Yukari chan ni. Dare mo yobanai. Kirawarete irun desu yo.*

(Many people wonder why Ikari (Iiyama's first name) doesn't appear on TV. The simple truth is that nobody invites her. She has not received any requests to appear on TV. It's as straightforward as that. She hasn't been given the opportunity, possibly disliked by others.)

Honestly and clearly, Iiyama makes the statement to all listeners that she has been ignored by all media people including TV stations such as TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting Station). The statement appears to be very abrupt, but it is her true and honest "declaration." According to her, nobody has invited her for any public appearance except this YouTube appearance. Observe the following comments from her.

*Hito mukashi mae dattara, media shika, oote media shika, jyoohoo no hassin no shudan ga nakatta desu yo. Media dake ga sore o dokuen shite ita to... Saki no sensoo chuu no media to onnaji desu yo... Dakara moo, moo, moo, moo, betsu ni iiyo... Chigau koto iu kara desu yo. (long pause). Asahi Shinbun, Mainichi Shinbun, minna onaji koto itte kokumin o misu ri-do shita n desu yo?*

(Many years ago, the primary communication tool for Japanese people was major media, especially during World War Two, correct? (pause) Well, well, well. (pause) I stand apart because I express views that sharply diverge from others. (long pause). Asahi Shinbun (a major Japanese newspaper), Mainichi Shinbun (another major Japanese newspaper), both consistently report perspectives vastly different from mine, ultimately leading to misinformation among the Japanese people. That's how it unfolded, isn't it?)



Iiyama appears to receive positive reactions and full support from Japanese listeners, suggesting a growing trust in YouTube as a reliable communication tool in Japan. Iiyama characterizes her own opinions as distinct and unique among Middle-East specialists. In a somewhat self-deprecating manner, she compares herself to a powerless entity, like an ant, dragonfly, or water flea, when considering major media outlets such as TBS, implying her perceived lack of influence. Despite this, she asserts her resolution and opinions, claiming support and understanding from Japanese people, particularly through YouTube, which she considers the only public communication tool not requiring financial support. Her reliance on YouTube as a primary means of conveying her message underscores her trust in the platform and its popularity among Japanese listeners. This reliance becomes crucial in reaching a broader audience and establishing a common ground with those who might not fully comprehend the Middle-East crisis. Iiyama appears to receive positive reactions and support from Japanese listeners, suggesting a growing trust in YouTube as a reliable communication tool in Japan.

## Conclusion

This paper undertakes an examination of the Japanese media system through the analysis of Iiyama's YouTube channel (e.g., Iiyama, 2023a, Iiyama 2023e, Iiyama, 2023g). The focus, particularly in the study of speech style, reveals the pivotal role played by the strategy of repetition in fostering mutual understanding among the Japanese people regarding the Middle-East crisis. Additional strategies, such as vivid image building and storytelling, also contribute to this understanding. An essential observation regarding speech style is the prominence of an emotional connection or rapport among the Japanese people, significantly impacting the effectiveness of any speech. Emotion, along with logical discourse, establishes mutual understanding among communicators. In essence, the meta message of rapport enhances language's persuasive power between a speaker and listeners. It is crucial to recognize that language is inherently dialogic, representing a shared endeavor among all participants engaged in an entertaining and convincing speech. The strategy of repetition, in particular, remains a potent tool for deepening our understanding.

Political speeches by politicians and scholars often contain jargon that can be challenging for the general public to understand, given its reliance on complex economic, diplomatic, and societal norms. In contrast, Iiyama's communications are characterized by content and language accessible to the public, allowing them to comprehend and support her arguments. Iiyama's YouTube content highlights her position that Hamas does not represent Palestinians in Gaza, branding them as terrorists with the goal of eliminating Israel. She emphasizes the importance of a shared understanding and support for comprehending the Hamas-Israel crisis.

Iiyama emphasizes the importance of obtaining accurate information on Islam and Islamic regions firsthand, leveraging her skills and understanding of Arabic knowledge as a Japanese-Arabic interpreter. Through her determined and emphatic approach, she challenges major Japanese mass media (e.g., TBS television), scholars (e.g., professors at the National Defense Academy of Japan), and government officials (e.g., the Minister of Foreign Affairs) without fear of failure. This bold attitude resonates with many Japanese viewers, drawing attention to Iiyama's speeches.

Additionally, Japanese media coverage mentions a critical moment reported by Al Jazeera, where a patient at Shifa hospital in Gaza expresses distress over the situation (Asahi, 2023b), describing it as "Gyakusatsu, Suusennin ga iru, Ikaru Gaza no hitobito" (Obliteration. Several thousand patients are there. Gaza people get extremely upset.) Asahi News reports global outcry against the ongoing situation in Gaza (e.g., Tele Asa News, 2023, Jiji, 2023b, Jiji 2023c, Jiji 2023d, Mainichi Shinbun, 2023c). The reporting urges action to prevent further tragedy, emphasizing the need for immediate intervention. The content highlights a lack of knowledge about the Middle East among the majority of people in Japan. It notes a prevalent belief that Japan heavily relies on the Middle East for about 90% of its oil imports and 20% of its natural gas imports, emphasizing the critical importance maintaining positive relations with Middle East oil-producing countries (Sankei Shinbun, 2023c). The Japanese reporting acknowledges the challenge of fostering a comprehensive understanding of the unfortunate and dire situation in Middle East among the Japanese people. It underscores the significance of trusting media to accurately and precisely report on the crisis in the Gaza-Israel situation (see Jiji, 2023e, CNN Japan, 2023b, Asahi Shinbun, 2023d, Asahi Shinbun, 2023e, Mainichi Shinbun, 2023b, Yomiuri Shinbun, 2023 among others). We have to wait to see what will happen in the Middle East crisis in the future (Sankei Shinbun, 2023d). It is critical for us to pay close attention to the crisis.

As a concluding remark for this paper, it is imperative to underscore two key elements. Firstly, the paper delves into the influence of prominent and vocal scholars like Iiyama Akari, who have played a pivotal role in cultivating a sustained and profound interest among the Japanese populace regarding the Middle East crisis. Iiyama forthrightly criticizes Hamas, or unequivocally identifies them as a group of terrorists responsible for suffering of the people in Gaza strip. It is emphasized that Hamas does not authentically represent the interests or aspirations of the people in Gaza. Secondly, the YouTube analysis conducted on the Ikari Channel, presented by Iiyama Akari, unequivocally demonstrates the transformative potential of internet-based analyses in offering a fresh perspective on the Middle East crisis.

This novel approach to analysis, facilitated by the internet, provides insights that diverge significantly from conventional modes of discourse found in major media outlets such as Japanese newspapers (e.g., Asahi Shinbun), TV stations (e.g., TBS station), and the Japanese government. The internet mode of communication represents an entirely innovative avenue for comprehending and interpreting the complexities of the Middle East crisis, surpassing the limitations of traditional written forms of communication.

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