

*A Stylistics Analysis of News Agency Articles on the Japan-China
Senkaku-Diaoyu Issue*

Barry Natusch, Nihon University
Beryl Hawkins, Temple University Japan

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Abstract

The Japanese government has recently become concerned that it is falling behind the Chinese government in representing its position internationally, in English, regarding geopolitical issues. The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute has highlighted this. The fundamental question concerning Japanese and Chinese news agency articles, such as those written by Kyodo and Xinhua, was framed as, “Do Japan and China news items differ stylistically in the way their journalists write stories relating to the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute?” To examine this question, a corpus of articles written in English by Japanese and Chinese news agencies was assembled. Articles in the corpus were then tagged for stylistic features. A stylistic analysis on these English language news stories designed for international readership was carried out. Specifically, lexical and metaphorical items were focused on. The discussion was scaffolded using the stylistic concepts of foregrounding and deviance. Results suggested that Japanese descriptions of the issue are more neutrally presented, through restrained and hedged lexical choices and no metaphorical allusions, resulting in a rational, somewhat abstract, and arguably weaker case being put forward. Chinese descriptions tended to be more hawkish in choice of aggressive lexis and employed forceful metaphors resulting in a more emotive prosecution of the issue. Japanese concerns about Chinese representations of the Senkaku/Diaoyu issue being more vivid may be vindicated by the results of this study but a less inflammatory, more reasoned approach, as followed by the Japanese news agencies, also has its merits. The study advances the case for using corpus stylistics to parse journalistic texts.

Keywords: Journalism, Stylistics, Corpus Stylistics, Media Stylistics, Foregrounding, Deviation, Senkaku Islands, Diaoyu Islands, Territorial disputes, Propaganda Wars, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kyodo News Agency, Chinese Foreign Ministry, Xinhua News Agency.

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1. Nationalistic Rhetoric and Diplomatic Dialogue

Early in 2014, a woman Diet Member asked Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe why the Chinese put their issues across forcefully in English to the outside world when Japan presents itself weakly and unpersuasively. This question coincided with heated exchanges between China and Japan regarding the Senkaku Islands 尖閣諸島 (Senkaku shotō) as the Japanese call them, also known as the Diaoyu Islands 釣魚台列嶼 (*Diàoyútái liè yǔ*) by the Chinese. The islands will be referred to in this study as the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.

The Diet member asked an interesting question. The Chinese have a history of being forceful in explaining themselves. For example, during the Cultural Revolution, Mao's "Little Red Book" was full of expressions like "paper tigers" and "running dogs" - vivid illustrations of the Chinese predilection for bias. In extreme circumstances, bias can become propaganda. This may be to present a positive idea like *raijio taiso* (Japanese early morning calisthenics), or to present a negative stance such as attitudes towards western countries during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Strident Chinese Cultural Revolution rhetoric is not the only form of propaganda. Any country can resort to bias in declaring their interests and defending themselves. Herman and Chomsky (1988) caution that any media can "mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity through choices, emphases, and omissions... We do not contend that this is all the mass media do, but we believe the propaganda function to be a very important aspect of their overall service."

2. 2012 and Beyond: Escalating Tensions and Confrontational Action

While Japan's lackluster PR strategy may be attributed largely to the government's reluctance to "create a strategy directed toward rival nations," in the view of diplomatic analyst Hisahiko Okazaki, Japan's position on sovereignty is unequivocal (Japan News, 2014). Japan's declaration that the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands are "clearly an inherent part of the territory of Japan" (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013) is in direct opposition to China's counter claim that the islands are "China's inherent territory in all historical, geographical and legal terms, and China enjoys indisputable sovereignty" (Chinese State Council Information Office, 2013). As one might expect, these competing sovereignty claims have provoked acrimonious disputes and dangerous maritime confrontations in recent years.

The latest round of territorial disputes in 2012 were sparked off by former Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara's initiatives. Although Ishihara retired from politics in 2014, in April 2012, during his last year as governor, he started a campaign to buy three of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands on behalf of the city of Tokyo (The Economist, 2012). Partly in response to protests from China, the Japanese government under Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda took over the negotiations with the private owners and finalized the 2.05 billion yen sale in September (Japan Economic Newswire September 5).

As a consequence, protests erupted as early as August, a month before the government purchase, when a boatload of Chinese protesters landed on the islands and three days later, Japanese nationalists took similar action. After the islands were

nationalized and placed under Japanese control, full scale protests escalated and anti-Japan demonstrations took place largely in Beijing, spread to other major cities and in some instances became disturbingly violent (Japan Economic Newswire, 2012a). Adding to the tensions, Japanese and Taiwanese Coastguard ships battled with water cannons and other maritime skirmishes continued. By the end of September, former Japanese Prime Minister Noda was presenting his case at the UN General Assembly in New York, causing even more antagonistic feelings with rival countries (Xinhua General News Service, 2012).

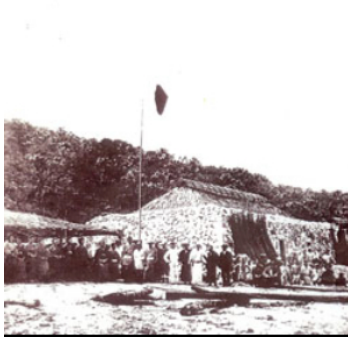


By the following month in October, the inflammatory rhetoric had subsided somewhat and the confrontational action had abated, but had not ceased. During the next year, public sentiment continued to deteriorate on both sides, followed by publication of the formal position papers on sovereignty by both countries. Towards the end of 2013, in November, tensions began to rise over air defense zones. In 2014 the disputes focused on the naming of the islands and the year ended with heated discussions over factual inaccuracies in school textbooks.

The researchers were thus intrigued by the journalistic and linguistic background to this story when the Japanese Diet member asked her question, because of the maritime and aircraft confrontations which started in 2010 and the anti-Japanese demonstrations in China in 2012. It was also clear that there is a need to further examine the styles of expression utilized by both the Japanese and Chinese news media in order to develop a more thorough understanding of this ongoing conflict. This was the motivation for the research question in this study: “Do Japanese news stories about the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands tend to be written in a more restrained style than Chinese articles?” In this article the content of Chinese and Japanese print news stories was studied using a qualitative stylistic analysis. This approach ties in with current research trends, which call for a multimodal approach to analyze news, incorporating techniques from stylistics, news discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, semiotics and sociology.

3. Brief Summary of Historical Events

This dispute is not just a recent one. Both sides have earlier laid claim to the islands based on both historical discovery and military conflict. The Japanese version of the history of the islands they call the Senkakus dates from 1895 when the Japanese government annexed the islands after the first Sino-Japanese war. Koga Tatsuiro built a bonito processing plant on the island in 1900 but by 1940 the business had failed and all workers left. After August 1945, the Senkakus fell under US jurisdiction until 1971 when ownership was returned to Japan. (The Economist, 2012).



The Chinese case concerning the islands they call the Diaoyus begins significantly earlier. They claim the first mention of the islands is made in a 1403 account called “Voyage with a Tail Wind”. They also claim the islands are on a Chinese map from 1503. They lost the islands after being defeated in the first Sino-Japanese war, but by 1958, the Chinese government was requesting that the islands be returned to China, and a protest was lodged in 1971 at the time of the Okinawa agreement (Ito, 2012).

So what’s at stake in the islands? There may be little in the way of attractive resorts, but territorial waters, fishing resources, air defense zones, and possibly oil reserves are important security and economic resource issues at stake. There is also the sense of national pride on both sides. As the Economist asked on its cover in Sept 2012, “Could China and Japan really go to war over these?” The turtle says, “Sadly, yes.” Reporting on the issue between the two countries has become heated at times, so our study is on the differences between Japanese and Chinese news stories. This is a micro level study with particular focus on the stylistic differences in language used by journalists reporting on the issue.

4. Literature Review

In reviewing the literature review we turned to a number of scholars, some working in the U.K.: Geoffrey Leech, Ronald Carter, Michaela Malmberg, others working in the U.S.: Michael Schudson, Brent Cunningham, Stephen Klaidman and Tom Beauchamp, Dutch scholars: Teun Van Dijk, and Marcel Broersma, Hong Kong: Michael Chan and Romania: Delia Tănase.

News Bias: The Journalist’s Dilemma

In this study of Japanese and Chinese news agency coverage of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, starting with the basic concept of news bias was the first step in this inquiry. While there are numerous definitions of news bias, Klaidman and Beauchamp’s (1988) interpretation, which they define as “a distorted and unfair judgment or disposition caused by the values of a reporter, editor or institution” is well regarded in journalism circles. Since then the discussion has crossed over into a broad range of relevant issues. To help journalists overcome these tendencies, Cunningham (2003) advocates neutrality in reporting, emphasizing the necessity to “be disengaged but have an impact; be fair-minded but have an edge.” At the same time Cunningham and other experts have questioned the practicality of maintaining objectivity, given the demands placed on journalists in our contemporary news culture. For example, eminent Dutch media scholar van Dijk (1988) maintains that “the media are not a

neutral, common-sensed, or rational mediator of social events, but essentially help reproduce preformulated ideologies”. Even the distinguished media scholar Schudson (2003) described some of today’s journalistic practices as “advocacy under the guise of objectivity”. If we reexamine the issue of news bias from the perspective of news audiences though, it suggests there are some more serious concerns:

“But isn’t opinion dangerous, especially when so many people are easily confused about what separates opinion from fact? Even if we agree that individuals are entitled to their own opinions, isn’t it crucial to assert that they are not entitled to their own facts? While I can agree with this, I also wonder what we can do about it except to hope that sunlight is indeed a good disinfectant.” (Schudson, 2003:168).

News Discourse Analysis

Prior to van Dijk’s (1988) seminal work on news discourse analysis, many news studies in mass communication literature utilized quantitative content analysis. In the beginning of his book on news discourse analysis, van Dijk acknowledges the previous studies in Europe, which contributed to the development of qualitative news discourse analysis. Chief among them are the Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts (1978) study of syntax in street violence news reports, Kniffka’s (1980) study on sociolinguistics in headlines during the 1972 Angela Davis trial, Hartley’s (1981) semiotic news analysis and Veron’s (1981) structural analysis study of news coverage of the Three Mile Island accident in the French media.

More importantly, van Dijk’s definition of news discourse as a “complex linguistic and ideological structure”, helped to steer news analysis in a new direction, enabling researchers to study news using a unique interdisciplinary approach drawing from the fields of critical discourse analysis, stylistics, sociology, semiotics, French structuralism, semantics and psychology. Van Dijk primarily focuses on a macro approach, which “requires both a description of textual structures of news and a description of the production and reception processes of news discourse in communicative situations and sociocultural contexts”. The macro approach in news discourse is similar to observing a sculpture and examining the curves, how the arm is molded into the shoulder and the overall form, but at the same time considering causality or the sociopolitical and psychological context of the work and the artist.

Although we have chosen to examine news discourse in this study on a micro-level, van Dijk’s work also offers some theoretical guidelines in this area. The major focus on the micro level is “lexical choices”. The news editor’s word choice can be related to the news organization’s style, but not always. As an example, he explains that “whether the newspaper selects *terrorist* or *freedom fighter* to denote the same person is not so much a question of semantics as an indirect expression of implied but associated values incorporated in shared-word meanings.” Hence news editors and reporters are constantly faced with the possibility of “ideologically-based or opinion-controlled” lexical choices.

One recent study that has adopted van Dijk’s news discourse approach is Chan’s (2012) comparative study “exploring how ideologies and national identities are discursively constructed” in *China Daily* and *Daily Yomiuri* newspaper editorials. His primary focus was the news coverage of the 2010 Chinese fishing vessel collision with a Japanese coastguard ship in the Senkaku/Diayou disputed territory, which led

him to conclude that “discourses are structured according to the respective ideologies and national identities of the ‘home nations.’” Other recent examples of comparative studies using news discourse analysis include Lee and Lin’s (2006) examination of self-censorship in two contrasting Hong Kong newspapers, Parsons and Xu’s (2001) study of the Chinese and American news coverage of the 1999 Chinese Embassy bombing in Yugoslavia and Hongyan He’s (2009) comparative micro analysis of China’s English news reports and Britain’s English news reports.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) highlights the study of language as it occurs in social settings. Fairclough (2001) distinguishes between macro, meso and micro levels of interpretation of text. At the macro level the focus is on the relation between the text and culture which produces it, the meso level involves power relations between the producer of a text and its target audience, and the micro level includes words, grammar, metaphor and rhetoric. For many sociolinguists such as van Dijk, the focus of inquiry is at the macro and meso level, but for linguists whose primary interest lies in the words, grammar, imagery and symbolism of the text under study the focus is at the micro level. Such focus becomes an inquiry into the style of expression. One of the pioneers of stylistics was Geoffrey Leech whose earlier work on the style of writing for advertising (Leech and Short, 1985) show how this is related to the persuasive nuances of the text.

Key to Leech’s approach is his notion of foregrounding or making something stand out from the surrounding words or images against expected conventions in ordinary language. Associated with this is Leech’s concept of deviance which refers to the comparison of a specific textual example to a general corpus, e.g. comparing one journalism article to a corpus of multiple journalism articles. Leech later extended his work into other genres harnessing the power of computational linguistics tools such as datasets and concordancers to introduce an element of objectivity to stylistics. Leech’s work on corpus linguistics has become almost mainstream in linguistic analysis nowadays, certainly in British linguistics, and is used not only where language use is somewhat formulaic, such as official documents or technical manuals, but even in literary criticism.

Leech’s computational linguistics influence has extended to many sub-disciplines of linguistics. In forensic linguistics the studies of researchers such as Coulthard and Johnson (2010) analyze language samples to identify speech and writing of individuals, often in legal contexts. Similarly, scholars such as Mahlberg (2012) use the tools of computational stylistics to describe patterns in literature. While computational linguistics may seem to be objective with its focus on numerical data, Carter (2011) cautions that while stylistic analysis can be an objective quantitative approach to analyzing text, actually judging the stylistic use of words can be subjective and qualitative. This would particularly apply to literary or journalistic texts. So stylistic analysis is about writers having to make choices in the words they use. Broersma (2010) notes that when journalists make choices about lexical choices it results in a style. In writing a story a journalist might choose to write with neutral words, or biased expressions, or may even wish to express a hostile attitude through choice of words. Style in journalism can thus be defined as the decisions reporters

make when making lexical choices in order to persuade the reader to accept the journalist's viewpoint.

Tănase (2011) proposed a set of markers for identifying style in texts which can be applied to journalistic writing. Among her markers are opinion verbs, evaluative adjectives, adverbial amplifiers, metaphors and repetition which serve to emphasize the message but carry a subjective load. Tănase, picking up on van Dijk's observations, pointed out that such markers can subliminally persuade readers and trigger emotions which in turn help readers remember reported events. Markers, which are used to imbue the text with a sense of objectivity include passive verb usage, hedges, citations of sources and concessive clauses.

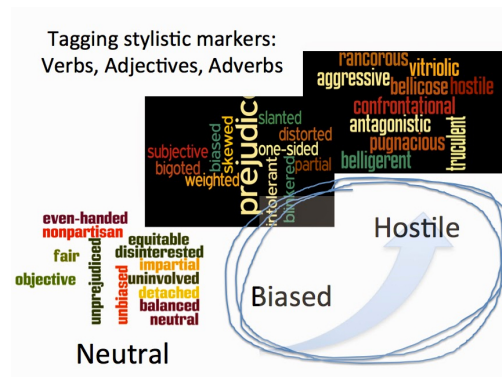
5. Methodology

Our fundamental research question, after reading a number of articles written by Japanese journalists and Chinese journalists on this issue was: "Do Japanese news stories about the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands tend to be written in a more restrained style than Chinese articles?"

Following the general methodological approaches to qualitative analysis of Bednarek and Caple (2014), the present study carried out a stylistic analysis of print media articles relating to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands using online databases accessed using LexisNexis. The aim was to find articles written for international readers in English about the respective Japanese and Chinese positions regarding the Senkaku or Diaoyu Islands. The search terms were: Senkaku Islands, Diaoyu Islands, Kyodo Wire Service, and Xinhua Wire Service. Focusing on the recent precipitating and controversial event of Ishihara's declaration of intent to buy the Senkaku Islands, search parameters were set to find articles from April 2012 to August 2014. A total of 567 articles were retrieved and assembled into a dataset.

Generally, the Kyodo Wire Service (Japan) calls the islands Senkaku, (occasionally referring to them as "Senkaku, which the Chinese call Diaoyu"). The Xinhua Wire Service (Chinese) on the other hand predominantly refers to the islands as Diaoyu and almost never acknowledges them as Senkaku. For the purposes of this study, therefore, we adopted the convention of Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. The Kyodo and Xinhua newswire agencies were chosen as they are both dominant sources for feeding news to the media in Japan and China respectively. An important difference between them is that Kyodo is an independent agency while Xinhua is controlled by the Chinese central government which has obvious implications for the way news stories are chosen and the way that they are written.

Using markers suggested by Tănase (2011) the stylistic analysis was divided into three components. The primary focus was on verbs, adjectives and adverbs which may range from being neutral through expressing a biased view, to being outright hostile. While we found it relatively straightforward to identify neutral or non-biased words, distinguishing between biased and hostile was more difficult. These latter two categories were therefore bracketed together as "biased". The secondary stylistic marker focus was on hedges, repetitions and metaphors.



The headlines were tagged for lexical markers and frequencies of neutral and biased headlines for Kyodo and Xinhua were tabled. With so large a dataset, a representative sample of articles was collected for the in-depth article analysis. Eight pairs of articles (each of the pair written by Kyodo and Xinhua respectively) were selected from the corpus according to the criteria of same story, same reporting date, datelined Tokyo for Kyodo and datelined Beijing for Xinhua. This approach paralleled that of Michael Chan's 2010 study. These sixteen articles were then subjected to a close stylistic analysis by tagging instances of neutral vs biased verbs, and the presence of hedges, repetitions and metaphors. Comparative results were then tabled.

It was recognized that an element of subjectivity is involved in stylistic analysis judgments, so an inter-rater reliability study between two independent raters was conducted. After discussion on criteria for recognizing neutral and hostile lexical items and what constituted evidence of hedging, repetition and metaphorical use, independent analyses resulted in a correlation of $r > 0.95$.

6. Dataset

The LexisNexis search yielded 567 articles (259 from Kyodo News Wire Service and 308 from Xinhua News Wire Service). Table 1 lists the newswire agencies and numbers of newswire articles captured in the search. This approach of using only English sources was adopted because both Japanese and Chinese articles on this issue were targeted mainly at the wider international audience. The procedure was adopted also to establish an even playing field for analysis, and to avoid problems relating to translation between languages, so only articles published in English were used.

	Kyodo (Japan)	Xinhua (China)	Total articles by month
Apr 2012	7	2	9
May 2012	7	1	8
June 2012	13	3	16
Jul 2012	17	16	33
Aug 2012	31	28	59
Sep 2012	40	118	158
Oct 2012	31	32	63
Nov 2012	15	9	24
Dec 2012	12	15	27
Jan 2013	16	15	31
Feb 2013	8	6	14

Mar 2013	8	8	16
Apr 2013	6	13	19
May 2013	7	3	10
Jun 2013	9	2	11
Jul 2013	1	4	5
Aug 2013	3	6	9
Sep 2013	7	9	16
Oct 2013	4	4	8
Nov 2013	3	7	10
Dec 2013	3	1	4
Jan 2014	2	4	6
Feb 2014	1	2	3
Mar 2014	0	3	3
Apr 2014	3	6	9
May 2014	1	1	2
Jun 2014	0	4	4
Jul 2014	1	1	2
Aug 2014	3	2	5
Total articles	259	308	567

Table 1: Summary of Senkaku Diaoyu Newswire Corpus:
Number of articles each month by news wire agency

The frequency profile in Table 2 graphs the number of stories appearing in each of the 29 consecutive months of the study from April, 2012 to August, 2014. News stories were at their peak between July 2012 and January 2013 which coincided with events such as maritime activity and anti-Japanese protests in China. The number of Senkaku/Diaoyu news stories diminished thereafter, possibly due to the decline in dramatic events, natural news story attrition and perhaps because visits between Japan and China sought to realize a more diplomatic solution rather than confrontation.

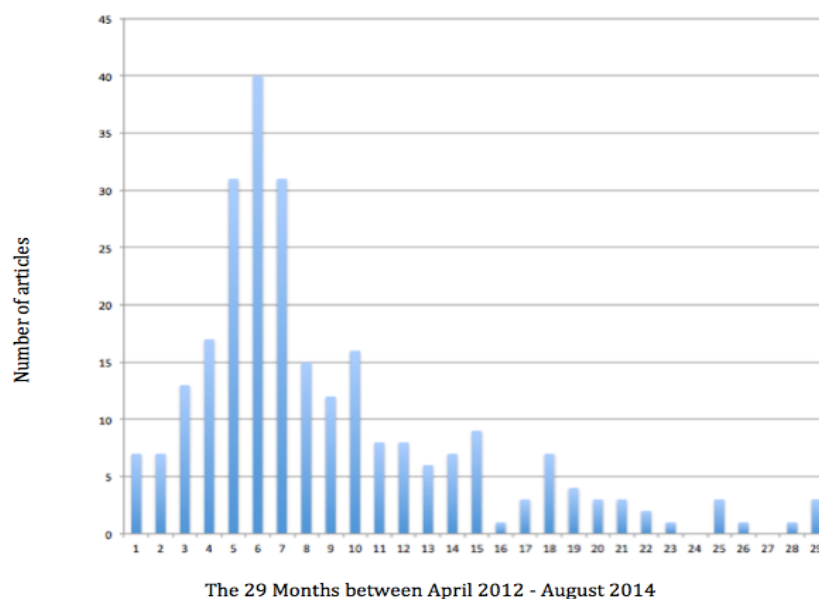


Table 2: Frequency profile of news stories on Senkaku/Diaoyu issue appearing between April 2012 and August 2014

7. Stylistic analysis of headlines:

The headline analysis borders on the category of a macro approach because the headline dataset consisted of 567 articles, but a micro lexical stylistic approach was incorporated in our analysis of each headline, by tagging opinion verbs, evaluative adjectives and amplifying adverbs. These lexical markers helped to identify the frequency of bias in headlines. This approach is also in line with van Dijk's (1988) views on headlines in news discourse. Although they are "merely an empty form" at the outset, "we may insert different meanings (as long as this meaning is a topic or summary of the meaning of the whole text)".

Following are examples of biased headlines from each news agency that include some of the study's lexical markers (opinion verbs and evaluative adjectives):

XINHUA - Japan's "theft" of Diaoyu Islands tramples on anti-fascist victory (22 September 2012)

KYODO - China fearless of causing friction with neighbors (28 March 2013)

In contrast, these are examples of neutral headlines from each news agency which do not contain any of the study's lexical markers:

KYODO - Plane thought to be drone flies near Senkaku Islands (9 September 2013)

XINHUA - Chinese coast guard continues patrol around Diaoyu Islands (27 September 2013)

In Table 3, a stylistic analysis of Kyodo and Xinhua article headlines is compared. The Kyodo headlines contain a significantly lower number of opinion verbs, evaluative adjectives, or amplifying adverbs than the corresponding Xinhua headlines (29.7% vs. 52.8%). The most striking difference occurs in the category of amplifying adverbs. The results show that most of the Xinhua headlines included this form of stylistic marker, while a much smaller number appeared in the Kyodo headlines (93.1% vs. 28%). These results also illustrate the marked differences in headline styles between Xinhua and Kyodo, and serve to further validate our assumption that Japanese reporters write in a more restrained style, certainly with respect to headlines.

Table 3
Stylistic Analysis of Kyodo and Xinhua article headlines
April 1, 2012 to August 31, 2014

	Kyodo	Xinhua
Opinion Verbs	24.2% (64/264)	51.2% (153/299)
Evaluative Adjectives	45.3% (43/95)	48.6% (69/142)
Amplifying Adverbs	28.0% (7/25)	93.1% (27/29)
Total	29.7% (114/384)	52.8% (209/470)

Total N of articles: 567 (Kyodo: 259, Xinhua: 308)
Sources retrieved by LexisNexis

8. Stylistic analysis of articles

While the headlines were single sentence or phrasal summaries of news items, and thus yielded relatively few numerical instances of neutral and bias expression, the articles themselves provided a much more extensive sampling of neutral and biased expressions. The investigation of stylistic differences in the sixteen selected articles revealed consistent trends. To clarify the discussion of main findings, and to avoid repetition, focus will be centered on six pairs of matched articles (total = 12). Frequencies of stylistic marker occurrence in these articles is summarized in Tables 4 to 10.

In Tables 4 and 5, analysis of Kyodo and Xinhua articles on nationalization of Senkaku Islands (September 11, 2012) and sovereignty and maps (October 10, 2012) is compared. The Kyodo reporting shows a considerably lesser incidence of opinion verbs, evaluative adjectives, or amplifying adverbs than the corresponding Xinhua article (18.9% and 25.7% vs 47.8% and 42.3% overall respectively), a pattern which occurred consistently across almost all articles analyzed. Examples of biased expressions particularly used by Xinhua writers included examples such as “urged”, “so-called”, “angered”, “unwavering”, “urged”, “provoking”, “wrong”, “sparked”, “demanded”, and “undermine”.

Table 4
Stylistic Analysis of Kyodo and Xinhua articles on nationalization of Senkaku Islands
September 11, 2012

	Kyodo	Xinhua
Opinion Verbs	14.5% (8/55)	38.7% (12/31)
Evaluative Adjectives	21.8% (7/32)	50.0% (3/6)
Amplifying Adverbs	37.5% (3/8)	77.7% (7/9)
Total	18.9% (18/95)	47.8% (22/46)

Sources retrieved by LexisNexis:

Kyodo: *Japanese gov't nationalizes Senkakus* (648 words)

Xinhua: *Chinese people, gov't together on Diaoyu Islands* (315 words)

Table 5
Stylistic Analysis of Kyodo and Xinhua articles on sovereignty and maps of islands
October 10, 2012

	Kyodo	Xinhua
Opinion Verbs	25.0% (7/28)	36.9% (24/65)
Evaluative Adjectives	28.7% (2/7)	48.8% (20/41)
Amplifying Adverbs	0.0% (0/0)	60.0% (3/5)
Total	25.7% (14/47)	42.3% (47/111)

Sources retrieved by LexisNexis:

Kyodo: *1960 Chinese map depicted Senkakus as Japanese territory* (279 words)

Xinhua: *China denies Japanese goods' customs delays* (609 words)

Results presented in Table 6 for the stylistics analysis of this article on sovereignty again show a typical pattern of difference between Kyodo and Xinhua: 25.6% and 54.5% of biased verbs, adjectives and adverbs respectively. But in this case, heavy

use of evaluative adjectives and amplifying adverbs used by Xinhua compared with Kyodo was observed.

Table 6
Stylistic Analysis of Kyodo and Xinhua articles
on sovereignty
October 26, 2012

	Kyodo	Xinhua
Opinion Verbs	14.8% (7/47)	38.4% (28/73)
Evaluative Adjectives	33.3% (9/27)	76.3% (26/35)
Amplifying Adverbs	62.5% (5/8)	92.3% (12/13)
Total	25.6% (21/82)	54.5% (66/121)

Sources retrieved by LexisNexis:

Kyodo: *Remote islands are key to protecting Senkakus* (523 words)

Xinhua: *China says no concession on territorial sovereignty* (679 words)

The results were not in all cases consistent, however. The analysis in Table 7 showed a very rare reversal of results: 29.9% for Kyodo and only 15.5% for Xinhua. The likely reason is that in this story the Chinese ships chased Japanese trawlers away thus scoring a “victory” suggesting that if one side gains face, objectivity may rise and angry levels of rhetoric may fall.

Table 7
Stylistic Analysis of Kyodo and Xinhua articles
on shipping confrontations around islands
April 23, 2013

	Kyodo	Xinhua
Opinion Verbs	20.9% (9/43)	30.0% (6/20)
Evaluative Adjectives	42.1% (8/19)	28.6% (2/7)
Amplifying Adverbs	66.6% (2/3)	100.0% (1/1)
Total	29.2% (19/65)	15.5% (9/28)

Sources retrieved by LexisNexis:

Kyodo: *8 Chinese surveillance boats in Senkaku waters* (410 words)

Xinhua: *Chinese fleet drives Japanese boats away from Diaoyu Islands* (227 words)

In a small number of articles, the level of heated rhetoric rose in both Kyodo and Xinhua reporting. Table 8 presents results from a pair of articles on the air defense zone surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Both Kyodo and Xinhua writers used a higher number of biased words such as “opposes”, and “utterly wrong”. Thus on both sides elevated levels of biased words were present, 44.4% for Kyodo and 66.6% for Xinhua. The notable feature in the Xinhua articles was the particularly heavy use of biased adjectives and adverbs.

Table 8
Stylistic Analysis of Kyodo and Xinhua articles
on air defense zone around islands
November 24, 2013

	Kyodo	Xinhua
Opinion Verbs	45.6% (26/57)	50.0% (13/26)
Evaluative Adjectives	30.0% (6/20)	90.0% (9/10)
Amplifying Adverbs	100.0% (4/4)	100.0% (6/6)
Total	44.4% (36/81)	66.6% (28/42)

Sources retrieved by LexisNexis:

Kyodo: *Japan, China trade barbs over controversial air defense zone* (524 words)

Xinhua: *Japan's remarks on China's air defense zone "groundless"* (227 words)

Towards the end of the period under study, the concern shifted from air and maritime engagements to the naming of the islands and school textbook publications. As in earlier articles, the regular pattern of biased word usage continued with Xinhua showing higher rates and using biased adjectives and adverbs more than Kyodo, certainly in the evaluative marking of adjectives and amplification of adverbs.

Table 9
Stylistic Analysis of Kyodo and Xinhua articles
on naming islands
August 1, 2014

	Kyodo	Xinhua
Opinion Verbs	13.9% (5/36)	33.3% (5/15)
Evaluative Adjectives	30.3% (5/15)	87.5% (7/8)
Amplifying Adverbs	50.0% (2/4)	100.0% (2/2)
Total	21.8% (12/55)	56.0% (14/25)

Sources retrieved by LexisNexis:

Kyodo: *Islands Update 2* (355 words)

Xinhua: *Japan's naming of islands illegal, invalid* (132 words)

The secondary focus of the stylistic analysis was on the use of repetition, metaphor and hedging. The first two of these rhetorical devices, repetition and metaphor, might signal a more persuasive intent on the part of the writer. Repetition has the effect of reinforcing or emphasizing a point whereas the adroit use of metaphor can result in an idea being foregrounded and making an impact on the reader in the hope that the message may be remembered. The third strategy, hedging, suggests at a more circumspect or cautious approach and a writer might hope that he or she comes across as more objective or balanced in using it.

Repetition and metaphor was observed predominately in Xinhua articles while hedging was a feature occurring only in Kyodo (Table 10). This finding supports the research hypothesis but from a different perspective to the verb, adjective and adverb analyses summarized above.

Examples of repetition (all taken from Xinhua data) were the following expressions:

Diaoyu
correct

forceful
groundless
illegal
invalid
opposes
utterly
wrong

Examples of metaphor (again all taken from Xinhua data) were the following:

cast a shadow
down a dangerous path
drive into a corner
not allow one inch
spin out of control
turn a deaf ear

Examples of Hedges (all taken from Kyodo data) were the following:

according to
allegedly
claim to
it was reported
potentially
reportedly
supposedly
there may be

Table 10
Numbers of repetitions, hedges and metaphors
in stylistic analysis of 16 article analysis

Marker	Kyodo	Xinhua	Total
Hedges	9	-	9
Repetitions	4	23	27
Metaphors	7	16	23
Total	16	39	55

Sources retrieved by LexisNexis

9. Summary

Similar statistics were found in headline analysis and article analysis for both Kyodo and Xinhua articles. In rough terms about a quarter of Kyodo's expression could be described as biased, but about half of Xinhua's expressions were.

The study focused on the presence of five markers of bias tendency (opinion verbs, evaluative adjectives, amplifying adverbs, repetition and metaphor) and only one marker of neutrality (hedging). It was perhaps significant that the cautious strategy of hedging was employed almost exclusively by Kyodo but almost never by Xinhua. This again emphasized the differences in reporting style between the two news agencies.

The overall comparison of the verbs, adjectives and adverbs resulted in these being used in 26.9% of instances by Kyodo and 44.7% of instances by Xinhua.

Kyodo descriptions were more neutrally presented, with restrained and hedged lexical choices, few metaphorical allusions, resulting in a rational, somewhat abstract, less impassioned, arguably weaker case. Xinhua descriptions tended to be more hawkish in choice of aggressive lexis and employed forceful metaphors resulting in a more emotive reporting of the issue.

Tānase (2011) notes that “If too strong emotions are involved, this leads to readers mistrusting the text, therefore a moderated emotional appeal, achieved in a subtle manner, preserving the feeling of fair, ethical judgment, is preferred.”

Language and culture are two obvious contenders as reasons for Kyodo and Xinhua being written differently. Japanese language and culture can be described as rather subdued, even subtle, whereas Chinese language and culture can be more openly expressive, sometimes even strident. Just listen to two Cantonese having a normal conversation and even Chinese from Beijing will think they are having an altercation. Historically, the Chinese are sensitive about being invaded or colonized. From a political and economic standpoint, Japan tends towards a free market model whereas China, despite its shift from socialism, is still centrally planned. And on top of that, Kyodo is an independent non-profit organization, whereas Xinhua is a state-run agency.

10. Conclusion

From a journalist’s viewpoint on this issue, the question is which journalism style is appropriate in covering this story: the restrained Japanese style or the more emotive, provocative Chinese style? Contemporary journalism holds objective reporting as the ideal to be aimed for but is it really an attainable goal? In the end, some journalists may not be able to control their natural tendency to favor one side over another and reflect this in their writing style. After all, journalists are members of and identify with a culture and even an ideology. They can be patriotic. Furthermore, they might be expected to reflect the philosophy of the news organization they work for. The question of objectivity is certainly a dilemma. And the competitive nature of the news business dictates that journalists need to file compelling stories. Considering this competitive side of the media industry, it might be more prudent for Japan to modify its international news approach as the Diet member implied when she questioned Prime Minister Abe in 2014 about Japan’s weak and unpersuasive international news style. A Japanese journalist also expressed this view, in a recent story in *The Japan News* (2014), comparing Japanese and Chinese approaches to presenting territorial arguments:

“China and South Korea have both been loudly trumpeting arguing their own cases in many parts of the world. In stark contrast, Japan has shown a clear lack of serious effort to refute these assertions over many years. Admittedly, Japan's stance on the Senkaku issue reflects a desire to avoid entering the ring with China.”

From a linguistic point of view, the initial research proposal “Japanese news stories about the Senkakus tend to be written in a more restrained style than Chinese articles”

was certainly supported. Thus, the case for using corpus stylistics to parse journalistic texts is advanced for understanding how language can be persuasive at a micro or lexical level.

Japanese concerns about Chinese representations of the Senkaku/Diaoyu issue being more vivid are demonstrably vindicated by the results of this study but a less inflammatory, more reasoned approach, as followed by the Japanese news agencies, also has its merits. As Michael Chan puts the question: “Does the Chinese government really believe that these lexical choices will resonate with foreign readers?”

Concluding with a little lexical stylistic analysis, paraphrasing Shakespeare’s semantic aside, and drawing on “actress and bishop” dialogues, as the linguist said to the journalist, “Calling Senkakus Diaoyus **might not satisfy** (neutral) 100 million Japanese” and “calling the Diaoyus Senkakus **will upset** (biased) 1 billion Chinese.”

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