MASS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH IN JAPAN

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Abstract

Scientific research in mass communication began in Japan through interpreting and reexamining the theories and hypotheses developed during the 1940s and 1950s in the United States and Europe. A major part of the research has been carried out by universities and research institutes established by media associations. The Japanese Society for the Study of Journalism and Mass Communication, the nation's largest academic association for mass communication research, now has more than one thousand members including journalists and mass communication researchers and scholars. The research interest is widely dispersed today and articles and books appearing every year covers a wide range of issues. Although most of them are published in Japanese, some are published in English presenting unique orientations.

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Early Stage of Mass Communication Research in Japan

Scientific research in mass communication began in Japan with the establishment of The Japanese Society for the Study of Journalism and Mass Communication in 1951. The first edition of *Shimbungaku Hyoron* (Japanese Journalism Review), the society's annual, was published in 1952. The journal is now entitled *Mass Communication Kenkyu* (Journal of Mass Communication Studies) and is published twice a year. A major part of the journal consists of reports from the society's symposiums and workshops.

Early research concentrated on interpreting and reexamining the theories and hypotheses developed during the 1940s and 1950s in the United States and Europe. Cross cultural application of those theories and hypotheses were often attempted and empirical results were accumulated. Ikeuchi (1953) conducted research on communication behavior in a Kanagawa prefecture village. Adopting the research methodology of the U.S., his research stimulated the interest of Japanese scholars of the time. Ikeuchi's research also utilized a highly advanced social survey technique which contributed greatly to the methodological development of later surveys. He also made a very important contribution of introducing content analysis methodology to Japan (Ikeuchi 1954; Ikeuchi 1956). Another survey analysed the political attitudes and mass communication behavior of labourers (Hidaka et al. 1955), which increased research interest in the effects of mass communication on peoples' values, beliefs and attitudes. Takahashi (1959) attempted to test the method of effect studies and further developed the two-step-flow hypothesis. In 1957 and 1959, an extensive survey on TV and children was conducted in the Shizuoka prefecture. The advantage of this research is that it took place when TV broadcasting was just beginning in the area and applied a before-and-after design to single out the effects of TV on children. Reports of the study were published as a series in *The NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research* from August 1958. Similar research was being conducted in Great Britain (Himmelweit et al. 1958), the United States and Canada (Schramm et al. 1961). The Shizuoka study presented important data which could be compared internationally. A follow-up of this study was conducted a decade later, in 1967, in Shizuoka to determine changes, the results of which were published in the same journal as a series from April 1969.

Those studies were conducted on the basis of academic traditions of sociology, psychology, political science and other related fields. Some of them have a much longer research tradition from the beginning of this century. During the 1950s, these research orientations were combined and increased the interest in mass communication research in Japan. Starting from 1955, mass communication readings consisting of six volumes were published (Shimizu et al. 1955), in which leading researchers and scholars of the time made contributions.

During the 1950s and 1960s, many books were translated into Japanese: *Public Opinion* by Lippmann (1922), *The Psychology of Rumor* by Allport (1947), *Mass Communication* by Schramm (1949), *Communication and Persuasion* by Hovland et al. (1953), *Four Theories of the Press* by Siebert et al. (1956), *The Effects of Mass Communication* by Klapper (1960), and *Psychologie der Massenkommunikation* by Maletzke (1965) are examples worth mentioning. The sheer volume of translated works reflects the active and eager attitudes of Japanese scholars of the time.

Institutionalisation of Mass Communication Research

A major part of mass communication research in Japan has been carried out by universities and research institutes established by media associations. In 1932, the nation's first journalism department was established at Sophia University, which offered courses and lectures related to mass media studies. The department now has eight faculty members and educates about 250 undergraduate students and 40 graduate students. Its annual publication, *Communication Kenkyu* (Communications Research), sometimes carries articles written in English.

In 1949, Tokyo University established the Institute of Journalism, which is now called the Institute of Socio-Information and Communication Studies. It has 15 faculty members and educates undergraduate and graduate students. The institute's journal used to be called *The Bulletin of the Institute of Journalism.* However, in 1981, it was renamed *The Bulletin of the Institute of Journalism and Communication Studies.* Now known as *The Bulletin of the Institute of Socio-Information and Communication Studies*, its articles are referred to the most frequently.

Keio University established its Institute for Communications Research in 1961. It has three faculty members and educates undergraduate and graduate students. It publishes two periodicals: *The Bulletin of the Institute for Communications Research*, and *Keio Communication Review*, which is published in English.

The above three departments or institutions are the early founders devoted to mass communication studies in Japan. Today, the study is widespread, with more than thirty universities and colleges with departments or institutes which are related to mass communication research.

Research institutes established by media associations have made important contributions to the development of mass communication research in Japan. As early as 1946, NHK, the public service broadcasting corporation in Japan, established the Broadcasting Culture Research Institute (BCRI). The institute is the largest organisation of its kind in Japan and has conducted much empirical, theoretical, and fact finding research. The institute publishes *The NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research* and *The NHK Annual Bulletin of Broadcasting Culture Research.* Two other periodicals are compiled and published by the Theoretical Research Center, a section of BCRI. One of these, *Hosogaku Kenkyu* (Studies of Broadcasting) carries important articles about theoretical research. The other, *Studies of Broadcasting* is published in English and contributes most importantly to introducing Japanese mass communication research to the world academy.

National Association of Commercial Broadcasters' research institute was established in 1962. It publishes an annual bulletin, as well as many articles on its monthly research reports *Gekkan Minpo* (Monthly of Commercial Broadcasting). The institute conducts many large-scale surveys and research.

The Japanese Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association's research institute was established in 1976. It publishes an annual bulletin as well as many articles in its *Shinbun Kenkyu* (Research on Newspaper). This institute regularly conducts a newspaper readership survey which is one of the most important surveys in the country.

Current Trends

The Japanese Society for the Study of Journalism and Mass Communication (JSSJMC) now has more than one thousand members including journalists and mass communication researchers and scholars. The research interest is widely dispersed and articles and books appearing every year covers a wide range of topics. *Mass Communication Kenkyu* has a list of books and articles published by JSSJMC members. In 1996, 125 researchers and scholars listed more than 400 publications. Following are the major areas of research interest. JSSJMC is planning to open its web site by the end of 1998.

Theoretical Developments

During the 1960s and 1970s, many articles were written discussing the uses and gratification of mass communication. One characteristic appearing in the Japanese approach was a common tendency of scholars to overcome the notion of passive audience. Research in this field was led by Ikuo Takeuchi, and his findings were summarised in his book (Takeuchi 1990).

Much research has been carried out to test the cognitive effects of mass communication. Takeshita (1981, 1983, 1988) discussed in detail the agenda setting function of mass communication. Theoretically and empirically he examined original hypotheses and expanded the perspective by analyzing the social and political effect of mass communication. This wider perspective is also presented by Tsuruki (1988), reflecting the interest of Japanese scholars to apply this hypothesis to the general political process.

The spiral of silence theory has attracted the attention of many scholars in Japan. Hirabayashi (1987) examined the theory in detail and criticized several points, including the psychological process loosely discussed by the original author.

Theoretical examination of dependency theory, cultivation theory, and knowledge gap hypothesis often appear in the publications. Among them, Mikami et al. (1989) conducted an empirical survey and reported the effect of TV news on young people. The example taken up in the study was the news report about dusky mallards. In a pond near a big business building in central Tokyo, a mallard nested with her chicks. This event makes the news of all the Tokyo-area TV stations every year. There was no doubt that the scene was attractive and appealing to many viewers. As a result, the news was reported repeatedly every year as a symbol of the season. As it is believed that TV news takes up things that are unusual and rare, people began to think that mallards belonged to a very rare species since it was being reported. Survey subjects were asked to estimate the number of mallards living in Japan. Among the heavy TV viewers, the most frequent answer was about one thousand. Actually, mallards are one of the major species in Japan and the estimated population exceeds several millionn. The study clearly demonstrated the cognitive effect of TV.

Study of Mass Media Audience

Audience studies have a long history in Japan. NHK started the audience survey during the 1930s to analyse audience interest and response. It started ratings surveys in the 1940s using the diary method. Ratings surveys using TV meters started in 1961 by Nielsen Japan and in 1962 by Video Research. Since then, NHK reports individual ratings while meter survey companies report household ratings. People meters were

introduced in 1997 and are now used in conjunction with household data. The analysis of audience behaviour is the most important research issue today as multi-channel digital TV service from communication satellites was started in 1997. With the development of new technologies, audience behaviour is gradually changing. Much research analyses viewing hours, the process of channel selection, channel switching, channel repertoire and so forth. The results of these various research projects appear in the periodicals mentioned earlier.

There is a growing interest in constructing a network which connects all households. There have been experiments on pilot systems of community network. One was a coaxial cable system in Tama New Town and the other was the optical fiber system in Ikoma City. Studies of these pilot systems were conducted during the 1970s and 1980s, but failed to find the real advantage of a two-way communication network. Now, ongoing experiments in Japan continue to test the need and advantages of the services possible through a highly advanced communication network. Those efforts have not reached clear results as of yet.

Japan has a rich research tradition of qualitative evaluation of broadcasting. This research was developed as a criticism against rating. Methods of quality assessment of individual programs were explored and tested in many ways. The research was further developed to assess quality of the total activity of a broadcaster using diversity as a key concept. Scholars from five countries (U.S., Canada , England, Sweden and Japan) participated in this project, which compared analyses of the quality of each country's broadcasters (Ishikawa 1996). The project also reported the tradition of quality assessment research in the five countries.

As mentioned before, the Research Institute of Japanese Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association conducts a newspaper readership survey regularly. Among the items included in this survey is the trustworthiness of the newspaper. Reports in the 1980s showed a decline of the newspaper in this respect, but the latest survey reports it is making a comeback.

Public Service and the Public Sphere

Critical studies of mass communication attracted the attention of many scholars and many articles have been written. Fujita (1988) summarised the theories and pinpointed the important research issues. An extraordinary number of books in this area were translated into Japanese and quoted by many scholars. Among them were two books by J. Habermas (1962, 1981). Discussion surrounding public service broadcasting has been an important research issue for a long time. As Japan adopted a dual system of broadcasting in which public service broadcasting and commercial broadcasting coexist, there was a need to define the function of each system. With the introduction of new media technology, the media situation has been changing drastically and there is a new need to discuss the public sphere and media system in this light. Among many of those works, Hanada (1995) presented a most carefully constructed discussion of the matter, clearly denying the notion of a "global public sphere" created by the globalised media.

Gender and Mass Media

The relationship between mass communication and gender is an important research issue today. There are many communication scholars involved both in research and in

action programs. Some of them participated actively in the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference. Leading scholars established the Gender and Communication Network, and their works have been summarised in books written by its members (Kato 1992; Muramatsu 1998). The study initiated by UNESCO to compare the status of women working in mass media concluded that Japan is among the worst in employing and promoting women in mass media.

Panic and Rumor in Natural Disasters

Unique research has been developed in Japan as the country has been plagued by numerous large scale earthquakes. In 1923, the Tokyo metropolitan area was devastated by an earthquake and a hundred thousand people were killed. The worst rumor in history began to spread soon after the disaster, which said that violent Koreans were uprising in many areas. Soon, throughout the city, self-protection groups were organised, searched for Koreans and killed them. Although there is no concrete data on the number of killings, it is estimated that more than six thousand Koreans were victimized. Since then, panic and rumor after natural disasters has been an important research issue in Japan. People's psychological response, the spread of rumor through word of mouth communication, the role and function of formal media in a panic and rumor situation and so forth were intensely studied by a group led by Osamu Hiroi. His group made many case studies, whose summary findings are available in the form of a book (The Research Institute of Journalism and Communication Studies, 1979). *Studies of Broadcasting* No. 32, cited later, collects articles in this field.

Accumulation of Basic Data for Mass Communication Research

Large scale surveys continue regularly to provide basic data for mass communication research. BCRI conducts time budget surveys every five years. The survey analyses how people spend their time during the span of a day. National samples are drawn, and the respondents are asked to record their behaviour in a diary throughout one week. The data are recorded according to behaviour categories and calculated. With this type of survey, we are able to know at a particular time of day, for example, approximately how many people are engaged in what kind of behaviour. We are also able to approximate how many hours are devoted to a particular kind of behaviour. Recent findings show that Japanese tend to go to bed later and wake up later. Also, there has been no significant change in the amount of TV viewing. Since the survey started in 1960, we are therefore able to trace the change in peoples' behaviour over a period of several decades. As Japan is a country with a wide variety of living environments and life styles, the data are broken down by district. International comparison of time management data is a current issue of this research. An English summary of this time budget survey appears in *Studies of Broadcasting*.

BCRI conducts another large scale survey on Japanese value orientations. The survey was first conducted in 1973, and since then it has been conducted every five years to detect changes over the decades. Political attitudes, morals and ethics, human relationships and so forth are analysed. Recent findings suggest decline in the efficacy feeling of the political world, as well as a growing liberal attitude toward sex.

Recent Publications

Following are the contents of major periodicals' recent issues. The Japanese titles are translated into English. All the articles of *Studies of Broadcasting* and *Keio Communication Review* are in English. In other journals, only the articles marked with * are in English.

The Bulletin of the Institute of Socio-Information and Communication Studies, University of Tokyo (Editorial Office/ Institute of Socio-Information and Communication Studies, The University of Tokyo, 7-3-1 Hongo, Bunkyoku, Tokyo 113-0033, Phone +81-3-3812-2111, ext.5921)

No. 50, 1995

Shin Sugimoto: *Structural Change of Information Media and Techno-Economic Paradigm*

Daisuke Tsuji: *Cognitive Process of Metaphor Interpretation in Communication*

Mitsuru Fukuda: *Reconsideration on Subliminal Effect-The Truth of Effect at a Viewpoint of Cognitive Psychology*

Mitsunobu Sugiyama: *Information Society without Community - A Japanese Case Study**

Tatsuro Hanada: *Can there be a Public Sphere in Japan? **

No. 51, 1996

Shin Mizukoshi: *Social Imagination and Industrial Formation of Television in Japan**

Itsuko Yamaguchi: *Free Speech in Cyberspace*

Junichi Hamada et al: *Attempted Approaches to the Socio-Information Studies II: Crossing postmodernism and socio-information studies*

No. 52, 1996

Yuji Masuda: *The Shaping and Construction of Cybereconomy*

Misa Matsuda: *The Rumor of the Media on the Early Stage in Diffusion: The analysis of rumor about cellular phone and telephone*

Yong Gwan Park: *Organisational Context of Network Organisations*

Kaga Yanagisawa: *A Study on the Fashionable Aspects of Media Diffusion: Its Possibilities and Limitations*

Yoshimitsu Uryu: *Formation and Transformation of the Genre of <Gekiga> from the Viewpoint of Media Studies*

Byeong-whan Chang: *Transition to the Information-based Economy and Socio-Economic Significances of an "Information Capital"*

The Bulletin of the Institute for Communications Research, Keio University (Editorial Office/ Institute for Communications Research, Keio University, Mita, Minatoku, Tokyo 108, Phone +81-3-3453-4511, Fax +81-3-3769-2048)

No. 45, 1995

Hugh Carter Donahue: *Interoperability: Definition paradigms public policy**

Masami Sekine: *Australia in 2001: Nationalism in the era of global communications*

Sumire Inoue: *An Analysis of Time Series Change in Reporting Hazards*

Haruko Yamashita: *An Essay on the International Competitiveness of U.S. Movies*

Toyofumi Mizumoto: *Logic of Standardization and Technological Policy in the Period of Technological Convergence*

No. 46, 1996

David L. Paletz: *Media and Fictional Violence**

Miki Kawabata et.al: *Factors Affecting Japanese' Image of Americans: An interim report of a survey of resident Japanese nationals in the U.S*

Makiko Sado: *The Image of Japan in Television News Programs: A study of the reporting of the 50th anniversary of World War II*

Norichika Tanaka: *A Perspective of Mass Communication Theory*

Chiou Shwu Wen: *The Transformation of the 1990's Broadcasting Policies in East-Asian Countries*

Takashi Uchiyama: *Four Managerial Networks of Commercial Broadcasting in Japan*

No. 47, 1997

Sumiko Iwao et.al: *A Study of Foreign Students' Images of Japan(12): Outline of the third world wave survey in 1995*

Shigeru Hagiwara et.al: *A Study of Foreign Students' Images of Japan(13): Examination of possible changes over two decades*

Shunji Mikami et.al: *Public Opinion and Mass Media on the Issues of Japan-USA-Sino Relationship*

Yoko Kunihiro: *The Image of Housewives as Portrayed by Educational TV Programs: A content analysis of NHK TV programs shown at elementary schools*

Takeshi Sakurai: *The BBC World Service: An impending choice of collocation and anticipated move from globalism towards parochialism in its news output*

Takashi Uchiyama: *The Competitive Advantage of the Commercial Broadcasting System: The consideration of the competency of its resource development*

Toyofumi Mizumoto: *Technological Competitive Advantages and Regionalism: European standardisation strategies of information communication technology and the problems*

Yasuo Tanaka: *Telecommunications in Papua New Guinea*

Keio Communication Review

(Editorial Office/ Institute for Communications Research, Keio University, Mita, Minatoku, Tokyo 108, Phone +81-3-3453-4511, Fax +81-3-3769-2048)

No. 16, 1994

Sumiko Iwao: *The Bitter and Sweet for American Women in Japanese Corporations: A study of intercultural communications*

Akira Tsujimura: *Public Opinion and Political Dynamics in Japan: The tripolar relationships of government, press and public opinion*

Yukio Tsuda: *The Diffusion of English: Its impact on culture and communication*

Hideo Hirose: *The Press Club System in Japan: Its past, present and future*

Jay K. Miller: *Broadcast News in Japan: NHK and NTV*

No. 17, 1995

Shigeru Hagiwara: T*he Rise and Fall of Foreign Programs in Japanese Television*

Toshio Takeshita et al: *How Did Mass Media Influence the Voters' Choice in the 1993 General Election Campaign in Japan?: A study of agenda-setting*

Kakuko Miyata: *Social Psychological Effects of Electronic Media*

Akira Mihara: *Meta-theoretical Issues in Conceptualization of Japanese Communication Competence*

Hudson N. Janisch: *Developments in Japanese Telecommunications*

Lee B.Becker: *Japanese Educational Policy as a Counterpart to European and U.S. Initiatives for Training Information Economy Professionals*

No. 18, 1996

Gerald M. Kosicki et al: *Strained Friendship: Public opinion and media in the United States, Japan and Korea*

Toshio Yamaki: *The History of Advertising in Japan: An international comparative study*

Hiroshi Tokinoya: *A Study on the Spiral of Silence Theory in Japan*

Michael L. Maynard: *American Narrative versus Japanese Dialogue: Culture-based modes of address in Japanese magazine advertisements*

Minoru Sugaya: *The Convergence of Telephone and Broadcasting Services in Japan*

Communication Kenkyu (Communications Research)
Editorial Office: Department of Journalism, Sophia University, 7-1 Kioicho, Chiyodaku, Tokyo 102. Phone +81-3-3238-3631 Fax +81-3-3238-3094)

No. 25, 1995

Yoshihiro Oto: *East Asian TV Broadcasting Enters the Multi-Channel Age: Case studies of Star TV and Taiwan broadcasting*

Yuga Suzuki: *The Origin of the Australian Popular Press(3): South Australia and New South Wales in the late 19th century*

Hideo Takeichi: *Ethics Problems of the Japanese Mass Media**

No. 26, 1996

Akihiko Haruhara: *Press Regulations during the Pacific War: Guidelines of the Cabinet Information Bureau*

Hideo Takeichi: *Journalism Education in Japan: Its present state and problems**

Yasuo Ueda: *My London Sketch: Comments on British media's reporting on IRA's Bombing*

No. 27, 1997

Sakae Ishikawa: *Promoting Community Culture: Growth of community FM radio in Japan**

Hideo Takeichi: *A Brief Observation of the Contents of Some American Midwest Newspapers*

Yasuo Ueda: *Possibility of Materialization of Studies for Publishing: A review of a paper of Hideo Shimizu*

Hiroshi Fujita: *Public Journalism: Its background and issues*

Studies of Broadcasting
(Editorial Office/ Theoretical Research Center, NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, 2-1-1 Atago, Minatoku, Tokyo 105. Phone +81-3-5400-6800, Fax +81-3-3436-5880)

No. 31, 1995

Stanley Budner et al: *Television News Coverage of the Other Country: Study goals and methods*

Hiroshi Akto: *U.S.- Japan Communication Gap and the Role of TV News*

Hirohisa Suzuki: *Ambiguity of Television News in Japan and the United States: A comparative analysis*

Ellis S. Krauss: *Varieties of Television News: Explaining Japanese and American coverage of the other*

Stanley Budner et al: *Opinionated Journalism: Taboo or not taboo*

No.32, 1996 —Special Issue: The Great Hanshin Earthquake and Broadcasting

Osamu Hiroi: *The Development of Disaster Broadcasting in Japan*

Sadao Oda: *The Role of Broadcasting Media in Providing Disaster-related News and Information*

Yasumasa Yamamoto: *News Gathering and Broadcasting in Disaster Emergencies*

Chihiro Hiratsuka: *Disaster Information in the Multimedia Age*

Toshihiro Tsuganesawa: *Media Reporting and Rumor Following the Great Hanshin Earthquake*

Koichi Osada: *Earthquake Prediction and the Media: Problem of "Gray Information"*

Hisashi Otsuka: *The Legal Framework for Media and Channel Multiplication in Japanese Broadcasting*

No. 33, 1997 — Special Issue for the 50th Anniversary of the Broadcasting Culture Research Institute

Denis McQuail: *After Fire-Television: The past half century in broadcasting, its impact on civilization*

Junichi Hamada: *Advanced "Public" and Public Broadcasting: Toward a theory of "public subjectivity" in broadcasting*

Wolfgang Hoffmann-Riem: *Public Service Orientation in Broadcasting: Current state and prospect of regulation in Germany*

Willard D. Rowland, Jr.: *U.S. Broadcasting and the Public Interest in the Multichannel Era: The policy heritage and its implications*

Bradley S. Greenberg et al: *Television in the Changing Communication Environment: Audience and content trends in U.S. Television*

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Siebert, Fred S. et al. 1956. *Four Theories of the Press.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

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