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Three Years after the Great East Japan Earthquake

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The most powerful earthquake ever recorded in Japan occurred at 2:46 in the afternoon of March 11, 2011 resulting in the loss of numerous precious lives and the complete destruction of the towns and villages that they called home. Although three years have passed since that tragedy, 267,000 people still live in evacuation shelters. The Great East Japan Earthquake not only caused devastating social and economic effects over these past three years, but also had a significant effect on the media environment. The loss of confidence in the mass media provided an opportunity for the Internet to become increasingly prominent. Personally, I must confess that I have learnt most of research tools from my education in the United States and still keep absorbing them from new books and journals produced there. Yet it took some time to realize that such an apparently innocuous and beautiful cabinet of expensive tools prove to be useless occasionally in the real field work in my homeland. Why is it that? What am I supposed to do in order to survive as a professional and produce a meaningful research to the country where I live? From my own experience, thus, I devised a temporary 'solution' that I need to be more creative in a view of tools, and conceive ways to choose wisely tools suitable for local needs.

At the time of the earthquake, 99.5% of the television sets in affected areas were unable to be used due to power outages, and an average of 4.3 days was required to restore power. Since communication by cell phone was also not possible, the only information available to family members who had escaped to various locations and were unable to contact each other was through bulletin boards installed at evacuation shelters. As a result, persons in affected areas relied on information provided on the radio, newspapers and portable Internet devices. Many of the victims recounted their experiences by indicating that, even though land-based telephones were down, they were able to use the Internet, or that even though cell phone e-mails had difficulty in getting through, contacts were able to be made using Twitter on their Smartphone's. The media strength of the Internet was also strongly recognized with respect to two-way communication enabling persons in affected areas to be heard directly or support for volunteers delivering information on daily necessities.

On the other hand, the shortcomings of the nature of the Japanese media industry structure of both television stations and newspaper companies being divided into individual prefectures were clearly exposed when news coverage was attempted to be provided on damage over a wide area spanning multiple prefectures. Even after television broadcasts were restored, there were regions where information on the situation was provided and regions where it was not and there were considerable discrepancies occurred in support activities, including the collection of contributions, resulting in a sense of unfairness among victims. At the time of the accident at the nuclear power plant in Fukushima, the media was unable to provide any in-depth coverage, and coverage essentially consisted only of reporting information on statements made by government officials. Since the mass media per se was unable to obtain accurate information, and since information cannot be provided without knowing whether or not it is accurate, the actual information provided to residents was limited, thereby creating dissatisfaction and a feeling of distrust among residents.

Although the Great East Japan Earthquake caused tremendous loss and damage, in actuality, 90% of the Japanese population was not directly affected. However, the perceptions of the Japanese people clearly underwent a change since that day on March 11 three years ago. A growing awareness and emphasis on "bonding" with the victims that spread rapidly among the Japanese created a tendency towards the need for communication. The free messaging application, LINE, which began service in June 2011 following the disaster, became firmly established as a communication tool used by a large number of Japanese. Although mixi, which initially became popular as a social networking service (SNS) in Japan, appeared in 2004 and was followed by similar jumps in popularity by Twitter in 2008 and Facebook in 2010, LINE has continued to undeniably hold the top spot since the disaster. In addition, the sentiment among residents that "since no one knows what could happen tomorrow and the end could come at any time, it is important to not to forget to live every day to the fullest" resulted in the ascent of the popular girls' singing group, AKB48 [1], to an exclusive rank that enabled them to have the top five rated CD single sales for the years 2011 and 2012. This group ABK48 was characterized by containing numerous lyrics in their songs that attempt to provide comfort and relief to young people exhausted by recent events. In the face of social crises in the form of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident, economically, socially and psychologically discouraged young people have supported this popular group as a result of sympathizing with their lyrics based on a sense that the lyrics sung by its members are targeted directly at them.

Analytical Data

Keywords (consisting mainly of nouns) were extracted using text-based data analysis software (IBM SPSS Text Analytics for Surveys 3.0.1J) [2]. Trends present in lyrics were determined by investigating frequently appearing words among those keywords, paragraphs containing certain keywords were extracted, and correspondence analyses were conducted between those paragraphs and keywords to analyze trends in their descriptive content. The targets of the analysis consisted of a total of 281 songs consisting of 32 singles released by AKB48 from February 2006 to August 2013, the songs contained

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in 4 albums released from January 2008 to August 2012, and songs performed at stage performances. All language data from the 281 target songs was input digitally and converted to text data followed by carrying out text mining and categorizing the "headwords".

Verification Results

As a result of verifying the results of the analysis by text mining, the headwords contained in songs performed by AKB48 were as indicated in the table below (Table 1).

Rank	Frequently Appearing Word		Frequency (No. of Songs)
	English	Japanese	
1st	Dream	Yume	126
2nd	I (woman)	Watashi	119
3rd	Love (formal)	Ai	112
4th	Heart	Kokoro	101
5th	Inside	Naka	91
6th	You (formal)	Anata	91
7th	I (man)	Boku	85
8th	Wind:	Kaze	83
9th	Sky	Sora	80
10th	You (informal)	Kimi	78
10th	Myself	Jibun	78
12th	Love (informal)	Koi	69
13th	Future	Mirai	68
14th	Road	Michi	61
15th	Hand	Te	56

Table 1: The results of the analysis by text mining, the headwords contained in songs performed by AKB48.

Although words relating to falling in love such as "love (formal)", "love (informal)", "you (formal)" or "you (informal)", which frequently appeared in the lyrics of previous female artists, also frequently appear in the lyrics of songs performed by AKB48 [3], words indicating hope such as "dream" or "future", as well as words invoking a sense of nostalgia for home such as "wind", "sky" or "road", were also determined to appear at a high frequency.

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