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【査読論文】

# Explanatory Journalism in the Digital Age: Global Practices and Japan's Media Landscape

Koichiro SHIGAKI

## Introduction

### 1.1. Why Should We Study Expository Journalism Now?

A new standard form of online journalism has emerged in the West, targeting new generations who are often familiar with social networking services (SNS). As new journalistic practices adapted to the Internet and SNS have emerged, the term *Explanatory Journalism* (EJ) has been re-proposed in the U.S. and elsewhere since the 2010s, along with *Citizen Journalism*, *Data Journalism*, *Investigative Journalism*, *Constructive Journalism*, and *Expository Journalism*, among others. This paper will explore current examples of journalistic practices related to Explanatory Journalism (EJ) and discuss why paying attention to EJ at this time is essential.

This focus on explanatory journalism is significant because of its growing prominence on digital platforms especially like YouTube. Explanatory journalism on digital platforms seems to be well-blended with other digital content, but we may not see these contents as usual news, as watched on television news with studio settings or seen in newspapers. I would argue that this expository type of content with infographics on YouTube blurs the definition of journalism in the traditional sense, even that it is different from Data Journalism or any other journalism, and that is worth examining.

Explanatory Journalism represents a distinct departure from both traditional journalism and other emerging digital formats. While sharing some characteristics with data journalism and investigative journalism, EJ uniquely combines multimedia elements, contextual analysis, and accessible presentation to make complex topics comprehensible to general audiences. EJ is moving away from the broadcaster- and studio-centered news presentation, but toward multimedia or multimodal presentation. It most closely resembles a shift found in education in many places, away from teacher-centered and textbook-centered teaching and toward multimodal teaching with multiple resources.

This paper adopts the term “Explanatory Journalism (EJ)” consistently throughout to refer to this specific practice, distinguishing it from traditional explanatory news reporting.

### 1.2. What Does the Explanatory Journalism Refer to?

Explanatory Journalism is not a new term. Search engines define EJ as a journalism practice that seeks to provide greater context than standard news to help an audience make sense of the topic. In the “old days,” journalists or experts explaining in writing or answering questions in the studio comprised typical explanatory journalism. Because of technology, news contents now are multimodal, showing text combined with animated tables of numbers, statistical tables, graphs and charts, and graphics showing social or historical change processes. The multimodality of news content is a characteristic of explanatory journalism today, and a great example is content created by *Vox*, like Figure 1, on the subject of U.S. debt ceilings. In this graphic, the image shows how the US Department of Treasury collects taxes, then spends and allocates them to fund the federal government.

Figure 1 *Vox, “Why the U.S. is always hitting a ’debt ceiling,” 2021.10.20, YouTube*




The Pulitzer Prize administration introduced the term, *Explanatory Journalism*, as an award category in the 1980s. In 2016, the Brookings Institution posted YouTube content about what Explanatory Journalism is in the digital era and how its use created and provided the audience with a whole new “layer” of information because of the Internet, showing the interviews of practitioners from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Vox*[1]. Importantly, this instructional piece by the Brookings Institution itself followed the apparent online explanatory content format.

### 1.3. Theoretical framework? Understanding Explanatory Journalism in the Digital Age

To properly situate Explanatory Journalism today within contemporary journalism studies, we must distinguish it from related practices mentioned above. EJ in digital format can be distinguished from other forms of journalism in several key ways.

#### Data Journalism vs. EJ

Coddington's (2015) typology of quantitative journalism (or data-driven journalism) helps us understand the key distinction: while data journalism focuses on "finding stories within data" and emphasizes statistical methods and data visualization, EJ uses data as one component within a broader explanatory framework. As Lewis and Westlund (2015) note, the key component of data driven journalism is how data is employed - data journalism primarily aims to uncover new insights from big data or data in general. On the other hand, EJ uses data to illuminate existing complexities for audiences in the arenas of industry, politics, science, culture, technology, etc.

#### Traditional Journalism vs. EJ

According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2021), traditional journalism primarily focuses on reporting current events and providing immediate context. In contrast, EJ aims to build lasting understanding of complex topics. This concept of EJ aligns with Schudson's (2018) argument that journalism's role includes not just informing but helping citizens understand the increasingly complex world around them.

#### Multimedia Integration

Deuze (2004) provides us a framework for understanding how current EJ differs in its presentation, noting that modern digital journalism (including EJ today) can integrate multiple forms of storytelling in ways previously impossible. This multimedia integration is central to EJ's effectiveness although Deuze does not directly mention EJ, referring instead to "modern journalism."

Recent scholarship documents significant changes in journalism practices that inform our understanding of EJ. Karlsson and Sjovaag (2018) demonstrate how digital journalism requires new research methodologies to capture emerging forms of news presentation and audience engagement. Steensen and Westlund (2021) further show how digital platforms have transformed not just news distribution but the fundamental nature of journalistic explanation.

By adopting new interactive, data-driven, and storytelling methods, journalists now integrate text, visuals, audio, and other multimedia elements, creating immersive narratives that invite deeper audience engagement and feedback. This shift ultimately reshapes how information is presented, interpreted, and verified. These studies help us understand the environment in which EJ has emerged and evolved.

Recent research from the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023 shows clear trends in EJ adoption: a) Younger audiences in the U.S. show consistently higher engagement with explanatory content or podcasts; b) News organizations report increased investment in explanatory formats; and c) Audience retention rates are higher for explanatory content compared to traditional formats with studio settings. Pew Research Center's 2024 report indicates that 37% of young adults (ages 18-29) regularly obtain news from social media influencers, reflecting a broader shift away from traditional news sources.

While not specific to explanatory journalism, these findings highlight an increasing preference for digital-first, multimedia-driven content. Further, digital-native news outlets focusing on digital content saw 35% audience growth from 2021-2023, and digital video content averages got more shares than traditional news formats..

Although these findings are not media theory or a-journalism-related theoretical framework, they provide the whole concept of what EJ in the digital age means. While various forms of journalism may contain explanatory elements, this paper specifically focuses on EJ as a distinct contemporary practice characterized by interactive multimedia engagement, non-linear narrative structures, and audience-centered explanation. This specificity is crucial for understanding how EJ differs from traditional expository news practices.

### 1.4. The Goal of This Paper

Although the term "Explanatory Journalism" (EJ) is not new, the way news agencies or media creators provide information has dramatically changed. EJ seems to have become a standard news format online since the Internet and SNS emerged. It uses infographics, animation, and other visual formats combined, with hyperlinks to extra content and data, to present systematic overviews of public affairs. The case of EJ shows the adaptation of journalism practice to digital formats.

This paper demonstrates that EJ is a distinct, recent departure from traditional expository journalism and explains how it muddles the traditional definition of journalism. I would also like to discuss the potential development of EJ and its problems in the context of a parallel trend in Japanese news, comparing Japanese expository news to online outlets elsewhere and

encouraging scholars and practitioners to compare the situation in their respective countries. Furthermore, this study also aims to assess the future of digital journalism and media education in Japan and examine the potential of EJ via assessment of cases of explanatory journalism. I want to explore how we can understand and re-frame this relatively new digital journalism practice online, since it has adapted to a highly digitalized world engaged by new generations in the way that education has adapted to digital/multimodal teaching and learning in some countries.

## Background

### 2.1. Why Should We Care?

As mentioned, EJ has become normalized on digital platforms like YouTube. I struggle to conceptualize EJ; I am still determining the best way to theorize this media practice *because* EJ has become so normalized. Millennials, including myself or Generation Z, take EJ content for granted. Even though I am a college educator in media studies, I am also an active viewer of expository news online every day, just like other people close to my age. If I did not consciously notice the changes in online content with fancy infographics, I would not see this as something relevant for research. I would only see this as online news, a short documentary to enjoy on YouTube when I take a break from work.

Specifically, online media outlets like *Economics*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Vox*, identified as news media outlets, use the practice of EJ to provide expository content on platforms like YouTube. These outlets do not contain news content in the traditional sense of journalism, but they are not just YouTube content for entertainment, either. Viewers can identify these contents as news or journalism dealing with critical public affairs of today. Yet, it is not a newspaper, nor is it an evening news program on television or online.

This also may be why there is little new study about EJ. Media scholars and practitioners of traditional journalism do not see this as a relevant subject for further assessment because it is the characteristic norm of the news or documentaries. Additionally, a handbook of digital journalism practice for upcoming journalists covers the "techniques" of combining infographics and data journalism, which apparently sounds explanatory, rather like online journalism (see, Gray, Chambers, & Bounegru 2012). This handbook shows that explanatory journalism is mainly all about practice and techniques but not the subject of academic, theoretical study. Thus, approaching and academically re-framing this relatively new explanatory journalism practice in

the digital age is still a difficult task to do.

Furthermore, journalists are likely skeptical about an academic analysis of journalism practice and see this as armchair scholarship, at least in Japan. Still, there have been some attempts to collaborate among academics and practitioners in these fields. Because of this, specialists and pioneers on both sides (traditional journalism and EJ) have made some progress on the relevance of the research to working journalists, for instance, on the topic of digitalization related to fake news or partisan influences on the press. Nevertheless, all previous attempts have paid little attention to what EJ has become online, which many people, including field scholars, may overlook.

Even so, there is a rather significant change in how information is funneled to the public, primarily online. Hence, EJ is a critical topic which must not be overlooked. We should not ignore the format of new digital content, including EJ, nor how media creators deliver news content online, nor its influences on viewers' perspectives and understanding. The fact is that the practices of EJ today with infographics blur the definition of the traditional form of journalism seen in traditional news outlets. This is akin to the distinction between professional journalism and blogging news becoming blurred. Further, the contents that deploy EJ practice have become more educational, similar to TedED, with animation and motion graphics explaining certain social phenomena or ideas. Perhaps EJ can be characterized as resembling educational programs produced by public service broadcasting like BBC in the U.K. or PBS in the U.S. Therefore, it is worth stopping to look at this phenomenon as it has created a new journalistic "foundation" right under our feet, namely an entirely new level of contextual content from multimodal information and images.

### 2.2. Previous Studies

There is a dearth of critical studies on explanatory journalism. Meanwhile, many previous studies covering much broader aspects of digital journalism practice, including EJ today. In addition to the previous studies mentioned in section 1.3, there has been an ongoing study to conceptualize "digital journalism" in general, including these: There is a textbook dealing with digital journalism and its study, one of a series focused on journalism studies by Routledge's, *What is Digital Journalism Studies?* edited by Steensen and Westlund (2021). Whittaker's *Tech Giants, Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Journalism* (2019), deals with a dramatic shift surrounding journalism from traditional media production and distribution to a landscape dominated by tech giants, algorithms, and artificial intelligence today and shares a similar objective as the books mentioned here. Karlsson and Sjovaag's edited book, *Rethinking Research*

*Methods in an Age of Digital Journalism* (2018), shows different cases of new methodologies in journalism research in the digital age, e, g,, the analysis of digital objects and their interconnectedness and the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches to study digital news texts, and suggests a new approach to adopting ever-changing digital journalism practices.

Other studies deal with similar topics, and many handbooks and textbooks give us all theoretical and practical frameworks of journalism studies. Of course, *The Handbook of Journalism Studies* (Darling-Wolf, 2018) in the ICA Handbook series is one of them. Kovach & Rosenstiel's book, *The Element of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (2021), is another excellent study that provides a great context for approaching journalism and journalism studies, and which is translated into Japanese by the Nikkei Groups, a well-known news agency publishing group in Japan.

Because many great previous studies are giving us the greater context of journalism and how we should approach it to understand journalism today, it might seem that there is little left to study about journalism anymore. Still, there is some small room left for regional case studies, journalism practices, or cultural contexts of regional studies if we only focus on the traditional sense of journalism with studio settings. However, since actual practice itself has evolved and adapted to a relatively new digital environment, it seems that there needs to be more targeted discussion about journalism today in every aspect.

There are only a few studies directly related to explanatory journalism today, and in fact several articles discuss EJ in Europe and the United States. Most studies related to EJ mention its potential to communicate complicated ideas and issues in the digital age and see this as a positive practice, especially given the digital era. The recent study of Bielik & Višňovský (April 2021) is a prime example. They argue that this form of journalism has become increasingly important for simplifying complex information and combatting misinformation in an era of information overload. They position explanatory journalism as a bridge between investigative and data journalism, making technically complex but socially important topics more accessible to audiences. The study emphasizes the growing need for this approach in response to the challenges of digital media and increased demands for information literacy. Mann (2016) argues that explanatory journalism is a powerful tool against political polarization and dysfunction. Providing in-depth analysis and context for complex policy issues helps citizens better understand political matters. This approach fills gaps left by traditional journalism and contributes to a more informed public discourse. Zhang (2016) states that "explainer" journalism (i.e., explanatory journalism) enhances audience engagement by comprehensively explaining

complex news stories. Zhang go on to say, this approach focuses on the "why" and "how" of events, complementing traditional news reporting. By making news more accessible and understandable, explanatory journalism addresses the need for context in an era of digitalization.

Additionally, some YouTube content and live-talk sessions by practitioners and academics mention Explanatory Journalism and Digital Journalism online but not in academic papers or conference presentations. To my observation, the assessment and discussion of EJ can sometimes be found online in talk show content or unique articles, so this might be a reason why there is seemingly less study on EJ in academic papers. Still, given how EJ has "colonized" journalism and digital news, there needs to be more discussion and analysis of the practice of EJ.

On the other hand, there is no discussion of EJ from journalists or academics in Japan. Interestingly, a video production interest magazine in Japan, *Video Salon*, published a unique instructional guide on combining infographics with news and educational content. In contrast, the definition of news in this Japanese interest magazine refers to a broader meaning than elsewhere, including P.R. companies' news releases and advertisements. They do not mention explanatory journalism there specifically, but the production side appears to have realized the potential of production techniques deployed in explanatory journalism today. However, it is hard to find any equivalent studies focusing on explanatory journalism in Japan, even though Japanese online news media agencies combine a traditional television studio with various production techniques employed in today's EJ practice which *Vox* and other media agencies elsewhere providing expository pieces follow.

### 2.3. The Reason for Minimal Discussion of EJ in Japan and What is Discussed

I suspect EJ and other journalism practices are not often discussed in Japan, unlike in Europe and the U.S., because of the nature of media industries and academics in Japan. While discussions of the future of journalism take place in Japan's academic media societies, private research groups, and within the industry, these debates need broader engagement. Ultimately, these discussions protect the preexisting "closed" or "cozy" (i.e., insular) communities of traditional Japanese media industries and industry-related organizations, with little progress in establishing a system that adapts to digitalization. Moreover, in Japan, research conducted by practitioners with backgrounds in the journalism industry is often accepted without critical examination, contributing to the stagnation of discourse.

A German public media outlet, Deutsche Welle, known as D.W., precisely described the nature and culture of the press in Japan in their online article "Why does Japan rank poorly in

press freedom?" (May 8, 2023). The article concentrates on the negative side of the Japanese press. It explains how the poor rankings of Japan's press freedom are due to the closed nature of the Japanese media industries, including the press, its vulnerability to government and business pressure, and a culture of self-censorship.

The closed nature of Japanese journalism is empirically documented. Press freedom rankings show Japan's dramatic decline from 11th place in 2010 to 71st in 2023 (RSF, 2023). Recent empirical studies provide concrete evidence of structural barriers in Japanese journalism. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2023) shows Japan has the lowest trust in news media among 46 surveyed countries. Within the *kisha* club system, which controls access to official sources, most freelance journalists and foreign correspondents face access restrictions (Freeman, 2000). A 2020 survey by the Japan Press Research Institute found journalists reported self-censorship, feeling pressure from advertising considerations. This institutional structure helps explain why digital innovations like EJ face significant barriers in Japan. These findings align with industry structure analysis from multiple sources. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2023) documents the cross-ownership patterns between newspapers and broadcasting companies, while the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2023) indicates lower rates of digital innovation adoption compared to other developed markets. Freeman's (2000) analysis of the *kisha* club system further demonstrates how institutional structures affect media innovation.

Further, from my own observations from about 10 years in media studies, journalists in Japan tend to be considered elite and specialized professionals requiring higher intellectual skills than professors, who "know little about society as they sit behind the desk." Many times, I have seen journalists exhibit pride in teaching and informing the "uneducated" public about society or anything and everything. Such journalists commonly describe ordinary people or the public as "general people" as opposed to intellectually elite journalists and often act condescendingly towards young inexperienced public figures. One of many examples was seen at a recent press conference of Liberal Democratic Party hopeful, Koizumi Shinziro, a son of a former prime minister Koizumi Junichiro. He was accused of being (too) "intellectually low" to be a leader of Japan by one of journalists when he announced his candidacy.

Some journalists become college professors without acquiring a graduate degree or formal academic training because they are treated as experts in industries and appear to "own" industries' inside information that normal college professors cannot access unless they have a good relationship to the industries.

This might be puzzling to some who may think," Why can't the academics just research those

industries?" The reason is very simple; we cannot get any access to any information about the how those industries work unless we form a good relationship with insiders of those closed industry communities. They tend to have a sense of ownership of knowledge concerning the government or even society.

In this sense, every piece of news in Japan tends to be expository, and sometimes, this news gives the audience a sense of learning, like being in school in Japan. However, traditional Japanese news is still not EJ as provided by *Vox* or other media outlets. As a media scholar in Japan, one gets the impression that the closed communities of media academics and professionals in these industries have a causal relationship to the lack of study on EJ and specific journalism practices. If these closed communities are not interested in certain topics in general, they simply will not become relevant for study, and one needs to make an argument for its relevance as an academic research subject first.

The closed nature of Japanese journalism also extends into media studies academia through institutional practices. Major academic societies primarily publish in Japanese, with research circulating predominantly within domestic spheres. Even as scholars like Hayashi produce significant work examining journalism's role and evolution in Japan, their research often remains within Japanese academic discourse due to linguistic and institutional barriers. This creates a self-reinforcing pattern: journalism's insular nature shapes how it is studied academically, which in turn perpetuates traditional perspectives within the industry. While some scholars have begun participating in international discourse, established academic practices continue to favor domestic over international engagement. This helps explain why emerging forms of journalism like EJ, despite their global prominence, receive limited theoretical attention in Japanese media studies.

Even among academics, most scholars in Japan focus on what to do with conventional journalism rather than discussing new journalistic practices. For example, there is an ongoing debate in Japan about the future of journalism as a government watchdog. However, there is no discussion about the possible development of journalism in the future apart from being a government watchdog. Instead, many discussions in Japan focus on the role of traditional news agencies in the future, where society has become highly digitalized and globalized, while at the same time, Japanese media industries are very closed and have not even globalized or digitalized well. Because of that, I feel that "explanatory journalism" would never be considered a topic of interest in Japan.

However, this does not mean there is no progress in journalism studies in Japan. Yoshimi Uchikawa, a pioneer in journalism education research emphasizing media literacy in Japan after

WWII, wrote many historical research publications on journalism as well as media, and established a foundation for Japanese media studies. In Japan, there are studies on care journalism and community journalism, as well as research on journalism about gender, ethics and law, and mass communication theory. There are a great many studies regarding journalism. Notable scholars include Tatsuro Hanada (2018), who examines the role, ethics, and education of journalism; Koichi Kinoshita (2021), who analyzes the challenges in journalism education in Japan; and Kaori Hayashi (2002, 2011, 2014) explores media ethics and journalism's social role emphasis on genders, minorities, and social care. Hitoshi Yamaguchi (2021) contributes to the field with his research on journalist surveys. There are many more, such as Oishi Yutaka's notable published studies and so on.

Additionally, institutions like the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute conduct comprehensive studies on broadcast journalism. These researchers collectively address crucial topics such as the impact of digitalization, the evolution of journalism education, ethical considerations, and the changing media landscape in Japan. Their work provides valuable insights into Japanese journalism's current state and future directions, balancing theoretical frameworks with practical applications in the field.

In search of new journalism practices, some Japanese universities that have implemented media studies departments and the "newspaper" industries cooperate to form study groups or build new educational programs to start a movement called *academic journalism*. Nevertheless, systematic research on Explanatory Journalism (EJ) or Digital Journalism is currently lacking, and a study of explanatory journalism is nearly nonexistent in Japan. Rather, the discussions primarily revolve around how traditional news organizations should adapt moving forward.

## The Landscape of Explanatory Journalism

### 3.1. Example Cases outside Japan

As mentioned, explanatory journalism online has become a normative practice in the United States and elsewhere. In the U.S., online news sites or YouTube channels such as *Vox* have been watched by Millennials and Generation Z, which meets their needs. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023 shows that digital content or explanatory podcast consistently outperforms traditional news formats in key metrics: average viewing time (8.2 minutes vs 2.1 minutes), sharing rates (2.3x higher). The report also indicates a growing preference for expository content among younger audiences (Reuters Institute, 2023). Similarly, Pew Research

Center's 2024 report indicates that 37% of young adults (ages 18-29) regularly obtain news from social media influencers, underscoring a broader transition from traditional journalism to digital-first, multimedia-driven content. This shift aligns with the increasing reliance on digital platforms for news consumption, reinforcing the role of explanatory journalism in engaging younger audiences through accessible and visual storytelling.

Besides *Vox*, the *Economist* from the U.K., the *Wall Street Journal's* YouTube channel, the *Behind News* produced by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation are other examples of EJ, and more are available on YouTube, TikTok, and other outlets. These sources on YouTube are equivalent to weekly news magazines like *Newsweek* or *Time* magazine, giving more in-depth news stories combined with graphs, visual images, and charts than traditional newspapers or television news.

These news outlets also provide a place for new learning opportunities for a new generation. This is a crucial feature that is different from a traditional mode of journalism. Internet technology makes it possible to combine different modes of media, including texts, images, effects, infographics with animation, hyperlinks for extra information, and voice-over explanations by journalists or topic experts. This has undoubtedly been discussed many times among media scholars and computer scientists, focusing on the multimodality of media text since the birth of the World Wide Web. Nevertheless, the discussion of multimodality focuses primarily on media technology and text itself instead of actual practice like explanatory journalism.

Notably, the Internet and social networks have brought technological advancements that can provide contextual information about complex issues accessible with mainstream news. As a result, people can now access extra information to understand public affairs better than ever. Even though the audience may not be able to assess the information and resources, as experts would, they can examine it and go back to explanatory news to get the whole idea behind the source or general news.

It is no coincidence that the rise of EJ in the U.S. and elsewhere since the 2010s has come about during a period of heightened interest in politics, including issues on economic inequality. We readers cannot know every aspect of society; for example, as media scholars, do we know how media industries work financially? As everyday people, do we know exactly what policies certain political candidates have and how each policy may affect our lives? We cannot suggest a solution to economic inequality without knowing the source of the problem in the first place. We cannot even explain why there is always a discussion of economic crises each decade, even if statistical data shows that recessions happen in most 10-year cycles.

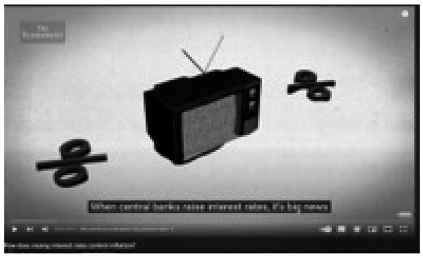
However, it is much easier to see complex data with numbers if it is presented in interactive infographics. Voters can now learn and evaluate the merits and demerits of specific policies advocated by political parties and candidates by accessing information from news outlets practicing EJ. A news website with infographics that provides a systematic overview of various viewpoints and visual materials on specific social issues would make this tedious study of public affairs easier. Figure 2 below illustrates *Wall Street Journal*, explaining how the U.S. federal government decides the budget and how it spends money, as related to the subject of the debt ceiling of the U.S. budget.

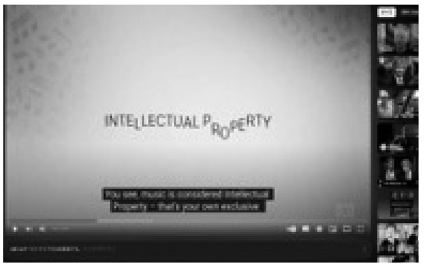
Figure 2 *Wall Street Journal explaining the debt ceiling of the U.S. budget*




This may indicate that journalism is changing from only providing daily events, or traditional means of journalism, to an outlet for learning and contextualized knowledge, just like professors in colleges and universities. The images shown above are great examples of expository pieces explaining the debt ceiling of the U.S. budget and why this topic is important. Does this look like a traditional means of journalism? Initially, I watched it as an element in news content, but the contents of expository pieces are more like educational content for adults in an educational broadcasting station. In Figure 3, we see the examples of EJ practices by *Economics*, explaining the US debt ceiling, and *Behind the News* by Australian Public Broadcasting explaining the dispute between Ed Sheeran vs the Marvin Gaye Lawsuit, which may affect the understanding of intellectual property rights.

Figure 3　*Other examples of EJ: Economics* and *The Behind the News*

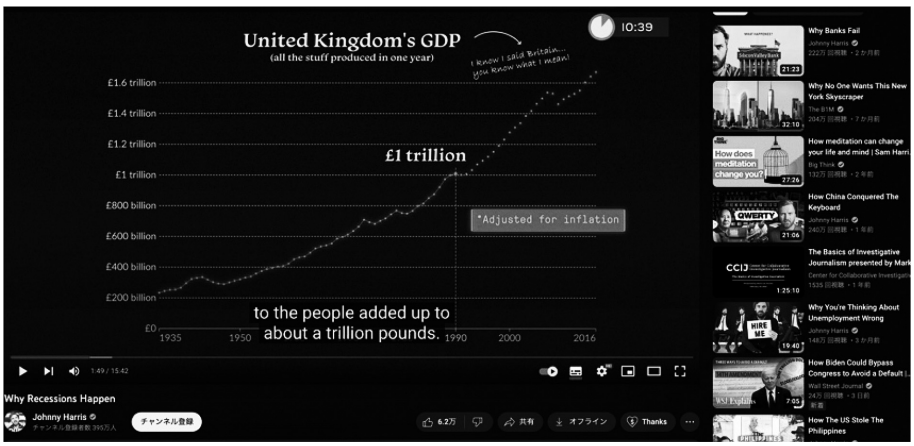



### 3.2. Could This Be a New Standard?

Indeed, this format of explanatory journalism is becoming a normed practice to get audiences' attention, especially among younger generations. An independent journalist like Johnny Harris creates newsworthy content in an easy-to-understand way, and his online content is expository, with moving maps, infographics, and animations. The reason for highlighting Johnny Harris, a freelance journalist, is that after initially working at *Vox*, he became independent and now practices explanatory journalism as both a YouTuber and a journalist. He shares his content on YouTube and other platforms, where he has gained a large following. His approach is entirely different from the traditional freelance journalist who simply writes articles. Harris gathers a team of fellow journalists and creates his own unique content. At first glance, it may appear as though a YouTuber is engaging in journalistic activities, but it represents a new form of journalism that diverges from the traditional model. Even other YouTubers who focus on providing information about specific public affairs seem to follow what Johnny Harris does, today. (See Figure 4 as an example, where Johny Harris shows examples of a relationship

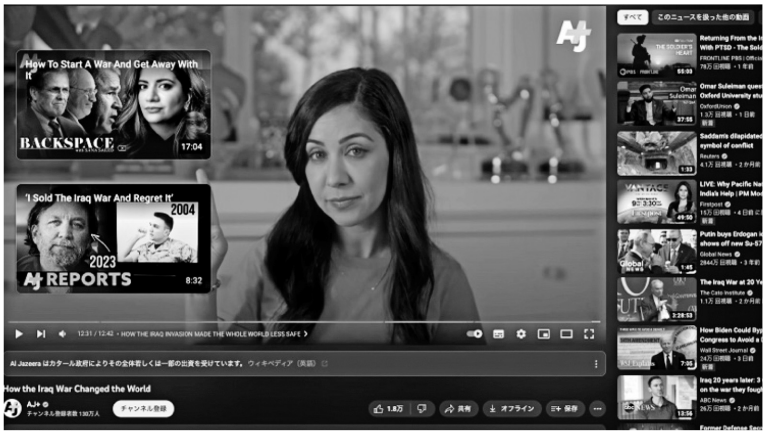
Figure 4　*Johnny Harris, Why Recessions Happen, his YouTube channel, 12/15/2022*



between GDP and inflation of each country about Why *Recessions Happen*.)

AJ+, formally Aljazeera America, provides a slightly stronger political stance on specific issues related to the Middle East as a more critical commentary on the U.S. Middle East policy, but it is expository with many graphics and extra b-rolls[2] to illustrate their stance on news events. AJ+ is considered a credible news outlet (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 *AJ +, In Context: How the Iraq War changed the World, 3/18/202*




However, this brings us questions about the combination of explanatory journalism and a robust political view or extreme political agenda that may coerce belief in a single point of view. Such an agenda or view contradicts the initial definition of explanatory journalism, which includes various perspectives. The key feature of recent explanatory journalism, like the Brookings Institution often mentioned, is that it is easy to understand the different contexts to see news without overthinking; however, some contents tend to emphasize a specific point of view, giving only one way to think about certain topics. This aspect of the practice needs to be given more critical attention. The point here is that we can understand or see a context "without thinking," but some explanatory pieces of news do not provide the whole context from different points of view.

Regardless, online explanatory journalism in one form or other has become a standard technique and practice in the United States and elsewhere, especially on platforms like YouTube, as shown above. As a viewer, I enjoy a fancy infographic providing a systematic overview of complex data and visual materials on specific social issues and different viewpoints or certain political viewpoints. It makes it easy to grasp complex social issues and ideas that we

might never fully understand otherwise. EJ probably has yet to become standard journalism practice today; however, given its utility, it would be unsurprising if EJ did become at least part of standard journalism.

## What is Japanese News Media Like?

### 4.1. Overview of Japanese News Media Landscape

A mix of traditional and digital outlets characterizes the Japanese media landscape. It features five major national daily newspapers (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, *Asahi Shimbun*, *Mainichi Shimbun*, *Sankei Shimbun*, and *Nikkei*) with high circulation rates[3], alongside public broadcaster NHK and commercial T.V. networks. We can note that in Japan, television networks are often heavily influenced by newspaper companies, as many of their shares are held by these publishers. While print media remains influential, especially among older generations, digital platforms are gaining traction, particularly among younger audiences. Social media platforms like LINE, Twitter, and YouTube are increasingly essential news sources in Japan. Despite high media consumption, Japan faces challenges in press freedom, partly due to the *kisha* club system and government, and business pressure on media organizations.

Many previous studies describe the landscape of Japanese media, and some notable studies on Japanese media include, again, Tatsuro Hanada's (2018) comprehensive exploration of journalism practice, which provides valuable insights into the subject's activities, ethics, and education. Koichi Kinoshita (2021) explorers further the critical issues surrounding journalism education and journalist training in Japan. Hayashi's contributions are particularly noteworthy, with her 2002 work examining the periphery of mass media and the core of journalism and her 2011 study focusing on the unique perspective of women and children in journalism, emphasizing the ethics of care. Oi's (2018) analysis of journalism education in Japan offers a critical view of the emergence of homogeneous and bland journalism. Yamakoshi's (2022) recent work traces the development of theoretical research in mass communication studies. The international perspective on Japanese media is represented by works, such as Freeman's (2000) examination of information cartels, "*kisha*-clubs" in Japan's mass media, and the edited volume by Pharr and Krauss (1996) on media and politics in Japan. Oi, Fukuda and Sako's (2012) chapter on the transition of Japanese journalists provides insights into the continuity and change in the profession. Lastly, Taniguchi's (2007) study on the changing relationship between media and politics in Japan rounds out this comprehensive overview of Japanese journalism research.

These works collectively offer a multifaceted view of the evolving Japanese media landscape, its challenges, and its unique characteristics. We can also refer to some worldwide journalism-related reports, including the industries' overview of many countries, such as Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2023), to see the up-to-date media landscape in Japan.

### 4.2. Japanese News Tends to Be Expository

As I have argued, "explanatory journalism" would never be considered a topic of interest in Japan because of its closed nature of journalism industries and academics of journalism studies. However, it doesn't mean that Japanese news does not follow expository trends. The expository type of news in Japan has a parallel but totally separate approach of expository news from what we may see on the contents created by *Vox*, for example.

While Japanese media has long included expository elements, these differ fundamentally from contemporary EJ practices. Traditional Japanese expository news emphasizes expert-led, studio-based explanation, maintaining hierarchical information flow. In contrast, contemporary EJ as practiced by outlets like Vox emphasizes: -a) Interactive audience engagement; b) Multimedia integration; c) Non-linear narrative structures; and d) Contextual frameworks that allow audience exploration.

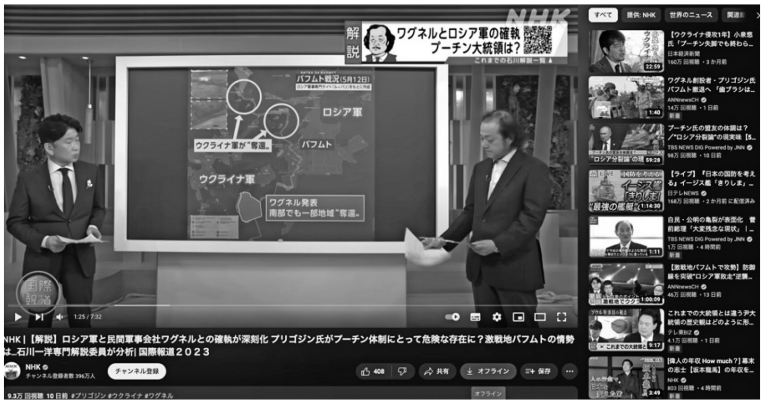
Japanese news outlets have similar expository trends, starting with tabloid news and some easy, slow news and business news outlets targeting the younger generation, ages 20 to 40. Although Japanese media industries do not use terms like "Explanatory" or "Expository" news, some news outlets like NHK and Nikkei follow these explanatory journalistic practices, albeit somewhat differently from the U.S. and elsewhere.

To systematically analyze how Japanese media approaches explanatory journalism, we must first establish clear criteria for examining representative cases. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023 documents how Japanese media approaches differ from global practices. Their data indicates that Japanese news organizations show distinct patterns in: a) Content presentation: predominantly studio-based explanations; b) Digital integration: limited interactive elements; c) Audience engagement: traditional hierarchical information flow; and d) Multimedia usage: fewer integrated elements compared to Western counterparts.

In the Japanese news media, due to the closed nature of industries and the extreme pride of journalists' "ownership" of knowledge, news or any information on societal problems must be given to "uneducated" audiences only by those journalists who "know everything." Thus, news tends to provide many explanations behind an event without providing a specific context. Especially television news, the expository nature of the news usually follows the traditional

studio settings. The news anchors in the studio break down the events for audiences without showing them the relevance of the events to the audiences (e.g. Figure 6). The news usually omits the relevance of news events and why the news item was chosen in the first place (e.g., significance for the economy, impact on the elderly, implications for government policy, importance for health, etc.).

Figure 6 *NHK, excerpt from international news where broadcasters show YouTube to explain the Ukraine-Russia War*




Caption: "NHK providing the explanation of the Ukraine-Russia War by combining info graphical map explaining the current situation in a broadcasting studio."

Since journalists are prideful in teaching and informing the "uneducated" public about any societal topic, every piece of news tends to be expository in this way. Otherwise, non-explanatory pieces usually sound monotonic, apparently like an objective type of news program where news "anchors" or "announcers" read prompters to tell audiences about everyday accidents and a famous restaurant in Tokyo you should visit on that day; it is like an American morning show.

This contrast between traditional and new digital approaches in Japanese news media reveals not just technological differences, but fundamental variations in how information is contextualized and presented to audiences.

### 4.3. The Case in Japan

The analysis of Japanese news media examples in this study follows these specific selection criteria:

1. Market Impact: Selected cases represent outlets with significant viewership/readership,

verified through industry data. For instance, NHK remains one of Japan's leading news providers (Reuters Institute, 2023).

2. Innovation Adoption: Cases demonstrate varying levels of digital transformation, from traditional formats to emerging digital approaches.

This spectrum allows examination of how Japanese media adapts EJ practices. This systematic selection enables analysis of how Japanese media organizations approach explanatory journalism across different platforms and formats.

The pioneer of explanatory news similar to EJ's practice could be NHK, Japan's only not-for-profit public broadcasting channel. It has produced several different expository news programs. For example, NHK used to broadcast *Shukan Kodomo* news (in English, "weekly news for children"), with news anchors pretending to be dads and moms teaching news to kids in a studio with handmade charts and miniature figures of Japanese society. In addition, NHK and other mainstream broadcasting news employ talk shows, using expert discussions with *Tarento* formats (i.e., famous comedians or idols in English) on the news, providing "difficult" news dealing with political and social problems to audiences in a more accessible manner.

While Japan has developed various forms of expository news content, it is important to distinguish these from contemporary EJ practices. Programs like NHK's Shukan Kodomo News or studio-based expert explanations like "Akira Ikegami's News So-Datta-No-Ka‼ (Japanese news variety shows explaining backgrounds of public affairs by a nationally famous journalist, Ikegami Akira)", while educational and explanatory in nature, represent a different approach to knowledge transmission than the interactive, multimedia-based EJ seen in outlets like *Vox* or *The Economist*. These Japanese formats, though valuable, emerge from and maintain traditional hierarchical information structures rather than adopting the audience-centered, interactive approach characteristic of contemporary EJ.

Japanese tabloid magazines used to provide easy-to-understand charts about rumors of political corruption, but not hard news. Business magazines and business news like *Nikkei Shinbun-sha* provide weekly explanatory pieces on finance and stocks in the weekend versions of newspapers—now digitalized with infographics. Traditional mainstream newspapers such as the *Asahi*-newspaper company and *Yomiuri*-newspaper company have made fonts bigger to be readable and use colorized photos and images to provide explanatory pieces.

In this sense, traditional news outlets in Japan have apparently provided expository news for a long time. However, have they actually done so? As noted, the Japanese news media explains every aspect of news events in detail but does not provide a context. It is broadcaster-centered

style. Audiences always need to learn why certain news is essential or newsworthy in the first place, yet this is not always made clear. Thus, explanatory news is somewhat different in Japan.

It must be conceded that this is my own perspective, developed as I tentatively assess mainstream Japanese news compared to explanatory journalism from English-speaking countries. Japanese news outlets have been trying to provide news of an expository nature, even if it does not give the whole context, and with a broadcaster-centered style in a studio setting. The audience must read between the lines to understand the context (or already know it), as the example shows in Figure 6 and Figure 7 on this paper.

A key difference between Japanese and Western EJ lies in how they present context and analysis. Western EJ, like Vox or The Wall Street Journal's YouTube channel, provides historical background, key concepts, and visual storytelling techniques before analyzing current events. For example, when explaining the U.S. debt ceiling, they trace its origins, past crises, and economic implications before discussing policy debates. This approach helps audiences grasp the issue's broader significance.

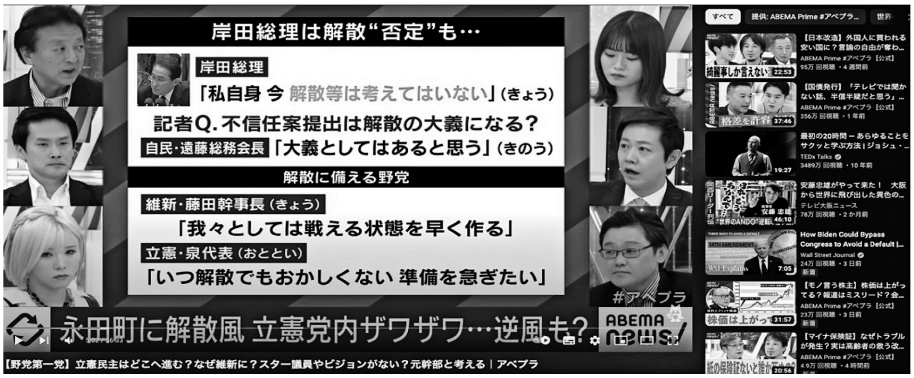
In contrast, Japanese news like NHK for example, focuses on factual reporting of government statements and legislative discussions. Reports summarize key points but often omit historical or economic context, assuming viewers already understand the background. A similar contrast appears in Ukraine War coverage for the past few years—Western EJ like BBC and The Economist explores historical relations, geopolitical stakes, and military strategy using interactive visuals with maps and satellite images, while Japanese news prioritizes Japan's diplomatic response and government briefings.

These differences reflect broader journalistic structures: Western EJ guides audiences through historical and systemic factors, while Japanese news presents official information neutrally, leaving interpretation to viewers. While both models have strengths, I believe that latter may engage general audiences more effectively in understanding complex global issues.

### 4.4. What about Emerging Online News Content in Japan?

Emerging online news agencies in Japan, such as News Picks and Ameba-Prime News, provide expository news programs mixed with the practice of EJ and with a bit of emphasis on the traditional news variety talk-show format mentioned previously, as illustrated in Figure 7, showing a discussion on politics with speakers on the sides of the screen and key points in the center.

Figure 7 *Abema Prime, Where is the opposition party trying to head to? Do they have an excellent political candidate? Let us discuss it with a former party member, 5/25/2023 on YouTube*




Caption: "Abema prime's political discussion asks, "where is the opposition party heading?" while incorporating both traditional expert commentary and digital engagement elements."

The online news format in Japan follows trends similar to explanatory pieces that we have seen in other countries since the Internet emerged. However, these online news outlets still employ traditional talk-show formats with comedians, famous CEOs of companies, and actors alongside so-called "experts." On these programs, they usually discuss societal problems that we see in traditional news. It is an exciting news format because we see a discussion between experts and non-experts (comedians, idols, movie stars, and news anchors). However, in the end, the audience never learns or remembers what the initial problems were after watching these programs because they keep arguing with each other without any conclusions, a format which is called ESPN-type news, as it seems like focusing mainly on who's winning and losing. The discussion is fascinating as it presents different viewpoints in a black-and-white way, with different viewpoints from experts and non-experts, like random comedians or members of girls' bands. It is clear that the perspectives are different, but they distort the main issues for the audience. Regardless, these news programs' mottoes say, "Making the economic news more interesting (*News Picks*)" or "News is interesting when we all talk (*Abema Prime*)," and they try to provide explanatory-style news in a more accessible way.

After the Covid-19 outbreak, news outlets and traditional mainstream newspaper companies such as the Asahi-newspaper company, and the previously-mentioned business newspaper pioneer, Nikkei-Shinbun, gradually began to emulate the practice of explanatory journalism with infographics, especially in digital format. Nikkei-Shinbun has a responsive, interactive web page that states, "The presentation will be summarized and explained in an easy-to-understand manner, using graphics" (Figure 8) on the heading of the news section with tiny letters. Here,

the Covid 19 outbreak forced newspaper agencies to become more digital and follow some practices of explanatory journalism, with infographics showing complex data in an easy-to-understand way. NHK also started to follow this trend in its web news, stating on the explanatory news section of the NHK international news website (see Figure 8), "International news in an easy-to-understand format: This is a special site featuring in-depth features and commentary articles on the latest world news."

Figure 8 *NHK and Nikkei*







Another outlet in Japan is on several YouTube channels featuring famous figures such as notable professors, famous CEOs, former politicians, professors, or actors, providing explanatory pieces on public affairs. This emerging business media outlet is called "Pivot," and provides business-related information and public affairs. It also provides podcast-style interviews and one talk show with upcoming business figures.

The problem here, though, is that I am not sure if we should consider these contents as "news" or explanatory journalism, as they are not traditional journalism, nor do they conduct actual journalism practice. Those contents can be characterized as "blogging of newsworthy events on YouTube." Or, podcast-style digital content. Nevertheless, they still provide news events and public affairs in an expository style by influential people.

### 4.5. Implications for News in Japan

The emergence of digital platforms in Japan presents a unique case study in the difference between digitizing traditional expository practices and developing true EJ approaches. While Japanese online news outlets have adopted digital tools, they often maintain traditional expository structures rather than embracing the full interactive potential that characterizes

contemporary EJ.

In Japan, to some extent, news content follows the practice of explanatory journalism, although it is not clearly stated that it is explanatory. The problem with the Japanese format of explanatory news is that it spells out every detail without a full context to see the whole picture. For example, there may be a news item about tax reform proposal by cabinet, but it does not include the background story or the reason cabinet proposing new tax reform. As mentioned earlier in this paper, I am uncertain whether we should consider this type of expository news without explaining context to be explanatory journalism, with infographics and content like *Vox*. However, this type of news in Japan still provides essential knowledge with infographics, animation, and some traditional Japanese news formats with studio settings.

The distinction between traditional Japanese expository practices and contemporary EJ is not merely technological but fundamental to how information is structured and presented. While Japanese media excel at detailed explanation, their approach maintains traditional knowledge transmission patterns, even when using digital tools. This differs from EJ's emphasis on interactive engagement and non-linear exploration of complex topics.

Research by the OECD (2023) shows that Japanese higher education emphasizes detailed knowledge transmission, with a majority of instruction time focused on foundational concepts compared to 45% in US universities. In journalism education specifically, Kinoshita (2021) documents how Japanese programs allocate curriculum time to technical skills and established practices, while US programs typically balance technical training with contextual analysis.

This systematic difference helps explain why Japanese EJ practices differ from global trends. Oi (2018) demonstrates how Japanese newsroom training emphasizes mastering established procedures over developing analytical frameworks, directly influencing how explanatory content is created. Similarly, Hayashi (2014) shows that Japanese journalism traditionally views its role as transmitting detailed information rather than providing interpretative frameworks.

My experience studying and teaching in both in Japan and the U.S., illustrates how these patterns manifest in practice. In Japan's educational system, teachers or professors provide only details of existing knowledge without context. For instance, they may explain to students a grammatical concept from English while they often do not provide when to apply those grammatical forms in a real-life situation like speaking, reading, or writing. This becomes particularly evident in how news organizations approach explanatory content - Japanese media often provide detailed information without broader contextual frameworks, while Western EJ practices typically begin with context before examining details.

This structural difference helps explain why Japanese news media, while expository in

nature, have not fully adopted the EJ practices seen elsewhere. The audience must often analyze whether hidden meaning is included between the line to understand the context.

In Japan's news setting, it is up to the student or viewer's effort to understand the context of the given knowledge. We might reasonably conclude that the Japanese cultural context may impact how people share knowledge with others, and even news media outlets follow that tradition unconsciously when it comes to explanatory pieces of news. Elites or experts claim ownership of knowledge or information, and other people need to ask if they want the knowledge or context. Thus, as noted, the news explains things without context. Given these observations, it is logical to consider that there is a connection between media culture and the forms of news presentation when it comes to Japanese news, given the closed nature of media industries in Japan.

Thus, Japanese news media content contains some expository elements; nonetheless, it is somewhat different from EJ practices that can be seen in some European countries and the United States. It is uncertain whether we can say that some expository content in Japan can be considered Explanatory Journalism.

## 5. The Future Integration of Journalism and Education

Looking at the transformation of journalism practices in the digital age, particularly through the lens of Explanatory Journalism (EJ), we can see the emergence of a hybrid form that combines journalistic and educational functions. This integration isn't merely theoretical but represents a natural evolution in how information is shared and understood in contemporary society.

The Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023 shows that audiences increasingly seek content that not only informs but builds understanding. This trend aligns with what we've observed in EJ practices elsewhere, where news organizations like Vox and others have effectively merged journalistic principles with educational approaches. Their success suggests that the future of journalism may lie in this integration of roles.

In the Japanese context, this integration presents both opportunities and challenges. Japanese news media already demonstrate some educational characteristics in their approach to explanation, as seen in examples from NHK and Nikkei or Abema prime news. However, the traditional hierarchical structure of Japanese journalism, where experts explain to presumed "uneducated" audiences, differs significantly from the interactive, collaborative approach seen in successful EJ practices. They somehow remain with that studio-setting and broadcaster-centered approach, to provide news to an audience.

Some examples demonstrate how this integration might work effectively:

1. **Digital Platform Integration** The Economist Educational Foundation shows how news content can be transformed into structured learning experiences while maintaining journalistic integrity. Their approach has resulted in improved audience engagement with complex topics (The Economist Educational Foundation Impact Report, 2023).
2. **Interactive Knowledge Building** Reuters Digital News Academy's research about digital news consumptions demonstrates how viewers engage with digital contents and knowledge (Reuters Institute Annual Report, 2023). From there, we could assume that building digital contents for sharing interactive knowledge may lead to more engagement.

This integration requires careful consideration of three key areas: 1) content development that maintains journalistic standards while enhancing educational value; 2) effective delivery methods across digital platforms; and 3) cultural adaptation that respects traditional practices while embracing innovation. For Japanese media organizations, the challenge lies in building on their explanatory strengths while adapting to these new approaches like EJ does.

For Japanese media organizations, this integration between journalism and education could offer a way forward that builds on their existing strengths in explanation while addressing current limitations. The challenge lies not in choosing between traditional and innovative approaches, but in finding ways to combine them effectively. The integration of journalism and education appears increasingly necessary as society becomes more complex and fragmented. As Kovach and Rosenstiel (2021) argue, journalism's role in helping citizens understand their world has never been more crucial. Also, for the ordinary person, the opportunity to learn about the world at this time is unprecedented in history. This integration might offer a path to fulfill this role more effectively in the digital age.

## Implications for Future Research and Practice: Integration of EJ and Education

I stated earlier that Japanese news contents tends to be expository in nature, but somewhat different from what is seen on the *Economist* or *Vox*, and also argued that the topic of EJ would not be discussed in Japan due to its "closed" industries. For these reasons, it may be the case that EJ does not fit well in Japan. A further assessment is needed, whether EJ may integrate into journalism practice in Japan. As previously mentions, EJ may happen within, the industries or outside of, mainstream formats.

Viewership creates revenues to maintain news agencies in the long run, which might solve declining news viewership in Japan among young people. Still, we need a more critical assessment of what explanatory journalism in Japan could be and how it influences journalism practice in the digital age. For the moment, we cannot categorically conclude that EJ is a journalistic practice that can contribute to solving current problems that journalism faces, especially in Japan. Nonetheless, EJ does embody forms of knowledge and information-sharing techniques that are suited to the digitizing of society and that seem to indicate the direction of journalism in the future, as noted by Pavel Bielik and Jan Višňovský (April 2021) and Zhang (2016).

The future of journalism will undoubtedly yield new developments. EJ is an excellent example of trending adaptation to digital tools. Digital explanatory news often integrates so seamlessly with other online content that it may not resemble traditional news formats typically seen on television with broadcasters centered in studio settings or in newspapers with letters. This content style, particularly when combined with infographics on platforms like YouTube, has complicated the conventional understanding of journalism, making it worthy of study.

Hence, I see a future where Journalism, mainly expository content, may eventually be integrated with teaching and learning activities in universities, schools, or elsewhere. There have already been examples in the U.S.; the documentaries and programs provided by PBS and NPR, serve as excellent cases. Meanwhile, educational content in the U.S. has become highly digitized. Students routinely access learning materials online, textbooks frequently have digital or online components, and presentation in learning materials now routinely incorporate graphics and multimedia components in the way that EJ news does.

Thus, the time may come when educators and other professionals will be required to incorporate journalistic practices, especially EJ long employed in professional journalism, to present explanations, histories, processes, analyses, stories, reasoning and other knowledge about society. In such cases, EJ's practices could serve as a model. In this case, there are many issues to consider, including the following: What kind of organizational structure should EJ take to operate correctly? What kind of education (EJ media literacy) must the recipients acquire for new forms of EJ? What are EJ's limitations and potential?

## Concluding Remarks: The Future of Journalism Lies in the Sharing of Knowledge in a Form that Integrates Education

French philosopher Jacques Attali predicts that society will become increasingly fragmented, and the fragmentation of individual communities will become inevitable. He argues that journalism and educational institutions will become increasingly important to share and link information among these communities.

I want to emphasize that journalism and education have come to share the same goal of providing a "place to learn" and a "place to share knowledge" about society. In the future, educational and journalistic practice will undoubtedly play an essential role in providing opportunities for learning and sharing new knowledge appropriate to the times. However, it will be difficult for existing organizations such as T.V. stations, newspapers, research institutes, and schools to adequately meet the possible changes in the future if they continue and remain as they are today.

Theoretically, anyone can be an information creator in the Internet age. The boundary between receiver and sender will disappear, but at the same time, new methods of information sharing will be required to suit the new demand. At least in Japan, neither news agencies nor educational institutions have adapted to that change. That may be why the study of EJ is nearly nonexistent there.

As for the case in Japan, there are potential answers for two of the three critical questions mentioned in the previous section. First, what organizational structure is needed for properly executing EJ? A collective or hybrid organization equipped with reporting and editing functions will be needed to present information in a way that allows people to grasp the whole picture of public affairs.

I would like to argue that Journalism and Education are interrelated activities on the same continuum with respect to the transmission of knowledge, and indeed complement one another. Although each is considered a distinct field of expertise that requires special knowledge and skills, the differences between the two are disappearing with the spread of digital technology. Educational endeavors, including universities, and journalism, will be integrated and overlap with one another. Journalism has the primary function of "informing people about daily events." On the other hand, education focuses on explaining the background of various "daily events," that is, the science, history, societal, psychological, and other elements. Second, what skills are needed to implement the functions of that organizational structure? A group of experts in each

field must be part of this enterprise. From journalism, journalists with expertise in science, industry, history, etc.; producers, and editors who produce the overall content, presenters and anchors who can straightforwardly share knowledge about society, web producers and editors, infographics designers - these people may all be necessary to form an organization where various experts gather and share their knowledge. From the educational field, educators will complement the journalist group, supplying expertise in all subject matters, targeted for various ages and sectors of society. These educators will also be conversant in media design and presentation skills. Such a hybrid organization, staffed by individuals with high-level reporting and editing skills, will be needed to serve as a bridge to individuals like YouTubers and TikTokers, who themselves are part of the chain of information transmission.

Properly implemented, such a journalism-education hybrid has the potential to help instill critical thinking skills in younger generations (older generations too), teach the next generation what is needed for successful and healthy living, and elevate public discourse in society.

Such an endeavor might well begin by considering deeper discussions on Explanatory Journalism, including content creators and information disseminators who handle public interest issues and public affairs.

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[1] T. E. Mann, Brookings Institution, *What is explanatory journalism?* February 26, 2016, YouTube. https://youtu.be/p9XHSrB9cqk

[2] A supplemental or alternative footage intercut with the main shot, a method that is often used in a documentary film.

[3] However, now circulation rates are declining dramatically.

《SUMMARY》

# Explanatory Journalism in the Digital Age: Global Practices and Japan's Media Landscape

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Explanatory Journalism (EJ) has emerged as a vital practice in digital media, blending multimedia elements to make complex topics accessible to general audiences. Unlike traditional or data journalism, EJ focuses on contextual analysis and audience engagement, using platforms like YouTube and integrating infographics, animations, and interactive visuals. Outlets such as Vox, The Economist, and Johnny Harris exemplify this trend, offering in-depth, multimodal content appealing to younger audiences. However, EJ faces challenges in Japan, where hierarchical media structures and limited digital transformation constrain its adoption. Japanese media emphasizes detailed explanations without broader contexts, maintaining studio-centered formats. The lack of critical academic discourse further limits EJ's growth in Japan. As digitalization reshapes journalism globally, EJ highlights the potential for merging journalistic and educational practices to foster understanding and critical thinking. This hybrid approach could redefine journalism, creating opportunities for media organizations to engage fragmented, digitally-savvy audiences worldwide.