

# The Historical Development of Japanese ODA Policy in the OECD: A Corpus Analysis of DAC Aid Reviews

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## **Abstract**

This paper provides a discussion on the historical development of Japanese ODA policy and practice through a linguistic study of policy documents. The study applies corpus linguistic methods to analyze OECD-DAC Annual Aid Reviews to reveal patterns within relevant texts over three decades (from 1962 to the 1990s). Policy discussions have been generated by interpreting the linguistic patterns in tandem with existing literature on international development aid policy and practice.

Findings have revealed that several theoretical policy narratives that are used to describe Japanese ODA policy are consistent with the linguistic characteristics of OECD policy documents drafted by the Japanese government. While these findings do provide some additional support for existing theories on development cooperation, they are insufficient in providing new insight and a deeper understanding about the history of ODA.

Newer and notable insights and observations into historical trends in Japanese ODA policy have instead been produced through deep readings into counter-intuitive patterns within the data. These include the seemingly politically motivated gaps in the language-use and terminology utilized between the OECD and Japanese authorities; a notable absence of coverage on characteristic policy decisions and actions taken by the Japanese government (i.e., relatively few mentions of China despite being the largest recipient of Japanese ODA); and the discovery that while many have long asserted that Japan's ODA has identified itself through a strong focus on self-help, the concept itself originated from OECD-DAC discourse.

## **Keywords:**

History of ODA, OECD, DAC Annual Review, policy analysis, corpus linguistics

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Historical Trends in Official Development Assistance (ODA) Policy

An extensive body of literature exists within the field of international development that aims to provide theoretical understandings of the past, current, and future landscape of development cooperation. Historical insight of aid policy is often informed by contexts of the political economy of domestic interests (Schraeder et al. 1998), the impacts of the cold war (Maizels and Nissanke 1984), or colonialism (Alesina and Dollar 2000), and have informed socio-political theories that have framed broad trends in policy decisions across time. It may be safe to say that studies that inform current development aid policies are dominated by economic studies, and have been influenced greatly by pioneering work that explored empirical means of investigating the relationship between disbursement patterns and political variables (McKinlay and Little 1979, Shraeder et al. 1998, Tuman et al. 2001). This includes the well-discussed narratives of the characteristics of Japanese ODA, such as its geographic concentration within Asia, and the significance placed on economic infrastructure, among other features (c.f., Kato et al. 2016). Such examinations of policy trends have pushed scholars to search for objective evidence of impacts, such as economic growth, improved health indicators, increased industrial output in specific sectors, larger agricultural yields, or other outcomes and indicators linked to development goals.

While research in this area is extensive and well-established, it is the *relationships* (i.e., correlations) between outcomes and policies that are often analyzed, rather than the policy making process itself. Insights into the policy process are instead often produced by combining a systematic observation of specific outcomes to qualitative understandings of the policy-making process (domestic, international, or both). The current paper takes a different approach by considering how policy documents themselves may reveal trends and characteristics, rather than the outcomes and indicators that have been linked to development goals (a link and relationship that in many cases, require their own systematic studies to validate). The current analysis is thus substantiated with empirical observations of linguistic evidence, and provides a level of robustness and quantitative validity to the generated discussions of policy language. In other words, existing studies often only consider intentions behind policy design processes as a precursor for evaluating policy effectiveness, while this study focuses on unearthing historical insights from the policy documents themselves as official expressions of intentions (Lowi and Ginsburg 1996).

The objective of this paper is to provide historical insight into Japanese ODA policies within the international community through a systematic observation of policy documents, i.e., policy memorandums and reports drafted for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC). The DAC is part of a high level multilateral body in which representatives from member countries discuss, define, and monitor aid (among various other economic) policies and practices. OECD-DAC discourse is thus representative of, and an appropriate context in which to observe how the Japanese government defines, frames, and communicates its ODA policies to the international community. Observable historical trends and characteristics of Japanese ODA will be unearthed by treating policy documents as secondary data to be analyzed directly.

## 1.2 Guiding Questions

The current paper will address the following questions to produce a discussion on the history of Japanese ODA.

- What linguistic policy patterns and trends can and/or cannot be observed in DAC reviews of Japanese ODA?
- What historical trends can be observed from a linguistic analysis of policy documents outlining the ODA efforts and policies of Japan?

In both cases, discussions are generated by interpreting the linguistic patterns together with existing literature on international development aid policy and practice. The purpose of the discussion will be to consider the implications for international development cooperation policy.

## 2. Data and Methods

### 2.1 Background: The OECD-DAC Annual Reviews

OECD member countries publish peer reviews of their aid efforts in regular intervals. Presently, member countries are reviewed by the DAC every five to six years. In the peer reviews, representatives from two other examining “peer” countries (other OECD members) work with the DAC Secretariat to produce a broad assessment of the overall performance of a country’s development aid (OECD 2017). The peer reviews represent an opportunity for learning lessons about aid practices from other countries, while simultaneously acting as a public accountability mechanism by monitoring domestic and international commitments and responsibilities of governments and other stakeholders, as well as monitoring member performance against internationally accepted benchmarks and standards.

The Peer Reviews in their current form have been in practice since 2000, but the reviews were originally conducted on an annual basis, with the first annual aid review conducted in 1962. The original purpose and goals of the annual aid reviews were drafted in a Resolution attached to the first Annual Review published in 1962, which stated that the primary purpose of the reviews was to “review the amount and nature of the effort being made...and to exchange experience regarding bilateral aid.”<sup>1</sup> The first reviews were thus primarily aimed at sharing information internally amongst member countries, and there was no transparent form of public accountability strengthened through the processes, as the contents were not published or released publicly. In 1970, the DAC decided to begin publishing press releases to provide a selective summary on the aid review findings and meetings, and it was only in 1994 that the contents of the aid reviews in their entirety were released publicly. The full-text memorandums analyzed in this paper in fact only entered the public domain after their de-classification, which in some cases occurred decades after they were drafted.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: 1962 Resolution Instituting an Annual Review of the Development Assistance Efforts and Policies of the Members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC.AR(62)1 Annex A, pp.8)

<sup>2</sup> Declassification of documents can take decades due to a policy drafted in 1974 (and updated in 1997) that systematically

The reasoning behind certain aid review processes appears to be a consequence of administrative capacity rather than a strict enforcement of internal accountability and protocol. The initial annual aid reviews were in principle conducted by the Secretariat, with assistance provided by other member countries to prepare pertinent questions and partake in discussions of the country being examined. The first set of aid reviews were prepared with the help of the “Working Party on the Annual Aid Review of the DAC”, which drafted Directives on how the reviews should be structured. The Directives for the Country Memoranda suggest that aid reviews should begin with an introduction that describes the basic features and general principles of a member country’s aid programs and policies, followed by a detailed description of the following topics:

- a) The current aid effort (volume of aid; terms and conditions of aid; official contributions by purpose; distribution of contributions by recipient countries)
- b) Organization and programming of Aid (organization and administration; programming criteria)
- c) Technical Cooperation.

These early documents (the resolutions and working party memos from the 1960s) state that the aid reviews are an opportunity to share information between member countries on aid practices, although the Directives contain detailed guidance (and arguably, substantial emphasis on) the “current aid effort”. These early versions can thus be understood as the DAC’s attempts at creating a process to better grasp the quantity and type of finance being disbursed by their members. As the process established itself as an institutional norm, we can see that peer feedback was gradually increased and critical input could be used to pressure members to align with emerging international policy priorities.

## 2.2 The Data: Three Decades of Annual Aid Reviews

Various documents can in fact be claimed to be associated with a member country’s Aid Review, with many being drafted on an irregular basis. For the purposes of this study, the most regularly drafted components of the Annual Reviews of development aid policy have been examined. These are the (1) Memorandum, (2) Report by the Secretariat, and (3) Questions to the Japanese Government or Summary of the Examination. A total of 30 years’ worth of documents have been collected between the years of 1962-1995, outlined below in Table 1. Due to data availability limitations, “(3) Questions to the Japanese Government” could not be obtained from 1979 onwards, and no documents could be collected for 1987, 1989, 1993, and 1994. These documents could not be found on the public databases in Japan or within the archives at the OECD Paris headquarters.

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restricts the public release of documents. Access to all aid reviews are “restricted to participants only” upon their completion, and the OECD is required (subject to the objection by specific Member countries or the Secretary General) to automatically downgrade the imposed restrictions, so that a minimum of 6 years would be required for any document to become “unclassified”. Only those “unclassified” documents that may be of potential historical interest are then added to the archives after another additional 10 years after being downgraded. Thus, we can estimate that since the distribution of memorandums on the aid policies of member countries were “restricted to participants only”, a minimum of at least 16 years would need to have elapsed under current policies for the documents to have become publicly accessible.

**Table 1 - Documents included in the corpus analysis of Japanese Aid Reviews**

	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
(1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
(2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
(3)	○	○	○	-	-	○	-	-	○	○	-	○	○	○	○
	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1988	1990	1991	1992	1995
(1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	-	○	○
(2)	○	○	○	○	-	○	-	○	-	○	○	○	○	○	○
(3)	○	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

(1) Memorandum of Japan

(2) Report by the Secretariat (On the Development Assistance and Policies of Japan)

(3) [Questions to the Japanese Government] or [Summary of Points made in Examination]

### 2.3 Methodology: Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis

Once the documents are collected and compiled, the data can be treated as a corpus that can be analyzed. Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis combines methods from corpus linguistics to generate statistical rankings of linguistic items to identify key terms and concepts within large bodies of texts. The rankings provide a level of quantitative validity to the qualitative interpretations of complex texts that can reveal the contextual significance of specific linguistic items. The quantitative approach employed here does have its limitations, primarily in that it is based on a simplistic assumption – that the frequency of occurrence of terms, in other words, the number of times a word is mentioned within a document, is assumed to be representative of the significance of that word, term, or concept. It is important to emphasize that this is not the strongest assumption, as the frequency of a word is not necessarily the determining factor linked to its “importance” or “significance” within a body of text. It is entirely possible that a central element of a discourse is mentioned very little in a document. Corpus linguistic methodologies simply provide an objective view of certain patterns within a text which may be used as justification for identifying areas that require deeper contextual readings of the documents being examined. Corpus-assisted discourse analytic methods have been used to identify characteristics of discourse in various fields, such as professional and educational engineering contexts (Handford and Matous 2011, Handford et al. 2018), and has also been applied to the discourse of ODA by the author in previous studies (Maemura 2016).

A simple calculation of the relative frequency of terms can thus reveal which concepts are most prominent within each year<sup>3</sup>. A complete list of every word mentioned in the document is created, and the frequency of occurrence (and inflections or other versions of the word with the same stem) is tallied and divided by the total number of words in the document (again, excluding the functional words noted in footnote 3). This gives every

<sup>3</sup> These frequency lists exclude functional words, make up the most frequent words in any large collection of words, which are: [the] [of] [and] [to] [a] [in] [that] [is] [was] [for] (c.f. Zipf's Law)

word a score which can be used to create a ranked list of terms in the document. See Table 1 for a list of the top 30 frequently occurring terms in each year.

### General characteristics of Japanese ODA policies represented in frequency lists

The basic frequency lists reveal some relatively intuitive observations concerning the linguistic patterns and characteristics of the documents. For example, all years have words falling under a category of **finance**, with terms such as “**millions**”, “**loans**”, and percentages, within the top 20 (highlighted in **green**), showing how the annual reviews were primarily a summary and explanation of financial resources disbursed by the Japanese government.

Over time, we can observe that terms such as “**million**” which indicate specific funding amounts (e.g., “100 million dollars for a project in Africa”) decline in prominence very gradually through the 70s and 80s, until 1990 when the term drops out of the list completely (replaced by a less prominent “billions”), indicating how the peer reviews appear to have evolved to place relatively less focus on describing the specific amounts of funding, and more emphasis on describing the nature, qualities, and characteristics of the aid activities, programs, and policies.

Another clear pattern observed within the frequency lists is the prominence of the term “**private**”<sup>4</sup> (highlighted in blue in Tables 2a and 2b) early on within the corpus (from 1962 through to 1971), and its virtual disappearance from the frequency list from the 1972 onwards. A possible interpretation of this pattern is that it is a reflection of the historical beginnings of Japanese ODA, which was mostly taken on by private entities, as the post-WWII Japanese government did not possess the capacity to implement ODA projects overseas, or to retain overseas trainees as part of technical cooperation initiatives up until the 1950s and 60s. ODA during these decades were mostly implemented through the private sector and expanded through the strategic expanded use of quasi-governmental organizations to incorporate private participation into development cooperation (Sato 2016).

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<sup>4</sup> Of the 679 mentions of the term “private” between 1962-1971, approximately 30% are mentioning “flows” of private capital (from Japan to recipient countries); approximately 15% are “private export credits”; and approximately 12% are of “private direct investments” – meaning we can assume reasonably that at least half of the mentions of the word “private” are pertaining to Japanese private sector participation (rather than other possible contextual interpretations, such as private sector involvement in recipient countries).

Table 2a - Simple Frequency Rankings (1/3)

YEAR RANK	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
1	million	aid	1963	million	million	million	million	million	million	development
2	japan	1962	japanese	1964	japan	japan	aid	total	1969	million
3	development	japanese	million	aid	year	aid	1967	development	development	1970
4	year	million	country	japan	1965	development	japan	aid	aid	japan
5	1961	japan	private	year	assistance	1966	development	country	total	country
6	country	projects	year	assistance	country	loans	japanese	1968	japan	year
7	assistance	development	development	technical	japanese	year	country	japan	official	assistance
8	official	country	japan	japanese	loans	1965	loans	loans	1968	japanese
9	capital	year	aid	government	development	country	terms	year	japanese	loans
10	increase	government	investments	operate	government	assistance	year	amount	increase	total
11	contributions	assistance	technical	official	technical	increase	increase	official	assisting	aid
12	dollars	official	capital	country	aid	fund	assistance	cent	year	1969
13	payments	capital	official	development	terms	terms	programme	grants	country	official
14	japanese	1961	loans	increase	operate	grants	technical	per	economic	increase
15	projects	economic	operate	private	credits	official	economic	1967	loans	economic
16	loans	terms	increase	1963	official	operate	official	private	flows	export
17	economic	export	total	economic	economic	economic	1966	table	private	cooperate
18	aid	loans	government	1965	increase	technical	government	technical	export	private
19	private	private	disbursements	loans	projects	japanese	grants	japanese	per	1971
20	export	amount	assistance	amount	private	percent	1968	increase	cent	technical
21	government	bank	1962	disbursements	1966	amount	export	terms	amount	grants
22	extend	contributions	terms	terms	commit	private	cent	credits	technical	investments
23	credits	flows	export	programme	export	bank	cooperate	assistance	grants	terms
24	balance	recipient	amount	per	total	government	credits	including	contributions	flows
25	finance	operate	projects	bank	1964	1967	disbursements	recipient	credits	disbursements
26	terms	1963	import	capital	agreements	export	private	capital	government	government
27	grants	import	1964	cent	direct	import	capital	bilateral	cooperate	import
28	recipient	total	commit	total	finance	total	fiscal	economic	terms	operate
29	yen	resources	programme	fund	agricultural	commit	amount	net	disbursements	questions
30	fund	technical	grants	activities	grants	credits	fund	export	investments	credits

Table 2b - Simple Frequency Rankings (2/3)

YEAR RANK	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
1	million	development	million	development	development	japan	japan	development	development	development
2	development	million	development	million	japan	country	development	japan	oda	oda
3	japan	1972	japan	japan	country	development	assistance	1978	1979	projects
4	1971	japan	country	1974	1975	oda	1977	oda	japan	million
5	cooperate	country	assistance	country	million	per	loans	country	country	country
6	assistance	loans	aid	cooperate	oda	cent	country	increase	million	increase
7	year	assistance	loans	assistance	billion	1976	oda	assistance	assistance	total
8	country	increase	1973	projects	loans	disbursements	million	aid	bilateral	assistance
9	economic	1971	billion	year	increase	increase	increase	projects	projects	bilateral
10	1970	per	year	technical	assistance	projects	projects	bilateral	increase	grants
11	official	year	100	1973	1974	japanese	aid	million	total	table
12	technical	cent	cooperate	billion	aid	assistance	disbursements	loans	1978	japan
13	billion	japanese	food	agricultural	projects	loans	grants	grants	per	1980
14	increase	total	increase	aid	terms	dac	total	disbursements	cent	loans
15	project	billion	total	loans	year	year	operate	total	disbursements	aid
16	amount	projects	grants	terms	disbursements	total	bilateral	cooperate	grants	commit
17	basis	grants	projects	grants	grants	1975	year	1977	aid	capital
18	loans	aid	oda	increase	cooperate	commit	commit	table	loans	1979
19	fund	official	1972	commit	import	aid	technical	technical	table	technical
20	bank	disbursements	indonesia	research	economic	operate	terms	year	share	year
21	1972	oda	terms	1975	bilateral	terms	table	per	year	disbursements
22	aid	technical	bilateral	disbursements	commit	import	share	recipient	terms	official
23	total	amount	commit	total	total	authorities	investments	share	amount	share
24	disbursement	terms	official	agency	extend	fund	per	cent	import	agricultural
25	programme	agency	agricultural	agreement	per	grants	1976	terms	commit	amount
26	research	credits	technical	oda	export	official	direct	capital	technical	major
27	agricultural	export	amount	programme	cent	programme	cent	investments	major	terms
28	international	fund	per	extend	private	bilateral	finance	official	1977	energy
29	Previous	finance	extend	per	government	export	government	programme	economic	indonesia
30	Agency	investments	japanese	cent	japanese	may	programme	direct	1980	cent

Table 2c - Simple Frequency Rankings (3/3)

YEARRANK	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1988	1990	1991	1992	1995
1	development	development	development	development	japan	oda	aid	aid	japan	japan
2	country	country	japan	country	oda	japan	japan	japan	aid	oda
3	projects	japan	projects	japan	country	aid	country	country	oda	development
4	japan	aid	oda	aid	development	country	development	oda	country	country
5	oda	oda	country	oda	aid	development	oda	programme	development	aid
6	1981	projects	aid	assistance	1985	1987	projects	loans	projects	operate
7	total	loans	loans	cooperate	loans	loans	assistance	development	total	projects
8	assistance	assistance	1983	1984	projects	dac	loans	projects	dac	per
9	loans	increase	increase	increase	dac	assistance	1988	per	assistance	programme
10	increase	bilateral	per	grants	1984	billion	1989	cent	evaluate	japanese
11	aid	economic	cent	million	increase	cent	dac	japanese	per	cent
12	bilateral	cooperate	assistance	share	grants	per	programme	1988	1991	dac
13	1980	grants	grants	projects	million	million	japanese	1989	grants	assistance
14	table	1982	dac	loans	plan	terms	per	oecf	1990	jica
15	grants	million	year	technical	total	1986	policy	year	loans	international
16	million	government	japanese	bilateral	cent	bilateral	year	dac	100	total
17	year	total	terms	total	finance	increase	cent	finance	cent	grants
18	share	import	1982	year	per	untying	increase	total	japanese	government
19	commit	100	total	100	terms	grants	grants	grants	jica	technical
20	technical	terms	agricultural	africa	year	projects	provide	indonesia	year	year
21	recipient	activities	bilateral	capital	assistance	year	total	operate	economic	1994
22	agricultural	capital	million	amount	share	total	finance	bilateral	million	economic
23	100	public	share	economic	cooperate	share	implementing	policy	share	policy
24	capital	table	plan	1983	contributions	cooperate	oecf	ordination	implementing	loans
25	disbursements	1981	table	recipient	recipient	recipient	activities	assistance	increase	recipient
26	finance	making	recipient	terms	disbursements	japanese	also	increase	programme	1993
27	programme	year	finance	policy	amount	policy	bilateral	plan	recipient	bilateral
28	import	effect	1981	implementing	bilateral	contributions	billion	billion	activities	oecf
29	plan	international	contributions	finance	economic	disbursements	efforts	technical	bilateral	organizations
30	economic	technical	disbursements	study	implementing	finance	indonesia	terms	provide	provide

### 3. Refining the Analysis: Inverse Document Frequency

#### 3.1 Adjusting for Regular Patterns and Commonness within the Collection

The preliminary frequency lists generated above can provide an objective overview of the contents of Japan's Annual aid reviews over three decades. However, readers will immediately notice the frequent repetition of certain words, topics, and themes across the collection, with terms such as “development”, “aid”, and “Japan” obviously ranking high in each list. A refined analysis would require this corpus to be compared with other lists, to determine whether or not these terms are in fact unique to the collection (all of the annual reviews of all member countries) overall.

In order to reflect the relative differences between each document in this corpus, word-scores can be recalculated to highlight the proportional occurrence of each term across the collection, and to adjust for common terms within every year. This is done through calculating a score known as a Term Frequency Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF) score, which multiplies the term frequency ranking score by the inverse value of the frequency of the term within all other documents. This method provides a counterbalance to the ranking scores for very common words such as “Japan”, “development”, or “aid/assistance”.

#### 3.2 Term Frequency Inverse Document Frequency Score (TF-IDF)

The methodological rationale behind TF-IDF is rather simple, although its calculation can become complex as a corpus grows in size. The current paper takes a basic and simplified TF-IDF approach, which will be explained here. The basic frequency rankings introduced in Table 2 are a list of words with the highest relative Term Frequency score (TF score). This is calculated as:

$$[\# \text{ of occurrences}] \div [\text{Total } \# \text{ of words in the document}]$$

For example, if the word “Japan” occurred 10 times in a document that was 100 words long, the relative TF score would be 0.1:

$$[10] \div [100] = 0.1$$

The proportion of a word occurring in other documents within a collection (in this case, across all years) can be incorporated by multiplying this TF score by its Inverse Document Frequency (IDF) score. This value is the logarithmically scaled inverse fraction of the number of documents/years that contain the same word. Thus, if the document collection is made up of 30 years of material, and all 30 years contain the term “Japan”, the calculation would look as follows:

$$\log([\text{Total number of years}] \div [\# \text{ of years that the word occurs}]) \\ \log([30] \div [30]) = \log 1 = 0$$

The more frequently a word occurs in other years, the lower the value becomes. In this example, the TF score for “Japan” would be multiplied by zero. This scaling would completely remove all words that are universally common across every year (mentioned in all 30 years) from the list of scores. The scaling calculation can be adjusted, or an arbitrary value can be added to the value so that terms with an IDF value of

0 are not completely removed from the rankings list<sup>5</sup>.

Once the TF-IDF scores are calculated for all words in the corpus, a new ranking list can be generated which places less weight on common words. These lists are shown in Tables 3a-c, and reveal a different set of patterns within the corpus. The following section will describe and discuss these linguistic patterns along with existing development theories and narratives, in an attempt to identify consistencies and discrepancies against the literature.

## 4. Findings: Consistencies and Inconsistencies across Time and Literature

### 4.1 Consistencies: Reparations, Structuralism, Environmentalism, and the Rise of NGOs

The refined rankings list immediately reveal characteristics that are not reflected in the simple frequency lists, and can provide insight into novel interpretations of the historical characteristics of Japanese ODA policy. For example, a recognizable keyword that surfaces in the refined list but is not prominent within the simple frequency lists, is the term “**reparations**”, which can be seen mentioned throughout the **1960s**. This highlights how the aid reviews were in fact mentioning Japanese ODA as a means of war reparations explicitly within official policy documents.

In **1970**, “**tying**” surfaces into prominence, and can be found mentioned consistently up until 1988, revealing the significance of the tied-aid debate which formed as Japan worked towards developing a memorandum of understanding on untying bilateral loans with 9 other DAC members (Manning 2016) in 1974. In 1977, the term “**structure**” surfaces, and was identified as a possible indicator of emerging structural adjustment policies that became part of the development agenda in the late 1970s (Pankaj 2005). A closer reading into this keyword revealed that the term “**structure**” did not occur a single time in the memorandum of Japan, but in fact that all mentions of “**structure**” were contained within the “Report by the Secretariat and Questions”. In other words, it was the language drafted by the DAC Secretariat within questions aimed at the Japanese government that mentioned “industrial structure”, “administrative structure”, and the “structure of foreign trade”. Similarly, “**security**” emerges in 1976, 1982, and 1984, in passages that describe the emerging issue of resource security. “Food security” is mentioned and described in 1976 and 1984, while the 1982 memorandum describes the need for Japan to strengthen “comprehensive security” for the “promotion of economic and social stability in the developing countries.”<sup>6</sup> The observations are in consistency with narratives provided by Kato (2016), who describes a shift within the Japanese government that occurred in response to various policy shocks, such as the oil shock and a sudden embargo of American soybeans to the Japanese market (i.e., the need for resource security); and political riots in Southeast Asia in protest of Japanese dominance in overseas markets (i.e., the need for economic and social stability).

<sup>5</sup> Both calculations were made for the research project but for the purposes of this paper, Tables 3a-c lists the scores with common terms removed completely.

<sup>6</sup> Source: 1982 Report by the Secretariat and Questions on the Development Assistance Efforts and Policies of Japan (DAC/AR(82)2/21, pp. 15)

Table 3a - TFIDF scored rankings (1/3)

YEAR RANK	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
1	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1967	1969	1970
2	1960	1963	1962	1963	supplying	1965	1966	1968	1968	1969
3	insert	1961	receiving	1965	1966	percent	lists	cont'd	rising	1971
4	liberalized	concentration	1964	question	1964	1967	1968	islands	question	transfers
5	substantially	borrowings	percent	programming	percent	repayments	softening	footnote	1967	Tbe*
6	Inclusive	contracts	programming	fy1965	determining	transfers	significantly	questionnaire	commodity	1960
7	deferred	persian	corporations	leading	centralized	borrowings	category	unallocated	programming	1966
8	1962	provisions	1961	receiving	executive	determining	reminder	insert	1966	1967
9	1957	delays	taxable	salary	consideration	favorable	receiving	1966	tying	examining
10	dollars	insert	declined	setting	significantly	softening	conducted	1969	1964	1968
11	amortization	assessment	amortisation	initialled	programming	1964	offered	indus	1970	1965
12	1956	conventions	insert	category	subsidy	programming	continue	refinancing	1960	plows
13	determining	screening	appropriations	ordination	involving	consolidation	decrease	s8650*	category	consideration
14	earnings	completed	dividends	suppliers'	refinancing	refinancing	rigidity	001	registering	considers
15	repairs	aside	rising	centre	insert	seems	particular	004	delegations	ships
16	usiminas	maturity	liberalized	decrease	1963	achieved	instalment	consolidation	i960*	rice
17	details	appraisal	repayments	appropriations	consolidation	ceylon	courses	exclusive	consideration	i960
18	treaties	Profit	repairs	donation	demonstration	agreement	expenditures	sales	repayments	industry
19	outflow	connexion*	leading	imbalances	acknowledged	ngum	obtained	diminished	1965	tariff
20	conventions	unexpected	industry	livelihood	suppliers'	main	amended	flags	development	continue
21	bnde*	agreement	centre	indian	calls	comprising	trend	007	industry	tlie*
22	buoyant	declined	liabilities	main	offered	coming	competing	guinea	ffi*	members
23	contributory	gulf	minas	agreement	delhi	question	revolving	061	japon*	appropriations
24	cruzeiros	shift	contrast	intentions	borrowings	southeast	shipment	549	1962	100o0*
25	formidable	malaya	corps	utilisation	plants	strongly	1965	oman	statistics	steeply
26	sunken	premium	geographic	industry	auxiliary	1963	1949	i3480*	ceylon	geographic
27	consideration	repairs	anxiety	repairs	despatch	appropriations	1952	Indies	263	clearly
28	maturity	ceiling	precarious	proposed	assembly	20000	pluri*	jopan*	argument	particular
29	premium	hague	strikingly	elements	recorded	bark	statistics	077	emerging	preferences
30	1958	justification	consolidation	indigenous	taiwan	hindering	repairs	049	comprising	824

Note: \*Words marked with an asterisk are typographic errors, but are presented here as they were analyzed in the primary data.

**Table 3b - TFIDF scored rankings (2/3)**

YEAR RANK	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
1	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	oda
2	1972	1971	1972	1973	1974	oda	oda	oda	oda	1980
3	1970	paras*	fertilizers	fertilizers	oda	ciec	1976	1977	1978	peoples
4	vientiane	1973	pledges	msa	cccn*	1975	1978	hydropower	refugees	1979
5	registering	question	accordingly	1975	ending	1977	secondly	1979	1980	apr
6	tariff	Des	tends	integration	setting	delays	Bhn*	attaches	1977	courses
7	khmer	setting	des	agreement	markedly	1974	objects	'78	apr	mar
8	substantially	read	apd	substantially	japan1s*	reflects	significantly	chapter	deflators	tying
9	decrease	Oda	oda	oda	Hardness	programming	refers	ora	kampuchean	1981
10	wave	agreement	fac	considers	1976	ilr	oriented	receiving	accordingly	1985
11	agreement	libéralité	fertiliser	paragraphs	security	structure	announcing	nursing	dag	hydroelectric
12	billion	tying	agreement	receiving	billion	believe	placement	placement	mar	nursing
13	realignment	receiving	cereals	ora*	significantly	industry	accordingly	positively	industry	Oct
14	repayments	pour	unknown	btn*	considers	permanent	intentions	utilities	716	geothermal
15	ceylon	labour	critique	billion	links	paragraphs	seminar	efficient	dotal*	lowincome*
16	regard	borrowings	élément	declined	1973	statement	untying	women	hydro	saguling*
17	micro	delegations	examining	associations	declined	1973	initiatives	appears	ola	accordingly
18	insert	covers	receiving	lampung	reaching	question	chapter	gbp	reinforcement	asean
19	members	pays	producing	producing	reflects	Caused	assumptions	broadly	barge	Jodc
20	accepted	consideration	1974	des	wishes	recovered	reaching	secondly	jodc	livelihood
21	raise	employment	associations	farmers	regard	asean	lhe*	oriented	declined	ooo*
22	speedily	billion	libéralité	japan1s*	agreement	Arithmetic	'77	untying	japan1s*	sep
23	expand	industry	stockholding	continue	triangular	Benchmarks	Mfa	phc	nursing	human
24	maturity	dag	khmer	regard	1972	govement-*	examining	1976	oct	Rural
25	ships	untying	l'apd	initiatives	consideration	happy	appropriations	expand	human	#896*
26	details	regard	montant	jica	main	hiti*	1975	ldc	considers	bombay
27	deliberations	japan1s*	farmers	steps	demarcation	reexamination	japan1s*	kulikhani	hut	distribtion
28	items	remunerations	années	rac	japanfs*	needs	markedly	hospitals	untying	pield*
29	center	appears	bilatéraux	upland	women1*	Arising	consideration	markedly	1981	rarem*
30	ngon	decrease	prêts	industry	oop	banlc*-	fhe*	issuance	main	tnce*

Note: \*Words marked with an asterisk are typographic errors, but are presented here as they were analyzed in the primary data.

Table 3c - TFIDF scored rankings (3/3)

YEAR RANK	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1988	1990	1991	1992	1995
1	1981	replenishments	1983	1984	1985	1987	1988	1988	1991	1994
2	oac	1982	oda	oda	1984	1986	1989	1989	1990	1993
3	1980	1981	1982	1983	oda	1988	ofthe*	professionals	charter	mofa
4	00a*	oda	1981	utilities	1986	oda	1990	1990	oda	1995
5	oda	1932	1984	decrease	secondly	fy1988	professionals	bappenas	1989	charter
6	security	jun	tends	saharan	doubling	ngos	dcd	oda	1988	oda
7	vtii	tying	1980	tying	1983	recycling	1991	1991	1992	tel*
8	mar	considers	plants	1985	ions*	reaching	oda	embassy	dcd	thc*
9	attaches	ted	1903	1981	1981	1985	ofdeveloping*	iggi*	wid	telefax
10	transfers	'81	security	revolution	fy1985	untying	bappenas	ordination	jica	dcd
11	apr	ibution*	assessment	considers	saharan	thirds	1987	offices	1987	preparing
12	1982	decrease	reflects	disciplines	ddr	cyclng	ofaid	1992	ngos	jica
13	dialogue	conferences	bohol*	permissible	considers	fy1987	ofjapan*	1987	offices	thirds
14	hydroelectric	lal*	oecf	reform	calculations	countr*	environmental	mofa	1993	starts
15	1979	1983	achieved	lldc	efficient	aims	embassy	jica	environmental	wid
16	geothermal	cons*	paragraphs	women	japan1s*	environmental	forests	oecf	performed	1992
17	opec	child	irrigation	green	decrease	1981	arranging	indonesian	sri	dispatching
18	1901	dialogue	valley	1982	selective	1992	iggi*	elements	mofa	designs
19	reuire*	maternal	1985	fora*	lla*	lldcs	ofoda*	1983	covers	emerging
20	courses	prc	untying	interference	women	billion	ordination*	démocratisation	lanka	calls
21	dec	contr*	replying	greatly	1982	achieved	wid	wid	posts	oic
22	continue	nuclear	lldcs	lcl	continue	women	jica	involving	differs	ngos
23	jul	sep	courses	human	reform	members	offices	saharan	ranks	initiatives
24	viii	chittagong	recurrent	expand	untying	appraisal	involving	integration	subsidy	filipino
25	1931	i98i*	electric	asean	practices	continue	ngos	believe	colombo	neda*
26	dda	iec	positively	needs	appraisal	offices	1992	aims	chart	grassroots
27	slowing	prog	1902	points	significantly	saharan	oecf	reflects	evaluate	supplying
28	likely	teg*	fullv	scholars	achieved	assumptions	mofa	staffing	1985	offices
29	sept	tivities*	thev	flexible	bnp	incore*	initiatives	saps	women	mof
30	nics	Regard	untving	loo*	please	practices	saharan	hire	1986	add2*

Note: \*Words marked with an asterisk are typographic errors, but are presented here as they were analyzed in the primary data.

As the reviews progressed into the **late 80s and 90s**, we observe **environmental** terms surfacing to reflect the rise of environmentalism as a global issue in the international arena. We also observe rising references to **non-governmental organizations**, which is consistent with various scholars' claims that the development aid community saw neoliberalist movements gaining momentum, and a space was created for the emergence of NGOs, as institutions shifted away from an understanding that the State was the key player for aid (Willis 2005, Banks and Hulme 2012, Kamat 2004).

#### **4.2 Inconsistencies: The 1980s and the Absence of China.**

Every memorandum and aid review contains specific mentions of regions, countries, and sectors to which aid is disbursed, and the frequency of these references is relatively consistent throughout the decades. Mentions of specific countries have been highlighted in **orange** in Tables 3a-c. As Japan began to expand ODA in the 1980s, one interesting trend that was *not* observed in the corpus was the increase in mentions of "China". Despite being the largest recipient of Japanese ODA in the 1980s, references to the country were less than would be expected. A deeper reading into this trend revealed some interesting observations within the documents. First, in 1967 the Memorandum of Japan (drafted by Japan) mentions "China" 12 times, but the report by the Secretariat and questions makes no mention of "China", but only "Taiwan" (7 times). However, in the 1980 memorandum, as Japan began to ramp up its ODA to China, "China" is mentioned only 4 times (in a 68-page document), while the Secretariat utilizes the term 8 times (in only 18 pages). Thus, we see that within the relatively few occurrences of the word "China" in the 1980s, the Secretariat mentions the term more frequently than the Japanese government. In 1983, when Japan reports that China became the largest recipient of ODA via a yen loan disbursement, the country is mentioned only 5 times. In this year, the memorandum still makes more mention of Bangladesh (8 times) and the Philippines (6). Similarly, in 1986, mentions of China (10) are again overshadowed by references to Africa (28). A comprehensive discussion on the political economic context and "asymmetric" bilateral relationship between Japan and the USA can be found in Miyashita (1999), in one of his case studies on the Japanese government's response to the deaths of Tiananmen Square protestors via the cancellation of ODA loans.

#### **4.3 Inconsistencies: The Origins of "Self-help" or "Self-reliance"?**

In a similar process to noticing the absence of China within the policy documents, a consideration was made of other counter-intuitive patterns of policy key-words and characteristic terms utilized to describe so-called "Japanese ODA policy". An example would be how Japanese ODA is often cited as having a strong focus or unique stance of "self-help" (Manning 2016, Takahashi 2010).

It was first noticed that the terms self-help and self-reliance were not mentioned frequently at all, with the phrase being used only 1-4 times every year up until 1975. A deeper reading then revealed that the use of these terms in fact did not originate from Japanese delegates, but was rather first mentioned by the OECD in 1962, and with a critical tone. In the 1962 aid review, the Secretariat questions Japan's emphasis on the project approach (as opposed to programs) and inquires as to how Japan takes care of "broader self-help

requirements,”<sup>7</sup> such as improved fiscal and monetary policies of the recipient countries, when implementing projects. In the following year (1963), the Secretariat again questions the Japanese Government for its *lack* of self-help requirements, by stating their current practices “precludes more forceful insistent on self-help efforts.”<sup>8</sup> It is in 1964 that the Japanese government then begins to emphasize its focus on self-help, and appears to have been influenced by a DAC meeting on aid programming criteria and methods (held in December 1963). The 1964 memorandum states that the Japanese authorities considered the meeting “a useful one... [and that] among the issues discussed...we place a great deal of importance on self-help.”<sup>9</sup> From 1964 onwards, the memorandums then state consistently that the Japanese authorities take the position that the degree of self-help held by the recipient is one of the principal criteria for aid programming (through actions such as participation in planning or willingness to finance local costs). By 1973, the Japanese government begins to define the principles of their aid policy within OECD memorandums as aid to “assist the developing countries in their economic development and their efforts for self-reliance.”<sup>10</sup> The forensic analysis thus reveals that “self-help” as a policy concept is not uniquely Japanese in its origins, nor is it an original concept formed through the reinterpretation or reframing of “ownership” as “self-help” (Ohno and Ohno 2007). The progression of language within DAC documents show that it is more accurate to say that “self-help” was an element of existing international aid discourse that Japanese authorities recognized as a useful concept to encapsulate a fundamental principle behind ODA policy programming, and eventually the larger Japanese ODA philosophy overall.

As illustrated above, a corpus-assisted analysis of the OECD-DAC reviews of Japanese ODA has revealed that linguistic characteristics clearly display trends and characteristics across development discourse. The methodology proves useful in evaluating historical trends, as well as for identifying inconsistencies in existing narratives and theories explaining Japanese ODA policies and practices.

## 5. Discussion: OECD Discourse as a Lens for Understanding ODA Policy

Deep readings into some linguistic trends within the annual reviews have revealed important differences in the properties of the OECD-DAC documents. Clear differences in linguistic characteristics of documents drafted by Japanese representatives and the DAC Secretariat reveal how policy discourse cannot be treated as a homogenous subject. The observable differences between notes drafted by the Secretariat and memorandums drafted by the Japanese government can indeed be interpreted as the state of competing discourses in action. Scholars have discussed how the OECD acts as a “first mover” in the international political arena to invent and maintain discursive validation procedures – i.e., the interpretive framing of knowledge and advocacy of hegemonic policies (Dostal 2004). Future work may be able to empirically track the acceptance of specific policy issues by observing the acceptance and/or saturation of policy language within documents across time.

<sup>7</sup> Source: 1962 Annual Aid Review outlining Questions to the Japanese Government (DAC-AR(62)3-21, paragraph #10)

<sup>8</sup> Source: 1963 Annual Aid Review outlining Questions to the Japanese Government. (DAC-AR(63)3-21, paragraph #10)

<sup>9</sup> Source: 1964 Annual Aid Review Memorandum of Japan (DAC-AR(64)1-21, paragraph #26)

<sup>10</sup> Source: 1973 Annual Aid Review Memorandum of Japan. (DAC-AR(73)1-21, pp. 4)

Such work would provide much-needed empirical proof for arguments within studies of agenda-setting which make observations around major shifts in policy discourse that are situated around key events in the international community (e.g., the rise of “sustainable consumption” as a policy agenda after the 1992 UNCED summit (Cohen 2001)).

There are several limitations to this study, the most evident one being the quality of the data. The refined TF-IDF scores reveal that the quality of the secondary data itself is in many instances insufficient, as optical character recognition technologies applied to poor-quality scans and older documentation produced numerous incorrect results and non-words such as “00a”, “ial” or “tivities”. Some documents were recreated through transcription services but this remains an expensive solution to addressing the quality of documents and other archived materials.

Another limitation of the study is the difficulty for corpus-linguistic findings to observe political-economic dynamics within official policy documents, perhaps due to the nature of the OECD, where the resolution of the common aid effort explicitly states that members must “regard...the circumstances of each country, including its economic capacity and all other relevant factors”<sup>11</sup>. In principle, OECD member countries must not interfere in internal affairs and respect member countries’ sovereignty and autonomy. The current discussion is of course nestled within a broader discussion of how Japan’s ODA policy fits within the complex domain of international policy. ODA policy makers are required to address the global issue of sustainable economic development with tacit acknowledgement of domestic political constraints (Colebatch 2018). Researchers have noted how Japan’s ODA acts as a foreign policy, in a distinctly different form to that of traditional foreign policy instruments studied in the American context (Wood and Peake 1998), and how the Japanese context has been marked by frequent struggles to manage conflicts between Western political interests and national interests (Shimomura et al. 2016). However, distinct differences in the linguistic contents of memorandums drafted by the OECD and the Japanese government have provided some insights which could inform further interpretations from the data.

In addition, some less-conventional interpretations of corpus findings have proven useful for identifying complex and nuanced political dynamics that lay behind the policy discussions and documents. The study was able to identify counter-intuitive observations, such as the under-representation of China, as well as the origins of the “self-help” concept through an “evidence of absence” approach, rather than a traditionally positivist or empirical stance that is used to justify most corpus studies. This is good news for social and political theorists, whose knowledge and synthesis are still needed to inform theory and provide structure to information- and data-based approaches. A comprehensive corpus of DAC memorandums or other international policy documents may be useful for providing supplementary evidence for policy arguments and historical insights, rather than as a base for fundamental observations to build theories. General, universal, or profound theories to which academic research should aspire towards are more likely to be found within a narrower and more specialized scope, such as corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, which could examine how linguistic patterns in international policy documents can inform our understandings of language use at large (rather than policy making).

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<sup>11</sup> Source: 1962 Resolution of the Common Aid Effort (Annex B of DAC-AR(1962)1-42, pp. 13)

## 6. Conclusions

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This paper has applied corpus analytic methodologies to examine OECD-DAC documents for the purposes of a historical analysis of Japanese ODA policy. Findings have revealed that several theoretical policy narratives that are used to describe Japanese ODA policy are consistent with linguistic characteristics of OECD policy documents drafted by the Japanese government, such as the identification and mention of ODA as war reparations in the 1960s; the emergence of tying and untying issues in the 1970s; language reflecting structural adjustment policies in the late 1970s; and the emergence of environmental issues and NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s. While these findings do provide some additional support for existing theories, they are insufficient in providing new insight and a deeper understanding about the history of ODA.

Newer and notable insights and observations into historical trends in Japanese ODA policy have instead been produced through deep readings into counter-intuitive patterns within the data. These included seemingly politically motivated gaps in the language use and terminology utilized between the OECD and Japanese authorities; a notable *absence* of coverage on characteristic policy decisions and actions taken by the Japanese government (i.e., relatively few mentions of China despite being the largest recipient of Japanese ODA); and the discovery that while many have long asserted that Japan's ODA has identified itself through a strong focus on self-help, the concept itself originated from OECD DAC discourse.

The current study has shown that corpus analytic methods are useful for testing existing theories against a valuable set of historical data, and that existing theoretical understandings of the aid process can be used to further reveal deeper insights into reading the intentions behind policy language within official documents. A comparison with documents drafted for and by other member countries is the most natural and important next step for expanding the scope and implications of this research.

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