

STYLING PERSONAE AT THE MARGINS: LANGUAGE STRATEGIES IN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE POLITICIANS IN JAPANESE PARLIAMENT

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Abstract:

This study investigates the role of language in the identity construction of female politicians in Japan, with a focus on the language they use in the Japanese parliament, in which women are severely under-represented. The study analyses the speech styles of two female politicians: the current Governor of Tokyo, Yuriko Koike, and a member of the House of Councillors, Kiyomi Tsujimoto. The data for the study are drawn from Japanese parliamentary debates in 2015, when both women were members of parliament (Koike belonging to the ruling conservative party; Tsujimoto to an opposition socialist party). The analysis focuses particularly on their use of honorifics and polite language as well as the length of the sentences they produce. It highlights how the speech styles of these politicians act as vital linguistic tools in constructing their very different political identities and public personae in the challenging context in which they work. Through the analysis of their linguistic strategies, the study sheds light on how their distinct speech styles generate varied expressive effects within the Japanese political arena, relate to public perceptions about them, and are intricately intertwined with the historically constructed ideology of 'Japanese women's language' (e.g., Nakamura, 2006).

Keywords: *Speech style; Identity; Gender; Politics; Japanese Parliament.*