

Open hand oblique in female Japanese politicians' speech

Keiko Tsuchiya
Yokohama City University
ktsuchi@yokohama-cu.ac.jp

Keywords: open hand oblique, political discourse, epistemics, recurrent gestures, being critical

Orators or politicians have been well-aware of the significant effect caused by hand gestures in political speeches and debates since the Roman era (Quintilianus cited in Kendon, 2004). How Japanese female MPs (members of parliament) assert their epistemic rights in parliamentary debates is discussed in this panel, applying a multimodal corpus analysis and a discourse analytic approach to investigate the multimodally embedded practices with *recurrent* hand gestures (Müller, 2017). One video recording of the parliamentary debate (6 hour long in total) involving eight female interpellators was chosen for the analysis, which discussed the so-called women empowerment law. Among them, five female MPs were focused in this study, considering the lengths of their interpellation sessions and their political careers: the minister of women empowerment (MS, hereafter), the vice minister of health, labour and welfare (VM) and three MPs in opposition parties (OPs). This is a continuous study of Tsuchiya (2018), which analysed one of the OPs' interpellation session and identified a distinctive discursive pattern in the question-answer sequence; OP sought the government's *action* or *opinion* in her question, which was followed by MS or VM's answering with *round about talks* or *evading with justification*, on the basis of Harris (2001) and Clayman (2001). Results from the current study added further descriptions of the OPs' activity of accounting in the question sessions. In the process of giving an account for their proposals, OPs asserted their primary epistemic rights, simultaneously indexing themselves as a *knower*, by using the sentence-final particles *yo* or *yone*, which indicate the knowledge territory of the speaker (Katagiri, 2007). At the same time, they emphasised an anaphora with the use of *open hand oblique* (OHO), which is a *referential gesture* (Monzoni & Laury, 2015) with a negative evaluation of the object (Kendon, 2004). In Kendon's study in Camapania, the object a speaker referred to with OHO was often a person. However, in my data of the Japanese political discourse, OPs directed the recipient and the audience's attention to the topics of OPs' arguments with the demonstrative pronouns *this* and *that* and the embodied action of OHO to indirectly criticise MS's lack of knowledge or responsibility. The recurrent practice of OPs' criticising with OHO was observed in the three OPs. As seen in the use of precision grip in Obama's speech to reflect his quality of "being sharp" (Lempert, 2011), OPs' use of OHO indexes their attitude of "being critical", which could be a convention of "form-meaning association" (Kita, 2009, p. 146) although further research with a larger data set is necessary.

References

- Clayman, S., E. (2001). Answers and evasions. *Language in Society*, 30(3), 403-442.
- Harris, S. (2001). Being politically impolite: extending politeness theory to adversarial political discourse. *Discourse & Society*, 12(4), 451-472.
- Katagiri, Y. (2007). Dialogue functions of Japanese sentence-final particles 'Yo' and 'Ne'. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39, 1313-1323.
- Kendon, A. (2004). *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kita, S. (2009). Cross-cultural variation of speech-accompanying gesture: A review. *Language and Cognitive Processes*, 24(2), 145-167.
- Lempert, M. (2011). Barack Obama, being sharp: Indexical order in the pragmatics of precision-grip gesture. *Gesture*, 11(3), 241-270.
- Monzoni, C., M. , & Laury, R. (2015). Making referents accessible in multi-party interaction. *Eesti ja soome-ugri keeleteaduse ajakiri (Journal of Estonian and Finno-Ugric Linguistics)*, 6(2), 43-62.
- Müller, C. (2017). How recurrent gestures mean: Conventionalized contexts-of-use and embodied motivation. *Gesture*, 16(2), 277-304.
- Tsuchiya (2018). *Asserting epistemic rights with hands: the use of open hand oblique in a Japanese female politician's speech*. Paper presented at the Bringing into Being: Multimodality and Cognition in Interaction, Ningbo, China.