

THE LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN HAYAO MIYAZAKI'S MOVIES

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Abstract

In this paper, I will explore the concept of '*yakuwarigo*' (役割語 role language) in Japanese language and present text analysis of three female characters, Eboshi, Rin and Yubaba from two anime movies of Hayao Miyazaki (*Princess Mononoke*, *Spirited Away*). My aim is to demonstrate how the well-known director employs role language, particularly masculine language, to empower his female characters to take on prominent roles in a society where men traditionally hold dominance. In terms of film analysis, Miyazaki places his female characters in the public sphere, making them active participants in the storyline while consistently defying traditional Japanese feminine conventions. This study is closely tied to the field of gender linguistics and linguistic ideology from an analytical perspective, aiming to illustrate how Miyazaki's female characters diverge from linguistic norms in their dialogues.

Keywords: Hayao Miyazaki, *yakuwarigo*, role language, gender linguistics, language ideology

Introduction

Hayao Miyazaki (1941–) was born on 5 January 1941 in Tokyo. In 1963, after graduating in economics and political science from the Gakushuin University, he worked as an in-between animator at Toei Animation Studio. After leaving Toei Animation in 1971, together with Isao Takahata and Toshio Suzuki animation director, he founded Studio Ghibli in 1985. Studio Ghibli has released several Japanese animated movies, including *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* in 1984, *Castle in the Sky* in 1986, *My Neighbor Totoro* in 1988, *Kiki's Delivery Service* in 1989, and *Princess Mononoke* in 1997. The most acclaimed movie however was *Spirited Away* in 2002, which won the Best Animated Feature Film Oscar award in 2003.²

Japan has a strongly patriarchal social structure, yet the protagonists of Miyazaki's movies are unconventionally female characters, who are also presented as strong, assertive, independent personalities. His female characters often deviate from stereotypes and are characters of conviction and determination, presenting an alternative option for female viewers by confronting the Japanese ideal image of women as passive and domestic.³ Hayao Miyazaki is one of the most important animation directors of our time, now known in Japanese society as the Walt Disney of the Far East.

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² Berton Gael: *The works of Hayao Miyazaki, the Japanese animation master*. Toulouse: Third Éditions, 2020, p. 11-20.

³ Napier Jolliffe Susan: *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 33.

The term *ryōsaikenbo*⁴ (良妻賢母) was once often used to describe Japanese women, and although it is no longer in common use in modern times, the term is still used by Japanese people. In the Meiji era (1868–1912) the main purpose of educating women was to make them „good wives and wise mothers“, a meaning that is also conveyed by the term *ryōsaikenbo*. Women were considered to be responsible for the housework and the upbringing of children. The Meiji government recognised the importance of maintaining linguistic gender in power relations, so the concept of gender was incorporated into the grammar of the national language. This was necessary to preserve the country's cultural identity and social structure as various Western ideologies gained ground around this time in the island nation. From then until the end of the Second World War, an ideologically formulated feminine language began to be taught in schools. In the Taishō era (1912–1926) there were efforts to include women, especially in business, but women were not allowed to have a higher status than men. Despite the fact that more than half of women in the Reiwa era⁵ are working, the expectations around the idea of *ryōsaikenbo* are continuing to influence the role of women in Japanese society. The Japanese language itself also reflects the relationship between male and female, as the word for husband's kanji, *shujin* (主人) implies "main man", the word *kanai* (家内) used for wife carries the meaning of "within the house".⁶

Women's language is discussed in social and cultural discourses not only in Japan, but also worldwide, which encourages researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the close relationship between language and identity and its changes. Domestically, Japanese women's language has not yet been studied at the level of language usage through Miyazaki's anime, and my aim is to contribute to the research on Japanese gender linguistics by writing this paper. The research is based on two anime movies directed by Hayao Miyazaki: *Princess Mononoke* (*Mononoke hime* もののけ姫), released in 1997, and *Spirited Away*, released in 2001 (*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* 千と千尋の神隠し). This paper will extract and analyse linguistic elements from the original context that provides insights into the linguistic representation of female characters in Miyazaki's movies. This study is limited in its scope as it does not provide a comprehensive overview, but it does show what conventions the director chooses to break and how, not only in the scenes of the film, but also in the language usage of the female characters.

There are many reasons for the success of Hayao Miyazaki's anime movies. If people tried to briefly capture the reasons for his success, there would be no studies. Anime presents a markedly different representation compared to other media, one of the main reasons being the 'Japanese look' that characterises anime and manga, and the fact that anime can and do convey different concepts rather than objects.⁷ Popular animated series generally have protagonists fighting villains on behalf of women, while women appearing in mostly minor roles, not influencing the narrative, and the

⁴ In Japan, the concept of family originates from China, more precisely from Confucianism and its mythology. The traditional Japanese family system, the *ie* (家) was a patriarchal family system which main virtue lay in the continuity of generations based on the principle of primogeniture. Confucianism's view of the family expects women to obey their fathers as daughters, their husbands as wives and their sons as old women. Even though the *ie* system has now been dismantled, its traditions still live on strongly in Japanese society.

⁵ Reiwa is the name of the current era in Japan, counted from 1st of May, 2019.

⁶ Davies J. Roger. – Ikeno Osamu. et al. *The Japanese mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture*. Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 2002, p. 179-180.

⁷ Swale Alistair David: *Anime Aesthetics*. New Zealand: University of Waikato, 2015, p. 60-61.

main expectation towards them is that they are obedient, kind and beautiful.⁸ This type of media conveys to children the concepts of masculinity and femininity and their codes. Female characters are therefore the most important ones in animation, as they represent and portray the changes that are most affecting modern society. Miyazaki's success also lies in the themes he explores in his movies. His central themes include Shinto and Japanese mythology, environmentalism and the feminine image.⁹ Notably, Miyazaki's work prominently features a central theme of the feminine image, in which he played a pioneering role in Japan by bringing to the screen the concept of the '*tatakau shōjo*' (戦う少女), warrior female characters.¹⁰

Speech differences and role language in Japanese language

Language is not only a means of communication, but social relations between the sexes are also reflected in the use of language. Through gender linguistics, we can understand how gender and gender relations are reflected in a language, reveal the guidelines of a state's ideology, the language policy in a given period. It identifies stereotypes and analyses them, helping to raise awareness among members of a society about the key role of language in the maintenance of power.¹¹

In Japanese language, a distinction is made between the masculine (*danseigo* 男性語) and the feminine (*joseigo* 女性語) language usage¹². It is generally accepted in the public consciousness that the term *joseigo* 女性語 refers to the linguistic variation used by Japanese women. Its legitimacy is primarily given by Japanese native speakers, who believe that Japanese men and women inherently used and continue to use, to this day, different – phonetical, lexicological and syntax based – linguistic forms in modern Japanese language. Women are expected to speak as little as possible, and when they do speak, to do so in a gentle, polite and low voice. On the other hand, *danseigo* gives the listener the impression of powerness, expresses command, firmness and conviction towards the other person.

Linguistic ideologies are present in all languages at some level, held by direct participants in the local sociolinguistic system, but also by other observers through various stereotypes.¹³ It is important to note that the term *joseigo* defines not as a real language practice of Japanese women, but as an ideologically saturated linguistic construction. In gender linguistics apart from real linguistic data, the analysis is carried out through metapragmatics, such as etiquette books, disciplinary books and works of fiction.¹⁴ The concept of *joseigo* includes cultural identity, linguistic universals, attitudes, and stereotypes, which together form a linguistic ideology.¹⁵

⁸ Napier Jolliffe Susan: *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 12.

⁹ Odell Colin – Le Blanc Michelle: *Studio Ghibli: The Films of Hayao Miyazaki & Isao Takahata*. London: Kamera Books, 2009, p. 15-21.

¹⁰ Asaga Sayuri: Miyazaki anime ni okeru „tatakau shōjo” no Hyōsō. *Meisei International Studies vol 3, No. 9*, 2017, pp. 15-30.

¹¹ For further details on Japanese gender linguistics see Gajdos (2025)

¹² Japanese women language is also often called *onna kotoba* (女言葉) in Japanese, along with the term *joseigo*.

¹³ Evans David: *Language and Identity: Discourse in the World*. New York – London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015, p. 15-16.

¹⁴ Nakamura Momoko: Gengo ideogōji toshite no 「onna kotoba」 In: *Goyōron Kenkyū* 2005, p. 110-111.

¹⁵ Language universals include, for example, the need to speak in polite language (*keigo* 敬語) and avoid vulgar expressions. Japanese women participating in Aya Kitamura's 2005 survey on Japanese female identity images often described the Japanese female ideal with the adjectives: attentive, reserved,

This leads us to conclude that there is no authentic female language in Japanese. The *joseigo* is a linguistic ideology that frames how all Japanese women should speak, a limited toolbox of linguistic expression for women. No Japanese woman cultivates the Japanese language in the same way, which is why it would be inappropriate to discuss *joseigo* as a universal fact. Each individual chooses and uses his or her own means of communication, which may vary depending on the situation, when and how much of it is used. The toolbox offers limited possibilities for self-expression and sets the boundaries of the notion of femininity (*onna rashisa* 女らしさ). Depending on one's choices, one's linguistic style can fluctuate between the feminine and the less feminine, but cannot step outside the toolbox. This paper will use the term in this sense from now on.¹⁶

In order to discuss this research project, it is essential to touch upon the definition of role language (*yakuwarigo* 役割語) and its relation to real language practice. The definition of *yakuwarigo* was introduced by Kinsui Satoshi in the early 2000s and is defined as follows.

Role language ("*yakuwarigo*"): a set of spoken language features (such as vocabulary, grammar and phonetic characteristics) that can be psychologically associated with a particular character type. (Character's attributes include age, gender, occupation, social status, appearance and personality.)¹⁷

In his study, Kinsui draws attention to the problem that role language does not faithfully reflect real language use, and that the knowledge possessed by everyday speakers is role language knowledge. As an example, he mentions that if a Japanese speaker is told *ashita wa ame dawa* 明日は雨だわ, the native speaker will know that the sentence ending *dawa* だわ is female-specific, but very few people know how much it is still used in real-life situations. The source of this problem lies mainly in the fact that in the old days there were no tape recorders to enable researchers to carry out effective fieldwork to note down the actual language usage of members of society and the register differences between different social groups and classes.¹⁸ The research was conducted through metapragmatics – disciplinary books, etiquette books, and fictional works. By not necessarily reflecting real language usage, the role language used in fictional works may, depending on the authors or directors intentions, convey or break stereotypes that are an integral part of linguistic ideology. The variations in the styles of role language used by female characters in popular culture can range from traditional female language to masculine language, depending on the characteristics of the characters, their age, their social status and, most importantly, the intention of the author/director.

The present study is based on an analysis of the most representative sentences of female characters and uses Kinsui's gender role linguistic marker table

understanding. While atypical Japanese women were associated with attributes such as self-confident, assertive, outspoken, self-centred. The Japanese female identity image of women as quiet, submissive and powerless was also very dominant among their interviewees.

¹⁶ For further details on Japanese women language see Gajdos (2025)

¹⁷ Kinsui Satoshi: *Virtual Japanese: Enigmas of role language*. Osaka: Osaka University Press, 2003, p. 205.

¹⁸ Kinsui Satoshi: *Virtual Japanese: Enigmas of role language*. Osaka: Osaka University Press, 2003, p. 23-25.

for sentence analysis. The Leipzig glossing rules¹⁹ were applied in the glossing process, but where the grammatical characteristics of the Japanese language required it, additional linguistic element markers were introduced. In the course of sentence analysis, the focus was on lexicology (word/phrase choice), personal pronouns (*ninshōdaimeshi* 人称代名詞), morphology and syntax, as well as sentence final particles (*shūjoshi* 終助詞) and end-of-sentence phrases (*bunmatsu hyōgen* 文末表現).

Figure 1. Kinsui's linguistic marker table

	Masculine feature	Neutral	Feminine feature
Copula <i>da</i>	<i>Kimi wa onna da (+yo/ ne/yone).</i> You are a woman.		<i>Anata wa onna da yo(ne/yone).</i> You are a woman.
<i>-noka /-noda</i>	<i>Kimi mo sono hon katta na ka.</i> Did you also buy the book? <i>Kore, dare ga kaita nda(ï)?</i> Who wrote this?		<i>Anata mo sono hon katta na?</i> Did you also buy the book? <i>Kore, dare ga kaita na?</i> Who wrote this?
Neutral style + <i>yo</i>	<i>Kore, chotto karai yo.</i> This is hot a little.		–
Imperative/ Prohibitive/ Request form	<i>Kocchi e kai.</i> Come here! <i>Sonna koto suru na.</i> Don't do that. <i>Kocchi e kite kure.</i> (Please) come here. <i>Kocchi e kite moraitai.</i> I want you come here.	<i>Kore yonde.</i> Read this.	<i>Kocchi e kite kudasaru?</i> Would you come here?
Interrogative	<i>Kimi, ashita no pāti shusseki suru ka.</i> Will you attend the party tomorrow? <i>Kore wa kimi no kai.</i> Is this yours? <i>Chotto, soko no hon totte kurenai ka.</i> Would you take me the book?	<i>Ashita no pāti shusseki suru?</i> Will you attend the party tomorrow? <i>Chotto, soko no hon totte kurenai?</i> Would you take me the book?	<i>(Chotto, soko no hon totte kudasaranai?)</i> Would you take me the book?
Sentence-final particle	<i>Konna chōshi dewa shiken ni ochiru zo.</i> You will lose the examination at this pace. <i>Ore wa matteru ze.</i> I will be waiting.		<i>Komatta wa. Henna hito ga iru wa.</i> I'm in trouble. There is a strange person.
Interjection	"Oi." "Kora." "Hey!" "Hey!"		"Ara." "Mā" "Oh!" "Alas!"
Pronoun	<i>ore/bokuloinal/washi</i> → I <i>omae/kimi</i> → you	<i>watashi/watakushi</i> → I <i>anata/anta/ otaku(sama)/ sochira(sama)</i> → you	<i>atashi</i> → I (Women use it more frequently than men.)

Source: Kinsui 2003, p. 82.

Gender equality and antipoles – not every boy is a hero, not every girl is a lady²⁰

The term *bishōjo* (美少女) is used to describe female characters in manga, anime and video games, literally meaning "beautiful girl". *Bishōjo* characters are now commonly found in genres such as science fiction. The term once only encompassed the beauty of female characters, but as time has progressed, *bishōjo* female characters have been

¹⁹ Max Plank Institute: Leipzig Glossing Rules. Available: https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php?fbclid=IwAR1kj7rRb0cAw_brnMmaKMKbwpfotdKTkjiFkThHNjp52TL2yr0i9TNaoR0 Accessed on 13 September 2023.

²⁰ For further details on Hayao Miyazaki's women representation in term of film analysis see Gajdos (2021)

portrayed not only as beautiful, but often strong, compatible, and also somewhat naive and innocent personalities. The word *shōjo* (少女) literally means „young girl”. *Shōjo* characters are often described as cute, sweet and shy female characters.²¹

Miyazaki's female characters break with traditional conventions, depart from the traditional female image and present an alternative option for the Japanese people. He reveals the possibility of a female-centred social system for future generations. His movies avoid events that end in marriage – unlike Disney movies – and romantic threads. The relationship between male and female characters is mainly based on friendship or alliance.²² Although Miyazaki's characters conform to certain anime conventions such as beautiful, wide-open eyes, lipless mouth. Despite this, however, his female characters cannot be judged as cute, girlish-looking. In terms of their age and general appearance, they do indeed have the typical characteristics of a *shōjo*, but while the average *shōjo* character is passive and lives in the dream world of her own, Miyazaki's characters are active, independent, courageous and, last but not least, inquisitive. For this reason, some critics have marked Miyazaki's female protagonists "shōjo masked", claiming that they could be more close to being *bishōjo* characters.²³

Miyazaki never juxtaposes characters representing the two extremes (good and evil), but they're rather binary opposites of each other, most notably in *Princess Mononoke*, where the most representative characters of these conventions are San and Eboshi. Knowing the intentions of Miyazaki's portrayal of women, it is not unusual to see female characters carrying weapons and confronting men when the situation calls for it. All the female characters can be said to be active participants in the story being told, shaping its events.²⁴

*Princess Mononoke – Lady Eboshi, lady or not lady*²⁵

Figure 2. Lady Eboshi

²¹ Cavallaro Dani: *The Anime Art of Hayao Miyazaki*. Jefferson és London: McFarland & Company, 2006, p. 10-11.

²² Lamarre Thomas: *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, p. 83.
Lamarre 83.

²³ Cavallaro Dani: *The Anime Art of Hayao Miyazaki*. Jefferson és London: McFarland & Company, 2006, p. 10-11.

²⁴ Gajdos Noémi: *A nők reprezentációja Mijazaki Hajao rajzfilmjeiben*. Budapest: Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 2021, p. 15.

²⁵ The quotations in this chapter were translated by Steve Alpert, Haruyo Moriyoshi & Ian MacDougall



Source: Ghibli Studio Official Website

*Princess Mononoke*²⁶ (*Mononoke hime* もののけ姫) was released in 1997 and is an animated film that takes place during the Muromachi era (1392-1573). In *Princess Mononoke*, Miyazaki further explores central themes such as environmentalism and the feminine image, while combining Japanese folklore with mythic themes.²⁷

Lady Eboshi holds a leading position as the leader of Irontown in *Princess Mononoke*. Miyazaki continues to subvert stereotypes and traditional conventions by having Irontown run, unusually, not by a male but by a female character.²⁸ Her character may appear on the surface to be set up as an antagonist, but seen from this perspective one would only be scratching the surface of the essence of her character. She uses her high position to help find a place for the socially marginalised, providing help for people with incurable diseases and for women working in brothels.²⁹

Eboshi is one of the most distinct female characters in *Princess Mononoke*, who leads Irontown without any apparent family background or male support. Eboshi's character is endowed with male characteristics, leading the warriors of Irontown into arms and battle. At the same time, however, Eboshi suffers from a constant identity crisis as she tries to maintain her high position in a male-dominated social system. She maintains her strong character traits through her masculine mask, but her visual appearance continues to represent traits of femininity in her clothing, hairstyle and make-up. Eboshi becomes extremely protective of the people of Irontown, especially when the problem in question affects women, for whom she acts as a kind of protector.³⁰

Eboshi tries to keep her feminine traits as low as possible, mainly by not showing her emotions. She wears a cold, heartless mask to gain the respect of the men in Irontown and keep them under her control.³¹ Eboshi's public sphere is a patriarchal

²⁶ For the synopsis of the movie, see Appendix.

²⁷ Odell Colin – Le Blanc Michelle: *Studio Ghibli: The Films of Hayao Miyazaki & Isao Takahata*. London: Kamera Books, 2009, p. 45-46.

²⁸ Napier Jolliffe Susan: *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 235.

²⁹ Cavallaro Dani: *The Anime Art of Hayao Miyazaki*. Jefferson és London: McFarland & Company, 2006, p. 123-124.

³⁰ Sierra Wendi: Nature, Technology, and Ruined Women: Ecofeminism and Princess Mononoke. In: *The Seneca Falls Dialogues Journal* 1 (2015/10), p. 43-48.

³¹ Sierra Wendi: Nature, Technology, and Ruined Women: Ecofeminism and Princess Mononoke. In: *The Seneca Falls Dialogues Journal* 1 (2015/10), p. 43-48.

one, which enables her to renounce the traits that make her feminine and to keep her feminine side hidden from the public. By creating Irontown, Eboshi has built a utopian community where she tries to give the marginalised, especially women, everything she can. She treats her female counterparts as equals and, despite the utopian community, she keeps the female residents safe while the men work at risk to their lives, while she puts the women to work to avoid the visibility of her soft-heartedness.³²

In the following sentence Lady Eboshi uses a commanding form of informality and masculinity in her speech with the „re” -れ imperative form. Traditionally, this should be done in a polite form, which is also a major convention that the director is breaking by not doing so. The results of contemporary surveys also show that Japanese women use *keigo*, polite speech in a much higher proportion in their speech than Japanese men. Given that *danseigo* is still the dominant language in the workplace in Japanese society, it is not at all surprising that Eboshi speaks in masculine language, otherwise she would lose the authority that his masculine language as a tool has helped her to gain. As for the personal pronouns, she refers to herself throughout the movie with *watashi*わたし, which is considered as a neutral personal pronoun in Japanese. Moreover, it is traditionally considered as a feature of women language that while men retain the copula *da* だ, women drop it and optionally add some feminine end-of-sentence particles to the simple form of the verb. Eboshi keeps the copula, which gives the sentence a rougher, more masculine sound.

(1)

トキ も 堪忍しておくれ。

Toki mo kannenshi-te-oku-re

Toki-3 too, forgive me=IMP (MAS).

私 が ついてきた のに ザマア なかった。

Watashi-ga tsuitekita-no-ni zamaa na-katta.

I-1=TOP (NEU) you followed me and yet it was disgraceful-NEG-PST

„I hope you’ll forgive me, too, Toki. I was responsible. I should never have let it happen.”

(2)

私 だけ が 使う のではない。

³² Vernon Alice: *Beyond Girlhood in Ghibli: Manning Heroine Development against the Adult Woman Anti-hero in Princess Mononoke*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017, p. 122.

Watashi dake-ga tsukau no de wa nai.

Me-1 (NEU) only for=TOP use don't you think

ここの 女達 に 持たせる のだ。

Koko no onnatachi-ni mataseru no da.

Here=GEN women=PL=LOC to have= NMLZ COP

„They're not for me. They're for the other women here.”

Eboshi often addresses others with the neutral *sonata* そなた, which is now an archaic way to refer to other people, however, given that the movie is set in the Muromachi-period, it provides a very authentic linguistic representation for its setting era. In her sentences, the use of the copula can still be found, as well as the use of the masculine sentence final particle, *zo* ぞ.

(3)

そなたを 侍どもか ものけの手先と疑う ものがいるのだ。

Sonata-wo samurai domo-ka mononoke-no tesaki-to utagau mono-ga iru noda.

You-2=ACC samurai Q Wolf Girl's spy=GEN to doubt some people=TOP there are COP

„Some think you're a spy for the Wolf Girl or for Lord Asano and his samurai.”

(4)

そなたの アザを 消す力も ある かもしれぬぞ。

Sonata-no aza-wo kesuryoku mo aru kamoshirenu-zo.

You-2=GEN curse=ACC to lift even might be able-JP (MAS)

„Might even be able to lift your curse.”

From a dramatic point of view, the following sentences are uttered in one of the most important scenes of Eboshi's character. Eboshi's mistrust of men is evident. When San and Eboshi first meet face to face, Eboshi, with two men at her side, welcomes the princess of Beasts. In this scene, Eboshi's right-hand may appear to be a male character, Gozan, but it soon becomes clear that this is only in the public sphere, and when we move to the private sphere we realize that Eboshi's actual right-hand is Toki, a girl who once worked in a brothel.³³ From a linguistic point of view, it is also the first scene when most of the features of masculine speech appear, such as the *omae*

³³ Sierra Wendi: Nature, Technology, and Ruined Women: Ecofeminism and Princess Mononoke. In: *The Seneca Falls Dialogues Journal* 1 (2015/10), p. 46.

お前 address, the *zo zo*, *sa* さ masculine sentence final particles at the end of the sentences.

Figure 3. Eboshi facing San, the princess of Beasts.



Source: Ghibli Studio Official Website

(5)

もののけ姫 聞こえるか。私は ここにいるぞ。

Mononoke hime kikoeru-ka. Watashi-wa koko-ni iru-zo.

Mononoke hime-3 can you hear me Q. Me-1=TOP here=LOC I am-JP (MAS)

„Can you hear me, Princess of Beasts? If it's me you want, here I am.”

お前が 一族の あだを 討とう というならー。

Omae-ga ichizoku-no ada-wo utou to iu nara

You-2 (MAS)=TOP family=GEN revenge=ACC seeking if

„If you seek revenge for all the animals we've killed...”

こちらにも山犬に食い殺された夫無念をあらそうと、心に決めた者たちがいる。

(6)

だからこそ みんなに ここを守って もらいたい のさ。

Dakara koso minna ni koko wo mamot-te-moraitai-no-sa

That's precisely why all=LOC here=ACC to be protected-JP (MAS)

„That's precisely why I want you all here in Irontown.”

Throughout the movie, Lady Eboshi uses masculine sentence final particles such as *zo*ぞ、*sa*さ. As for the personal pronouns, she refers to herself throughout the film with *watashi*わたし, while addressing others with the masculine *omae*お前, which is primarily used by male speakers. On this basis, Eboshi's language is characterised by *danseigo*, the only thing that is neutral is that she refers to herself as *watashi*, which can be attributed to the fact that throughout the story she wants to assert herself in a male-oriented society. She wants to be a leader and wants to earn the respect of others for which masculine language is a practical choice, since in Japanese society men are fundamentally associated with decisiveness and strength. In addition, she uses neutral personal pronoun because she wants to convey the sense that, after all, everything she has achieved, has been achieved as a woman.

*Spirited Away – Is workplace dominated by male language?*³⁴

*Spirited Away*³⁵ (*Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi* 千と千尋の神隠し) is an anime movie released in 2001, and without doubt one of the best known of Miyazaki's anime, which has won numerous international awards including the Best Animated Feature Film Oscar award in 2003. *Spirited Away* is a story about childhood, growing up, responsibility, the dangers of a new world, it depicts the diversity of *yōkai* (spirits) in Japanese folklore through the creatures featured in the film.³⁶

Spirited Away is also an interesting test corpus for the use of *danseigo* and *joseigo* in animation. It is mainly worth observing the dialogues that take place in the working environment – the bathhouse – regarding the boss-subordinate relationship.³⁷ In Japanese society, workplaces are still strongly male-oriented, with 3/4 of women still working in lower clerical positions in companies on the so-called *ippanshoku* (一般職 general office work) career path, and women outside companies mostly working part-time or on a contract basis. One of the biggest problems facing the Japanese society is the redefinition of women's roles, the need to balance work and family life and to ensure equal opportunities in employment.

Figure 4. Rin working with the little girl, Chihiro in Yubaba's bathhouse

³⁴ The quotations in this chapter were translated by Linda Hoaglund

³⁵ For the synopsis of the movie, see Appendix.

³⁶ Lenburg Jeff: *Hayao Miyazaki: Japan's Premier Anime Storyteller*. New York: Chelsea House, 2012, p. 82.

³⁷ Muhammad Peri Syaprizal- Qistike Handay Pugar- Nuria Haristiani, An Analysis of Language Shifting: The Use of *Danseigo* by Women in the Workplace. In: *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* (2019/09), p. 129.



Source: Ghibli Studio Official Website

Rin is a 20-year-old young woman who works hard and is obedient to her boss, Yubaba. Throughout the story the 10-year-old Chihiro becomes Rin's subordinate because of her lack of experience in the workfield, as well because of her age. When Rin gives orders to Chihiro in a situation, *danseigo* characteristics can be observed in her speech style.

When referring to herself, Rin uses the masculine *ore* オレ personal pronoun, which is mostly used by men. It is important to note, that in a work environment it is also used by men towards people in the same or a lower position. Knowing this, it is not surprising that Rin uses *danseigo* characteristics in her dialogues, as *ore* for Rin is a form of assertiveness towards subordinates, but also expresses herself with other masculine characteristics, such as *sa* さ、*zo* ぞ、*dayo* だよ sentence final particles and copula usage, and the masculine *omae* お前 when addressing others. She uses masculine language outside of work as well, which adds an extra to her character's identity, in contrast to her boss, Yubaba, who uses *danseigo* because of her position as a leader. The sentences below give examples of these features.

(1)
さっき 上で 大騒ぎ して たん だよ。

Sakki ue-de oosawagi-shi-te-ta-nda-yo

Before upstairs=LOC uproar-PST COP-JP

„They're having a fit about it upstairs.”

(2)
靴 なんかも 持って どうすんのさ。

Kutsu nanka motte dousun no sa.

Shoes things like bring why would NMLZ-JP (MAS)

„What do you need shoes for!”

(3)

お前トロイからさ心配してたんだ。

Omae toroi kara sa shinpai-shi-te-ta-nda

You-2 (MAS) thick that's why I was worried-PST COP

„You're so thick, I was worried.”

(4)

オレいつかあの町に行くんだ。

Ore itsuka ano machi ni iku-n-da

I-1 (MAS) some day that town=LOC I'll go COP

„Some day, I swear I'll get to that town.”

Figure 5. Yubaba, a witch and leader of the spirit world's bathhouse



Source: Ghibli Studio Official Website

Yubaba is a 60-year-old witch, who owns the spirit world's bathhouse. Seeing that everyone else is her subordinate because of her status, it is not surprising in her case either, that she uses *danseigo* to communicate with her employees. Yubaba, similarly to Rin, uses various *danseigo* characteristics, such as the second personal pronoun *omae* お前. In addition, recurrent elements in her sentences are the masculine sentence final particles as well: *sa* さ、*zo* ぞ、*dayo* だよ. Similarly to Eboshi, it is clear that leadership requires a strong retention of authority, which female characters can only achieve by adopting the traits of masculine speech. The following sentences give examples of the character traits of Yubaba's speech.

(1)

そんな ヒョロヒョロに 何が できる のさ。

Sonna hyoro hyoro ni nani ga dekiru no-sa

So unsteadily what=TOP are you even capable of-JP (MAS)

„What can a clumsy child like you be capable of?”

(2)

八百万の 神様たちが 疲れを癒しにくる お湯屋なんだよ。

Happyakuman no kami-sama-tachi-ga tsukare wo iyashi-ni kuru o-yuya nan-da-yo

Eight million god-POL-PL=TOP tiredness=ACC healing bathhouse COP

„It’s a bath house, where eight million spirits can rest their weary bones.”

(3)

その お方は おクサレ神ではないぞ。

Sono o-kata wa o-kusaregamide wa nai-zo

That spirit=TOP not stink-NEG-JP (MAS)

„That’s no Stink Spirit in there.”

(4)

お前の 初仕事だ。 これから来るお客をお湯で話をするんだよ。

Omae-no hatsu shigoto da. Kore kara kuru o-kyaku wo o-yuu de sewa wo suru-na-da-yo

You-2 (MAS)=GEN first job. The coming customer=ACC take to the bathtub COP

„Listen, this is your first job. You take this customer to the big tub.”

Summary

As stated in the introduction, this paper aimed to present the linguistic representation of some female characters in Hayao Miyazaki’s anime movies. They show the role of women in a mostly utopian social system, and thus provide an alternative way not only for female viewers but also for future generations to redefine the role of women in Japanese society, and in other societies. This study was to present a more comprehensive picture of what is considered masculine and feminine in Japanese language. I have narrowed down my analysis of *yakuwarigo* to the examination of sentence-final particles, personal pronouns and verb usage. Hayao Miyazaki exploits the potential of the *yakuwarigo* to represent his female characters as strong personalities, elevating them to the top of the social sphere. Miyazaki's

animations reveal that Japanese society, and thus language, is heavily male-dominated, so until the concept of female language is fully articulated in the language change, the representation of strong female protagonists/characters will be mainly done in masculine language, as it suggests dominance.

His characters are often described by critics as *shōjo* masked characters, but they are more closely associated with the *bishōjo*. The term *bishōjo* was originally used to describe only the beautiful appearance of a particular female character, but it has been increasingly associated with virtues such as courageous and compatible, while at the same time being portrayed as somewhat naive and innocent. His characters conform to anime conventions such as beautiful, wide-open eyes and lipless mouths, but they cannot be uniformly described as *shōjo* characters. In terms of their age and appearance, they could be considered as *shōjo*, but while the average *shōjo* characters are passive and live in their own dream world, Miyazaki's characters are active, independent, brave and not least curious. Miyazaki constantly breaks with traditional conventions, deviates from the traditional image of women, avoids marriage stories and romantic threads. There is no clear antagonist going against the protagonist, as he never portrays the two extremes, but rather binary opposites of the characters. This representation of women, however, merely reveal a „deceptive representation" of Japanese society's social expectations of women, which implies an underrepresentation of real-world feminine conventions in contrast to visual representations where heroines easily outperform men, both in physicality and social status.

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Appendix

Synopsis of Princess Mononoke

Princess Mononoke begins with the character introduction of Ashitaka, the Prince of Emishi, who defends his village from an enraged wild boar god, but pays a terrible

price for his actions. The hate-spewing beast infects Ashitaka's right arm, causing the poison to seep into Ashitaka's bones little by little, endangering his life. Sensing unease in the West, which could endanger their lives, following the suggestion of the village oracle as the only solution, Prince Ashitaka travels to the West to shed light on the cause of the deity's wrath. On his journey, Ashitaka meets Jigo, a wandering monk who suggests that Ashitaka should seek help from the spirits of the forest. Ashitaka later is confronted with the cruelty of the samurai and their incursions into neighbouring villages. His helpful interventions, however, only increase the spread of the poison in his forearm, but in return the boar god provides him with great physicality. It is in the midst of the battle that he first glimpses Moro, the wolf god, and San, riding on the back of a wolf pup. They are pursued by a band of soldiers and a woman in a red hat - Lady Eboshi - who successfully wound the wolf girl, San. Ashitaka later encounters two wounded soldiers in the forest inhabited by the spirit gods, and then explores the forest with the helpful-looking little mongrels, the *kodamas*, and meets the *shishigami*, the spirit of the forest.

Ashitaka gets the wounded soldiers back to their home, Irontown safely, where he meets a woman in a distinctive red hat, Lady Eboshi. Eboshi, who is the leader of the iron ore and weapon-making Irontown, tells Ashitaka that the wild boar god, Nago, the one who cursed Ashitaka's right arm, died by Eboshi's hands, turning him into a demon fueled by anger and hatred. Eboshi also lets Ashitaka get to know her secrets, revealing to him that she provides shelter to the social outcasts, which makes Ashitaka unable to feel anger towards Lady Eboshi. Nevertheless, the industrial expansion of the city is now threatening the forest inhabited by the gods and spirits, leading Eboshi to wage war with the gods of the forest, especially with Moro and the princess of the Beasts, San. Not only are Eboshi's smelted metal factories polluting the environment, but her deforestation programmes are also turning the land inhabited by the gods barren. Jigo, a rogue wandering monk, and Lady Eboshi go against the forest god to get its head. The head of the forest god is linked to immortality, which the emperor also covers, as a result, whoever succeeds is handsomely rewarded and offered protection and autonomy by the Emperor. Meanwhile, Eboshi must also reckon with the samurai, who would gladly take the weapons that Eboshi's people produce. Eboshi and her men succeed in capturing the head of the God of the Forest. By losing its head eventually it becomes the God of Destruction. Ashitaka and San prevent the forest god from rampaging and return his severed head, and peace temporarily returns between the forest gods and the people. Ashitaka, who understands both sides' points of view, tries to avoid as much bloodshed as possible while trying to uncover the cause of the curse on his arm.

Synopsis of Spirited Away

Chihiro and her family are about to move to a new house, her former life fading away like the bouquet of flowers Chihiro holds tightly in her family's car as she gets more and more distant from her former home and friends. On the way to their new life, however, they lose their way and end up at a dead end. Once at the dead end, Chihiro's parents are driven by curiosity, and they walk through a tunnel that leads them to an abandoned amusement park. The place may seem abandoned at first, but smelling the delicious foods, Chihiro's parents find themselves in what looks like a restaurant, showing no reluctance but more gluttony, they start eating, almost like wild animals, to which Chihiro is shocked. Wandering around the unfamiliar place, Chihiro runs into a boy, Haku, who immediately warns her to be careful and to leave before it gets

dark. Baffled by what he said, Chihiro immediately heads back to her parents, who by this time have turned into pigs, and if that is not enough, the unknown place is suddenly crawling with spirits and other supernatural beings, led by none other than, Yubaba the dictator.

Chihiro must soon face the fact that this new, unfamiliar world does not tolerate the presence of humans, and she must find work as soon as possible if she is to save her parents and avoid the same fate that has befallen them. The dictator of the spirit world, Yubaba, after some wrangling, puts the little girl to work, and from that moment on her name was not Chihiro, but Sen. In the bathhouse run by Yubaba, she has to do the most insidious jobs, and in the midst of all the hardships, she slowly loses sight of her true identity. In the spirit world, she makes many friends, but her greatest ally is undoubtedly the mysterious and enigmatic Haku, known to those around him as Lord Haku, Yubaba's sorcerer apprentice.

A NŐK NYELVI REPREZENTÁCIÓJA MIYAZAKI HAYAO RAJZFILMJEIBEN

GAJDOS NOÉMI

Jelen tanulmány a japán nyelvben megjelenő „*yakuwarigo*” (役割語 szerepnyelv) fogalmát tárja fel és veti vizsgálat alá Miyazaki Hayao két anime filmjéből (*A vadon hercegnője*, *Chihiro szellemországban*) három női karakter: Eboshi, Rin és Yubaba mondatanalíziseit, hogy bemutassa, hogyan használja ki az elismert japán rendező a szerepnyelvben rejlő lehetőségeket, különösen a férfias nyelvezetet, hogy női szereplőinek lehetővé tegye egy magasabb szerepkör betöltését egy férfiorientált társadalomban. A filmelemzés szempontjából Miyazaki a női karaktereit a nyilvános szférába helyezi, a cselekmény aktív résztvevőivé teszi őket, miközben következetesen szembeszáll a hagyományos japán női konvenciókkal. Ezen tanulmány szorosan kapcsolódik a gendernyelvészet és a nyelvi ideológia területéhez, ahogyan fő célja, hogy bemutassa Miyazaki női karakterei a dialógusaikban milyen módon térnek el a nyelvi normáktól.

Kulcsszavak: Miyazaki Hayao, *yakuwarigo*, szerepnyelv, nyelvi ideológia, gendernyelvészet