

# The Rhetorical Techniques Employed by Japanese Activists

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## Abstract

This study analyzes the English language rhetorical techniques employed in public speeches by four current Japanese activists. While not as deeply embedded in Japanese culture as in some Western cultures, there has been a recent increase in activism in Japan. Frequently, such activists deliver speeches in English focusing on climate change issues, gender issues, and political issues. Correspondingly, there has been a renewed interest in exploring whether these Japanese activists employ established English language rhetorical techniques to enhance the persuasiveness of their speeches. Four speeches (two delivered by experienced speakers and two by inexperienced speakers) were analyzed in this study using Rowland's (2019) categories of language strategies. The core research question in this study is: What rhetorical techniques are utilized by Japanese activists to enhance their English language speeches? Findings indicate that even though the Japanese activists spoke in their second language (English), they employed many of the traditional rhetorical techniques commonly used in English speeches. Furthermore, subtle differences in the frequency and complexity of techniques used distinguished one of the experienced speakers from the other speakers. The educational implication drawn from these findings is that English language rhetorical techniques can be more widely taught in L2 classes.

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## Share and cite

Miles, R. (2024). The Rhetorical Techniques Employed by Japanese Activists. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching [e-FLT]*, 21 (Supplement), 109–119. <https://doi.org/10.56040/rcml2122>

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## 1 Introduction

Rhetoric can be defined as “the use of symbols (primarily language) to persuade or inform” (Rowland, 2019, p. XI). How speakers can effectively employ rhetoric has been the focus of great debate dating back thousands of years to the Sophists and Aristotle (Degani, 2015). According to Herrick (2018, p. 9), rhetorical discourse is typically: planned; adapted to an audience; determined by human motives; context-dependent; seeking to persuade; and, concerned with contingent issues. Being particularly poignant for political speeches, rhetoric is considered an “essential part of the democratic process” (Toye, 2013, p. 4). Rhetoric is also an indispensable element in speeches delivered by activists and other speakers seeking to persuade their audience. There are a multitude of recognized rhetorical techniques, including antitheses, metaphors, and tricolons (see Leith, 2019; Herrick, 2018; Lucas, 2015; Miles, 2020, Toye, 2013) and studies have documented how established world leaders such as former US President Barack Obama (Degani, 2015) use these techniques. However, the majority of research to date on how such techniques are utilized has almost exclusively focused on examining speeches delivered in Western contexts. There have been few studies on the

use of English language rhetorical techniques by Japanese public speakers (Tomasi, 2004), making this study original and potentially significant. By analyzing speeches from a selection of current and prominent activists in Japan, possible conclusions can be proffered on whether or not Japanese speakers of English can also implement these techniques in the public speaking domain. This study aims to assess if and how Japanese activists use rhetoric in their English language speeches and to document such usage. Implications for L2 instruction can then be proposed accordingly.

## 2 Literature review

Rhetoric has been considered a distinct academic field of knowledge and study since the 5th century BC (Fahnestock, 2011; Toye, 2013). Rhetoric has also frequently been viewed as “synonymous with persuasion” (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2019, p. 37). Some scholars have equated the use of rhetoric to the shallow and deceptive use of language to manipulate audiences (Herrick, 2018). Plato famously alleged rhetoric “created belief without knowledge” (Toye, 2013, p. 12). Nevertheless, throughout history, skilled orators have utilized a vast array of rhetorical techniques to persuade (and manipulate) audiences for a host of purposes (both good and bad). As such, there is a rich research tradition of analyzing rhetoric.

Aristotle viewed rhetoric as having three branches: deliberative (to exhort or persuade), judicial (to accuse or defend), and epideictic or panegyric (to commemorate or blame) (see Charteris-Black, 2018; Herrick, 2018; Lanham, 1991; Toyes, 2013). The rhetor could employ three types of ‘proof’ to support their message: *ethos* (the speaker’s character or credibility); *pathos* (an appeal to the audience’s emotion); and *logos* (the content or logic of the discourse). For many years, Aristotle’s framework was the guideline for analyzing and teaching rhetoric. Subsequent models proposed re-worked Aristotle’s model, such as those devised by Cicero and Quintilian, but still owed much to Aristotle’s work (Toye, 2013). Although rhetoric was less valued during the Middle Ages, it became integral to Europeans in the Renaissance, “as a method of writing and persuasion, an avenue to personal refinement, a platform allowing women to enter the public arena, a means of managing civic and commercial interests, and a critical tool for studying ancient and contemporary texts” (Herrick, 2018, p. 163). The subsequent rise of Western democracies in the 18th century further necessitated a better understanding of how public figures employed language techniques and for what purposes as mass communication and discourse became crucial in shaping societies. At one stage, attempts were made to systematically categorize more than 5,000 rhetorical techniques, also known as rhetorical ornaments (Herrick, 2018). Another, more recent macro-approach to analyzing rhetoric, focuses on the five canons: 1) invention/discovery (appropriateness of arguments); 2) arrangement (structure of how arguments are presented); 3) style (the language and language techniques chosen); 4) memory (ability to internalize what needs to be expressed); and 5) delivery (gestures, voice, and visuals) (Toye, 2013).

Lanham (1991) and Charteris-Black (2018) explain that within the field of rhetoric, there is no definitive method of categorizing or analyzing the more than three hundred accepted and defined rhetorical language techniques available to rhetors. Scholars, such as Atkinson (2004) and Dowis (2000) have attempted to document many of these techniques. Others, such as Fairhurst (2011) have described language techniques as, “language forms in framing” (p. 93) and have analyzed them from the perspective of message framing. Lanham (1991) does offer a group of potential broad (yet mostly self-explanatory) categories with which to conduct a more rigorous analysis of discourse. These are: addition, amplification, balance brevity, description, emotional appeals, examples, metaphorical substitutions and puns, repetition, techniques of argument, and unusual uses of grammar (pp. 181-195).

A more recent framework for rhetorical criticism and analysis is the “I CARE” system proposed by Rowland (2019). This framework can be used for analyzing any form of rhetoric from political speeches to one-line tweets by celebrities. The “I” in the acronym refers to each individual (audience or researcher) and why they should care about the rhetoric they are analyzing. In the first stage of the framework, the “C” refers to, choice by the researcher and serves to explain why a particular

piece of rhetoric has been selected for analysis. Factors such as, immediacy of the work, representativeness of the disseminator, the distinctiveness of the work, or the relevance of the work to other research by the investigator.

The second stage of the framework involves analysis (“A”). According to Rowland (2019),

The analyst identifies the explicit and implicit message, the supporting reasoning and evidence, the role played by the speaker or writer (the rhetor), the implied relationship between the rhetor and the audience, and all of the various strategies present in the rhetoric. (p. 4)

The third stage of the framework is research (“R”). Rowland (2019) clarifies that this research should be conducted after the analysis and should focus on learning about the context in which the rhetoric was presented and to whom it was presented. Finally, “E” represents explanation and evaluation, where the researcher tries to “explain why the rhetoric resonated or failed to resonate and to evaluate the ethicality and truthfulness of the rhetoric” (Rowland, 2019, p. 10). These last two stages have become more difficult recently with electronic media and globalization meaning there are now a multitude of audiences being targeted by rhetors in each speech (Toye, 2013).

Within the I CARE framework, there are a host of sub-categories that can be explored by the researcher. One such pertinent sub-category for this current study involves what Rowland (2019) has labelled the most important category in the analysis system, Strategy categories. As Rowland explains, these are “a major plan of attack, one of the keyways that the rhetor appeals to the audience.” (p. 28). As Herrick (2018, p. 4) further explains, “rhetoric traditionally has been closely concerned with the techniques for gaining compliance.” One specific strategy category is aesthetic, where the rhetor utilizes the power of language to persuade the audience. As Herrick (2018, p.15) clarifies, “Aesthetics are elements adding form, beauty, and force to symbolic expression. Writers, speakers, composers, or other sources typically wish to present arguments and appeals in a manner that is attractive, memorable, or perhaps even shocking to the intended audience.” Language strategies serve this purpose and are an integral way of enhancing the persuasive impact of a message and according to Rowland (2019), the seemingly endless array of these language strategies can be grouped into 12 categories (see Table 1). The explanations and definitions have been glossed from Rowland’s work (2019, p. 163-168).

**Table 1. Categories of language strategies**

<b>Language Strategy</b>	<b>Explanation &amp; Definition</b>
Metaphor	most important language strategy, frequently used to enliven rhetoric
Antithesis	two contrasting thoughts are juxtaposed for emphasis
Parallel Structure and Repetition	the repetition of a sentence, phrase or single word, or the use of such words and phrases in successive sections of text
Rhetorical Question	a question posed with an implied answer
Depiction or Description	the use of language to create a strong visual image
Personification	giving an inanimate object or concept human form
Rhythm and Rhyme	used to help audiences remember a point
Definition	used to control the subject of discussion
Alliteration and Assonance	using several consecutive words that begin with the same consonant
Allusion	an indirect reference to existing rhetoric, literature, history or cultural norm
Labelling	a label or slogan can help to characterize a person, object, concept or stance
Irony	by explicitly stating something, the rhetor can intentionally convey a different meaning

While these language strategies are an important part of rhetoric and serve an enhancing function in the dissemination of the rhetor’s message, there are limitations that need to be considered. Firstly,

it is highly doubtful that these techniques work in isolation, without a congruent delivery strategy (Miles, 2020), or some form of persuasive substance supporting the underlying message (Rowland, 2019). Rhetors also need to consider the context of delivery, which should help determine which language strategies are employed and how they are utilized. Furthermore, language strategies are frequently more effective when used in combination with other language strategies (Miles, 2020). Finally, cultural ‘norms’ and expectations can influence how language strategies affect audiences. Although research has explored apparent cultural differences in how Japanese university students utilize rhetorical techniques when writing in English, there is a dearth of research into how Japanese speakers of English employ (or do not employ) these techniques in the public speaking domain.

### 3 Methodology

This study represents the initial stage of a larger study, whose ultimate research objective is to document the English language rhetorical techniques employed by public speakers from a variety of linguistic backgrounds. The key scientific question framing this study is: What rhetorical techniques are utilized by Japanese activists to enhance their English language speeches? Although rhetoric is typically analyzed from economic, political, historical, and psychological perspectives (Toye, 2013), this current study solely analyzes rhetoric from a linguistics perspective. This means the analysis is primarily concerned with identifying and documenting the specific techniques uttered by each speaker, not with establishing the intent of the speaker.

Firstly, the four speeches analyzed in this study were selected by a group of 95 Japanese university students, as part of their coursework. Their assignment was to search for and then review English language speeches by Japanese activists online (primarily on YouTube, but all platforms were acceptable) and to document and analyze the most impressive speeches, regardless of the issues being covered. The goal of the assignment was to learn public speaking techniques from the speakers and then model those techniques in their class speeches later in the course. From the student’s responses, the top four most frequently chosen speeches were included in this study, comprising two relatively inexperienced speakers (high school students) and two professional speakers (with experience in public speaking). Table 2 provides a brief overview of the speakers and their speeches.

**Table 2. Speakers and speeches**

Activist - profile	Speech information
Shina Tsuyuki (High school student)	“The Power of our Choices as Consumers” Graduation speech, 2019 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ryb9ZI7yeWc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ryb9ZI7yeWc</a>
Seena Katayama (High school student)	“How an Activist is Just Like a Rainbow” TEDxYouth@Tokyo, 2018 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IybRyONuek">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IybRyONuek</a>
Naoko Ishii (Economist)	“An Economic Case for Protecting the Planet” TED Talk, 2017 <a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/naoko_ishii_an_economic_case_for_protecting_the_planet/transcript">https://www.ted.com/talks/naoko_ishii_an_economic_case_for_protecting_the_planet/transcript</a>
Shiori Ito (Journalist)	“黒箱/假如没人能谈论性侵，那就由我来做这件事吧” (Black Box: If No One Can Talk About Sexual Assault, Let Me Do It) YiXi Conference presentation, 2019 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4dYkAW53dc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4dYkAW53dc</a>

The researcher transcribed the speeches by listening to each recording three times and then comparing the transcript with official transcripts, when available. The speeches were transcribed according to the ‘sound scripting’ method (see Powell, 2011), meaning that chunks of language were transcribed as they were uttered, rather than following traditional written conventions (i.e., complete sentences). Each line on a transcript represented a chunk of language. Mistakes and restarts were

transcribed as they occurred, without any glossing procedures applied. Delivery elements (e.g., gestures, pauses, use of visuals) were not included, due to a singular focus on rhetoric from a linguistics perspective in this study. The following is an example of a transcript, taken from Shiori Ito's speech (L12-16).

So I am very happy that you are here today to listen to this.  
 And I have to warn you it's going to be heavy.  
 But I am with you and you are with me.  
 So I am going to talk about it from now on.  
 My dream always has been to be a journalist.

**Fig. 1. Transcript excerpt**

The raw transcripts were then analyzed with the use of MAXQDA 2020 software to identify and code the established and widely recognized rhetorical techniques (language strategies) listed in Table 1 (see Lanham, 1991; Topping, 2016) used by the four speakers. Rowland's language strategy categorization model (2019) is used to identify underlying tendencies in the data and to identify specific language techniques that are prevalent. A segment of the coded transcript (the same lines as in Figure 1. – Shiori Ito's speech, L12-16) is provided in Figure 2 to help illustrate the process.

	12	So I am very happy that you are here today to listen to this.
	13	And I have to warn you it's going to be heavy.
Parallel structure or r	14	But I am with you and you are with me.
	15	So I am going to talk about it from now on.
Definition	16	My dream always has been to be a journalist.

**Fig. 2. Coded transcript excerpt**

The framework for analysis consisted of identifying and interpreting the descriptive statistics resulting from the coding stages. To provide a richer context from which to base the analysis of the frequency of language strategy findings, Aristotle's three persuasive appeals model (see Charteris-Black, 2018), consisting of 'ethos', 'logos', and 'pathos', is used to help identify general approaches adopted by the speakers and Rowland's (2019) I CARE system is also referenced in appropriate situations.

#### 4 Findings and discussion

When analyzing rhetoric, the researcher can focus on the "macro questions of rhetoric: what is the nature of a speech; how is it constructed and delivered; does it play on reason, emotion, or character?" (Toye, 2013, p. 45). They can also adopt an analytical approach that explores the micro aspects of rhetoric, such as which language techniques were employed and how. If the research is examining one segment of rhetoric (e.g., one speech transcript) in detail, both approaches to analysis are pertinent. A comparative analysis across a selection of rhetorical examples – such as this study is conducting – typically requires a more micro-analytical focus. While this study primarily adopts a micro-analytical approach to analyzing the language techniques employed by four rhetors, it begins by incorporating elements of a macro-analytical approach as a means of situating the study.

To briefly address the macro questions in this study, Rowland's framework for rhetorical criticism, the "I CARE" system is adopted (2019). To summarize, all four speakers were heavily invested in the content of their speeches, with only Ishii not invoking a personal anecdote to underpin their own personal motivation for attempting to persuade the audience to align with their own viewpoint. The audience and the specifics of the context for these four speeches are unknown ("R"), so it is impossible to verify whether the audience members were already invested in the content of the

speech before it was delivered (“I”), but we can assume and evaluate that as they were enthusiastic in their response to all four speeches, the speeches were successful in obtaining at least superficial agreement from the audience (“E”). The secondary audience (the researcher’s students) was also impressed enough by the speeches to consistently evaluate them highly as part of their coursework (“E”). As for the “A” in Rowland’s framework (the analysis), this will be covered in the micro-analytical approach focusing on language techniques used by the speakers.

Due to its historical importance, Aristotle’s framework (Ethos, Logos, and Pathos) is also used to better situate the coming micro-analytical analysis. In terms of ethos (the speaker’s character or credibility), we can say that both Ishii and Ito likely had a higher degree of credibility with their audience prior to speaking, due to their more established professional reputations. Tsuyuki and Katayama were both likely unknown to their respective audiences, with both being high school students partaking in presentation contests and exhibitions. In terms of pathos (an appeal to the audience’s emotion), it can be said that all four speakers exhibited a great deal of passion and clearly believed strongly in the message they were trying to convey to their audiences. An appeal to the audience’s emotions was frequently made with the use of personal anecdotes featuring negative experiences by the speaker, or alarming claims about the seriousness of not addressing the issue being presented. Finally, the logos (the content or logic of the discourse) of each speaker can be seen in the simplicity of the language used. While the issues were of a serious nature, all four speakers employed a simple and clear discourse to reach a wider audience. For example, Ishii did not mention any of the complex scientific terms used when describing environmental issues, and Ito rarely referred to any highly specific legal terms when describing her case. In all four cases, it can be assumed that as the focus of the speeches is widely familiar to most audiences around the world, there was less of a need to provide specific evidence and micro-details. It can also be assumed that as the four speakers were speaking in countries where English was not the primary language of communication, the simplicity of the speakers’ language was advantageous in that the audience could more readily follow the speech.

The focus of this section now takes a micro-analytical approach (“A” in Rowland’s (2019) framework) to explore the core objective of the study: identifying which techniques were used by the four speakers and exploring how they used them. Table 3 provides a breakdown of the overall frequency for each language strategy employed by the four speakers.

**Table 3. Frequency of language strategy**

Strategy	Shina Tsuyuki	Seena Katayama	Naoko Ishii	Shiori Ito
Metaphor	4	5	6	4
Antithesis	2	7	4	9
Parallel structure or repetition	5	7	11	26
Rhetorical question	5	1	4	13
Depiction of description	5	3	1	3
Personification	2	1	3	1
Rhythm and rhyme	6	1	0	1
Definition	1	4	2	7
Alliteration and Assonance	4	1	0	2
Allusion	0	3	2	17
Labelling	7	3	3	1
Irony	2	1	0	0
Total	43	37	36	84

Overall, there were exactly 200 coded instances of language strategy use by the four speakers: Shiori Ito used 84 language strategies; Shina Tsuyuki used 43; Seena Katayama used 37; and Naoko Ishii used 36. Parallel structure was employed in 49 instances by the speakers, making it the most commonly utilized strategy (and the most frequently used strategy by three of the four speakers).

Irony was employed only three times and by only two speakers, making it the least utilized strategy. Perhaps, most importantly, all twelve strategies in Rowland's framework (2019) were utilized by at least two of the speakers and eight of the strategies were utilized by all four speakers. It is also apparent that Shiori Ito (one of the experienced speakers) employed language strategies at a greater rate than the other speakers (although her speech was significantly longer). Equally important was the finding that the two lesser experienced speakers (Tsuyuki and Katayama) were able to utilize language techniques at a similar rate to the other professional speaker (Ishii). This indicates that the use of language techniques is not limited to the more experienced and trained speakers.

The most widely employed language strategy was parallel structure or repetition. This strategy is simple to use, and it can foster a certain rhythm in a speech, which then enhances the message being communicated by the speaker. The speakers often relied on a specific parallel structure or repetition technique known as a tricolon, "a figure of speech containing three equal and syntactically balanced parts" (Charteris-Black, 2018, p. 294). All four speakers utilized this technique often to highlight key segments of their speeches. Tsuyuki used a negative version to highlight the dangers of unregulated makeup products, "...with no required testing, with no required monitoring of health effects, and no required labelling" (L32-33). She then employed a powerful example of a tricolon as part of her conclusion: "We can't control what companies put in products. We can't control the air we breathe. We can't control the world we live in. But we can 100% control what we consume..." (L119-122). Katayama used a very simple, yet powerful tricolon, to describe her progression towards coming out as queer, "And then I went into high school. And then I started dating a girl. And then I dated another girl and a guy" (L38-40). Ishii also used a tricolon to help illustrate her key point about the social contract being the binding force in society: "This is how villagers in medieval Europe managed pasture and forests. This is how communities in Asia managed water, and this is how indigenous peoples in the Amazon managed wildlife" (L5-7). She essentially reiterated the same technique, albeit an updated version, to conclude her speech: "We all share one planet in common. We breathe the same air, we drink the same water, we depend on the same oceans, forests, and biodiversity" (L20-22). Finally, Ito also employed the technique to powerful effect when trying to impress on the audience that the perpetrators of sexual violence, are often known to the victims: "It could be your family. It could be your friend. It could be your boss." (L123-125). What is apparent from looking at these examples is how simple the language used is, yet how all four speakers in this study used this simplicity to great effect by manipulating the words into a parallel structure, which then served to greatly enhance the message they were trying to impart on the audience.

In terms of analyzing patterns regarding how language strategies were used by the speakers, it is notable that three of the four speakers began their speeches by utilizing a technique, or a combination of techniques. No doubt, this was intended to make an immediate impact on the audience and to garner attention. Tsuyuki opened by combining a definition, a rhetorical question, and irony: "Everyone believes what's on the label: 100% natural, organic, pure, sustainable, botanical. What does it actually mean?" (L5-6). This served to introduce her topic immediately and the irony helped indicate a certain skepticism that would become a theme throughout her narrative. Katayama also introduced her topic immediately, by relying on parallel structure and repetition, combined with depiction or description to illustrate for the audience what she would be speaking about: "So, an activist. When you hear the word activist, you're probably thinking of someone like this [gestures to slide]. You're probably thinking of someone who is out on the streets with posters and banners. At protests and demonstrations." (L3-6). Ishii also began by using a language strategy, but she employed an anthesis technique to open her speech (after a short initial greeting):

I am from Japan, so I'd like to start with a story about Japanese fishing villages. In the past, every fisherman was tempted to catch as many as fish as possible, but if everybody did that, the fish, common shared resource in the community, would disappear. (L4-6)

This antithesis technique served to highlight the theme of her speech which was the constant battle between the individual need or desire to do something for oneself, and the good of the overall

community through abiding by the social contract which people of the world had agreed to in the past but had forgotten in the present day.

The only speaker who did not begin her speech with a certain strategy was Shiori Ito. Instead, she attempted to initiate an interaction with the audience briefly and then introduced herself: “Wow, it’s bright. I can’t see your face. Hi. Thank you so much for coming here today. My name is Shiori Ito.” (L4-7). This likely reflects a more experienced and relaxed speaker, who can start a speech casually, assured that she can generate interest in her content at a later time and also not risk forgetting her opening scripted lines. Introducing yourself as the speaker has also been identified as a typical speech opening for Japanese speakers (Bull, & Waddle, 2021).

One interesting finding in this study is that both Katayama and Ito used the antithesis technique as one of the most employed strategies in their speeches. While Tsuyuki and Ishii also used it, they used it far less prominently. A possible explanation for this could be the subject matter of the speakers. Both Katayama and Ito were focused on gender-related issues (accepting LGBTQ rights and changing the laws related to rape) and were attempting to persuade the audience that the current status quo was unacceptable, thereby necessitating a change. The content matter lent itself to the frequent use of the antithesis strategy and the speakers contrasted the current situation (which they perceived as wrong) with the desired future situation (the improved situation). Ito used the antithesis technique to set up a point about how seriously underreported the crime of rape is in Japan; “But here Japan is 1.1%, ranking 73. When you see this number, you cannot think, oh okay, this doesn’t happen in Japan. No. Only 4% report. That is why it is so few.” (L176-180). Katayama used quite a few short antithesis statements to help illustrate the difference between herself and Japanese society. For example, she stated that “there was this disparity between what society saw of me, and what I saw of myself” (L42). She also stated her belief that “Because, we live in a society where homogeneity and in-synchness [SIC] is valued above everything else. It prevents our country from being a more progressive and more inclusive nation” (L17-18).

Rhetorical questions featured in all four of the analyzed speeches. As with typical speeches delivered in English, these questions frequently served to set up the speaker’s key point by provoking the audience to consider something in a particular way. Ito used this strategy more than the other speakers and thirteen times in total in her speech. In fact, she used a series of four rhetorical questions in less than twenty seconds to help depict her disbelief at how sexual consent was viewed by respondents to a survey conducted in Japan (while gesturing at her slide): “What do you think is a consent for sex? ... Can you believe that? ... These things are showing our consent? ... Why we don’t know about consent?” (L59; 61; 67; 69). This series of questions served to set up one of the key points of her speech: sexual consent is not defined clearly in Japanese law and people in Japan are largely uneducated about consent and ignorant of what constitutes consent. Later, Ito used three consecutive rhetorical questions (also coded as a tricolon) to show how difficult it is for victims to decide what to do after being raped: “Can I go to the police? What would happen to my relations? What would happen to my life?” (L127-129). The other speakers also used rhetorical questions to set up the delivery of key points, but unlike Ito, did not combine them in a series of questions. Near the beginning of her speech, Tsuyuki said, “Why is it so dangerous for us to use these kind of makeup products?” (L42). This framed the thrust of her speech, which detailed the pitfalls of using makeup without being aware of the ingredients used in it and how a particular experience with an allergic reaction to face cream had led her to begin developing her own organic brand of makeup.

While certain techniques were implemented frequently by the four speakers, one technique which was seldom used was irony. Second-language users typically struggle to understand or express irony, so it is perhaps not surprising that the four speakers in this study did not often feature the technique in their speeches. Tsuyuki though, actually started her speech with the line, “Everyone believes what’s on the label: 100% organic, pure, sustainable, botanical” (L5). Clearly her whole speech reflected that this statement wasn’t true, so the use of irony right at the beginning signified a hook or attention-getting device to demonstrate to the audience what her real position was and that she had a sense of humor. Katayama was the only other speaker to use the irony technique and she used it in the form of a tricolon, as she described her prior beliefs that women were supposed to be



strong and outspoken, which she then discovered was everything that society said women should not be (as described earlier). Somewhat surprising is that the two more experienced speakers (Ishii and Ito) did not use the irony technique. Given the relatively darker nature of their content, perhaps they did not wish to risk undermining their message by attempting to use humor.

## 5 Implications

With research on rhetorical techniques largely limited to speeches by established politicians instead of grassroots activists, this study offers a fresh perspective on public speaking. A cautionary note about over-emphasizing the importance of rhetoric in any study of public discourse comes from Toye (2013, p. 5), who warns that “excess faith in the existence of rhetorical laws may lead the critic to overlook other factors affecting rhetorical success or failure.” With this caveat in mind and given that this study is not focusing on determining the rhetorical success or failure of particular usages, there is one underlying conclusion that can be drawn from this study: All four speakers in this study, for whom English is a second language, employed rhetorical techniques frequently, often paralleling how professional speakers for whom English is a first language employ them (Bull & Waddle, 2021). This finding has two pedagogical implications for language learners and instructors, as well as public speakers and activists and offers suggestions for future research avenues to be explored.

Firstly, there were differences in how the more experienced speakers utilized rhetoric when compared with the two less experienced speakers. Specifically, Shiori Ito made extensive use of several techniques to enhance her message. Rhetorical questions and allusions were employed far more frequently than by other speakers in this study. Rhetorical questions are typically employed for the purpose of engaging the audience. This aligns with a finding by Bull and Waddle (2021) who discovered that Western speakers typically use such rhetorical techniques to invite responses from the audience. Such usage is also likely indicative of a more experienced and confident speaker who was taking account of how the audience could be better drawn into her speech while constructing her script. Further evidence of this experience can be found in her extensive use of parallel structure and repetition, which helped reinforce her underlying message and make the speech more comprehensible for the audience. Ito exhibited a skilled and effective use of such techniques which the less experienced speakers did not. This suggests a potential progression that speakers may traverse as they develop their rhetorical skills. As a journalist, Ito had no doubt a great deal more experience speaking in public than even Ishii, the other more seasoned public speaker. This experience is evident in her poised usage of rhetorical language techniques.

The other significant implication to be drawn from this study is that the frequent use of language strategies and rhetoric techniques by the four Japanese activists demonstrates that the use of such techniques is not solely the domain of speakers for whom English is a first language. Both the experienced and lesser experienced speakers analyzed in this study employed a wide range of techniques frequently and throughout their speeches (albeit at differing rates) designed to enhance the impact of their message. None of these techniques are overtly difficult to incorporate into speeches, yet they are seldom used by L2 learners in public speaking contexts or even in educational domains such as university language class presentations (Miles, 2020). Although there is currently no known comparable study in the literature with which to situate this current study, it would seem that L2 instructors and students in speech and oral presentation-related classes or tasks could easily make better use of such techniques. Learning more about how to use rhetoric would help address the perceived need by Japanese students to better learn perspective-taking (Gyenes, 2021). Incorporating such micro techniques into speeches could also help activists shape the overarching message they are trying to impart to audiences. For example, gender activists are often perceived in Japan as taking a ‘non-cooperative resistance’ (Lilja, 2021) approach to their speeches, but with the use of certain micro techniques, their approach could be seen as ‘constructive resistance’ and would potentially be more effective.

In terms of limitations to the study's scope, further work still needs to be done to more widely assess how L2 speakers utilize rhetorical techniques. Studies that incorporate a wider pool of speakers than this current study would yield more conclusive results, particularly if conducted across a range of cultural contexts. As noted by Feldman (2021) in a study on how Japanese culture shapes the rhetorical approaches adopted by politicians, rhetoric does not exist in a cultural vacuum. Furthermore, studies that focus on the rhetoric used by speakers who were not highly acclaimed by online viewers or a live audience would also be important to conduct. Comparative work could then be done on the use of rhetoric in speeches perceived as being effective and those perceived as less effective. Such studies could potentially yield clues as to how rhetorical techniques determine the effectiveness of a speech (or not). Finally, a study that can account for the content of the speech and how such content determines which specific rhetorical techniques are suitable to use would also likely yield more conclusive results.

## 6 Conclusion

The research purpose of this study was to address the following core question: What rhetorical techniques are utilized by Japanese activists to enhance their English language speeches? To accomplish this, four speeches (two delivered by experienced speakers and two by relatively inexperienced speakers) delivered by current Japanese activists were analyzed. The speeches were analyzed using Rowland's (2019) categories of language strategies. The primary finding from this study is that even though the Japanese activists (both experienced and inexperienced) were speaking in English (L2) they frequently utilized many of the traditional English language rhetorical techniques outlined by Rowland (2019). The pedagogical implication drawn from this study is that the relative ease with which both experienced and inexperienced speakers utilized the rhetorical techniques suggests such techniques can be easily learned and employed in speeches and should therefore be more widely taught in L2 classes. The long-term effect of such pedagogical improvements would mean that Japanese speakers could be better equipped with the tools they need to make an impact when speaking English on the world stage.

## Acknowledgments

This research was supported by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) KAKENHI Grant Number 22K13170 and was also conducted with the support of a Nanzan University Pache Research Subsidy (1-A-2) for the 2022 academic year.

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