This paper examines the issue of Japanese women’s speech as covert language policy. Although previous studies in the field of language policy have pointed out that covert aspects of language policy should be dealt with, they have mainly been focused on official policies stated or codified by the central authority. In this paper, I propose the necessity of another analytical frame of covert language policy by which stereotypical images of Japanese women’s speech are promoted. By and large, two different ideas of covert language policy have existed; although both criticize the lack of covert aspects in discussions of official language policy. Proponents of covert language policy use it on the one hand to account for the governmental control towards people’s language, and on the other hand to verify the existence of local policy of language. In the first case, covert language policy may support or supplement official language policy, but in the second case, covert language policy may conflict with it. I adopt the first idea of covert language policy for Japanese women’s speech. Japanese women’s speech has not been targeted for official language reform, such as the neutralization of gender discriminated language. However, women’s speech was not totally ignored; it was always discussed as midare [disorder] of keigo [honorifics], which should be avoided to accomplish idealistic Japanese or standard Japanese. Historically it was argued that women’s speech should not change even though it is not codified or officially stated in documentation in order to stabilize the policy. Thus, I argue Japanese women’s speech is covertly controlled not to be changed in order to restrict women’s linguistic behavior.

**Key terms:** language policy, covert language policy, women’s speech, honorifics (keigo); disorder (midare)