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Department of
East Asian Studies
Japanese Studies



Japanese Culture and Emotion

Thursday
2025-12-11
18⁰⁰~19³⁰

写真 怒り A hybrid u: japan lecture by Yumi Sasaki



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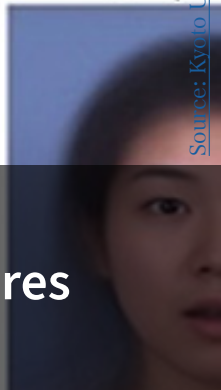
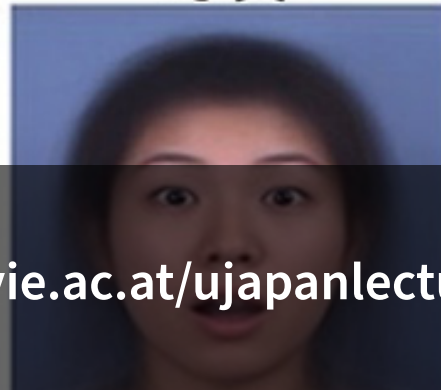
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Japanese Culture and Emotion

A hybrid *u:japan* lecture by Yumi Sasaki

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This presentation will examine how Japanese emotions are shaped in its cultural context, focusing on *amae*, anxiety, pride, and embarrassment, through the theoretical frameworks of Cultural Psychology and Psychological Constructionism. To show that emotions could be different between cultures, as a good example, the Japanese emotion, *amae* will be shortly discussed at the beginning. According to Doi (2007), *amae* refers to an implicit expectation of indulgent acceptance within relationships. It contrasts with American norms of independence where *amae* often remains unrecognized. This difference reveals that emotional concepts are culturally constructed.

Why do people experience particular emotions differently between cultures? To explain this point, the presentation will introduce Cultural Psychology and Psychological Constructionism. Cultural Psychology claims that culture shapes people's psychological process including their cognition and emotion. Psychological Constructionism suggests that emotions are not innate biological entities, but socially/culturally constructed through language.

As for more examples to show that emotions could be different between cultures, the presentation will discuss the studies on anxiety, pride and embarrassment in Japanese culture.

A study on Japanese students reveals that returnees, who have lived in western cultures and internalized independent self-construals, tend to report lower state anxiety in face-to-face conversations than non-returnee students (Sasaki, 2023).

Finally, the presentation will discuss a cross-cultural study on pride and embarrassment between Japanese and Americans (Lewis et al., 2010). It reveals that American children tend to express pride more frequently than Japanese children who often exhibit embarrassment even upon success instead. It suggests early internalization of modesty and group-oriented self-concepts. In the U.S., pride is viewed positively and promotes self-esteem. The presentation discusses that these differences in their emotional experiences tend to shape different communication styles between two cultures; Japanese are likely to minimize personal success, whereas Americans are likely to talk openly about their achievements.

In conclusion, the Japanese emotional landscape illustrates how culture constructs emotional experiences and communication patterns. Within the frameworks of Cultural Psychology and Psychological Constructionism, these findings highlight that emotions are culturally emergent phenomena rather than universal psychological entities.



Dr. Yumi Sasaki is a scholar in communication studies and professor at Keio University in Japan. Sasaki received her Ph.D. in comparative cultural studies and communication studies at Ochanomizu University in Japan in 2003. Her expertise is interpersonal/intercultural communication. Her recent research interests include the relationship between culture and emotion, and its impact on their communication. Her research has appeared in the book titled "*Interaction Management Strategies in Intercultural Communication*" (2006, Kazama-shobo), book chapters and peer-reviewed papers in several academic journals such as *International Behavioral Studies*, *Japanese Journal of Communication Studies*, and *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*. She is currently a board member of Association of International Behavioral Studies.

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