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## THE EFFECTS OF GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS ON JAPANESE LANGUAGE BEHAVIOR\*

Understanding different cultures could minimize problems in cross-cultural communication. Group consciousness appears to be one of most important nuclei for the Japanese people. The relationship between group consciousness and Japanese language behavior is looked at in this article. Japanese society is considered as vertically structured one. There are various groups in a hierarchy-like system in Japanese society. The Japanese are likely to group people into in-groups and out-groups and each group tends to communicate differently with the others. Consequently, the Japanese employ different models of expression depending on their partner. The Japanese language can categorize people, and the Japanese behave according to how they are categorized.

### **Introduction**

Each culture, and its language, holds its own unspoken rules or invisible culture which dictates what can be said, what must be said, and what must not be said. A lack of knowledge of the cultural background of the target language can obviously lead to problems in communication. For instance, it is often heard that the Japanese are more likely to think that Americans are too friendly. Conversely, Americans rather think the Japanese are too distant (Kunihiro, 1977, p. 30). These are stereotypes and prejudices which may lead to misunderstandings or cause difficulties for people from different cultures in developing relationships. If one fails to behave in accordance with unspoken rules, then one could be punished (Higa, 1976, p. 118). By contrast, learning this “invisible culture” is rather difficult. Additionally, Hudson (1980, p. 120) suggests that language is a sign of social identity; thus, it could illustrate the speaker’s, as well as the addressee’s or the referent’s, social characteristics, and also the relationship between the speaker and the addressee or the referent. It might also be said that language controls people’s behavior.

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A number of studies of the Japanese language and Japanese people's language behavior have been carried out (Nakane, 1970, 1976 & 1978; Suzuki, 1973 & 1975; Kindaichi, 1975, 1988 & 1991; Higa, 1976; Tsurumi, 1976; Shibata, 1976 & 1977; Kunihiro, 1977; Mizutani & Mizutani, 1977; Mizutani, 1979; Befu, 1980; Morita, 1995 & 1998). Benedict (1946) described the traditional image of Japanese people in "The Chrysanthemum and The Sword", which then became the stereotype in the West. Yamagishi (2000) claims that Asians act in a collectivist way, unlike their Western counterparts. Laungani (2000) argues that identity in Western cultures is represented in individualistic terms, whereas collective terms are often used for identity in the non-Western cultures. Befu (1980) refers to the Japanese society as a group model. Group consciousness as a sign of social identity is one of the striking features of Japanese people although it could be understood as a stereotype (Maynard, 1997, p. 30). These are labeled by the outsiders, but how the Japanese consider themselves is as follows:

The Japanese nation was believed to consist of only one pure ethnic group, ignoring the fact that Chinese, Korean, and Ainu people lived in Japan. This false belief was widely accepted, and even the ex-Prime Minister Nakasone proclaimed that Japan consisted of only one ethnic group, because this belief let the Japanese feel unique and superior to other groups. In other words, the Japanese would be willing to listen to such an opinion. The notion of political correctness has since influenced Japan and the false belief has been eliminated, nevertheless, it has encouraged the Japanese to develop group consciousness. It appears that group consciousness is a key issue amongst the Japanese. Therefore, this article will be devoted to how group consciousness influences the Japanese language and people's behavior.

## Group consciousness

Another example of the false belief<sup>1</sup> is *hito no ki o sassuru*<sup>2</sup>, "understanding someone's feeling or thoughts without being told". That is to say, the Japanese were one ethnic group; therefore, although a speaker did not say everything that s/he would like to tell the hearer, the hearer could understand what the speaker would like to say. The idea has become the key of social interaction. Also, people criticize others for *sonna koto mo iwanakereba wakaranai*, "telling even such things which normally must be understood without being said." Consequently, the Japanese in general do not like to speak as much as the Westerners<sup>3</sup>, which can be illustrated by the proverb, *kiji mo nakazuba utare mai*<sup>4</sup>, "if a peacock did not cry, it would not have been shot". As a result, people observe others and guess what others think and expect them to do. Also, the Japanese sometimes care too much about other people's feelings; thus, they tend to avoid having an argument by saying something directly. This would not cause any problem if the Japanese language were used only by **Japanese people**; nonetheless, there are more and more non-native Japanese speakers who communicate in the Japanese language with the Japanese.

<sup>1</sup> The Japanese nation was only one pure ethnic group.

<sup>2</sup> The transcription of Japanese into Roman script (romanization) used in this article is based on the Hepburn style. When the same vowel occurs consecutively, the letter is repeated.

<sup>3</sup> This depends on situation and people but this phenomenon is often found in official settings.

<sup>4</sup> There is safety in silence.

### Social hierarchy – social power

Japan seems to be a class-free society; accordingly, the majority of people do not think in terms of class. Only if asked do they classify themselves as middle class. So it is true to say the Japanese are not aware of a class system such as exists in the UK. On the other hand, there are many different kinds of groups in Japanese society. Nakane (1976) calls the Japanese society a vertically structured one. Various groups belong to a military-like hierarchy system, or a vertical relationship in the society (Benedict, 1946, p. 43). That is to say, Japan is like a big pyramid-like hierarchy made up of various groups. Also, inside the groups other types of vertical relationships exist. The system influences the Japanese language, and Japanese speak differently to in-group members than to out-group members. Social hierarchy has led to the creation of *keigo*, “honorific language”<sup>5</sup> (Benedict, 1946, p. 47). The closer the psychological distance and social distance between a speaker and a listener, the less polite will be the expressions used.

It is widely accepted that British English reflects one’s background, which involves class or social status, occupation, or place the speaker is from. Consequently, when two Britons converse, they will each learn about their partner from their English (Watanabe, 1977, p. 143). Similarly, since there are also many dialects in the Japanese language, it is possible to guess where a speaker is from by hearing her/ his speech. However, it is rather difficult to predict one’s occupation or social status. Shibata (1976, p. 11) says that social stratum is not clearly reflected in the Japanese language. The Japanese language and social hierarchy seem to interact differently from their British counterpart. For instance, use of both *tomodachi* and *yuujin*, “friend” in Japanese, is different from their equivalents in English and Polish. *Tomodachi* and *yuujin* have an age limit. That is to say, both words are used to address only those of similar age as the speaker; thus, if someone is 10 years older than you, s/he cannot be called *tomodachi*/*yuujin*, but *chijin*/*shiria* “acquaintance” or “someone I know” is used instead. The reason for this is the Japanese hierarchy system which, even when the age difference is only one year, puts the younger person in an inferior position.

The social hierarchy has produced forms of address such as *senpai*, “senior” and *koohai*, “junior”. They are used in school as well as in companies. If a person is only one year older than the other, the person is called *senpai*, and *senpai* has absolute power over *koohai*, who have to obey their seniors. Seniors can speak in plain/rough forms to juniors, but juniors always use polite forms when they talk to their seniors. Their relationships appear to be similar to those in the army. *Senpai* sometimes seem to have more influence and power over *koohai* than *koohai*’s parents or teachers<sup>6</sup>. Juniors call their seniors *senpai*; however, *koohai* is not used in this way. When someone’s senior introduces her/ his junior, s/he says, *koohai desu*, “X is my junior.” Additionally, if person A was senior to person B when they were at high school, person B always calls person A *senpai* as long as their relationship lasts, even though they have graduated from high school. Accordingly, B speaks with polite expressions to A (see Table 1 in the Appendix).

Shibata (1976, p. 11) and Kunihiro (1977, p. 14) claim that Japanese find it difficult to express their opinion in public if social peers are present. This may be so because the

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<sup>5</sup> The relationship between politeness in the Japanese language and the Japanese people will be discussed in the next article (in preparation).

<sup>6</sup> In Japan, teachers are traditionally respected by, and thus, influence their students.

person feels the psychological pressure of other members of the group. Consequently, the person does not say anything, or smiles in an ambiguous way. The Japanese smile when they do not want to say “no” or show disagreement. This can often be seen when people at different levels of a hierarchy talk to each other. It is not appropriate for someone who is inferior to present his/ her opinion if his/ her boss is present, and s/he would rather follow his/ her boss’s decisions.

### Group consciousness – solidarity

A group-oriented person can be defined as one who identifies herself/ himself as a member of a particular organization or institution, (e.g. I am from Toyota,) rather than to give one’s profession, for instance. The reason for this is that Japanese groups provide members with social intimacies and emotional comforts. Consequently, they rather harmonize than confront. There are such words as  *Murahachibu*, “sent to Coventry” or “being excluded from the group”;  *nakamahazure*, “being left out of / the odd one out in one’s group”,  *shikato*, “ignoring”; and  *tsumahajiki*, “being disliked and excluded from the group”, which mean discrimination as punishment.  *Murahachibu* comes from the Edo period<sup>7</sup>. At that time there were 10 important activities in groups/communities and those who broke a community rule were excluded from eight activities out of the ten and they were generally ostracized by other group members.  *Nakama* means a company, a companion, a friend.  *Hazure* literally means deviation.  *Shikato* is slang, and means being ignored by social peers.  *Tsumahajiki* literally means “flicking with four fingers from the thumb” and this illustrates that someone is kicked out of a group. Those words are in use, and when one is discriminated against by one’s group members, s/he is unlikely to receive social comfort and support from others.

Also, those who often use e-mail tend to make use of loanwords, mainly Japanese-English. These are difficult to understand by those who do not use e-mail, or those who do not live in Japan or who do not use the Internet. They claim that their superiors do not understand loanwords, and their use resembles a secret code. Consequently, when young people write complaints about their bosses, they rather use such a **code** as a special language. Shibata (1995, p. 175) argues that the use of a special language, including a type of jargon, makes people feel that they share something and this strengthens their social ties.

Benedict (1946, p. 99) points out that  *on*, “moral indebtedness” as one of outstanding features, has not yet disappeared and is still in evidence in vertical relationships in current society (Tsukishima, 1973, p. 140).

As mentioned above,  *on*, “moral indebtedness” and  *giri*, “duty” or “social/moral obligation” play an important role in Japanese society (Benedict, 1946, p. 98/ 133; Befu, 1981, p. 16, 168).  *On* and  *giri* form a socially expected relationship and can be based on an interest. Therefore, this relationship creates a social hierarchy between the  *on*-giver and the  *on*-receiver. The  *on*-giver is superior and the  *on*-receiver inferior. For instance, A gave B some resources which B had needed but did not have. B became an  *on*-receiver and has  *giri* towards A as an  *on*-giver. Therefore, the  *on*-receiver (B) is obliged to return dispensation to the  *on*-giver (A), otherwise B will be considered  *giri ninjoo*<sup>8</sup>  *no wakaranai hito*, “a person who does not understand duty and human feelings”. This  *on-giri* relationship

<sup>7</sup> 1603-1867 is also known as Tokugawa-jidai.

<sup>8</sup>  *Ninjoo* can be translated as a person’s natural inclination, lover and feeling in desires.

might not end even when the *on*-receiver returns the *on*-giver some resources, but is more likely to last as long as both parties interact with each other. When one is in a group, other group members provide the person *on*, and that person has *giri* towards those members. In comparison, if one is expelled from a group, the person no longer has *giri* and is not obliged to repay *on*<sup>9</sup> but s/he will no longer receive *on*.

The Japanese are likely to belong to several different social groups connected, e.g. with school, birth place, age, and interests. According to Nakane (1978, p. 31), this tendency is maximized in a village as one big group; a stranger is always excluded from the group. Thus, in order for the stranger to be accepted or to gain social rights within the group, the stranger has to belong to some social group in the village. Then, if one breaks a social group rule, the person will likely be considered as *wa o midasu*, “disturbing the harmony of the group” and will be expelled from the group, *murahachibu* as mentioned above.

Maynard (1997, p. 30) suggests that the group interpretation might explain some aspects of Japanese social behavior. Yet this behavior is also influenced by whether the audiences are present or not, because a communication strategy depends on social contexts. The typical Japanese meeting style is often criticized. According to Ishii et al. (1987, p. 194), Japanese participants in an international conference could be divided into three groups: silent, sleeping and smiling. They did not actively participate in the conference, their opinions were too formal and they hardly had any conflict with others. Morita (1998, p. 31) says that the Japanese are concerned about how others perceive themselves which is reflected in the language. There are a lot of proverbs with *hito*<sup>10</sup>, “a person”, “people”, “others” and *seken*, “the world”, “the public”, “the society”, or “people”<sup>11</sup>. *Hito* is opposed to *seken*. For instance, *hito shirezu*<sup>12</sup>, “secretly”; *seken o semaku suru*<sup>13</sup>, “losing one’s credit and having relationships with few people”; and *sekentei o ki ni suru*, “worrying about public view of oneself”; and *hito me o ki ni suru*, “to be too nervous about how one may appear to others”. Almost all such proverbs are negative as if someone is always observed by her/his social peers and the person judges herself/himself by their point of view. However, “one’s social peers’ point of view” is, in fact, the way the person assumes how others see himself/herself.

One way of keeping group consciousness is criticizing the out-group. For instance, when a group of Japanese tourists were in a Finnish hotel, they started to criticize Finland and Finnish people. Suddenly, one of the receptionists, who was a Finnish woman, said in Japanese that they should not say such things. They stopped and became very embarrassed. The Japanese tourists said unpleasant things about Finland and the Finnish being out-group members, and, at the same time, they developed stronger social ties than before. Deaux et al. (1993, p. 365) claim that the presence of other groups might lead to a greater awareness of identity. Also, social identity theory states that a group is a fundamental part of one’s self-concept. Therefore, one group discriminates out-groups to enhance or maintain self-esteem.

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<sup>9</sup> This is so-called *on o kaesu*.

<sup>10</sup> *Hito* does not include „I”.

<sup>11</sup> People exclude „I”.

<sup>12</sup> This literally means not to be known to others.

<sup>13</sup> This literally means one limits one’s social circle.

None of the Japanese visitors mentioned above expected that a Finnish person could speak Japanese. The Japanese generally have a stereotyped idea that foreigners, except the Chinese and Koreans, do not speak Japanese. Therefore, foreigners who live in Japan often complain that when they speak to Japanese people in Japanese to ask something on the street or in a shop, Japanese say *wakarimasen*, “I do not understand English”, or shake a hand in front of their faces, which is a sign of “no”, and walk away. Or they might reply in English. When the Japanese notices a person speaks Japanese, that person will hear such compliments as *nihongo ga o-joozu desu ne*, “your Japanese is great.” On the other hand, if the person speaks Japanese too well, the Japanese are more likely to say nothing and to think that individual is a very strange foreigner. However, this does not apply to the Chinese and Koreans. They are always expected to speak Japanese reasonably well. The Japanese apparently think that Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans, who are in-group members, as compared to westerners or other non-Asians, can use the Japanese language.

Moreover, the Japanese people make a distinction between the native and non-native Japanese from their appearance (Kindaichi(1), 1988, p. 14). Consequently, although the ex-President Fujimori of Peru never lived in Japan until recently, he would be treated as a strange Japanese, if he cannot speak Japanese fluently. By comparison, if someone whose ancestors are not Japanese speaks fluent Japanese in Japan, s/he will be treated as a strange foreigner. The Japanese are more likely to expect high social norms on the part of Koreans and Chinese rather than of white foreigners. This means that when the Koreans or Chinese speak broken Japanese, the Japanese consider them as being not diligent enough to learn Japanese. By contrast, if a Caucasian speaks broken Japanese, the Japanese would rather pay them such compliments as “You speak Japanese very well!” This is just because of prejudice or racial discrimination. The Japanese have an inferior feeling towards white people but tend to develop superior feelings towards other Asians and Africans.

In addition, when in-group consciousness becomes extreme, the Japanese may even behave immorally. *Aka shingoo minna de watareba kowaku nai*, “although it is a red light, one does not have any fear when all of us cross the street together”, which illustrates that harmony within a group can be dangerous.

### ***Uchi-Soto/In-Out* – social identity**

The Japanese would rather behave and make decisions in agreement with other group members (Honna & Hoffer, 1989, p. 120), since in-group members always mutually support each other. There is a proverb, *deru kui wa utareru*, “the stake that stands up will be pounded down”, which means that one who interferes with the harmony of a group will be punished. It is argued that the Japanese are an agricultural nation, especially cultivating rice, which is hardly even done by only one person but always by a group (Araki, 1973, p. 23). Consequently, within the group, people have to be co-operative and always behave in accord with their social group. However, it is said that the Japanese are nowadays becoming more and more individualistic. But the notion of Japanese individualism appears to be different from the Western one, even though the younger generation is likely to conform to a majority opinion. As it was shown in Asch (1951, 1956, 1958), any nation would to a certain extent, find it difficult to show disapproval or criticism of the majority (Deaux et al., 1993, p. 194). Yet, the degree of Japanese conformity appears to be higher than that in the Western cultures. If someone does or says something against the group’s expectations, they will be isolated or will face difficulties with other group members. Accordingly, such

features can be said to be characteristic of the Japanese even though there are different kinds of social norms and people's social expectations.

Maynard (1997, p. 37/ 43) is interested in the difference in the notion of self between the West and Japan as well as how *uchi*<sup>14</sup>, "in-group" – *soto*<sup>15</sup>, "out-group" relationships interact with the self. She assumes that the Japanese are likely to make a comparatively strong emotional and psychological investment in the development of a relational rather than an isolated or independent "self", *jibun*. In two social territories, *uchi* and *soto*, indicate different social orientations and behavior. In the former, where the psychological distance amongst members is minimized, politeness is usually avoided. In the *soto* relation, where the psychological and social distance is accentuated, appropriate levels of politeness must be maintained. It is said that the Japanese normally try to have smooth interactions by physically and emotionally accommodating others, by giving gifts, repeatedly expressing gratitude, making others feel important and appreciated, by humbling and often blaming themselves in order not to upset others. Using polite expressions is one strategy for expressing feelings of respect and admiration.

Shibata (1976, p. 7, 1977, p. 80) believes that the geography of Japan formed the notion of *uchi-soto* division, since Japan is surrounded by the sea. Hence, it has been clear to label things or people inside of Japan and outside. Shibata pointed out that *uchi-soto* divisions produced different language expressions together with different speech. *Gaijin*<sup>16</sup> means, literally, a person from outside, and this word is considered as discriminatory; thus, *gaikokujin*, "a person from an out land" is used instead. The notion of *uchi-soto* leads to discrimination. The Japanese form an in-group and an out-group. Normally, a Japanese person is an in-group member and a foreigner is an out-group member. If a Japanese person is good at foreign languages, then the person is no longer considered as an *uchi*-group member because many in-group members do not speak a foreign language, whereas the person uses a foreign language like a foreigner.

According to Hudson (1980, p. 122), speech can represent power as self-explanatory and solidarity. The relation between power and solidarity deepens with social distance; therefore it involves a relationship between superior and inferior, and one between intimate and non-intimate. There are many *uchi-soto* divisions in the society. The smallest social group is the family, and in the family the notion of *uchi-soto* differences can be seen. When a married woman lives with her parents-in-law, she is considered a newcomer to the family, which means the woman is not accepted as an in-group member. She is addressed as *o-yome-san*<sup>17</sup>, "bride" until her parents-in-law die. Until the label of *o-yome-san* is no longer used, she is not a real in-group member. It does not depend on her age or years of marriage. When a groom lives with his parents-in-law, he will be called *o-muko-san*, "groom" until his parents-in-law die. Accordingly, he is treated in a similar manner as *o-yome-san*. There is a proverb, *aki nasu wa yome ni kuwasuna*, "lit.<sup>18</sup> do not let a *yome* eat

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<sup>14</sup> Inside, internal, private, hidden.

<sup>15</sup> Outside, external, public, exposed.

<sup>16</sup> This can be considered as derogatory term and *gaikokujin*, a person from a foreign country, is used instead.

<sup>17</sup> O is the prefix and -san is suffix. -san means Ms/ Mr.

<sup>18</sup> Abbreviation of literally.

aubergine in autumn” (because aubergine in autumn are delicious; therefore, they are too good for an outside member to eat.)<sup>19</sup>

People in the in-group have to be alike, and they do not allow anybody to behave differently from other members. That is why we have such typical behavior in a restaurant. *Watash/ boku mo*, “me, too” is a typical way to order what one will eat in a restaurant. This feature occurs more often when group members do not have strong ties. One decides what to eat and then others also order the same food because they are lazy to choose anything else or they feel obliged to order the same/ similar food. Consequently, if there are 10 people in a group, all of them might order only one dish although there are many choices. People in the in-group should not display differences and this idea can be illustrated by several examples. In the country, people do not address each other or they do not use their names. For instance, Mr Sooichiro Honda who has a house which is located on a narrow path, will be called *komichi no oji-san*, “an uncle of the narrow path”. Thus, they often do not remember this person’s real name, which is not necessary in this situation (Shibata, 1977, p. 75; Mizutani, 1979, p. 130). Also, in-group members use less polite expressions but towards out-group members they use more polite expressions. For instance, colleagues in a company use informal speech, such as *chotto matte*, “wait a minute” or expressions with lower politeness, such as, *chotto matte kudasai*, “please wait for a moment”. However, when speaking to clients, polite and formal expressions are used, such as *shooshoo o-machi kudasai(mase)*, “could you please wait for a moment”. Also, informal expressions are used amongst close friends. For example, *ima isogashii?*, “are you busy now?” is used instead of employing the polite expression *ima isogashii desu ka?*, “are you busy now?” Although choosing the appropriate style in different social encounters obviously requires experience, an individual as a social member is required to learn how to make use of *keigo*, “honorific language.”

### References to own experiences of In/Out-group differences

Morita (1998, p. 19) suggests the reason why the Japanese language often omits the subject **I** is that the speaker’s point of view reflects **I**; therefore, it is not necessary to mention it. Such adjectives which indicate someone’s feeling, emotions, and sense can be used only as an adjective without a subject or verb if a speaker describes her/ himself. For instance, i). However, if a speaker wants to describes someone, a verb has to be added, ii).

- i) *atsui*. + Personal Knowledge (+ PK)  
hot  
“I am hot.”
- ii) *kare wa atsugatte iru.*<sup>20</sup> – Personal Knowledge (- PK)  
he hot seems to be/ is showing signs of being hot  
“He is hot.”

Another example is the difference between the following sentences:

<sup>19</sup> The proverb indicates that aubergine in autumn has the best taste. Both *o-yome-san* and *o-muko-san* are treated as an outsider of a family until their parents-in-law die.

<sup>20</sup> *-gatteiru* can be translated as showing signs of ~.



- iii) *kanojo wa asu isogashikunai to omotte iru.* (+ PK)  
 she tomorrow will not busy that thinks  
 “someone thinks that she will not be busy tomorrow” or “she thinks that she will not be busy tomorrow.”
- iv) *kanojo wa asu isogashikunai to omoo.* (- PK)  
 she tomorrow will not be busy that I think  
 “I think that she will not be busy tomorrow.”

and the difference between iii) and iv) is *te iru* and to *omoo*.

The former indicates someone’s opinion, which is shown in *omotte iru*, “be thinking” and the latter indicates a speaker’s point of view, which is seen in *omoo*, “think”. *-te iru* makes a distinction between the speaker’s, or subjective, point of view and the non-speaker’s, or objective, point of view. This is also related to the division between *uchi* and *soto*. It also seems to be related to the phenomenon of evidentials<sup>21</sup> (see Table 2 in the Appendix).

Morita (1998, p. 26) claims that “I”, which is inside, is always an observer of outside, which is *soto*, and *watashi* is created to make an opposition against *ooyake*, “public”. *Ooyake* does not include *watashi*. A similar phenomenon is shown in the relationship between *hito* and *seken*. “I” is always in the center of the Japanese language, and things and events are described by “I”. Consequently, these descriptions are not objective but they are rather subjective and look at the relationship between “I” and events or things. The Japanese language appears to be sensitive to people. As a result, there are a lot of proverbs that are connected with *hito*, and those proverbs are mainly negative. Of course, there are positive ones as well, but fewer than negative ones. As was noted earlier, *hito* in the Japanese language is how “I” perceive others and whatever “I” do, others always observe me, but these “others” are not concrete people, they represents the strong feeling that there are always others looking at me.

In the past the *uchi-soto* division was illustrated in such ways as, when a stranger entered someone’s territory, the stranger was immediately expelled because it was taboo to enter someone’s privately owned place (Morita, 1998, p. 44). Consequently, *gomennasai*, “excuse me / I am sorry” or *sumimasen*, “excuse me” was used for making an excuse before someone entered an other person’s territory and still now, when someone enters somebody else’s house, the person utters either term. *Sumimasen* became popular for this purpose in the *Shoowa* era<sup>22</sup>. Morita (1998, p. 44) explains that *sumimasen* has started to be used to show appreciation, such as in receiving a cup of tea, the person says *sumimasen*, “thank you” instead of *arigatoo*, “thank you”. The latter can be translated as “I am sorry for bothering you to let me have a cup of tea.” In any case, the Japanese apologize first and try to avoid an argument.

Before someone enters a house, the person normally takes off their shoes, which reflects also the *uchi-soto* difference. Shoes are dirty and used only outside a house; therefore, to enter the house, one has to be clean and protect the inside (*uchi*) from the outside (*soto*). There is a proverb *hito no ie ni dosoku de agaru*<sup>23</sup>, “to interfere with someone’s affairs”.

<sup>21</sup> The source of data is encoded grammatically in some languages.

<sup>22</sup> 1926-1989.

<sup>23</sup> This literally means entering someone’s house with one’s shoes. In Japan, when someone enters a house, one has to take off one’s shoes.

The Japanese consider a house as a private space where they can relax; therefore, a lock on the door is not necessary. They call a house *ie*, “house” and *uchi*, “inside” or “house”

### Various expressions in In/Out-groups

*Aisatsu*, “greetings” and *kimarimonku*, “fixed expressions” are also a sign of the *uchi-soto* distinction. Mizutani (1979, p. 4) hypothesizes that Japanese greetings and fixed expressions are used by members of a certain group (see Table 3 in the Appendix). That is to say, whether the Japanese give and return greetings or not is related to group consciousness and is a matter of psychological distance. Psychological distance influences the use of *sayoonara*, “good bye” and *shitsurei shimasu*, “excuse me”, but here means “good bye”. The former is used in the schools and the latter is more likely to be used in formal settings. Those who think that they are on the higher levels of hierarchy still think that *sayoonara* is impolite and get angry when others, who are below them, address them thus. Mizutani (1979, p. 154) says that he sometimes is unhappy when his students say *sayoonara* to him. Also, he heard that an old professor at the university was furious when his student said to him *sayoonara*. University professors or teachers traditionally have a high social status, and therefore they expect that students at the lower levels of the hierarchy should display respect. The use of *sayoonara* does not sound respectful.

On the other hand, the closer the psychological distance between the Japanese, the less frequently they use greetings. Certainly, *konnichiwa* and *konbanwa* are never used in close relationships. The question arises: what do they say instead? In fact, they do not say anything. It depends on gender and generation of people; *ah*, *yah*, and *oh* can be used but rather by male speakers. Female speakers tend to smile, raise a hand, and give a little wave when they recognize people whom they know very well. Physical expressions in this specific situation are more important than uttering words. Apparently saying something draws a clear line amongst people, which means there is a certain degree of psychological distance between them. On the other hand, in a close relationship, saying something is no longer important. Also, the closer the relationship, the better people understand each other without words. Thus, the Japanese omit the first greeting. This may sound rude for non-native Japanese speakers but not for the Japanese. What seems strange and rude to the Japanese is the English greeting, since the speaker is not really interested in the hearer’s reply. “How are you?” is said but the speaker sometimes does not expect to hear a reply. This appears very rude to the Japanese because the speaker has asked a question of the hearer, but if the speaker does not expect an answer, there is no point to say it. This is rude and against the Japanese notion of caring for others.

### Remarks

Emigration is the time for cross-cultural interaction. This is also the time to develop borderless societies. When the Japanese change their place of abode, they not only change their behavior but also their language. Yet their speech and their behavior are sometimes misunderstood by non-Japanese speakers. Interaction between the Japanese and others is the ongoing topic of my PhD thesis entitled: “Cross-cultural communication. Strategies of initiating and maintaining social interactions in Polish-Japanese dyads”.

Japanese society is changing and the notion of Japanese group-consciousness seems to be changing as well. Although not as strongly as before, the idea still influences Japanese society.

Accordingly, understanding this concept helps non-Japanese language speakers to develop good communication strategies with the Japanese as well as to avoid conflict. When a non-Japanese speaker finds her/ his group or her/ his position in Japanese society, s/he will learn to choose appropriate expressions to communicate with the Japanese. As has been shown in this article, group consciousness seems to be one of the most important characteristics of the Japanese culture, because it appears to be different from its Western counterparts<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> The details of this difference will be described in the PhD work.

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## Appendix

Table 1. Differences between Senpai- and Koohai-words

Japanese (romanization)	meaning	<i>senpai</i> to <i>koohai</i>	<i>koohai</i> to <i>senpai</i>
<i>ohayoo</i> ( <i>gozaimasu</i> )	good morning	<i>ohayoo</i>	<i>ohayoo</i> <i>gozaimasu</i>
( <i>doomo</i> ) <i>arigatoo</i> ( <i>gozaimasu</i> )	thank you very much	( <i>doomo</i> ) <i>arigatoo</i>	( <i>doomo</i> ) <i>arigatoo</i> <i>gozaimasu</i>
<i>osakini</i> ( <i>shitsurei</i> <i>shimasu</i> )	please excuse me leaving early	<i>osakini</i>	<i>osakini</i> <i>shitsurei</i> <i>shimasu</i>
<i>otsukare</i> ( <i>sama desu</i> )	thank you for your trouble, effort	<i>otsukare</i>	<i>otsukare</i> <i>sama desu</i>

Table 2. Reference to own experiences

Japanese (romanization)	meaning	+PK/ -PK
<i>atsui</i>	hot	+ PK
<i>atsugatteiru</i>	hot	- PK
<i>omoo</i>	think	+ PK
<i>omotte iru</i>	think	- PK

Table 3. In-/out-group differences

Japanese (romanization)	meaning	in-group	out-group
<i>ohayoo</i> ( <i>gozaimasu</i> )	good morning	<i>ohayoo</i> ( <i>gozaimasu</i> )	<i>ohayoo</i> <i>gozaimasu</i>
<i>konnichiwa</i>	good	——— afternoon	<i>konnichiwa</i>
<i>konbanwa</i>	good evening	———	<i>konbanwa</i>
<i>gochisoosama</i> ( <i>desu</i> )	thank you for the meal	<i>gochisoo</i> <i>sama</i>	<i>gochisoosama</i> <i>a (desu)</i>
<i>doomo</i> <i>arigatoo</i> <i>gozaimasu</i>	thank you very much	( <i>doomo</i> ) <i>arigatoo</i>	( <i>doomo</i> ) <i>arigatoo</i> <i>gozaimasu</i>
<i>oyasumi</i> ( <i>nasai</i> )	good night	<i>oyasumi</i> ( <i>nasai</i> )	<i>oyasumi</i> <i>nasai</i>
<i>tadaima</i>	I am back <sup>25</sup>	<i>tadaima</i>	———
<i>okaeri</i> ( <i>nasai</i> )	welcome back	<i>okaeri</i> ( <i>nasai</i> ) home	———
<i>kodomo</i>	a child	<i>uchi no</i> <i>kodomo</i> <sup>26</sup>	<i>otaku no</i> <i>o-ko-san</i> <sup>27</sup>
<i>gakusei</i>	a student	<i>kochira no</i> <i>gakusei</i> <sup>28</sup>	<i>sochira no</i> <i>gakusei</i> <sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> This literally means “just now”.

<sup>26</sup> *Uchi* means “my”, “my family”, “my home”, and “my house”. “My child”.

<sup>27</sup> *Otaku* means “your”, “your home”, and “your house”. “Your child”.

<sup>28</sup> “My/our student” or “a student in this group”.

<sup>29</sup> “Your student” or “a student in that group”.