

# An Attentiveness Perspective in Metapragmatics of Im/politeness

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## Abstract

This paper investigates attentiveness from the perspective of metapragmatics. Attentiveness is defined as a demonstrator's preemptive response to a beneficiary's verbal/non-verbal cues or to situations surrounding a beneficiary and a demonstrator, which takes the form of offering. In this paper, the process of demonstrating and evaluating attentiveness is shown; and attentiveness is examined in relation to empathy and inference. These three are important in understanding im/politeness in Japanese culture.

## Keywords

Metapragmatics; Im/politeness; Attentiveness; Empathy; Inference

## 1. Introduction

Recently, I received an email from a Chinese graduate student who is interested in doing research on attentiveness. She is concerned by several recent incidents in China, which suggest a lack of attentiveness in modern Chinese society, e.g., the hit and run scandal in which a toddler was run over by a van and then ignored by 18 passers-by when she lay critically injured on the street and later died. It is my hope that people everywhere will be able to recognize the importance of attentiveness and demonstrate attentiveness to others so that such a tragic incident will not occur again. In the present paper, attentiveness is examined from the perspective of metapragmatics.

Before beginning a discussion of attentiveness, it is necessary to clarify some related concepts. According to Verschueren (1999: 188), "the systematic study of the metalevel, where indicators of reflexive awareness are to be found in the actual choice-making that constitutes language use, is the proper domain of what is usually called metapragmatics." For Overstreet (2010: 267), "metapragmatics is concerned with a particular type of reflexivity, one that is in evidence when speakers indicate in some way that they are aware of pragmatic features and potential pragmatic interpretations of utterances." Haugh (forthcoming) defines metapragmatics as "the study of

*awareness* on the part of ordinary or *lay observers* about the ways in which they use language to interact and communicate with others” (original emphasis). Overstreet (2010: 266-267) states that the prefix *meta* (‘above’, ‘beyond’) marks a shift in perspective that is tied to reflexivity, or the ability not only to create utterances, but also to recognize and talk about features of those utterances. Likewise, Haugh (forthcoming) states that the prefix *meta*, which comes from Greek meaning “above”, “beyond” or “among”, is normally used in English to indicate a concept or term that is *about* another concept or term. He (forthcoming) continues that metapragmatics involves the study of reflexive awareness on the part of participants and observers of interaction about the way in which language is used. The notions of *reflexivity* and *awareness* are thus critical to understanding metapragmatics” (original emphasis). The following are the four key types of metapragmatic awareness Haugh discusses that are relevant to understanding politeness: (1) metalinguistic, (2) metacommunicative (3) metadiscursive and (4) metacognitive.

The first type of metalinguistic awareness includes the metalanguage of im/politeness and involves reflexive representations of evaluations of politeness, impoliteness and so on (Haugh forthcoming) (e.g., corpus analysis, ethnographic interviews) (Haugh 2010). Essentially this involves the different *metalanguage* we can use in various languages to talk about politeness, impoliteness and so on, such as *polite or courteous* in English and *teinei or reigi* in Japanese (original emphasis) (Haugh forthcoming). The second metacommunicative awareness refers to reflexive *interpretations* and *evaluations* of social actions and meanings. This includes explicit comments that participants make in interactions using terms such as *polite or courteous* (original emphasis) (Haugh forthcoming) (e.g., ethnographic interviews about past experiences of “impoliteness”, survey of lay evaluations of im/politeness) (Haugh 2010). Interpretations and evaluations lie at the core of politeness and social practice (Haugh forthcoming). The third metadiscursive awareness refers to reflexive *social discourses* on politeness that are constituted (and contested) at a societal or cultural level (original emphasis) (Haugh forthcoming) (e.g., etiquette manuals, debate in media) (Haugh 2010). A social discourse encompasses a *persistent frame of interpretation and evaluation* that has become objectified in ongoing metapragmatic talk about politeness (original emphasis) (Haugh forthcoming). This includes, for instance, talk about *politeness or courtesy* in the popular media (original emphasis) (Haugh forthcoming). The fourth metacognitive awareness involves reflexive *presentations* of cognitively-grounded states, such as attitudes, expectations and so on, through discourse or pragmatic markers (Haugh forthcoming).

According to recent politeness theories (e.g., Eelen 2001), there is a growing need to focus on the first-order politeness (politeness<sub>1</sub>), i.e., lay conceptualisations (Watts 2003: 30) (see also Terkourafi 2011). This partly includes the understanding of metapragmatic politeness. Metapragmatic politeness<sub>1</sub> covers instances of talk about politeness as a concept, about what people perceive politeness to be all about (Eelen 2001: 35). Culpeper (2012: 1132) states that

the use of metapragmatic data helps tap into first-order understanding of (im)politeness. It was suggested in Fukushima and Haugh (2012) that metapragmatic aspects should be much more investigated in politeness research as well as in politeness theories. In light of this need, the present study attempts to clarify attentiveness, which can be considered as a metapragmatic aspect, along with its related concepts, i.e., empathy and inference.

## 2. Attentiveness

According to Riley (2007: 217), attentiveness is one of the communicative virtues, which are socially valued characteristics of discourse. The presence of these characteristics contributes to a positive perception of ethos by hearers and to a successful negotiation of identities and outcomes (Riley 2007: 217). In the study by Sifianou and Tzanne (2010), Greek participants were asked what they considered to be polite behavior. The results show that “turn to people in need” was considered to be polite behavior. This is the idea behind attentiveness. Actually, Greek participants in Sifianou and Tzanne (2010) cited some incidents as politeness, which happened to be the same as attentiveness in Fukushima (forthcoming).

Attentiveness is defined as “a demonstrator’s preemptive response to a beneficiary’s verbal/non-verbal cues or situations surrounding a beneficiary and a demonstrator, which takes the form of offering” (Fukushima 2009: 504; 2011: 550). Cues for attentiveness can be verbal or non-verbal, including situations (Fukushima 2009: 504). Whether attentiveness is demonstrated or not depends on the uptake and the willingness of a demonstrator (Fukushima 2009: 505). A demonstrator does something for a beneficiary without or before being asked, inferring the need of a potential beneficiary (Fukushima 2011: 550). Attentiveness can be demonstrated linguistically, non-linguistically (only with behaviors) or by a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic means.

The process of demonstrating and evaluating attentiveness is as follows (see figure 1):

After observing situations or considering a potential beneficiary’s verbal/non-verbal cues (stage 1) (e.g., A and B sit next each other in a class (situation). A does not have a pen (a nonverbal cue). Or, A says, “I forgot my pen” (a verbal cue)), a potential demonstrator of attentiveness infers a potential beneficiary’s needs or wishes (stage 2) (e.g., B infers that A needs a pen to take notes).

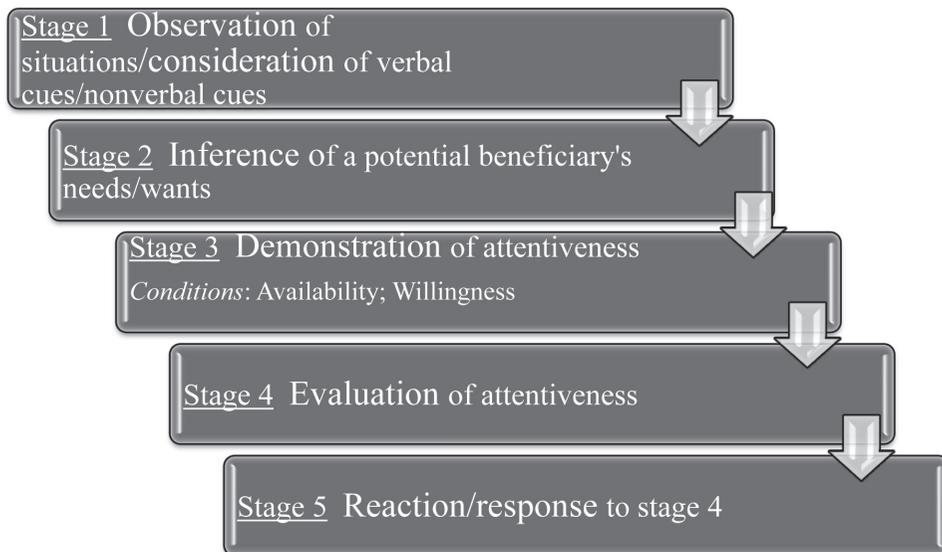
A demonstrator is likely to think of values (cultural and personal) and behavioral conventions which are culturally bound. As a result of considering these factors, a demonstrator can decide to demonstrate attentiveness (stage 3), although s/he may not be aware of this process in most cases (Fukushima 2009: 505). There are conditions to demonstrate attentiveness: (1) availability and (2) willingness of a potential demonstrator. By availability, I mean that a

potential demonstrator has something (e.g., B has an extra pen to lend), or s/he can do what a potential beneficiary wants (e.g., to offer a seat in a public transportation). And a potential demonstrator of attentiveness needs to be willing to demonstrate attentiveness (e.g., B is willing to lend A her/his extra pen). There may be cases in which a potential demonstrator infers the desires of a potential beneficiary, but does not want to demonstrate attentiveness (Fukushima 2009: 505-506). A potential demonstrator may also consider whether s/he is the right person to demonstrate attentiveness (s/he may think that other people may or should demonstrate attentiveness) (e.g., when offering a seat in a public transportation). In this sense, stage 1 reoccurs until a potential demonstrator decides to demonstrate attentiveness. Human relationships between a potential demonstrator and a potential beneficiary, or *tachiba*, i.e., “place one stands” (see Haugh 2005: 47) of a potential demonstrator and a potential beneficiary may also influence the decision of a potential demonstrator to demonstrate attentiveness (e.g., A host or a hostess may be more responsible or may be more likely to demonstrate attentiveness than guests).

After attentiveness has been demonstrated, it is evaluated by a beneficiary (stage 4). Appreciation of attentiveness by a beneficiary (e.g., A thanks B) leads to a positive evaluation. A negative evaluation is made, when attentiveness did not match a beneficiary’s behavioral expectations (when a beneficiary expects something) (see an example of breaches of behavioral expectations in Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009: 114) (there are cases in which a potential beneficiary does not intend to receive attentiveness, but receives attentiveness) (see Fukushima 2011: 551). If a beneficiary feels that attentiveness was meddling, or s/he feels that her/his territory is infringed, a negative evaluation is made. These evaluation can be made linguistically (e.g., saying “Thank you” or “That was not necessary”), non-linguistically (e.g., smile or frown) or both linguistically and non-linguistically. Or, there may be cases in which a beneficiary does not show any sign of evaluation, especially when it is negative.

A reaction to the evaluation by a demonstrator follows (stage 5). That is, a demonstrator feels good, if s/he has received a positive evaluation; or s/he feels bad, after having received a negative evaluation. This is reflexivity, and the notion of reflexivity is critical to understanding metapragmatics (Haugh forthcoming). A positive evaluation by a beneficiary and a positive reaction by a demonstrator will contribute to making good human relationships between a beneficiary and a demonstrator; and a negative evaluation and a negative reaction will make uneasy relationships.

**Figure 1. The process of demonstration and evaluation of attentiveness**



There are cases in which a potential beneficiary intends to receive attentiveness and those in which s/he does not intend to receive it. In the latter case, the uptake by a demonstrator is independent of a beneficiary's intentions. Both a demonstrator and a beneficiary can save face in demonstrating or receiving attentiveness. When a beneficiary evaluates attentiveness positively, co-constitution of politeness (Haugh 2007) by a demonstrator and a beneficiary arises. And it can be said that positive evaluation of attentiveness enhances the face (Brown and Levinson 1987) of a demonstrator. Impoliteness (Bousfield 2008; Culpeper 2005; House 2010; Kienpointer 2008; Locher and Bousfield 2008; Nishimura 2010; Terkourafi 2008; Tracy 2008) arises when a negative evaluation of attentiveness is made. As face and co-constitution of im/politeness are important issues in politeness theories, it can be said that attentiveness is important in im/politeness research. Indeed, Işık-Güler (2008) in Işık-Güler and Ruhi (2010: 631) observed that Turkish impoliteness evaluations were based on eight components, one of which was "inattentiveness to other: showing open lack for concern for other's emotions, needs, and attentiveness to self benefit/goal instead". And for politeness judgments, it was attentiveness to other's needs (Işık-Güler and Ruhi 2010: 631). This confirms the importance of attentiveness in im/politeness research.

Marui et al. (1996: 36) use a Japanese term, *kizukai*, to mean attentiveness and state that "In case of *kizukai* such manifestations can take the form of offering things or services to show friendliness, especially in relationships which are neither too close nor too distant." The results of Fukushima (2011), however, showed that attentiveness is demonstrated not to show friendliness but to help the other party; and the relationships between a demonstrator and a

beneficiary of attentiveness varied from very familiar to not very familiar at all. Therefore, it can be said that attentiveness is demonstrated when a demonstrator wants to be of help to a beneficiary, and when a demonstrator infers a potential beneficiary's wants and needs. Or, there may be cases in which a demonstrator wants to gain credit by demonstrating attentiveness, or to get some kind of benefits in return. These two different types of attentiveness were termed (1) genuine attentiveness and (2) reflexive attentiveness, the former being for the well-being of a beneficiary and the latter for the benefit of a demonstrator (Fukushima 2011: 550). Those who can demonstrate attentiveness as expected are called "*kigakiku*" (i.e., one who is sensitive to others' needs) in Japanese, being evaluated positively; and those who do not demonstrate attentiveness as expected are called "*kigakikanai*," being evaluated negatively (Fukushima 2011: 550).

Attentiveness can be translated as *kikubari*, which literally means allocation or distribution of *ki* (Fukushima 2009: 503). According to Lebra (1993: 64), *ki* and *kokoro* are often used interchangeably. Hamano (1987: 103) states that the subject of the word *ki* moved to some extent from something beyond human knowledge to something that was within the range of ego- or self-consciousness. According to Hamano (1987: 105-106), *ki* has three senses. (1) *Ki* is regarded as a changeable material and personality is metaphorically seen as having this *ki* within it, and is basically changeable. (2) *Ki* is seen as attention toward others, and it can be said that our personality is evaluated by the way we pay attention to others. (3) *Ki* is thought to be something like radio waves between people, and the capacity for "tuning into" others is one of our characteristic models of evaluating people. *Ki* in attentiveness is in the second sense above.

Attentiveness has to do with self-construals. Markus and Kitayama (1991: 224) suggest that construals of the self, of others, and of the relationship between the self and others may be even more powerful than previously suggested and that their influence is clearly reflected in differences among cultures. Markus and Kitayama (1991) compare an *independent* view of the self with one other, very different view, an *interdependent* view (original emphasis). The independent view is most clearly exemplified in some sizable segment of American culture, as well as in many Western European cultures, while the interdependent view is exemplified in Japanese culture as well as in other Asian cultures, African cultures, Latin-American cultures, and many southern European cultures, according to Markus and Kitayama (1991: 224-225). Markus and Kitayama (1991: 246) argue that the sense of individuality that accompanies an interdependent self includes an attentiveness and responsiveness to others that one either explicitly or implicitly assumes will be reciprocated by these others, as well as the willful management of one's other-focused feelings and desires so as to maintain and further the reciprocal interpersonal relationship. From the above, it may be said that attentiveness is more frequently demonstrated and/or more positively evaluated in cultures in which the interdependent view prevails than in those in which independent view prevails.

Attentiveness can be examined from equity rights, which is argued by Spencer-Oatey (2000: 14; 2002: 540; 2008: 16). Spencer-Oatey (2008: 16) argues that “people typically hold value-laden beliefs about the principles that should underpin interaction.” Spencer-Oatey (2008: 16) labels these beliefs as sociopragmatic interactional principles (SIPs) and suggests that two fundamental ones are equity and association. According to Spencer-Oatey (2002: 540-541), sociality rights have two interrelated aspects: equity rights and association rights (we are entitled to association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with them). Equity rights are defined as follows: We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to *personal consideration from others* (emphasis added), so that we are treated fairly: that we are not unduly imposed upon or unfairly ordered about, that we are not taken advantage of or exploited, and that we receive the benefits to which we are entitled. There seem to be two components to this equity entitlement: the notion of *cost-benefit* (the extent to which we are exploited, disadvantaged or benefitted, and the belief that costs and benefits should be kept roughly in balance through the principle of reciprocity), and the related issue of *autonomy-imposition* (original emphasis) (the extent to which people control us or impose on us) (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540). Attentiveness entails personal consideration from others, and it requires a demonstrator cost, a beneficiary receiving benefit (except for cases in which a beneficiary evaluates attentiveness negatively, e.g., as meddling). It can be said that the autonomy of a beneficiary is infringed, when attentiveness is negatively evaluated.

The notion, which is closely associated with equity rights above, can be found in other works. For example, Hambling-Jones and Merrison (2012: 1120) cite Clark’s (1996: 295) Equity Principle, which claims that individuals enter into joint projects *presupposing* (original emphasis) a method for maintaining equity, and Goffman’s (1967: 19) description of face maintenance as “a condition of interaction, not objective”. Hambling-Jones and Merrison (2012: 1120) argue that the above two concepts are fundamentally interconnected, the former being concerned with balancing costs vs. benefits, the latter referring to ritual equilibrium. Leech (1983: 123-125) also discusses the cost-benefit scale, stating that “the cost-benefit scale therefore brings with it an implicit balance-sheet of *s*’s and *h*’s relative standing, and there also seems to be a tacit assumption that a maintenance of equilibrium is desirable” (Leech 1983: 125). Goffman’s (1967: 45) “ritual equilibrium” concerns the remedial action which restores the balance between individuals (as well as between the individual and society) (Merrison et al. 2012: 1083). These notions may be similar to equity rights.

Attentiveness has been investigated in the following studies. In Fukushima (2000), demonstration of attentiveness by British and Japanese participants was investigated, although the term “solicitousness” was employed in the same sense as attentiveness. In Fukushima (2004), evaluation of attentiveness by British, Swiss and Japanese participants was investigated. In Fukushima (2009), evaluation of attentiveness by British and Japanese participants was investigated. As there were not many differences among the different national groups of the

participants, who were all young university students, a cross-generational comparison was made in Fukushima (2011). In Fukushima (2011), demonstration of attentiveness by Japanese university students, Japanese parents and American students was investigated, exploring generational as well as cross-cultural differences. In Fukushima (forthcoming), evaluation of attentiveness by Japanese university students, Japanese parents and American students was investigated. In these studies, there were not many cross-cultural nor cross-generational differences in demonstration or evaluation of attentiveness among the participants. Although Ueda (2011) wrote that only the Japanese people can demonstrate attentiveness, this is not necessarily the case, according to the results of the above studies. It may be said that these findings partly confirm the universalist assumptions (politeness-oriented theories), such as Brown and Levinson (1987).

### 3. Empathy

Empathy, which can be translated as *omoiyari*, is closely related to attentiveness. *Omoi-yari* can be the idea behind attentiveness (Fukushima 2011: 552). In other words, a demonstrator of attentiveness may empathize with a potential beneficiary and demonstrates attentiveness through action (only linguistically, only non-linguistically (with behaviors), or both linguistically and non-linguistically) as a result. Lebra (1976: 38) defines *omoiyari* as “the ability and willingness to feel what others are feeling, to vicariously experience the pleasure or pain that they are undergoing, and to help them satisfy their wishes.” Hara (2006: 27) translates *omoiyari* as “altruistic sensitivity” and states that *omoiyari* literally means sending one’s altruistic feelings to others. Wierzbicka (1997: 275) characterizes *omoiyari* as “an ability to ‘read other people’s minds’ and a willingness to respond to other people’s unspoken feelings, wants, and needs.” Travis (1998: 55) states that *omoiyari* essentially represents a kind of “intuitive” understanding of the unexpressed feelings, desires and thoughts of others, and doing something for them on the basis of this understanding. This “doing something for them through intuitive understanding of the expressed feelings, desires and thoughts of others” is what I call attentiveness. It can be therefore said that *omiyari* means the same as attentiveness for some researchers. However, I distinguish *omoiyari* from attentiveness. Miyake (2011: 6-7) also distinguishes *omoiyari* from attentiveness and she classifies linguistic behavior including attentiveness and *omoiyari* into *purasuno hairyo gengo koudou* [plus or positive linguistic behavior of consideration]. *Omoi-yari* comes from the verb *omoiyaru* (lit. to think of someone), thus it means to think of the other party’s feelings, needs or wishes. I would argue that it does not necessarily mean to do something for the others. Attentiveness, on the other hand, includes the action of doing something (e.g., to offer the other party help), as shown in section 2, based on *omoiyari*.

*Omoi-yari* is important in Japanese culture. According to Wierzbicka (1997: 275), *omoi-yari* is

generally regarded as one of the most important ideals in Japanese society. Lebra (1976: 38) states that for the Japanese, empathy (*omoiyari*) ranks high among the virtues considered indispensable for one to be really human, morally mature, and deserving of respect. Clancy (1986: 232-235) points out that cultivation of *omoiyari*, or empathy training is conducted from early childhood in Japan, which shows the importance of *omoiyari* in Japanese culture. According to a survey Travis (1998) conducted, which asked 50 Japanese and 60 Anglo-Australians to compile a list of 10 words that describe the personal qualities they most value, nearly 70% of the Japanese respondents included *omoiyari*, whereas “empathic” did not occur at all among Anglo-Australian respondents and other possible translations for *omoiyari* such as “kind”, “caring”, “understanding”, “thoughtfulness” and “considerate” appeared under 20% (Travis 1998: 56). In regard to Işik-Güler and Ruhi’s (2010: 629) contention that “values underpin behavioral expectations in that these are to a great extent grounded in the norms of behavior specific to a speech community”, the importance of *omoiyari* in Japanese culture, which can be regarded as a value, may lead to behavioral expectations that people have *omoiyari*.

*Omoiyari*, which involves a general understanding of another’s *unspoken* feelings, desires and thoughts, a belief that one can do things to benefit that person because one has this understanding and *actually doing something* (emphasis added) (Travis 1998: 69), is related with an ideal interaction in Japan, i.e., one knows what another wants, and provides it for them, without that person having to say anything. This kind of understanding is perhaps facilitated by the well documented “group” nature of Japanese society, and the interdependence of relationships within that group (Travis 1998: 69). Hara (2006: 27) also points out that to have a sense of *omoiyari* and to behave with *omoiyari* are regarded as ideal communication in Japanese society. These indicate that *omoiyari* plays a very important role in Japanese culture.

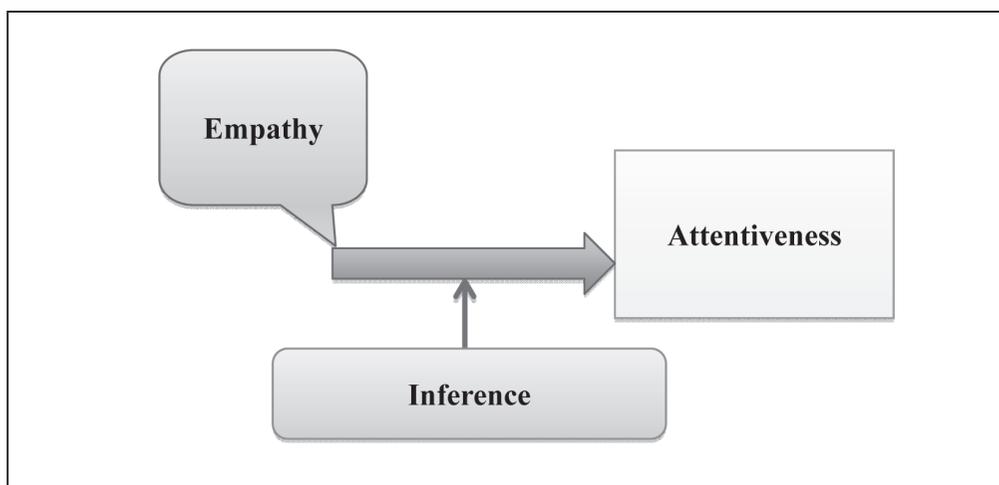
There are some researchers who argue that *omoiyari* is different from empathy. According to Travis (1998), *omoiyari* is different from the English word empathy. Travis (1998: 61-62) maintains that “*omoiyari* includes a notion of understanding the *unverbalized* feelings, desires and thoughts of others”, although empathy is not based on any kind of “intuitive” knowledge. While *omoiyari* is a common Japanese word and essential for the maintaining of harmonious relations in day-to-day interaction, empathy is not, and indeed, is not a particularly salient concept in Anglo society (Travis 1998: 70). Hara (2006: 27) argues that the difference among *omoiyari*, empathy, and sympathy is that *omoiyari* implies intuitive understanding and includes behaving in that way (in my definition “behaving that way” belongs to attentiveness) (see section 2). *Omoiyari* is different from empathy, also from the perspective that *omoiyari* can go the wrong way, e.g., if your assumptions about what would be good for someone are wrong, it could become *osekkai*, or meddling/interfering, according to Travis (1998: 65) (also Lebra 1976: 41). Hara (2006: 25) mentions this, saying that overly imposing *omoiyari* on others might be a psychological burden or, even worse, an annoyance. But empathy could not come to

be meddling, because it does not necessarily involve doing anything for another (Travis 1998: 65). Another difference between *omoiyari* and empathy is that empathy refers to an ability to understand the way another is feeling as a result of a bad experience they have had (Travis 1998: 75). *Omoiyari*, however, does not necessarily have to do with a bad experience in my opinion. Lebra (1993: 72) states that the most direct expression for empathy is to “become another’s *mi*”, (*aite no mi ni naru*), and the most common idiom for empathy is *omoiyari*. Although empathy may not be so frequently demonstrated in Anglo society as *omoiyari* in Japanese society, empathy can be the closest English translation for *omoiyari*.

#### 4. Inference

A definite prerequisite for attentiveness to arise is inference by a potential demonstrator of attentiveness. In relation to empathy, inference may exist in the process in which a demonstrator of attentiveness converts the empathy into attentiveness (see figure 2).

**Figure 2. The relationship among inference, empathy and attentiveness  
by a demonstrator of attentiveness**



Verbal/non-verbal cues, situations, shared knowledge or assumption can trigger inference. Inference is translated as *sasshi* in Japanese; and it is considered to be important in Japanese communication. For example, Ishii (1984) characterizes Japanese communication as *enryo-sasshi* (restraint-inference) communication. Ishii (1984: 50) regards *sasshi* as sharp guesswork. According to Ishii (1984: 57), *enryo-sasshi* communication is characterized by the message sender’s silence and ambiguity and the receiver’s sensitivity, and functions smoothly in Japanese society, even though it may function badly in intercultural situations. According to

Yamada (1997: 37), being able to guess at what others are going to say is central to the Japanese expectation of unspoken interdependence. Yamada (1997: 37) defines *sasshi* as the process of anticipatory guesswork required to fill out each other's communication, and it is a strategy where players try to understand as much as possible from the little that is said. The following studies show that inference is important in Japanese communication. According to Akasu and Asao (1993: 111), Japanese is heavily dependent on context whereas English is not. Presenting an example of *are* (a deictic pronoun in Japanese), Akasu and Asao (1993: 111-112) give an explanation of how communication works in Japanese, using inference. The importance of inference in Japanese communication is also shown in the studies by Ogiwara (2000) and Miyake (2011: iv-vi; 2011: 16).

Gudykunst and Nishida (1993: 150) argue that Japanese communication focuses more on nonverbal aspects of communication than communication in the United States: (1) *ishin-denshin* ("traditional mental telepathy"); (2) taciturnity; (3) *kuuki* (mood or atmosphere) and (4) respect for reverberation (indirect communication). This also implies that inference is important in Japanese communication, as inference is needed for *ishin-denshin*. Miyanaga (1991) in Gudykunst and Nishida (1993: 156) further argues that in an ideal relationship where *sasshi* and *amae* are operating, Japanese communicate spontaneously.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has tried to investigate attentiveness and its related concepts, i.e., empathy and inference. Theories of politeness need to be responsive to these concepts, as they are important from the perspective of metapragmatics as well as in understanding politeness in Japanese. As Haugh and Obana (2011: 147) rightly point out that in the study of Japanese politeness, honorifics (*keigo*, *taigu hyogen*) has been the subject, but a full explanation of (in-)appropriate behavior in Japanese cannot be limited to the study of honorifics. The concepts investigated in this study should be included in the investigation of Japanese politeness, as they are salient in Japanese culture and they constitute im/politeness from a metapragmatic perspective.

The results of the study by Fukushima and Haugh (2012) showed that attentiveness, empathy and inference are important in Japanese culture. It can be said that they are culturally laden notions (culture specific) (emic). However, it should be noted that they are not unique only to Japanese culture, i.e., they can be found elsewhere (culture-general) (etic), too (e.g., Greek culture as shown in the study by Sifianou and Tzanne (2010) and Turkish culture as shown in the studies by Işik-Güler (2008) and Işik-Güler and Ruhi (2010)). The degree of their importance may vary cross-culturally (cf. Schwartz and Bardi 2001). It is hoped that empirical cross-cultural research, investigating the key concepts in this study, will be conducted in the future; and that these concepts will be further clarified.

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