

What we talk about when we talk about emotions
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The talk first discusses the grammatical characteristics of Japanese talk about emotions, or more generally, inner states. In English, there is no grammatical difference between statements about one's own inner states and those of third parties: *I am happy* has the same syntax as *she is happy*. In Japanese, however, predications about one's own inner states are simpler, lacking an experiencer argument term (just 'Happy.', for example), while predications about third parties' inner states are more complex in that they necessarily embed the predication into an evidential construction. For example, one cannot say 'she's happy', but rather has to say 'she seems to be happy' / 'she acts like she's happy' etc. These differences between self-related and other-related inner-state predications are grammatical. They reflect a principal epistemological condition: only the experiencer is in a position to really know about their inner states; other persons can only have indirect evidence for an experiencer's inner state.

This circumstance leads to deep semantic and pragmatic problems:

- The meaning problem:
How can the meaning of expressions for inner states be acquired and conveyed?
- The reference problem:
What do statements by the experiencer about their inner states refer to?
- The evidence problem:
What is the available evidence for making statements about the inner states of others? What is the epistemic status of such statements?

It will be argued that these problems are overcome in actual communication by the general ability of empathy. In part, empathy is a matter of neurology (cf. mirror neurons and insula findings); but it is also a matter of social culture. The sensitivity of the Japanese language to the epistemological condition of statements about inner states corresponds to a characteristic culture of empathy ('*omoiyari*') in Japanese society.