The doubling of giving verbs in Japanese: Convergence and divergence on the implicit side

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Abstract

Japanese has (at least) five giving verbs: 'yaru,' 'ageru,' 'sashiageru,' 'kureru,' and 'kudasaru.' These are inherently deictic, and divided in a cross-cutting fashion in terms of (i) the viewpoint from which the giving event is described and (ii) the social/psychological factors relating to the speaker, the hearer, and the event participants. The giving verbs can also be used as auxiliary verbs with the same two-way categorisation. In this article, we reveal the legitimate and illegitimate combinations of giving verbs in a main-verb-auxiliary cluster, and propose a functional-pragmatic account: the doubling of giving verbs is possible only when a conventional implicature encoded in the main verb is consistent with a conventional implicature encoded in the auxiliary verb. The proposed account is based on theory-neutral assumptions/mechanisms, and it can thus be integrated with previous analyses, with the consequence of broadening empirical coverage.

1. Introduction

Japanese giving verbs display a typologically complex system (Comrie, 2010; Newman, 1996; Sawada, 2014). There are five forms that correspond to *give* in English: *ageru*, *yaru*, *sashiageru*, *kureru*, and *kudasaru*.[1] Consider (1) for an example of *kureru*.

(1) *Ken-ga Naomi-ni orenji-o   **kure**-ta*.
     K-NOM   N-DAT   orange-ACC give-PAST
     'Ken gave oranges to Naomi.'

The choice of form depends on (i) the viewpoint from which the giving events are described and (ii) social/psychological circumstances involving the speaker, the hearer, and the event participants. To illustrate the viewpoint factor, *kureru* in (1) indicates that the giving event is described from Naomi's viewpoint (see Section 2 for details).

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[1] There are other varieties: the "wago"-type (Japanese native words) such as *ataeru* and the "kango"-type (Chinese-origin loans) such as *juyo-suru*. These often appear in formal discourse and may have marked usage (Okutsu, 1984:65). Further, the auxiliary use (see (2)) is highly restricted (Yamada, 2004:1). Thus, these varieties are not discussed in this article.

Another interesting aspect of the giving verbs is that they may be used as auxiliary-like verbs (simply referred to as ''auxiliaries'' in this article).

(2)   *Ken-ga Naomi-ni hon-o   yonde-**kure**-ta*.
       K-NOM   N-DAT   book-ACC read-give-PAST
       'Ken read a book for Naomi.'

In (2), *yonde-kure* consists of the main verb *yomu* 'read' and the auxiliary *kureru*. The auxiliary part indicates from whose viewpoint the action denoted by the main verb is described. In (2), the reading event is described from Naomi's viewpoint.

Although Japanese giving verbs have been the subject of a number of studies (Kuno, 1987; Ooe, 1975; Yamada, 2004; see Section 4), little attention has been paid to ''doubling'' cases where the main-verb-auxiliary cluster is made up of two giving verbs, as in *agete-kureru*. Ooe (1975:240–3) offers some relevant data (see Section 3.1), but a wider range of data is called for and an account remains to be provided.

We present new data of the ''doubling'' construction as above and develop a functional-pragmatic account. As summarised below, our enquiry suggests an approach to lexico-grammatical phenomena based on the functional-pragmatic notion of ''consistency of conventional implicatures.''

- In the licit doubling patterns, a conventional implicature encoded in one giving verb is consistent with a conventional implicature encoded in the other.
- In the illicit patterns, conventional implicatures encoded in two giving verbs lead to a contradiction in terms of the speaker's viewpoint identification.

Two caveats are in order. Firstly, our account is meant to supplement previous analyses. We assign each giving verb a minimally specified entry which could be enriched with specific proposals from previous studies. Secondly, we do not intend to present a formal analysis; rather, the doubling phenomena are treated in functional-pragmatic terms, although some remarks on formal issues are made.

Section 2 lays out the basic features of Japanese giving verbs. Section 3 establishes the doubling data, and Section 4 reviews previous studies against the backdrop of these data. Section 5 presents our account of the doubling phenomena. Section 6 draws theoretical implications and closes with future prospects.

2. Descriptive preliminaries

Let us first set out the foundations for surveying the ''doubling'' phenomena. We illustrate the basic properties of Japanese giving verbs based on the standard references such as Kuno (1987) and Tsujimura (2013). (See Ooe (1975) and Teramura (1982) for the characterisation of giving verbs in terms of ''directionality.'')

2.1. The main-verb usage

There are two ingredients affecting the choice of giving verb: (i) the viewpoint factor and (ii) the social/psychological factors. Our focus is on the former (i.e. viewpoint), and the latter will be briefly mentioned at the end of this subsection.

Giving events consist of at least two participants: the giver and the recipient. Giving verbs in Japanese specify from which perspective the event is viewed. For instance, the giving event described in (3) consists of Ken (the giver) and Naomi (the recipient). The use of *kureru* sets the viewpoint on the recipient, Naomi.

(3)   *Ken-ga Naomi-ni orenji-o   **kure**-ta*.
       K-NOM   N-DAT   orange-ACC give-PAST
       'Ken gave oranges to Naomi.'

The term ''viewpoint'' is used theory-neutrally and may be understood through the ''camera angle'' metaphor (Kuno, 1987:263). In (3), the giving event is described through the camera angle of Naomi.

The viewpoint encoding of each giving verb is indicated in Table 1.

Following Kuno (1987) and Tsujimura (2013), among others, we illustrate the basic parts of Table 1 with the following simplified assumptions:

(4)   a. Only two individuals are engaged in giving events: the giver and the recipient.
       b. One of them is the speaker and the other is some third person.