

Verbs of giving/receiving

This handout discusses the complex system of **giving/receiving verbs** in Japanese, and uses this to illustrate the importance of certain social factors in the discourse:

- Relative position in the social hierarchy
- In-group/out-group

I. Position in the social hierarchy

- (1) **SSS** = person (or entity) who is socially superior to the speaker (Harada 1976)
- (2) Some things that the SSS designation is relevant for
 - (a) In general: Honorific use — is the *addressee* or *referent* in an utterance SSS?
 - (b) Specifically: Which giving or receiving verb to choose depends on SSS status

II. In-group and out-group

- (3) Social/cultural concept of **in-group** (*uti* 内) and **out-group** (*soto* 外)
 - Depends on the relevant situation and participant relationships for a given utterance
- (4) Some things that the in-group/out-group distinction is relevant for
 - (a) Whether an action involves “giving” or “receiving”
 - (b) Honorific use — Not appropriate to treat an in-group member as SSS

III. Verbs of giving and receiving

- (5) **Thematic relations** (θ -roles) of the participants in a giving or receiving event (see the Santorini & Kroch [online textbook](#) — supplementary section on [thematic roles](#))
 - (a) *Source (agent)*: Initiates the transfer
 - (b) *Recipient*: Endpoint of the transfer
 - (c) *Theme*: Undergoes the transfer
- (6) Verbs of **giving** (all are *ditransitive* verbs — two *complements* of the V)

<i>Syntactic position:</i>	Structural subject (-ga)	Indirect object (-ni)	Direct object (-o)	V
<i>θ-role:</i>	Source	Recipient	Theme	

- (a) Out-group gives to in-group:

kure-
kudasar-

(giver \leq receiver)
 (giver $>$ receiver; giver is SSS)

 - written with character for ‘down, below’ (下)
 - irregular “-ar” verb:
 - continuative form *kudasa-i-(mas-u)*, not **kudasar-i-*
 - imperative (actually used!) *kudasa-i*, not **kudasar-e*

- (b) In-group gives to out-group: *yar-* (giver > [or =] receiver) — be careful using!
age- (giver ≤ receiver)
 • also ‘raise’; character used also for ‘up, above’ (上)
sasi-age- (giver < receiver; receiver is SSS)

(7) Verbs of **receiving** (*transitive* verbs with a *modifier* PP)

<i>Syntactic position:</i>	Structural subject	PP modifier (P= <i>ni, kara</i>)	Direct object (-o)	V
<i>θ-role:</i>	Recipient	Source	Theme	

(a) Out-group generally doesn’t “receive”!

- (b) In-group receives: *mora(w)-* (receiver ≥ giver)
itadak- (receiver < giver; giver is SSS)

IV. The giving/receiving verbs can also function as auxiliary verbs

(8) Morphosyntax:

- (a) Put main verb in *-te* (gerund) form | phonology is like that for past-tense *-ta* morpheme
 (b) Add ‘give’/‘receive’ verb as auxiliary

(9) Semantics: Someone “gives” or “receives” the *doing of VP* for/from someone else

(a) Common way of making requests or “commands”

Kite kudasai. ‘Please come.’

Tabako-wa go-enryo kudasai. ‘Please refrain from smoking.’

enryo: VN meaning ‘restraint’; *go-*: Sino-Japanese honorific prefix

Misete itadakemasu ka? ‘Can I have you show it to me?’

mise-: ‘to show’ | *itadak+e*: “potential” (‘able to’) form of *itadak-*

- Which type of request is more indirect: with ‘give’ or ‘receive’?

(b) *Receive*-based auxiliaries used to express “someone did something *for me/us*” — often!

(10) Example from a web site [[FAQ: Can customers choose their own phone number?]]

お客様に	ご連絡を	差し上げ、	選んでいただく	ことは	可能です
o-kyaku-sama-ni	go-renraku-o	SASIAGE,	erande ITADAKU	koto-wa	kanoo desu
HON-customer-HON-DAT	HON-contact-ACC	give-CONT	choose-receive	thing-TOP	possible COP