

A Study of the Difference Between Granting Verbs and Granting Auxiliary Verbs in Japanese Language

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The difference between granting verbs and granting auxiliary verbs in Japanese plays an important role in the teaching of grammar in the whole Japanese intensive reading course, and it is enough to draw considerable attention from every teacher of Japanese intensive reading course. In this thesis, we are going to discuss the difference between granting verbs and granting auxiliary verbs in Japanese. It has been proved that the Japanese expression of giving and receiving not only indicates the granting and receiving of objects or behaviors, but also implies the transfer of favors between people, reflecting the unique sense of favors among Japanese people.

Keywords: granting verbs, granting auxiliary verbs, sense of favors

Basic of Granting Verbs and Granting Auxiliary Verbs

“Grant” is to give and “receive” is to accept. While modern Chinese uses the verb “to give” to indicate whoever is giving to whom, Japanese is much more complex. When using the verb to give or receive, it is important to consider both the “giver” and the “receiver”, as well as the “superiority or inferiority” relationship between them. Generally, granting verbs express the granting of things, while granting auxiliary verbs express the granting of actions.

A famous Japanese scholar, Iori Isao, classified the forms of granting in Japanese into granting verbs and granting auxiliary verbs. He pointed out that granting verbs express the granting of things, while granting auxiliary verbs express the granting of actions. Subsequently, based on the unique perspective of Japanese expression and the characteristics of treatment, he further subdivided Japanese granting expressions into seven granting verbs, namely, “あげる、さし上げる、やる、もらう、いただく、くれる、くださる”, and their derivatives, namely, “～てあげる、～てさし上げる、～てやる、～てもらう、～ていただく、～てくれる、～てくださる”, and three series of seven granting auxiliary verbs. Each of the three series of seven granting auxiliary verb usages, also known in Japanese as “授受表現” or “やりもらい表現”, contains a clear directionality of giving and upper and lower kinship relationships, etc. (Iori, Takanashi, & Nakanishi, 2001).

The Japanese expression of giving and receiving not only indicates the granting and receiving of objects or behaviors, but also implies the transfer of favors between people, reflecting the unique sense of favors among Japanese people (Horiguchi, 1984).

American cultural anthropologist Ruth Benedict, in her book *The Kiku and the Sword* also dissects the Japanese sense of beneficence. She points out that for the Japanese, favors are a debt that must be repaid.

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Receiving favors and repaying favors are two different categories. There is nothing praiseworthy about receiving favors, but on the contrary, repaying favors is remarkable. On the contrary, it is a great honor to repay a favor. The Japanese people are more interested in “repaying a favor” than in “giving a favor” (Benedict, 2007). Because of its own beneficent nature, the expression of giving and receiving should be used in a way that avoids the feeling of giving a favor, especially to an elderly person.

A Study of Granting Verbs—Common Expressions of Granting Verbs

AはBに～をあげる（差し上げる・やる）

This is the expression when A gives something to B. A is the one who gives and B is the one who receives, and the receiver is usually the second or third person. The grammatical auxiliary “に” indicates the receiver. The difference between “あげる” and “差し上げる” is that “あげる” is polite. Differently, “差し上げる” is used when the recipient’s seniority or social status is higher than that of the giver, and of course, when the giver expresses his or her respect to the recipient. However, it is important to note that when you talk about what you have given to your parents, brother, sister, et al., you do not use “差し上げる” but “あげる”. “やる” is often used when the receiver is the junior of the giver or has a lower social status than the giver, but it is also used when there is a close relationship between peers, or when giving things to animals or plants. Anyway, when these three verbs are used as predicates, the subject must be the giver. For example:

1. わたしは李さんにリンゴを一つあげました。
2. 卒業式に先生に花をさしあげました。
3. 王さんはお兄さんの誕生日にレコードをあげようと思っています。
4. 妹さんは花に水をやりました。

BはAから～をもらう（いただく）

In this expression, the receiver is the subject and the giver is the complement, which is indicated by “に” or “から”. There are two granting verbs in this expression, one is “もらう”, which is used between equals, between people of equal social status, or when the receiver’s status is higher than that of the grantor. Conversely, “いただく” is used when the recipient’s seniority or status is lower than the giver. However, you do not need to use “いただく” in general when you tell someone what you have received from your parents or older siblings. For example:

1. さっき母から電話をもらいました。
2. アルバイト募集センターから申込書をもらいました。
3. 大学の友達からプレゼントをもらいました。
4. 昨日北村先生から本をいただきました。

Aは私に～をくれる（くださる）

The subject of this sentence must be the giver, but the recipient must be me or one of us. “くれる” is used between people of equal rank or social status, or when the giver is of a lower rank than me. On the other hand, “くださる” is used when the person who gives the gift is of a higher status than me. However, when you talk about something that your parents or older siblings gave you, you should use “くれる” instead of “くださる”. “くださる” is an irregular verb and becomes “くださいました” when it is followed by “ました”. For example:

1. 趙さんはパンを一つくれました。

2. 姉はかわいい人形をくれました。
3. 母は自分で編んだセーターをくれました。
4. 先生は電子辞書をくださいました。

It is important to note that the action expressed by using a granting verb, such as “あげる・もらう・くれる” must be accompanied by the movement of a favor. Therefore, you cannot use “あげる・もらう・くれる” for a simple action of handing over something that is not accompanied by the movement of a favor. See the following misuse:

1. 駅前で道行く人にチラシをあげます。
2. 班長にレポートをあげました。
3. 秘書は社長にその日の予定表をあげました。

The usage of “あげる” in the above examples is wrong. Example 1 should be changed to “配ります”, Example 2 to “出しました”, and Example 3 to “渡しました”.

A Study of Granting Auxiliary Verbs—Common Expressions of Granting Auxiliary Verbs

AはBに～てあげる（差し上げる・やる）

This sentence pattern indicates that A does something for B. A is the giver, which is indicated by “は”, and B is the receiver, which is indicated by “に”. There are three ways to express this sentence pattern: “～てやる”, “～てあげる”, “～てさしあげる”. “～てやる” is used when the relationship between A and B is close or casual, or when B’s seniority, position, or social status is lower than that of A. “～てあげる” is a polite version of “～てやる”, while “～てさしあげる” is even more polite than “～てあげる”, and is often used to describe a patronizing relationship when B is A’s superior. When describing the relationship between family members, “～てあげる” is usually used. In addition, “～てあげる” and “～てさしあげる” emphasize that one’s own actions bring benefits to the other person and that the speaker is giving a favor to the other person, so the receiver of the action feels that it is an imposition and feels offended, so one should be careful about using it for one’s own actions in conversations. For example:

1. 木村さんは田中さんにチャーハンを作ってあげました。
2. あなたは兄さんだから、弟に貸してやりなさい。
3. わたしは先生に手紙を書いてさしあげました。
4. その写真を家族にもぜひ見せてやりたいです。

AはBに（から）～てもらう（いただく）

This sentence pattern expresses what A receives from B. A is the receiver, which is expressed by “は”, and B is the giver, which is expressed by “に” or “から”. What B does for A is expressed by the verb in front of “て”. This sentence pattern has two expressions: “～てもらう” and “～ていただく”. The expression “～ていただく” is a modifier of “～てもらう”, and it is usually used when B has a higher seniority, position, or social status than A, or when B is a person whom A respects. “～てもらう” is used when describing the relationship between family members. For example:

1. 王さんに記念写真を撮ってもらいました。
2. 李さんに本を貸してもらいました。
3. 先生にはごあいさつをしていただきました。
4. わたしは、今司会の先生から紹介していただいた鈴木です。

Aはわたしに～てくれる（くださる）

This sentence pattern indicates that A does something for me (us). A is the giver, the receiver must be me, us, or one of our people, and it is often omitted in the sentence. This sentence pattern has two expressions, “～てくれる” and “～てくださる”. “～てくださる” is the honorific form of “～てくれる”, and is used when A’s seniority, position, or social status is higher than mine. Generally, “～てくださる” is not used when describing the relationship between family members. For example:

1. 橋本さんは日本のお寿司を作ってくれました。
2. 友達はお祝いの挨拶をしてくれました。
3. これは先生が買ってくださったものです。
4. 講義が終わってから、先生が皆さんからの質問に答えてくださることになっています。

It can be seen that each of the above three series of grant auxiliary verbs contains a different relationship of favor. The “～てあげる” series emphasizes that one’s actions bring benefits to others and that the speaker is giving favors to the other person, so one should be careful when using them in conversation for one’s own actions; the “～てもらう” series emphasizes one’s sense of asking for favors; the “～てくれる” series emphasizes that another person’s actions bring benefits to one, and that one is receiving favors from others.

Conclusions

To sum up, the Japanese expression of giving and receiving can not only indicate the granting and accepting of objects or behaviors, but also imply the transfer of favors between people, reflecting the unique sense of favors among Japanese people. The expression of granting verbs and granting auxiliary verbs in Japanese is a difficult problem for both Japanese intensive reading and Chinese learners. Teachers should pay attention to the teaching of this part of knowledge and guide students to understand it in various aspects and dimensions.

First of all, it is important for students to distinguish between the giver and the receiver. When Chinese learners learn basic Japanese, due to the influence of their mother tongue, it is easy for them to use the same word or expression to deal with all kinds of situations when they come across the distinction between the giver and the receiver. This results in errors, such as “王さんは私におみやげをあげました”, and so on. To solve this problem, students must make a strict distinction between the giver and the receiver, and make it clear to whom the object or action ultimately belongs.

Secondly, students are made to understand the granting of behavior. In the Chinese system, the beneficence of an action is not expressed in words, and the expression is deeply rooted in the minds of Chinese learners. Therefore, if students do not have a good understanding of the granting of actions, the acquisition of granting verbs and granting auxiliary verbs in Japanese will be greatly affected.

Furthermore, the students will be able to grasp the importance of respect for the elders and the young. Japan is an island nation with a small land area, which requires close and harmonious interpersonal relationships. The hierarchical system that emphasizes the importance of superiority and inferiority is a manifestation of these relationships, and this relationship is also reflected in the language. An example of this is the expression of

granting verbs and granting auxiliary verbs.

Finally, to cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence. Intercultural communication skills have a direct impact on language acquisition and application. Strengthening the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence will help students understand more accurately the relations of giving and receiving in Japanese, make it easier for them to understand why Japanese people use the expressions of giving and receiving in certain specific occasions, and further enable them to understand the hidden cultural connotations behind the relations of giving and receiving, which will ultimately serve the acquisition and use of the language.

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