Three Types of Viewpoint - Empathy, Subjective, and Agentive: A Case Study from Japanese Giving and Receiving Verbs

Soichi Kozai
Three Types of Viewpoint - Empathy, Subjective,
and Agentive: A Case Study from Japanese
Giving and Receiving Verbs*

Soichi Kozai

It is well known by now that Japanese
giving and receiving verbs assign speaker
empathy to a particular participant. In
general, this assignment is determined by
the verb and the social relationship existing
between the discourse participants and
among the characters referred to in the
discourse. However, there are certain
counterexamples to this generalization. This
is the phenomenon called empathy shift: the
speaker is taking a non-designated
participant's viewpoint on purpose. Kuno
(1987) has proposed a syntactic account for
these counterexamples, while Inoue (1979)
and Wetzel (1985) have specified speaker
motivations as explanations for such use. In
this study a comprehensive analysis of these
empathy assignment phenomena will be
presented using the Mental Space
(Fauconnier 1994, 1997) notion of
Viewpoint.

Three types of viewpoint are posited
in the present study - Empathy, Subjective,
and Agentive. These viewpoints may be
assigned to one NP or two NP's. If the
assignment is concentrated in one specific
NP, Empathy shift cannot occur because
these viewpoints constitute a single stable
whole. When more than one NP is assigned
a viewpoint, shifting of Empathy is more
likely since a single entity has not been
identified as having the perspective from
which the event is viewed.

1. Giving and receiving verbs

There are two give's and one receive in
Japanese, and there are three levels of
register with each of these verbs - casual,
plain, and honorific (see Table 1).

The honorific form of morau
(itadaku) also has a Sino-Japanese
alternative, tyoodai suru. For convenience,
example sentences cited in this paper use
only the casual forms, i.e., yaru for give1,
kureru for give2, and morau for receive. The
three indispensable participants for these
verbs are the giver, the recipient, and the
object being transferred. If these referents
are recoverable from the context, they may
not be phonologically realized. Because the
object being transferred is most likely a non­
human entity, the speaker's empathy must be
located with either the giver or the recipient.

Consider giving and receiving
constructions with three participants - watasi
(I) anata (you) and a pen. In sentences (a­
c), watasi has the giver role and anata, the
recipient role. In (a'-c'), the role has been
reversed:

(1) a. Watasi ga anata ni pen o yaru.
I N you D Agivel
I give you a pen.

a'. *Anata ga watasi ni pen o yaru.
you N I D Agivel
* You give me a pen.
b. *Watasi ga anata ni pen o kureru.
   
   * I give you a pen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>give1</th>
<th>give2</th>
<th>receive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>yaru</td>
<td>kureru</td>
<td>morau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain</td>
<td>ageru</td>
<td>kureru</td>
<td>morau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorific</td>
<td>sasijageru</td>
<td>kudasaru</td>
<td>itadaku (tyoodai-suru)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Humble)</td>
<td>(Respect)</td>
<td>(Humble)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.

b'. Anata ga watasi ni pen o kureru.
You give me a pen.

c. Anata ga watasi ni pen o morau.
You receive a pen from me.

c'. Watasi ga anata ni pen o morau.
I receive a pen from you.

With the verb *yaru*, the first-person form *watasi* must be the giver, not the recipient, while the reverse is true for *kureru* and *morau*. While (1b) is unacceptable, (1c) is marginally acceptable. This is because the verb *morau* assigns agentivity not only to the recipient, the grammatical subject, but also to the giver, the *ni*-marked NP. This point will be discussed in more detail later.

Since the first person participant is the epistemic entity with whom the speaker inevitably identifies him/herself, the empathy locus with each verb can be schematized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empathy Locus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>give1</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>give2</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>receive</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.

Kuno and Kaburaki (1977) define empathy as identification with an individual, while Wetzel (1985) uses group membership as the criterion for the identification of speaker's empathy. This membership, called *in/out (uti/soto)-group membership*, determines the social deictic reference point. For example, speakers use honorific forms appropriate for the group membership, such that when a company employee is talking to his/her own superior, the employee must use respect forms if the superior is the referent of the grammatical subject, but humble forms if the employee is the referent of the grammatical subject. When the employee is talking to someone outside the company, however, humble forms are used for all company employees because all belong to the same group, i.e., the in-group, while the addressee does not. The addressee belongs...
to the out-group. Of course, in/out-group membership shifts with changes in time or situation. For example, members of the same family or school constitute the in-group opposed to members of other families or schools, respectively. In this study we combine these two conditions - individual and group membership - in referring to the empathy locus. The first-person form is always the empathy locus when the speaker is explicitly involved in the event. When this is not the case, the social relationship between the speaker and a second or a third person determines who will be the locus of empathy.

2. Counterexamples
Inoue (1979) rejects the Kuno and Kaburaki generalization, presenting a number of counterexamples. She argues that empathy constructions depend on social factors regarding the speaker's relation to participants at the time of the utterance. From a pragmatic perspective, her observation is indeed correct; however, it is not really an explanation but rather a description of the speaker's motivation for using the specific person forms with these verbs in the counterexamples. Wetzel (1985, p.151) provides a more elaborated account, calling these exceptional empathy constructions cases of deictic projection (Lyons 1977) - the shifting of the speaker's viewpoint to someone else's - but still this fails to go beyond description. On the other hand, Kuno (1987, p.253) proposes a syntactic explanation in terms of logophoricity: predicted- to-be ill-formed indirect speech constructions are acceptable if the corresponding direct speech constructions are well-formed. Logophoric verbs are speech verbs such as say, tell, ask, and/or psychological verbs such as feel, bother, please. In examples (2a-c), the first person pronouns are used in non-empathy loci, but since their direct speech counterparts (2a'–c') are acceptable, these apparently ill-formed indirect speech constructions turn out also to be acceptable:

(2)a.  Watasi① ni yatta to hito ni iw-anai
       de kudasai.
       being please
       Please don't tell others that (you① gave it to) me③.

a'. Watasi③ ga anata① ni yatta.
       I       N       you① gave1 you③.

b.  Watasi③ ga kureta to hito ni
       iw-anai de kudasai.
       say-not being please
       Please don't tell others that I③ gave (it to you③).

b'. Anata② ga watasi① ni kureta.
       you② I       D       gave2
       You① gave (it to me③.

c.  Watasi③ ni moratta to hito ni
       iw-anai de kudasai.
       say-not being please
       Please don't tell others that (you③ received) (it) from me③.
c'.\textit{Watasi R ga anata G ni moratta.}
\text{I N you from received} \\
\text{I\textsubscript{R} received (it) from you\textsubscript{O}.} \\
(G: giver, R: recipient)

In (2a), the first-person pronoun is the recipient for \textit{yaru}, violating the empathy assignment constraint. However, in (2a'), the giver, whose counterpart in (2a) was an understood second-person entity, takes on the form of \textit{watasi}, the first-person pronoun, and the recipient, whose counterpart in (2a) was a first-person entity, takes on the form of \textit{anata}. Thus, (2a') is well formed and therefore its indirect counterpart (2a) is also well-formed despite the apparent violation. The same is true for the apparently ill-formed sentences with \textit{kureru} and \textit{morau} (2b, c), which also have well-formed counterparts (2b', c'). The referent of the first-person giver for \textit{kureru} in (2b) is the same as that for \textit{anata} in (2b'), and the referent of the understood second-person recipient in (2b) is the same as that for \textit{watasi} in (2b'). In (2c) and (2c'), the first-person giver is also the same as the referent of \textit{anata}; and whether \textit{anata} is overt or implicit, the second-person recipient is the same as the referent of \textit{watasi}. Hence, (2b) and (2c) are also well formed, although they might appear to be ill formed.

However, there are yet other counterexamples outside the scope of Kuno's logophoric account:

[Context: A speaker is talking to Taro, whom the speaker saw earlier wearing a poorly cared-for sweater which the speaker had given him as a gift.]

(3)\textit{Watasi ni moratta seetaa o anna ni} \\
\text{I from receive sweater A like-that} \\
\text{yogosita.} \\
dirtied

How dare (you) get the sweater (you) received from me dirty like that. 
In (3), \textit{watasi} is the giver for \textit{morau}, which should be a violation of empathy assignment. However, the sentence is acceptable. This is a direct speech construction that Kuno's logophoric rule fails to account for. Note that if \textit{ageru} or \textit{kureru} is used, the acceptability varies considerably:

(4)a.*\textit{Watasi ni yatta seetaa o anna ni} \\
\text{I D give1 sweater A like-that} \\
\text{yogosita.} \\
dirtied

How dare (you) get the sweater (you) gave me dirty like that.

b. ??\textit{Watasi ga kureta seetaa o anna ni} \\
\text{I N give2 sweater A like-that} \\
\text{yogosita.} \\
dirtied

How dare (you) get the sweater I gave (you) dirty like that.

While (4a) is clearly unacceptable, the status of (4b) is less certain and varies among native speakers. Why is there this variability?

3. Viewpoint

To account for this variability, I will use the Mental Space (Fauconnier 1994, 1997) notion of Viewpoint. Mental Space theory treats language as a system of prompts building and interrelating semantic spaces or
domains, using minimal lexical and grammatical structures. This theory posits a Viewpoint space from which other spaces are accessed and structured. When describing an event or a state, the speaker must take a particular stance for the description. This speaker's stance is the Viewpoint space.

I am proposing three types of viewpoint for Japanese - Empathy, Agentive, and Subjective. Empathy viewpoint represents the speaker's identification with a particular participant in an event - the speaker describes the event from this identified participant's perspective. As discussed above, if there is a first-person participant, it can only be the giver for yaru and has to be the recipient for kureru and morau.

Agentive viewpoint is located with the agent NP of the event. In nominative-accusative languages, transitive events can be described either in active or passive voice. When such an event is described from viewpoint of the patient, the agent NP is marked with oblique case, as in the passive; otherwise, it takes nominative case. Although the three giving and receiving verbs are all transitive, a patient NP with these verbs is likely to be a non-human entity so that we are primarily concerned here with the active voice of these predicates. Two verbs, yaru and morau, mark a single NP for both the Agentive and Empathy viewpoints. With kureru, the two viewpoints cannot be assigned to the same participant because the recipient has to be the Empathy location whereas, obviously, the agent (the giver) gets the Agentive viewpoint. There is only one Agentive for the two give's while, conceptually, there are two Agentives with morau - the giver and the recipient (Shibatani 1979). Example (1b') can be a paraphrase of (1c'), here repeated as (5a) and (5b), respectively:

(5)  

a. **Agt GI Thm**

   Anata ga watasi ni pen o
   you N I D A

   kureru.

   give

   You give me a pen.

b. **Agt Agt Thm**

   Watasi ga anata ni pen
   I N you from

   o morau.

   A receive

   I receive a pen from you.

In (5b), the ni-marked NP, anata, (unlike its dative NP counterpart in (5a)), though not the subject, is assigned an agentive role in Japanese because speakers construe the recipient as an agent despite the presence of another agentive, the subject watasi. Thus, for example, if the ni-marked NP Tanaka sensei (the teacher Tanaka) in (6a) is replaced by an NP referring to an inanimate entity gakkoo (school) as in (6b), kara (from) must replace ni (by), since the agentive viewpoint cannot be attributed to an inanimate entity:

(6)  

a. **Watasi wa Tanaka sensei ni/kara**

   I T Tanaka teacher by/from

   hon o moratta.

   book A received

   I received a book from the teacher Tanaka.
Three Types of Viewpoint

b. Watasi wa gakkoo *ni/kara hon o moratta.
   received

I received a book *by/from school.

Thus *ni in (5b) marks agentivity when the *ni-marked NP is an animate entity.

Jackendoff (1985, p. 451) points out that a subject of receive in English cannot be an agent (in his term, Actor). He applies tests using pseudo-cleft and imperative constructions as in (7) and (8), respectively, to distinguish action verbs from non-actions verbs -- the subject of the former is an agent, while that of the latter is not.

(7)  
a. What Bill did was give up linguistics.

b. *receive a letter.

(8)  
a. Give up linguistics!

b. *Receive a letter!

However, in Japanese, both pseudo-cleft and imperative constructions with morau are acceptable:

(9)  
a. Taroo ga sita koto wa watasi ni tegami o morau koto datta.
   letter A receive thing Cp/Pst

   What Taro did was receive a letter from me.

b. Tegami o morae!
   letter A receive
   Receive a letter!

Moreover, the volitional form of morau is natural (10a), while that of receive (10b) is dubious:

(10)  
a. ??Tegami o morao! 
   letter A let's-receive
   Let's receive a letter!

b. Let's receive a letter!

Receiving as well as giving is thus seen as a kind of act, and hence the subject of morau is the agent.

In the earlier section, we noted that (1c), repeated as (11) below, was marginal rather than unacceptable; but no explanation of this was given.

(11) ??Anata ga watasi ni pen o morau.
   you N I from A receive
   You receive a pen from me.

We now see that both recipient (anata) and the giver (watasi) are agentive with morau; this double agentivity explains the marginality. Empathy viewpoint is assigned to anata rather than watasi, the normal locus of empathy, but the *ni-marked participant is assigned agentivity. Hence, the non-empathy-marked NP's volitionality is concomitant with the receiving event. Thus, this presupposed *ni-marked participant's controllability on the event helps make the ill-formed empathy marking construction less unacceptable: the NP that is supposed to have a type of viewpoint - Empathy - is yet marked for another type of viewpoint - the Agentive.

Also, the marginality of (11) can be accounted for if we consider the imperative construction. Receiving from watasi is unacceptable as in (12a) because it violates empathy marking, while it is acceptable if
anata receives something from a third person as in (12b), which conforms to empathy marking - in which the speaker has closer relationship to the second person than to Taro.

(12) a. *Watasi kara tegami o morae! (corresponding to) I from letter A receive
Anata ga watasi ni morau.
Receive a letter from me!

b. Taro kara tegami o morae! (corresponding to)
Taro from letter A receive
Anata ga Taro ni morau.
Receive a letter from Taro!

The third viewpoint is the Subjective - the expression of an internal state attributed to the referent of the grammatical subject. Not all subjects are assigned this viewpoint, which is partially determined by the nature of the predicate. Unlike English, Japanese subjective predicates expressing the internal state of an epistemic entity are constrained syntactically:

(13) a. Watasi wa oyogi-tai.
I T swim-want-to
I want to swim.

a'. *Watasi wa oyogi-ta-gatte-iru.{1}
GAR-STA
I want to swim.

b. *Anata wa oyogi-tai.
you T swim-want-to
You want to swim.

b'. Anata wa oyogi-ta-gatte-iru.
you T swim-want-to-GAR-STA
You want to swim.

As exemplified in (13a-b'), the psychological predicate of -tai (want to) needs to be suffixed by a descriptive modal morpheme -gar-, which is followed by the stative marker, -iru, for the representation of non-first-person subjects. This is because a speaker can take a subjective stance in expressing his/her own internal states, whereas he/she cannot do this for others. This is also true when the giving and receiving verbs are suffixed by the morpheme -tai in that the derived adjectival for first person cannot be suffixed by the modal morpheme -gar-, while those of a non-first person need to be suffixed:

(14) a. Watasi wa anata ni pen o age-tai.
give1-want-to
I T you D A
I want to give you a pen.

a'. *Watasi wa anata ni pen o age-ta-gatte-iru.
give1-want-to-GAR-STA

b. *Anata wa watasi ni pen o kure-tai.
give2-want-to
You want to give me a pen.

b'.  Anata wa watasi ni pen o
you  T I D  A
kure-ta-gatte-iru.
give2-want-to-GAR-STA

c.  Watasi wa anata ni pen o
     I  T you from A
morai-tai.
receive-want-to
I want to receive a pen from you.

c'.  *Watasi wa anata ni pen o
     I  T you from A
morai-ta-gatte-iru.
receive- want-to-GAR-STA

It can thus be seen that those subject NP's whose psychological predicates cannot be suffixed by the modal morpheme -gar- are marked for Subjective viewpoint - i.e., those with ageru and morau - otherwise they are non-Subjective - i.e., grammatical subjects for kureru. The distribution can be summarized as in Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>viewpoint</th>
<th>ageru</th>
<th>kureru</th>
<th>morau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>give1</td>
<td>[-]</td>
<td>[-]</td>
<td>[+    ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give2</td>
<td>[-]</td>
<td>[-]</td>
<td>[+    ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>receive</td>
<td>[-]</td>
<td>[-]</td>
<td>[+    ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.

Now the distribution of all three viewpoints can be schematized as in Table 4, on the following page.

For yaru, all three viewpoints are located on a single NP, the giver. For kureru and morau, two NP's in their clauses are assigned viewpoint status. Thus, the overall viewpoint marking is the most concentrated with yaru. With kureru, only Agentive and Empathy viewpoints occur, and these are not located on the same NP - the Agentive is assigned to the giver and the Empathy to the recipient. Like yaru, morau locates all three viewpoints on the recipient and, in addition, a second Agentive viewpoint is located with the giver.

Of the three viewpoints, only Empathy may be shifted to another NP; the viewpoint distribution after Empathy shifting is the exceptional assignment that we are concerned with here. As just noted, yaru has the most concentrated viewpoint distribution, all three types being located in a single NP, while kureru and morau have a less stable distribution, the locations being distributed over two NP's. Hence, because of the most inflexible distribution, the acceptability of empathy shift for yaru is the lowest among the three verbs. For kureru and morau, the latter, locating the three viewpoints with a single NP, seems to have a greater concentration of viewpoint than kureru. So it appears that morau might have less acceptability than kureru for empathy shift. However, this is not correct. Now consider the viewpoint distribution after Empathy shifting (see Table 5, following page):
Distribution of the three Viewpoints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'give1'</th>
<th>yaru</th>
<th>Sub/Agt</th>
<th>Emp/Sub/Agt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'give2'</td>
<td>kureru</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emp/Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'receive'</td>
<td>morau</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emp/Sub/Ag</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Emp: Empathy, Sub: the Subjective, Agt: the Agentive, G: giver, R: recipient)

Table 4.

Viewpoint distribution after the shifting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'give1'</th>
<th>yaru</th>
<th>Sub/Agt</th>
<th>Emp/Sub/Agt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'give2'</td>
<td>kureru</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emp/Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'receive'</td>
<td>morau</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emp/Sub/Ag</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Emp: Empathy, Sub: the Subjective, Agt: the Agentive, G: giver, R: recipient)

Table 5.

The verb kureru, which formerly had two NP’s as viewpoint locations, now has only one, while morau still retains two NP’s as viewpoint locations. Thus, morau, being more flexible in viewpoint distribution, can maintain this balance of distribution after shifting. Therefore, the two verbs kureru and morau have two NP’s for viewpoint loci and, hence, it is easier for Empathy to shift from one to the other NP. On the other hand, since yaru has the most concentrated distribution - only one NP for viewpoint location - it is not easy for Empathy to shift to another NP.

4. Conclusion

Empathy is a type of viewpoint, and the exceptional constructions of giving/receiving verbs are a phenomenon of empathy shift. With pragmatic considerations, we are able to describe background of the speaker producing such utterances and, with consideration to syntactic elements of those constructions, we can partially solve the problem. However, none of these approaches could...
Three Types of Viewpoint

provide a unified account for the phenomenon.

In this study, we have examined viewpoint, defined the three types - Empathy, the Agentive, and the Subjective - and found these viewpoints to be significant to account for the empathy phenomenon in an integrated way. The nature of viewpoint distribution before and after shifting determines the degree of acceptability, as shown in examples (3) and (4). The acceptability of these constructions corresponds to the following ordering: yaru, kureru, and morau. With yaru, all three viewpoints are located with the giver. Thus, the overall viewpoint marking is very strong, and hence viewpoint shifting is unlikely. If kureru is used, only Agentive and Empathy viewpoints occur, and these are not located with the same NP - the Agentive is assigned to the giver and the Empathy viewpoint to the recipient. In this case, the Empathy may be shifted to the Agentive NP. However, if the Empathy is shifted, the recipient in a kureru clause is not assigned a viewpoint. With morau, on the other hand, there are two Agentives and, hence, even after shifting Empathy from the recipient to the giver, the first site is still marked for the Agentive. In addition, unlike the subjects of kureru, the subject NP of morau is marked for a third Viewpoint - Subjective - hence, the distribution of viewpoints is strong enough to support Empathy shift. Therefore, the acceptability of Empathy shift with giving and receiving verbs is determined by the distribution of the three types of viewpoint with these verbs.

Works Cited


University of Chicago Press, Chicago.


End Notes
(*) I am indebted to three professors of University of Hawaii for this paper to be completed. Those who are Professor Haruko Cook, who has first inspired me to study this research area no one has worked on; Professor John Haig, who has given me invaluable comments and advice for analyses on Japanese; and Professor Roderick Jacobs, who has guided me with his great patience since I started to study discourse grammar at the university.

{1} This utterance, however, will be acceptable when the speaker shifts his/her viewpoint, such that objectifying him/herself as in (I) or taking addressee's stance as in (ii) (John Haig, personal communication):
水は怖かったのである。

私は今、泳ぎたいと思っています。

おそらく、私が泳ぎたいと思える