

## Subjective and Objective Construal of the Japanese

### Benefactive Auxiliary Verb *Kureru*

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#### 1 Introduction

The Japanese benefactive auxiliary verb *kureru* is used when the speaker benefits from either the subject of the embedded clause (Kim 2009) or the event described by the clause (Nishikawa 1995; Yamahashi 1999). However, no agreement has been obtained regarding which of the two is the actual giver of the favor. The present study aims to demonstrate that the giver of the favor is determined by whether the speaker subjectively or objectively construes the event (Ikegami 2008).

#### 2 Previous studies

According to Masuoka (1981), *kureru* sentences contain a beneficiary noun phrase (beneficiary NP), which represents the person who receives a favor from the described event or situation. Masuoka (1981) argued that the beneficiary NP of the *kureru* sentence must be the speaker, as evidenced by the fact that (1b) is unnatural where the beneficiary NP is another person (Mr. Yoshida).<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. *Tanaka san-wa boku-ni okane-o kasite-kure-ta.*  
 Mr. Tanaka-TOP me-DAT money-ACC lend-BEN-PAST  
 ‘Mr. Tanaka gave me the favor of lending me some money.’
- b. ? *Tanaka san-wa Yosida san-ni okane-o kasite-kure-ta.*  
 Mr. Tanaka-TOP Mr. Yoshida-DAT money-ACC lend-BEN-PAST  
 ‘Mr. Tanaka gave Mr. Yoshida the favor of lending him some money.’
- c. *Taroo-wa boku no ootoo-ni okane-o kasite-kure-ta.*  
 Taro-TOP my brother-DAT money-ACC lend-BEN-PAST  
 ‘Taro gave my brother the favor of lending him some money.’

(Masuoka 1981: 73–74)

However, (1c) is acceptable although the receiver of the money is not the speaker but his brother. This

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<sup>1</sup> In the sentences in (1), “V-*kureru*” is translated into “give the favor of V-ing” in accordance with Masuoka (1981). Henceforth, I will only translate the embedded clause for the sake of simplicity.

is because the close relationship between the speaker and his brother allows him to be the beneficiary of the sentence.

Whereas there is little doubt that the speaker is the receiver of the favor in *kureru* sentences, the giver of the favor is less certain. There are two possible candidates: the subject of the sentence and the event described. Nishikawa (1995) and Yamahashi (1999) suggested that the giver of the favor is the event, showing examples whose subject is not obviously the giver of the favor, such as (2).

- (2) *Kono kusuri-ga koosyuu-o kesite-kure-ru.*  
This medicine-NOM bad breath-ACC get rid of-BEN-PRESENT  
'This medicine gets rid of my bad breath.'

(Yamahashi 1999: 81)

In (2), the subject *kono kusuri* is never likely to be the giver of the favor. What is beneficial to the speaker is the event in which the medicine gets rid of his bad breath.

If the giver of the favor in *kureru* sentences is the event described, it is predicted that *kureru* can be used as long as the speaker considers the event beneficial. However, this is not always the case. For instance, (3) is unacceptable even if the described event is beneficial to the speaker.

- (3) \* *Taroo-ga battari atte-kure-ta.*  
Taro-NOM accidentally meet-BEN-PAST  
'Taro accidentally met me.'

(Kim 2009: 98)

(3) becomes acceptable if the word *battari*, the use of which indicates that Taro did not have the intention to meet the speaker, is removed.

The above example demonstrates that the giver of the favor in *kureru* sentences is the speaker; *kureru* is used only when the speaker recognizes the subject's intention to benefit him. However, as already exemplified by (2), the subject of *kureru* sentences can be an entity that does not have the intention to benefit the speaker. In addition, (4) is acceptable regardless of whether the subject has such an intention.

- (4) *Keisatu-ga hannin-o tukamaete-kure-ta.*  
police-NOM criminal-ACC arrest-BEN-PAST  
'The police arrested the criminal.'

(Kim 2009: 105)

Kim (2009) suggested that *kureru* has one basic meaning and three extended ones. The basic meaning is that the speaker regards the act performed by the subject with the intention of benefiting

him as beneficial.<sup>2</sup> The meaning of *kureru* in (4) is an extended one; while the subject does not have the intention to benefit the speaker, he assumes that the subject has. Therefore, even in (4), the giver of the favor is the subject.

However, it is questionable whether the speaker assumes that the subject has the intention to benefit him in (4), given the fact that the word *guuzen*, the use of which indicates that the speaker does not recognize such an intention, can be added to (4), as in (5).

- (5) *Keisatu-ga guuzen hannin-o tukamaete-kure-ta.*  
 police-NOM accidentally criminal-ACC arrest-BEN-PAST  
 ‘The police accidentally arrested the criminal.’

Considering examples of (3) and (5), both the subject and the event can be the giver of the favor in *kureru* sentences, as described in Takami & Kuno (2002). In the next section, I will propose that *kureru* has two distinct usages depending on whether the giver of the favor is the subject or the event, which in turn depends on the speaker’s attention.

### 3 Two usages of *kureru*

If the giver of the favor in *kureru* sentences is the subject, the benefit of the described event is predicted to be cancelable. In fact, the benefit of the event described by (1a) can be canceled, as in (6a). However, this is not always the case. As demonstrated by (6b), it is awkward to cancel the benefit described by (2).

- (6) a. *Tanaka san-wa boku-ni okane-o kasite-kure-ta*  
 Mr. Tanaka-TOP me-DAT money-ACC lend-BEN-PAST  
*kedo kasite-hosiku-nakat-ta.*  
 but lend-want-not-PAST  
 ‘Mr. Tanaka lent me some money, but I did not want him to do so.’
- b. ? *Kono kusuri-ga koosyuu-o kesite-kure-ta*  
 This medicine-NOM bad breath-ACC get rid of-BEN-PAST  
*kedo kesite-hosiku-nakat-ta.*  
 but get rid of-want-not-PAST.  
 ‘This medicine got rid of my bad breath, but I did not want it to do so.’

The crucial difference between (6a) and (6b) is whether the subject has the intention to benefit the speaker. Note that *kureru* sentences are an attitudinal expression as well as a benefactive expression in

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<sup>2</sup> Note that it is the speaker who determines whether the subject has the intention to benefit him.

the sense that they show the speaker's gratitude for the subject's act beneficial to him (Harada 2006; Kumada 2001). The subject in (6a) is assumed to have the intention to benefit the speaker, and therefore the use of *kureru* is motivated not only by the benefit of the event but also by the speaker's appreciation for the subject. As a result, the benefit of the event described by (6a) can be canceled. By contrast, the use of *kureru* in (6b) is purely motivated by the benefit of the described event, which makes it impossible to cancel it.

From the above discussion, *kureru* is supposed to have two distinct usages: *appreciation* and *evaluation*. The former and the latter respectively denote the speaker's appreciation for the subject's intention to benefit him and the speaker's positive evaluation of the described event.

The distinction between these usages would be related to the notion of attention. To realize the subject's intention to benefit the speaker requires him to pay attention to the subject. Likewise, the speaker needs to focus on the event to consider whether it is beneficial to him. However, it is still unclear in what case the speaker pays attention to the subject or to the event. To address this problem, the notion of subjective/objective construal (Ikegami 2008) will be introduced in the next section.

#### 4 Subjective and objective construal

The notion of construal is an important aspect of cognitive grammar (Langacker 2008), where a meaning is supposed to consist of not only conceptual content but also a particular way of construing that content. For instance, the sentences "The glass is half-full." and "The glass is half empty." have the same conceptual content, but their meanings are different because of the speaker's construal. In the former sentence, the conceptualizer pays attention to the liquid in the glass. In the latter sentence, on the other hand, the conceptualizer focuses on the void of the glass.

According to Ikegami (2008), there are two types of construal depending on whether the conceptualizer construes the event from the inside or outside, as follows:

Subjective construal: the conceptualizer is on the very scene s/he is to construe and construes the scene as it is perceivable to her/him. Even if the conceptualizer is not on the scene s/he is to construe, s/he may mentally project her-/himself onto the scene s/he is to construe and construes it as it would be perceived by her/him.

Objective construal: the conceptualizer is outside the scene s/he is to construe and construes it as it is perceivable to her/him. Even if the conceptualizer is on the scene s/he is to construe, s/he may mentally displace her-/himself outside the scene s/he is to construe and construe it as it would be perceived by her/him.

(Ikegami 2008: 231)

Notably, Ikegami (2008) introduced a pair of cognitive operations: *self-split* and *self-projection*. Self-split allows the conceptualizer to objectify himself to construe the event he participates in as if he was an observer. On the other hand, self-projection makes it possible for him to subjectify someone other than himself to construe the event he does not participate in as if he was a participant.

By adopting Ikegami's subjective/objective construal, the giver of the favor in *kureru* sentences can be described as follows. When subjectively construing an event, the speaker is inside the event, and his attention is paid not to the event but to the subject, which is the most salient participant in a sentence (Langacker 2008). As a result, the speaker realizes the subject's intention to benefit him and considers the subject the giver of the favor. On the other hand, when objectively construing an event, the speaker is outside the event, paying attention to the event as a whole. In this case, the speaker regards the event as the giver of the favor. The above discussion can be formulated as follows:

The giver of the favor in *kureru* sentences is the subject when the speaker subjectively construes the described event while it is the event when the speaker objectively construes it.

The above formulation predicts that if the event includes a participant with whom the speaker empathizes, it is subjectively construed, and the benefit of the event is cancelable. On the other hand, if there is no such participant in the event, it is objectively construed, and the benefit of the event cannot be canceled. These predictions are proved valid by the sentences in (7). Canceling the benefit described by (7a) is possible because the described event has a participant for whom the speaker feels empathy (the speaker's brother). By contrast, since (7b) includes no such participant, it is awkward to cancel the benefit of the described event.

- (7) a. *Taroo-wa boku no ootoo-ni okane-o kasite-kure-ta*  
 Taro-TOP my brother-DAT money-ACC lend-BEN-PAST  
*kedo kasite-hosiku-nakat-ta.*  
 but lend-want-not-PAST  
 'Taro lent my brother some money, but I did not want him to do so.'
- b. ? *Saibankan-ga hannin-ni sikeihanketu-o kudasite-kure-ta*  
 Judge-NOM criminal-DAT death sentence-ACC pass-BEN-PAST  
*kedo kudasite-hosiku-nakat-ta.*  
 but pass-want-not-PAST  
 'The judge passed a death sentence on the criminal, but I did not want him to do so.'

## 5 Conclusion

The present study revealed that both the subject and the event can be the giver of favor in *kureru*

sentences. When subjectively construing an event, the speaker is inside the event and therefore his attention is paid not to the event itself but to the subject. As a result, the speaker realizes the subject's intention to benefit him, which makes the subject the giver of the favor. On the other hand, when objectively construing an event, the speaker focuses on the event as a whole from the outside. In this case, the speaker evaluates the event, making it the giver of the favor. These two ways of construing an event lead to the two different usages of *kureru*: appreciation and evaluation, which respectively correspond with the attitudinal expression and the benefactive expression.

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