

# Giving and Receiving

Cited From Using Japanese, (by William McCLURE, 2000, Cambridge Univ. Press)

PP: 147-150.

## 3.3 Giving and receiving

In Japanese it is important to acknowledge the source of your information and your degree of confidence. Likewise, it is important to indicate that you have benefited from someone else's actions (intentionally or not). This is related to the fact that when you have a relationship with someone you often greet them with an expression like どうも or いつもお世話になっております or この間、どうもありがとう. Cynics might say that relationships between Japanese people are like contests to see who can be nicer to the other person. Certainly many actions are motivated by little more than a sense of obligation, but, for better or for worse, an awareness of who is doing what for whom is crucial to all relationships in Japan.

To this end, overt expressions of giving and receiving are significantly more common in Japanese than in English. While speakers of English may feel all of the appropriate emotions and obligations, in Japanese it is necessary to recognize indebtedness in speech. People who do not use these expressions sufficiently seem insensitive, even selfish. As usual, a non-native speaker will be forgiven, but using these expressions correctly signals a sensitivity to Japanese inter-personal relations which is well-appreciated. Compare the Japanese examples with their English translations where overt expressions of benefit are much less frequent.

くれる・くださる (くれる・下さる)

買い物に行ってくれた。

*He went shopping (so I wouldn't have to).*

私が考えていることを言ってくれた。

*He said what I was thinking (so I didn't have to).*

赤ちゃんが元気に産まれてきてくれた。

*The baby was born healthy.*

先生が私の言いたいことをわかってくださった。

*The teacher understood what I was trying to say.*

秀明君は私と遊んでくれた。

*Hideaki played with me.*

息子がよく食べてくれた。

*My son ate everything.*

ドアを開けてくださいました。

*He opened the door for me.*

もらう・いただく (貰う・頂く)

英会話を教えてもらおう。

*Let's have someone teach us English.*

うちの子が隣の子によく遊んでもらった。

*My youngest child often had the child next door over to play.*

荷物を持ってもらった。

*They brought my luggage. I had them bring my luggage.*

答えを教えてもらった。

*I had her tell me the answer.*

やる・あげる・さしあげる (やる・上げる・差し上げる)

うちの子が隣の子と遊んであげた。

*My youngest child played with the child next door.*

電話をかけてあげた。

*I called them (to tell them the good news).*

書いて差し上げましょうか。

*Shall I write it for you?*

While あげる and くれる both mean *give*, くれる means specifically *give to me* (or to a member of my in-group). An expression such as 私にくれた therefore sounds redundant although it is not ungrammatical. In contrast, 私がくれた is basically ungrammatical since it can only mean that I gave something to myself. Similarly, the unspoken subject of もらう is the speaker (or a member of the speaker's in-group) so that 私にもらった is also ungrammatical since it means that I received something from myself. If it is the case that you have in fact given something to someone, 私が彼にあげた *I gave it to him* is preferred to 彼が私にもらった *He received it from me*, although the latter expression is not impossible. Given a choice between くれる and もらう, the former is generally more polite because the speaker's role as recipient seems passive. It is also possible with くれる (and only with くれる) to put yourself into the position of the person you are speaking to, allowing either 誰がくれたの? meaning *Who gave that to you?* or 誰にもらったの? meaning *Who did you get that from?*

When speaking of acts of giving and receiving between two third parties, the verbs あげる and もらう are used freely. With もらう, the source of what is received may be marked with に or から, although から is more likely when the source is not an actual human being (田中君にもらう versus 国からもらう).

As noted on page 10, やる is really just a colloquial version of 上げる. While typical examples with やる involve giving water to plants and food to babies (i.e. giving to inferiors), it is in fact possible to use やる when speaking of giving to a relatively wide range of people.

It should be obvious that when used correctly verbs of giving and receiving make explicit use of pronouns redundant (particularly any reference to oneself). Verbs of giving and receiving can also disambiguate sentences by making it explicit exactly who has benefited in a particular situation. Compare the following:

田中さんが手伝いました。

*Tanaka helped.* (someone quite unlikely the speaker)

田中さんが手伝ってくれました。

*Tanaka helped me.* (must be the speaker, the speaker's in-group)

田中さんが山本君に手伝った。

*Tanaka helped Yamamoto.* (Yamamoto is most likely unrelated to the speaker)

田中さんが山本君に手伝ってあげた。

*Tanaka helped Yamamoto.* (Yamamoto is explicitly unrelated the speaker)

田中さんが山本君に手伝ってくれた。

*Tanaka helped Yamamoto.* (Yamamoto is in the speaker's in-group)

行こうか。

*Shall I go? Shall we go?*

行ってあげようか。

*Shall I go? (for you, in your place)*

中島さんは山本さんが自分の車を洗ったと言いました。

*Nakajima said that Yamamoto washed his car.* (Nakajima's car or Yamamoto's car?)

中島さんは山本さんが自分の車を洗ってくれたと言いました。

*Nakajima said that Yamamoto washed his car.* (must be Nakajima's car)



お書き差し上げようか

Finally, there is a point of contrast between expressions like お書き差し上げようか and 書いて差し上げようか. While both expressions are offers, お書き差し上げようか is given even when the other person is clearly capable of doing the activity, in this case writing. A helpful clerk offers to fill in a form simply as a courtesy. In contrast, 書いてあげようか and 書いて差し上げようか carry the implication that the person being addressed is in some way incapable of doing the activity. The helpful clerk makes such an offer to someone who has left their reading glasses at home, or to a foreign student who is unsure of how to fill in the form. As a result the latter can in some circumstances be insulting. On a bus, for example, it is polite to offer your seat with a polite お譲りしましょうか. It may be dangerous to offer your seat with an equally polite 譲って差し上げようか unless the person you are addressing obviously needs to sit down. Said to someone with no clear need to sit may imply that you believe them to be old, feeble, and in need of assistance. For people who do not feel themselves to be particularly old, this may come as something of a shock (cf. おじさん and おばさん on page 233).

follow are increasingly indirect command forms disguised as other kinds of sentences. In general, the easier it is to refuse or ignore a command (overt or implied), the more polite it is felt to be, because the overall goal is to avoid the potential difficulty of having to refuse. When making a request (which is to say when trying to have done what you want done), it is natural to use one of the more polite expressions. And as with English, the more complicated or difficult your request, the more polite and circumspect you should probably be.

と  
止まれ。Stop!

The most direct kind of command; military, official, angry. と止まれ is what is written on stop signs in Japan. The negative version of this is と止まるな Don't stop!

と  
止まってくれ。Stop!

くれ is the direct command form of くれる. The overall effect is still quite strong.

と  
止まりなさい。Please stop.

Intimate sounding, generally adults speaking to children.

と  
止まって。Stop!

A somewhat less direct command form. Some form of くれる has been omitted.

と  
止まってください。Please stop.

The most neutral command form. The negative here is と止まらないでください Please don't stop.

と  
止まってちょうだい。Please stop.

Very intimate sounding, for use within a family. ちょうだい on its own is an intimate way to say please when you want something.

と  
お止まりください。

お止まりになってください

Please stop.

These are softer, female, characteristic of people working in hotels, restaurants and other service industries.

Three more general types of commands are discussed below. In the first set, the command is disguised as an invitation. As an invitation it is up to the person being invited to accept or decline. This command is considered more indirect because the person being invited is given an implicit (if very weak) choice. More direct forms like と止まれ or と止まって or even と止まってください lack this sense of choice.

と  
止まってくれない?

止まってくれないか。

止まってくれませんか。

# Japanese Grammar with Comparative Perspectives from English

Name (in Chinese characters if any) \_\_\_\_\_

氏名 (ふりがな) \_\_\_\_\_

Year 学<sup>がく</sup>年<sup>ねん</sup> Major/ Program 専<sup>せん</sup>攻<sup>こう</sup>

Nationality 国<sup>こく</sup>籍<sup>せき</sup> Overseas Students Only

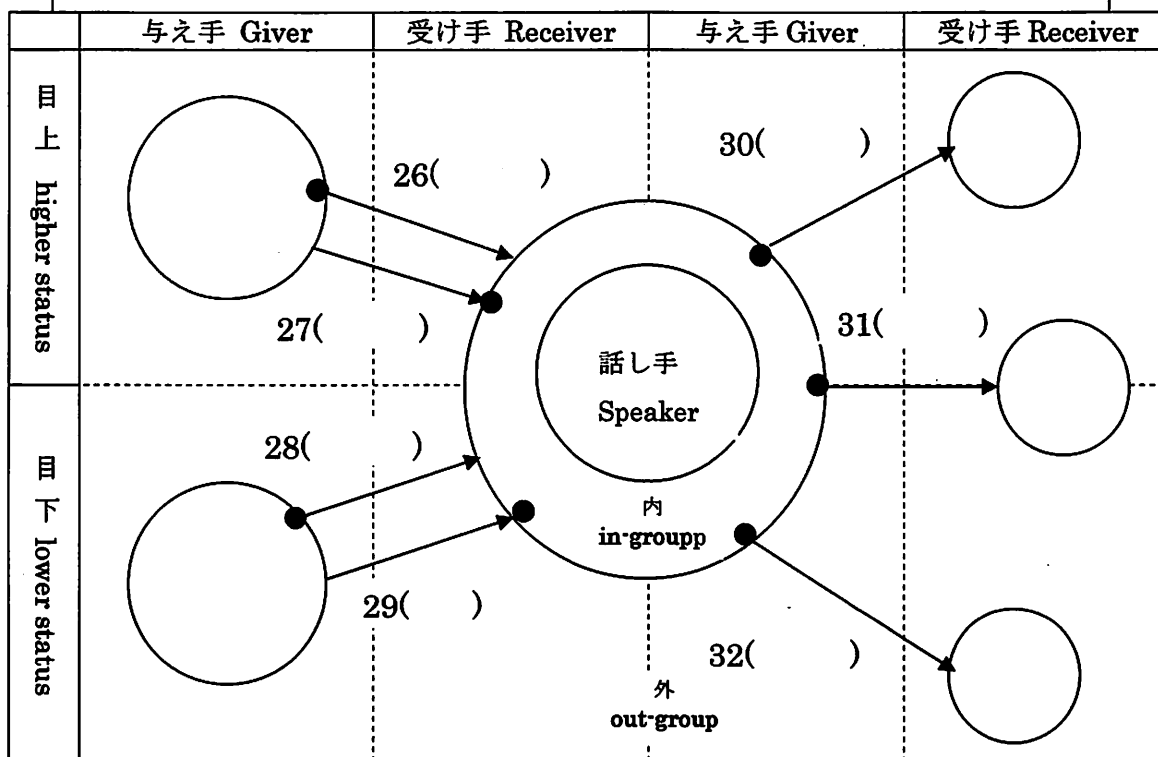
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Home University \_\_\_\_\_

Fill in the number of the appropriate Japanese Giving and Receiving verbs in the following blank. of the diagram.

Choices

- |          |               |         |           |             |
|----------|---------------|---------|-----------|-------------|
| 1. ageru | 2. sashiageru | 3. yaru | 4. kureru | 5. kudasaru |
| 6. morau | 7. itadaku    |         |           |             |



● indicates a subject