

Itadaite and Kudasatte in Expressions of Gratitude : Analysis and Pedagogical Implications

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***Itadaite* and *Kudasatte* in Expressions of Gratitude: Analysis and Pedagogical Implications**

シスリー 悦子

要旨

「いただいて」と「下さって」がその感謝の対象である動作を表す動詞とともに感謝を表す発話の中で使われる際、そのどちらかを選択するにはどのような要素が影響を及ぼしているのだろうか。日本語を母語とする被験者にアンケートを行いその要素を調べ、その結果をどのように授業に反映できるかを考察した。

【キーワード】 *itadaite*、*kudasatte*、*gratitude*、*Japanese*

1. Introduction

This study examines two Japanese expressions of gratitude: *gerund + itadaite arigatoo gozaimasu* and *gerund + kudasatte arigatoo gozaimasu*, first to determine which factors contribute to selecting between them, and then to investigate and identify specifically what social factors may be associated with a preference between the two forms.

A questionnaire was administered to collect the data, and it was done by e-mail and by traditional paper distribution. The questionnaire had two parts: the first part requested personal data of the respondents and the second one had thirty-six multiple choice questions in which the respondents were asked to select either *itadaite* or *kudasatte* in a variety of contexts. For example,

(1) a. *Ame-no naka-o wazawaza kite kudasatte arigatoo gozaimasu.*

b. *Ame-no naka-o wazawaza kite itadaite arigatoo gozaimasu.*

‘Thank you for coming in the rain although it is trouble.’

(The National Language Research Institute, 1993)

Although there seem to be no clear rules of choice between *kudasatte* and *itadaite* in this particular example, the respondents must make two choices: selecting a verb for either giving (*kudasatte*) or receiving (*itadaite*) and deciding on either honorific (*kudasatte*) or

humble form (*itadaite*).

2. Factors

There might exist some factors which influence respondents when they are making a selection between *itadaite* and *kudasatte* in the expression of gratitude. A few factors will be examined here.

2.1 Formal factors

As mentioned above, *kudasatte* is the *te*-form of a giving verb '*kudasaru*' and *itadaite* is the *te*-form of receiving verb '*itadaku*'. Therefore, the types of verbs are different.

The way of showing respect can differ by the verb the speaker selects. '*Kudasaru*', from which '*kudasatte*' is derived is an honorific form of the verb '*kureru*'. On the other hand, '*itadaku*' the *te*-form being '*itadaite*', is a humble form of '*morau*'. Therefore, by using the honorific verb, *kudasatte*, the respondent expresses respect by showing that the status of the benefactor is higher than one of the respondent. On the other hand, when a speaker chooses *itadaite*, s/he is lowering his/her position to show respect to a benefactor, so the result seems to be the same as choosing *kudasatte*. In other words the usage of the honorific verb is a direct expression of respect and a usage of the humble form is an indirect expression of respect. These two different usages of verbs might give different connotation because being indirect is considered to be more polite in Japanese culture (Ide 1983).

2.2 Semantic factors

In addition to formal differences, there are two semantic factors that may contribute to the selection of *itadaite* or *kudasatte* in the gratitude expression.

First, any contextual information, such as formal situation and informal situation, may affect the selection of *itadaite* and *kudasatte* was investigated. Since indirect expressions are considered to be more polite, the humble form (*itadaku*) may be selected more in a formal context than the honorific form (*kudasaru*).

Also, in some utterances of gratitude, Sino-Japanese words, which are words that originated in the Chinese language (e.g. *sanka*), may be used in the expression of gratitude as "*go-sanka kudasatte/itadaite*". Sugito (1983) states that Sino-Japanese words are used in formal communications. Thus, when a Sino-Japanese word is used in an expression of gratitude, it may have stronger affinity to the humble verb because it is associated more strongly with formality than the honorific verb is.

2.3 Personal factors

Another possible factor is the respondent's personal status and position. In other words, the respondents' social status, gender, and age may attribute to their choices in the questionnaire.

First, students and people who work at a company seem to have different execution of polite expressions. Ogino (1997) compared college students' usage of polite expressions and those of people who work at a publishing company and found that college students did not seem to have mastered polite expressions.

Also, it is said that women behave more politely than men (Ide, 1990; Sakuma, 1983; The National Language Research Institute, 1983). Survey results will be investigated as well for particular preferences by respondents' gender.

Lastly, elderly people tend to speak more politely than younger people (The National Language Research Institute, 1957, 1983). The age difference among the survey respondents may influence their selection, regardless of the age that may be assumed for the speaker of the utterances in the survey.

3. Research Method

A questionnaire was created to collect data on the selection between the forms *itadaiite* and *kudasatte* in expressing gratitude for a favor. It was given as a printed material to respondents whenever possible. However, since there were not enough native speakers of Japanese around since it was done in the United States, most of the questionnaires were sent to Japan by e-mail.

Three types of informants answered the questionnaire. The first group, from which most of the results were derived, consisted of 121 native speakers in Japan. The second group consisted of 22 Japanese native speakers who were living in the United States but use primarily Japanese in their daily lives, for example, workers at a Japanese automobile manufacturing company in central Ohio and their spouses. The last group included 9 Japanese students at the Ohio State University, both graduates and undergraduates. Although they used more English in their daily lives than the second group of informants, they tended to be closely involved socially, and spoke Japanese frequently.

In total, 152 native speakers of Japanese responded, ranging in age from 14 years to over 70 years. 59 answers came from male participants, and 93 came from female participants.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part asked personal information

such as sex, age, occupation, education, region of residence, and whether or not the respondent had any children. The second part consisted of thirty-six sentences that participants were to complete by selecting one of two given words. Thirty of the questions aimed at checking participants' selection between *itadaite* and *kudasatte* or its variation such as *itadaki* and *kudasari* in gratitude expressions. Six questions were designed to gauge how progressive or conservative the informant's language use is. These sentences included progressive usages such as *kireru* instead of *kirareru* (to be able to wear), and *nomereru* instead of *nomeru* (to be able to drink)¹.

Also, each sentence was given a description of a person with whom the informant was to imagine being engaged in a conversation. To accommodate the experiences of people who have led different social lives, the descriptions consisted of various types of people so that each participant could easily produce a natural sentence. However, since it was a written questionnaire and participants were asked to answer all questions, they might have faced unfamiliar situations such as talking to a child's teacher though they may not have any children. Ogino suggested that the situations which are not familiar to the participants should be skipped and oral interview should be given (Ogino, 1982). However, a written questionnaire was used because of limitations of time and budget.

4. Results and analysis

Several findings from the survey indicated some trends in the selections between *itadaite* and *kudasatte* in expressions of gratitude. They can be categorized as four types: those related to the respondents' social status, those related to situations of interaction, those related to types of favor performed, and those related to sentence structure.

4.1 Social status of the respondents

The first category was related to the respondents' social status. It was found that whether or not s/he constantly deals with a client had a significant correlation to the selection of *itadaite* and *kudasatte*, which means that for respondents, who have experienced working at a company or a store was an important factor in their selections *itadaite* or *kudasatte* in expressions of gratitude. Ogino pointed out that people learn *keigo* (polite language) after they start working (Ogino, 1982). Wetzel observed a training seminar for new employees by a Japanese company and pointed out that new employees who have just graduated from a college needed to have a special training for correct usage of *keigo* to fit

into a company structure (Wetzel and Inoue, 1999).

The different situations presented in the questionnaire include three types: business situations, situations related to home, and situations that involve teachers as an addressee. The data show that regardless of gender, both company employees and students indicated a consistent preference throughout all the situations. Company workers preferred *itadaite* while students were inclined toward choosing *kudasatte*. Ide's data also showed that students prefer *kudasaru* and its variation for request expressions with counterpart of *itadaku* (Ide et al., 1986). However, Ide's examples are slightly different from the ones of the questionnaire for the present survey as shown below.

(2) *Kashite kudasai.*

lend-GER give-IMP (honorific)

Please lend me (it).

(2') *Kashite itadak-e-masu ka*

lend-GER receive-POT-PRES Q

May I receive (your action of) lending?

Therefore, these examples of request sentences used by Ide are not exactly parallel in their forms since the first one uses the imperative form and the latter uses the potential form and the form of a question. However, both data from this survey (Table 1) and Ide's data show that university students prefer *kudasatte* to *itadaite*.

Table 1. Students' preference between *itadaite* and *kudasatte* for three different types of situations.¹

	<i>itadaite</i>	<i>kudasatte</i>	Total
Business situation	31.7% (19)	68.3% (41)	100% (60)
Home-related situation	36.1% (30)	63.9% (53)	100% (83)
Toward a teacher	41.7% (25)	58.3% (35)	100% (60)

N = male 1, female 11

Table 2. Company workers' preference between *itadaite* and *kudasatte* for three different types of situations.²

	<i>itadaite</i>	<i>kudasatte</i>	Total
Business situation	67.6% (250)	32.4% (120)	100% (370)
Home-related situation	66.5% (344)	33.5% (173)	100% (517)
Toward a teacher	68% (251)	32% (118)	100% (369)

N = male 46, female 28

Thus, students and company workers have significantly different preference on selection between *itadaite* and *kudasatte* in the expressions of gratitude.

4.2 Situation

The next category is related to the formality of the situation. First, co-occurrence of Sino-Japanese such as *go-syootai* and the combination of 'o-' and the stem of a verb (e.g. *o-mati*) triggered the usage of *itadaite*. Sino-Japanese are words that originated in the Chinese language, and it often has a Japanese native counterpart(s), although the nuance of words can be slightly different, such as *go-syootai* and *yonde*. It is said that usage of Sino-Japanese adds more formality to the sentences than utilizing only original Japanese words (Sugito, 1983, The National Language Research Institute, 1983).

Table 3. Preference of *itadaite* over *kudasatte* with the sentence with Sino-Japanese (*go-*) divided by social status.³

	<i>itadaite</i>	<i>kudasatte</i>	Total
Student	69% (25)	31% (11)	100% (36)
Company worker	76.5% (169)	23.5% (52)	100% (221)
people who stay at home	70.3% (116)	29.7% (49)	100% (165)

N = male 49, female 92

Table 4. Preference of *itadaite* over *kudasatte* with the sentence with Sino-Japanese (*o-*) divided by social status.⁴

	<i>itadaite</i>	<i>kudasatte</i>	Total
Student	50% (12)	50% (12)	100% (24)
Company worker	62.1% (90)	37.9% (55)	100% (145)
people who stay at home	61% (66)	39% (43)	100% (109)

N = male 49, female 92

As the tables above show, people chose *itadaite* more than *kudasatte* when a sentence utilizes Sino-Japanese with the prefix (*go-*) than a sentence utilizing the polite prefix (*o-*) and the stem of a verb.

Also, when the addressee was a teacher, all types of respondents, regardless of social status, age, or gender, chose *itadaki/itadaite* more frequently.

Table 5. Preference between *itadaite* and *kudasatte* toward teachers divided by social status.

	<i>itadaite</i>	<i>kudasatte</i>	Total
Student	45.8% (22)	54.2% (26)	100% (48)
Company worker	67.5% (199)	32.5% (96)	100% (295)
people who stay at home	65.7% (142)	34.3% (74)	100% (216)

N = male 49, female 92

Table 6. Preference between *itadaite* and *kudasatte* toward teachers divided by age and gender.

	Gender	<i>itadaite</i>	<i>kudasatte</i>	Total
20-29	Male	83.3% (25)	16.7% (5)	100% (30)
	Female	52.7% (58)	47.3% (52)	100% (110)
30-59	Male	70% (133)	30% (57)	100% (190)
	Female	66.1% (201)	33.9% (103)	100% (304)
60-	Male	56% (14)	44% (11)	100% (25)
	Female	67.3% (37)	32.7% (18)	100% (55)

N (20-29) = male 6, female 22, (30-59) = male 38, female 61, (60-) = male 5, female 9

In the survey which was done by the National Language Research Institute in Okazaki city, people ranked the status of a doctor and a teacher high in formality (1983, 201-02). Moreover, Japanese university students say that they communicate with professors with the most careful attitude (Ide et. al., 1986). Parents of university students also rank professors and instructors of hobby groups highly (Ide, 1990). Confucius teaching which respects teachers as well as elders and parents, still seems to influence people's view and people's language usage.

4.3 Types of favors

The third category established that women differentiate between situations in which the ownership of some item does or does not change in the favor being performed such as receiving apples from parents-in-law or attending a garage sale. They chose *itadaite* more often when ownership changed, and they preferred *kudasatte* more often when there was no change of ownership as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Different preference by gender between *itadaite* and *kudasatte* when ownership is/is not transferred.⁵

	Gender	<i>itadaite</i>	<i>kudasatte</i>	Total
Ownership transferred	Male	70.7% (104)	29.3% (43)	100% (147)
	Female	64% (176)	36% (99)	100% (275)
No ownership transferred	Male	66.2% (389)	33.8% (199)	100% (588)
	Female	51.5% (566)	48.5% (533)	100% (1099)

N = male 49, female 92

It can be seen that women show stronger preference toward *itadaite* when ownership was transferred while men did not show a significant difference between two situations. It is suspected that male respondents, the majority of whom have business dealings on a daily basis, select *itadaite* almost habitually, regardless of transfer of ownership. Women possibly focus more clearly on the action of “receiving”.

However, out of twelve sentences that did not involve any ownership change, female respondents preferred to utilize *kudasatte* for eight and *itadaite* for four. They might have focused on the action of the favor and the benefactor rather than the action of receiving since no object was transferred. Therefore, *kudasatte*, which identifies the subject as the benefactor was selected.

4.4 Sentence form

Finally, there was a preference caused by a sentence form. When a sentence contained a different structural form namely ‘- *soo de*,’ both men and women in all age groups significantly preferred *kudasaru*.

It appears that this specific structure, ‘a direct style imperfective verb + *soo de*,’ evoked this particular selection. *Soo de* is used when the event of the favor has not yet been completed; therefore, the speaker who will receive the favor may feel the need to be very polite. Some respondents commented in their response that had the potential form *itadakeru* been a choice, they would have selected it. (*Kudasareru* is grammatically questionable.) According to Ueno, use of the potential morpheme ‘-e-’ in a request is the most courteous pattern of request (Ueno, 1983). Hence the respondents felt that potential morpheme ‘-e-’ should be utilized with ‘*soo de*’ because the favor was not yet completed.

The reason why the respondents chose *kudasaru* more frequently than they did *itadaku* is not very clear. However, it might be connected to a difference of psychological distance between *itadaku* and the speaker and *kudasaru* and the speaker. When the speaker uses *itadaku*, s/he imagines that the object is closer to him/her than it is to the benefactor as if the object is already in his/her hand. On the other hand, when s/he chooses *kudasaru*, s/he feels that the object is closer to the benefactor. In other words, it can be said that people selected either *itadaku* or *kudasaru* to indicate the psychological difference. Moreover, selection of *kudasaru* might be facilitated more because the question contained *te*-form of the imperfective verb and imperfective verb seems to be more suitable for the favor which is not completed yet, which is indicated with '*soo de*' .

5. Pedagogical implication

The findings from this study suggest a couple of important points regarding teaching terms for expressing gratitude, that contain *itadaitte* and *kudasatte*. In this section, they will be examined closely.

5.1 Presentation of gratitude expressions

Before learning the gratitude expressions, verbal gerund + *arigatoo gozaimasu*, students must learn the essential expression of gratitude, *arigatoo gozaimasu*. Then donatory verbs should be introduced. *Itadakimasu* is a ritual expression before meals, and it is often introduced in the early stages of the curriculum as a structurally unanalyzed set phrase. *Kudasaru* can be introduced in the imperative form, *kudasai*, which expresses a request for the addressee's action. At the same time *kudasai* is introduced, verbal gerund form can be taught in order for the students to compose an expression of request of an action, verbal gerund + *kudasai*. These should be presented during the first stage of the curriculum.

The donatory verbs such as *kureru*, *morau*, *kudasaru*, and *itadaku* should be introduced later since they involve the concept of in-group and out-group, which is not systematically coded in English. Honorific prefix *o-* and *go-* should be taught before donatory verbs in order to introduce the concept of in-group and out-group. Among the donatory verbs, giving verbs such as *kureru* and *ageru* should be taught before receiving verbs such as *morau* and *itadaku* because giving verbs have more variety. After students are familiar with giving verbs, receiving verbs should be taught while contrasting them with their giving verb counterpart, according to their relationship as giver and receiver.

Then the gratitude expressions with mentioning the benevolent action can be

introduced. Both *itadaite* and *kudasatte* should be presented at the same time to contrast each other. The students considered in this study are adults, so they have the cognitive and the analytical ability to analyze the material systematically (Unger et al. 1993). Contrasting materials can help those students understand and retain the material longer.

Also, the findings of the survey for this study should also be pointed out to the students, which is that verbal gerund + *itadaite arigatoo* is used in more formal contexts than the verbal gerund + *kudasatte arigatoo*. The finding that *kudasatte* is used more when ownership is transferred might also be introduced, but it might not be as important as the previous finding for students.

5.2 Practice of gratitude expressions

There are situations that do not require mentioning the particular favor the benefactor provided. Therefore, instructors should provide a reason/motivation and an appropriate context to the students in order to elicit the target expression from the students.

One possible context is that both the speaker and the addressee are present when the benefactor provided the favor. However, in an authentic situation, the speaker might not mention the particular action that the benefactor did because the reason for the gratitude is clear for both.

Another context is that the benefactor has done a favor without the speaker being present. In that context, the one who received the favor has to mention the favor that the benefactor has done for him/her to clarify the reason for the gratitude. Therefore, it is important to set up the situation well and to make sure that students understand it completely.

Also, if the benefactor has done more than one favor for many people, the speaker might want to specify which favor s/he is referring to. To practice this context, a list of favors the benefactor has done to different people on the previous day may be provided, and the instructor should provide the students with information that motivates them to mention a particular favor.

Moreover, to emphasize the different context in which the verbal gerund *itadaite + arigatoo gozaimasu* and the verbal gerund *kudasatte + arigatoo gozaimasu* are used, different ranges of formality should be provided. Talking to a neighbor and talking to a client may contrast the difference well.

Furthermore, to help the students practice ‘a direct style imperfective verb + *itadaku/kudasaru + soo de + arigatoo gozaimasu*’, the context should be set up in which the favor has not been completed yet. This can be accomplished with a third person who

conveys to the speaker that the benefactor agreed to do a favor for the speaker, since ‘*soo de*’ means ‘hearsay’. Then when the benefactor and the beneficiary communicate, the target sentence can be elicited.

6. Conclusion

In the survey it was found that *itadaite* + *arigatoo gozaimasu* is utilized more frequently by speakers who work at a company dealing with clients. On the other hand, students preferred *kudasatte* + *arigatoo gozaimasu* more than company workers did. The gender and the age of the speakers were not nearly as significant as the speaker’s status as factors in the selection between *itadaite* and *kudasatte* in the gratitude expression.

Moreover, preference of *itadaite* is closely related to the formality of the situation such as talking to a professor who holds higher status which creates a formal situation. In addition, when beneficent event is expressed in Sino-Japanese such as *go-syootai*, *itadaite* was selected more frequently due to the formality of Sino-Japanese.

Also, transfer of ownership within the favor seemed to be a factor of the selection of *itadaite* or *kudasatte*. When the favor involves transfer of ownership of an object (e.g. sending apples), speakers preferred *itadaite*, whereas when no ownership was transferred in the favor (e.g. taking laundry in), *kudasatte* was chosen more frequently.

Kudasaru was preferred extensively in the gratitude expressions with ‘*soo de*’, and it seems to be connected to the completion or incompleteness of the favor. However, the analysis is incomplete because the survey did not include the questions with ‘the perfective verb + *soo de*’.

Thus, formality of the situations seems to be an important factor in selecting *itadaite* or *kudasatte* in the gratitude expressions when the favor is mentioned. When it is practiced in the classroom, different situations that contain different degrees of formality such as talking to a neighbor, a client in a business situation, or a professor should be provided.

Notes

- 1) Progressiveness and conservativeness of the language did not show any significant correlation with the selection between *itadaite* and *kudasatte* in the expression of gratitude. Therefore, it is not discussed in this paper.
- 2) There were five business related situations, eight home related situations, and five situations

talking to a professor/teacher. The numbers of responses are all added for the chart.

- 3) There were three questions which contained the honorific prefix 'go-'.
- 4) There were two questions which contained the honorific prefix 'o-'.
- 5) Three questions included transferring ownership, and twelve questions did not contain transferring ownership.

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