Japanese First-Person Pronouns and the Emergence of Identity

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Senior Thesis

This thesis aims to explore the notion of identity in relation to Japanese speakers as reflected in their use of first-person pronouns, given that the first-person pronoun in Japanese has several varying forms (watashi, boku, ore, atashi, etc.). I begin with a presentation of traditional and prescriptivist accounts that treat these pronouns as having shared, common meanings and use. I then present some recent ethnographic studies that show pronoun use that often contradicts traditional accounts. These contradictions pose questions concerning the nature of meaning: in what ways is it shared and common and how does it relate to normative behavior or expectations of normative behavior. These pronouns present a nice case study for considering recent frameworks in sociolinguistics and emergence theory. I argue that in order to understand the underlying pragmatics of first-person pronoun use in Japanese it is necessary to interpret the dynamics of various linguistic communities in the way they shape and are shaped by language use. Identity, individual and group, and the linguistic variation that indexes it, are argued to be emergent phenomena that arise from negotiation and interaction between various linguistic communities and subcultures.

1 Japanese First-Person Pronouns

The Japanese language has many variations of the first-person pronoun. These are not limited to, but include: watakushi, watashi, boku, atashi, and ore—all glossed as I in English. While these pronouns can all be used to refer to the speaker, they may vary in connotation and contextual usage. Most traditional approaches to these pronouns tend to account for their variation by emphasizing differences in age, gender, and levels of formality. Table 1 shows a typical categorization of first-person pronouns one might find in a Japanese textbook:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>watakushi,</td>
<td>watakushi,</td>
<td>ϕ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>watashi</td>
<td>watashi</td>
<td>watashi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>boku</td>
<td>watashi, atashi</td>
<td>boku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>ore</td>
<td>ϕ</td>
<td>ore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*FN represents first name

Ide and Yoshida (2002: 471)
According to Table 1, Japanese men use *watakushi, watashi, boku,* and *ore,* while Japanese women use *watakushi, watashi,* and *atashi.* *Watakushi* (1a) is often considered to be very polite and formal, indicating a deference to the addressee. *Watashi* (1b) is a contracted form of *watakushi* and is also polite, but slightly more casual. *Watashi* and *watakushi* are acceptable for use by both men and women and because of this are sometimes viewed as gender-neutral pronouns (Hinds 1986).

(1) a. *Watakushi, anshin shiteimasu.*
   I piece of mind is-doing
   I feel at ease.

   b. *Kondo wa watashi ga sore o yatte miyou.*
   now-TOP I-SUBJ it-ACC try-to-do
   This time I will try it.

*Boku* (2a) is traditionally a masculine form; it can be more casual or colloquial than *watashi* and is usually associated with young men, boys, and male students. *Atashi* (2b) can be viewed as a female equivalent of *boku* in that it is not necessarily formal and fairly casual.

(2) a. *Boku wa basu de gakkou ni ikimasu.*
   I-TOP bus-BY school-TO(LOC) go-formal
   I go to school by bus.

   b. *Atashi wa kare o shiteimasu.*
   I-TOP he-ACC acquainted-is
   I know him.

*Ore* (3a) is generally considered to be strongly masculine and informal; sometimes viewed with connotations of being brash and boastful. Japanese women do not have a deprecatory form equivalent to men's *ore,* as they are supposed to maintain a higher level of politeness in general compared to men (Ide and Yoshida 2002). It should also be noted that female Japanese children also make pronominal use of their first names by appending the hypocoristic suffix *-chan* (3b).

(3) a. *Ore wa ninben da.*
   I-TOP man-copula.
   I am a man.

   b. *Ayumi-chan terebi o mitai.*
   Ayumi-Affectionate TV-ACC see-WANT
1.1 Formality

In Japanese, formality is reflected in the language not only by certain lexical choices, but also by varying verb endings (1). Similarly, the copula verb *desu* also varies depending on level of formality (2). Situational formality can be further reflected by use of sentence-final particles; for instance, the negative imperative *-na* (1c) and the emotive *-naa* (2c) both add an extra degree of casualness or informality. Accordingly, the pronoun used in a given sentence must often be appropriate to the level of formality associated with the verb endings and particles. For instance, if a sentence was composed of *ore*, a very informal and masculine pronoun form, and a formal verb ending like *-masu*, the sentence would come off as awkward to most Japanese speakers (3).

(1)  

   a. formal  *eiga ni ikimasu*  
             movie-to go
             (subject) goes to the movies.

   b. neutral  *eiga ni iku*  
              movie-to go
             (subject) goes to the movies.

   c. informal  *eiga ni iku na*  
                 movie-to go-neg-imperative
                 Don't go to the movies!

(2)  

   a. formal  *sugoi desu*  
             great copula
             It's great.

   b. neutral  *sugoi da*  
              great copula
             It's great.

   c. informal  *sugoi da naa*  
                         great copula-emotive
                         How great it is!.

(3)  

   *Ore wa hon o yomimasu*  
   I-TOP book-ACC read
   I read a book
Generally, it is important to recognize that the pragmatics of Japanese is highly complex and that one pragmatically motivated linguistic choice, i.e. verb ending form, will be affected by and affect other aspects of a sentence and discourse. However, a discussion of all the myriad pragmatic effects running through each example sentence would be impossible and beyond the scope of this thesis; so I'll limit the discussion to only those properties that seem most relevant to understanding the pragmatics of first-person pronouns and their relation to identity.

1.2 Classification

As suggested by Makino and Tsutsui (1986), the classification of this set of words as “pronoun” is not beyond suspicion. According to Payne (1997), pronouns are considered to be “free forms that function alone to fill the position of a noun phrase in a clause” and “normally have all the distributional properties of noun phrases” (43). However, as Makino and Tsutsui show, unlike pronouns in English, these pronouns can be freely modified by adjectives (1a) or relative clauses (1b).

(1) a. Isogashii watashi wa terebi mo mirarenai.
   busy me-TOP TV-even see-can-NEG
   Busy me cannot see even TV.
   I cannot even watch TV because I'm so busy.

   b. Ongaku ga sukina watashi wa ichinichijuu ongaku o kiite iru.
      music-NOM like-MOD I-TOP all day long music-ACC listen is.
      I who like music is listening to music all day long.
      Because I like music, I listen to it all day long.

The fact that they tend to have nominal origins semantically and have many variations also lends to the idea that they may be more akin to normal nouns. In addition, many nominals such as kinship terms, titles, and first names are often used for self-reference as well. Yet, while regular nouns in Japanese are not marked for number, these pronouns can be marked for plurality by appending -domo, -tachi, or -ra, (2) depending on the pronoun used and the level of formality one wishes to express (Makino and Tsutsui 1986).

(2) a. Watakushidomo wa terebi o mimasu.
   I-PL-TOP TV-ACC see
   We watch TV.
b. *Bokura wa terebi o miru.*
   I-PL-TOP TV-ACC see
   We watch TV.

c. *Oretachi wa terebi o miru.*
   I-PL-TOP TV-ACC see
   We watch TV.

For the sake of this thesis, I will continue to refer to this class of words as Japanese first-person pronouns. The reason being that I am concerned with the pragmatics of these words and their pragmatic function is similar to that of regular pronouns in that they serve in part to index the speaker of the utterance in which they are contained.

1.3 Ellipsis

Ellipsis, the omission of words, occurs frequently in Japanese. Ellipsis can be viewed as a strategy to minimize the effort of conveying messages. In Japanese, ellipses is a pragmatic phenomenon. If an element or component can be understood from the context or situation of the utterance, it can usually be omitted, unless it makes the sentence ungrammatical (Makino and Tsutsui 1986). For example,

(1) a. *taro wa sono mise de nani o kaimashita ka*
   taro-TOP that store-LOC what-ACC buy-past question
   What did Taro buy from that store?

   b. *pen o kaimashita*
   pen-ACC buy-past
   (Taro) bought a pen.

taro wa and sono mise de can be omitted from the response as shown in (1b) because they are inferred from the discourse context provided by (1a). Furthermore, kaimashita cannot be omitted because Japanese sentences must end with core predicates to be grammatical.

Because speaker and addressee are typically well understood in the context of a discourse, pronouns are often omitted. Since ellipsis then, is generally the rule rather than the exception, usage of pronouns is usually motivated. One motivation for using first-person pronouns can be to emphasize "me-ness":

"me-ness": 

(2)  a. *watashitachi no kodomo wa inu ga suki da ga watashi wa neko no hou ga suki da.*
    I-PL-GEN children-TOP dog-SUBJ like contrastive I-TOP cat prefer-copula
    Our children like dogs, but I prefer cats.

    b. *watashi wa watashitachi ga yakusoku o mamoru koto ga taisetsu da to omou.*
    I-TOP I-PL-SUBJ promise-ACC protect thing-SUBJ important-copula quotative-think
    I think it important that we should keep a promise.

    c. *konban wa watashi ga ryouri shimasu.*
    tonight-TOP I-SUBJ cuisine-do
    I'll cook for you tonight.

In (2a) *watashi* is used for a contrastive purpose to emphasize the different in taste of pets between the speaker and his/her children. In (2b) *watashi* establishes the speaker as the topic, which emphasizes the sense in which the embedded statement is the speaker's opinion. In (2c) *watashi* makes explicit the speaker as the subject of the compound verb *ryouri shimasu,* to cook, which emphasizes perhaps the sense in which the speaker is doing a favor for the addressee.

The motivations behind pronoun use in contrast to their possible omission is not something that I discuss in this thesis. I limit myself to a discussion of linguistic choice between pronouns exclusively and do not often discuss omission as part of the repertoire of the speaker. I do this in order to maintain a manageable scope for the paper; however, a consideration of this aspect of a speaker's repertoire might prove an additionally fruitful source of data in understanding the relationship between language and identity in Japanese.

2 Ethnographic Studies of Japanese First-Person Pronouns

Several recent ethnographic studies of the Japanese language have presented cases which contradict or bring into question normative-driven accounts of first-person pronouns. In this section I will present some research dealing with underrepresented speaking communities in Japan; in particular, language use among homosexuals and junior high school students. The use of self-referencing terms within these communities often varies and sometimes contradicts perceived norms. This is due perhaps to the emerging and negotiated identities of these speakers. Among the examples presented are uses of first-person pronouns that contradict traditional descriptions; including, shifting between pronouns in
discourse and conscious negotiation between self-referencing choices.

The researchers discussed in this section employ several different methodologies in their data gathering. Lunsing and Maree (2004) pay particular attention to metadiscursive narratives or speaker's own personal accounts of language choice. Their examples emphasize the sense in which language use is strategic and creative and how meaning arises from a negotiation of various contexts. They write: “The term multiple identities invokes the notion of a totality or multiplicity, which the speaker negotiates at every point of the speech act and in all speech situations. A speaker's negotiation of complex contexts is aided by her or his creative use of language. This creativity is founded in individual experiences of language and personal histories in which discourse can uncover speaker's conscious negotiation of coercive language norms” (100). Miyazaki (2004) uses a longitudinal ethnography of a mostly middle-class junior high school located in a city that is an hour's train ride from Tokyo. She conducted her study from 1997 to 2001 and drew her data from observations of students in the classroom as well as interviews with students in individual and group settings. She pays particular attention to the contextual environment of the Japanese classroom, called gakkyuu. Gakkyuu in Japan are groups of up to 40 students which are assigned to a teacher. These gakkyuu become interesting fields where students constantly negotiate their relationships, status, and power. Abe (2004) focuses on the relationship between language use and identity among women at lesbian bars in Shinjuku, Tokyo. She also uses a combination of observation and interview, studying naming and identity construction in discourse.

Each of these studies found several examples of personal pronoun use that directly contradict the traditional mappings between first-person pronouns and categories of age, gender, and formality. In Miyazaki's (2004) study of Japanese junior high school students, contradictions were abundant. She found that, while most gender-divided descriptions of first-person pronouns show that girls are supposed to use watashi and atashi among friends, no girl regularly used watashi and that many girls used boku or even the deprecatory male pronoun ore (260). She also discovered that many girls also
used *uchi*, which is not usually considered by most traditional accounts. *Uchi*, a word that originally meant “home” or “inside” in Japanese, seems to be a newly created first-person pronoun in the Tokyo area. One boy who belonged to an otherwise all-girl group, often used *atashi*. Other contradictory examples were one boy that used *washi*, a somewhat archaic pronoun considered to be for old men, as well as one boy who created his own pronoun, *ore-sama*, which translates roughly as “Mr. I” or “the honorable I.” There were other girls at the schools that creatively used pronouns such as *atai, oira,* their full names, and their first names plus the informal suffix *-chan*. While these first-person pronoun uses often diverged from the gendered ideology presented in most traditional descriptions, they cannot be merely attributed to mere deviations since only 2 students out of 34 consistently followed the perceived norms—1 boy out of 17 using *boku* and 1 girl out of 17 using *atashi* exclusively. Abe (2004) observed the use of several first-person pronouns at lesbian bars: *watashi, atashi, ore, washi* and *jibun*, with the same speaker using several different pronouns depending on the context. Younger employees in their early twenties at these bars exclusively listed *jibun* 'oneself' as their preferred first-person pronoun. *Jibun* is also used in Japanese as a reflexive pronoun; it's use as a first-person pronoun is said to be somewhat old-fashioned and is associated with men in sports or militaristic groups, which has traditionally given it a “masculine” interpretation. Lunsing and Maree (2004) found one exceptional woman who refers to herself by using only her first name *Marina* and who does not regularly use first-person pronouns.

These examples show uses of first-person pronouns that contradict the expectations presented in Table 1. They show that Japanese first-person pronouns cannot be easily classified in terms of age, gender, and formality. In order to give an adequate description of the pragmatics of Japanese first-person pronouns it will perhaps be more fruitful to disregard classification charts altogether and focus more critically on some of the processes that may be governing their use. Before delving into more abstract considerations of these issues I'll present some complex examples from these ethnographic studies highlighting the researcher's and speaker's interpretations of their first-person pronoun use;
including the conscious negotiations that go on between pronoun choices, as well as pronoun shifting in discourse.

Lunsing and Maree (2004) argue that the language use of homosexuals is highly strategic. In Japanese, *okama* has been used to refer to transvestites and also as a degrading term for Japanese gay men. Togo once introduced himself as *watashi wa okama*. Most Japanese gay organizations however prefer to say *boku wa gei*. The differences between these two statements, which essentially both mean, “I'm gay,” in English, reflect decisions made by these speakers which take in to account how they perceive themselves and how they wish to be perceived by others. As mentioned earlier, *watashi*, can be seen as being more often associated with female use and *okama* traditionally has been used as a pejorative.

When asked by Abe (2004) why she used *jibun*, one young employee said that she did not want to sound too feminine by using *watashi* or *atashi*, adding that she did not use other “masculine” forms although her boss regularly used *washi* which is normally associated with old men. However, when speaking on the phone to a regular customer, whom she knew very well, she used *ore*, which is frequently viewed as a “masculine” form. The use of *ore* in this example as opposed to her previous use of *jibun* exhibits negotiation of multiple identity positions in relation to different contexts. For her, *jibun* is used in more formal settings of interaction, such as an interaction she had with relatively new customer who is also a researcher, but *ore* is her preferred choice in more intimate and emotional contexts. Lesbians consider *jibun* the least gendered if one wants to be, literally, simply oneself (Maree 1997). One of the customers at the bar said that she uses *boku* when she wants to make a false show of power, but *atashi* in more formal situations such as with the interviewer. She added that she uses *boku* in the workplace with her male boss and claims that this helps her situate herself at the boss's level. She expressed the belief that the “feminine” first-person pronoun, *atashi*, did not make her strong. Switching between a more “masculine” form to a more “feminine” form shows that gender identities are not fixed in discourse but are negotiated and flexible.
In a series of interviews with some of the boys in one Japanese classroom, Miyazaki (2004) explored power and gender relationships governing an individual's personal pronoun use. Miyazaki gives an example of one boy, Taku, who shifts pronouns depending on the contexts of his speech; particularly, in relation to his audience and the power relationship between them. Another group of boys in his classroom are viewed as the tsuyoi "strong" group: these boys view taku as weak, "the least likely to join the strong group." They all use ore, which they, and others in the classroom, associate with strength, masculinity, and power. One of the boys in the group said he once used boku in elementary school when he was weak, but that after befriending the leader of the group he started to use ore and view himself as strong. Another boy, considered the weakest of the group of strong boys, once used oira, which in urban areas has a funny, hillbilly connotation to it; he tried to spread around to use of oira, but was unsuccessful. Taku claims that in front of one of the stronger boys he would use boku, but that in front of one of his friends, who he considers his equal, he would use ore. He feels that ore is easier, or natural for him to say, but that in front of the stronger boys he "chickens out" and uses boku, fearing that he would sound too arrogant using ore and might subject himself to some bullying. In an interview with one of his friends Hide, Taku switches to more masculine forms and uses ore freely when consulting with his friend. His friend Hide did not regulate his speech, using ore freely in front of those boys and be bullied for it as a result. Taku wanted to use ore in order to express elements of his masculine identity but feared bullying from the students. His relationship with Hide allowed him to use ore and explore that identity without any negative repercussions. As Miyazaki states, "Taku and Hide's negotiation of their speech and identity provides us with an example of the complex interplay between individual's language, identity, and social world".

These examples strongly suggest the limitations of the traditional accounts of first person pronouns. While Japanese speakers are often aware of the social norms regarding personal pronoun use, they do not always, consciously or unconsciously, conform to them. These studies express the conclusion that categorizations such as gender, age, and formality, while they might be part of the story governing the
pragmatics of pronoun use, they do not give us an end-all description of the pragmatics of these pronouns. While some researchers using the traditional accounts of pronouns might be tempted to talk about how things like gender, formality, and age being "encoded" in the Japanese language; as shown by these case studies, this is likely not the case. Age, gender, and formality are reflected in the language because they are necessarily part of the social world of these speakers. These studies showed as well that speaker's language are highly influenced by the contexts of their social worlds. In the case of homosexuals that social world is marked by individuals coming to terms with their own complicated sexualities and sense of gender. Their use of pronouns reflected a desire to express and acknowledge their perceived difference between mainstream hetero-normative ideologies and their own emerging sense of identity and gender. The children in Miyazaki's study had to deal with their own emerging identities and their use of particular pronouns reflected their desire to express certain aspects of their personality; however, their identities were largely a product of their situational contexts as well as the emerging cultures of their classrooms.

These studies bring up several interesting questions about the nature of language variation. Language variation in these studies seem to stem from the fact that these speakers can be viewed as parts of several varying linguistic communities. A more general linguistic community that is represented and governed by normative linguistic behaviors and rules, as well as more local linguistic communities reflected by their linguistic subcultures. In a loose sense of subculture, these individuals can be seen as partaking in several linguistic subcultures on a daily basis, each one with its own set of "norms" governing "appropriate" use. In the case of Taku, those "norms" weren't established by society at large, but by the menacing boys of the tsuyoi group that threatened to bully Taku for using a pronominal form or mode of speech which came off as arrogant to them. So there is a sense in which linguistic speakers are not entirely free agents, but subject to several "norms" or "ideologies" governing their language use. Being a part of several linguistics communities and thus being subject to varying language norms, these speakers are forced to negotiate their own sense of identity and as a result their
There are various "degrees" of linguistic community, perhaps the most local level being the level of the individual speaker. At the individual level a speaker can partake in a degree of language creation, if he finds that the various linguistic communities that he is a part of do not give him a proper mode of expression, at least one that he feels comfortable with. (As is in the case of several examples: the woman who doesn't use personal pronouns altogether because she cannot come to terms, or find herself comfortable with any of the connotations associated with them.)

I guess the idea here is that even the individual speaker carries with them their own loose set of norms, or sense of appropriateness. If a linguistic community that he becomes a part of does not offer him what she feels to be an appropriate form of expression, she may choose not to accommodate the speech of others in the community, instead creating her own form of expression.

These examples pose to me several questions about the pragmatics of the pronouns. Of the recent words that have emerged as having a pronominal self-referencing use, what if anything is similar about them? Can the extension of a nominal into a self-referencing term be seen as being, if only loosely, regulated by some pragmatic process? In the next section I will look at several abstract concepts that have been used to discuss other aspects of Japanese language pragmatics; namely, the notions of *in* groups and *out* groups, social status, and *empathy*. In addition I believe that several of these notions might be elucidated by a consideration of work in the conceptual metaphor framework. I think that concepts such as linguistic choice, variation, negotiation, invention and emergence can all be used fruitfully in a discussion of the pragmatics of these pronouns and that conversely, these pronouns present an interesting study for examining several aspects of these linguistic processes.

### 3 Reinterpretation of Japanese First-Person Pronouns

#### 3.1 *Uchi* and *Soto*

Many authors have discussed *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside) as pervasive cultural metaphors that are extremely relevant for understanding Japanese society and its customs (see Makino 2002, Maynard...
Japanese are generally expected to be highly aware of their sense of place in relation to both social and situational context. This awareness is known to largely affect linguistic practice. Japanese speakers choose between various verb endings (formal and plain forms), words, and sentence-final particles in order to acknowledge their sense of place in relation to those they refer to or address. In negotiating their decisions, Japanese are said to establish different conceptual spaces or “groups”—uchi (in-group) and soto (out-group). As Makino (2002) writes, “The fundamental semantic property of uchi is one of involvement” (29). Thus, soto would be seen as representing detachment, or distance. One might view prototypical “in-groups” as being one’s family or other close intimates. However, these mental spaces can be far more dynamic and can change depending on the context in which the person is situated. For example, within a company setting, a speaker would defer to his boss by using honorifics, such as a title like kachou (boss), in order to acknowledge the boss’s higher status within the company. Outside of the company, when speaking to a stranger, the boss would be viewed as an insider, part of the in-group of the speaker that consists of those who work in the company and would more likely be referred to by simply a last name.

3.11 Social Status

3.2 Giving and Receiving Verbs

In Japanese, giving and receiving verbs are governed by a complicated system of pragmatic constraints involving the relational concepts discussed above. This section shows how those concepts can explain the proper usage of these verbs.

Japanese has several verbs that correspond to the English verbs give and receive:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>give</th>
<th>receive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sashiageru</td>
<td>itadaku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ageru</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yaru</td>
<td>morau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kudasaru</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kureru</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
These words are not strictly interchangeable in discourse and therefore their usage is in need of clarification. Jorden (1988) uses the notions of *uchi* (in-group) and *soto* (out-group) in order to give more specific classes of giving and receiving as perceived in Japanese discourse. As discussed above, the in-group of a Japanese speaker is based on relationships between the individuals in question and the speaker. The speaker’s in-group will always consist of at least the speaker. The concept of in-group is very relative and an individual’s in-group status may change in different contexts. There are various contexts in which an in-group may be established: school, work, family, intimacy, etc. Outside of the family setting, a speaker may establish his in-group as including himself and his family and his out-group as everyone else. Within the family setting, however, he may define a more specific in-group, perhaps his immediate family, to be contrasted to an out-group, say his extended family.

Using Jorden’s distinction, Tsujimura (1996) gives us three scenarios for determining whether an event is considered to be classified as giving or receiving:

\[
\begin{align*}
give_1 & \quad i \rightarrow o \\
sashiageru & \quad kudasaru \\
ageru & \quad kureru \\
yaru & \quad morau \\
give_2 & \quad o \rightarrow i \\
\end{align*}
\]

The \( x \rightarrow y \) notation is supposed to represent the flow of transaction; “transaction” being the most objective way in which we can talk about events of giving and receiving. For example, for \( give_2 \), we can read \( o \rightarrow i \) as saying “the flow of transaction goes from out-group to in-group and is an event of giving, or simply, out-group gives to in-group”. As shown in the boxes above, the Japanese language distinguishes between two cases in which an event of transaction is viewed as giving. In the first case, which I’ve written as \( give_1 \), the in-group acts as the giver and an out-group member acts as the receiver. In the second case, \( give_2 \), an out-group member acts as the giver and an in-group member acts as the receiver. In the third case, the event of transaction is viewed as an event of receiving. In this case, the
acting receiver is always an in-group person while the giver is an out-group person. There are no verbs for the fourth logical case where the out-group is receiving and the in-group is giving and the transaction is being viewed as an event of receiving. As the boxes illustrate, these scenarios take us from two defined subsets of giving and receiving verbs to three, but still leave room for further clarification of the usage of these verbs.

Another consideration to make is the difference in social status between the two groups. Here I use inequality notation to represent the social status relation between the in-group and the out-group. For example, \( o > i \), would be read as “the social status of the out-group is greater than the social status of the in-group.” Again, we can further distinguish cases for these verbs. This time the verbs can be classified in terms of the social status relation between giver and receiver in addition to whether the event is viewed as giving or receiving and whether the in-group or the out-group is acting as the giver or receiver. We go then from three subsets of giving and receiving verbs to the total seven cases of giving and receiving that are recognized in the Japanese language.

As shown above, \textit{sashiageru} is used when the event is viewed as a giving from an in-group person to an out-group person and in the case that the out-group person is perceived as having a higher social status than the in-group person:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
give_i \quad i \rightarrow o \\
o > i \\
sashiageru
\end{array}
\]

\text{watashi-ga sensei-ni hon-o sashiageta.}
“I gave a book to my teacher.”

\text{sister \in (in-group) \& teacher \in (out-group)}
\text{Imooto-ga sensei-ni hana-o sashiageta.}
“My younger sister gave flowers to the teacher.”
Ageru is used when the event is viewed as a giving from an in-group person to an out-group person and in the case that the out-group person is perceived as having a social status equal to that of the in-group person:

\[
\text{Watashi-ga tomodachi-ni eiga-no ken-o ageta.}
\]
I-NOM friend-DAT movie-GEN ticket-ACC gave
“I gave my friend a movie ticket.”

\[\text{mother} \in (\text{in-group}) \& \text{Yamada} \in (\text{out-group})\]
\[
\text{Haha-ga tomodachi-no Yamada-kun-ni sushi-o ageta.}
\]
mother-NOM friend-GEN Yamada-DAT sushi-ACC gave
“My mother gave sushi to my friend Yamada.”

Yaru is used only in the case that the social status of the in-group person is viewed as being higher to the social status of the out-group person and when the event is being viewed as an event of giving where the in-group person is the acting giver. Using ageru in this situation, an appropriate alternative, could be seen as more polite in that it places less attention to the perceived lower status of the out-group person:

\[\text{speaker} \in (\text{in-group}) \& \text{sister} \in (\text{out-group})\]
\[
\text{Watashi-ga Imooto-ni furui tokei-o yatta/ageta.}
\]
I-NOM younger sister-DAT old watch-ACC gave
“I gave my younger sister an old watch.”

\[
\text{Otooto-ga hana-ni mizu-o yatta.}
\]
Younger brother-NOM flower-DAT water-ACC gave
“My younger brother watered the flowers.”
Kudasaru is used again when the event is viewed as an event of giving, but when the in-group is acting as the receiver, while the out-group is giving. The out-group is also perceived as having a higher social status in relation to the in-group:

\[
\text{speaker} \in (\text{in-group}) \land \text{teacher} \in (\text{out-group}) \\
\text{Sensei-ga watashi-ni chizu-o kudasatta.} \\
\text{Teacher-NOM I-DAT map-ACC gave} \\
\text{"My teacher gave me a map."}
\]

\[
\text{son} \in (\text{in-group}) \land \text{teacher} \in (\text{out-group}) \\
\text{Sensei-ga musuko-ni hon-o kudasatta.} \\
\text{Teacher-NOM musuko-DAT book-ACC gave} \\
\text{"The teacher gave my son a book."}
\]

Kureru is used when the event is viewed as one of giving and the out-group is giving to the in-group, but the social status of the out-group is seen as less than or equal to that of the in-group:

\[
\text{Tomodachi-ga watashi-ni jishyo-o kureta.} \\
\text{Friend-NOM I-DAT dictionary-ACC gave} \\
\text{"My friend gave me a dictionary."}
\]

\[
\text{sister} \in (\text{in-group}) \land \text{Tanaka} \in (\text{out-group}) \\
\text{Tanaka-san-ga imooto-ni okashi-o kureta.} \\
\text{Mr. Tanaka-NOM younger sister-DAT sweets-ACC gave} \\
\text{"Mr. Tanaka gave my younger sister sweets."}
\]

The last two cases are when the event is viewed as one of receiving. Japanese only uses verbs of
receiving when the in-group acts as the receiver in the event of transaction. *Itadaku* is used when the social status of the out-group is greater than the social status of the in-group:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{speaker} \in (\text{in-group}) & \land \text{teacher} \in (\text{out-group}) \\
\text{Watashi-wa sensei-ni/kara eigo-no shinbun-o itadaita.} & \quad \text{I-TOP teacher-DAT/FROM English-GEN newspaper-ACC received} \\
\text{"I received an English newspaper from my teacher."} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{sister} \in (\text{in-group}) & \land \text{teacher} \in (\text{out-group}) \\
\text{Imooto-ga sensei-ni/kara nihon-no chizu-o itadaita.} & \quad \text{Younger sister-NOM teacher-DAT/FROM Japan-GEN map-ACC received} \\
\text{"My younger sister received a map of Japan from the teacher."} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{receive} & \quad o \rightarrow i \\
\text{receive} & \quad o \leq i \\
\text{Morau} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

*Morau* is used when the social status of the out-group is less than or equal to the social status of the in-group and the event is again viewed as one of receiving:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Watashi-wa tomodachi-ni/kara zass1-o moratta.} & \quad \text{I-TOP friend-DAT/FROM magazine-ACC received} \\
\text{"I received a magazine from my friend."} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Watashi-wa imooto-ni/kara hana-o moratta.} & \quad \text{I-TOP younger sister-DAT/FROM flower-ACC received} \\
\text{"I received flowers from my younger sister."} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

How do we go from the set of all the giving and receiving verbs to the set of giving verbs and the set of receiving verbs? In other words, how is an event determined to be one of giving or one of receiving? Perhaps an empathy analysis or a very complex *uchi/soto* distinction could explain this. This would be the last piece for giving a full account of giving/receiving verbs.

### 3.3 Empathy

Another possible consideration of pragmatic constraints on Japanese first-person pronouns comes from Susumu Kuno’s (1987) work on what he calls the “Empathy Perspective.” Kuno believes that
empathy, the perspective from which a speaker stands in relation to an event, can provide a weak constraint on syntactic constructions and can give a clarification of the process of linguistic choice among various modes of expression. Kuno notices that in giving a description of an event, a speaker can reflect his attitude towards the participants of the event in various, often subtly different ways. He gives the example of an event where John and Bill, two brothers, are fighting and John hits Bill (Kuno 1987, 203). This event can be described, in English, in various ways:

- Then John hit Bill.
- Then John hit his brother.
- Then Bill’s brother hit him.

These sentences are logically identical, but differ from each other in respect to where the speaker has placed himself in relation to the participants of the event. Kuno assumes five possible perspectives from which the speaker can choose to view the event. Three of these involve a partial identification of the speaker and the last two a full identification. For example in the case of the event described, the speaker can exhibit partial identification with either John or Bill or neither John nor Bill:

**Partial identification with John**
- “John hit Bill.”
- “John hit his brother.”

**Partial identification with Bill**
- “John hit Bill.”
- “Bill’s brother hit him.”
- “Bill was hit by John.”
- “Bill was hit by his brother.”

**Partial identification with neither**
- “John hit Bill.”

Kuno claims that the passification of sentences like “Bill was hit by John” and “Bill was hit by his brother” indicate that the speaker has placed himself closer in relation to the new subject than the old
one; in this case, the speaker would be seen as closer to Bill than to John. Gerund phrases like “John’s brother” would indicate a closer relationship between the speaker and the possessive of the noun phrase; so in a sentence like “John hit his brother,” the speaker would seen as identifying more with John than Bill, the referent of “his brother.” A sentence like “John hit Bill” on the other hand, gives us no clues as to the perspective taken by the speaker, and in that sense can be seen as ambiguous in respect to empathy.

Another possibility for the speaker is to totally identify with one of the participants in the event:

**Total identification with John**

“I hit Bill.”

“I hit my brother.”

**Total identification with Bill**

“John hit me.”

“My brother hit me.”

These last two really do not occur often in conversation. They are however used often in narratives and other writing. They can also occur in conversation possibly through the use of quotations and other meta-discursive devices. Another possibility not mentioned by Kuno is total identification with both John and Bill, which would be sort of like an omniscient narrative in fiction.

One must be carefully in discussing empathy to remember that empathy is being used in a technical sense for the purpose of linguistic analysis. Kuno gives some technical definitions of empathy and degrees of empathy to clarify his use of the term:

**Empathy:** the speaker’s identification, which may vary in degree, with a person/thing that participates in the event or state that he describes in a sentence.

**Degree of Empathy:** The degree of the speaker’s empathy with x, E(x), ranges from 0 to 1, with E(x) = 1 signifying his total identification with x, and E(x) = 0 signifying a total lack of identification.
Kuno uses the notion of empathy hierarchies and degrees of empathy to formalize the notion of empathy and its role in syntactic constructions. The degree to which a speaker empathizes with an individual in an event can be formulated through the expression of inequalities between degrees of empathy. The notion of empathy hierarchy presents the relation between the degrees of empathy of the speaker towards several participants in a given event. For instance an event between two participants x and y, where the speaker more closely empathizes with x can be given formally as \( E(x) > E(y) \). This notion of empathy hierarchy can be used in regards to particular syntactic constructions to show how the marginality of certain constructions can be seen as a contradiction between conflicting claims of empathy. Here are two examples of empathy hierarchies as given by Kuno:

**Descriptor Empathy Hierarchy:**
Given descriptor \( x \) (e.g., *John*) and another descriptor \( f(x) \) that is dependent on \( x \) (e.g., *John’s brother*), the speaker’s empathy with \( x \) is greater than with \( f(x) \).

\[
E(x) > E(f(x))
\]

E.g. \( E(John) > E(John’s \ brother) \)

**Surface Structure Empathy Hierarchy:**
It is easier for the speaker to empathize with the referent of the subject than the referent of other NPs in the sentence.

\[
E(\text{subject}) > E(\text{other NPs})
\]

Given these two empathy hierarchies, we can apply them to the previously given sentences to elucidate the speaker’s choice among various expressive forms and for the marginality of expressions like:

?? Then John’s brother was hit by him.

?? Then his brother was hit by John.

The marginality of these two sentences can be explained as a contradiction of claims of empathy, i.e. contradiction between the descriptor empathy hierarchy and surface structure empathy hierarchy.

(6.1) ??Then John’s brother was hit by him.

**Descriptor Empathy Hierarchy:**
E(John) > E(John’s brother)

*Surface Structure Empathy Hierarchy:*
E(referent of subject = John’s brother) > E (referent of other NP = John)

*E(John) > E(John’s brother) > E(John)*

(6.2) ??Then his brother was hit by John.

*Descriptor Empathy Hierarchy:*
E(John) > E(Bill)

*Surface Structure Empathy Hierarchy:*
E(referent of subject = Bill) > E(referent of other NP = John)

*E(John) > E(Bill) > E(John)*

3.4

References


