

Bodily Behavior as Constructional Meaning: The Case of Benefactive Construction in Japanese Family Interaction

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Speakers in daily conversation use their bodies while they talk. In the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, the focus of multimodal analysis tend to be placed on more or less iconic hand gestures that depict physical movements produced along with spatial expressions. However, as Goodwin (2018) nicely demonstrated with various cases, participants in interaction deploy a wider range of resources and achieve more than semantic representations. This study investigates the Japanese benefactive *-te ageru* construction with special focus on the participants' bodily behaviors, aiming to reveal what roles bodily behaviors play in the production and understanding of the construction.

The data for this study come from interaction among family members videotaped in the participants' homes. 14 families participated and the total length of recording is about 500 hours. In child-caregiver interaction, the benefactive *-te ageru* construction is mostly used by the caregivers to suggest the older child to change the participation framework by including the younger child in the ongoing activity, as the construction emphasizes that the action is done for the sake of the beneficiary, which in turn highlights the generosity of the agent. In this presentation, I focus on two cases to demonstrate that linguistic instructions using the construction are embedded in the contexts that consist of both linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors and the environment.

Example (1) shows that the physical positions of the participants can be the pre-condition for the use of the construction; the older child stays away from other participants, which makes it hard for them to play together. Mother's use of the construction, especially in line 05 ("Let's play together (for the younger child)"), is triggered by the older child's non-friendly attitude and the physical distance between them. In Example (2), after the mother produces the *-te ageru* construction "Please let your brother borrow the toy he likes", she hands a toy box to the older child. The use of the tool (i.e., toy box) provides the condition for the achievement of instructed action, as it allows the older child to pick a toy from the box in front of her and use it to attract the attention of the younger child.

While it has been argued that speaker's knowledge about a construction should be represented in the interactional frame as well as the semantic frame (Matsumoto 2010), it is still not clear how the representations in interactional frame are determined. This study suggests that multimodal analysis is crucial for the understanding of the ongoing interaction and thus contributes to the representation in interactional frames.

Example (1)

- 01 ((Older sister (K1) wants to start something with her mother (M1). K1 is sitting on a chair at the dining table, while M1 and a baby (B1) are sitting on the floor.))
02 M1: *Kana mo asoberu yatsu ni shite age*. "Do something Kana (=B1) can also play (for her)."
03 ((K1 stays on the chair and tells B1 to bring a book.))
04 M1: *sonnan kawaiiso yan ka*. "That way (we should) feel sorry, don't we."
05 *ishoni asonde ageyoo na*. "Let's play together (for her (=B1))."

Example (2)

- 01 ((Older sister (K2) pushes back her little brother (B2) when he reaches a toy that was between K2 and B2.))
02 M2: *ja Shiho-chan Tasuke no suki na omocha kashite agete?*
"Then, Shiho (=K2), please let Tasuke (=B2) borrow the toy he likes (for him)."
03 ((The mother (M2) picks up a toy box and hands it to the father, and the father hands the toybox to K2. K2 takes a toy-flyer and makes a big noise with it.))

References

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Matsumoto, Yoshiko. 2010. Interactional frames and grammatical descriptions: The case of Japanese noun-modifying constructions. *Constructions and Frames* 2(2): 135-157.