The Japanese -Te Yaru Benefactive Construction Revisited
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Shibatani brings examples like those in (1) within the scope of his papers (1994, 1996), and attempts a unified analysis of the Japanese benefactive auxiliary verb -te yaru ‘give’.

1. a. Taroo-ga Hanako-ni hon-o katte yatta. ‘Taroo bought a book for Hanako’
   b. Taroo-ga (*Hanako-ni) sin de yatta. ‘Taroo died (for Hanako)’

He assumes that the auxiliary verb inherits the thematic structure from the base verb. He schematically represents the auxiliary verb’s thematic structure as follows:

\[
\text{auxiliary verb -te yaru: <Agent, Goal, Theme EVENT>}
\]

To account for the data concerned, he makes three further assumptions, as listed below:

i. The Goal role of the auxiliary verb can be instantiated by either the recipient of a transferred object or the person who enjoys the benefit of the event described by the main verb.

ii. The Goal role, if syntactically realized, is marked with the dative marker ni.

iii. A Theme role cannot be associated with more than a Goal role.

These three assumptions make it possible to identify a covertly expressed beneficiary, allow the auxiliary verb to provide a transitive verb with a Goal NP, and prevent a Goal NP from overtly occurring with an intransitive verb in the benefactive construction, as in (1b)

Shibatani has a keen insight into some linguistic facts about the Japanese benefactive construction, to be sure, but there is room for improvement. This paper aims to show that the Japanese benefactive construction can be adequately explained by fewer assumptions.

My central claim is that the auxiliary verb –te yaru contributes a Beneficiary role rather than a Goal role, and has no power to contribute a Goal NP. A piece of supporting evidence is that some verbs (such as kau ‘buy’, which Shibatani (1994: 48) says “does not license the goal nominal”) can take a Goal NP without the help of the auxiliary verb. This means that the auxiliary verb does not have to augment the valence of a verb. A second piece of evidence is given in (3):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. sono ko-ni booru-o nageta} & \quad \text{‘(I) threw a ball to the boy’} \\
\text{b. sono ko-ni booru-o nagete yatta} & \quad \text{‘(I) threw a ball to the boy’}
\end{align*}
\]

Although both sentences can refer to the event of playing catch, sentence (3b) strongly implies that the speaker threw the ball in such a way that the boy could catch it easily. Besides, only (3b) can be uttered felicitously in a context like this: the speaker accidentally found a ball rolling toward himself, picked it up and threw it to the boy. This suggests that the ni-marked NP is not just the Goal reached by the ball. I propose that the Beneficiary role serves as if it were a higher-order role. In this case the boy plays a dual role, that is, the Goal and the Beneficiary. On the other hand, the boy in (3a) plays a single role of the Goal. This approach can eliminate the unnecessary assumptions listed above, and explain a wider range of data (such as the case of a ‘comitative’ NP understood as a beneficiary).