

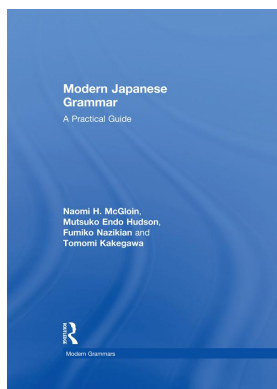
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20

The causative construction

The causative construction expresses the idea that one person causes someone else to do something by physically forcing, applying psychological pressure, ordering, plotting, giving permission, or by not intervening.

20.1

Causative forms

The following explains how to produce the plain nonpast affirmative causative form from the dictionary form of the verb.

Irregular verbs

<i>Dict. form</i>		<i>Causative form</i>
suru 'to do'	→	saseru
kuru 'to come'	→	kosaseru

U-verbs

Delete the final **-u** and add **-aseru**; if a vowel precedes the final **-u**, add **-waseru**.

<i>Dict. form</i>		<i>Causative form</i>
yomu 'to read'	→	yom<u>aseru</u>
kaku 'to write'	→	kak<u>aseru</u>
uta 'to sing'	→	utaw<u>aseru</u>

Ru-verbs

Delete the final **-ru** and add **-saseru**.

<i>Dict. form</i>		<i>Causative form</i>
taberu 'to eat'	→	tabe<u>saseru</u>
kakeru 'to hang'	→	kake<u>saseru</u>

NOTE

Once any verb is in the causative form, it conjugates like a **ru**-verb.

▶ 12.1

A shortened version of the causative form, in which the final **-eru** is replaced by **-u**, is also used.

<i>Causative form</i>		<i>Shortened causative form</i>	
saseru	→	sasu	'to make X do'
kosaseru	→	kosasu	'to make X come'
yomaseru	→	yomasu	'to make X read'
tabesaseru	→	tabesasu	'to make X eat'

The shortened causative conjugates like **u**-verbs (12.1).

Most stative verbs, e.g. **aru** ‘for inanimate things to exist,’ **iru** ‘need,’ **niau** ‘look good, suit’ and potential verbs, are not used in the causative form.

20.2 Regular (productive) causative

Structure: causer-**ga/wa** causee-**o/ni** intransitive V-(s)**aseru**

Structure: causer-**ga/wa** causee-**ni** transitive V-(s)**aseru**

The causer is the person who makes the causee perform the action denoted by the verb. The causee is the one who performs the action denoted by the verb. When the verb is intransitive, the causee may be marked by the particles **o** or **ni**. When the verb is transitive, the causee must be marked by **ni**. The regular causative sentences with an **o**-marked causee are called **o**-causative and those with a **ni**-marked causee are called **ni**-causative.

親が子供に/を宿題をさせた。

Oya ga kodomo ni/o shukudai o saseta.

The parent made the child do homework.

私は妹に/を昼ご飯を作らせた。

Watashi wa imooto ni/o hirugohan o tsukuraseta.

I made my sister make lunch.

妻は夫に/を買い物に行かせた。

Tsuma wa otto ni/o kaimono ni ikaseta.

The wife let/made her husband go shopping.

When both **o** and **ni** are possible markers for the causee, the **o**-causative sentence tends to express more coercive meaning than the **ni**-causative sentence. In the above example, **otto o ikaseta** might mean that the husband did not want to go shopping but the wife made him go. With **ni**, on the other hand, it might mean that the husband was quite willing to go shopping, and the wife let him go.

20.3 Adversative causative

Structure: causer-**wa/ga** causee-**o** intransitive V-(s)**aseru**.

In adversative causative sentences, the causee is marked with **o**, just like **o**-causatives. However, they are not interpreted as having a coercive meaning. The subject (i.e. causer) in the adversative causative is not directly involved in causing the event. The adversative causative sentence expresses the idea that the subject of the sentence feels somehow responsible for an action carried out by the causee or for an event which affects the causee. The action/event denoted by the verb is usually something that has an adverse effect on the subject.

私は仲間を死なせてしまったことを後悔している。

Watashi wa nakama o shinasete shimatta koto o kookai shite iru.

I regret that I let my friend die.

In this sentence, ‘**nakama**’ died for some reason, and ‘**watashi**’ thinks that there might have been something she/he could have done to prevent the death. Therefore, even though ‘**watashi**’ did not kill ‘**nakama**,’ ‘**watashi**’ feels like she/he caused the death. The sentence structure of the adversative causative is the same as the **o**-causative. It is therefore possible to interpret the example given here as though it is **o**-causative, i.e. ‘**watashi**’ made his/her friend die, for example, by not giving obviously needed help.

20.4

Causatives + benefactives

When causatives combine with benefactives, they express the meaning of ‘to permit/let’ and lose the coercive meaning. It is used when the causer lets the causee do what the causee wants to do. By using the benefactives in combination with the causatives, the speaker acknowledges that there is some benefit given or received in the action/event denoted by the main verb.

▶ 12.7; 19.2.8; 43

20.4.1

Causative *te* + *ageru/sashiageru*: ‘to let X do ...’

Structure: causer-*wa/ga* causee-*ni* V-causative *te*-form + *ageru*

The causer knows or assumes the causee’s intention or desire to do the action denoted by the main verb and allows the action to take place.

私は友達にコンピューターを使わせてあげた。

Watashi wa tomodachi ni konpyuutaa o tsukawasete ageta.

I let my friend use the computer.

母親は子供を遊びに行かせてあげた。

Hahaoya wa kodomo o asobi ni ikasete ageta.

The mother let her child go to play.

When the causee is the causer’s social superior or someone worthy of respect, *sashiageru* may be used instead of *ageru*.

私たちはお客様にお土産を持たせてさしあげた。

O-kyaku-sama ni o-miyage o motasete sashiageta.

We had our guests take a souvenir gift.

In the above example, the speaker is reporting to someone that she/he gave a souvenir gift to his/her guests. Importantly, the speaker is not talking to the guests themselves. Causative-*te sashiageru* is not appropriate when the speaker is talking to his/her superior about actions that benefit the superior. For example, if you are talking to your guest about letting him/her take a souvenir, the exalting form should be used.

▶ 12.7; 19.2.8; 29.2

お客様、お土産をお持ちになってください。

O-kyaku-sama, o-miyage o o-mochi ni natte kudasai.

Please take the souvenir with you.

not *お客様、お土産を持たせてさし上げます。

***O-kyaku-sama, o-miyage o motasete sashiagemasu.**

We will have you take the souvenir with you (as a favor).

20.4.2

Causative *te* + *kureru/kudasaru*: ‘someone lets me do ...’

Structure: causer-*wa/ga* causee-*ni* V-(causative) *te*-form + *kureru/kudasaru*

To combine *kureru/kudasaru* with the causative-*te* form, the causer must be someone other than the speaker and the causee must be the speaker or someone close to the speaker (e.g. family members).

A causative + *kureru/kudasaru* sentence expresses the speaker’s gratitude towards the causer who allowed the causee to do the action denoted by the main verb. When the causer is the causee’s social superior or someone worthy of respect, *kudasaru* is used instead of *kureru*.

▶ 12.7; 19.2.8

同僚が（私に）手料理を食べさせてくれた。

Dooryoo ga (watashi ni) teryoori o tabesasete kureta.

My colleague let me eat his/her homemade dish.

先生が妹にノートを書させてくださった。

Sensee ga imooto ni nooto o utsusasete kudasatta.

The teacher let my younger sister copy his/her notebook.

20.4.3 Causative *te* + *morau/itadaku*: 'to be permitted to do ...'

Structure: causee-*wa/ga* causer-*ni* V(causative) *te*-form + **morau/itadaku**

This structure is different from the other causative structures in that the subject is the causee rather than the causer. It expresses that the causee receives the favor of the causer's letting him/her do the action denoted by the main verb. It implies that the causee asked for and was granted permission.

（私は）両親に留学させてもらった。

(Watashi wa) ryooshin ni ryuugaku sasete moratta.

I had my parents let me study abroad.

The above example expresses that **watashi** 'I' received from the parents the favor of being allowed to study abroad. The causer (**ryooshin** 'parents') is marked by the particle **ni** and the causee (**watashi** 'I') is marked by **wa**.

When the causer is the causee's social superior or someone worthy of respect, **itadaku** is used instead of **morau**.

▶ 12.7; 19.2.8

（私は）上司に極秘書類を読ませていただいた。

(Watashi wa) jooshi ni gokuhi-shorui o yomasete itadaita.

My boss let me read the top-secret document.

When **itadaku** is used with the causative **te**-form, the causee/subject is usually the speaker or the speaker's in-group member.

20.5 Other ways to express causative meaning

20.5.1 Lexical causative

Transitive verbs that have morphologically related intransitive counterparts are called lexical causatives. They contrast with their intransitive counterparts by expressing causation. Some examples of transitive–intransitive pairs are given below.

▶ 12.2

Transitive (lexical causative)

Intransitive

kesu 'to turn off (something)'

kieru 'to go off/out'

akeru 'to open (something)'

aku '(for something) to open'

okosu 'to wake up (someone)'

okiru '(for someone) to wake up'

Transitive verbs express that someone causes something to happen; e.g. 'to turn off the light' means that someone causes the light to turn off. Intransitive verbs express that something happens (the existence of a causer is of no concern); e.g. 'The light turned/went off.'

Intransitive verbs that have lexical causative counterparts can have the regular (productive) causative form as well. In such cases, the lexical causative and the regular causative sentences express slightly different meanings.

Intransitive	子供たちがお風呂に入った。 Kodomo-tachi ga o-furo ni haitta. The kids took a bath.
Lexical causative	私は子供たちをお風呂にいった。 Watashi wa kodomo-tachi o o-furo ni ireta. I bathed the kids.
Regular causative	私は子供たちをお風呂に入らせた。 Watashi wa kodomo-tachi o o-furo ni hairaseta. I made the kids take a bath.

In the lexical causative example, ‘**watashi**’ physically takes part in bathing the children, for example, by taking their clothes off, scrubbing them, and so on. In the regular causative example, ‘**watashi**’ makes the children take a bath by just ordering them to do so.

20.5.2

Adjective-ku/ni + suru

The adjective **ku/ni** + **suru** construction expresses the meaning of ‘make X be something,’ in which ‘something’ is a property expressed by the adjective.

I-adjective

akarui ‘bright’ → **akaruku suru** ‘make it bright’

atarashii ‘new’ → **atarashiku suru** ‘make it new’

Na-adjective

kiree ‘clean’ → **kiree ni suru** ‘make it clean’

hade ‘gaudy’ → **hade ni suru** ‘make it gaudy’

Example sentences:

私たちは建物を新しくした。

Watashi-tachi wa tatemono o atarashiku shita.

We remodeled the building. (Lit. We made the building new.)

母は部屋をきれいにした。

Haha wa heya o kiree ni shita.

My mother cleaned the room. (Lit. My mother made the room clean.)

NOTE

The transitive construction NOUN (X) **o** NOUN (Y) **ni suru** ‘make X become Y’ also expresses a causative meaning; e.g. **gakkoo o danjo kyoogaku ni suru** ‘make the school co-ed,’ to be contrasted with the intransitive counterpart, NOUN (X) **ga** NOUN (Y) **ni naru** ‘X becomes Y.’