

“ARIGATOU” PHRASE IN JAPANESE DAILY LIFE

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ABSTRACT

In daily social life, humans cannot be separated with interaction with nature, and it includes giving and receiving. In Japanese society, a gift is always depicted as *On* or debt which must be repaid in later time. One way to pay *On* is through the phrase *arigatou*. This research objective is to describe *Arigatou* phrase based on the meaning and forms of expression inside Japanese society daily life. Methods used in this research is Descriptive Methods which utilizes symbolic interaction theory to analyze the data. Result found is that *arigatou* was originally addressed to God and gradually used in daily life. From meaning perspective *arigatou* described as gratitude and social harmony keeper and was addressed to the Emperor as expression of loyalty towards the country with full consent on abiding the law. Meanwhile the phrase *arigatou* in family is meant to express obedience towards every decision made by the family to maintain honor within said family. *Arigatou* phrase towards nature is to include them in every element of life. Found conclusion is that *Arigatou* phrase included *Up-Down* essence, which means the relation between *Kami (God) (Up)* and *Humans (Down)*, described *arigatou* in both form of phrase and meaning.

- **Keywords :** *Arigatou*; *On*; *arigatou* definition, gratitude, harmony keeper

Introduction

In human's daily life, an action of helping and giving each other is a common occurrence. These actions are done to keep one's social harmony in society. In Japanese society which promotes morale teaching such as humility and self-respect, a goodwill towards them will be deemed as the heaviest burden in their life. As explained by Mauss (on Hasibuan, 2010_29) basically there are no free gift, every gift will be accompanied by another gift in return or reward in exchange of the gifts. In Japanese society every gift will generate On or debt and that is why Japanese will usually feel guilty if they cannot return the favor, as the gift must be paid or rewarded. The gift itself has generate On or debt which must be paid. For Japanese, On is the main feeling of debt that will always be a part of their life. According to Benedict (1982:107-121) On is a burden and debt which must be carried as good as possible by the one responsible and caused obligation to repay them back. On is accepted because of Ninjou or humanity feeling. According to Saleha (On Ginting:2011-4) Ninjo is humanity's feeling of affection towards other humans. On repayment is done with Giri and Gimu Giri Concept. According to Mattulada Saragih (2011_3) Giri is described as obligation to repay kindness one received from others. Meanwhile Gimu is repayment of On with unlimited form and time, which means the full repayment of this obligation cannot be done fully within one's life. Gimu are collective amount of obligation which becomes one's debt in family circle and/or towards ruler. Gimu is unavoidable for Japanese (Hasibuan, 2010:36)

When one receive help or kindness from others, there will be form of *thanks* as expression of gratitude toward the action. Leech (Saifudin, 2010 : 2) states " Thank you phrase are social phrase which has convivial function in society to cover or decrease imbalance between the speaker who receive the kindness and the addressee". While in KBBI (2001:1183) thank you means gratitude which urge one to return the favor received. Gratitude interpreted as thanks towards Allah and expressing relief, happy and others. Thank you is interpreted as embodiment of returning the favor performed orally and addressed to those who did something towards us.

In Japanese, thank you come in the form of *arigatou*. Arigatou stems from the word *arigatashi* (有難し) which means あることが難しい. (yosei, 2003 : 23), and can be interpreted as something which hardly or rarely occurs. Arigatou mainly used in daily conversations and very important for Japanese to build solidarity between individuals and

protect social harmony. For Japanese arigato is not only phrase spoken from the mouth but also from the heart.

This research objective includes describing *arigatou* meaning inside Japanese daily life and to describe means and forms of *arigatou* phrase.

Researches involving arigatou / thank you has already been done many times in the past. But researches related to expression and means of arigatou in society is done, which propel this research as a must to add more insight in Japanese cultural field of study especially about means and variety of *arigatou* phrase. Objective of this research is to describe arigatou means and forms of expressions in Japanese society life. Studied using symbolic interaction theory from George Herbert Mead in Siregar (2011:104) states the theory consists of three concept:

- Mind, the ability to use same social meaning symbols.
- Self, the ability to reflect each individuals from others viewpoint or opinion.
- Society, a social communication network which is created, built, and constructed by each individuals inside environment.

Method

Methods used in this research is descriptive method. According to Mardalis (2006:43), a descriptive research are social communications images from social groups which have tight integrated kinship. Resource data is taken from books titled *Nihon Bunka Keyword* 日本文化キーワード from Isamu Kurita (1993) published by Tokyo Shoudensha, and *Arigatou Nihon Up Down Kouzou* 「ありがとい日本」アップダウン構造, from Masahara Yosei (2003, Osaka Transpace). Data gathering technique are using literature study. Data analysis are using interactive model from Miles and Huberman, which divide them into three activity flow, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

Results and Discussion

On, Giri, Gimu, dan Ninjo Concept in Japanese society life.

***On* Concept**

恩というのはめぐむ.いつくしむ.なさけ。目上の人から受けた、感謝すべき行為.利益

(Nihon Kokugo Jiten (1995:339)

Translation:

On is to give gifts, feeling of guilt, good manners, luck, act of appreciating something which is given from person with higher social status.

On is a concept referring to debt of gratitude which related to every kindness received by a person from other person/s. *On* is important value which must be protected in Japanese society which involves reciprocal social network. For Japanese *On* is one of deeply rooted ethics, so much that received *On* is considered burden which must be carried as carefully as possible.(Benedict, 1982 : 105-121)

There are four main *On* in Japanese society, which are :

- *Ko On* , *On* received from Emperor, which is repaid by unquestioned loyalty.
(Benedict, 1982 : 107)
- *Oya On*, *On* received from parents, which is repaid by carrying out obligations diligently when the young becomes parent themselves.
- *Shi no On*, *On* received from teacher, which is repaid by paying attention in important times, such as *ochugen*, or *oseibo*
- *Nishi no On*, *On* yang received from employer, which is repaid with loyalty towards the working place.
(Benedict, 1982_: 24, 107-109)

***Gimu* Concept**

Gimu is *On* repayment in unlimited form and time. This means the repayment is done for the rest of the rest of their life.

In Nihon Kokugo Jiten, (19915 : 524) states *Gimu* as :

義務は

1. 得的に人が当然しなければならない事柄

2. 哲学で、道徳が人間の意志や行為などにおよぼす強制.高速。
3. 法律が強制する行為。

Translation:

1. Things which should be profitable to someone, 2. In philosophy, a morality which oblige or force human's will and action, 3. Action forced by law.

Gimu is collective of obligation which becomes debt of someone towards family circle with tight kinship and towards ruler as symbol of their country. *Gimu* must be paid because of the tight relation when the individual is born. *Gimu* is never described as “reluctance” because it is an unlimited debt. It was stated that “A person will never be able to pay back even one tenth thousand of this *On*.” (Benedict, 1982 : 122) . *Gimu* is moral obligation which should not be binding individuals. *Gimu* obligation is shown towards:

- Emperor (Chu), Repayment of debt towards revered ruler. (Benedict, 1982 “ 134)
- Parents (Ko), is obligations toward parents and ancestors. (Benedict, 1985 : 125)
- Occupation (Nimmu), is obligation towards occupation, being responsible towards job and work the person is charged to thoroughly. (Benedict, 1985: 125)

***Giri* Concept**

義理は 1. 他人や世間に対して、つとめるべき道
 2. やむを得ずしなくてはならない.つきあい

(Nihon kokugo jiten dictionary (1955-566)

Translation:

1. An obligation toward other persons and world, 2. An inevitable thing inside social communication.

Giri is form of obligation to repay kindness and gestures from other person/s with equal value. Japanese forbid a giving a gift which value more than the gift they previously received. Benedict stated a clear division of *giri*, which are *Giri* towards the world and *giri* toward reputation (1985 : 148) . *Giri* towards world is interpreted as a person obligation to repay *On* towards his kind in general. *Giri* toward world is depicted as

fulfillment of relationships based on contracts. *Giri* gifts toward world can be seen in how they give gifts, two times in a year (Benedict , 1995 : 149) *Giri* toward reputation is an obligation to protect good names so they won't be sullied. In this case *giri* was meant as set of virtues which serves as obligations and not repayment of kindness from others. Obligation here is meant as actions which will keep a good reputation towards one name without basing it on debt which are previously owned by a person towards other person.

***Ninjou* Concept**

人情は 1. 人間の自然な心の動き。人間のありのままの情感。

2. 人としての情け。他人への思いやり。

(<https://dictionary.goo.ne.jp/jn/168885/meaning/m0u/>)

Translation:

Natural human mind flow, Human's emotional feelings, 2. One's sense of Sympathy. belas kasih untuk orang lain. "

Ninjou is sympathy or mercy towards others. *Ninjou* adalah is pure feelings from one's heart, which is owned by all humans. According to Nobuyaki in Giniting (2011:4), "*Ninjou* is humanity's feeling and all Japanese believe that love, affection, mercy, and sympathy are the most important feelings in maintaining human's relationship." *Ninjou* is not only about human feeling and personal desire. When a Japanese says, "He/She is a *Ninjou*" means that the individual is since toward their peers, kind towards their environment, and warm hearted. Asides of that the individual is regarded to never forget about *On* (Ramadhan,2017 :31)

***Arigatou* phrase origin**

Arigatou originated from the word *arigatashi* 「有難し」 the word "*aru*: 「有る」 which means existence, and *gatashi* 「難し, which means hard and difficult. From the words itself, *arigatashi* can be described as a presence of something which is hard and rarely happens. Meanwhile from the kanji 「有難し」 it can be described as *aru koto ga muzukashii* 「あることが難しい, or a presence of something that is rarely happens. *Arigatou* means it's hard and rare to find good occurrence. (Kurita,1999 : 27)

Other meanings of arigatou is as follows:

「あり得ないこと」「存在し得ないこと」が起きたときに、それを神仏が起こしてくださったこととして賞賛する言葉であったというのです。ですから、そもそも「ありがとう」は、人と人に向けて使った言葉ではなく、神仏の領域、天にお捧げするための言葉だったのです。「ありがとう」が今のように人の間でも使われるようになったのは、室町時代からとされます。しかし、もともと天にお届けするために生まれた言葉ですから、人と人の間であろうとも、ひとたび「ありがとうございます」と発しただけで、ちゃんと天に通じていくのです。

(Weston Mail Magazine, edisi 6 Juli 2007)

Translation :

When something impossible or non-existent thing happens, it is all God's power, arigatou is the word used to give praise on God's divinity. This means arigatou is not only just words used on human relationship with each other, but also dedicated to those Above. Arigatou is already used on human relationship with each other since Muromachi period. But since arigatou was originally meant to be words of connection to Heaven, the word arigatou gozaimasu can mean to send someone to heaven even though it's used in human relationship purpose.

Meanwhile Ermon in his book titled The little book of Gratitude define arigatou as follows:

ありがとうと感じたとき、私たちは恩恵を受けたことを意識し、その価値を知り、相手の好意に心を動かされ、「何となくにせよ」「もらって当たり前ではない」とも気づくはずです。自分に当然の権利があるわけではなく、相手の思いやり、心の広さ、あるいは愛情によって惜しみなく与えられたものだ、という気づき。それが感謝の原点です。

Translation:

When thankful, we have to be aware that we receive debt of gratitude, acknowledge the value, our hearts feel moved, and then we realized about "how to get", "it's not natural to get" the kindness of others. Not because of myself, but because of generosity, affection,

broad-mindedness and love from others. This is what people say as important point in gratitude.

In the beginning the phrase *Arigatou* is word of praise toward *Kami* or *Hotoke*. Then slowly change into daily life phrase (<http://alimansyar.blogspot.co.id/2012/01/arigatou.html>). The phrase *arigatou* in daily life is uttered when an individual is given kindness or help from others, as well as gratitude because *Kami* has helped them by the hand of others.

Arigatou phrase is symbolic means of repayment in debt of gratitude, and to recover the balance. Other than that, *arigatou* is also a form of politeness. *Arigatou* phrase in Japanese society is influenced by *uchi - soto* concept. Thankful expression in a form of words are basic etiquette in Japanese society.

Arigatou phrase Meaning

In Japanese language *arigatou* has an *Up-Down* structure which involves a third party, which means in their belief system Japanese believe of unseen world, and that's the mean of the word *Kami* in the structure. It is as pictured below:

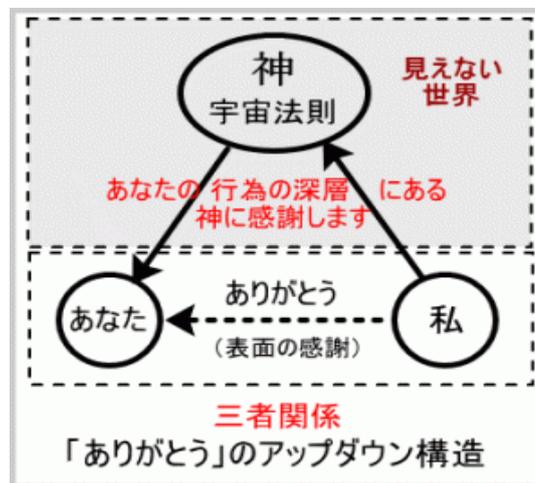


Image 1: Struktur *Up-Down* *arigatou*

Source: Yosei, 2003:25.

Gambar. 1 Above is the structure of *arigatou* and there is a third party mentioned in the *Up* structure, directing to *Kami* or universe, and *down* structure directing to humans. When

watashi (I/me) utters *arigatou* they will first says the word to *Kami* (up) since in their belief, Japanese are always connected to other world, which is *Kami* and Universe. After saying thanks to *Kami*, the phrase *arigatou* went down to *anata* (You), and to *Kami* (God). As stated by Nami in the book titled *Arigatou de Kiseki ga Okoru* (2013 :27) :

ありがとうという言葉をお口に、もちろんそれは人にも届けますが、同時に宇宙にも届けます。ありがとうという言葉の感謝を介した現れた、素晴らしい人たちとの出逢いや、うれしい出来事や、目に見えない力の不思議な働きがあります。”

Translation:

Arigatou saying is of course uttered towards human, but at the same time it is also uttered toward Universe. Expression of gratitude, meeting with good people, nice things, etc. is influenced by powers from other world.

The depth of *arigatou* meaning is placed on the object, which means when someone says *arigatou* it also means they are thankful to other individual which helps them to express their gratitude to *Kami* or universe, so that the thankful object involves the third party, and in this case *Kami*.

The wonder of *Arigatou*

In Japanese vocabulary, *arigatou* is the most liked phrase since they refer it as the most beautiful word. By hearing *arigatou*, the hearer feels happiness such that there are assumptions about weird powers (不思議な力) inside *arigatou* word. This is discovered through the survey done by Shiota Jun (25-30 March 2015) to know “*What words can make people happy when hearing them?*” From the survey it is discovered that “*arigatou*” placed first by 57.2% of majority vote, shown by the table below:

Q.シンプルだけど言われると嬉しい言葉を教えてください (複数回答)		
NO	WORD (言葉)	PERCENTAGE
1	ありがとう	57.2
2	おはよう.こんにちは (あいさつ)	26.4

3	大好きだよ	13.9
4	お疲れさま	13.7
5	気が利くね	13.0

Table 1: Words which can make Japanese happy when hearing them

Sumber:<http://news.nicovideo.jp/watch/nw1590733>

This shows that the phrase *arigatou* can make a person happy by hearing them. Happiness felt by the person will generate positive energy in themselves.

Another wonder of *arigatou* which Japanese felt is the feeling of giving energy when saying the word and in return, make the hearer felt touch or moved. It is as written by Eigo Desoka (20170) in his blog.

ありがとうは「奇跡の言葉」である。口に出せば、元気が出る。耳に入れば、勇気がわく。「ありがとう」の中には相手への敬意がある。謙虚さがある。人生に対する大いなる肯定がある。前向きの楽観主義がある。強さがある。「ありがとう」と素直に言える心は健康である。だから「ありがとう」を言うたびに、あなたの心は光ってくる。 <http://eigodesoka.blogspot.co.id/2017/09/the-miraculous-words-thank-you.html>

Translation:

Arigatou is a magical word. Arigatou gives us energy when saying it toward others, and makes us moved while hearing it. Arigatou contains respect towards others, humility, and deep life affirmation. Besides, arigatou has power and optimism value. A person who sincerely says arigatou is one with healthy spirit, every time we say arigatou, our heart shines.

From the words we discover Japanese felt that *arigatou* word contains optimism value, respect, and humility. Aside of that, by uttering the word *arigatou* 100 times they believe luck and other good things will come to them (Yakota, 2009 : 83).

Forms of Arigatou phrase in Japanese Society Life

- Arigatou towards Emperor (Tenno)

Form of *arigatou* towards Emperor is done by executing every single obligations they have as Japan citizens., such as obeying the law, loyal to the Emperor, Parents doing their obligation as parents, and children devoted to their parents. Any kindness received by the citizens from the Emperor are regarded as debts, and therefore it is mandatory for Japanese citizens to respect their leaders, love their country, and do what must be done to devote themselves fully and repay the kindness of their ruler. (Benedict, 1982 : 107)

- Arigatou towards Nature (Shizen)

Form of arigatou towards nature implied in the usage of nature elements in every part of their life. For example in Kimono / clothes motive, the displays of ikebana or bonsai inside the house, and many more. Japanese gratitude towards nature cannot be separated from Shinto teachings which taught them worship and appreciation towards nature. Japanese are citizens with deep appreciation and connection with nature and they live in tune with them.

- Arigatou towards family

Form of arigatou inside family is meant for On repayment towards parents. For example a child cannot refuse decisions made by their parents. As written by Benedict (1982 : 62- 63)

“For Japanese, obedience toward family’s will is demanded as very high importance value even if each part of the family has their own interests, no matter how hard it is. The demand is based on behalf mutual loyalty. Japanese also learns from their experience in the family, that the heaviest weight ever given to someone is to make decision for the whole family, noting that with that decision, their family name will be protected.

Even though obedience is one of the forms of arigatou towards family to repay their On, in reality Japanese rarely used arigatou in their family circle. This is shown from survey result done by Asahi Group in knowing how often Japanese says arigatou in their family in below diagram:

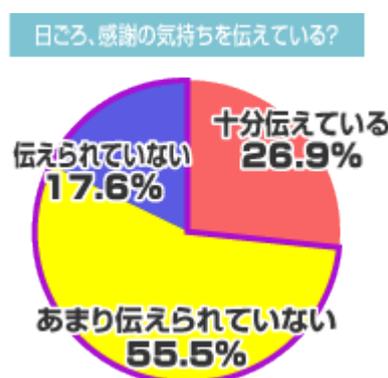


Image 2: Percentage of Japanese saying *arigatou* towards family

Source:<http://www.asahigroupholdings.com/company/research/hapiken/maian/bn/201110/00396/>

It is discovered that Japanese seldom used thankful words in their family. Almost 55.5% says “あまり伝えていない”. There are even cases of people never saying the word *arigatou* even though the percentage is small, around 17.6%. Reasons why Japanese seldom says *arigatou* towards family can be seen in the following table:

Q.感謝の気持ちを言葉で十分に伝えていない理由は？		
NO	REASONS (理由)	PERCENTAGE
1	感謝の気持ちを伝えるのが、気恥ずかしいから	58
2	感謝の気持ちは言葉で言わなくても、分かると思うから	16.6
3	家族と一緒に住んでいないのでなかなか言う機会がないから	8.0
4	感謝の気持ちを伝えるのが、面倒だから	4.0
5	相手が恥ずかしがると思うから	3.7

Table 2: Reasons why Japanese seldom says *arigatou* towards family

Source:<http://www.asahigroupholdings.com/company/research/hapiken/maian/bn/201110/00396/>

From the table above it is described that the main reason why Japanese seldom used *arigatou* towards their family is because they are embarrassed to say the thankful word, so much as 58% says 感謝の気持ちを伝えるのが、気恥ずかしいから

Even if arigatou is regarded as the most beautiful word in Japanese vocabulary, in reality Japanese seldom says it to their family. Even so, Japanese has certain times to say the word arigatou as thankful and gratitude expression. The situation and time to say arigatou which often occurs is as the table below:

Q. 感謝の気持ちを伝えるのにふさわしい場面は？		
NO	SITUATION/TIME	PERCENTAGE
1	家族との食事・晩酌の時	37.9
2	感謝を伝えたい相手と二人でいる時	34.9
3	感謝を伝えたい相手の誕生日	29.3
4	母の日,父の日,いい夫婦の日,敬老の日などの公的な記念日	29.1
5	結婚記念日など相手との記念日	22.0

Table 3: The right Situation to say arigatou

Source:<http://www.asahigroupholdings.com/company/research/hapiken/maian/bn/201110/00396/>

The most often time to say arigatou are: when having dinner together, when having private time with the one being grateful of, celebrating birthday, Mother's day, Father's day, Senior's day, and other commemorative dates, including wedding day.

Arigatou Meaning

Expression of Gratitude

For Japanese the arigatou word express gratitude towards all the kindness they receive from others. Saying arigatou for Japanese means to admit themselves receiving On or debts from other person which cannot be forgotten and has to be repaid on later date. This is Japanese means of gratitude. As stated by Itou (2014: 99) in his research about *kansha wo kanjiru keiken to kansha sareru keiken ni okeru kanjou, yaitu* :

感謝は他者から援助や思いやりのある行動を受け取った際に感じる感情であり、援助を行った他者に対して返報的な援助行動を動機づける。

Translation:

Kansha (Gratitude) is feeling felt when receiving help, affection, or love from others and motivate special action to repay the help of that specific others.

Social Harmony Keeper

In their life, Japanese considers company in groups as very important in keeping harmony within group relationship. Therefore one of Japanese way to keep the harmony of social relations within group are with *arigatou*. As stated by Takashi (2004 : 34) in his book , which is :

「ありがとう」は人間関係の最高の潤滑油になる言葉である。

Translation:

"arigatou" is the best lubricant for human's relationship.

Arigatou has function to decrease imbalance caused by kindness or good intent received from others. This is so that the receiver does not feel burdened by the kindness debt given by others, while the giver will feel happiness when hearing *arigatou*. From this explanation it can be understood why *arigatou* is said to be “communication lubricant”. *Arigatou* phrase became media to keep good relations between humans.

Conclusions

From results and discussions above it can be concluded that the phrase *arigatou* in Japanese has Up-Down structure which involves a third party. *Kami* occupy the Up structure and humans occupy the Down structure. Thus when humans says *arigatou* to other person they indirectly says *arigatou* to *Kami* (God) as well, so the depth of *arigatou* meaning is placed on the object the thankful expression is intended to.

In Japanese daily life, *arigatou* is considered the most beautiful of word since it can give energy when said and make a person feel moved when heard. *Arigatou* is considered to have wonder

behind the phrase since it consists of optimism, respect, and humility. Arigatou is also believed to grant good luck if often said.

From meaning perspective we understood that arigatou is an expression of gratitude, harmony keeper in social communications, and can be categorized as a form of aisatsu.

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