

How does the way of thinking about business influence the meaning of buy/sell -Comparative study between Japanese and Korean-

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1. Purpose of study

This study aims to figure out the difference in the way of thinking about business (selling and buying) between Japanese and Korean people, compare the semantic structures of two Japanese verbs, KAU(買う: to buy) and URU(売る: to sell) with those of two corresponding Korean verbs SATA(사다: to buy) and PALTA(팔다: to sell). The study will further consider the relationship between their way of thinking and these semantic structures.

2. Methodology

At first, I will find out the Japanese and Korean people's way of thinking about business (buying and selling), and make clear the difference of them.

Next, I will clarify the meanings of Japanese two verbs, KAU(=to buy) and URU(=to sell), and those of corresponding Korean two verbs SATA(=to buy) and PALTA(=to sell) by analyzing the semantic descriptions of Japanese and Korean dictionary.

Finally, I will consider the relationship between the way Japanese and Korean people think, and the meaning of those Japanese and Korean verbs.

3. Result and discussion

3.1. The Japanese and Korean people's way of thinking about buying and selling

Korea has a long history of regarding business, especially service industry as lowly –particularly after the Chosun Dynasty(1392-1910).

Why are people in the service industry unfriendly to customers in Korea? It is due to the long heritage of traditional values in this country since the time of the Chosun Dynasty. The Yangban(兩班), the upper-class of that time, considered working as lowly, and were dedicated to learning. This tradition spread throughout the common people, and they also regarded working hard as undignified behavior.

For example, there were small private schools called Seodang(書堂) in Korea, as Terakoya(寺子屋) in Japan. In the schools, Confucian and Mencian ethics were taught. In contrast, reading, writing, and arithmetic were taught at the Terakoya in Japan. As a result, people in the service industry, while becoming unfriendly to customers in Korea, became calculating and humble in Japan.

But even though people in Korea consider business as lowly, they have to work to feed themselves, so they work reluctantly, showing their pride and complaining about having to take a job like this. As a result, store clerks greet their customers in an unfriendly manner in Korea. They also do this in order to defend themselves against the customers looking down on them.



Terakoya



Seodang

Contrast this with people in Japan who do not consider the service industry as lowly, at least in comparison with people in Korea.

Omi merchants(近江商人), who are considered one of the most famous merchants along with Osaka merchants(大阪商人), and Ise merchants(伊勢商人) in Japan, used to say that in business you had to have the "three goods (三方よし)": the good for the seller, the good for the buyer and the good for society. They also have a thought, 利真於勤 (りはつとむるにおいてしんなり), which means that behaviors of merchants suit heaven's will because the exchange economy is crucial for people, and the benefit is a reward for doing their job with fullest sincerity.

3.2. The definitions of the Japanese verbs, KAU/URU, and Korean verbs, SATA/ PALTA

As can be seen, the way of thinking about business between Japanese and Korean people is diametrically opposed. Does this opposition have any effect on the meanings of verbs "buy" and "sell" of these two languages?

3.2.1 Japanese

Below are the explanations about Japanese verbs KAU, and URU, quoted from *Daijirin*(大辞林), *Sanseido*(三省堂)

3.2.1.1 買う [KAU(=to buy)]

(1) to buy, purchase

本を買う to buy a book

入場券を買う to buy a ticket

権利を買う to buy a right

(2) to think highly of

私は彼のひたむきな努力を買う I give him credit for his effort.

語学力を買われてロンドン支店長になる

They sent him to the Tokyo Bureau Chief because they thought highly of his linguistic ability.

(3) to accept, offer

売られた喧嘩を買う *to accept a challenge (to a fight).*

一役買う *to offer one's services [to help].*

買って出る *to volunteer*

(4) to incur

人の恨みを買う *to incur another person's ill will*

顰蹙 (ひんしゆく) を買う *to be frowned on [upon]*

失笑を買う *to make one burst into laughter*

(5) to buy (sex)

飲む打つ買う (大酒を飲み、ばくちを打ち、女を買う) *To drink a lot, to gamble, and to buy sex.*

3.2.1.2 売る[URU(=to sell)]

(1) to sell

土地を売る *to sell land*

切符を売る *to sell tickets*

油を売る *to waste time in idle conversation*

(2) to betray, sell

国を売る *to sell [betray] one's own country*

仲間を売る *to betray a friend*

(3) to make oneself known, become popular

顔を売る *to make oneself known*

名(前)を売る *to become popular*

男を売る *He has built up a reputation*

媚を売る *to butter up*

(4) to force

けんかを売る *to pick [provoke/start] the fight.*

恩を売る *to place a person under an obligation*

(5) to sell (one's body)

体を売る *to sell one's body*

身を売る *to prostitute oneself*

3.2.2 Korean

The following are the explanations about Korean verbs SATA, and PALTA, quoted from the online *Yahoo Korean Dictionary*.

3.2.2.1 사다[SATA(=to buy)]

(1) to buy, purchase

찬거리를사다 (おかずの材料を買う) *to buy ingredients of the side dishes*

(2) to employ

품을사다(勞を買う) *to employ*

일꾼을사다(働き手を買う) *to engage[hire] a person*

(3) to sell grain and make money.

쌀을 팔아 돈을 샀다(米を売ってお金を買った) *I sold rice and made money.*

(4) to offer

경멸과 분노를사다(輕蔑と憤怒を買う) *to incur one's scorn and indignation*

고생을 사서 하다(苦勞を買って出る) *to offer to do a difficult work*

우환을사다(憂患を買う) *to make someone worry*

(5) to incur

호감을사다(好感を買う) *to entertain a friendly feeling*

의심을사다(疑心を買う) *to give rise to suspicion*

오해를사다(誤解を買う) *to be met with misunderstanding*

미움을사다(恨みを買う) *to incur another's enmity[displeasure]*

비웃음을사다(失笑を買う) *to expose one to ridicule*

(6) to value properly

그의 재능을 높이사다(彼の才能を高く買う) *to think highly of his talent*

그의 정직한 태도는 높이 살 만하다(彼の正直な態度は高く買うに値する)

We should give him credit for his honesty.

3.2.2.2 팔다[PALTA(=to sell)]

(1) to sell

집을팔다(家を売る) *to sell one's house*

책을팔다(本を売る) *to sell books*

(2) to sell (one's labor)

품을팔다(勞を売る) *to do job work*

(3) to betray, sell

내 목숨을 내놓는 한이 있어도 친구를 팔 수는 없다(友だちを売る) *to betray a friend*

(4) to put one's conscience aside

양심을팔다(良心を売る) *to put one's conscience aside*

지조를팔다(操を売る) *to sell[prostitute] one's honor[chastity] (for money)*

(5) to distract[divert] one's attention

한눈을팔다(わき見を売る) *to turn one's eyes away*

(6) to buy[purchase] grain.

쌀을 한 말 팔아 왔다(米を買う) *I bought rice.*

(7)* to sell (one's body) *This meaning is not referred in the dictionary, but it is used actually.

몸을 팔다(体を売る) *to prostitute oneself*

3.2.3 Commonalities and differences

BUY: KAU(J) / SATA(K)

| Meaning | J | K | example sentences |
|---|-----|-----|---|
| 0)to buy something in exchange for giving money for it | (1) | (1) | to <u>buy</u> a book |
| | | (2) | to <u>engage</u> a person |
| | | (3) | to <u>sell</u> rice |
| 1)to buy high talent in exchange for giving high evaluation | (2) | (6) | to <u>think highly of</u> one's talent |
| 2)to buy bad feeling in exchange for giving bad behavior | (4) | (5) | to <u>incur</u> one's ill will |
| | | (4) | to <u>make</u> one worry |
| 3)to buy good feeling in exchange for giving good behavior | | (5) | to <u>entertain</u> a friendly feeling |
| 4)to buy a fight in exchange for giving agreement | (3) | | to <u>accept</u> a challenge (to a fight) |
| 5)to buy a valuable thing in exchange for money/profit | | | |
| 6)to buy one's heart in exchange for something else | | | |

* Underlined words correspond to the Japanese KAU or Korean SATA

SELL: URU(J) / PALTA(K)

| Meaning | J | K | example sentences |
|---|-----|------|---------------------------------------|
| 0)to give something in exchange for money | (1) | (1) | to <u>sell</u> books |
| | | (2) | to <u>do</u> wage labor |
| | | (6) | to <u>buy</u> rice |
| 1)to give high talent in exchange for high evaluation | (3) | | to <u>make oneself known</u> |
| 2)to give bad feeling in exchange for bad behavior | | | |
| 3)to give good feeling in exchange for good behavior | | | |
| 4)to give a fight in exchange for agreement | (4) | | to <u>pick</u> the fight. |
| 5)to give a valuable thing in exchange for money/profit | (2) | (3) | to <u>betray</u> a friend |
| | (5) | (7)* | to <u>sell</u> one's body |
| 6)to give away one's heart in exchange for something else | | (4) | to <u>sell</u> one's honor |
| | | (5) | to <u>turn</u> one's eyes <u>away</u> |

* Underlined words correspond to the Japanese URU or Korean PALTA

3.2.3.1 Commonalities

Both Japanese and Korean languages have words with the central meaning of *buying something in exchange for giving money for it* or *giving something in exchange for money*. From these words many meanings are derived as are some similarities.

3.2.3.2 Differences

While there are some similarities between the two languages, there are some differences as well.

(a) Only in Korean language, both SATA(=buy) and PALTA(=sell) have the meaning of buying / selling something with grain, not money. 쌀을 사다(to buy rice) means selling rice (or buying something in exchange for rice) in the market, and 쌀을 팔다(to sell rice) means buying [purchasing] rice (or selling something in exchange for rice).

(a1) 쌀을 사다(to buy rice) *to sell rice*

(a2) 쌀을 팔다(to sell rice) *to buy[purchase] rice*

(b) Only in Korean language, both SATA(=buy) and PALTA(=sell) have the meaning of engaging someone / being engaged by someone.

(b1) 사람을 사다 *to engage[hire] a person*

(b2) 품을 팔다 *to do wage labor, to work for wages*

(c) Only in the Japanese language, both KAU(=buy) and URU(=sell) have the meaning of accepting / provoking a fight.

(c1) 売られた喧嘩を買う *to accept a challenge (to a fight)*

(c2) けんかを売る *to pick [provoke / start] the fight*

(d) There are differences between the meaning of the two verbs corresponding buy in English, URU in Japanese and PALTA in Korean. Moreover, it should be noted that URU has a relatively positive nuance, and PALTA a negative one, because (d1)~(d3), the example sentences of meaning (d3), gain value through selling, while the example sentences of (d4) and (d5), lose value through selling.

(d1) 顔を売る *to make oneself known*

(d2) 名 (前) を売る *to become popular*

(d3) 男を売る *He has built up a reputation*

(d4) 양심을 팔다 (良心을売る) *to put one's conscience aside*

(d5) 한눈을 팔다 (わき見を売る) *to turn one's eyes away*

3.3. The relationship between people's way of thinking and the semantic structures

As explained above, people in Japan tend to find value in business and consider it in a positive light, while people in Korea tend to consider it in a negative light, as something reluctant to do.

On the other hand, URU in the Japanese language has a positive nuance of selling something valuable, while PALTA in Korean language has a negative nuance of selling such as throwing something away, or something losing value.

As a result, there seems to be a relationship between the way of thinking about business and the corresponding Japanese / Korean word "sell". That point still requires further investigation.

Reference

コリアンワークス (2002) 『「日本人と韓国人」なるほど事典』、PHP 文庫