

# The Application of *Aisatsu* in Japanese Hospitality Culture

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**Abstract.** *Aisatsu* is one of Japanese communication culture which is very important in Japanese society. The purpose of this study is to find out about the application of *aisatsu* in formal communication environment, especially within the scope of Japanese hospitality activities that focused on hotels and restaurants. The method for the research is a qualitative descriptive using library research as a methods for data collection. The data source collected from Japanese conversation's books for special purposes: hotel and tourism. The results of this study shown that *aisatsu* in Japanese hospitality is not only serves as an ordinary greeting, but in a higher context, *aisatsu* is defined as an expression of praise, respect, and encouragement. There are two types of *aisatsu* commonly used in hotels and restaurants. The first one is *aisatsu* related to time, such as *ohayou gozaimasu*, *konnichiwa* and so on. The second one is *aisatsu* for visitors and customers, such as *irasshaimase*, *youkoso*, and *omataseitashimashita*. The key purpose of both expressions is to establish a good relationship between staff and guest.

## INTRODUCTION

Japan's tourism sector is growing rapidly, especially in the expansion of the hospitality industry. According to the latest survey conducted by Mordor Intellegince in 2020, Japan has recorded the highest number of visitor year over year. Japan is expanding its hospitality industry to accommodate an increasing number of visitors [1]. The development of tourism in Japan cannot be separated from the culture of communication and service applied in hotel and restaurant sectors in Japan.

*Aisatsu* is one of the communication cultures that is supporting factor for Japan to be known as a country with a society of good ethics and politeness. In the Japanese hospitality culture, *aisatsu* is one of the important things applied in tourism sector, especially hotels and restaurants. *Aisatsu* is said to be a unique feature of the Japanese language. When the term is translated into English, words such as "greetings" are commonly used. However, *aisatsu* is much more complex than that. In everyday Japan *aisatsu* mostly serves as a tool to keep human relationship smooth. Greetings, apologize, congratulations and public speech, all of these consist of different *aisatsu* expressions [2]

*Aisatsu* consists of two Japanese characters, namely 挨拶 (*ai*) and 拶 (*satsu*). The first one carries meanings such as "to push" and "to make an approach." The second character also carries similar meanings; "to approach, near" [3]. According to Nihongo Kyouiku Gakkai in Nihongo Kyouiku Jiten [4], it is explained that *aisatsu* is a phrase that is answered with an expression of friendly, affectionate, or respectful in everyday life. It can be said that *aisatsu* is very important in Japanese society. Japanese people do *aisatsu* not only with words, but often accompanied by other movements such as bowing or hand gestures. If we arrive at a restaurant or hotel in Japan, the staff will say welcome while bowing and using hand gestures to welcome guests in.

*Aisatsu*, which is a communication culture, can be a way to preserve culture. There are many form of cultures, one of them is communication culture in the form of various speeches and gestures. For example, the culture in Bali is to give greetings like 'om swastiastu' by covering both hands.

Various studies on adverbs have been carried out. One of them is Persson (2012) who researched the complexity of *aisatsu*. The researcher's purpose is to display the complexity of *aisatsu*, thus demonstrate that it exists outside of the traditional sense of "greetings". The analysis is based on mentioned background material and transcribed speeches from the webpage "Youtube". In the result of this analysis the complexity of *aisatsu* becomes evident.

Kuraesin (2021) analyze the *aisatsu* in formal communication. The researcher's purpose is to describe the ways in which some *aisatsu* are used in Japanese and the discrepancies that often arise in Japanese learners. This

study found there are 16 expressions of *aisatsu* that used in formal communications, such as *yoroshiku onegaishimasu*, *kashikomarismashita*, *osewani natte orimasu*, and so on.

Persson's, and Kuraesin's research both analyze Japanese *aisatsu*. However, there are several differences between previous researches with this research. In this research, the author wants to see the types of *aisatsu* used in hotels and restaurants in Japan and how they are applied.

## METHODOLOGY

The method for the research is a qualitative descriptive using library research as a methods for data collection. The source of data comes from expressions of *aisatsu* used in Japanese conversation's books for special purposes: hotel and tourism. By using this method, conversation using *aisatsu* are observed and then recorded for further analysis. The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative techniques; description of the findings and description of the conclusion. After the data is analyzed, next is presenting the results. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of reports. What type of *aisatsu* expressions and how they are applied in Japanese hospitality are pointed out.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results, there are a total of 4 types of *aisatsu* found within the source. Which are *aisatsu* that represent time, *aisatsu* to visitors and customers, send-off *aisatsu*, and calling *aisatsu*. There are various examples of *aisatsu* expressions that are often used based on each type. The following are the results of the analysis of the type of *aisatsu* and the application in Japanese hospitality, especially in hotel and restaurant.

### *Aisatsu* that Represent Time

*Aisatsu* that represents time or what is often classified as *aisatsu* used when meeting people. In this type of *aisatsu*, the examples found in the data sources used as follows.

- (1) おはようございます。  
*Ohayou Gozaimasu.*  
'Good Morning'
- (2) こんにちは。  
*Konnichiwa.*  
'Daytime greetings' which can be interpreted as 'good afternoon' or can also be interpreted as 'hi' when greeting someone.
- (3) こんばんは。  
*Konbanwa.*  
'Good Night'

An example of its application in hotels and restaurants in Japan that found in data sources is as in the following conversation:

- (4) Doorman: おはようございます。  
*Ohayou gozaimasu*  
'Good Morning'  
Guest: すみませんが、免税店はどこですか。  
*Sumimasen ga, menzeiten wa doko desu ka.*  
'Excuse me, where is the duty-free shop?'

Hotel staff will greet guests according to the time. For example when staff meet guests in the morning, they will say '*ohayou gozaimasu*' to the guests.

### *Aisatsu* to Visitors and Customers

In this type of *aisatsu*, there are four types of *aisatsu* expressions found in the data sources, which are as follows:

- (5) ようこそ !  
*Youkoso!*  
'Welcome!'

- (6) ようこそいらっしゃいました。  
*Youkoso irasshaimashita.*  
'Welcome' (usually used in hotel)
- (7) いらっしゃいませ。  
*Irasshaimase.*  
'Welcome' (usually used in restaurant, hotel, shops, etc)
- (8) おまたせしました。  
*Omataseshimashita*  
'Thank you for waiting' or 'sorry to have kept you waiting.'

Data (5), (6) and (7) both have the same meaning 'welcome' in English and only the context in which it is used is different. *Youkoso* is used more casual and is often in the form of writing installed on banners at tourist attractions. Meanwhile, the use of *youkoso irasshaimashita* is more formal and it is a verbal form. An example of its application in hotels and restaurants in Japan is as in the following conversation:

- (9) Doorman: ようこそいらっしゃいました。  
*Youkoso Irasshaimashita.*  
'Welcome to our hotel'  
Guest: やあ、ありがとう。グループツアーですが。。。。  
*Yaa, arigatou. Guruuupu tsua desu ga...*  
Yes, thank you. We are group tour...
- (10) Front office: いっらしやいませ。チェクインですか。  
*Irasshaimase. Chekku in desu ka.*  
'Welcome. Are you going to check in?'  
Guest: はい、そうです。さと一路です。  
*Hai, sou desu. Sato Ichiro desu.*  
'Yes. My name is Sato Ichiro'
- (11) Waitress: いっらしやいませ。  
*Irasshaimase.*  
'Welcome'  
Customer: メニューを見せてください。  
*Menyuu o misete kudasai.*  
May I have the menu, please.

In data (9) and (10) it can be seen that at the hotel staff can use both *youkoso irasshaimashita* and *irasshaimase* to welcome guests while bowing and also sometimes using hand gestures. In contrast to hotels, data (11) shows that restaurants only use the expression '*irasshaimase*' to welcome customers.

The last aisatsu of this type that found in the data source is data (8) whis is *omataseshimashita*. For example, when the guest are waiting to check in at the receptionist, the staff has finised preparing all the things needid to check ini, the staff will say 'omataseshimashita' to the guest. For the context at the restaurant *omataseshimashita* said by staff when bringing customer orders. It can be said that *omatasheshimashita* means than you for waitung or sorry to have kept you waiting.

### 1. Send-off Aisatsu

In Japan, hotel staff usually say '*itterasshai*' when guests check out. It means like 'take care, see you' or simply 'enjoy your trip'.

- (12) いってらっしゃいませ。  
*Itterasshaimase.*

'Have a good day', 'take care', 'see you'.

*Itterasshaimase* that found in the data source is a formal form of *itterasshai*. An example of its application in hotels in Japan is as in the following conversation:

- (13) Doorman: どうぞお乗りください。いってらっしゃいませ。  
*Douzo onorikudasa. Itterasshaimase.*  
'Plese get on the vehicle. Take care'  
Guest: ありがとう。  
*Arigatou.*

‘Thank you’

## 2. Calling Aisatsu

The last type that found in this research is calling greeting. Moshi-moshi is commonly used greeting.

(14) もしもし

*Moshi-moshi*

‘Hello’

When hotel or restaurant staff receive a call from a guest, they say ‘*moshi-moshi*’ that means ‘hello’ (on phone).

## CONCLUSION

By knowing the concept of aisatsu, it becomes possible to understand that the Japanese people has hospitality culture to achieve their excellent customer service. There are four types of aisatsu commonly used in hotels and restaurant, such as aisatsu that represent time, aisatsu to visitors and customers, send-off aisatsu, and calling aisatsu.

Aisatsu in Japanese hospitality is not only serves as an ordinary greeting, but in higher context, aisatsu is defined as an expression of praise, respect, and encouragement. This communication culture can be applied consistently, especially in the hospitality world that can be an added value in sustainable tourism development. Sustainable is not only in terms of the environment but also in terms of culture.

Local greetings are very valuable to become unique selling point for hospitality industry in order to not only create sense of warm welcome but also differentiation between other places. Learning from Japanese culture, this initiative can be explored further and implemented towards other culture around the world.

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