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The Use of the Japanese Nonfinite Form -te in Second Language Narrative Discourse

Miki Shibata

Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the use of the Japanese nonfinite form -te in second language (L2) narratives. Japanese is a clause-chaining language, in which clauses are connected with nonfinite, and unified with a finite verb. The acquisition of L2 verbal morphology has been examined within two frameworks: the Aspect Hypothesis and the Discourse Hypothesis. The former claims that learners start to use past marking predominantly with achievement verbs which express events that occur at a given time (e.g., break); and progressive morphemes with activity verbs (e.g., walk). The latter states that learners use verbal morphology to distinguish main events from background information in narratives. Nonfinite forms, however, have never been focused on within either hypothesis.

The present research is the cross sectional study in which 59 English natives learning Japanese, grouped into three proficiency levels (i.e., novice, intermediate, and advanced), and 20 Japanese natives were requested to narrate a wordless picture book. The distribution patterns of finite and nonfinite verbal morphemes in their narratives were examined in terms of lexical aspect and narrative structure. The major findings were as follows: (a) like the past morpheme, the te-form is frequently attached to achievement verbs, indicating the completion of a punctual event, and (b) the low proficiency learners marked the chronologically sequent events with past regardless of thematic significance, and gradually the te-conjunction emerged to mark the temporally ordered yet thematically insignificant events and past marked the main narrative events (i.e., the temporally ordered and thematically significant events).

Key words: the te-conjunction, narrative discourse, lexical aspect, a chain-linking language

1. Introduction

The purpose of the present study is to examine the distributional patterns of the nonfinite form -te in the non-native speakers’ narrative discourse in terms of lexical aspect and narrative structure. First, I will introduce the theoretical background and review relevant recent research of the use of L2 tense-aspect morphology.

1.1. A chain-linking language

Japanese is a clause-chaining language, in which clauses are connected with nonfinite, medial verb forms and unified with a finite verb. Japanese has various kinds of nonfinite clauses such as te, tara, to, and zero-conjunction as shown below.

(1) Asa oki-TE, kao o arat-ta.
    morning wake up-te, face ACC wash-PAST.
    'I woke up and washed my face.'
(2) Asa oki-TARA, yuki ga fut-te i-ta.
morning wake up-tara, snow NOM fall-PROG-PAST
'When I woke up, it was snowing.'

(3) Asa oki-ru-TO, shirainai hito ga tonari ni ne-te i-ta.
morning wake up-NPST-to stranger NOM next sleep-PROG-PAST
'When I woke up in the morning, the stranger was sleeping next to me.'

(4) Kesa hayaku tonari machi de kaji ga ar-I,
this morning early next town in fire NOM exist-STEM,
suunin no kega nin ga de-ta.
a few POSS hurt people NOM come out-PAST
'Fire started early this morning and a few people got hurt.'

Researchers have been examining functional differences among the Japanese nonfinite clauses. For instance, Kuno (1973) accounted for the difference between the te-clause and the zero-conjunction in terms of self-controllability. That is, both situations in the te-marked clause and its following clause must be either self-controllable or non-self-controllable. See the following examples from Kuno (1973, p. 123).

(5) a. Taro wa hikojo ni tsui-TE, nimotsu no kensa o uke-ta
TOP airport at arrive-te, luggage POSS inspection ACC take-PAST
'When Taro arrived at the airport, he got his luggage inspected.'

b. ?Taro wa hikojo ni tsui-TE, ie ni denwa shi-ta.
TOP airport at arrive-te, home phone-PAST
'When Taro arrived at the airport, he phoned his house.'

c. Taro wa hikojo ni it-TE, ie ni denwa shi-ta.
TOP airport to go-te, home phone-PAST
'When Taro went to the airport, he phoned his house.'

In the above sentences the verb tsuku 'arrive' is non-controllable while the verb iku 'go' is controllable. The sentence (5a) has two non-controllable situations, "arriving at the airport" and "getting his luggage inspected." On the other hand, in (5b) the following situation "calling home" is controllable, which conflicts with the previous situation that is non-controllable. In (5c) both situations "going to the airport" and "calling home" are controllable. The self-controllability constraint does not hold for the zero-conjunction.

Ono (1990), investigating te and zero-conjunctions, and the finite form -ru in a cook book, described differences among them in terms of the degree of continuity. He measured the degree with respect to participants, time, and place. His hypotheses were that the te-conjunction would be used more frequently when participants, time and place are the same, while the zero-conjunction and the finite form would when those three items in the previous and following clauses differ. The statistical analysis supported his hypotheses.
Watanabe (1994) studied te, to, and zero-conjunctions in terms of action/event continuity. She defined it the predictability or conceptual connectedness of action/event sequences. In discourse, some clauses that are familiar, expected, and predictable tend to be perceived as part of a single unit. In the following sentences, two situations are connected with different conjunctions, which indicates a speaker's different intent.

(6) a. Oomisoka ni depaato ni iku-TO
    New Year's eve on department store to go-to
    chuugakkoo no kurasumeeto ni at-ta.
    Junior high school POSS classmate meet-PAST
    'When I went to the department store on the New Year's eve, I ran into one of my classmates from the junior high school.'

   b. Oomisoka ni depaato ni it-TE,
    New Year's eve on department store to go-te
    chuugakkoo no kurasumeeto ni at-ta.
    Junior high school POSS classmate meet-PAST
    'I went to the department store on the New Year's eve, and met one of my classmates from the junior high school.'

In (6a), the following event "running into one of my classmates from the junior high school" is not expected to occur. On the other hand, in (6b) the following event was planned. The semantic difference is clear when the adverbial phrase guuzen 'by accident' is embedded in each example.

(7) a. Oomisoka ni depaato ni iku-TO
    New Year's eve on department store to go-to
    GUUZEN chuugakkoo no kurasumeeto ni at-ta.
    accidentally Junior high school POSS classmate meet
    'When I went to the department store on the New Year's eve, I ran into one of my classmates from the junior high school.'

   b. ? Oomisoka ni depaato ni it-TE,
    New Year's eve on department store to go-te
    GUUZEN chuugakkoo no kurasumeeto ni at-ta.
    accidentally Junior high school POSS classmate meet-PAST
    ? 'I went to the department store on the New Year's eve, and met one of my classmates from the junior high school by chance.'

The sentence (7a) is more acceptable than (7b). In (7a) unexpectedness is expressed by the to-conjunction so the adverbial phrase guuzen 'accidentally' matches with its unpredictability of the clause. In (7b), however, the predictability of the planned event conflicts with the notion of unexpectedness denoted in the adverbial phrase.
The *te*-conjunction conveys various meanings. *A dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar* (1986) stated that the *te*-conjunction marks the different semantic relationship between two clauses: a sequential order, a cause-effect relationship, the means, a contrast, and a paradox. The examples are as follows:

(8) a. Sequential order

\[\text{Asa oki-TE, kao o arat-ta.}\]
\[\text{morning wake up-te, face ACC wash-PAST.}\]
\'I woke up and washed my face.\'

b. Cause-effect

\[\text{Tabe sugi-TE, onaka ga ita-i.}\]
\[\text{eat too much-te, stomack NOM hurt-NPST}\]
\'Because I ate too much, I have a stomackache.\'

c. Means

\[\text{Arui-TE, kaet-ta}\]
\[\text{walk-te go home-PAST}\]
\'I went home on foot.\'

d. Contrast

\[\text{Maiasa watashi wa hashit-TE, haha wa aruk-u.}\]
\[\text{Every morning I TOP run-te, mother TOP walk-NPST}\]
\'I run and my mother walks every day.\'

e. Paradox

\[\text{Tomu wa itsumo ason-de i-TE, tesuto ga deki-ru.}\]
\[\text{TOP always play-habitual-te, test NOM do well-NPST}\]
\'Tom plays around yet he always does well on tests.\'

1.2. Lexical aspect

An event can be perceived either as ongoing or as a completed act with beginning and end points, independent of its relation to any reference time. This internal status of the event is referred to as aspect. It is necessary to distinguish an actual situation from speakers' linguistic representation of the actual situation. Speakers choose aspectual meanings in order to present actual situations from a certain point of view. In other words, they can describe the actual situation in more than one way. For example, the situation in which John runs every day. Talking about this event, a speaker can describe it as a whole, focus on the beginning, end, or middle of the event, or present it as an on-going process. S/he chooses a certain linguistic representation to present different viewpoints:

(9) a. John is running.

b. John started running.
In (9a) the process is marked by the progressive morpheme -ing, while in (9b) the beginning of the event is marked by means of another verb start.

A speaker captures an actual situation as a certain type of situation such as event, state, or process, and then choose the linguistic representation of her/his viewpoint of the situation. The former has been referred to as inherent lexical aspect (situation aspect in Smith, 1983) and the latter as grammatical aspect (viewpoint aspect in Smith, 1983) respectively. A certain situation is captured as an event, state, or process, which corresponds to predicate. The situation of John’s running is marked as the event by means of the verb RUN. This example shows that individual verbs describing a certain situation denote aspectual characteristics, which is referred to as lexical aspect. The most widely accepted verb classification is Vendler’s (1967). He categorized verbs into four groups based on the temporal properties of the situation to which the predicate refers; states, activities, achievements and accomplishments. State verbs, such as know and understand, refer to a static situation in which the event has a homogeneous character. Activity verbs, such as work and run, imply ongoing process, and efforts must be made continually in order for the dynamic situation to remain. Achievement verbs, such as find and arrive express events that occur at given points in time. Finally, accomplishment verbs, such as write a book and walk to the store, refer to a situation where there is a process leading up to the end point, at which the action is completed. Note that the accomplishment is a combination of an activity verb and a noun or prepositional phrase (e.g., a book, to the store).

1.3. Acquisition of tense-aspect markers

1.3.1. Aspect Hypothesis

Previous studies on first and second language acquisitions have recognized learners’ systematic but not-native-like use of verbal morphology at the early stages of language acquisition. Shirai (1991) and Andersen & Shirai (1996) summarized the claims as follows (p. 533):

1. Children first use past marking (e.g., English) or perfective marking (Chinese, Spanish, etc.) on achievement and accomplishment verbs, eventually extending its use on activity and state verbs. This roughly corresponds to Bikerton’s (1981) punctual-non-punctual distinction (PNPD).
2. In languages that encode the perfective-imperfective distinction, imperfective past appears later than perfective past, and imperfective past marking begins with stative verbs and activity verbs, then extending to accomplishment and achievement verbs.
3. In languages that have progressive aspect, progressive marking begins with activity verbs, then extends to accomplishment or achievement verbs.
4. Progressive markings are not incorrectly overextended to stative verbs. This corresponds to Bickerton’s (1981) state-process distinction (SPD).

Studies on the acquisition of verb morphology in L2 have consistently found the tendency in which adults acquiring L2 strongly associate the inherent aspect of the verb with verbal inflections, as do children acquiring an L1. For example, Andersen’s (1991) study on two untutored adolescents learning Spanish as an L2 showed that the preterite occurred with the achievement, and then extended to the accomplishment, the activity and finally to the state. Imperfective past morphemes started with the state and expanded to the activity, accomplishment, and finally achievement. Robison (1990) studied utterances from an interview.
with one adult native speaker of Spanish who had lived in the United States since late 1980 and had not received much formal instruction in English. The result showed a tendency for past marking to occur with punctual verbs (e.g., killed), and progressive with durative verbs (e.g., having). Not only the untutored learners but also the tutored learners have shown a similar tendency. Robison (1995) analyzed oral interviews with twenty six Spanish native speakers learning English in Puerto Rico. The finding was that non-native speakers associated -s with state, -ing with activity and past with achievement. Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds (1995) investigated 182 adult learners of English at six levels of proficiency. The participants were given a text with the base form of the verb and requested to fill in the blank with the morphologically marked verb. The result showed that in the first stage achievements and accomplishments were marked with past morpheme, states with non-past, and activities with progressive.

The linguistic phenomenon of limiting a tense-aspect marker to a certain class of verbs is known as the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; Robison, 1995, Shirai & Kurono, 1998). One account for this tendency is that learners initially mark inherent aspect with tense-aspect morphology rather than tense or grammatical aspect (Andersen, 1991). This is referred to as the Redundant Marking Hypothesis in Shirai and Kurono (1998).

There are four studies conducted on the use of Japanese tense-aspect morphology in the L2 context: Kurono (1994), Shibata (1998a), Shirai (1995), Shirai and Kurono (1998). Shirai and Kurono (1998) investigated the distributional characteristic of the durative morpheme -te i by non-native speakers of Japanese, in which results supported the Aspect Hypothesis. They analyzed distribution patterns of -ta and -te i morphemes in taped interviews with three native speakers of Chinese learning Japanese in Japan and those in a grammaticality judgment task with 17 learners of JSL, who had lived in Japan. The results showed the similar tendency claimed as the Aspect Hypothesis. On the other hand, Shibata (1998a) did not fully support the Aspect Hypothesis. In Shibata (1998a), a Brazilian worker who had lived in Japan for five years and never received any formal instruction in Japanese language was interviewed in terms of various topics (e.g., daily life in Japan, the reason she came to Japan, her future plans, and differences between Brazil and Japan). Her utterances were examined in terms of the interaction between lexical aspect and tense-aspect morphology. The results were that she tended to mark achievement verbs and activity verbs with the past tense form -ta, and achievement verbs with the durative form -te i although this association appeared with a small number (only 1 token). Although discrepancy is observed among the studies on acquisition of Japanese tense-aspect morphology, the details will not be discussed since it is beyond the scope of the current paper.

1.3.2. Discourse Hypothesis

Speakers need to organize their linguistic representations in a certain way so that their text can be consistent. This is referred to as discourse. Given that a speaker wishes to call attention to some events in discourse and to relate them to one another within the discourse, Hopper (1979) proposed that there is a binary notion involved in building the discourse: foreground and background. In discourse, the former indicates temporally ordered events and forwards the story while the latter provides additional information to the story. That is, in foreground any change in the ordering of the main clauses alters the chronological order of the events of a story. It has been claimed that the foreground and background distinction is realized by means of some linguistic devices. For example, Hopper (1979) claimed that the foreground was marked by tense-aspect morphology in French and Russian, word order in Old English, and voice in Malay and
On the assumption that tense-aspect morphologies play a role in organizing discourse in addition to presenting the temporal relations between narrative events, the use of L2 tense-aspect morphology in narrative discourse was studied in Kumpf (1984), Flashner (1989) and Bardovi-Harlig (1992). Analyses of the structure of learners’ narratives showed that the morphology correlated with the foreground/background distinction. Kumpf (1984) investigated the English narratives of one adult native speaker of Japanese who had been in the States for 28 years. She marked punctual verbs in the foreground with based forms, and background with various forms. In the background all state verbs were tensed. Active verbs in the background were marked for habitual and continuous aspect, and irregularly for tense. On the other hand, Flashner (1989) found that three Russian natives learning English marked actions in the foreground with simple past and left background components unmarked. Examining 37 oral and written narratives in a film-retelling task, which were graded into 7 levels, Bardovi-Harlig (1992) found that foreground verbs typically carry past tense marking in both oral and written narratives, whereas background verbs carry non-past marking. The distribution characteristics across levels showed the developmental process of the use of L2 tense-aspect marking. At the beginning of tense-aspect development, base form and present tense appeared as well as simple past in the foreground, and then in later stages past appeared predominantly. The use of past as the dominant tense emerged in the background later than in the foreground. One may notice that research findings are contradictory. Although conflicting marking has been reported, these studies found the distribution of tense-aspect markers to be influenced by discourse organization.

To my knowledge Kurono (1996) is the only study conducted on the use of Japanese tense-aspect morphology in L2 learners’ narrative. Four non-native speakers of Japanese were requested to narrate two sets of a four-picture cartoon four times, the first time was after six months from their arrival, and the fourth time after one year and three months. The results were that they used past in the foreground and non-past in the background, and that regarding aspect perfective marking predominately appeared in the foreground and state verbs marked with the perfective forms -ru and -ta in the background. Present and past durative morphemes -te i-ru and -te Ha barely occurred in their background. Note that previous studies have focused on verbal inflections in the main clauses, namely finite forms but never on nonfinite forms in L2 discourse. In the present study, the nonfinite form -te is extensively investigated in L2 narrative discourse in terms of lexical aspect, semantic characteristics, and textual function. The research questions are as follows:

(a) Do the English-speaking learners of Japanese associate the te-conjunction with any particular lexical aspect?

(b) Does the te-conjunction play any role in distinguishing foreground from background in narrative discourse?

2. Study
2.1. Subjects

Fifty-nine English natives living in Japan participated in the study. Of those, fifty-two were studying Japanese at a Japanese university from three different locations. Eleven participants were working in Japan at the time of data collection (See Appendix for details). Twenty native speakers of Japanese also participated in the study as a control group: 17 college students from Okinawa University and three of my
acquaintances.

2.2. Placement

Participants with different learning background were grouped into three proficiency levels using SPOT (Simple Performance Oriented Test).\(^{[9]}\) The test was designed to measure an on-going processing ability of grammar.\(^{[10]}\) The test consists of a set of sentences in which one hiragana letter is deleted. Each sentence is read at a natural speed and the student is to provide missing hiragana as s/he listens to it as shown below.

\[ \text{(10) gohan o tabe( ) kudasai.} \]
\[ \text{rice/meal ACC eat please} \]
\[ \text{'Please eat rice/the meal.'} \]

\[ \text{(11) atama ( ) itai-ndesu.} \]
\[ \text{head hurt-be:NPST} \]
\[ \text{'I have a headache.'} \]

Each deleted hiragana is related to a certain grammatical item. Individual test sentences are semantically independent and have no contextual relationship with each other. On the tape, each sentence is read once, and there is a two-second pause between sentences. The SPOT test has two levels; the SPOT A with 65 sentences designed for intermediate and advanced learners, and the SPOT B with 60 items designed for beginners. Only the SPOT B was utilized in the current study. Based on their scores on the test, the participants were categorized into three groups as shown in Table 1:

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<th>Proficiency level</th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>55 - 60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>45 - 54</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>0 - 44</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty participants were placed in advanced, 20 in intermediate, and 19 in novice groups.

2.3. Task and procedures

Participants were requested to narrate a story with a wordless picture book Frog, Where Are You? by Mercer Mayer (1969). The book consists of 24 pictures, in which their sequential order presents a story. A picture description is presented below:

Picture 1: a boy and his dog are watching a frog in a jar in his room. It is a night.
Picture 2: the frog escapes the jar while the boy and the dog are sleeping.
Picture 3: the next morning the boy finds that the frog is gone.
Picture 4: the boy and his dog look for the lost frog in his room. The boy calls the frog in his boot, and the dog looks for him in the jar.
Picture 5: the boy is at the window and calls his frog.
The thematic goal is that the boy finds his missing frog. In order for the boy to achieve this goal, he and his dog experience various events including some failure outcomes throughout their journey.

The story-telling task was conducted individually in various places such as the participant’s house, my office, and a classroom. The background information was provided about the story in Japanese, such as ‘this is a story about a boy and his frog.’ Then each participant was asked to look through a series of pictures before narrating the story. This should allow them to prepare for telling the story. While looking through the pictures, a non-native speaker was allowed to write down the necessary words which s/he did not know the Japanese equivalent for. For verbs, only base forms were provided. I was present throughout the task in order to answer any clarification questions while listening to the story without giving any comments or reacting but simply responding with ‘OK’ or ‘Go on’ in Japanese. But this was not the case for native speakers of Japanese. I was not present since they told me that my presence made them uncomfortable. Each session was taped and transcribed.

2.4. Analysis
2.4.1. Aspectual analysis

All clauses with the non-past -ru, the past tense -ta, the present durative -te i-ru, the past durative -te i-ta, and the te-conjunction were identified. Then, following Shirai’s (1993, 1995) operational test as shown below, the verbs in individual texts were classified into four verb types (i.e., the state, the activity, the achievement, the accomplishment). The present paper reports only past marking -ta and the nonfinite
form -te since they are the most relevant to the research questions.

(Shirai, 1995, pp. 579-580)

Tests for inherent aspect (Each test is used only on the clauses remaining after the preceding test.)

Step 1: State or non-state?
Can it refer to present state in simple present tense without having a habitual or vivid-present interpretation?
If yes———→ State (e.g., Tukue no ue ni hon ga aru. 'There is a book on the table.')
If no———→ Non-state (e.g., Boku wa gohan o taberu. 'I will eat rice.' or 'I [often/usually] eat rice.')
——→ Go to Step 2

Step 2: Activity or non-activity?
If you stop in the middle of the action, does that entail that you did the action?
If yes———→ Activity (e.g., aruku 'walk')
If no———→ Non-activity (e.g., eki made aruku 'walk to the station')
——→ Go to Step 3
*If it is difficult to distinguish between 'punctual verbs denoting resultative state' and 'activity verbs denoting action in progress,' use the following tests (a), (b) and/or (c).
(a) Is it possible to say 'X wa Y (=place) de V-teiru,' and if so, is it more natural than to say 'X wa Y ni V-teiru'?
If yes to both questions, activity. (e.g., John wa soko de neteiru. 'John is sleeping there.')
If no, resultative state (and therefore the verb is achievement). (e.g., John wa soko ni/de sundeiru. 'John lives there.')
(b) Is it possible to say V-hajimeru without iteration involved?
If yes, activity. (e.g., hanasi-hajimeru 'start talking')
If no, resultative state (and therefore the verb is achievement). (e.g., *suwari-hajimeru 'start sitting')
(c) Does it have 'simultaneous activity' reading in the frame 'V-nagara'?
If yes, activity. (e.g., hanasi nagara 'while talking')
If no, may be resultative state (e.g., siri nagara 'although knowing')—but not necessarily, since this test also involves 'agency.'

Step 3: Accomplishment or achievement? (Punctual or non-punctual) If test (a) does not work, apply test (b), and possibly (c).

(a) If 'X wa Y de V-ta' (Y=time; e.g., 10 minutes), does that entail X was involved in V-ing (i.e., V-teita) during that time?
If yes———→ Accomplishment (e.g., Kare wa go hun de itimai no e o kaita. 'He painted a picture in five minutes.')
If no———→ Achievement (e.g., Kare wa go hun de itimai no e ni kizuita. 'He noticed a picture in five minutes.')
(b) Can 'V-teiru' have the sense of 'action-in-progress'?
If yes———→ Accomplishment (e.g., Kare wa oyu o wakashiteiru. 'He is heating water until it boils.')
If no———→ Achievement (e.g., Kare wa sono e ni kizuiteiru. 'He has noticed the picture.')
(c) ‘X wa Y de V-daroo’ (Y=time; e.g., 10 minutes)→‘X wa Y goni V-daroo’
If no----→Accomplishment (e.g., Kare wa itijikan de e o kakudaroo ‘He will paint a picture after an hour’ is different from Kare wa itijikan go ni en o kakudaroo ‘He will paint a picture after an hour,’ because the former can mean he will spend an hour painting a picture, whereas the latter does not.)
If yes------→Achievement (e.g., Kare wa nihun de utai-hajimeru daroo ‘He will start singing in two minutes’ can have only one reading, which is the same as in Kare wa nihungo ni utai-hajimeru daroo ‘He will start singing after two minutes,’ with no other reading possible.)

For the reliability issue, all ambiguous cases were discussed with a second experienced coder who was familiar with the studies on L2 acquisition of tense-aspect morphology. Disagreements were resolved by discussion.

Both type and token counts will be provided in the current study. In type count only the verb type is counted no matter how frequently it occurs, while in token count every occurrence of each verb is counted and the total number of occurrence of each morpheme is added. A discrepancy has been found between Shibata (1998a) and Shirai & Kurono (1998). The findings from the former and the latter came from type and token counts respectively. The results from both studies suggest that it is necessary to examine the distributional pattern in both type and token counts to provide a solid basis for the study of L2 tense-aspect morphology.

2.4.2. Semantic relationship
In the present study the te-marked clauses were divided into four groups: Temporal, Simultaneous, Reason, and others. The situation in which two actions/events occur sequentially regardless of time lapse between them was referred to as Temporal. Simultaneous was the situation in which two actions/events occur at the same time. The contrast relationship as presented in (8d) was included in Simultaneous. The te-clause was categorized as Simultaneous when the te-form and its following clause have a coreferential subject, and the te-conjunction could be replaced by the nagara-conjunction ‘while’ as shown below:

(12) a. shika wa otoko no ko o atama ni nose-TE, hashit-ta.
deer TOP boy ACC head on put-te run-PAST
‘The deer ran with the boy on his head.’

b. shika wa otoko no ko o atama ni nose-NAGARA,
deer TOP boy ACC head on put-nagara hashit-ta.
run-PAST ‘The deer ran with the boy on his head.’

Reason was the situation when the previous action/event clearly causes the following one. Although it includes temporally sequenced situation, the temporally sequenced actions/events do not necessarily have cause-effect relationship. Finally, the te-marked clauses which could not be categorized into any of three were classified as others.

2.4.3. Grouding analysis
The events in the story may be not only linearly ordered in terms of temporal relationship but also
hierarchically related to the story goal. That is, some story events are more importantly or directly related to the primary goal than others. Trabasso and Sperry (1985) claimed that the events which had causes and consequences leading to the goal of the story tended to be judged important. Van den Broek, (1988) found that the reader tended to consider a statement more important when it had more connections to other statements and was more directly related to the primary goal. Applying the notion of importance to the grounding distinction in addition to temporal sequence, the following criteria were utilized in order to identify foreground:

(i) Is the event temporally sequential?
(ii) Is the event significant in achieving the thematic goal in the story?

The predicates that satisfy criteria (i) and (ii), or (ii) were categorized as foreground. Events temporally ordered but not significantly related to the global theme were categorized as background. That is, those that meet only (i) were not considered foreground. For example, the statement buutsu o hai-TE, mori e it-TA ‘after wearing a pair of boots, he went to the woods,’ two phrases buutus o hai-TE ‘wearing a pair of boots’ and mori e it-TA ‘went to the woods’ are temporally ordered. They describe a scene from the story utilized for the present study. The first phrase is considered insignificant since the protagonist’s action of putting on his boots does not directly influence the primary goal and the story line goes forward without it. That is, the omission of the first phrase does not change the story line. Thus, it was categorized as background. On the other hand, the second action should be considered significant since the omission of this action causes the story line to break down. The clauses with past -ta and the te-conjunction were examined based on the above criteria.

Although all clauses were classified into foreground or background based on the above criteria, the past morpheme -ta and the nonfinite form -te are reported in the next section since the current research focuses on the te-form and compares it with past. The current study shows percentages of distribution. The comparison of raw frequencies from each group may not be appropriate since the number of predicates differed among the groups.

3. Results and discussion
3.1. The te-conjunction on lexical aspect

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the use of the te-conjunction in narratives from four groups. The te-conjunction tended to be associated with achievement verbs most frequently in narratives by intermediate learners, advanced learners, and natives: 56% by both intermediate and advanced groups respectively and 69% by natives from type count, and 55% by intermediate group, 51% by the advanced, and 71% by natives from token count. This tendency was not observed in novice learners’ narratives. They associated the re-form with both activity and achievement verbs with the similar frequency: 43% of activity verbs and 45% of achievement verbs from type count, and 45% and 43% from token count. The comparison of raw frequency shows that they were not productive in the use of -te with the exception of two learners. Learner 10 associated -te with activity verbs more often than achievement verbs (10 activity verbs and 7 achievement verbs, 12 and 10 based on tokens), while learner 15 did the opposite association (4 activity verbs vs. 9 achievement verbs, 5 activity verbs vs. 9 achievement verbs from token count). Due to their performance, the tendency of novice learners is not decisive.
Figure 1: Percentage of the *te*-conjunction used by four groups (type)

![Distribution of *te*-conjunction (type counts)](image)

Figure 2: Percentage of the *te*-conjunction used by four groups (token)

![Distribution of *te*-conjunction (token counts)](image)

The past form *-ta* also occurred with achievement verbs most frequently across the groups: 61% by novices, 60% by the intermediate group, 62% by the advanced group, and 63% by the native speakers from type count, and 60% by novices, 59% by the intermediate group, 60% by the advanced group, and 61% by the native speakers according to token count. This tendency has been recognized in previous studies on acquisition of both L1 and L2 tense-aspect morphology. Shirai & Anderse (1995) proposed that each of Vendler’s four verb categories can be characterized in terms of the semantic features telic, punctual and dynamic. Telic refers to having a clear end point, punctual having no duration, and dynamic being continuous as long as the energy keeps to be provided. Achievement verbs are [+telic], [+punctual], and [+dynamic]. Further, they suggested that the prototypical features of past were [+telic], [+punctual], and
Considering the fact that children limit their use of past tense to punctual events such as *fall, drop,* and *break,* Taylor (1989) claimed that the central meaning of past tense might be "completion in the immediate past of a punctual event (i.e., achievement), the consequences of which are perceptually salient at the moment of speaking" (p.243). Given his proposal, it is plausible that past marking is attracted to achievement verbs since they share the semantic features, [+telic] and [+punctual].

Adopting the claim in Bullock et al. (1982) that humans 'bracket' sequences of discrete situations in certain ways, Hasegawa (1996) proposed that the fundamental usage of *-te* is to express such bracketed situations, which reflect our innate perception of physical and psychological reality. Given her proposal, it is plausible to assume that the standard semantic characterization of *-te* is boundedness or perfective like past morpheme *-ta*. The frequent association between the *te*-conjunction and achievement verbs above suggests that the prototypical semantic features of the *te*-conjunction also include [+telic], [+punctual], and [+result].

These semantic features carried by the *te*-conjunction match with those in achievement verbs, which enhances their frequent association. This is a prototypical association for the *te*-conjunction, indicating the completion of a punctual event or wholeness of event/action.

### 3.2. Semantic characteristics of *-te* in L2 narratives

This section reports the semantic differences in the use of the *te*-conjunction among the groups. Figure 3 does not show any particular differences. The usage of **Temporal** was the most frequent across the proficiency levels: 42% by novice, 52% by the intermediate, 51% by the advanced, and 50% by the native. The *te*-form marks the temporally ordered events in a narrative like the past morpheme *-ta*.

**Figure 3: Semantic distribution of the gerund *-te***

![Image of bar graph showing the percentage of *te*-form distribution across proficiency levels](image)

Watanabe (1994) reported that 83% of the subject was the same in the *te*-clause and its following clause. The present study further investigated whether there would be any difference in the subject according to the semantics of the *te*-clause. Table 2 presents the different (DS) or same subject (SS) between the *te*-clause and its following clause. **Temporal** shows a strong SS characteristic throughout...
proficiency levels: 85% in the novice group, 87% in the intermediate group, 89% in the advanced, and 94% in the native. On the other hand, Simultaneous shows that the different subjects appear in narratives by both novice and intermediate groups (64% and 63%) while the same subjects appear in the advanced and native groups (54% and 74%). When the te-clause and its following clause have the different subject, it indicates a contrast relation, which term is used in A Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar (1986).

Table 2: Same subject vs. different subject in the TE-clause and the following clause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Temporal</th>
<th>Simultaneous</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DS SS</td>
<td>DS SS</td>
<td>DS SS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>3 17</td>
<td>7 4</td>
<td>3 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(15%) (85%)</td>
<td>(64%) (36%)</td>
<td>(23%) (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>7 50</td>
<td>17 10</td>
<td>10 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12%) (87%)</td>
<td>(63%) (37%)</td>
<td>(67%) (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>13 110</td>
<td>25 29</td>
<td>27 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11%) (89%)</td>
<td>(46%) (54%)</td>
<td>(51%) (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>5 79</td>
<td>10 28</td>
<td>17 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6%) (94%)</td>
<td>(26%) (74%)</td>
<td>(40%) (60%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The excerpts for the different subjects with Simultaneous meaning are as follows:

(13) Novice 5:

Otoko no ko wa let's see, eh mogura mogura no ana ni sagashi-TE,
Boy TOP mole mole POSS hole into look for-te
Inu wa hachi no su ni sagashi-mashita.
Dog TOP bees POSS hive into look for-PAST
'The boy looked for the frog in the mole’s hole, and the dog did in the bee hive.'

(14) Intermediate 34:

(otoko no ko wa) ookii koe mou ichi do ookii koe anou
loud voice once more loud voice well
'kaeru, doko i-masu ka, doko i-masu ka’ to kii-TE,
frog, where exist-NONPAST Q, where exist-NONPAST Q that ask-te
Inu no chotto ishi no ushiro de sagas-u.
dog also well rock POSS behind look for-NPST
'The boy asked with a loud voice ‘Frog, where are you?’ and the dog also looked for the frog behind the rock.'

In both (13) and (14) the actions by the boy and the dog were contrast.

The advanced group and the native speakers of Japanese showed the more frequent use of Simultaneous with the same subject than the one with the different subject.
(15) Advanced 47:

'Doko ni i-ru ka, kaeru wa to omot-TE,'
where exist-NONPAST Q, frog TOP that think-te
ano, kutsu no naka ni chotto mi-te,
well, shoe POSS inside little bit look-at-te
demo kaeru ga i-nakat-ta n-desu.
But frog NOM exist-NEG-PAST PRED
'The boy) looked for the frog in the shoe with wondering where the frog was, but the frog was not
there.'

In (15) the first te-clause shows that the actions of wondering where the frog was and looking for the frog
in the shoe occur simultaneously. And the second te-clause indicates the temporally sequenced actions of
looking for the frog and finding that the frog is not in the shoe. The te-conjunction in both (15) and (16)
can be replaced with the nagara-conjunction 'while' without changing the meaning.

The te-conjunction with the contrast meaning does not differentiate significant and insignificant
events. The equal value should be given to the event described in the te-clause and the one in its following
clause. Intuitively, in (13) and (14) the action by the boy, which was marked by the te-conjunction, is not
perceived insignificant. It is unreasonable to argue that one of two actions is more significant than the other.
On the other hand, Simultaneous with the same subject indicates that the te-clause marks the thematically
insignificant event. The actions of wondering in (15) and holding the branch in (16) do not necessarily
provide significant information for a plot development.

I counted the predicates with -te as Reason when the te-conjunction could be replaced by the finite
form followed by node or kara 'because' as presented in (17).

(17) a. Advanced 58 [picture 11]:

Kodomo ga bikkurishi-TE,
child NOM get surprised-te
ki kara ochi-TA, ochi-MASHITA.
tree from fall-PAST fall-PAST
'The child fell off the tree because he got surprised.'

b. Rewrite (17) with the finite verbs and node 'because'

Kodomo ga bikkurishi-TA NODE,
child NOM get surprised-PAST because
ki kara ochi-TA, ochi-MASHITA.
'the child fell off the tree because he got surprised.'

In (17) the event of the boy’s getting surprised triggers the next event of his falling off the tree. The te-form with the cause-effect meaning marks the significant events since they cause the consequent event(s) in constructing the story. The story does not move forward without the te-clauses.

3.3. Textual function of the nonfinite form -te

I have presented that both -ta and -te have the semantic features of [+telic], [+punctual], and [+result] indicating the completion of a punctual event or wholeness of event/action, and both mark the temporally ordered events. Now the question is whether they function in narrative discourse differently, and if so, how. By examining the occurrences of -ta and -te in narratives, it is revealed that the te-conjunction tended to be used in order to relate the events recognized in a single scene as shown in Table 3. In the most cases the te-conjunction did not coincide with a picture boundary but occurred to connect the events in a single picture. The past form -ta, on the other hand, tended to coincide with a picture boundary.

Table 3: Percentage of frequency of -te that relates the episodes in a single picture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency level</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The followings are the actual excerpts from the narratives.

(18) Intermediate 24 [Picture 5]:

Kodomo, otoko no ko wa mado o ake-TE,
child, boy TOP window ACC open-te
ookii koe de Kuroki, Kuroki o yobi-MASHITA.
Loud voice with ACC call-PAST
'The boy opened the window and called Kuroki with a loud voice.'

(19) Advanced 41 [Picture 1]:

Kore no petto ni shi-yoo to omot-TE,
this also pet keep as-MOD that think-te
mazu, eeto, saisho wa, heya a, heya juu ni ano, etto, sagashi-TE,
first of all, well, first, room, oh, room around well, well, look for-te
etto, bin o nituske-TE,
well, jar ACC find-te
soshite, eeto, kono kaeru o tuskan-DE,
then, well this frog ACC grab-te
bin o, bin ni ire-TE,
jar ACC jar into put-te
etto, zutto, petto toshite ka-oo to omot-TA.
well, for a long time pet as keep-MOD that think-PAST
'(The boy) thought that he wanted to keep this as a pet as well, looked around the room, found the jar, grabbed the frog, put it in the jar, and thought that he wanted to have the frog as his pet for a long time.'

(20) Advanced 43 [Picture 11];
Soshite Piitaak-kun, ki no, ki ni nobot-TE,
And Peter tree POSS tree on climb-te
Ki no ana ni mi-TE,
Tree POSS hole into look-te
'kaeru-chan koko ni i-masen ka, koko ni i-masu ka' to frog here exist-NEG Q here exist-NPST Q that
yobi-MASHITA.
call-PAST
'And Peter climbed the tree, looked inside the hole on the tree, and called the frog into there.'

The excerpt in (18) describes picture 5, where the boy is calling the frog from the window. It is more natural to open the window first, and then call the frog from there than the reversed order. Although the action of opening the window is not depicted, it is possible to infer this action from the depicted situation in which the window is open. In (19), there are six bracketed events recognized: thinking about keeping the frog as his another pet, looking for something to keep him, finding a jar, grabbing him, putting him in the jar, and thinking about having him as his pet for a long time. The scene in the picture 1 is that the boy and his dog are looking at the frog in the jar. This advanced learner narrated the process of the frog ending up being in the jar by connecting all actions inferred from the depicted scene by means of the te-conjunction. The sequential order of these actions is natural to our interpretation based on our script knowledge. The scene described in (20) is that the boy is calling the frog on the tree. The actions of climbing the tree and looking inside the hole on the tree are not depicted but inferred from the scene in the picture.

Throughout the excerpts, the event marked with the past form -ta is a necessary event in order to construct the story. Keeping the frog as a pet in picture 1, calling the frog from the window in picture 5, and calling the frog into the hole on the tree in picture 11 are significant to move the story line forward. In other words, the scene depicted shows the thematically significant event to achieve the story goal, which is finding the missing frog. On the other hand, the events marked with the te-conjunction provide additional information inferred from the situation recognized in a single picture and related to the significant event depicted. The sub-events can be sequentially related based on our ‘culturally-shared, conventional, generic knowledge of sequential action schemata’ (Givón, 1995, p.50). For instance, in (18) the action of opening the window is not depicted but it is possible to imagine that the boy opened it before calling his missing frog from there based on our sequential action schemata.

I contend that the past form -ta is used to mark a significant event related to a global theme of a story, while the te-conjunction is used to mark the sub-events eventually related to the thematically significant
event. The sub-events could be omitted since they are not necessarily relevant to the thematic goal of the story. In the above excerpts, the story possibly goes forward without the te-clause. In this respect the te-clause provides background information. Yet the information would be helpful to bridge the significant events so that the story moves forward smoothly. The findings support Saul (1986) and Ono (1990). In the former study, the participants tended to use the finite form of the verb when they perceived a strong thematic break among the pictures. The strong thematic break could be equal to each significant event. Ono reported that the finite form coincided with a picture boundary, and its tendency was less observed in the te-clause. He assumed that the picture boundaries represented conceptual breaks of one or less the same degree at some level.

I have argued that the past form -ta and the te-conjunction have functional difference in discourse organization although both mark the event boundary. This difference, however, emerges gradually along proficiency. As presented in Figure 4 and Figure 5, the past morpheme was used at the early stage of acquisition, while the use of the te-conjunction gradually occurred. Figure 4 shows the percentage of tense-aspect morphology used to describe picture 11 in which the boy is calling his frog into the hole on the tree. The event of the boy climbing the tree before calling his missing frog into the hole on the tree was inferred from the depicted situation, and this event was marked by both the te-conjunction and the past morpheme -ta with different frequency depending on proficiency. That is, along proficiency the use of -te to describe the sub-event increased (20% by novices, 67% by the intermediate group, and 78% by the advanced) while the use of the past morpheme decreased (40% by novices, 33% by the intermediate group, and 22% by the advanced).

Figure 4: Percentage of verbal inflections to describe picture 11

![Diagram showing the distribution of tense-aspect morphology in picture 11](image)

Note: there were only two natives to describe this process so their tokens were omitted.

Another example is from picture 12 in which the owl comes out from the hole and the boy falls off the tree. Interestingly, the event of the boy falling off the tree was exclusively marked with the past tense morphology across the levels; 82% for the novice group, 90% for the intermediate group, and 100% for the advanced group. On the other hand, as shown in Figure 5 the event of the owl coming out from the hole...
was gradually marked by the te-conjunction: 6% by novice learners, 12% by the intermediate group, 35% by the advanced, and 67% by natives.

Figure 5: Percentage of verbal inflections to describe picture 12

The above patterns, however, do not mean that novice learners do not differentiate significant and insignificant events conceptually. The further investigation is necessary with respect to the inquiry of whether novice learners linguistically distinguish these two types of narrative events, and if so, how.

In sum the te-conjunction tends to be used to describe temporally ordered events which are not necessarily significant in a plot line. The developmental process observed in the current study shows that at the early stage of acquisition the past form -ta marks the temporally sequent events regardless of thematic significance, and gradually the te-form emerges to distinguish the insignificant narrative events from the significant ones in terms of the thematic goal of the story. However, the clauses with -te should be considered foreground when they carry the cause-effect meaning. They cause the sequent events in constructing the story so they are thematically necessary. In this sense, the Japanese nonfinite form -te marks both foreground and background depending on the meaning that it carries in narrative discourse.

4. Conclusion

The present study investigated the use of the te-conjunction in the narrative discourse by the English-speaking learners of Japanese. The following findings were reported:

a. Like past marking, the te-conjunction was frequently associated with achievement verbs, marking completion of a punctual event. The prototypical features of -te are [+telic], [+punctual], and [+result].

b. The use of the te-conjunction increased to mark the chronologically sequent yet thematically insignificant narrative events along proficiency.

To my knowledge, the use of nonfinite forms has never been investigated in the area of L2 tense-
aspect morphology acquisition. Previous studies focused on the finite forms. The present study revealed the functional difference between the past form -ta and the te-clause in narrative discourse although both of them marked boundedness of an event/action. One may claim that the te-form indicates the backgrounded events. However, it is emphasized that it depends on the meaning that the nonfinite form -te carries in narrative. The foreground/background distinction by -te is summarized in the following table.

Table 4: Foreground/background distinction by -te

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreground</th>
<th>Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Temporal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous with a different subject</td>
<td>Simultaneous with a coreferential subject</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 4, Reason and Simultaneous with a different subject mark foreground. However, this is the case only when the consequent event(s) described in the following clause are thematically significant for a plot development. Temporal and Simultaneous with a coreferential subject mark background. The te-clauses with Temporal indicate the temporally ordered yet thematically insignificant events.

In the current study, the clause was counted as foreground when it was marked with node or kara 'because' or replaced with it in case of -te, indicating reason. But it was background when the event/action/situation denoted in the clause did not trigger any sequent event leading to the goal achievement. Tomlin (1984, 1985) pointed out a circularity problem, that is, a certain linguistic presentation marks the foreground/background distinction or a narrative perspective triggers the certain linguistic marking. He claimed that the pertinent syntactic forms and semantic/pragmatic functions should be identified independently of one another. However, the present study shows that it is difficult to make determination of grounding completely independently of verbal morphology in narratives.

Finally, I will mention the pedagogical implications in terms of modality. There was an interesting functional difference observed in the use of the te-clause by the non-native and native speakers of Japanese. Through the close examination of non-native speakers' discourse, there were some cases in which the to-clause would be more appropriate to connect two situations than the te-clause.

(21) Intermediate 32 [picture 3]:

Tsugi no hi ni asa ni inu to kodomo wa oki-TE,
Next POSS day on morning on dog and child TOP wake up-te
ano, kaeru wa, kaeru ga i-masen.
Well, frog TOP frog NOM exist-NPST:NEG
‘Next morning the dog and the child woke up, and there was no frog.’

(22) Advanced 51 [picture 22]:

Hantai gawa o mi-TE,
Opposite side ACC look-te
Kaeru futari wa i-mashita.
Frog two TOP exist-PAST
‘(The boy and the dog) looked for behind (of the log), and found two frogs there.’
Watanabe (1994) reported that the to-conjunction marked action/event discontinuity since the following clause indicates the unpredictable action/event from the previous one. Following this framework, it is more appropriate to connect two clauses in (21) with the to-conjunction, that is, when a boy wakes (and probably looks up at the jar where he put the frog in the previous night) (clause 1), the frog is gone (clause 2). The protagonist does not expect the frog to escape the jar at all. Another example is that the protagonist finds the frog behind the log as described in (22). When he looks for the frog behind the log, he does not expect to find it although he does hope to do so. In terms of the notion of unexpectedness the to-conjunction marks the narrator's intent.

The speaker's attitude or state of knowledge about a proposition is normally expressed with a modality marker. The to-conjunction indicates the speaker's unexpectedness or her/his assessment of the content of the proposition denoted in the clause following the to-clause. The -te was overused in the situation where the boy finds the frog gone from the jar in picture 3 and the boy finds it behind the log in picture 22 as shown in (21) and (22) above. This use persisted at the later stage of acquisition: 2 out of 3 uses in novice learners, 5 out of 7 by intermediate learners, 8 out of 13 by advanced learners. Although the advanced learners in the present study differentiated the thematically significant and insignificant narrative events, they tended to overuse the nonfinite form -te. Their behavior shows that modal functions of verbal inflections do not emerge until the much later stage of acquisition. Thus, the instruction should be provided to help the advanced learners develop the modal use of verbal inflections.

(1) This term came from Watanabe (1994). Researchers, however, use the different term: Kuno (1973) used the shi-form, Inoue (1984) infinitive ending, Iwasaki (1993) ren yoo-kee, and Ono (1990) the i-clause.

(2) List of abbreviations: ACC = Accusative, DRTV = Durative, NEG = Negative, NOM = Nominative, NPST = Non-past, PAST = Past, POSS = Possessive, PRED = predicate, PROG = Progressive, TOP = Topical

(3) Makino and Tsutsui used the term 'unexpected' instead of the paradox in A Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar. Consider the following example from A Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar:

(i) Tomuwa itsumo ason-de i-TE, tesuto ga deki-ru.

   TOP always play around-habitual-te, test NOM do well-NPST

'Tom plays around yet he always does well on tests.'

As shown in the English translation, the te-conjunction indicates the paradox with 'yet or but' rather than unexpectedness.

(4) Shibata (1998b) is excluded since in her study the L2 learners were advanced so that the Aspect Hypothesis does not apply to account for their distributional patterns of tense-aspect morphology.

(5) Two experiments in this study were initially reported in Kurono (1994) and Shirai (1995) respectively.

(6) There is, however, no correspondence between grounding and a single linguistic feature. That means Hopper found other features to mark either foreground or background in addition to the single linguistic property. For example, in Old English, active and punctual verbs tend to appear in the foreground in addition to the word-order property. Myhill and Hibiya (1988) also made a similar claim that individual forms are not simply associated with 'foreground' or 'background' but rather with particular features of foreground and background. They considered continuation of the same subject, chronological ordering, perfective aspect, and human subject as foreground features.
Shibata (1998a) and Shibata (1998b) included the nonfinite form -te in the analysis of tense-aspect morphology. But it was not focused on and the details were not discussed in either study.

Originally 62 learners participated. But 3 participants were excluded because their native languages were not English (i.e., Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese) since this study focused on English natives learning Japanese.

Dr. Tohsaku Yasuhiko kindly allowed me to use this test for the current study.

In both the second and foreign language learning situations, the reliability and validity of SPOT have been examined. Kobayashi and Ford (1992) found that there was high correlation between SPOT and the grammar section of the placement test used at the University of Tuskuba in Japan. Hatasa and Tohsaku (1997), investigating the test quality and applicability of SPOT at a foreign language learning environment, reported that the high discriminability and reliability estimates demonstrate that SOPT is effective as a placement test of Japanese in the U.S. What does SPOT measure, then? The on-going processing of language is involved to process the item in SPOT. A learner needs to match sounds coming into her/his auditory system and letters appearing in the test, comprehend the word meaning, predict what is coming next, retain the words and syntactic information s/he has comprehended, and actually write down a hiragana letter. Only the grammatical knowledge does not successfully complete the task.

It is necessary to consider the context in which the predicate occurs when extracting it. The verb could be either activity or achievement, or activity or accomplishment depending on the object or the postpositional phrase. For example, the verb hashiru 'run' could be activity if there is no postpositional phrase occurring with it and accomplishment if there is.

(i) John wa hashit-TA. [Activity]
  TOP run-PAST
  'John ran.'

(ii) John wa eki made hashit-TA. [Accomplishment]
  TOP station to run-PAST
  'John ran to the station.'

The verbal phrase hashit-ta 'ran' in (i) is the activity verb while the one in (ii) is the accomplishment because the postpositional phrase eki made 'to the station' marks the endpoint, and the action of running continues until he arrives at the station.

The nature of the object also changes the verb type. For example, nigeru 'run away' could be activity or achievement depending on what you run away from. Consider the following examples:

(iii) Inu wa hachi kara nige-TA [Activity]
  dog TOP bees from runaway-PAST
  'The dog ran away from the bees.'

(iv) kaeru wa bin kara nige-TA [Achievement]
  frog TOP jar from run away-PAST
  'The frog ran away from the jar.'

In the situation described in (iii), the bees follow along with the object that they are chasing so nigeru 'run away' expresses the process. On the other hand, we perceive the situation in (iv) as inceptive
aspect. Following our common knowledge that bin ‘the jar’ does not move, our interpretation is that
the jar indicates the starting point of running away from.

There are cases in which verbs could be classified as either activity or achievement, such as hoeru ‘bark’ and yusuru ‘shake.’ When these verbs occur with the durative morpheme -te i-ru, the situation
is iterative.

(v) inu ga hoe-te i-ru.
dog NOM bark-DRTV-NPST
‘A dog is barking.’

(vi) inu ga ki o yusu-te i-ru.
dog NOM tree ACC shake-DRTV-NPST
‘A dog is shaking a tree.’

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**日本の学習者のナラティブ・ディスコースにおける「シテ」形接続の使い方**

柴田 美 紀

**要 約**

英語を母国語とする日本語学習者を対象に、物語の中で使われる「シテ」形接続（例：食べて、見て、等）が動詞の持つアスペクト的特徴に影響されるか、また物語全体で一つの出来事をどのように位置付けるかによって「シテ」形接続の使用が影響されるかを調査した。

学習者と母国語話者が24枚の続きの絵を見て、物語を作ってもらい、その中に使われている動詞述語を分析した。その結果、本研究の学習者とは違った動詞に「シテ」形接続を頻繁に用いる傾向が見られた。また、到達動詞は過去形にも頻繁に変化される傾向が見られた。その両者を比較した結果、物語のテーマには直接関係しないが、物語の主要な出来事の補足説明をする事柄に「シテ」形接続を、物語をすすめる際の必要な出来事に過去形「タ」を使用する傾向が見られた。動詞接続形式における第二言語習得の先行研究がこれまで報告されていないので、本研究はその先駆けとなり、意義ある研究と言える。

**キーワード：**「シテ」形接続・動詞のアスペクト的特徴・話し
### Appendix: Subject profiles by group

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Subj. #</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>SPOT score</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Length of learning Japanese</th>
<th>Starting where</th>
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</table>

*They were working in Japan at the time of data collection.

** Subjects 1, 10, 37, 41, and 43 never received any formal instruction of Japanese. They learned Japanese through self-study.

***Subject 56 had 2-year formal instruction of Japanese. He had lived in Japan for 13 years.