The acquisition of the imperfective aspect marker by L2 learners of Japanese

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Terminology

L1 : first language

L2 : Second language
(any language learned after learning the L1)
Aspect

- Grammatical item for expressing temporal concepts (c.f. tense)
- Japanese aspect marker
  -- te i -(ru)

ex. Ken-ga utat-te i-ru.
  Ken-NOM sing-PROG-NONPAST
  “Ken is singing.”
Inherent Aspect (Vendler 1967)

State verb  ___________  love, know
Activity verb  ~~~~~~~~~~~~  run, eat
Accomplishment verb

~~~~~~~~~~~ X  make a chair
Achievement verb  X  die, drop
Aspect Hypothesis: Acquisition order
(Shirai 1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Accomplishment</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past (−ed, −ta)</td>
<td>4 ← 3 ← 2 ← 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive (−ing, −te i−ru)</td>
<td>? ← 1 ← 2 ← 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Basic meanings of -te i-ru

- Action in progress:
  ex. Ken-ga utat-te i-ru.
  “Ken is singing.”

- Resultative state:
  ex. Booru-ga oti-te i-ru.
  ball-NOM fall-IMP-NONPAST
  “The ball has fallen (and is still there).”
Basic meanings of -te i-ru

- **Action in progress:** Activity verb + -te i-ru
  
ex. Ken-ga utat-te i-ru.
  
  “Ken is singing.”

- **Resultative state:** Achievement verb + -te i-ru
  
ex. Booru-ga oti-te i-ru.
  
  ball-NOM fall-IMP-NONPAST
  
  “The ball has fallen (and is still there).”
Previous studies in L2 Japanese -te i-ru

⋯Support Aspect Hypothesis

Action in progress → Resultative state
(Koyama 2003; Kurono 1995; Sheu 1997, 2000; Shibata 2001; Shirai & Kurono 1998; Sugaya 2002 and so on.)
Input frequency

c.f. Native speakers of English
   Activity + -\textit{ing} > Achievement + -\textit{ing}

Native speakers of Japanese
   Activity + -\textit{te i-ru} < Achievement + -\textit{te i-ru}

-> Effect of L1? Instruction ? (Shirai 2000)
Can existence of progressive marker facilitate the acquisition of action in progress meaning of *-te i-ru*?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Action in progress</th>
<th>Habitual/generic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Ken-ga *utat-<em>te i-ru.</em></td>
<td>Ken-ga zyoozuni utau.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Ken is <em>singing.</em></td>
<td>Ken sings well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>Ken <em>singt.</em></td>
<td>Ken <em>singt</em> gut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>Кэн <em>пoёт.</em></td>
<td>Кэн пoёт gut.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*utat-*te i-ru.* means Ken is singing in Japanese, while *singt.* means Ken sings in German.
Sugaya & Shirai (2007)

- L1 progressive (English)
  - higher: n=12, lower: n=14

- L1 progressive (German, Russian, Ukrainian)
  - higher: n=15, lower: n=20

- Acceptability judgment test
- Oral picture description task
Result: Sugaya & Shirai (2007)

• Acceptability test: No L1 effect
  Action in progress $\triangleright$ Resultative state

• Oral task

+L1 progressive, high: Action in progress $\triangleright$ Resultative state

  low: Action in progress $\triangleright$ Resultative state

-L1 progressive, high: Action in progress $\triangleright$ Resultative state

  low: Action in progress = Resultative state
Ishida (2004)

- L2 Japanese @Hawaii, n=4  
  (L1: English, Chinese)
- Conversation data, 4 weeks
- Results ... Overall accuracy score

Action in progress < Resultative state

1st data  14% : 40%
last data  43% : 90%
Ishida (2004) ... Why?

- Effect of instruction order?
  Resultative state \( \rightarrow \) Action in progress
  (introduced 4 month later)

- Can instruction affect the acquisition order?
  ‘instruction does not seem able to alter acquisition sequences,’ but ‘has positive effects on the rate at which learners acquire the language...and on their ultimate level of attainment.’ (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991:321)
Further Research: Effect of L1

- Comparison of L1 groups

  - L2 Japanese (L1 progressive, ex. English)
  - L2 Japanese (L1 non-progressive, ex. Russian)

  Resultative state, Action in progress and Habitual meanings
Further Research: Effect of L1

- Bidirectional study

L2 Japanese (L1 Russian)
L2 Russian (L1 Japanese)
Further Research: Effect of Instruction

- Instruction order experiment

Action in progress $\rightarrow$ Resultative state

Resultative state $\rightarrow$ Action in progress

- Preferably, foreign language environments.

(Ishida 2004)
References


