

# 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)

	State	Activity	Accomplishment	Achievement
Past (-ed, - <i>ta</i> )	4 ←	3 ←	2 ←	1
Progressive (-ing, - <i>te i-ru</i> )	?	1 →	2 →	3

## 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; Kuroono 1995; Sheu 1997, 2000; Shibata 2001; Shirai & Kuroono 1998; Sugaya 2002 and so on.)



## Input frequency

*c.f.* Native speakers of English

Activity + **-ing** > Achievement + **-ing**

Native speakers of Japanese

Activity + **-te i-ru** < Achievement + **-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*?

	Action in progress	Habitual/generic
Japanese	<i>Ken-ga utat-<b>te i-ru</b>.</i>	<i>Ken-ga zyoozuni utau.</i>
English	Ken is sing <b>ing</b> .	Ken sings well.
German	Ken <b>singt</b> .	Ken <b>singt</b> gut.
Russian	К э н п о ё т .	К э н п о ё т х о р о ш о .

## 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 > Resultative state

- Oral task

+L1 progressive, high: Action in progress > Resultative state

low: Action in progress > Resultative state

-L1 progressive, high: Action in progress > 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

1<sup>st</sup> data      14% : 40%

last data      43% : 90%

## Ishida (2004) ... Why?

- Effect of instruction order?

Resultative state → 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 → Resultative state  
Resultative state → Action in progress

···Preferably, foreign language environments.

(Ishida 2004)

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