

While both Japanese and English have a grammatical form denoting the progressive, the two forms (*te-iru* and *be+ing*) are linked differently to the inherent semantics of the verb to which they attach (cf. Jacobsen, 1992; Kindaichi, 1950; McClure, 1993, 1995; Ogihara, 1998; Shirai, 2000). In Japanese, change of state (COS) predicates such as arrive are incompatible with a progressive interpretation, allowing only for a resultative interpretation of V+ *te-iru* as in (1). Yet with activity predicates such as run in (2), a progressive reading is preferred.

(1) Hikoki-ga kuko-ni tui-te-iru
plane-NOM airport at arrive te-PRES
The plane (arrived and) is at the airport.

(2) Gakusei-ga hasit-te-iru
student-NOM run te-PRES
The student is running.
(Hirakawa, 2001)

While this aspectual form has been widely discussed in semantics, it is a relatively unexplored topic in second language (L2) acquisition (cf. Hirakawa, 2001 on *te-iru* and unaccusativity). We investigated the learnability issue that Japanese learners of English encounter in acquiring the progressive morpheme *be+ing*, whose interaction with lexical semantics is more restricted than its nearest L1 equivalent, *te-iru*.

Using an interpretation task, intermediate (N=38) and advanced (N=45) Japanese learners of English were tested on their interpretation of activity and COS predicates in both past progressive and simple past contexts.

Learners were asked to judge items such as the pairs in (3) and (4), determining whether or not the second sentence presents a possible continuation of the first sentence.

(3) The duck was swimming to the other side of the pond. It didn't reach the end. (L1 & L2 ok)
The duck swam to the other side of the pond. It didn't reach the end. (*L1 & *L2)

(4) The plane was arriving in Osaka at 3:00. The plane exploded in midair. (*L1, but L2 ok)
The plane arrived in Osaka at 3:00. The plane exploded in midair. (*L1 & *L2)

Primacy of Aspect (POA) models (cf. Andersen and Shirai, 1994) predict that at the initial stages, learners use past marking on achievement verbs and progressive marking on activity verbs. Under this model learners should perform better on progressive forms with activity and on past forms with COS verbs.

Models of lexical semantic transfer (cf. Juffs, 1996) also predict better performance on the progressive with activity verbs since they denote progressive readings in both the L1 and L2. On the other hand, for COS verbs, transfer of L1 lexical and morphosyntactic knowledge will block a progressive interpretation for L2 COS verbs because the nearest L1 equivalent is resultative. In the simple past, both activity and COS verbs in the L1 and L2 denote resultative readings. Accordingly, this model predicts equivalent performance on the two verb types.

Results indicate that neither model can by itself predict learners' performance. In the past progressive, mean percent correct on activity verbs (INT=38% SD=40.9, ADV=51% SD=40.5) was not significantly different than performance on COS verbs (INT=40% SD=29; ADV=56%

SD=37). This contradicts both POA and lexical transfer models, which predict better performance on activity verbs.

Results in the simple past lend support to the transfer model. Mean percent correct on activity verbs in the simple past context (INT=58% SD=42, ADV=79% SD=31) was not significantly different than performance on COS verbs (INT=62% SD=31, ADV=81% SD=19). Contra POA, learners do not show a preference for COS verbs in the simple past.

Our results suggest that transfer does not proceed by lexical semantics since independent of verb type, learners had significantly more difficulty with the past progressive than with the simple past ($F(1.84)=17.644$, $p=.000$). We argue that knowledge of L2 semantics-syntax correspondences proceeds on the basis of grammatical forms. When there is a match between form and meaning in the L1 and L2, as in the simple past, acquisition proceeds with relative ease. However, when there is a mismatch between form and meaning in the L1 and L2, as in the past progressive, even learners at advanced stages have difficulty.

We hypothesize that Japanese learners overgeneralize a resultative interpretation of the L1 syntactic structure *te-iru* onto its nearest L2 equivalent, allowing a resultative reading for the English progressive *be +ing* even when the comparable structure in Japanese denotes a progressive reading. Our proposal suggests that the perfective interpretation of *te-iru* may in fact be the default interpretation for native speakers of Japanese. Furthermore, we will discuss whether our results can shed light on issues in the semantics literature, such as how we can account for the fact that verbs like *dying* can denote a progressive interpretation in English, but not in Japanese.

- Andersen, R.W. and Shirai, Y. 1994. Discourse motivations for some cognitive acquisition principles. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 16, 133-156.
- Hirakawa, M. 2001. L2 Acquisition of Japanese Unaccusative Verbs. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 23, 221-245.
- Jacobsen, W. 1992. The Transitive Structure of Events in Japanese. Tokyo: Kurosio.
- Juffs, A. 1996. Learnability and the lexicon. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kindaichi, H. 1950. Kokugo Dooshi no Ichibunrui. *Gengo Kenkyuu* 15, 48-63.
- McClure, W. 1993. A semantic parameter: The progressive in Japanese and English. *Japanese Korean Linguistics* 3, 245-270. CSLI.
- McClure, W. 1995. *Syntactic projections of the semantics of aspect*. Tokyo: Hituzi Syobo.
- Okuda, Y. 1977. Asupekto no kenkyuu o megutte- Kindaichi teki dankai [On the study of aspect- the Kindaichi stage]. *Miyagi Kyooiku Daigaku Kokugo Kokubun* 8.
- Ogihara, T. 1998. The ambiguity of the *-te iru* form in Japanese. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics*, 7, 87-120.
- Ogihara, T. 1999. Tense and aspect. In N. Tsujimura (ed.) *The Handbook of Japanese Linguistics*, Blackwell, 321-348.
- Shirai, Y. 2000. The semantics of the Japanese imperfective *-teiru*: an integrative approach. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 32, 327-361.

