An Essay on the Segmentation of Situation in Japanese[*]
Katsuo Ichinohe

1. Introduction

My goal in this short essay is to reveal a way in which Japanese speakers segment situation (i.e., temporal relation) into units, the process of Situation Segmentation. It will be pursued through demonstrating a correlation among three phenomena which seemingly have no relation, exemplified in (1) - (3). For convenience, I call them respectively, *-ta* for event occurrence, progressive/resultative ambiguity of *-teiru*, and result cancellation.

(1) *-ta* for event occurrence:

    A,   ugoi-ta.

    Exclamation move-PAST

    'Oh! It moves.'

(2) Progressive/resultive ambiguity of the imperfective form *-teiru*:

    Mado-ga   aite-*teiru* / Mado-wo   ake-*teiru*.

    window-NOM open-IMPERF window-ACC open-IMPERF

    'A window is open. / I am opening the windows.'

(3) Result cancellation:

    Kodomo-wo okosi-ta   kedo oki-nakat-ta.

    child-ACC   wake- PAST but   wake-NEG-PAST

    'I tried to wake my child but he/she didn't.'

In particular, I would like to show what underlies them is a particular way of Situation Segmentation of Japanese: Native speakers of Japanese can focus on the beginning potion of an event, perceiving it as if the whole had completed. In a sense, this essay is a tentative proposal about the issue to what extent an event develops so that we can qualify it as a unit.[1]

In section 2 I discuss *-ta* for event occurrence and attempt to show what motivates the usage is a way in which Japanese speakers segment situation. In section 3, the analysis in the previous section is applied to the issue of ambiguous interpretation of *-teiru*. Section 4 deals with result cancellation

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[*] I am deeply indebted to TES reviewers for suggesting stylistic improvement. All remaining errors are my own.

[1] Tow terminological notes: I use the term *event* as an extremely general term, including any kinds of dynamic situation except static one; and the term *situation* is also used a theory-neutral term subsuming both dynamic and static situations.

in Japanese. The last section includes a brief summary and some speculations for future work.

2. -*Ta* for Event Occurrence

In this section, I will show that Japanese speakers can focus on the beginning portion of an event, describing it as if the whole had completed. The discussion is based on a careful examination of an intriguing usage of Japanese tense/aspectual marker -*ta*, which I call -*ta* for event occurrence. I assume this reflects the way in which Japanese speakers segment situation.

-*ta*, which follows a verb in "Ren'yookei," is basically a perfective, past tense marker, standing in contrast to non-past -*ru* in tense (past or non-past) and to -*teita* in perfectivity (perfective or imperfective).

There are, however, a number of usages of -*ta* that cannot be simply treated as referring to a past event. Among them is the one that is used to describe an event that is actually happening in the speaker's sight at the moment of speech. I name it -*ta* for event occurrence with the intention of expressing that the form is used to convey the meaning that an event has just occurred. As illustrated in (4), this is the form typically used in such situations as sports commentaries.

> (4) Pittyaa, nage-masi-ta.　　Battaa, omikiri hut-ta.
> 　　pitcher, throw-polite-PAST　batter　hard　swing-PAST
> 　　Lit. 'The pitcher threw.　The batter swung hard.'

In examples such as (4), there may be a good reason for using -*ta*. According to Comrie's distinction between perfectivity and imperfectivity, a perfective form often indicates the completion of a event (1976:19). -*ta* is a perfective marker, and the designated actions (i.e. pitching a ball and swinging hard), strictly speaking, have completed immediately before the moment of speech. Simply put, in (4) the perfective form -*ta* is used to indicate the completion of the event described.[2]

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[2] There is another fact that may relate to the use of -*ta* in such situations: Japanese can make no formal distinction with respect to Perfect and Preterit, as English. (Teramura (1984))

> (i) Tyuusyoku-wo moo　　tabe-ta/ sanjuppun　　maeni　tabe-ta.
> 　　lunch-ACC　　already　eat-PAST thirty-minutes　before　eat-PAST
> 　　'(I) have already eaten lunch/ ate lunch thirty minutes before.'

This fact may suggest the indifference to "Remoteness of time (Comrie (1976))" of

It is particularly noteworthy, however, that this usage is allowed even when the event described is still continuing. We would say as (5), for example, when comforting a baby, and at the moment of the utterance, (and even after the utterance,) the baby can be still laughing.

(5) A, warat-ta.
Exclamation laugh-PAST
Lit. 'Oh! You smiled.'

Present activity is usually incomplete, as Palmer points out (1987:58), and the incompleteness often motivates the use of the progressive form in English. Now, we face a problem: Why is it that in (5) the perfective form -*ta* is used for the technically incomplete event of a baby's laughing? I assume that the use of -*ta* in this example suggests the idea that the situation in question is viewed as completed. In other word, it reflects the way of Situation Segmentation in Japanese: Japanese speakers pay attention only to the beginning potion of an event, and given that the portion has completed, they can treat the whole event as completed. I name this beginning-as-whole segmentation. As a result, an event still continuing, like *wara-* in (5), can be treated as if the whole had completed.

There may be another factor to facilitate the use of the perfective form in this case. *Laughing* is an "action verb" in the sense of Vendler (1967). It is a homogeneous activity and the same event continues (for somehow interval) as far as it has begun. Therefore, it is reasonable that given the beginning portion, the whole event is treated as completed.

To clarify the point, a comment on the difference between Japanese and English will be helpful. In the case of sentence (4), it is certain that the activity *laugh* has begun. It might be a universal way to reason that a event in progress is at least partially completed. Note that also in English, *John is running* entails *John has run*; so-called imperfective paradox (cf. Dowty (1979)). Despite that, perfective forms such as past tense or present perfect form cannot be used in this case. I assume this reflects a difference in the way of segmenting event: The two languages differ in whether they treat the beginning of an event as its completion.

So far, I have attempted to show that the intriguing usage of the past/perfective marker -*ta* in Japanese is motivated by the

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Japanese: It does not discriminate "immediate past" from "remote past." This property of Japanese may make it possible to use -*ta* for a situation which is seemingly inadequate to be labeled as past, such as (4).

beginning-as-whole segmentation. In the following, I will argue this segmentation has non-trivial consequences to the other facts: Progressive / resultative ambiguity -*teiru* and result cancellation.

3. Imperfective Form -*teiru*

In the previous section I argued that Japanese speakers can focus the beginning portion of an event and qualify that part as the whole. In this section, I would like to show the way of Situation Segmentation in Japanese (at least partially) motivates the progressive/resultative ambiguity of the imperfective aspectual form -*teiru*.

In European languages, it is usual to make a morpho-syntactic distinction between the progressive and perfective/resultative aspectual meanings. There is a good reason for distinguishing them, because while a progressive sentence "zooms in" and takes an "internal view" of an event in the course of development, a perfective/resultative sentence describes a resultant, static situation after an event. The two aspectual forms correspond to two highly contrastive situations.

In Japanese, in contrast, both of them can be represented in terms of the same form -*teiru*

    (6) a. Kodomo-ga hasit-teiru.
             child-nom   run-IMPERF
             'A child is running.'
      b. Mado-ga   ai-teiru.
          window-nom open-IMPERF
          Lit. 'A window is opened.'

At first glance, this fact might be mysterious. Why is it that Japanese describes that opposing situations in terms of the single aspectual form? With the discussion in the previous section and some assumption about morphological history of -*te* of -*teiru*, however, this would be no longer surprising: I argue that both of the sentences in (6), in a sense, describe situations after the completion of an event. As for (6b), it will be intuitively clear that it is viewed as referring to the static situation resulted from the completion of *ake-ta* 'opened'. On the other hand, sentence (6a) describes the situation after the completion of the activity *hasit-ta* 'run'.

From a historical point of view, there seems to be a good reason for treating both meanings as sharing the notion of completion as the common core. It is well known that historically, both -*ta* and -*te* of -*teiru* derives

from -*tsu*, which is considered to have been a perfective form in classical Japanese. This suggests that the imperfective form was originally a resultant state marker. Fukushima (2000) observes that there were less examples of -*teiru* for activity in progress in middle Japanese and they were used mainly to express situations resulted from an event.

As for a continuous and homogeneous action like *hasir*-, for example, it includes no definite end point, and as a result, the focal part is most likely to be placed on the beginning portion of the event. On the other hand, an instantaneous action like *aker*- usually includes little duration and finishes instantly, leaving the evident result of window's opening. This leads naturally to the end point focus of such an event. A putative developmental process of the two-way ambiguity of -*teiru* is this: the imperfective form at first followed result-oriented verbs and was used only to describe resultant situations. It increasingly came into use with action-oriented verbs, which lead to establishing the progressive use. It should be clear that one of the factors that motivated the historical development and lead to the present ambiguity of -*teiru* is the beginning-as-whole view.

4. Cancellation of Implied Result

In this section, we turn to the issue of cancellation of a resultant state implied by verbs in Japanese. (Ikegami (1981)) I assume that when Japanese speakers interpret a result-cancel sentence, for a consistent interpretation they adjust the situation designated by the sentence, which is normally understood as containing not only an action but also a result state; in particular, their attention is distributed only to the action part. I argue again that one of the factors which make the adjustment possible is the way of Situation Segmentation in Japanese discussed above.

As is well known, in Japanese, it is possible to cancel out the result whose achievement is strongly implied from a verb. The verb, *okos*- (wake), for example, implies that the person who undergoes the action gets awake actually; but in fact, this sense can be cancelled out. Consider sentence (3) at the front of this essay:

(3) Kodomo-wo okosita-kedo, okinakat-ta.

Okinakat-ta 'didn't wake up' explicitly denies the result implication of the first conjunct. This cancelability has been attributed to a semantic/ aspectual property of Japanese verbs; that is, mostly, Japanese verbs do not entail result. This analysis is able to give a straightforward explanation to

this fact: Japanese verbs like *okos-* do not lexicalize, or "entail," the result situation *being awake*, which is conveyed just as an "implicature."

The Gricean dichotomy may sound sufficient in this case. With a more detailed consideration, however, we notice that things are not so simple. The addition to (3) of an adverb like *matigatte* 'by mistake', which denies Agent's intentional activity, is not acceptable, as in (7) (Chae (2001)).

(7) *Matigatte   kodomo-wo   okosi-ta   kedo   oki-nakat-ta.
      by mistake   child-ACC   wake-PAST   but   wake-NEG-PAST

Lit. 'I woke up my child by mistake, but (s)he didn't wake up.'

This fact is highly suggestive: It does not seem promising to attribute the kind of cancelability phenomenon in question solely to the lexical semantic property of verbs of Japanese. I assume that one of the factors which underlie the phenomenon is the way of Situation Segmentation in Japanese discussed above: curving out the beginning portion of an event as a completed one.

Now we are turning to the consideration of what process takes places in interpreting (3). I make a brief review of the explanation by Chae (2001:54). According to a major tradition of lexical semantics, suppose that the event of *waking up somebody* consists of two subparts: the action and the change of state subparts (cf. Dowty (1979), Pinker (1989), among others). In result cancel sentences like (6), the achievement of a reluctant state (being awaken) is strongly implied in the first conjunct, but the implication is readily denied in the second; almost contradicting. To avoid the contradiction and obtain a consistent interpretation, Japanese speakers reinterpret the sentence and arrive at the interpretation in which the situation designated in the first conjunct is only the action subpart (e.g., to swing one's body or to call out to him), excluding the change of state subpart. With a minor departure from Chae (2001), I assume that this reinterpretation is motivated by the result-as-whole segmentation. It is important to emphasize that I am not arguing that this is the sole factor behind the phenomena. The observation that the Japanese language is a change-of-state oriented language (Ikegami (1981)), also has an important consequence for this phenomenon, and they may be two sides of the same coin.

There still remains a question: Why such kind of expression as *matigatte*, which denies Agent's intention, is incompatible with result-cancel sentences, as illustrated in (7)? The answer is that in order to pay attention

to the action subpart and segment it as a whole unit, Agent's intentional action is essential, because the prototypical action is perceived as intentional one (see Nishimura (1998)). Without intention, the action subpart could not be viewed as a unit and it could not be possible to focus that subpart; instead, the focus would be placed on the result part.[3]

5. Concluding Remarks and Speculation

In this essay, I have attempted to show that Japanese can treat the beginning portion of an event as the whole and that this segmentation motivates three seemingly unrelated phenomena in Japanese. The discussion may sound speculative, but I hope the reader finds it quite plausible.

I would like to pursue some speculations a little further. The world is continuous. When we conceptualize the world, we carve out a phase of the world as a unit in a motivated manner, and code it in terms of language. The same holds true to situation; there is no unit of situation inherently segmented for our cognition; we partition off a situation around us in some motivated manners. This cognitive process is what I call Situation Segmentation. I think it is a fundamental process for human to conceptualize the world around us.

Attentive readers would notice that the discussion here has a close relation to the Cognitive Linguistic notion *profile* (Langaker (1991)). The profile of an expression is what the expression designates. I avoided to discuss the relation between them in case I misunderstand details of the paradigm. One of topics of my future research is the issue of whether the profiling is Situation Segmentation itself, or whether the former is motivated by the latter. The relation to so-called event models such as force-dynamics and billiard-mode (Langacker (1991), Croft (1990), Talmy (1988)) will be another issue. In addition, there seems to be a typological difference in the way of Situation Segmentation among languages around the world.

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[3] It is worthwhile to note that this is not the only interpretation available with respect to this sentence and the result-cancel sentences in general. As for the multiple interpretation types and a convincing inference-based explanation for them, see Chae (2001).

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Center for Humanities and Sciences
Ibaraki Prefectural University of Healthcare Sciences
e-mail:ichinohe_ka@hotmail.com