

## Quantitative Analysis of a Current Change in Japanese Aspect

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In this paper, I investigate a new usage of the Japanese progressive/perfect marker *-te iru* in Japanese, using empirical data gathered from Osaka and Fukuoka dialects. The results indicate that the marker has been regrammaticalized and developed into an imperfective marker, although *-te iru* is usually considered to have ‘completed’ its grammaticalization path.

The aspect marker *-te iru* has received much attention due to its unique semantic property; it signifies both progressive and perfect (Ogihara 1998 and Shirai 1998 among others), which are usually categorized separately (Bybee et al. 1994). However, previous studies on this subject focus on the semantic property of the marker in Modern Japanese, and its diachronic development has been overlooked. The only systematic study on the diachrony of the marker is conducted by Watanabe (2003). Watanabe investigates the development of the marker by examining 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century documents. She finds that the marker, which consists of a conjunctive particle *-te* plus a lexical verb *wiru*, initially formed a compound verb, which later gained a grammatical function (i.e., resultative aspect). Then, the marker underwent further grammaticalization and gained highly complex aspectual functions, namely progressive and perfect.

The lack of interest in the diachronic study is due to the assumption that *-te iru* has ‘completed’ its grammaticalization process, since it has already gone through ‘the entire chain of grammaticalization’ (Heine 2003). First, desemanticization (Anderson 2008) or loss of lexical meaning (‘to sit’ to resultative), brought about recategorization (from a lexical verb to a periphrastic). Subsequently, its syntactic status has been ‘upgraded’ (ibid) from an optional expression to an obligatory grammatical marker (i.e., a periphrastic to an aspectual suffix), which increased the token frequency of the marker. In addition, the marker went through a gradual phonological reduction (from the initial form in the 8<sup>th</sup> century *-te wiru* to the colloquial form in the Modern Japanese *-teru*).

However, *-te iru* has recently developed into an imperfective marker in the Western regions of Japan, especially Kinki region (represented by Osaka dialect in the paper) and Kyushu region (represented by Fukuoka dialect). I have examined the current usage of *-te iru* in these dialects using both digital corpus and fieldwork data, and found that *-te iru* co-occurs with stative and existential verbs as well as adjectives. This distribution pattern is identical to that of *Imparfait* in French or imperfective in Russian.

This new development indicates that the ‘completion’ of grammaticalization is not necessarily determinable. In other words, one cannot ascertain that a grammatical item is still ‘in progress of its change and has not run its course yet’ or ‘arrested its development’ (Anderson 2008), even though the grammatical item has undergone the series of changes in which an ideal case grammaticalization would partake.

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