

## A Classification of Japanese Verbs

著者(英)	Haruhiko KINDAICHI
翻訳者(英)	Stephen Wright HORN
校正者(英)	John H. Haig
journal or publication title	Pioneering Linguistic Works in Japan
page range	1-30
year	2021-06
URL	<a href="http://doi.org/10.15084/00003336">http://doi.org/10.15084/00003336</a>

## A Classification of Japanese Verbs

KINDAICHI Haruhiko

Introduction

- Section 1     The 4-way classification of Japanese verbs
- Section 2     Status of membership in the four classes for presently existing verbs
- Section 3     Differences between each class seen in the usage of inflectional forms
- Section 4     Differences between each class seen in the meanings of subsequent dependent morphemes
- Section 5     Relationships between the 4-way classification and classifications based on other criteria
- Section 6     A reconsideration of the present classification

Introduction

When the Chinese expression *Wǒ míngbái* ‘I understand’ is translated into Japanese, it is *Watashi wa wakari-masu*, while the Chinese expression *Wǒ zhīdào* ‘I know’ translated into Japanese is *Watashi wa shit-te-i-masu*. Saying *Watashi wa shir-imasu* ‘I come to know’ instead of *Watashi wa shit-te-imasu* is decidedly strange, and to say *Watashi wa wakat-te-i-masu* ‘I have understood (that)’ instead of *Watashi wa wakari-masu* sounds domineering. Although these observations are perfectly obvious to us Japanese, if a foreigner were to ask why verbs as similar in meaning as *shiru* and *wakaru* should exhibit such a difference, we might not find it altogether easy to provide an answer. In this article I have attempted to organize what I have come to understand in puzzling about how to teach Chinese exchange students about this question, but as the theorization is still underdeveloped, it may be that there are points which I suppose myself to understand when I don’t really understand them at all.

### Section 1. The 4-way classification of Japanese verbs

Among the ways to classify Japanese verbs, there are various divisions that have been used so far: between transitive and intransitive verbs, between volitional verbs and non-volitional verbs, between independent verbs and auxiliary verbs, between complete verbs and incomplete verbs, etc. However, in this article I want to further the consideration of a classification scheme that has not been very deeply

examined heretofore. Assuming that verbs denote actions or processes, this classification is one that I would propose as involving “temporal distinctions among actions and processes”, so that it might possibly be described as “a classification of Japanese verbs as seen from the perspective of aspect”. However, as to the appropriateness of such terminology, I beg the advice of experts.

Now, from this perspective, the verbs of Japanese can be divided into four classes.

Class 1 verbs are verbs which, rather than “denoting actions or processes”, are more accurately described as verbs “denoting states,” so that they normally express concepts which transcend time. For example, the verb *aru* ‘exist’ that appears in *Tsukue ga aru* ‘There is a desk’, and *Wagahai wa neko de aru* ‘I am a cat’, and the verb *dekiru* ‘be able’ that appears in *Eigo no kaiwa ga dekiru* ‘(I) can do English conversation’ are verbs that belong to this class. Verbs in general are such that, if the form *-te-iru* is attached to their ends, they express a so-called present state, but the verbs of this class are characterized by never having the form *-te-iru* attached thereto. In short, while being verbs, they are of the most un-verb-like kind, and are closer to being adjectives, so much so that among the researchers of the past, there were even those like Akira Suzuki (author of “*Gengyo shishu-ron* [Theory of the four-way distinction in words]”) who saw fit to include them in the class of adjectives. Let’s call the verbs of this class stative verbs.

Class 2 verbs are verbs that clearly express actions and processes, but these verbs denote actions or processes that continue over a period of time. The verbs in *Hon o yomu* ‘(I) read a book’, *Ji o kaku* ‘(I) write characters’ and the like are items of this sort. It goes without saying that the verbs *yomu* ‘read’ and *kaku* ‘write’ express actions, but these actions normally continue over some period of time such as five or ten minutes, or one or two hours. On this point these verbs differ from those of Class 3, discussed below. It is possible to attach the form *-te-iru* to verbs of Class 2, and when that form is attached, the result expresses that the action is in progress, which is to say that part of the action is finished but there is part that still remains. Let’s call verbs of this class continuative verbs. Among the verbs that denote natural processes, the verbs in *Ame ga furu* ‘Rain falls’ and *Kaze ga fuku* ‘Wind blows’ fall into this class, and most of the verbs that normally come to mind as being verbs belong in this class.

Class 3 verbs are the same as those of Class 2 insofar as they include verbs that denote actions or processes, but the actions or processes expressed by the third class of verbs are such that they end instantaneously. For example, the verb *shinu*

‘die’ in *Hito ga shinu* ‘Someone dies’, and the verb *tsuku* ‘turn on’ in *Dentoo ga tsuku* ‘An electric light turns on’ belong to this class. As *shinu* ‘die’ refers to someone drawing their last breath, the effect described as *shinu* ‘die’ begins at the instant the last breath is drawn and ends as soon as it begins. In the case of an expression such as *Uchi no oyaji ga chuubuu o shichi-nenkan wazuratte shinda* ‘My father, having suffered from palsy for seven years, died’, for seven years the phenomenon of “dying” had yet to begin. We do not say \**shini-hajime-te-iru* ‘(lit.) is starting to die’. In one instant after seven years the “dying” begins and ends simultaneously. It goes without saying that (*Dentoo ga*) *tsuku* ‘(An electric light) turns on’ denotes an instantaneous process. Verbs of this class cannot appear in the context \_\_\_-te iru saichuu da ‘be in the midst of \_\_\_-ing’. When the form -te-iru is attached to a verb of this class, the expression denotes that, the action or process having ended, the result thereof persists. Let’s call verbs of this class instantaneous verbs.

Among the verbs that denote actions or processes, there are those for which one cannot say just when the action or process began or ended, but given that it ends at some point, it is impossible to put the verb into a context like *genzai \_\_\_-te-iru saichuu da* ‘is presently in the midst of \_\_\_-ing’. The verbs *kekkon suru* ‘get married’ and *sotsugyoo suru* ‘graduate’ are verbs of this sort. It is not possible to say at what hour and what minute one becomes married, and an individual may be either yet to be married or already married, but one cannot say how much time was taken up doing the marrying. Considering the various properties of verbs such as these, I choose to include these in the class of instantaneous verbs out of convenience.

Finally, the items I would like to present as Class 4 verbs are similar to those of Class 1 insofar as they do not include the concept of time, but whereas a Class 1 verb denotes that some entity is in some given state, I contend that the verbs of Class 4 class denote the taking on of states. For example, the verb *sobieru* ‘tower above’ in *Yama ga sobie-te-iru* ‘A mountain towers above’ is such a verb. It is characteristic of verbs of this class that they invariably use the form \_\_\_-te-iru to express states, and do not use an isolated form like the simplex *sobieru* to express an action or process. The meaning of *sobieru* is “(with respect to some other mountain[s] one mountain) takes on the state of (relative) tallness”, and to actually say *sobieru* ‘takes on the state of relative tallness’ would imply that something which was once short now becomes tall, which is infelicitous. If we analyze the meaning “be in a state of (relative) tallness with respect to other mountains”, and express it as the composition of the concept of *iru* ‘be’ with some other concept *X*,

then it is the meaning of *sobieru* that makes up this *X*. The meaning of this verb is extremely difficult to explain, but I think I can assume that it is a meaning which my readers already understand. As another member of this class of verbs, there is also the *suru* ‘do’ in the expression *Ano hito wa takai hana o shi-te-iru* ‘(lit.) That person is doing a high nose’, i.e., ‘That person has a prominent nose’. For this as well, a form without *-te-iru* attached is not used. As an appropriate name for verbs of this class does not readily occur to me, I choose to call them Class 4 verbs.

I propose to divide the verbs of the Japanese language into the four classes set out above, but with the proviso that not all of this is my original idea. That is to say, the fact that verbs of Class 1 are different from other verbs was observed early on in the “*Kō Nihon buntan* (General Japanese Grammar)”, and with regard to the continuative verbs of Class 2, and to the instantaneous verbs Class 3, Dr. Daizaburō Matsushita (“*Kaisen hyōjun Nihon bunpō* [Revised Standard Japanese Grammar]”, pg. 411), Dr. Kanae Sakuma (“*Gendai Nihongo no hyōgen to gohō* [Expressions and usages of contemporary Japanese]”, pg. 320 and *passim*) and Prof. Shirō Hattori (“*Mōko to sono gengo* [Mongolia and its languages]”, pg. 176) have already made theoretical claims. It is only by the establishment of an additional fourth class of verbs, the attempt to sort individual verbs into each of the four classes, and the close consideration of oppositions between classes with respect to the inflectional forms of verbs and the dependent morphemes attaching to them that I have made any original contribution, if these can be called such. In sum it is my arbitrary decision to present this as it is, and I welcome my readers to criticize it as they see fit.

## Section 2. Status of membership in the four classes for presently existing verbs

To begin, when we sort the general verbs presently existing in the Japanese language into the classes set out in the previous section, we get the following results.

[Class 1] Stative verbs include the verb *aru* ‘exist’ (*Tsukue ga aru* ‘There is a desk’; *Hombako ga aru* ‘There is a bookcase’), and identically, *aru* ‘be’ (as in the expression *Wagahai wa neko de aru* ‘I am a cat’, etc.), and the verb *gozaru* ‘be’ (ex. *Tsugi wa Ginza san-choome de gozai-masu* ‘Next stop is Ginza block number three’). The verb *dekiru* ‘be able’ expressing possibility (The expressions *Eigo no kaiwa ga dekiru* ‘[I] can do English conversation’; *Yuku koto ga deki-nai* ‘[I] cannot go’) are examples with this verb, but *dekiru* in

expressions like *Koibito ga dekiru* ‘[I] find/obtain a lover’; *Odeki ga dekiru* ‘[I] sustain a blemish’ denotes manifestations and as such belongs to the instantaneous verbs of Class 3) is a Class 1 verb. The verbs in the so-called potential voice all belong to Class 1, for example, *kireru* ‘can cut’ (ex. *Kono naifu wa yoku kireru* ‘This knife cuts well’), and *hanaseru* ‘can speak’ (ex. *Oyaji nakanaka hanaseru* ‘My father certainly can talk’). The verb *wakaru* ‘understand’ meaning *rikai dekiru* ‘can comprehend’ which I presented at the outset also falls into this class, and in its simplex form without attaching *-te-iru*, it expresses a present state. In addition to these are *mieru* ‘be visible’ (ex. *Ikanimo tsuyo-soo ni mieru* ‘[They] look ever so strong’), *iu* ‘say’ (restricted to that usage seen in, for example, *Hideyoshi to iu hito* ‘the person called Hideyoshi’), *yoo suru* ‘require’ (ex. *San-jikan o yoo suru* ‘[It] takes three hours’), and *atai suru* ‘be worth’ (ex. *Chuumoku ni atai suru* ‘[It] is worth attention’). Verbs formed by attaching the verb *sugiru* ‘exceed’ to adjectival stems, for example *ookisugiru* ‘be too big’; *chiisasugiru* ‘be too small’, etc., belong to this class.

While the English verbs *have*, *live*, *know*, etc. are all stative verbs in that language, stative verbs in Japanese are few in number, with verbs such as *motsu* ‘have’, *sumu* ‘live, reside’, and *shiru* ‘know’ belonging rather to the class of instantaneous verbs. The verb *iru* ‘exist’, which is used in parallel with *aru* ‘exist’, would arguably belong to the stative verbs judging from its semantics, but as it differs on various points discussed further below, it is a verb requiring some caution in its treatment.

[Class 2] To begin with, the class of continuative verbs contains verbs that express the actions of humans. In addition to *yomu* ‘read’ and *kaku* ‘write’ presented above, as members of this class there are *warau* ‘laugh’, *naku* ‘cry’, *shaberu* ‘talk’, *utau* ‘sing’, etc. And there are *miru* ‘see’, *kiku* ‘hear’, *kuu* ‘eat’, *nomu* ‘drink’, *nameru* ‘lick’, *suu* ‘suck’, *osu* ‘push’, *hiku* ‘pull’, etc., and in addition *aruku* ‘walk’, *kakeru* ‘run’, *suberu* ‘slide’, *oyogu* ‘swim’, *karu* ‘mow’, *soru* ‘shave’, *nuu* ‘sew’, *fuku* ‘wipe’, *haku* ‘sweep’, *hataraku* ‘work’, *kangaeru* ‘think’, *benkyoo suru* ‘study’, *kufuu suru* ‘devise’, in short, too many to list. As for verbs denoting natural phenomena, the items *chiru* ‘scatter’ (as in *Hana ga chiru* ‘Flowers scatter’), *furu* ‘fall’ (as in *Ame ga furu* ‘Rain falls’), *yureru* ‘shake’ (as in *Ji ga yureru* ‘The earth quakes’), *moeru* ‘burn’ (as in *Hi ga moeru* ‘Fire burns’), etc. all belong to this class of verbs.

[Class 3] Instantaneous verbs include the items *shinu* ‘die’ and *tsuku* ‘turn on’ (as of electric lights) presented earlier, but in addition there are the items *kieru* ‘turn off (as in *Dentoo ga kieru* ‘Electric lights turn off’), *sawaru* ‘touch’, *todoku* ‘reach’, *hanareru* ‘separate’ (however when in the sense of *toozakaru* ‘go off into the distance’, this is a continuative verb), *kimaru* ‘be decided’, *mitsukaru* ‘be found’, *sameru* ‘become alert’ (as in *Me ga sameru* ‘[lit.] Eyes become alert’, i.e., ‘(I) wake up’), and *tomaru* ‘stop’ (as in *Tokei ga tomaru* ‘Clocks stop’), etc. As for verbs with abstract meanings, there are the items *hajimaru* ‘begin’, *owaru* ‘end’, *shuppatsu suru* ‘depart’, *toochaku suru* ‘arrive’, *naoru* ‘heal’ (as in *Byooki ga naoru* ‘[My] disease heals’), *yamu* ‘stop’ (as in *Ame ga yamu* ‘Rain stops’), *yameru* ‘quit’ (as in *Tabako o yameru* ‘[I] quit tobacco’), *kekkon suru* ‘marry’ and *rikon suru* ‘divorce’, *sotsugyoo suru* ‘graduate’ and *nyuugaku suru* ‘matriculate’, *nokoru* ‘be left over’, *tsukiru* ‘be exhausted’, *ushinau* ‘lose’, *wasureru* ‘forget’, and others, making up no small number. The verb *shiru* ‘know’, which I presented at the outset, also belongs to the class of instantaneous verbs, but when one says, *Shiru* ‘(I) come to know’, it denotes the instant at which one receives some piece of knowledge. Accordingly, when one wishes to express the state of having some piece of knowledge at the present time, the form used is *shitte-iru*, in short, expressing that “the experience of ‘having come to know (having learned)’ in the past persists into the present”. The verb *wakaru* ‘understand’ in the expression *Wakat-te-iru* ‘(I) know’ is different from the word *wakaru* ‘can comprehend’, as it is an intransitive verb meaning “to have as knowledge”, and as such it too is an instantaneous verb.

[Class 4] With regard to the Class 4 verbs, while the number of items belonging thereto is extremely small, in addition to the verb *sobieru* ‘tower above’ presented above, the items *sugureru* ‘excel’, *omodatsu* ‘be principal among’, *zubanukeru* ‘be exceptional’, *arifureru* ‘be common’, etc. fall into this class. To these add the verbs *saiki-bashiru* ‘appear quick-witted’, *sai-hajikeru* ‘be clever’, *niyakeru* ‘act effeminately’, *bakageru* ‘be foolish’, etc. While the two verbs *tomu* ‘be abundant’ and *niru* ‘resemble’ have also been used as instantaneous verbs not infrequently, in the present day they are more often used as Class 4 verbs. Just as the expressions *takai hana o suru* ‘(lit.) do a high nose’, i.e., ‘have a prominent nose’ and *marugao o suru* ‘(lit.) do a round face’, i.e., ‘have a round face’ belong to this class, so do the expressions *shinshi-zen to suru* ‘behave

gentlemanly’, *botchan-botchan suru* ‘behave like a well-bred boy’, *shinneri-muttsuri suru* ‘be taciturn and morose’, *nomben-darari to suru* ‘be lazy and shiftless’, etc.

Above, I have presented examples of the verbs belonging to each of the classes, but here I must add a proviso (of which my readers are certainly already aware) to the effect that, “it is not the case that all of the verbs of the Japanese language will fit well into just one of any of the above classes.” Rather, it is the case that there are very many verbs which straddle two or more classes.

To begin with, the verbs that straddle the continuative verb Class 2 and the instantaneous verb Class 3 are particularly numerous: For example, the so-called verbs of change of location all do double-duty between these two classes. The verb *kuru* ‘come’ on occasion denotes the entire action of “coming here from there” including every point along the way, and in such cases it serves as a continuative verb. However, on occasion it may also denote the instant of arrival “here”, and in these cases it serves as an instantaneous verb. For this reason it is possible to point to a person who is in the act of approaching and say of him, *Ima koko e ki-te-iru* ‘(She/He) is coming here now’, while at the same time it is possible to say *Mada koko made ki-te-i-nai* ‘(She/He) hasn’t come here yet’. By the same token, *yuku* ‘go’, *hairu* ‘enter’, *deru* ‘exit’, *noboru* ‘go up’, *oriru* ‘go down’, etc., are able to denote both the mid-points of movements and the instants of arrival as well.

There is also no small number of items that can both serve as instantaneous Class 3 verbs and also as Class 4 verbs. With respect to something like a nail (*kugi*) or a pair of tongs (*hibashi*), when one says, *Kono kugi (hibashi) wa magat-te-iru* ‘This nail (pair of tongs) is bent’, the nail (pair of tongs) which was once straight has at some point bent, making *magaru* ‘bend’ an instantaneous verb, but when one says *Kono michi wa magat-te-iru* ‘This road is bent’, the road was bent in the first place, making *magaru* ‘bend’ a Class 4 verb. When one says *Itsumademo hibachi ni kuttsui-te-iru* ‘(lit.) (They) are always stuck to the brazier’, i.e., ‘(They) never leave the brazier’s side’, at some point the people in question got stuck to it, so in this case *kuttsuku* ‘get stuck to’ is an instantaneous verb, but when one says, *Seiyoojin wa me to mayuge to ga kuttsui-te-iru* ‘(lit.) Westerners are such that their eyes and eyebrows are stuck together’, i.e., ‘Westerners have little space between their eyes and eyebrows’, the two things in question were stuck together to begin with, so in this case *kuttsuku* ‘be stuck to’ is a Class 4 verb.

There are also items that do double-duty between Class 1 stative verbs and

Class 4 verbs. With regard to the verb *chigau* ‘differ’, to a shoe-check clerk one can say, *Kono geta wa chigau* ‘(lit.) These clogs differ (from mine)’, and one can also say *Kono geta wa chigat-te-iru* ‘(lit.) These clogs differ (from mine)’. However, when one says *chigau* in its simplex form one is using a stative verb, and when one says *chigat-te-iru* in its complex form one is using a Class 4 verb. The expressions *Ano hito wa watashi no oji ni ataru* ‘(lit.) That person counts as my uncle’, i.e., ‘That person is my uncle’ and *Ano hito wa watashi no oji ni atat-te-iru* ‘That person is my uncle’ have the same meaning. Thus, here as well the verb *ataru* ‘strike, correspond to’ serves as both a stative verb and a Class 4 verb.

The verbs I presented at the beginning of this section were meant to be representative members of the classes to which they respectively belong, but that is not to say that each always fits into only one class.

For example, I presented the verb *yomu* ‘read’ as an example of a continuative verb, but in a context like *Ano hito no yomikata no hayai no ni odoroi-ta; ima yomi-hajime-ta to omot-tara moo yon-de-iru* ‘I am astounded at the speed with which that person reads; when you think (she/he) has just now begun to read, (she/he) has already finished reading’, the last instance of *yomu* means “finish reading”, and as such has been used as an instantaneous verb. In a context like *Kono ko wa sootoo muzukashii hon de mo yomu* ‘This child reads even books that are quite difficult’, the verb *yomu* describes a property of *kono ko* ‘this child’, so in this case *yomu* is being used as a stative verb. I stated that *shinu* ‘die’ is typical as a member of the class of instantaneous verbs, but in a context like *Konogoro wa eiyooshitchoo no tame ni tokai no hito ga dondon shin-de-iru* ‘Due to malnutrition, lately people in the cities are dying in ever-increasing numbers’, *shinde-iru* is the progressive form of *shinu*, so in this context it is possible to think of *shinu* as being used as a continuative verb.

When considered in this way, one might ask whether it is not the case that the verbs that belong to two or more classes are extremely numerous, and those that can be limited to only one class are very few in number. One might even ask whether there any such verbs at all. Pushing on to the ultimate, fundamental problem, one might doubt whether a classification such as that proposed here is possible in the first place. I will come back to this question, but first I would like to spend some time presenting my views on the effects that this classification arguably has on research into the grammar of the Japanese language.

### Section 3. Differences between each class seen in the usage of inflectional forms

It is conceivable that the verb classification I propose in this article is useful for making possible an explanation of the various usages of the inflectional forms of Japanese verbs and of the meanings of the various dependent morphemes attaching to each class of verbs that is more detailed than the conventional explanations that exist to date. This is because verbs sorted into classes by this method frequently show clear oppositions in their various inflectional forms and in the forms they take when various dependent morphemes are attached. In this section, to begin with, I will present contrasts between verbs of each class when they are used in their various inflections as simplex forms.

First let's address the usages of the conclusive inflection. Normally usages such as “expressing a present state” or “expressing a generic/habitual fact in the present”, among others, are presented as usages of the conclusive inflection of verbs. But that is not to say that the conclusive forms of each of the verbs in my 4-way classification have these usages.

For example, the usage of “expressing a present state” is one that only pertains to stative verbs. Expressions like *Tsukue ga aru* ‘There is a desk’ or *Eigo no kaiwa ga dekiru* ‘(I) can do English conversation’ or *Kono naifu wa yoku kireru* ‘This knife cuts well’, etc., all contain stative verbs in conclusive forms expressing present states. But in contrast to this, it cannot be said that an expression employing a continuative verb such as *Kare wa ima ji o kaku* ‘(lit.) He writes characters now’ expresses a present circumstance describable as *Kare wa ima tsukue no mae ni suwatte fude o tot-te-iru* ‘He is now sitting in front of a desk taking pen in hand’. It is not possible to read it as denoting anything other than either an event in the near-distant future (‘He will now write characters’), or a present generic/habitual occurrence such as in *Kare wa mukashi ji o kaku yoo na koto wa daikirai dat-ta ga, genzai de wa ji o kaku yoo ni nat-ta* ‘While before he hated anything to do with writing, now he has become such that he writes’. Given an expression using an instantaneous verb, such as *Kare wa ima shinu* ‘(lit.) He dies now’, i.e., ‘He will die now’, it is even more difficult to entertain the idea that it expresses a present state.

Furthermore, while it is common for the conclusive forms of stative verbs and of continuative verbs to express generic/habitual occurrences in the present, it appears that among instantaneous verbs, there are comparatively many for which the conclusive form does not have this usage. For example, it is difficult to find an appropriate word to fill in the blank in an expression like *Watashi wa itsumo \_\_\_ ni*

*kekkon suru* ‘I always get married in \_\_\_’.<sup>1</sup> I will return to this point below, but this seems attributable to the fact that many of the verbs classified as being instantaneous both express actions or processes that end instantaneously, and at the same time also express momentous actions or processes which, once occurred, are hard put to occur a second time. It goes without saying that *shinu* ‘die’ expresses a phenomenon that does not easily happen a second time. Moreover, when verbs normally classified as instantaneous are used to express generic/habitual occurrences in the present, it is possible to think of them as being used as stative verbs.

Because Class 4 verbs are always used with *-te-iru* attached, one can say that there is no conclusive form for (simplex) items in this class.

Next let’s address the usages of the adnominal inflection. The usages of the adnominal inflection are similar to those of the conclusive inflection, but not identical. We noted that the only instances of the conclusive form that are able to express a present state are those of stative verbs. But the adnominal usages of continuative verbs also seem to be able to express present states. In expressions such as *Niwa ni uguisu no naku koe ga kikoeru* ‘In the garden the voice of a warbler that sings can be heard’ and *Hatake o utsu noofu no sugata ga mirareru* ‘The figure of a farmer who cultivates a garden can be seen’, the meanings involved are, respectively, *Nai-te-iru koe ga kikoeru* ‘A voice (of a warbler) that is singing can be heard’, and *hatake o ut-te-iru noofu no (sugata)* ‘(the figure) of a farmer who is cultivating a garden’, allowing one to view *naku* ‘sing’ and *utsu* ‘cultivate’ as expressing present states. However, these usages have a literary ring to them. Next, the adnominal forms of instantaneous verbs can never express present states. But that instantaneous verbs should not be able to express present states is entirely natural, given that, the phenomena that instantaneous verbs express being themselves instantaneous, it is impossible for them to be in the midst of happening in the present.

Next we address the imperative inflection. With regard to the imperative inflection, stative verbs and Class 4 verbs both share a notable characteristic. This characteristic is that, in principle, neither stative verbs nor Class 4 verbs have imperative forms. It is impossible to say to a child who cannot do arithmetic, *\*Motto suugaku ga dekiro* ‘(lit.) Be able to do arithmetic better!’ Neither is it possible to say

---

<sup>1</sup> [Translator’s note] In construction with the verb *kekkon suru* ‘marry’, words that could fill a blank before the particle *ni* ‘in’ might plausibly be those denoting time (e.g., *rokugatsu ni* ‘in June’) or manner (e.g., *jyuu ni* ‘freely’), but in the context of the example sentence, the resultant meaning for any of these would be odd.

to a child who appears feeble, *\*Tsuyo-soo ni miero* ‘(lit.) Appear to be tougher!’ In recent days people have come to say things like *Josei yo, shitoyaka de are* ‘(lit.) Women, be graceful!’ but when compared to expressions like *Yome* ‘read!’ and *Kake* ‘Write!’ such expressions feel decidedly artificial.

Related to this, the fact that “so-called potential verbal auxiliaries do not have imperative forms” is called to mind. As I understand it, when a potential verbal auxiliary attaches to a verb, the entire string becomes a verb in the potential voice, allowing us to consider it a stative verb. By this reasoning, the statement “so-called potential verbal auxiliaries do not have imperative forms” is just a theorem that follows from a higher general rule to the effect that “stative verbs do not have imperative forms”.

Now, among the stative verbs there is one that does unequivocally have an imperative form: *iro* ‘stay!’ (< *iru* ‘exist’). Compared to other stative verbs, this item is a step closer to being a continuative verb. Continuative verbs and instantaneous verbs in principle have imperative forms, and with respect to that point there is nothing more in particular that needs to be said.

In addition to the inflectional forms treated above, the infinitive form is one that can be used in isolation, but as its circumstances are complicated, I will omit it from discussion here. While it might be considered somewhat inappropriate for inclusion in this section, next I will take up oppositions between verb classes that can be seen with respect to the form composed of the infinitive with the prefix *o-* attached.

First, the form [*o* + stative verb infinitive], as in *o-ari* ‘exist’ and *o-deki* ‘be able’ are used to express present states and future states. The expression *Okosama wa o-ari desu ka* ‘(lit.) Are there any children?’, i.e., ‘Do (you) have any children?’ expresses a present state. If someone intends to pay a visit, *Ashita goyoo ga o-ari desu ka* ‘(lit.) Tomorrow are there any obligations?’ i.e., ‘Do (you) have any obligations tomorrow?’ expresses a future state. However, there are no instances of this form being used to express past states. For example, if you received a visit from an acquaintance but you were unfortunately absent at the time, upon meeting you the next day, for that person to say *\*Kinoo nanika goyoo ga o-ari desu ka* ‘(lit.) Do you have some kind of obligation yesterday?’ is odd. The expression must be *O-ari deshi-ta ka* ‘(lit.) Was there (something)?’ i.e., ‘Did (you) have (something)?’

In contrast to this, the form [*o* + continuative verb infinitive] is used to express actions and processes over the present, past, and future. If a stranger points to a newspaper next to you and says, *Moo o-yomi desu ka* ‘(lit.) Do (you) read it

already?’ i.e., ‘Have (you) already read it?’ this expresses the past. If a stranger peeks into the newspaper that you are presently reading and says, *Ima doko o o-yomi desu ka* ‘(lit.) Which place do (you) read now?’ this expresses the present. And if, wanting to know whether you will read it tomorrow or the day after that, this stranger asks, *Itsu o-yomi desu ka* ‘(lit.) When do (you) read it?’, i.e., ‘When will (you) read it?’, this expresses the future.

It appears that the form [*o* + instantaneous verb infinitive] is again different from those above, expressing just the past or the future. If you say to a person who has arrived from a distant part of the country, *Itsu o-tachi desu ka* ‘(lit.) When do (you) depart?’ i.e., ‘When did (you) set out?’ this expresses the past. But if you say to a person who is about to depart, *Itsu o-tachi desu ka* ‘(lit.) When do (you) depart?’, i.e., ‘When will (you) depart?’, this expresses the future. And with respect to the inability of these verbs to express the present, we see the same thing as was discussed in the paragraph concerning the adnominal form.

Finally, Class 4 verbs are fundamentally different from all the others, as it can be safely said that they do not have the form [*o* + infinitive]. For the verb *niru* ‘resemble’ and its like, expressions analogous to *\*Okaasan ni yoku o-ni da* ‘(intended) (You) closely resemble your mother’ are not normal. Given an expression like *takai hana o shi-te-iru* ‘(lit.) do a high nose’, i.e., ‘have a prominent nose’, there is no way to say *\*Takai hana o-shi da*. The normal way to express that content would be to say, *Takai hana o shi-te-irassharu* ‘(You) have a prominent nose’.

#### **Section 4. Differences between each class seen in the meanings of subsequent dependent morphemes**

Oppositions between the verbs of the four classes I have presented in this article are even more clearly apparent when one considers the meanings that result when auxiliary morphemes are attached to them. Below, I examine words formed when auxiliary morphemes attach to inflectional forms in the (canonical) order of irrealis, infinitive, and so on.<sup>2</sup>

#### **[1] Patterns composed of [irrealis + auxiliary morpheme]**

The first items to be presented as inflecting verbal suffixes attaching to the irrealis inflection of verbs are the causative *-seru/-saseru*, and the passive

---

<sup>2</sup> [Translator’s note] Traditional analyses present inflectional forms in the following order: irrealis, infinitive, ombin, conclusive/adnominal, conditional, imperative. Inflecting auxiliary morphemes do not attach to the last two forms, which are accordingly left undiscussed here.

*-reru/-rareru*. Stative verbs and Class 4 verbs exhibit characteristics different from the other classes when it comes to the concatenation of these subsequent dependent inflecting verbal suffixes.

Specifically, inflecting verbal suffixes of these types do not readily attach to stative verbs and Class 4 verbs. While uttering a word formed by attaching the causative suffix *-saseru* onto (potential voice) *oyogeru* ‘can swim’ might seem plausible, in truth the resulting form is not found in the language. Attaching the passive suffix *-rareru* onto the verb *mieru* ‘be visible’ might seem as though it would work in theory, but it is impossible in fact. Now, the causative *-seru/-saseru* and the passive *-reru/-rareru* attach well to continuative verbs and instantaneous verbs. Expressions such as *Hon o yoma-seru* ‘(I) make/let (them) read a book’, *Tanin ni tegami o yoma-reru* ‘(lit.) (I) am read (my) letter by a third party’, i.e., ‘(I) am such that (my) letter is read by a third party’, *Narubeku rakuni shina-seru* ‘(We) let (them) die as peacefully as possible’, and *Hitorimusuko ni shina-reru* ‘(lit.) (I) am died by (my) only son’, i.e., ‘(I) am such that (my) only son dies on me’ are all natural expressions.

Next let’s consider cases where the negative inflecting verbal suffix *-nai* ‘not’ is attached to verbs. While this inflecting verbal suffix will attach to verbs of any class, semantic differences between classes arise. To begin with, when *-nai* ‘not’ attaches to stative verbs, it expresses negation of a present or future state. For example, the expression *Samu-soo ni mie-nai* ‘(It) does not appear to be cold’ is the negation of *Samu-soo ni mieru* ‘(It) appears to be cold’, that is, the negation of a present state. And the expression *Ashita yooji ga atte shusseki ga deki-nai* ‘Having obligations tomorrow, (I) won’t be able to attend’ is a negation concerning a state of affairs in the future. That being said, we also observe that, attached to stative verbs, *-nai* cannot express the negation of a state of affairs in the past. In a situation where, having had an obligation yesterday, it had been impossible to attend, one cannot say, *\*Kino wa shusseki deki-nai* ‘(lit.) Yesterday (I) am not able to attend’. One must say *Shusseki deki-nakat-ta* ‘(I) was not able to attend’.

Patterns composed of [continuative verb irrealis + *-nai*] express negations of past and future states of affairs. If one uses the pattern [*yomu* ‘read’ + *-nai*] to say, *Watashi wa kono shimbun o yoma-nai* ‘(lit.) I do not read this newspaper’, this either expresses a negation of a past state of affairs, namely, *Watashi wa mada kono shimbun o yon-de-i-nai* ‘I have not read this newspaper yet’, or it expresses the negation of a future state of affairs, namely, *Watashi wa shoorai*

*ni oite yomu ikoo wa nai* ‘I have no intention of reading (this newspaper) in the future’. But that being said, we observe that this construction cannot express the negation of a present state of affairs. If one were absently looking out a window after having read some specific newspaper and were asked *Anata wa nani o shi-te-iru n desu ka. Shimbun o yon-de-iru n desu ka* ‘What are you doing now? Are (you) reading the newspaper?’ one would not answer *Iya, shimbun wa yomi-masen* ‘(lit.) No, (I) do not read the newspaper’. One would answer using a construction with *-te-iru*, saying, *Iya, shimbun wa yon-de-i-masen* ‘No, (I) am not reading the newspaper’.

Nevertheless, in the following sort of cases it seems possible to interpret the pattern [continuative verb + *-nai*] as expressing a present state of affairs. Such a case would be, for example, where someone asks, *Anata wa nani shimbun o o-yomi desu ka. Asahi desu ka* ‘What newspaper do you read? Is (it) the Asahi?’, and you would answer, *Iya, watashi wa Asahi wa yomi-masen* ‘No, I don’t read the Asahi’. However, rather than something merely expressing a present fact, this is better understood as something expressing a present habit, which easily finds an explanation if we consider this *yomu* ‘read’ that expresses habits as being used as a stative verb, as was discussed at the end of Section 2.

Patterns composed of [instantaneous verb + *-nai*] express negations of past and future states of affairs, just as do those with continuative verbs. The expression *Ano hito wa mada shina-nai* ‘(lit.) That person does not die yet’ means *Ano hito wa mada seizonchuu de aru* ‘That person is still currently alive’, which is to say that, at the same time as expressing that the event described by *shinu* ‘die’ has not happened yet, this expression also means, *Ano hito wa madamada seizon shi-soo de aru* ‘That person seems as though (she/he) will live on for a while yet’, i.e., ‘A “dying event” will not be occurring in the near future’.

Patterns composed of [Class 4 verb + *-nai*] can sometimes express negations of present states. The expression *Ano ko wa chitto mo oya ni ni-nai* ‘That child doesn’t resemble (her/his) parents at all’ is one such example. However, this expression is a literary turn of phrase, and normally a form using *-te-i-nai* would be used in place of *-nai*. Expressions such as *Chitto mo oya ni ni-te-i-nai* ‘(She/He) doesn’t resemble (her/his) parents at all’ and *Takai hana o shi-te-i-nai* ‘(lit.) (They) are not doing high noses’, i.e., ‘(They) do not have prominent noses’ would be the preferred forms.

Among the verbal suffixes attaching to the irrealis inflection, there is also what is called the future verbal suffix: *-u/-yoo*. When this is attached to a

stative verb, in principle, the resulting form expresses conjecture. The form *aro-o* (< irrealis *ara-* ‘exist’ + *-u*) means *aru daroo* ‘must certainly exist’, and in the expression *Suiei ga deki-yoo* (< *suiei* ‘swimming’ + NOM + *deki* ‘be.able’ + *-yoo*) ‘[They] must be able to swim’ the form *deki-yoo* means *dekiru daroo* ‘must certainly be able to’. Expressing an intention by uttering the expression *\*Watashi mo hitotsu suiei deki-yoo* (lit.) ‘I too shall resolutely be able to swim’ is impossible. In contrast to this, when *-u/-yoo* attaches to continuative verbs, the result often expresses intention: *Kako-o* (< irrealis *kaka-* + *-u*) ‘(I) shall write’, *Yomo-o* (< irrealis *yoma-* + *-u*) ‘(I) shall read’, etc. When *-u/-yoo* attaches to instantaneous verbs, there are cases such as *Shino-o* (< irrealis *shina-* + *-u*) ‘I shall die’ and *Kekkon shi-yoo* ‘(I) shall marry’, etc., in which it is possible to express intention, but there are many verbs for which the addition of the verbal suffix *-u/-yoo* alone does not express intention, such as those in the expressions *San-ji ni toochaku shi-yoo to omou* (lit.) ‘(I) think such that (I) will arrive at 3 o’clock’, i.e., ‘(I) will try to arrive at 3 o’clock’ and *Wakaro-o to doryoku suru* (lit.) ‘(I) make an effort such that I will understand’, i.e., ‘(I) make an effort to understand’.

When considered in this way, it seems plausible to say that the verbal suffix *-u/-yoo* reflects the distinctions between each of the verb classes, but this is nothing more than a result of the fact that stative verbs and instantaneous verbs both contain large numbers of non-volitional verbs. I will have occasion to touch upon the relationship between the four verb classes and volitional/non-volitional verbs in the next section.

[2] Patterns composed of [infinitive + dependent morpheme]

For verbs in the infinitive inflection there are many other forms that attach thereto by changing their lexical category from verb to suffix. For example, there are the forms *-kakeru* and *-kakaruru* that express inceptive meaning.

The form *-kakeru* does not attach to stative verbs. One does not say *\*ari-kakeru* ‘(intended) begin to exist’. One can say *deki-kakeru* ‘begin to be completed’ and *Ie ga deki-kakeru* ‘The house is almost completed’, but in these cases *dekiru* is an instantaneous verb. The form *-kakeru* does attach to continuative verbs. In such cases the resulting form expresses a situation in which the action in question has been carried out part-way. The expression *Hon o ichi-ni peeji yomi-kake-ta tokoro e kyaku ga ki-ta* ‘Just as (I) had begun reading a book for the first one or two pages, a visitor came’ is one such example.

In addition, the form *-kakeru* can also express situations in which the action in question has been discontinued part-way through. The expression *Jishin de gohan o tabe-kake de oorai e tobidashi-ta* ‘Because of the earthquake, halfway through dinner (I) ran outside’ is one such example. In fact there are even instances where it appears as though what is expressed is a situation in which a state is reached immediately prior to carrying out the action. For example, the expression *Shoosetsu o yomi-kakete yame-ta* ‘(I) was about to read a novel but I stopped’, used in a situation where someone turns to the first page and is about to train his gaze on the first line but changes his mind, is an example of this usage, but in such a case it is probably more suitable to consider *yomu* ‘read’ as being used provisionally as an instantaneous verb.

Patterns composed of [instantaneous verb + *-kakeru*] regularly express arrival at a state immediately prior to when the action is performed, but do not express actions performed part-way. However, this point is obvious when one takes into account the properties of said verbs. Take for example the expressions *Ayauku shini-kake-ta* ‘(I) narrowly escaped dying’ and *Denki ga nandomo kie-kake-ta* ‘Again and again the lights almost turned off’. The form *-kakeru* does not attach to Class 4 verbs.

While the form *-kakaruru* is similar to *-kakeru*, its usage is narrower, as it both fails to attach to stative verbs and also has a tendency to not readily attach to continuative verbs. Expressions like *\*yomi-kakaruru* and *\*kaki-kakaruru*, etc., are odd. The form *-kakaruru* attaches to instantaneous verbs with much greater frequency. Expressions such as *shini-kakaruru* ‘be about to die’ and *Denki ga kie-kakaruru* ‘The lights are about to turn off’, etc., are examples. Here too the meaning is one of arriving at a state immediately prior to the execution of an action or the manifestation of a process. The form *-kakaruru* is similar to *-kakeru*, but *-kakeru* is mostly used to refer to arriving at a state just prior to an action and then reverting to an earlier state, whereas *-kakaruru* does not carry with it the meaning of reversion to an earlier state.

There is also the form *-hajimeru* ‘begin’, and this attaches readily to continuative verbs, but not to stative verbs, instantaneous verbs, or Class 4 verbs.

There are forms which carry the meaning of “completely”, such as *-kiru* ‘exhaust’ and *-ageru* ‘bring to completion’. They do not attach to stative verbs. One does not say *\*ari-kiru* (lit.) ‘exist completely’ or *\*deki-kiru* (lit.) ‘be able completely’ (that is, the potential verb *dekiru*).

These forms occasionally attach to continuative verbs: *Hon o yomi-kiru* '(They) read a book to the end', *E o kaki-ageru* '(They) paint a picture to completion', etc. In each case the forms mean "entirely" or "to the end". The form *-kiru* does not often attach to instantaneous verbs, but when it does, it takes on a meaning that is somewhat different from its usage with continuative verbs. This meaning is not "up to the end" but rather "in surfeit": *shiri-kit-te-iru* 'know (a thing) twice-over', *wakari-kit-ta koto* 'a thing that is understood *ad nauseam*', etc. These verbs do not attach to Class 4 verbs.

The form *-owaru* 'finish' attaches only to continuative verbs, just as is the case with *-hajimeru* 'begin'.

As a form meaning "carry out a second time", there is *-naosu* 'restore'. This form does not attach to stative verbs, but attaches productively to continuative verbs: *yomi-naosu* 're-read', *kaki-naosu* 're-write', etc. While attachment to instantaneous verbs is not ruled out completely, turns of phrase such as *kekkon shi-naosu* 're-marry' have a joking feel to them. This is probably because of the tendency I noted earlier for many instantaneous verbs to denote actions or processes which, once realized, are not readily repeated. The verb *shinu* 'die' is a prime example of this.

The form *-tsukeru* 'set' expressing habituation also attaches productively only to continuative verbs. Expressions such as *Fudan kaki-tsuke-te-iru kara umai mono da* '(She) is accustomed to writing regularly, so (she) is skillful', *Mi-tsukete me ga koe-te-iru* 'Being accustomed to seeing (them), I have a discerning eye', etc. are examples. This form does not attach to stative or instantaneous verbs.

Among the particles that attach to the infinitive inflection, there is *-nagara* 'while'. When this attaches to stative verbs, it expresses adversativity. For example, in expressions such as *Ningen de ari-nagara sono furumai wa chikushoo ni otoru* 'While (she/he) is a human, (her/his) behavior is worse than dumb beasts', and *Chikaku ni mie-nagara nakanaka yukitsuka-nai* 'While (it) appears to be nearby, we just don't ever arrive (there)', the particle *-nagara* helps form the meanings, "in spite of being" and "in spite of appearing".

In a pattern composed of [continuative verb + *-nagara*], in principle, the action's being in progress is what is expressed. The expressions *uta o utai-nagara aruku* 'walk while singing a song' and *Maa tabe-nagara hanaso-o* 'Well, let's talk while we eat' are examples. Note that there are also examples of this pattern with the meaning of "in spite of...", the expression *Jibun de wa*

*tabe-nagara tanin ni wa tabe-sase-nai* ‘While he himself eats, he won’t let others eat’ being one of them, but I will discuss these further below.<sup>3</sup>

The particle *-nagara* has a certain amount of difficulty attaching to instantaneous verbs, but when it manages to do so, it typically expresses adversativity. The expressions *Daigaku o sotsugyoo shi-nagara tegami ippon roku ni kake-nai* ‘In spite of graduating from college, (they) can’t even write one letter properly’ and *warui koto to wa shiri-nagara* ‘while knowing that (it) was a bad thing to do’ are examples of this. Additionally, the pattern composed of [instantaneous verb + *-nagara*] can also mean “the action in question having ended, the (resulting) state persists unchanged”. The expressions *Iki-nagara ume-rare-ta* ‘(They) were buried while living’ and *Tachi-nagara mono o kuu* ‘(They) eat while standing’ can be considered examples of this. Still, it is not impossible to consider both *ikiru* ‘be alive’ and *tatsu* ‘stand’ as being continuative verbs. Under that assumption we could consider the examples above as expressing actions in progress.

The particle *-nagara* does not readily attach to Class 4 verbs either, but when it does, it expresses adversativity: *Tairyoku ni sugure-nagara...* ‘While being superior in physical strength, ...’, etc.

With respect to inflecting verbal suffixes attaching to the infinitive forms of verbs, first there is the item *-tai* expressing desire. This does not easily attach to stative verbs. While it is not impossible to form expressions like *Kaku ari-tai to negau* ‘(lit.) (I) wish such that (I) want to be that way’, i.e., ‘(I) wish (I) were that way’, etc., nevertheless, expressions that seem viable at first glance, such as *\*Watashi mo suiei ga deki-tai* ‘(intended) I too want to be able to swim’, etc., are not sentences in Japanese. The inflecting verbal suffix *-tai* attaches freely to continuative verbs and instantaneous verbs, and there is no particular observation to be made about such patterns. Examples include such expressions as *yomi-tai* ‘want to read’, *kaki-tai* ‘want to write’, *sotsugyoo shi-tai* ‘want to graduate’, *kekkon shi-tai* ‘want to marry’, etc.

The inflecting verbal suffix for politeness is *-masu*. This attaches extremely freely to stative verbs, continuative verbs, and instantaneous verbs, but has a certain amount of difficulty in attaching to Class 4 verbs, depending on the item

---

<sup>3</sup> [Translator’s note] In this paper there is no further discussion of adversative uses of [continuative verb + *nagara*]. Reference to a discussion with regard to the possibility of an adversative use of the expression *yomi-nagara* appears in the postscript of this paper, suggesting that a prior version of this paper included an elaboration on the topic somewhere below.

in question. Expressions like *ni-masu* ‘resemble’ and *sugure-masu* ‘excel’ can be used, but *-masu* doesn’t attach to expressions such as *takai hana o suru* ‘(lit.) do a high nose’, i.e., ‘have a prominent nose’ or *bakageru* ‘be foolish’.

Among particles attaching to the infinitive, there is another form expressing conjecture: *-sooda*. This attaches to verbs in every class, but when it attaches to stative verbs, in principle it expresses conjecture about the present. Expressions such as *Ikanimo okane ga ari-sooda* ‘(lit.) (They) are utterly such that (they) must certainly have money’, i.e., ‘(They) most certainly look like they have money’ and *Kono naifu wa kire-sooda* ‘(lit.) This knife is such that it must certainly cut well’, i.e., ‘This knife looks like it cuts well’ are conjectures about the present. While the expression *Gogatsu-goro shokuryookiki ga ari-sooda* ‘Around May there will most likely be a food shortage’ is a conjecture about the future, actually in this case it is possible to view the verb *aru* as meaning *okoru* ‘happen’, that is, as being used provisionally as an instantaneous verb.

When *-sooda* attaches to a continuative verb, in principle it expresses conjecture about the future: *naki-soona kao* ‘a face that looks as though it is about to cry’, *Ame ga furi-sooda* ‘It looks as though it is about to rain’, etc. Note that in a situation where one meets someone who has a reputation for being a maudlin drinker and says of same, *Ikanimo naki-soona kao o shi-te-iru* ‘Indeed (she/he) has a face that looks ever so much as though (she/he) is about to cry’, one could be said to be making a conjecture about a present state of affairs, but this is not merely a conjecture about a present fact, but rather a conjecture about a present generic/habitual fact, making possible an analysis in which *naku* ‘cry’ is being used as a stative verb.

As might be expected, the pattern composed of [instantaneous verb + *-sooda*] expresses conjecture about the future: *Denki ga kie-sooda* ‘The lights are about to turn off’, *Wasure-soode shikata ga nai* ‘(lit.) Being about to forget (it), there is nothing to be done’, i.e., ‘(I) am so worried (I) will forget (it), I don’t know what to do’, etc. The form *-sooda* does not attach to Class 4 verbs.

[3] Dependent morphemes of the kind that concatenate with *ombin* forms in the case of quadrigrade verbs<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> [Translator’s note] Quadrigrade (consonant-final) verbs in their *ombin* forms are only concatenated with the gerundive *-te*, the past tense *-ta*, the representative *-tari*, and the conditional *-tara* (or their phonological variants). Note that monograde (vowel-final) verbs and /s/-final verbs (which do not have *ombin* forms) can also be concatenated with these

Let's begin with the inflecting verbal suffix *-ta* expressing the past tense. While this inflecting verbal suffix attaches to verbs of all classes, it can be seen attaching to stative verbs, continuative verbs, and instantaneous verbs, where it expresses the past with such regularity that there should be no need to present examples. What demands our attention here is the case where *-ta* attaches to Class 4 verbs, and in this case it does not express the past, but rather expresses present states. For example, the verb forms in the expressions *mukoo ni sobie-ta yama* 'mountains that tower in the distance', *takai hana o shi-ta hito* '(lit.) a person who did a high nose', i.e., 'a person with a prominent nose', and *sugure-ta chosho* 'a piece of writing that is outstanding' mean exactly the same thing as *sobie-te-iru yama*, *takai hana o shi-te-iru hito*, and *sugure-te-iru chosho*, and those expressions with *-ta* do not mean that there were actions or processes of *sobieru* or *takai hana o suru*, etc. in the past having results that persist into the present. What is denoted in these cases is, in all instances and in every respect, a present state. In sum, apart from the usages for inflecting verbal suffix *-ta* that are already presented in grammar texts, an entry needs to be created for "expressing present states", additionally supplied with a footnote to the effect that this usage only obtains in Class 4 verbs.

In addition there are instances in which *-ta* expresses states which continue from a point of time in the past into the present, but these are only seen in patterns where *-ta* attaches to stative verbs. Examples include the expressions *Kono isu wa senkoku kara koko ni at-ta* '(lit.) This chair was here since a moment ago', i.e., 'This chair has been here since a moment ago', *Kono ko wa shoogakkoo no toki kara sanjutsu ga yoku deki-ta* '(lit.) This child was able to do arithmetic well since elementary school', i.e., 'This child has been able to do arithmetic well since elementary school', etc. And it is often said that *-ta* is used in situations when a present or future matter is recalled afresh, but these situations seem to be limited to the pattern [stative verb + *-ta*]. A line often used by Chūji Kunisada in the Shinkokugeki theater company, to wit, *Ore ni wa omae to iu tsuyoi mikata ga at-ta* '(lit.) I had a strong ally in you', i.e., '(I had forgotten that) I have had a strong ally in you' is an example of recall of a present fact. An example of *-ta* used in reference to a future fact is the following: *De wa itsu o-ai shi-masho-o. Ashita ni shi-masho-o ka. Iya ashita wa dame desu. Ashita wa kenkyuukai ga ari-mashi-ta* 'So when shall we meet? Shall we make it tomorrow? No, tomorrow is no good. (lit.) There was a research

---

four dependent morphemes.

meeting tomorrow (i.e., [I had forgotten that] there is a research meeting tomorrow).’ Such usages are not available for continuative and instantaneous verbs.

Instances of auxiliary verbs attaching to *ombin* forms or their equivalents mediated by the particle *-te* are extremely numerous, but having covered the pattern formed with *-te-iru* in Section 1, I will pass over that and make a comment about its negation, *-te-i-nai*.

The verbs to which this form attaches are the continuative verbs, the instantaneous verbs, and the Class 4 verbs, and for each class the resulting forms express present states, but there are differences between these three classes. The pattern composed of [continuative verb + *-te-i-nai*] is used to express both situations in which the action in question was performed in the past but is not performed in the present, and also situations in which the action in question will be performed in the future but hasn’t been performed yet, while the pattern composed of [instantaneous verb + *-te-i-nai*] is used to express only the latter of these two situations. The expression *Hon o yon-de-i-nai* ‘(I) am not reading the book’ is compatible with both *Mada* ‘still, yet’ \_\_\_ ‘I haven’t read the book yet’ and *Moo* ‘already, anymore’ \_\_\_ ‘I am not reading the book anymore’, but *Kekkon shite-i-nai* is only compatible with *Mada* ‘still, yet’ \_\_\_ ‘I haven’t married yet’.

The form *-te-shimau* (expressing perfective aspect, irrevocability, etc.) also exhibits clear differences between each of the verb classes. To begin with, this form does not attach to stative verbs. We do not say *\*At-te-shimau* (lit.) ‘(It) exists all up/(It) goes and exists’ nor do we say *\*Deki-te-shimau* (lit.) ‘(They) are capable (of it) all up/(They) go and are capable (of it)’. Note that the *dekiru* in *Monomorai ga deki-te-shimat-ta* ‘I have gone and contracted a sty’ is an instantaneous verb.

The pattern composed of [continuative verb + *-te-shimau*] is used frequently, and in such cases the meaning it expresses is “completely” or “up to the end”: *Kinoo kat-ta hon o ichi-nichi de yon-de-shimat-ta* ‘(I) read the book (I) bought yesterday to the end in one day’, *Tooan o kai-te-shimat-ta hito wa dete yoroshii* ‘Those people who have written their answers completely are free to leave’, etc. There is also a usage of this form expressing the impossibility of reverting to the previous state once an action has been taken, or the incurring of an irrevocable situation. The expression *Tooan ni taihen na machigai o kai-te-shimat-ta* ‘(I) went and wrote a huge mistake in (my) answer’ is one such

example, but granted this, we also note that the pattern composed of [instantaneous verb + *-te-shimau*] is only used in this latter sense, that is, “the action or process once having been carried out, ... (it cannot be undone)”. The expressions *Ano hito mo tootoo shin-de-shimat-ta* ‘So now that person has finally gone and died for good’ and *Denki ga kie-te-shimat-ta* ‘Now the light has gone and turned off for good’ are examples of this. The form *-te-shimau* does not attach to Class 4 verbs.

There are also the forms *-te-kuru* ‘come to do’ and *-te-iku* ‘go on doing’. While these attach to verbs of each class, when they attach to stative verbs, the resulting form expresses that there is a gradual change to the state in question: *Kono ko mo ichi-ji wa zuibun shimpai shi-ta ga konogoro dandan deki-te-ki-ta* ‘At one time (I) was very worried about this child, but recently she has come to be capable more and more’, *Fuji-san ga hakkiri mie-te-ki-ta* ‘Mt. Fuji has come to be clearly visible’, etc. When these forms attach to continuative verbs the result is completely different, with the meaning expressed being that of the continuance of the situation in question. For example, the expressions *Kore made wa kodomo no zasshi bakari yon-de-ki-ta* ‘Up until now (they) have read nothing but children’s magazines’ and *Ijoo shabet-te-ki-ta koto o yakugen sureba, ...* ‘To summarize what (I) have said up to this point, ...’ do not express gradual changes. Given this, we also note that the form *-te-kuru* does not attach to Class 4 verbs. Any expression of a form like *\*kekkon shi-te-kuru* ‘(lit.) come to marry’ or *\*shin-de-ki-ta* ‘(lit.) came to die’ will be meaningless.

While the form *-te-iku* cannot be used as freely as *-te-kuru*, when it does attach to a verb, it interacts with verb classes in the same way as *-te-kuru*.

[4] Dependent morphemes concatenating with conclusive/adnominal forms

As examples of inflecting verbal suffixes concatenating with conclusive/adnominal form of verbs, there are the items *daroo* and *rashii*, both of which express conjecture. The situations in which these forms attach to verbs of each class are exactly the same as those with the expression *-sooda* discussed above. Namely, when attaching to stative verbs the resulting forms express conjecture with respect to present or future states of affairs; when attaching to continuative and simultaneous verbs, the resulting forms only express conjecture with respect to future states of affairs. In contrast with the expressions *Funabashi ni wa sakana ga aru daroo* ‘There are probably fish in Funabashi’ (present), *Ashita itte mo aru daroo* ‘There will probably be (some) even if (I) go tomorrow’ (future), the following are limited to the future: *Ima ni*

*taberu daroo* '(They) will eat it any second now' (future), *Sorosoro kekkon suru daroo* '(They) will marry sometime soon' (future). If patterns composed of [continuative verb + *daroo/rashii*] could be said to express conjectures about present facts at all, they would be conjectures about present generic/habitual events: *Naruhodo ano taikaku naraba takusan taberu daroo* 'I see. With a physique like that (she/he) probably eats a lot'.

The forms *ka mo shirenai* '(lit.) cannot even know whether', i.e., 'maybe', *ni chigainai* '(lit.) there is no discrepancy thereto', i.e., 'undoubtedly', and *kashira* '(I) wonder' all exhibit the same characteristics as *daroo/rashii*.

Next, the form *mai* expresses negative conjecture and negative intention, but when it attaches to stative verbs, in principle it expresses negative conjecture; when it attaches to continuative verbs and instantaneous verbs it expresses both negative intention and negative conjecture. In the same way as with *-u/-yoo*, this is based on the relationship of the present classification with the volitional/non-volitional verb classification, and to this extent presents no problem. However, when this form expresses negative conjecture, the pattern composed of [stative verb + *mai*] is the same as that with *daroo* insofar as it expresses conjecture about present and future states of affairs, but the pattern composed of [continuative/instantaneous verb + *mai*] expresses conjecture about past or future states of affairs. For example, *Ano hito wa konna hon o yomu mai* 'This person will not likely read books like these' also entails a negative conjecture about a past state of affairs with the meaning of *Mada yon-de-i-mai* '(She/he) has likely not read them yet', and at the same time is a negative conjecture about a future state of affairs: *Shoorai yomu mai* 'In the future (she/he) will likely not read them'. The same point holds for instantaneous verbs: *Ano hito wa mada kekkon shi-mai* 'That person will not likely marry yet'.

Finally, let's consider the particle *na*, which expresses prohibition. This particle does not attach to stative verbs. While it might seem plausible to say something like *\*Darashinaku mieru na* '(intended) Don't look slovenly!' this is not a sentence in Japanese. The particle *na* attaches to continuative verbs as well as to instantaneous verbs, but with observable differences. Namely, for patterns composed of [continuative verb + *na*], in addition to expressing prohibition of future actions, it is also used for finding fault with past actions. As an example of the first kind of usage, there is *Kimi ni dake oshieru ga, dare ni mo iu na* 'I'll tell only you, but don't tell anyone else'. As an example of the

second kind, consider the following expression in the context of one's having some secret be suddenly exposed: *Oi oi hen na koto o iu na* 'Hey, hey—on't say crazy things!'

Patterns composed of [instantaneous verb + *na*] tend to express only prohibitions with respect to future actions, and not suppressions of past actions. The expression *Sonna ni hayaku kekkon suru na* 'Don't marry so soon!' is an utterance addressed to an unmarried person and cannot be used to address a married person.

There are hardly any instances where auxiliary words concatenate with Class 4 verbs.

### Section 5. Relationships between the 4-way classification and classifications based on other criteria

In the discussion above, I have classified the verbs of the Japanese language from the perspective of what kinds of temporal properties obtain in the actions and processes these verbs express, examining the similarities and differences that are revealed thereby, but given this classification, what relationships does it have to conventional methods of classification based on other perspectives?

Among the conventional verb classifications carried out to date, the method that classifies all verbs into either transitive verbs or intransitive verbs is the most prevalent. When we compare that with the classification proposed in the present article, the first point that comes to mind is that my stative verb class is, almost without exception, composed of intransitive verbs. This holds for *aru* 'exist', for *dekiru* 'be able', and so on. The only exception was the single word *yoo suru* 'require' presented in Section 2, used as in *San-jup-pun o yoo suru* '(It) takes thirty minutes', which is considered a transitive verb, but it is not with any intention of disposing of this exception that I venture to say that, within the class of transitive verbs, this is a very unrepresentative member.

Taking up continuative verbs next, when we consider those items that express the actions of people, the number of transitive verbs is extremely large: *kaku* 'write', *yomu* 'read', *miru* 'see', *kiku* 'hear', *kuu* 'eat', *nomu* 'drink', etc. However, the number of intransitive verbs is not inconsiderable: *warau* 'laugh', *naku* 'cry', plus items that express natural phenomena such as *furu* 'fall (as of rain)' and *fuku* 'blow (as of wind)'. We wind up with an admixture of transitive and intransitive verbs in this case, but compared to the next class, that of instantaneous

verbs, we can definitively state that the class of continuative verbs is rich in transitive verbs. That is to say, instantaneous verbs such as in *Shinu* '(They) die', *Kekkon suru* '(They) marry', *Dentoo ga tsuku* 'Lights turn on' *Dentoo ga kieru* 'Lights turn off', etc. are all intransitive. Granted, the verbs *sotsugyoo suru* 'graduate' and *rikon suru* 'divorce' can be used in expressions like *Gakkoo o sotsugyoo suru* 'Graduate from school' and *Nyooboo o rikon suru* 'Divorce (one's) wife', but the particle *o* in these cases is the *o* that expresses separation, and as such does not necessarily indicate transitivity in the verb. Nevertheless, instantaneous verbs such as *wasureru* 'forget' and *shiru* 'know', etc. must be considered transitive verbs, so in the final analysis the class of instantaneous verbs consists of a majority of intransitive verbs and a minority of transitive ones.

As can be seen above, the class of continuative verbs is judged to have an abundance of transitive verbs, and the class of instantaneous verbs is judged to have an abundance of intransitive verbs, but as if to reflect this tendency between verb classes, we observe as a point of deep interest that among verb pairs closely related in meaning, there are not a few pairs of verbs for which one member is transitive and belongs to the continuative verb class, while the other member is intransitive and belongs to the instantaneous verb class. For example, in order to consider the pair *kimeru* 'decide' and *kimaru* 'be decided', suppose a context in which just now three children are playing "rock, paper, scissors" to 'decide' (*kimeru*) who is to be "it" in a game of tag. In the first round, the shapes presented were respectively a "rock", a "paper", and a "scissors", so the issue 'was not decided' (*kimara-nakat-ta*). In the second round, everyone presented a "stone", so the issue 'was not decided' (*kimara-nakat-ta*). Given this situation, during the time in which the first and second rounds are being played, one can felicitously say *Oni o kime-te-iru* (lit.) 'They are deciding the "it"', but one cannot felicitously say #*Oni ga kimat-te-iru* '(intended) The "it" is being decided'. It is not until the third round, in which two of the children present "scissors" and the remaining child presents "paper", that one can rightly say *Oni ga kimat-te-iru* 'The "it" has been decided'. In short, we interpret *kimeru* 'decide' as a continuative verb and *kimaru* 'be decided' as an instantaneous verb. Whether it be in the pair (*Sakana o yaku* '(They) broil (the fish)' and (*Sakana ga yakeru* '(The fish) is broiled', or the pair (*Ki o ueru* '(They) plant (the tree)', (*Ki ga uwaru* '(The tree) is planted', the transitive verbs *yaku* 'broil' and *ueru* 'plant' have continuative meanings, while the intransitive verbs *yakeru* 'be broiled' and *uwaru* 'be planted' have instantaneous meanings.

Finally, the Class 4 verbs are in principle intransitive verbs, and while

occasionally one might find a transitive verb mixed in, as with the verb *suru* ‘do’ in *takai hana o suru* ‘(lit.) do a high nose’, i.e., ‘have a prominent nose’, of such instances it might be said that they are not representative of transitive verbs in general.

Next is the classification by grammars of all verbs into volitional verbs and non-volitional verbs. Volitional verbs are verbs which express actions carried out according to the will of the subject, and non-volitional verbs are verbs which differ in exactly this respect. When we contrast this classification with the classification proposed in the present article, the first point that stands out is that stative verbs are all non-volitional verbs. When used in expressions where the subject is an inanimate entity, such as in *Tsukue ga aru* ‘There is a desk’ and *Isu ga aru* ‘There is a chair’, the verbs are non-volitional as a matter of course. Setting aside examples such as these, if we consider items like the *dekiru* ‘be able’ in *Ano hito wa Marai-go ga dekiru* ‘That person can speak Malay’ or the *mieru* ‘be visible’ in *Ano hito wa rippa ni mieru* ‘That person looks impressive’, we see that these are all non-volitional. The fact I noted earlier to the effect that it is impossible to add the form *-u/yoo* expressing volition to verbs such as these is no doubt due to their being non-volitional verbs. As an exception, we note that among the stative verbs, *iru* ‘exist’ is a volitional verb in some of its instances. The fact that of all the stative verbs this one word was exhibiting exceptional behaviors (viz. taking the imperative form) is arguably relevant to this point.

Next is the class of continuative verbs, in which we see that the great majority of them are volitional verbs. The verbs *yomu* ‘read’, *kaku* ‘write’, *kuu* ‘eat’, *nomu* ‘drink’, etc. are all examples of volitional verbs. While it is obvious that verbs taking non-animate subjects such as *furu* ‘fall (of rain)’ and *moeru* ‘burn’ are non-volitional, it is safe to say that most verbs taking human subjects are volitional. Conversely, among instantaneous verbs, it appears that the number of verbs that are non-volitional verbs or nearly equivalent thereto is large. The expressions (*Me ga*) *sameru* ‘(lit.) (Eyes) become alert’, i.e., ‘(I) wake up’ and (*Byooki ga*) *naoru* ‘(My illness) heals’, etc., contain verbs that concern humans, but these are non-volitional verbs. Employing verbs such as *nemuru* ‘sleep’ and *wasureru* ‘forget’, it is possible to form expressions like *Nemuro-o* ‘(lit.) (I) shall sleep’ and *Wasure-yoo* ‘(lit.) (I) shall forget’, but just as we experience in everyday life that these are events that do not always come off as we would wish, we must admit that the verbs denoting these events cannot be said to be purely volitional verbs. That the same holds for the verb *shinu* ‘die’ is clear for all to see without having to wait for the example set by

Former Prime Minister Tōjō.

Given the arguments above, we may consider whether it is the case that the class of continuative verbs abounds in volitional verbs, whereas instantaneous verbs tend to be non-volitional, but here I think it bears noting that it is possible to find verbs that have continuative meanings when used as volitional verbs, but have instantaneous meanings when used as non-volitional verbs, even though the form of a given verb of this sort may be completely identical in both usages. For example, in the expression *Boo de kaki no mi o otosu* ‘(lit.) Drop the fruits of a persimmon with a stick’, i.e., ‘Knock down the fruits of a persimmon with a stick’, the verb *otosu* ‘drop, cause to fall’ is clearly a volitional verb, but in this case *otosu* expresses an action that is carried out over a period of time, and that may start with finding some well-ripened persimmon fruit, and may even go so far as to involve plucking fruit and branch down together using a Y-shaped fork. In contrast to this, the verb *otosu* ‘drop’ in the expression *Hitogomi de gamaguchi o otosu* ‘Drop one’s coin purse in a crowd’ is arguably a non-volitional verb, and in this instance we would judge that *otosu* is being used as an abstract, instantaneous verb.

Additionally, we note that Class 4 verbs are in principle non-volitional verbs.

It appears that there are other areas which are related to the classification proposed in this article. For example, as noted in Sections 3 and 4, it is an observable fact that there are many instantaneous verbs expressing actions which, once carried out, are not easily carried out a second time, or actions at which it is difficult to try making an attempt, while continuative verbs exhibit the opposite behavior. What might this mean? Here we arrive at a point where a fundamental reconsideration of the classification proposed in this article is in order.

### Section 6. A reconsideration of the present classification

When I first set out to attempt this classification, I took the properties of actions and processes seen from a temporal perspective as the criteria for deciding class membership.

However, upon reconsideration, among the four classes, I note that Class 4 is defined as containing “verbs that express the taking on of states”. Reassessing the status of Class 3 instantaneous verbs, one would suppose that they can be re-defined as “verbs that express changes of state”. It is the case that verbs such as *shinu* ‘die’ and *kekkon suru* ‘marry’, etc. all can be viewed as such. If we extend this way of looking at things to Class 2 verbs, is it not the case that continuative verbs can be defined as “verbs which express temporary changes of state”? Given an

expression *Hon o yomu* '(She/He) reads a book', just for the duration of "reading", the person in question is in a changed state. We can interpret it to mean that when the "reading" is over, that person resumes her/his original state. Class 1 stative verbs can be defined as "verbs denoting unchanging states". If we define continuative verbs as verbs that express temporary changes of state, then we can define instantaneous verbs as expressing permanent changes of state. The relationships between classes can then be set out as below:

Stative verbs = verbs that express unchanging states

Continuative verbs = verbs that express temporary changes of state

Instantaneous verbs = verbs that express permanent changes of state

Class 4 verbs = verbs that express the onsets of states

However, a question remains as to whether, in order to pursue this analysis, verbs that express continuous actions must necessarily be defined as meaning temporary changes of state, and verbs that express instantaneous actions must necessarily be defined as meaning permanent changes of state. When we actually try to apply this analysis, we can't deny that there are indeed verbs which express continuous actions while at the same time expressing permanent changes of state. Verbs such as *nobiru* 'lengthen', *chijimaru* 'shrink', *sumu* 'become clear' (as of liquids, gasses, etc.), *nigoru* 'become cloudy' (as of liquids, gasses, etc.) are examples of this. Since a one-inch piece of rubber line may stretch to one-and-a-half inches over the span of an hour, this *nobiru* 'lengthen' is a continuous verb, but it must also be viewed as expressing a permanent change. The same is true of *chijimaru* 'shrink', *sumu* 'become clear' and *nigoru* 'become cloudy. In addition, if we ask whether there might be verbs which can be viewed as expressing instantaneous actions while at the same time expressing temporary changes of state, though their numbers be few they are not entirely non-existent. The verbs *mabataku* 'blink' and *bekken suru* 'glimpse' fit this description. That a state which obtains before blinking has changed after blinking is not plausible. Accordingly, we are left with no choice but to consider this verb *mabataku* 'blink' as an instantaneous verb that nevertheless expresses a temporary change of state.

If we follow the analysis above, we arrive at the following problem with regard to the classification of verbs. In short, this is the problem of whether it is better to divide all verbs into four classes according to the method set out at the beginning of this article, namely [1] verbs that express states, [2] verbs that express

continuous actions, [3] verbs that express instantaneous actions, and [4] verbs that express the taking on of states, or rather to use the method newly developed here to divide all verbs into the following classes: [A] verbs expressing unchanging states, [B] verbs expressing temporary changes of state, [C] verbs expressing permanent changes of state, and [D] verbs expressing the onsets of states. Whether we choose the [1], [2] classification or the [A], [B] classification, there is no great difference in class membership among words, with the proviso that verbs such as *nobiru* ‘lengthen’, *chijimaru* ‘shrink’, *sumu* ‘become clear’, and *nigoru* ‘become cloudy’ fall into class [2] if we choose the [1], [2] classification, but fall into class [C] if we choose the [A], [B] classification. Additionally, the verbs *mabataku* ‘blink’ and *bekken suru* ‘glimpse’ fall into class [3] if we choose the [1], [2] classification, but fall into class [B] if we choose the [A], [B] classification.

Of the [1], [2] system and the [A], [B] system, which is the better method of classification? The question should probably be decided on the basis of which system reveals more clear oppositions among usages of inflectional forms and among meanings of concatenated dependent morphemes. Obviously the next step should be to attempt this sort of comparison, but as the author hasn’t given the matter enough thought, and because this article would become far too long, I choose this point to rest my pen for the time being.

[Postscript] This article is a revision of a draft corrected after being presented for the first time on 10 February 1945 at a meeting of the *Tōdai gengogaku kenkyū-shitsu* ‘Tokyo University Linguistics Research Room’, and then presented again the same year, on 30 November 1945, at a research meeting of the *Gengo bunka kenkyūsho* ‘Research Institute for Language and Culture’. Concerning the views presented in this article, I received valuable suggestions and admonitions from Dr. Shiro Hattori and Dr. Motoki Tokieda, and from Ōki Hayashi, Susumu Ōno, Jirō Ikegami, Tōru Mineya, Minoru Wada, and Shin Kawakami, among others, but in this article I have limited myself to correcting only certain phrases in places where these might invite misunderstandings. Among the opinions offered by these people, Mr. Hayashi’s suggestion was that continuative verbs probably are not “verbs that express actions that continue over a certain period of time” but rather “verbs that depict certain actions as actions that continue over a certain period of time”, and that instantaneous verbs probably are not “verbs that express actions that are completed at some instant”, but rather “verbs that depict certain actions in a way that is divorced from the concept of continuing over a certain period of time”. When considering whether *-nagara* ‘while’ (such as in *yomi-nagara* ‘while reading’) expresses progressive aspect or adversative

modality, as discussed on page 56,<sup>5</sup> the difference between the two comes out clearly from this perspective, leading me to realize what an excellent idea this is. With all respect, I present the idea here as something of especial importance.

[16 July 1947]

---

**ORIGINAL PAPER**

KINDAICHI Haruhiko, 1950, Kokugo Dōshi-no Ichibunrui, *Gengo Kenkyū* 15, Nihon Gengo Gakkai [The Linguistic Society of Japan], pp.48-63.

Translated by Stephen Wright HORN

Proofed by John H. Haig (University of Hawai'i at Manoa)

---

<sup>5</sup> [Translator's note] For part of the relevant discussion, please refer to the treatment of the ambiguity of *tabe-nagara* in Section 4, [2] Patterns composed of [infinitive + dependent morpheme]. Note that an extended discussion of the various uses of [continuous verb + *nagara*] does not appear in this paper.