JAPANESE 'IRREVERSIBLE' ASPECT: -*TE SHIMAU*[*]

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In this paper, I consider the use of the Japanese completive aspect marker -*te shimau*. While this marker is typically thought to emphasize the end point of an action, it is compatible with many verbs that do not have an end point. Based on the knowledge that V-*te shimau* indicates that an action has reached a point of irreversibility, I argue that the location of the point of irreversibility within the event differs based on the aspectual class of the main verb. In the first section, I describe the meaning of the auxiliary *shimau* and how it is used, as outlined by Iwasaki (2002). Next, I describe how it interacts with verbs of different aspectual classes, and how this interaction contradicts Iwasaki's description. Next, I discuss the V-*te shimau* construction in terms of its status as an achievement verb. Finally, I discuss the relevance of the implication of irreversibility that V-*te shimau* conveys, and how it is this irreversibility that unifies the different interpretations of the construction.

1.   V-*te shimau*

The Japanese lexical verb *shimau* means 'to put away'; when used with the conjunctive form of a main verb in the V-*te shimau* construction, it means 'to do V completely (and the speaker is affected)' (Strauss 2003). This construction expresses completive aspect; it conveys that an action has reached a point of completion, and also that the speaker is somehow affected by this completion (Iwasaki 2002).

(1)   a.   Taro-ga   ringo-wo tabe-ta.
               Taro-*nom* apple-*acc* eat-*past*
               'Taro ate the apple.'

       b.   Taro-ga   ringo-wo tabe-te   shima-tta.
               Taro-*nom* apple-*acc* eat-*conj* put.away-*past*
               'Taro completely ate the apple up (unfortunately).'

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(2)   a.   Kingyo-ga   shi-nda.
                goldfish-*nom* die-*past*
                'The goldfish died.'

      b.   Kingyo-ga   shi-nde   shima-tta.
                Goldfish-*nom* die-*conj*   put.away-*past*
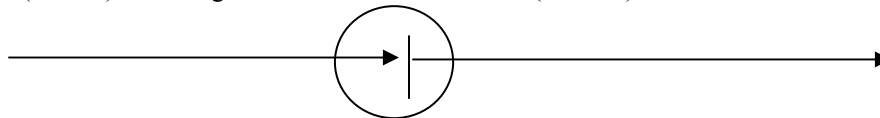   'The goldfish died (unfortunately).'

(Iwasaki, 2002, p. 118, his (35))

      While (1a) is semantically neutral, (1b) places a greater emphasis on the fact that the apple is completely gone, and that this somehow affects the speaker. (2a) carries no particular emphasis; however, (2b) conveys the idea that it is irreversible and unfortunate that the goldfish has died. The way in which the speaker is affected by the event is understood through the context; V-*te shimau* can express surprise, disappointment, relief, etc., depending on the context of the utterance (Strauss 2002).[1]

2.   Completive Aspect and Aspectual Type

Iwasaki (2002) says that V-*te shimau* focuses semantically on the point at which an action ends. He describes the completive aspect with the following schema:

(3)   (state A)   Change of State/Reference Time   (state A')

(Iwasaki, 2002, p.117, his Figure (4))

      According to Iwasaki's diagram, it is the emphasis on the change of state that characterizes the completive aspect; the V-*te shimau* construction conveys that state A is completed, and cannot be resumed. Iwasaki (2002) notes that because this construction requires a change of state, it applies easily to verbs with inherent end points (that is, accomplishments and achievements):
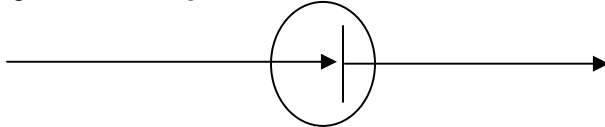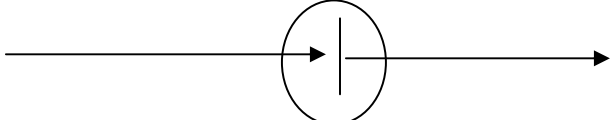
(4)   Sono mondai-wa   to-ite   shima-tta.
        That   problem-*top* solve-*conj* put.away-*past*
        'I solved the problem (and I am proud of it).'

(Strauss, 2003, p.660, her (16))

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[1] I will not be discussing the emotional connotation of this construction in great detail here. For a thorough analysis of this issue, see Strauss (2003).

(5)   Kono kata-wa   namae-wo wasure-te   shima-tta.
          That   person-*top* name-*acc* forget-*conj* put.away-*past*
          'I completely (and unfortunately) forgot that person's name.'

       The main verb in (4), *toku* 'to solve,' is an accomplishment verb by Vendler's classification; the process of solving culminates in an end point. The V-*te shimau* construction in (4) implies that the process of solving the problem has been completed, and that the speaker has an emotional response to this change of state. Similarly, when used with the achievement verb *wasureru* 'to forget' in (5), the V-*te shimau* construction conveys that the act of forgetting is complete and unfortunate (Iwasaki 2002). Following Iwasaki's diagram for completive aspect, (4) and (5) would look like (6) and (7) below:

(6)   process: *creating*   CS   state: *created*

(7)   state: *not forgotten*   CS   state: *forgotten*

       The initial process or state denoted by the verb culminates in a point of transition; this point indicates the beginning of a new state. Iwasaki (2002) says that the V-*te shimau* construction semantically focuses on this point of transition.
       V-*te shimau* can also be used with atelic verbs. Iwasaki (2002) says that when a process verb is used in conjunctive form with *shimau*, it creates an "artificial end point"; it suggests that an event has reached the point of being irreversible and is regretted.

(8)   Ikenai to   shiri-nagara ano hito   to   oshaberi shi-te   shima-tta.
          bad   *conj* know-while that person with chat   do-*conj* put.away-*past*
          'While knowing it's bad, I ended up chatting with that person.'
(Iwasaki, 2002, p.118, his (34))

       According to Iwasaki (2002), the implication of (8) is that the speaker has reached the point within the process of speaking with someone that prevents him from reversing the action; *shimau* imposes an artificial end point. However, this is not an accurate characterization of how *shimau* interacts with an atelic verb; with these verbs, *shimau* does not force an end point, but an initial point. Consider the verb *neru* 'to sleep,' which takes on the meaning 'to fall asleep' when in the V-*te shimau* form (Kuno 1973):

(9) a. Megumi-ga ne-ta.
         Megumi-*nom* sleep-*past*
         'Megumi slept.'

     b. Megumi-ga ne-te   shima-tta.
         Megumi-*nom* sleep-*conj* put.away-*past*
         'Megumi fell asleep.'

In (9b), the process verb *neru* 'to sleep' is given an inchoative reading rather than an accomplishment reading. The action of sleeping receives an initial point rather than an end point; (9b) can be said even if Megumi is still sleeping at the moment of speech. Thus, the act of sleeping is not being completed in any sense; the completion marker is not creating an end point to the process denoted by the main verb. This interpretation is true of (8) as well; there is nothing that suggests that the process of chatting is being completed. When applied to process verbs, it is not an end point that is created by the V-*te shimau* construction, but an initial point.

V-*te shimau* is also compatible with the verbs that are described in Nightingale (1999) as belonging to Kindaichi's (1950) class of stative potentials. While stative verbs such as *iru* 'to be (*animate*)' and *aru* 'to be (*inanimate*)' independently denote states, stative potentials must be used with the auxiliary *iru* 'to be' in order to denote states; when used independently, they are not stative.

(10) a. Haha-ni   ni-te   i-ru.
          mother-*dat* resemble-*conj* be-*nonpast*
          'I resemble my mother.'

      b. ?Haha-ni   ni-ru.
          mother-*dat* resemble-*nonpast*
          'I resemble my mother.'

Niru 'to resemble' is a stative potential; when used with the auxiliary *iru* 'to be,' it denotes the state of resembling; however, when used independently, it does not refer to a state. (10b) is of dubious grammaticality because Japanese non-stative verbs, like English non-stative verbs, cannot be used in the simple present to describe an action occurring at the moment of speech. Nightingale (1999) points out that a stative potential like *niru* or *aisuru* 'to love' can be used in the V-*te shimau* construction; however, a stative like *iru* 'to be' cannot.

(11) a. Toronto-ni i-ta.
          Toronto-*dat* be-*past*
          'I was in Toronto.'

b. *Toronto-ni i-te shima-tta.
Toronto-*dat* be-*conj* put.away-*past*
*'I was completely in Toronto, unfortunately.'
*'I finished being in Toronto, unfortunately.'

(12) Warui koto da-tta ga, kare-ni ai shi-te shima-tta.
Bad thing *cop-past* but him-*dat* love do-*conj* put.away-*past*
'It was a bad thing, but I loved him (I shouldn't have).'

The stative verb *iru* 'to be' in (11b) is incompatible with V-*te shimau*. However, (12) is grammatical, and *shimau* interacts with the stative potential verb *aisuru* 'to love' in the same way as it interacts with the process verb in (8) and (9b) above; the sentence does not refer to the final point of loving, but to the initial point. Therefore, with stative potential verbs as with process verbs, *-te shimau* creates an initial point rather than a final point.[2]

Thus, it seems that the completive aspect marker *-te shimau* does not always require the completion of the action denoted by the main verb. How, then, can we characterize its behaviour in a unified manner?

3. The Aspectual Class of V-*te shimau*

The lexical verb *shimau* is an accomplishment verb; however, the diagnostics that Nightingale (1999) applies to *shimau* as a conjunct reveal that the construction V-*te shimau* denotes an achievement. Three such diagnostics for this construction are its compatibility with *guuzen ni* 'accidentally,' its incompatibility with *shibaraku mae kara* 'since a while ago,' and its interaction with *-te iru*:

(13) a. Onaka-ga guuzenni mie-te shima-tta.
Belly-*nom* accidentally be.visible-*conj* put.away-*past*
'My belly was accidentally showing, to my embarrassment.'

(Nightingale, 1999, p.39, his (2.81))

b. *Onaka-ga shibaraku mae kara mie-te shima-tta.
Belly-*nom* long.time before since be.visible-*conj* put.away-*past*
'My belly was showing since a while ago, to my embarrassment.'

(Nightingale, 1999, p.39, his (2.82))

c. Onaka-ga mie-te shima-tte i-ta.
Belly-*nom* be.visible-*conj* put.away-*conj* be-*past*
'My belly had been showing, to my embarrassment.'

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[2] It should be noted that not all stative potentials are compatible with the auxiliary *shimau*; however, all those that are interact with it in the same way.

Nightingale's (1999) tests tell us that achievement verbs are compatible with *guuzen ni* 'accidentally,' are incompatible with *shibaraku mae kara* 'since a while ago,' and receive a perfect interpretation with V-*te iru*.[3] Therefore, although *shimau* is itself an accomplishment, and the main verb may be of any aspectual class except stative, the V-*te shimau* construction yields an achievement (Nightingale 1999).

An achievement verb is a point event that exists between one state and another; thus, when Iwasaki (2002) says that the V-*te shimau* construction "focuses" on the end point of the event denoted by the main verb, he means that the construction forces an achievement reading, and the achievement is the point of transition between state A and state A'. Therefore, in a sentence like (1b), repeated here as (14), the V-*te shimau* construction condenses the accomplishment of eating the apple into the achievement of its culmination.

(14)   Taro-ga   ringo-wo   tabe-te   shima-tta.
       Taro-*nom* apple-*acc* eat-*conj* put.away-*past*
       'Taro completely ate the apple up, unfortunately.'

In (14), the achievement denoted by V-*te shimau* is the finishing of the apple; the process of eating is not part of the event. Thus, in (14), the accomplishment is being reduced to the achievement.

The problem with Iwasaki's (2002) explanation is that the change of state that V-*te shimau* denotes is not obligatorily the end point of the action, as he suggests. With process verbs and stative potential verbs, the achievement is the point of transition between the state that existed prior to the event denoted by the verb and the state after its inception; that is, the achievement is the initial point of the main verb, not the final point. This raises the questions of why the readings of V-*te shimau* are different for verbs of different aspectual classes, and how an achievement that denotes the beginning of an event can be interpreted as "completive" aspect.

4.   "Irreversible" Aspect

Strauss (2002) says that the core meaning of the V-*te shimau* construction is 'finality,' meaning that a stage of irreversibility has been reached. Iwasaki (2002) makes a similar assertion, claiming that the construction indicates that an event has come to a terminal point where a reversal is impossible. While Iwasaki maintains that this point is necessarily the end point of the event denoted by the main verb, in actuality, the point differs depending on the type of event. When the main verb denotes an accomplishment, the point of irreversibility is not reached until the culmination of the accomplishment has been reached. However, when the main verb denotes an event that does not have an inherent end point, the point of irreversibility has been reached as soon as the action begins.

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[3] There has been much discussion in the literature about the interaction of different verb classes with the –*te iru* form; this issue does not fall within the scope of this paper. For in-depth analyses of this issue, see Ogihara (2000) or Matsuzaki (2000).

This distinction between telic verbs and atelic verbs is easily seen by the relationship of entailment between the progressive and the perfect. (15a) below is a sentence with a process verb, while (15b) has an accomplishment verb. While in (15a), the verb in the progressive entails the verb in the perfect, the same is not true of (15b):

(15) a.   Edwin is walking ⊦ Edwin has walked
      b.   Edwin is eating the apple ⊬ Edwin has eaten the apple

In (15b), no point of irreversibility has been reached; if Edwin is eating the apple, there is still a chance that Edwin might not eat the apple. There is an inherent end point to the event denoted by the verb, and the event is not irreversible until this end point is reached. However, in (15a), the point of irreversibility has been reached as soon as Edwin starts walking; if he is walking, then he has already walked. Thus, the action of walking is "completed" as soon as it begins, in the sense that it cannot be reversed. However, the action of eating the apple is not completed until the apple has been eaten, and is reversible until this culmination is reached.

The completion that V-*te shimau* expresses is the completion of the point within the event denoted by the main verb that makes the event irreversible; this point differs depending on whether the main verb is telic or atelic. Consider (12), repeated here as (16), in which the main verb is a stative potential:

(16) Warui koto da-tta   ga, kare-ni ai   shi-te   shima-tta.
      Bad   thing *cop-past* but him-*dat* love do-*conj* put.away-*past*
      'It was a bad thing, but I loved him (I shouldn't have).'

In (16), the process of loving is irreversible upon its inception; once one has started loving, one has loved, and thus, the action is irreversible once this point has been reached. Therefore, the achievement denoted by the V-*te shimau* construction is the initial point of the main verb. In contrast, consider (14), repeated here as (17), in which the main verb is an accomplishment:

(17) Taro-ga   ringo-wo tabe-te   shima-tta.
      Taro-*nom* apple-*acc* eat-*conj* put.away-*past*
      'Taro completely ate the apple up, unfortunately.'

Here, the action is not irreversible until the inherent culmination has been reached; Taro has not eaten the apple until the apple has been completely eaten. Therefore, the achievement in (17) is the culmination of the process.

As Iwasaki (2002) and Strauss (2002) maintain, the auxiliary *shimau* encodes the fact that the event denoted by the main verb is final or irreversible. This point of irreversibility is different for telic verbs and atelic verbs, which explains the interaction between the main verb and the auxiliary *shimau*. When *shimau* is used with an accomplishment or an achievement, the point of irreversibility is the inherent culmination of the event; however, for processes and stative potentials, the event is irreversible as soon as it begins. Therefore,

the achievement denoted by the V-*te shimau* construction is the change of state that makes the event denoted by the main verb irrevocable. In the case of telic verbs, this point is the culmination of the event; in the case of atelic verbs, this point is the initial point.

5.   Conclusion

While Iwasaki (2002) claims that the auxiliary *shimau* either emphasizes an end point or creates one, this is not the case. The V-*te shimau* construction does change the verb into an achievement, thus condensing the event denoted by the main verb into a change of state. However, this achievement is not necessarily the end point of the event denoted by the main verb; rather, it is the point at which the event denoted by the main verb becomes irreversible. In achievement and accomplishment verbs, this point is the inherent end point of the verb, while in process and achievement verbs, this point is the initial point. Thus, the completion that the V-*te shimau* construction expresses is the completion of the point within the event that makes it irreversible.

References

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