

A Proposal of an Alternative Hypothesis on the “*To* Construction” in Temporal Use for Past Specific Events

SHIMIZU Takafumi
Birkbeck College, University of London

Abstract:

This paper is a critical examination of Fujii’s (1993) hypothesis on the “*To* construction” in temporal use for past specific events in Japanese.

Fujii (1993) treats the *To* connective and the linked clauses as a whole as one grammatical construction, and names it the “*To* construction.” She explores one of the uses of the construction, that is, “temporal use for past specific events,” and hypothesizes that S1 (subordinate clause) establishes the setting for a cognitive change while S2 (main clause) describes the content of discovery. She proposes four types of aspectual schemes based on the patterns of combinations of “punctual” and “durative.”

This paper presents three counterexamples which Fujii’s schemes of “punctual” and “durative” fail to account for, and reanalyzes these counterexamples in terms of the lexical semantic features of verbs in S1 and S2 following the classifications of verbs by Kindaichi (1976). Based on this analysis, I propose an alternative hypothesis, in which I describe S1 in terms of the semantic features of predicates instead of grammatical aspectual marking, to account for the counterexamples for Fujii’s hypothesis.

1. Introduction

Fujii (1993) treats the *To* connective and the linked clauses as a whole as one grammatical construction, and names it the “*To* construction.”¹ She explores one of the uses of the construction, that is, “temporal use for past specific events,” and hypothesizes a conceptual scheme underlying the uses of the construction through an examination of two major semantic constraints associated with it: a constraint regarding the uncontrollability of the second clause (S2) and an aspectual constraint.²

In this paper, I will first summarize Fujii’s (1993) hypothesis on the “*To* construction” in temporal use for past specific events (section 2). Then, I will introduce three questions on her hypothesis by presenting counterexamples to her argument (section 3). Finally, I will propose my alternative hypothesis to account for my counterexamples for Fujii’s hypothesis (section 4).

2. Fujii’s Hypothesis

Fujii points out the “uncontrollability” of S2: S2 usually represents a state or event that neither the speaker nor the subject of the first clause (S1) can control as shown in sentence (1).³

¹ Fujii, Seiko. “On the Clause-Linking *To* Construction in Japanese,” *Japanese/Korean Linguistics II*, Ed. Clancy, Patricia (Stanford: CSLI; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 3.

² *Ibid.*, 4-8.

³ *Ibid.*, 5.

- (1) *Hamabe ni kaeru to, mura no yoosu ga sukkari*
 seaside DAT return WHEN village GEN atmosphere NOM
 completely
kawatte-imasita. [(3) in Fujii (1993)]
 change-ASP-PAST
 ‘When I returned to the seashore, (I found that) the atmosphere there had completely changed.’

Then, based on the patterns of combinations of “punctual” and “durative,” Fujii proposes four types of aspectual schemes associated with the *To* construction. That is, the “Punctual-Durative” combination (Scheme A), the “Punctual-Punctual” combination (Scheme B), the “Durative-Punctual” combination (Scheme C), and the “Durative-Durative” combination (Scheme D). According to Fujii, the first three schemes are acceptable, while the last one is unacceptable.⁴ Observe the following sentences from Fujii (1993).

- (2) *Uti o deru to ame ga futte-i-masita.* [(7a) in Fujii (1993)]
 Home ACC get out of WHEN rain NOM fall-ASP(PROG)-PAST
 ‘When I left my house, (I found that) it was raining.’

[Punctual + Durative]: scheme A

- (3) *Uti o deru to ame ga huri-hazime-masita.*
 [(7b) in Fujii (1993)]
 Home ACC get out of WHEN rain NOM fall-start-PAST
 ‘When I left my house, it started raining.’

[Punctual + Punctual]: scheme B

- (4) *Kinoo teregurahu o aruite-iru to, ame ga*
 yesterday telegraph ACC walk-ASP(PROG) WHEN rain NOM
huri-hazime-masita. [(7c) in Fujii (1993)]
 fall-start-PAST
 ‘While/When I was walking along Telegraph Avenue, it started raining.’

[Durative + Punctual]: scheme C

- (5) * *Kinoo teregurahu o aruite-iru to, ame ga*
 yesterday telegraph ACC walk-ASP(PROG) WHEN rain NOM
hutte-i-masita. [(7d) in Fujii (1993)]
 fall-ASP(PROG)-PAST
 ‘While I was walking along Telegraph Avenue, it was raining.’

[Durative + Durative]: scheme D

- (6) ?? *Kinoo teregurahu o aruite-iru to, ame ga*

⁴ Ibid., 6-8.

yesterday telegraph ACC walk-ASP(PROG) WHEN rain NOM
huri-masita. [(7e) in Fujii (1993)]
 fall-PAST

‘While I was walking along Telegraph Avenue, it was/started raining.’

[Durative + Durative]: scheme D

Fujii accounts for the unacceptability of sentence (5) and (6) as follows: in these sentences, “the time span of the state expressed in S1 overlaps with that of the state expressed in S2,” and “no perceptual or cognitive change occurs on the part of the subject of the S1 or the speaker during the overlapping time span.”⁵ Therefore, if the situation that “the event/statedescribed in S2 does not come to the speaker’s or subject’s attention until the time set up by S1” can be assumed, the sentence becomes acceptable regardless of its unacceptable scheme (Scheme D), as shown in sentences (7) and (8). Fujii points out that “the aspectual constraints on the *To* construction cannot be determined simply by the grammatical aspectual marking of two clauses”⁶ and categorizes this case as Scheme E.

(7) *Uti-zyuu o hissini natte sagasite-iru to yatto*
 home-around-ACC very hard look for-PROG WHEN finally
arimasita. [(8) in Fujii (1993)]
 exist-PAST

‘I looked for it very hard all around the house, and finally found it.’

[Durative + Durative]: scheme E

(8) *Kinoo teregurahu o aruite-iru to, henna hito ga*
 Yesterday telegraph Avenue ACC walk-PROG WHEN strange person
 NOM
miti de nete-i-masita. [(9) in Fujii (1993)]
 on the street sleep-PROG-PAST

‘When I was walking along Telegraph Avenue, there was a strange man sleeping on the street.’

[Durative + Durative]: scheme E

3. Three Questions to Fujii’s Hypothesis

3.1. Question 1

Although Fujii’s hypothesis of “aspectual schemes” seems convincing, there is a counterexample which cannot be explained by her hypothesis. Consider sentence (9) below:

(9) ?? *Uti o deru to ame ga huri-masita.*
 Home ACC get out of WHEN rain NOM fall-PAST
 LIT. ‘When I left my house, it rained’

⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁶ Ibid., 9-10.

'When I left my house, it was raining

[Punctual + Durative]: scheme A

'When I left my house, it started raining.'

[Punctual + Punctual]: scheme B

The difference of sentence (9) from (2) or (3) is the aspect of S2. That is, S2 of sentence (2) and (3) represent "past progressive" and "start point in past" respectively, while that of sentence (9) represents "simple past." Sentence (9) is ambiguous because the intended meaning of S2 can be interpreted either as "Durative" ('it was raining') or as "Punctual" ('it started raining').⁷ When the intended meaning of S2 is interpreted as "Durative" ('it was raining'), sentence (9) has an acceptable scheme -- "Scheme A." Whereas, when it is interpreted as "Punctual" ('it started raining'), the sentence should also be acceptable under Fujii's "Scheme B." Therefore, Fujii's hypothesis predicts that sentence (9) is an acceptable sentence regardless of the ambiguity of the intended meaning of S2, although native speakers do not accept it. Hence, her hypothesis makes an incorrect prediction of the acceptability of sentence (9).

This problem can be accounted for by Hasunuma's (1993) hypothesis regarding factual use of *To*.⁸ In sentence (3), S2 represents an actual occurrence of an event in the situation represented in S1: the occurrence of the event of raining. In sentence (2), S2 represents the subject's recognition of a certain state (as a result of an occurrence of an event) in the situation represented in S1: the recognition of the state of raining. Indeed, maintaining the original meaning, sentence (2) can be paraphrased into a sentence like sentence (10) below.

(10) *Uti o deru to ame ga futte-iru koto ni ki ga tuki-masita.*

Home ACC get out of WHEN rain NOM fall-ASP(PROG) fact notice-PAST

'When I left my house, I noticed that it was raining.'

In order that the subject can notice a state or a processing activity, it should begin before the situation represented in S1 occurs and exist at the moment of the subject's recognition. In sentence (10), the aspect of progressive is used in the relative clause in S2 to indicate this. Thus, replacing *futte-iru* 'is

⁷ Regarding this point, Fujii considers it to be "Durative," giving the reason that "aspect of the second clause *furi-masita* ('it rained') does not express a change of state explicitly." However, it does not explicitly express "Durative" meaning either. It seems to be dependent upon whether the situation is considered to have an internal structure or not. Ignoring such a structure and considering a situation "as a whole" result a 'Durative' interpretation. (Jacobsen, Wesley. Via personal communication)

⁸ Hasunuma, Akiko. "Tarato to no zizituteki yoohoo o megutte" [Concerning the Factual Use of TARA and TO]. *Nihongo no Zyookan Hyoogen* [Conditional Expressions in Japanese], Ed. Masuoka, Takashi (Tokyo: Kuroshio Publishers, 1993), 73-97.

She hypothesizes that factual *To* is used when the speaker tells an occurrence of an event represented in S2 or the subject's recognition of it in the situation where another event represented in S1 has already occurred with an objective observer's perspective.

in the relative clause in S2 to indicate this. Thus, replacing *futte-iru* ‘is raining’ with the simple non-past form *furu* ‘rain’ turns the sentence into an unacceptable one, as shown in sentence (11). *Furu* ‘rain’ is a continuative verb, thus to indicate that some activity is in the process of occurring, it should take *te-iru*.

- (11) * *Uti o deru to ame ga furu koto ni ki ga tuki-masita.*
 Home ACC get out of WHEN rain NOM fall fact notice-PAST
 ‘When I left my house, I noticed that it rained.’

The unacceptability of sentence (9) seems to be explained in the same way. That is, the verb of S2, *furimasita* ‘rained,’ is in the simple past form. Thus, it cannot indicate a progression of an activity, which should be a prerequisite for the subject’s recognition of it.

3.2. Question 2

As shown in sentence (2) through (6) above, Fujii (1993) uses *deru* ‘get out of’ and *aruite-iru* ‘be walking’ in S1 as examples for “Punctual” and “Durative” respectively.⁹ If *aruite-iru* ‘be walking’ is replaced by *aruku* ‘walk’ in the identical sentences, does S1 still maintain the property of “Durative,” or, similar to *deru* ‘get out of,’ should it be considered to be “Punctual”? If *aruku* ‘walk’ can be viewed as “Punctual” (‘start walking’), sentences (12) through (14) below are predicted as acceptable sentences because of their acceptable aspectual schemes: “Scheme B” for sentence (12) and “Scheme A” for sentences (13) and (14). However, in fact, all three of the sentences above are unacceptable to native speakers. On the other hand, if it can be regarded as “Durative” (‘be walking’), the unacceptability of sentences (13) and (14) can be accounted for by their unacceptable scheme (“Scheme D”). However, even in this case, the discrepancy between the prediction and the result with sentence (12) is still left unsolved, because it has an acceptable scheme (“scheme C”), and this is not congruent with the unacceptability of the sentence.

- (12) * *Kinoo teregurahu o aruku to, ame ga huri-hazime-masita.*
 yesterday telegraph ACC walk WHEN rain NOM fall-start-PAST
 ‘While I was walking along Telegraph Avenue, it started raining.’
[Durative + Punctual]: scheme C
 ‘When I started walking along Telegraph Avenue, it started raining.’
[Punctual + Punctual]: scheme B

- (13) * *Kinoo teregurahu o aruku to, ame ga hutte-i-masita.*
 yesterday telegraph ACC walk WHEN rain NOM fall-ASP(PROG)-PAST
 ‘While I was walking along Telegraph Avenue, it was raining.’

⁹ Fujii, “On the Clause-Linking *To* Construction in Japanese,” 6-8.

[Durative + Durative]: scheme D

'When I started walking along Telegraph Avenue, it was raining.'

[Punctual + Durative]: scheme A

- (14) * *Kinoo teregurahu o aruku to, ame ga huri-masita.*
 yesterday telegraph ACC walk WHEN rain NOM fall-PAST
 LIT. 'While/When I walked along Telegraph Avenue, it rained'
 'While I was walking along Telegraph Avenue, it was raining.'

[Durative + Durative]: scheme D

'When I started walking along Telegraph Avenue, it was raining.'

[Punctual + Durative]: scheme A

The cause of this problem can be attributed to the semantic features of verbs in S1. *Aruku* 'walk' belongs to the class of continuative verbs since *aruite-iru* 'be walking' expresses the continuation of the action. On the other hand, *deru* 'get out of' is an instantaneous verb since *dete-iru* 'has left' expresses the resultant state created by an event expressed by the verb.¹⁰ Considering these points, continuative verbs, such as *aruku* 'walk,' do not seem to include the notion of "moment" by themselves. Rather, we presume a connotation of a certain time period where an activity continues. When these types of verbs are used with the *-te iru* construction as shown in sentences (4) through (6) and (8) above, they seem to become closer to a *moment* than the verbs themselves are, since *-te iru* expresses present progressive and, thus, S1 seems to be able to represent "a point in current progression." The acceptability of sentence (4) and unacceptability of sentences (12) through (14) seem to be accounted for by this difference.

Fujii (1993) points out that *iku* 'go' must be interpreted as 'arrive' in a sentence such as sentence (15), although it could "potentially refer to not only the arrival time, but also the departure time and/or the transportation time (on his/her way there)."¹¹ This determination of the meaning of the verb is done based on two criteria. First, "the transportation time" does not represent "moment," and second, the subject of S1 can perceive the weather in S.F. only at "the arrival time." This meaning selection process also supports my hypothesis that S1 must represent a *moment* in a *To* construction.

- (15) *Kinoo S.F. ni iku to, ame ga futte-i-masita.* [(7g) in Fujii (1993)]
 yesterday S.F. DAT go WHEN rain NOM fall-PROG-PAST
 'When I arrived S.F., it was raining there.'

3.3. Question 3

Kuno (1973) mentions the notion of "duration" of the state expressed in S1 as a criterion for *To* construction. According to him, "when S1 refers to

¹⁰ In this paper, I follow Kindaichi's (1976) classification of verbs: Stative, Continuative, Instantaneous, and Type four verbs.

¹¹ Fujii, "On the Clause-Linking *To* Construction in Japanese," 8.

a state, it must be of a reasonably short duration.”¹² Compare the following sentences quoted from Kuno (1973).

- (16) *Aru hi, aru kaisya de hataraitte-iruto, Bill ni*
 one day one company in work-ASP(PROG) WHEN Bill DAT
atta. [(24a) in Kuno (1973)]
 meet-PAST
 ‘One day, when I was working in a company, I met Bill.’

- (17) * *Tokyo de aru kaisya ni tutomete-iruto, Bill ni*
 Tokyo in one company in work for-ASP(PROG) WHEN Bill DAT
atta. [(24b) in Kuno (1973)]
 meet-PAST
 ‘While I worked for a company in Tokyo, I met Bill.’

With sentences (7) and (8) above, Fujii (1993) demonstrates that the notion of short duration is “not the major aspectual constraint,” and points out the unsuitability of Kuno’s analysis.¹³ Notwithstanding Fujii’s argument, the notion of “duration” proposed by Kuno seems to be worth considering. However, the point seems to be the difference between “action in progress” and “event with a certain duration,” rather than the matter of “duration” of the state. Observe the sentences (18) and (19) below, both of which have the identical elements except the adverbial phrases. In sentence (18), *Sagasite-iru* ‘be looking for’ is regarded as an “action in progress,” while in sentence (19), it represents an “event with a certain duration.”

- (18) *Taroo wa ima nakusita kagi o sagasite-iru.*
 Taroo TOP now lost key ACC look for-PROG
 ‘Taro is looking for the lost key now.’

- (19) *Taroo wa sannengan nakuista kagi o sagasite-iru.*
 Taroo TOP three years lost key ACC look for-PROG
 ‘Taro has been looking for the lost key for three years.’

Now, consider sentence (7) again. In sentence (7), *sagasite-iru* ‘be looking for’ represents an “action in progress,” in the same manner as in sentence (18), rather than an “event with a certain duration,” in the same manner as in sentence (19), because of the existence of an adverbial phrase *hissi ni* ‘desperately.’ If the adverbial phrase *hissi ni* ‘desperately’ is replaced by another adverbial phrase which expresses relatively long duration, the sentence becomes inappropriate as shown in sentence (20).

¹² Kuno, Susumu, *The Structure of the Japanese Language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), 192.

¹³ Fujii, “On the Clause-Linking *To* Construction in Japanese,” 12.

- (20) ?? *Sannenkan sagashite-iru to yatto arimasita.*
 three years look for-PROG WHEN finally exist-PAST
 ‘I have been looking for it for three years, and finally found it.’

In sentence (20), unlike sentence (7), *sagasite-iru* ‘be looking for’ does not represent an “action in progress” but an “event with a certain duration,” because of the existence of an adverbial phrase *sannenkan* ‘for three years.’ It is against common knowledge that human beings can continue to look for something throughout three years without interruption as a consecutive “action.” Thus, *sagasite-iru* ‘be looking for’ in sentence (20) is considered as an “event with a certain duration,” and the *To* construction with S1 which expresses an “event with a certain duration” results in inappropriateness.

The acceptability of sentence (16) and the unacceptability of sentence (17) can be accounted for in the same manner. In sentence (16), S1 seems to be interpreted as an “action in progress,” since the adverbial phrase *aruhi* ‘one day’ specifies a certain moment, and as a result, it is an appropriate sentence. If an adverbial phrase which expresses a certain long duration, such as *sannenkan* ‘for three years,’ takes the place of *aruhi* ‘one day,’ the sentence becomes inappropriate as shown in sentence (21).

- (21) ?? *Sannenkan aru kaisya de hataraite-iru to, Bill ni*
 for three years one company in work-ASP(PROG) WHEN Bill DAT
atta.
 meet-PAST
 ‘While I was working in a company for three years, I met Bill.’

Sannenkan aru kaisya de hataraite-iru ‘be working in a company for three years’ is not an “action in progress” but an “event with certain duration.” Moreover, in this case, the intended meaning of the sentence is very similar to sentence (17), that is, *aru kaisya ni tutomete-iru* ‘be working for a company.’ On the other hand, the unacceptability of sentence (17) is attributed to the semantic feature of the verb *tutomete-iru* ‘be working for.’ Certain types of verbs, such as *tutomeru* ‘work for,’ *sumu* ‘live in,’ and *kayou* ‘attend,’ when they are used with a *-te iru* construction, seem to primarily mean an “event with a certain duration.” Thus, in sentence (17), S1 which represents an “event with a certain duration” makes the *To* construction unacceptable.

4. Alternative Hypothesis

Through the above discussions based on the consideration of Fujii’s hypothesis, I will propose alternative schemes. The lexical semantic feature of predicates in S1 is a key criterion. It is classified into three categories: a) momentary action, b) action in progress, and c) event with a certain duration. Another criterion, same as Fujii’s, is the state of “cognitive change” in the speaker or the subject of S1 described in S2. Yet, here it is classified into three categories: a) real change, b) NO real change but discovery, and c) NO real change and NO discovery. The acceptability of the *To* construction is

dependent on the combination of these two criteria as shown in (22). (To clarify the difference between Fujii's (1993) hypothesis and mine, refer to the charts (23) and (24).)

(22)

- 1) When S1 represents a "momentary action," and...
 - a) S2 represents a "real change": acceptable [e.g. (3)]
 - b) S2 does not represent a "real change" but a "discovery": acceptable
[e.g. (2), (10), (15)]
 - c) S2 does not represent a "real change" nor a "discovery": unacceptable
[e.g. (9), (11)]
- 2) When S1 represents an "action in progress," and...
 - a) S2 represents a "real change": acceptable [e.g. (4), (16)]
 - b) S2 does not represent a "real change" but a "discovery": acceptable
[e.g. (7), (8)]
 - c) S2 does not represent a "real change" nor a "discovery": unacceptable
[e.g. (5), (6)]
- 3) When S1 represents an "event with a certain duration," and...
 - a) S2 represents a "real change": unacceptable [e.g. (12), (17), (21)]
 - b) S2 does not represent a "real change" but a "discovery": unacceptable
[e.g. (13), (20)]
 - c) S2 does not represent a "real change" nor a "discovery": unacceptable
[e.g. (14)]

(23)

Fujii's (1993) Hypothesis

S1	S2	Punctual	Durative
Punctual		OK [Scheme B]	OK [Scheme A]
Durative		OK [Scheme C]	NO [Scheme D] OK [Scheme E] (discovery)

(24)

Alternative Hypothesis

S1	S2	real change	NO real change but discovery	NO real change & NO discovery
momentary action		OK	OK	NO
action in progress		OK	OK	NO
event with a certain duration		NO	NO	NO

5. Conclusion

In this paper, starting from three questions to Fujii's hypothesis, I tried to develop my original hypothesis. However, my hypothesis is not completely incompatible with Fujii's. Rather, it builds upon and refines Fujii's hypothesis. Fujii proposes a canonical conceptual scheme underlining the uses of the *To* construction: "the first clause establishes the setting for a cognitive change while the second clause describes the content of discovery."¹⁴ In order to be a setting for discovery, S1 must represent a "moment" of discovery. Verbs which represent "momentary action" are ideal for this purpose. A certain set of verbs which represent an "action in progress" in *-te iru* construction" are also suitable for this purpose, because, in such cases, S1 can be interpreted as a "moment in progressive action." On the contrary, verbs, either used with *-te iru* construction or by themselves, which represent an "event with certain duration," do not work as a setting for a moment of discovery. In short, Fujii's hypothesis takes two steps: aspectual schemes and world knowledge governing semantic features. In my hypothesis, I developed the latter and describe S1 in terms of the semantic features of predicates instead of grammatical aspectual marking.

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¹⁴ Ibid, 17.