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A Strange Man: First Language Interference in Second Language Fluency

Mark Ledbetter

INTRODUCTION

A while back, one of my Hosei students described in class a strange man she had once observed putting on yellow-striped pants. He had done the deed not in the privacy of his own apartment but right there on the platform of Ichigaya Station! We will return to the strange man presently, but first let us consider some language learning issues.

Average educated Northern Europeans generally display an astounding superiority over average educated East Asians in the proficiency, fluency, naturalness, and ease with which they can converse in English. There would be nothing particularly remarkable about touring Germanic countries and having meaningful and lengthy conversations in English with, say, farmers in Germany, fishermen in Denmark, and factory workers in Holland. If you then turned your travels southward and tried the same thing in the Latin countries, though, your discussions would be, in comparison, limited and confused.

Now let us proceed to East Asia. Accosting in English farmers, fishermen, and factory workers in Japan, Korea, or China is simply a fool's mission. You'd hardly even consider the possibility of a meaningful English discussion with someone from those countries unless the person were well-traveled or a highly educated and intelligent member of the intellec-

tual elite. Then you would at least have a shot, but you would still rarely find someone as fluent as a similarly educated citizen of a Germanic country, or even of a Latin country.

Clearly, then, Aryans are more intelligent than other humans, or at least better at languages, right? But what happens when Northern Europeans come to Japan? Suddenly their vaunted language ability evaporates and they struggle along with the rest of us. Germans in Japan rarely acquire the level of ease and naturalness in Japanese that a local shopper perusing the bargain racks in a Munich department store has in English. On the other hand, Korean (but not Chinese) university students in Japan, despite having struggled valiantly but unsuccessfully for so many years back home with English, suddenly emerge as the language-learning geniuses, picking up fluent Japanese with uncanny speed.

Though admittedly anecdotal, if you check with Japanese, Chinese, and Korean students at Hosei University about the relative levels of Japanese fluency exhibited by Korean and Chinese students (*I* have, numerous times) or simply listen in on their conversations with Japanese friends after class, the Koreans come out on top 8 or 9 times out of 10.

What gives? The answer, of course, is that Germans learning English and Koreans learning Japanese are, in a sense, not really learning a foreign language but rather a distant dialect of their native language. To a large extent, Germans learning English and Koreans learning Japanese don't need to struggle with the intricacies of grammar and natural forms of expression because they already know it. All they need to do, more often than not, is substitute the equivalent English or Japanese word for their native German or Korean word and otherwise leave pretty much intact the German or Korean sentence running through their minds.

If Germans learning Japanese, or Koreans learning English, tried that, though, they'd produce mostly nonsense. When translating German to Japanese or Korean to English, a mere substitution exercise would usually leave grammar non-existent. And the problem is not just grammar. The radically different meaning boundaries around supposedly equivalent

words from unrelated languages often make one-to-one lexical substitutions not equivalent at all.

Teachers don't always recognize the inherent difficulty of producing fluent speech in an unrelated language. Even when they do, they rarely consider the problem in depth, so a number of critical differences between English and Japanese go undetected. English teachers end up, then, teaching not to the needs of the particular students, needs etched deep into their minds by their particular native language, but straight from the standard grammatical syllabus taught around the world. The problem of interference from the grammar and meaning boundaries of the students' native languages is largely ignored. This paper will look at one ignored difference between English and Japanese grammar, a difference critical but unknown and untaught. Unawareness of the problem unnecessarily handicaps Japanese learners of English in their supremely difficult quest for proficiency in a language unrelated to their own.

POINT AND DURATION VERBS

The man putting on yellow-striped pants in Ichigaya station may indeed have been strange, but not as strange as our student's story would indicate. It turns out he was not *putting on* that garish fashion statement right there on the platform but simply *wearing* it. He had, we may assume, put on his pants at home. More skilled Japanese speakers of English and hopefully all Japanese teachers of English know the difference between *put on pants* and *wear pants*. They likely have some understanding on a case-by-case basis of a few other similar examples, such as *catch a cold* vs. *have a cold* and *join a club* vs. *belong to a club,* though even some fairly good speakers will stumble over these two. Virtually all English speakers and most English teachers would be rather lost, though, if you asked them to explain precisely what's going on with these verbs.

What few realize (actually no one, in my experience, and I've looked) is that we are not dealing with just a few specific examples here. We are

dealing with a large system that permeates English grammar. The system strongly affects verb choice, internal verbal inflections, usage of auxiliary verbs, and preposition choice. Knowledge of this system would greatly simplify the teaching of certain important words, words largely unused or misused even by Japanese with excellent English skills. Better students may get *put on* and *wear* right but they are likely to avoid, for example, *figure out* and misuse *find out.*

How would you explain the problem with the following two sentences? After all, *have a job* and *have cancer* are good English, so what's wrong here?

You'd better have a job. (Unnatural without special context)
It's easy to have cancer if you smoke.

Or this one. *Catch a cold* is good English, so what's wrong here?

I catch a cold today.

Or these two:

They could know the time from the stars.
I knew that I liked Japanese food when I visited England. (Apparently correct but the actual meaning is different than the intended meaning)

Or this one:

Do you get married? (A mistake unless you add some unlikely context.)

Fall in love with cherry blossoms is possible, so what's wrong here?

Japanese have fallen in love with cherry blossoms for a long time.

Figure out, find out, and the problems with all these examples are not at all difficult to explain if only the explainer understands the concept of point and duration verbs. So without further ado, let's look at this largely unknown verb category.

There are hundreds of English verb pairs that Japanese have trouble with because each pair corresponds to a single Japanese verb. Here are a few examples:

put on / wear
join / belong to
catch a cold / have a cold
get on the train / ride the train
get married / be married
figure out / understand, know

When Japanese speak English they often choose one member of these verb pairs pretty much at random and therefore often make mistakes. Better speakers of English understand how to use a few specific pairs like *put on/wear* and *get on/ride.* For other pairs like *join/belong* to and *catch a cold/have a cold* they may have a somewhat more hazy understanding. But they don't realize that these specific examples are part of a larger system, that all can be understood through a single concept, or that that concept will clarify many problems they have with English grammar.

English learners also lack a clear understanding of the important, even critical, relationship between the two basic verbs *get* and *be.* This is natural since their teachers and even most linguists apparently lack that understanding. *Get* and *be* are tightly bound together as a complementary pair, but they are not taught that way by teachers unaware of the existence of the point-duration system. Rather, *get* and *be* are taught as independent unrelated verbs. Some linguists have gone into long and convoluted explanations of the meaning of get in an attempt to define its full range of meaning when they could make their explanations much

easier and shorter if they knew that get and *be* are simply a verb pair, complementary members of an important but largely unknown grammatical category. I call the members of these verb pairs *point verbs* (時点動詞) and *duration verbs* (持続動詞).

Point verbs describe actions that occur at one point in time. They are the first step, the beginning, the initiation for duration verbs, or they are the last step, the finish, the ending for duration verbs. Duration verbs describe actions or states initiated and finished by point verbs. Point verbs are the bookends, duration verbs the books. First you put on your pants; then you wear them; then you take them off. *Put on* and *take off* are the point verbs for *wear.* First you join a club; then you belong to it; then you quit. *Join* and *quit* are point verbs for *belong to.*

Final point verbs, like *take off* and *quit,* are not a big problem for Japanese learners of English. (Well, *quit* is, but for a different reason.) I suspect all languages end duration states with separate point verbs. English does and so does Japanese. For Japanese learners of English, however, the initial point verb most certainly *is* a problem. Where English often uses entirely different words for the initial point verb and its corresponding duration verb, Japanese generally uses the same word with a change of form.

First you catch a cold (引く), then you have a cold. (引いている). *Catch* and *have* are completely different words while Japanese uses the single word 引く with a change of form. First you get married (する), then you are married (している). First you join a club, then you belong to it or are in it. First you get on the train. Then you ride it or are on it. First you figure out how to use your new cell phone, then you know how to use it.

Two issues may have already occurred to careful readers. First, though the ている inflection on Japanese verbs is normally considered equivalent to -ing, here it is being used as a way to make a verb durative. So which is it? Does ている indicate progressive, like English -ing, or duration, as claimed here? Or maybe ている simply indicates the *keizoku*

meaning of English present perfect, as is often taught in Japanese schools, rather than some new hypothetical category called duration? Second, since duration verbs often describe a state, some may feel the author is confusing point-duration verbs with active-stative verbs. Let us consider each issue in turn. *てある and た are also used to indicate duration, but we will mostly leave that out of this discussion for the sake of simplicity.

Does ている Indicate Progressive, Perfect-keizoku, or Duration?

Actually, it can indicate any or all of the above, depending on context and/or verb choice. Such multiple purposes for verbal inflections are not unusual. For example, though it is frequently overlooked by teachers, the English verbal inflection -ing also has several meanings. In addition to progressive it is often used to form declarations of future action, especially scheduled action: *I'm leaving next week.* Both -ing and ている, then, have multiple meanings. They have shared meanings, but also unshared. It behooves both teacher and student to know about the unshared meanings so they need to know about point and duration. Let's consider these six English (e) sentences and their Japanese (j) equivalents to see when the inflected forms of the verb (-ing / ている) and uninflected forms correspond and when they don't. *Again for the sake of simplicity, I will leave out the declaration-of-future-action meaning of -ing.

1e. I ride the train everyday.
1j. 毎日電車に乗る.

2e. I'm rid**ing** the train now.
2j. 今電車に乗っている.

3e. I've already been rid**ing** the train for an hour.
3j. もう一時間も電車に乗っている.

So far, so good. For pair 1, neither uses the inflection. For pairs 2 and

3, both use the inflection. ている and -ing seem equivalent. But consider pairs 4 and 5.

4e. Be careful when you get on the train.
4j. 電車に乗るとき，気をつけて.

5e. Be careful when you ride the train.
5j. 電車に乗っ**ている**とき，気をつけて.

In Pair 5, Japanese must use ている (or た). English could use -ing in this case, but it certainly does not need to. Now consider Sentence 6. Imagine the speaker is talking into his cell phone as he boards the train.

6e. I'm just gett**ing** on the train.
6j. 今電車に乗るところ.

Now English uses -ing but Japanese does not use ている.

Here is a summary showing which language requires the inflection.

Sentences 1 and 4: Neither

Sentences 2 and 3: Both

Sentence 5: Japanese only

Sentence 6: English only

Only in Sentences 2 and 3 (I'm riding the train/I've already been riding the train for an hour) does -ing equal ている. The key point about Sentence 2 is that it is both progressive and duration. The key point about Sentence 3 is that it is both progressive and perfect-keizoku. The Japanese version incorporates both progressive and perfect-keizoku into a single inflection (ている). English indicates each meaning separately (have+participle for perfect, be+-ing for progressive).

Sentence 4 is simple point, neither language uses the inflection.

Sentence 5 is duration. Only Japanese must use the inflection.

Sentence 6 is point-progressive. Here only English uses the inflection.

If we consider these six pairs of sentences we can make a number of discoveries.

1. English uses completely different verbs for point and duration: *get on* and *ride*.
2. Japanese uses different forms of the same verb for point and duration. The base form, 乗る, indicates point while the inflected form, 乗っている (or 乗った), indicates duration.
3. When the meaning is both progressive and perfect-keizoku, Japanese uses only ている, killing two birds with one stone.
4. When the meaning is both progressive and duration, -ing is generally equivalent to ている.
5. When the meaning is duration but not progressive, ている is used but -ing is not.
6. When the meaning is point and progressive, -ing is used but ている is not.

Duration and Stative

It should probably be clear by now that duration verbs and stative verbs are not the same. Stative verbs are a small group of special verbs in English that do not normally take -ing. For example: know, like, see, need, want etc. Some grammarians include be-verbs in this group. Stative verbs are obviously not equivalent to duration verbs since the stative group's defining characteristic is that its members don't normally take -ing while many duration verbs, as we have seen, do take -ing (wearing a shirt, riding a train). The reader may still have a sense, though, that there is something similar about duration and stative verbs. That feeling would not be misplaced. There *is* something similar. Stative verbs are always duration, never point. They are a small sub-group, then, of duration verbs. Two stative verbs in particular, *be* (for those who consider it stative) and *have* are important duration verbs. In fact, we have already seen both in previous examples: *be* married, *have* a cold. This conveni-

ently brings us to the next topic of discussion, the four major point-duration pairs.

Major Pairs

Here is a list of the important point-duration pairs, with a few examples from each group. Notice that there are four major groups. *Stay* and *keep* can often replace *be* as the duration verb in the *get-be* and *go-be* groups. From the four major groups we can extract three primary point verbs (get, become, go) and two (or four) primary duration verbs (be, have (stay, keep)). *Come* might also be included in the list of primary point verbs. For *come*'s importance, see *Making Point and Duration Verbs* below.

	Point	Duration
GET / BE	get on	be on / ride
	get away	be away
	get dressed	be dressed
	get married	be married
	get excited	be excited
	get lost	be lost
	get rich	be rich
	get used to	be used to
	get rid of	be rid of
	get in shape	be in shape
BECOME / BE	become the queen	be the queen
	become a doctor	be a doctor
	become rich	be rich
GET / HAVE	get a job	have a job
	get / buy a car	have a car
	get a dog	have a dog
	get / catch a cold	have a cold
GO / BE	go bankrupt	be bankrupt

	go crazy	be crazy
	go away	be away
	go on a diet	be on a diet
	go on a trip	be on a trip
	go to Italy	be in Italy
	go to bed	be in bed
	go to sleep	be asleep
OTHER	put on	wear / have on
	join / enter	be in / belong to
	wake up	be awake / stay awake
	calm down	be calm
	fall in love	be in love
	figure out / learn	understand / know
	find out / learn	know
	catch / get a train	take a train
	go to sleep	sleep
OF SPECIAL NOTE	finish	be finished
	stop	be stopped
	die	be dead

This last group (*Of Special Note*) represents a number of verbs that cause problems for English-speaking students of Japanese. They also learn that -ing and ている are equivalent and so are inclined to say 終わっている，止まっている，and 死んでいる with the intention of expressing a progressive-point meaning. But in Japanese, since ている means duration, they end up saying a moving car is already stopped (They say 止まっている instead of 止まろうとしている) or a living person is already dead (死んでいる instead of 死にかけている). Japanese have the same problem in reverse, especially with *die / be dead.* *The information in this paragraph is not original to this paper. Numerous linguists and teachers have noticed this, though they may have trouble explaining it succinctly without knowledge of the point-duration system.

Progressive-Point Verbs in Japanese

If Japanese normally has no progressive point verb form, how can we translate English progressive point verbs into Japanese? The most common ways are to use するところ (see above: 電車に乗るところ), しようとしている, and sometimes しかけている. For other Japanese verbs, however, a simple ている does not do the trick, as we have seen above.

終わっている, for example, does not generally mean *ending*. It means something has already ended, and that the state of having ended continues. I.e., it is duration. To impart the meaning of *ending* you need to say 終わるところ. Or you could import a second verb more amenable to the progressive meaning of ている and say 終わろうとしている. Similarly, *dying* is not 死んでいる. Again, you need to attach another more amenable verb to 死ぬ and say, 死にかけている. *The author is not entirely satisfied with this "more amenable" explanation. Is a progressive-point meaning possible with certain verbs like する and — かける when they are used as auxiliaries or in compound verbs?

There are yet other ways to translate English progressive point verbs into Japanese. Sometimes you can attach — ぎみ to the verb. Take かぜ or *cold* for example. *Catch a cold* is かぜを引く. *Have a cold* is かぜを引いている. But what about the progressive point form in English: *catching a cold*? 引く doesn't work because it is point only, without the progressive meaning. 引いている doesn't work because it is duration, not point. *Catching a cold* is probably most naturally translated as かぜぎみ.

The Passive: *get-be* and *get-have*

Get and *be* are the dominant point-duration pair. This partnership extends to the passive construction. Passive can be formed by *get*+*p.p.* or *be*+*p.p.* The *be*+*p.p.* passive is the standard taught by all teachers. The equally important *get*+*p.p.* passive, though, is generally underemphasized or even untaught. (*Or it is confused with the causative *get.*) Recognizing the get-be partnership would help rectify this pedagogic oversight. Probably

because *get* is a point verb, the *get passive* seems to be stronger, to emphasize the immediacy of the situation.

I was accepted to Harvard! / I got accepted to Harvard!

In some cases the *get passive* emphasize the suffering of the subject, much like the so-called *suffering passive* in Japanese:

We were rained on. / We got rained on.

Another pattern, which I personally would call a variety of passive, is probably even closer in nuance to the Japanese suffering passive: *have something p.p.* Since *get* also forms a point-duration pair with *have,* it is not surprising that, in conversation, *get* often replaces *have* for this passive, too:

I had my keitai confiscated. / I got my keitai confiscated.

When attuned to this get-have interchangeability, a student of natural language usage will notice other examples of the get-have partnership in everyday speech:

I'll have her do it. / I'll get her to do it.
(ordering food): Can I have that to go? / Can I get that to go?

Is Japanese Past Tense Really Perfect Tense?

Consider these two Japanese sentences expressing something happening right now.

おどろいた.
電車が来た.

More often than not, a good translation would be:

I'm surprised.
(Not *I was surprised.*)
The train's here. *or* The train has come.
(Not *The train came.*)

In English, past tense normally describes something that started and finished in the past. The Japanese "past tense," though, often describes something happening right now. The た inflection (as well as the ている inflection) often indicates that a durative state is now in effect. I am surprised *now.* The train is here *now.* That is why a Japanese past tense verb is often equivalent to an English present tense duration verb, most often *be.*

Some linguists, noticing this lack of concordance between Japanese and English past tense, have proposed that Japanese た is actually perfect tense (or perfect aspect, if you prefer). Not a bad supposition. It would explain why, as a translation of た, *The train has come* works as an alternative to the more common *The train is here.* But it does not explain why *I've been surprised* is not usually a good translation for おどろいた. Maybe the おどろいた problem is the reason the た -as-perfect-tense idea hasn't really caught on. Somehow it just doesn't really feel right.

When we have the concept of point-duration to use as an analytical tool, we may be able to put together a theory that *does* feel right. With point-duration we have a way to explain both おどろいた and 電車が来た with a single concept. The Japanese た on these two sentences indicates not only past but a current state of duration. That is why た -inflected verbs often become present tense duration verbs when English speakers describe the same situation.

Interestingly, speakers of English often use duration and perfect interchangeably, as with *The train's here / The train has come.* This leads to the suspicion that duration and perfect have something in common. That

thought is confirmed by the fact that *have,* one of the two primary duration verbs, is used to form perfect tense. In fact, the other primary duration verb, *be,* was also used to form perfect not so very long ago. In Shakespeare we can find *He is come.* When you think about it, the various meanings of English perfect tense all have a strong durative component. This may be precisely why we use primary duration verbs to form perfect tense.

The Four Meanings of Present Perfect

The perfect tense pattern *have*+*p.p.* is commonly said to express four different meanings, though the meanings often overlap and their boundaries are not always clear. Since the pattern uses the duration verb *have* as the auxiliary, all four have a durative characteristic, the source of the overlapping. The main verb, though, can be either point or duration. Which it is generally affects which of the four meanings is intended.

Past action-present effect can use either duration or point. More often than not, however, a present tense duration verb will be used instead of present perfect. We are more likely to say *The train is here* than *The train has come.*

Experience (したことがある) can use duration or point.
A done deed (してしまった) uses point.
Continuous-up-to-and-including-the-present uses duration.

Examples

Past Action/Present Effect: Perfect or Present-Duration

He has joined the club*. / He's in the club. クラブに入っている.

*He joined the club (past action) and so he is in the club now (present effect).

Experience: Perfect with Point or Duration:

He's never joined a club before. クラブに入ったことがない.

He's never been in a club before.

A Done Deed: Perfect with Point.

He has joined the club. クラブに入ってしまった.

Continuous Up To and Including the Present: Perfect with Duration:

He's been in the club since March. 三月からクラブに入っている.

Notice what happens, though, when Japanese uses 行く as the verb. Half the time, duration *be* rather than point *go* is used in the English equivalent.

A Done Deed: She's gone to Hawaii. ハワイに行ってしまった.

Experience: She's been to Hawaii. ハワイに行ったことがある.

A Done Deed: She's gone to the bank. 銀行に行ってしまった.

Past Action/Present Effect:

She's been to the bank. 銀行にいっている.

*For both English and Japanese *has gone* / *行ってしまった* implies location: she's not here now. *Has been* / *行っている* implies accomplishment. What kind of accomplishment is highly dependent on context, which, of course, is missing to keep the example short. Maybe she now has some money. Maybe, at least in the Japanese version, she is simply not here now, making this a weaker version of 行ってしまった. Anyway, if the speaker intends no such implications, simple past tense would be normal in both languages.

Where Japanese uses 行く in all these cases, English uses *be* for experience and past action-present effect. Knowledge of the point-duration system provides a quick and easy explanation for why English uses separate verbs where Japanese uses one. To whit, go-be is a primary point-duration pair. In such a case, it is natural for English to use the point member of the pair for a done deed and the duration member for experience and past action-present effect.

Let's pursue this similarity between English present perfect, English present duration, and Japanese duration a little further. As we have seen above, present perfect and present tense duration are often interchangeable in natural English and expressed in Japanese by the ている inflection

for duration. The reason becomes clear once we understand the point-duration system. ている indicates duration in Japanese, *be* and *have* are the primary duration verbs in English, and present perfect has a strong durative aspect expressed by the duration verb *have*. ている, then, often corresponds to both present perfect and present duration; present perfect and present duration are themselves often interchangeable. Conscious knowledge of these correspondences and their common duration source should help both teachers and learners of English clear up their understanding of English present perfect. It should help both teachers and learners of Japanese clear up their understanding of ている.

A perusal of just a few frames in my favorite manga quickly reveals how pervasive the correspondences are. They are likely more common than the correspondence between ている and -ing. Here are three examples, shorn of some of their verbiage for the sake of brevity.

鎌倉に来ている. He has come to Kamakura / He's in Kamakura.
人間の赤ん坊に変わっている. He has changed into a human baby.
本人が自覚していない. He hasn't realized it himself.

Hit-and-Run! Past Perfect and Duration

He's running over his victim many times!!!

Saigan Ryohei is author of the manga series *Kamakura Monogatari,* stories of suspense and fantasy that take place in Shonan. A police detective, explaining a gruesome crime scene, says,

犯人は倒れたガイ者を何度も轢いています.

Of course an English speaker hearing 轢いています translated as *is running over* will naturally think the crime is in process. The cartoon, though, shows several people, including the detective, standing around a

bloody mangled body hours after the fact. The phrase 何度も introduces a small translation wrinkle, but if we consider only 轢いています, a more skillful translation than the one above would be *ran over* or *had run over.* If we include 何度も, a more skillful translation might opt for passive: *has been run over many times.* In any event, some sort of perfect construction is likely for the English translation while present progressive is clearly a mistake. We see here, too, the correspondence between the English inflection for perfect and the Japanese inflection for duration.

A few pages later, a character says, 現場に残されていたオモチャの自動車... A bad hypothetical translation might be: *The toy car that was being left at the scene of the crime...*

残された would describe a single complete action in the past with no indication of what happened afterwards. In English, *was left* would do the same. But this is not a simple た but ていた (残されていた), thus the bad translator's *was being left.* ていた, though, does not indicate progressive. It indicates that duration has been added to the initial action. The toy car was left behind *and remained there* (or in some other way affected future events). When we understand that present perfect and ている often correspond, it is easy to see that past perfect might be a better rendering of ていた than the past progressive interpretation in the bad translation above. A better translator might write, *the toy car that had been left at the scene of the crime.*

The problem here for learners of English is how to add a duration meaning to a past action. In this instance, the admittedly more elegant Japanese solution corresponds to past perfect in English. But it is hard to see how the traditional teaching of past perfect (time before time) will lead a learner to the correct translation in this case.

What if we taught that ていた is often past perfect in English, especially when the English verb is duration? We could further teach that when the duration verb is *be,* as it often is, past perfect passive will likely work: *the toy car that had been left.* With this understanding, good students with some intuitive language ability may actually arrive at the

most natural solution to this quite difficult translation problem. If they were thinking only time-before-time, though, exceedingly few would find the solution.

Point and Duration With Auxiliary Verbs

Here are four examples of common utterances made by Japanese when speaking English. The first four are unnatural, *bimyo* at best; the fifth is clearly a mistake:

1. *Fumika*: If you only eat and sleep you will be fat.
2. *Reiko*: I know, but I don't want to be on a diet.
3. I thought I would be crazy after studying so much.
4. You'd better have a job.
5. It's easy to have cancer if you smoke.

You can explain the problems here easily and elegantly if you know about point and duration verbs. Unless there is a special time frame, point verbs are normal with auxiliaries and other modifications of the verb. This is also true in Japanese. The most natural Japanese translation of all of these would use the point form of the verb rather than the duration form. Students, then, are translating Japanese point into English duration for no obvious reason. Therefore, language interference would not seem to be the problem here. Rather, inadequate (non-existent) teaching of point and duration is the problem. Native English speakers would usually use a point verb and say,

1. *Fumika*: If you only eat and sleep you'll get fat.
2. *Reiko*: I know, but I don't want to go on a diet.
3. I thought I would go crazy after studying so much.
4. You'd better get a job.
5. It's easy to get cancer if you smoke.

In language, context always rules, though, and sometimes it rules that duration is the best choice. The duration verb is normal, naturally, when you are actually talking about duration, i.e. an activity that continues throughout a mentioned time frame, or has already started before the mentioned time. Here the duration verbs *be* and *have* are preferred.

I don't want to be on a diet while I'm traveling.
You'd better have a job the next time I see you.

And sometimes context will allow either point or duration:

You'd better have a job before I see you next.
You'd better get a job before I see you next.

Must: しなければならない／に違いない

So, without a special time context, auxiliaries generally go with point verbs. However *must* (and sometimes *have to*) goes with both point and duration verbs. *Must* has two meanings, the *must of compulsion* (You must go) and the *must of deduction* (You must be rich). The choice of point or duration verb often indicates which *must* it is. Compulsion normally requires the initiation of some action and therefore needs a point verb. Deduction normally describes a durative state and therefore needs a duration verb. This is especially true when the duration verb is also stative.

Point: しなければならない	Duration に違いない
The kids must go to bed.	The kids must be in bed.
He must find out the address.	He must know the address.
She must join a club.	She must belong to a club.

Japanese learners of English need to be careful here as they often use a point verb when they intend the *must of deduction*. How should the

English speaker respond when amiably informed by a Japanese friend that, "You must catch a cold" or "You must get married"?

Japanese learners of English also need to be careful when using *must* for past or future events. The *must of compulsion* cannot be used in the past, naturally, as you can't compel in the past. So past time *must* (expressed with present perfect since *must* has no past form) is always the *must of deduction,* even with point verbs.

They must have gotten married. (結婚したに違いない)
They must have been married. (結婚していたに違いない)

On the other hand, future time *must* is always the *must of compulsion* and therefore is normally point. If you want to make a deduction about the future you have to use something besides *must* like *probably* or *I'm sure.* Japanese, assuming that *must* can be used in the same way as に違いない, often try to use the *must of deduction* for future events. This is a mistake, but one not directly related to the discussion at hand, so enough said.

So for present time, *must* with a point verb means compulsion and *must* with a duration verb means deduction.

However, as with other auxiliaries, context can change this. With point verbs the rule is pretty firm. *Must* almost always means しなければならない. With duration verbs it generally means に違いない but with context it can shift to しなければならない, especially with a point preposition (see *Point and Duration Prepositions* below).

She must be in bed. (に違いない)
She must be in bed by 11:00. (しなければならない)

*I include this discussion of *must* with a bit of trepidation. There may be too many complications and context-driven exceptions for it to be particularly useful. It might be better to simply say that *must* with stative verbs means deduction. This leaves out the large body of non-stative duration verbs, but it also reduces the complications. There is one more complication not men-

tioned: *must stay*. *Stay* is a duration verb in my system yet must stay is normally compulsion, not deduction.

Defining *get*

Linguists and semanticists have struggled over the problem of *get*, looking for a core meaning that can explain how this one word can be used for so many unrelated actions and processes:

Get to school, get on someone's nerves, get busy, get going, get divorced, get well, get even, get mixed up, get in trouble, get off work, get over someone, get rid of etc etc.

Get a cold, get a bite to eat, get a new car, get it straightened out, get it to go (when ordering food), *get her to do it* etc etc.

As proposed earlier, defining *get* becomes much easier when it is understood that it is one of the primary point verbs. In all of the examples listed here, *get* is the point verb for *be* (first group) or *have* (second group). That is generally all a student really needs to know about get in these cases. *There are cases where *get* is not the point member of a point-duration pair. For example, *I'll get* it when answering the door. These, of course, do need to be taught for their specific meanings.

Making Point and Duration Verbs

The meaning or function of *get* is often merely to turn a duration verb into a point verb. Sometimes *go* performs the same function.

get going
get moving
get a move on
get to sleep
go to sleep
get to work

*Sometimes the duration verb is first turned into a noun, as with *get a move* on and as with other examples below.

*_Get to sleep_ and _go to sleep_ are almost the same, point verbs for the duration _sleep_. But _get to work_ and _go to work_ are clearly different in their usual meanings. In _go to work, go_ simply means 行く. It's not a point-maker. _Get to work_ is a point-maker when it means start working. It is not, of course, in the question, _What time do you get to work?_

How can teachers explain the difference between _pull_ and _give it a pull_? If they and their students understand the point-duration system, the answer is easy.

Like many verbs, _pull_ can be either point or duration. For such verbs, if you want to emphasize the point aspect, you can turn it into a noun and then use _give_ or _take_ as the verb, the point verb. Often either _give_ or _take_ is possible with each imparting a different nuance. You can then use _keep_ for emphatic duration.

Point/Duration	Emphatic Point	Emphatic Duration
pull	give it a pull	keep pulling
	take a pull	
look	give it a look	keep looking
	take a look	
push	give it a push	keep pushing

Often-used duration verbs, especially those that do not have an obvious point partner, can be converted to point by using _start, begin, commence_ etc. or _stop, finish_ etc.

Initial Point	Duration	Final Point
start working	work	finish working
begin to fish	fish	stop fishing

Start and _begin_ are point but not emphatic. They simply describe the actual commencement of the activity, but the activity itself is more important. If you want to emphasize the pointedness of _start_ you can

combine it with *get*:

get started (But not *get begun*)

Become is a primary point verb used with nouns and adjectives: *become a salesman*; become sleepy. Remove the *be* and you can use *come* to make the following verb or situation point:

Point	Duration
Come to understand	understand
Come to like	like
Come to a stop	be stopped
Come to a rest	rest / be still
Come to your senses	be sane

Japanese also has mechanisms for making point verbs. One is to make a compound verb with ―かける：しかける，死にかける，分かりかける．For duration verbs of motion, a final point verb can often be made with ―つく：たどりつく，流れつく．

Point and Duration Prepositions

There are also point and duration prepositions. While far from absolute, there is a strong tendency for point prepositions to be used with point verbs and duration prepositions to be used with duration verbs. When verb and preposition are not synchronized, look for a subtle time-based difference in meaning: *He'll get back at 5* vs. *He'll be back at 5.*

Point Prepositions	Duration Prepositions
by	until
within	for
at - on - in	from... to...; since

finish it **by** Thursday	work on it **until** Thursday
go to bed **within** an hour	be in bed **for** an hour
get married **at** 3 **on** Sunday **in** June	be married **since** June

Conclusion

Teacher: *Where's Kie? Has anyone seen her?*
Student: *She is coming.*

How many times have I had a conversation like this with high school students? I used to think that Kie was on her way. Now I know better. The English is apparently good, but it does not mean what the speaker intended. The intended meaning is that the student had seen Kie somewhere on the school grounds, but had no idea whether she was coming to class. The English-speaking teacher, however, believes he has just been told that Kie is on her way. Or, the student might say, "She is coming to school." Now the native English teacher thinks Kie is still on the train while the student means she is somewhere at school.

The following day, Kie is late again.

Teacher: *Where's Kie? Has anyone seen her?*
Student: *She comes now.*

At least this time the teacher can figure out what's up. Yesterday, the English (a direct translation of 来ている) sounded good but gave the wrong message. Today, though the English is bad (a direct translation of 来る), at least the message is clear.

Teachers of English really need to know about the point-duration system, as it explains so many of the typical problems and mistakes made by Japanese students of English. At the very least, such knowledge will help give the teacher a clearer idea of where Kie is. Students need to know the system so that, at the very least, they can accurately inform the

teacher of Kie's whereabouts.

Students, in my experience, tend to be quite interested in point-duration. They quickly recognize its significance to their own understanding of English grammar. Some actually get excited. About a grammar lesson! The problem is not that point-duration is a difficult concept. In fact, it is much easier to grasp than a great deal of the normal grammatical syllabus. The problem is simply that the system and its importance remain unrecognized. Hopefully this paper may serve as a step towards rectifying that.

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