

■ Meaning of *Suru* Form and *Shiteiru* Form

The *suru* form discussed here is the form that has not been stativized. Stativized forms include the most representative form *shite iru*, as well as *shite aru*, *shitsutsu aru*, etc. The *shite iru* form is the most widely used form that expresses stativization, and it can express both the on-going aspect and the result. In contrast, *shite aru* expresses the result, and *sitsutsu aru* mainly expresses the process of change.

The *suru* form expresses the entire event as having a beginning and an ending, while the state which the *shite iru* form describes is picked out as a slice of event out of a temporal continuum.

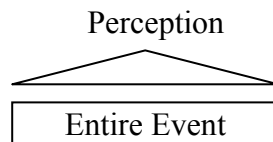
Illustration 2-3 shows the contrast.

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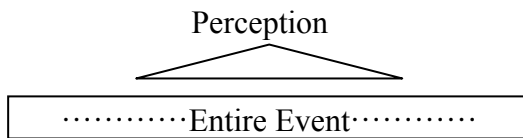
Illustration 2-3: Relationship between the Observed Event and the Entire Event

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- Movement (e.g., *Suru* Form)



- State (e.g., *Teiru* Form, etc.)



Consider:

- (1) *Watashi wa kare ga {taoreru/taorete iru} no o mita* 'I saw him {fall/lying}.'

If he falls while I watch, the *suru* form is used, and if my seeing is part of what has already happened, the *shite iru* form is used. Japanese tend to be rather particular about the circumstances of the observer and what s/he observes. If the observer discovers the body after it fell, *taorete iru* is preferred over *taoreta*.

When there are multiple sentences, there is time progression when the sentences are movement sentences. There is no time progression with a succession of stative sentences.

When the situation cannot be placed on a specific timeline, the perception of the movement aspect (expressed by the *suru* form) and the stative aspect (expressed by the *shite iru* form) are no longer differentiated.

- (2) *Watashi wa maiasa asagohan o tabemasu* 'I eat breakfast every morning.'

When a habit is described, the *teiru* form can also be used, as in *watashi wa maiasa asagohan o tabete imasu*. (The *shite iru* form gives the impression that it is more specific, whereas the *suru* form sounds more general.)

The *shite iru* form describes general state, but it can express a variety of states, depending on the situation that the verb describes.

First, when the verb describes ongoing process, it can describe the action that is going on. There are instances where the ongoing process also accompanies the realization of a situation. If the verb expresses accomplishment, the ongoing action may not always express the accomplishment of it, as in the following examples.

(3) *Ima, yoroi o kiteiru ga, mada kita to wa ienai* ‘I am putting on an armor, but I haven’t quite finished putting it on.’

(4) *Ima kodomo ni yoroi o kisete iru ga, mada kiseta to wa ienai* ‘I am putting an armor on the child, but I haven’t quite finished putting it on him.’

Second, when verbs lexically include the meaning of change (i.e., verbs in which a situation constructs a specific resulted state), the state of the result of the change (maintenance of the result, continuance of the result) may be described with the *shite iru* form.

(5) *Engeki de ima kodomo ga yoroi o kite iru* ‘Children now wear armor in dramas.’

(6) *Engeki de ima kodomo ni yoroi o kisete iru* ‘We now have children wear armor in dramas.’

The *shite iru* form may be used to express the validity of a previously established situation, regardless of the lexical meaning of the verb.

(7) *Igo, ichido, kare wa yoroi o kite iru* ‘Since then he has worn armor once.’

(8) *Izen, ichido, kare wa kodomo ni yoroi o kisete iru* ‘Once before he had children wear armor.’

These examples show that there was an earlier precedent. (One may say they indicate past history. The *shita* form may describe the immediate past in relation to the situation, and it also gives the impression of “being there.” In contrast, past history is about events that are removed from the present, and it can express what has not been made clearly aware of until now.)

The *shite iru* form in this usage may describe connection among multiple points of time.

(9) *Kare wa kyonen no kugatsu ni wa sudeni sotsugyō shite ita* ‘By September of last year, he had already graduated.’

The expression of the state at a specific point of time (September of last year) indicates that there was a preceding situation (graduation) prior to the specific point of time.

In order to negate the situation, the non-existence of the situation may be described as a state. The negative expression for *kita* ‘came’ may be *konakatta* ‘didn’t come,’ but it can also be *kite inai* ‘hasn’t come.’ The former focuses on a specific time in the past while in the latter the non-existence of the situation is described in relation to the present.

→アスペクト Aspect (2-G), 状態動詞 Stative Verbs (2-G), *teoku & tearu* (2-G), *tsutsuaru, tekuru, teiku*—直前、変化の進展 Right Before and Progression of Change (2-G)

● References

Okuda, Yasuo (1977) ‘Asupekuto kenkyū o megutte – Kindaichi-teki dankai’ (Discussion on the Study of Aspect: Kindaichi’s Stages) in *Miyagi Kyoiku Daigaku Kokugo Kokubun, Number 8*.

National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (1985) ‘Nihongo dōshi no asupekuto to tensu’ (Aspect and Tense of Japanese Verbs) in *Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo Hōkoku, No. 82*. Shueisha Shuppan.

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