

Subjectivity and the ‘Accusative’ *-te aru* Construction in Japanese

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1. Introduction

There are a number of perfect constructions in Japanese, each involving different combinations of situation type and viewpoint aspect (Smith 1997, Shirai 2000). Viewpoint aspect markers that can express perfect meaning in Japanese include the widely discussed *-te iru* and *-te aru* forms.

The *-te aru* form of verbs, like the more common and widely discussed *-te iru* form, is made up of the *-te* (gerundive) form of the verb plus an auxiliary derived from the verb ‘to be / have’. All *-te aru* clauses involve purposeful action of some kind (Matsumoto 1990:273), and nearly all contain transitive verb roots.

Again, like the *-te iru* form, *-te aru* can be used to express both resultative meaning, and perfect meaning in the more general sense (Nedjalkov & Jaxontov 1988: 15-17; Hasegawa 1996: 91-99):

- (1) *Sugu waki ni kaidan ga atte, kami ga*
immediately side LOC staircase NOM be-GER, paper NOM
hatte ari, *heya no zumen to juunin no na*
stick.up_{tr}-TE ARU-CONT room GEN layout and resident GEN
name
ga kaite aru.
NOM write-TE ARU
‘Immediately to the side there is a staircase, and a paper **stuck up**, and the layout of the rooms and the names of the residents **are written** (on it).’ (*Cheers to the Chairwoman!*: 838)
- (2) *Taroo wa, umarete kono kata, jibun no tabeta-koto-no-aru*
Taro TOP be.born-GER until.now self GEN eat-EXP.PERF
sakanawa, minna nooto ni namae o kakitsukete aru.
fish TOP all notebook LOC name ACC write.down-TE ARU
‘Ever since he was born, Taro **has written down** in a notebook all the names of the fish he has eaten.’ (*The Tale of Taro: High School Life*: 84)

In example (1), the *-te aru* forms of *haru* ‘stick s.t. up’ and *kaku* ‘write’ both function as resultatives: in each case they show the resultant state of the Undergoer, *kami* ‘paper’ and *heya no zumen to juunin no na* ‘the layout of the rooms and names of the residents’ respectively.

Notice that, in this resultative use of the *-te aru* form, the Undergoer is marked with the nominative particle *ga*. When occurring with the transitive verb alone, the Undergoer of the verb *haru* ‘stick s.t. up’ or *kaku* ‘write’ would be marked with the accusative particle *o*:

- (1') a. *kami o haru*
 paper ACC stick.up
 ‘stick up paper’
- b. *heya no zumen to juunin no na o kaku*
 room GEN layout and resident GEN name ACC write
 ‘write the layout of the rooms and the names of the residents’

The fact that the Undergoer in Examples like (1) is marked nominatively rather than accusatively, and the fact that the Actor cannot appear at all in sentences like these, has led a number of scholars to refer to this use of the *-te aru* form as the ‘intransitivizing’ resultative (e.g. Martin 1975, Miyagawa 1988), or the ‘valency changing’ *-te aru* form (Hasegawa 1996: 86). In this paper, this construction will be referred to simply as the nominative *-te aru* construction.

In example (2), the *-te aru* form of the verb *kakitsukeru* ‘write down’ is functioning as a perfect rather than a resultative. The focus in this sentence is not on the resultant state of the Undergoer, *namae* ‘the names (of the fish)’, but on the continuing relevance of the action of the Actor, *Taroo* ‘Taro’.

Notice also that, in this perfect use of the *-te aru* form, the canonical case-marking pattern occurs: the Undergoer (*namae* ‘names’ in this case) is marked with the accusative particle *o*, just as it would be if it occurred with the transitive verb alone:

- (2') *namae o kakitsukeru*
 name ACC write.down
 ‘write down the names’

For this reason, along with the fact that the Actor can and often does appear in the sentence, the perfect use of the *-te aru* construction has been called the ‘valency maintaining’ *-te aru* form (Hasegawa 1996: 86). It will be referred to here simply as the accusative *-te aru* construction. It is this accusative *-te aru* construction, exemplified in (2) above, that will be the focus of the current paper.

2. The Data for the Study

To facilitate the investigation of this construction, I looked at both nominative and accusative uses of the *-te aru* construction in modern and contemporary Japanese novels. I limited my investigation to examples in which the Undergoer appears, and is marked by either the nominative or the accusative particle. That is, I did not include cases in which the Undergoer is elided, topicalized, etc.

In my initial investigation, I found far more examples of the nominative use of the *-te aru* form than the accusative: 52 examples as opposed to seven, in nine different novels. For this reason I did a follow-up study in which I concentrated on collecting examples of the

accusative construction. This yielded a total of 31 examples of the target structure from 17 novels.

Table 1. The Data for the Study

	Authors	Novels	Accusative Use	Nominative Use
Initial Study	5	9	7	52
Follow-up Study	8	8	24	not examined
TOTAL	13	17	31	52

3. The Basic Uses of the Two Constructions

Although all *-te aru* constructions in the data involve purposeful action of some kind, this semantic feature is somewhat backgrounded in the nominative use. The data show that the principal function of this use of the construction is descriptive or scene setting. This is illustrated in Example (1) above. This kind of *-te aru* construction tends to appear at points in a story when the author is describing a new scene, and the way things are arranged there.

When the accusative *-te aru* construction is used, however, the focus is very much on the purpose of the action, and there is a strong sense that the action is done in preparation for that purpose. The precise purpose of the action is clear in every example of this construction in the data. Of the 31 examples, 16 actually contain some overt reference to purpose in the same sentence, as in Example (3):

- (3) . . . *au beki hito ni ai, sumaseru beki koto o*
 meet OBLIG person DAT meet-CONTfinish OBLIG thing ACC
sumaseru yoo yotei o bisshiri-to kunde atta
 finish in.order schedule ACC tightly construct-TE ARU-PAST
no da.
 NMZR COP
 ‘ . . . in order to see the people I should see, and finish the things I should finish, (I) **have packed** my schedule tightly.’ (*A Momentary Summer*: 11)

The fact that the accusative use of *-te aru* has this strong sense of purpose, while the nominative use does not, can clearly be attributed to the higher transitivity of the accusative construction. Recall that this construction exhibits canonical transitive case marking as opposed to the intransitive case-marking pattern of the nominative construction. Jacobsen (1992: 49) claims that intention / purpose is one of the key features related to canonical transitive marking in Japanese; this claim is supported by the work of Jarkey (1999: 214-219) and by the findings of the present study.

4. The Subjectivity of the Accusative *-te aru* Construction: Previous Observations

Another important difference that has been noted between the nominative and accusative uses of the *-te aru* form is in relation to the perspective of the constructions and the person of the Actor involved. Sugimura (1996) observes that, in the case of the nominative *-te aru* construction, the speaker/writer takes the point of view of an observer, and describes something about the scene that s/he has discovered - that has come about as the result of someone's action. A situation in which the speaker/writer discovers something that has come about as the result of his/her own action is difficult to imagine, so the Actor in this structure tends to be a third person, according to Sugimura¹. In the accusative *-te aru* construction, on the other hand, Sugimura says that the speaker describes the effectiveness of his/her own act, or that of an 'in group' member - someone with whom s/he feels affinity in that particular context. Other scholars who have noted this difference between the person of the Actor in the two types of *-te aru* construction include Morita (1977), Teramura (1984), and Masuoka (1987).

Hasegawa (1996: 95-96) observes precisely the same difference between the accusative *-te aru* construction and another, more common perfect construction in Japanese, the *-te iru* perfect. Hasegawa maintains that the "crucial" difference between these two perfect constructions is that those with *-te aru* describe the situation subjectively, whereas those with *-te iru* describe it objectively:

- (4) a. *Sono otoko wa Tanaka ni wairo o watashite #aru/iru.*
 that man TOP Tanaka DAT bribe ACC give-TE ARU/IRU
 'That guy has given Tanaka a bribe.'
- b. *Watashi wa Tanaka ni wairo o watashite aru/#iru.*
 ISG TOP Tanaka DAT bribe ACC give-TE ARU/IRU
 'I've given Tanaka a bribe².'

According to Hasegawa, *-te aru* is not natural in example (4a). because the Actor, *sono otoko* 'that guy', is clearly not an 'insider' - not someone with whom the speaker identifies. In this case, Hasegawa suggests, the more objective *-te iru* construction is the natural way to express the perfect. In example (4b), on the other hand, Hasegawa says that the use of the accusative *-te aru* construction is more natural than *-te iru*, because the Actor is the first person, *watashi* 'I'.

5. Subjectivity and the Accusative *-te aru* Construction in this Study

My investigation of authentic examples of the accusative *-te aru* construction lends some support to the claim that this construction is used subjectively.

¹ Recall that the Actor never, in fact, appears in this construction. Nevertheless, because the construction involves a transitive verb root, there is clearly a sense that an Actor is responsible for the situation or state described.

² The use of *-te iru* in this sentence is, actually, perfectly acceptable, but only with an alternative interpretation which involves an imperfective rather than a perfect interpretation: 'I regularly give Tanaka bribes (these days)'.

Table 2. Frequency of Actor Type in *-te aru* Perfect in the Data Examined

Type of Actor	1 st Person	Insider / Protagonist	Outsider	Unknown 3 rd Person	TOTAL
Frequency	13	11	3	4	31

First person Actors are quite common in examples of the construction found in the data. From the total of 31 examples of this construction, 13 (nearly one third) had Actors of this type. In some examples, the first person Actor is mentioned explicitly, as in (5). In most cases it is understood from the context.

- (5) *Watashi wa shibaraku gaikoku o tenten-to-suru tsumori de*
 ISG TOP for.a.whileoverseas ACC roam.around intention with
kane no junbi o shite atta.
 money GEN preparation ACC do-TE ARU-PAST
 ‘With the intention of travelling around overseas for a while, I **have done** my financial preparations.’ (*A Momentary Summer*: 267)

Third person Actors also occur commonly in the data – something that may seem to contradict the claim that this construction is fundamentally subjective. However, a closer examination of these Actors reveals that the majority - 11 of the 19 - involve third person Actors who are ‘in group’ members in some sense.

A very common type of ‘in group’ Actor in the genre investigated is, of course, the protagonist of the story. The writer of a third person narrative tends to take an ‘insider’ stance when reporting the actions of the protagonist. For example:

- (6) *Sono tame ni, daidokoro no mado o wazawaza*
 that reason for kitchen GEN window ACC intentionally
akehanatte aru.
 throw.open-TE ARU
 ‘For that reason, (she) **has** intentionally **thrown open** the kitchen window.’ (*Cheers to the Chairwoman!*: 101)

In this case, the one who has thrown open the window is the protagonist, a woman who has just received news of her husband’s promotion, and who wants to make sure that all her neighbours will hear her discussing it.

The other type of third person ‘insider’ that occurs in the data are ‘in group’ members of the narrator him/herself in first person accounts, or ‘in group’ members of the protagonist in third person accounts. Very frequently these insiders are family members:

- (7) *otooto no tegami ni wa, mada chokki mo kite*
 brotherGEN letter LOC TOP yet waistcoat even wear-GER
inai yoo-na koto o kaite arimashita keredomo.
 be-NEGLike fact ACC write-TE ARU-POL-PAST but
 ‘In my younger brother’s letter, (he) **had written** things like the fact that he hadn’t yet worn even a waistcoat, but . . .’ (*Snow Country*: 6)³

In examples like these with a third person Undergoer, it is often possible to substitute the nominative particle *ga* for the accusative particle *o*, with no effect on the felicity of the sentence at all; this is certainly the case in both of the examples above, at least when they occur out of context⁴. Native speakers of Japanese to whom I have spoken about this alternation report that, if the nominative particle were to be used, the sentences would tend to sound more objective, to focus more on description than on purpose.

The interest in this paper, however, is not so much on what can occur, but on what actually does occur in the data examined. In this data there were no examples of the nominative *-te aru* construction in sentences like these, in which there is clear reference to a situation brought about by the purposeful or preparatory action of an ‘in group’ Actor. As mentioned, however, there were 11 examples of the accusative *-te aru* construction of this type.

As illustrated above, the clear majority of examples of the accusative *-te aru* construction involve an ‘in group’ Actor of one kind or another, and thus could be said to convey a subjective perspective on the situation described. However, there are three examples in the data in which the Actor of an accusative *-te aru* construction is clearly not an ‘insider’. Two of these are given here:

- (8) *yonjuu chikai hidoku kappuku-no-ii yatsu de, kogai ni jikayoosha*
 forty near very amply.built fellow COP-TE outsideLOC personal.driver
o matasete atta soo da.
 ACC wait-CAUS-TE ARU-PAST EVID COP
 ‘He was a very amply proportioned fellow in his late thirties, and it seems he **had made** his driver **wait** outside.’ (*The Tale of Asunaro*: 183)
- (9) *furonto de kiku to, sakka ga boku no heya o*
 front.desk LOC ask when writer NOM ISG GEN room ACC
totte aru to iu koto datta.
 reserve-TE ARU QUOT say NMZR COP-PAST
 ‘When I asked at the front desk, they said that the writer **had reserved** a room (for me).’ (*Sacred Girl*: 309)

In example (8), it is clear that the Actor - the one who made his driver wait - is an ‘outsider’. The narrator describes him in a way that indicates that this is the first time s/he has even seen this ‘amply proportioned fellow’. In (9), the context tells us that the Actor concerned is, again, an ‘outsider’ to the narrator. In this case, we know from the context

³ The purpose of writing this information is not evident from the sentence itself in this case, but is clear from the wider context: the younger brother wanted the protagonist to know that it hadn’t really got very cold yet.

⁴ Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this point with regard to these two examples, and to examples (10) and (11) below.

that the Actor is someone the narrator does not know well at all, a writer who lives in an apartment block owned by the narrator's grandmother.

Notice, however, that in all cases in which the accusative *-te aru* appears with an 'outsider' Actor, the situation is reported as something known only indirectly. In (8) the evidential *soo da* is used, and in (9) the proposition is embedded in reported speech. Rather than contradicting the idea that this accusative construction has a subjective quality, these examples actually lend the idea some support. They suggest that, when the Actor of this construction is an 'outsider', the situation tends not to be reported as the first-hand knowledge of the narrator.

The motivation for using the accusative *-te aru* in these sentences is clearly the sense of 'action in preparation' that it conveys. In each of these sentences, the action described is performed with a clear purpose in mind. In (8), the purpose of the 'amply proportioned fellow' is to have his driver waiting on his return; in (9), the writer has reserved the room so that the narrator can stay in it. While exploiting this sense of 'action in preparation', it seems that the writer overrides any sense of subjectivity that the construction conveys by reporting indirectly these situations involving an 'out group' member.

There are, however, four examples in the data that do seem to provide evidence against the hypothesis that the accusative *-te aru* construction is subjective in nature. In these examples, the Actor is not an insider, and yet no evidential or reported speech is used. Examples (10) and (11) exemplify this type:

- (10) *Chotto usugurai no to, bineeru o kakete aru no de*
 a.bit dim NMZR and vinyl ACC hang_{tr}-TE ARU NMZR COP-TE
kizukanakatta no da.
 notice-NEG-PAST NMZR COP
 'It was a bit dim and (someone) **had covered** (the corpse) with vinyl, so (Junko) didn't notice it.' (*Cheers to the Chairwoman!*: 721)

- (11) *Nagoya no hodoo wa, jitensha-nori no tame ni*
 Nagoya GEN footpath TOP bicycle-rider GEN reason for
kado o nadaraka-na suroopu ni shite aru.
 curb ACC gradual slope DAT make-TE ARU
 'On the Nagoya footpaths, (they) **have made** the curb slope gently for the sake of bicycle riders.' (*The Tale of Taro: University Life*: 785)

In sentence (10), the person who had covered the corpse is unknown, although the context tells us that it was probably the murderer. In (11), it must have been the Nagoya City Council, or some such institution, that was responsible for making the curbs slope. In neither case, however, is the Actor identified or personalized. The Actor in these sentences is neither 'insider' nor 'outsider'.

It seems, then, that we do need to refine the hypothesis regarding the subjective nature of the accusative *-te aru* construction to some extent. Sentences like (10) and (11) above are highly objective. In this respect, they are actually reminiscent of the nominative *-te aru* construction: in these sentences the narrator takes the point of view of an observer, and describes something that has come about as the result of someone else's action (cf. Sugimura 1996). In fact, as noted above with regard to examples (6) and (7), it would be

perfectly acceptable to substitute the nominative particle *ga* for the accusative particle *o* in both of these sentences.

The factor that seems to result in the use of the accusative rather than the nominative *-te aru* construction in these cases is that the focus is not on the resultant state of the Undergoer, but on the purpose for which the actions were done. In the case of example (10), the body was covered so that it would not be noticed. In example (11), the curbs were made to slope for the safety and convenience of bicycle riders. This strong sense of purpose associated with the actions in each of these sentences is what distinguishes them from nominative *-te aru* sentences, rather than any sense of subjectivity.

These data suggest that, contrary to the claims of Sugimura (1996) and Hasegawa (1996), it is not the case that the accusative *-te aru* construction is completely subjective in nature and confined to first person or ‘insider’ Actors. Nevertheless, the fact that first person and ‘insider’ Actors clearly predominate, and the fact that ‘outsider’ Actors only occur in reported contexts, remain to be explained.

6. Explanation of the Predominance of ‘Insider’ Actors with the Accusative *-te aru*

The explanation proposed in this paper is that both the predominance of ‘insider’ Actors with this construction, and the restrictions on the occurrence of ‘outsider’ Actors, can be attributed to a more general feature of the Japanese language. The general feature referred to is the fact that, in Japanese, it is not normal to directly express someone else’s desires, emotions, or feelings. Examples that illustrate this point, such as (14a – d), are very familiar to students and teachers of Japanese:

- (14) a. *Watashi wa kameraga hoshii desu.*
 ISG TOP cameraNOM want COP-POL
 ‘I want a camera.’
- b. **Taroowa kameraga hoshii desu.*
 Taro TOP cameraNOM want COP-POL
 ‘Taro wants a camera.’
- c. *Taroo wa kameraga hoshii to itte imasu.*
 Taro TOP cameraNOM want QUOT say-GER be-POL
 ‘Taro says that he wants a camera.’
- d. *Taroo wa kamerao hoshi-gatte imasu.*
 Taro TOP cameraACC want-appear-GER be-POL
 ‘Taro looks like he wants a camera.’

Similar kinds of indirect ways are used to report, for example, someone else’s physical feelings, emotions, or desire to do something:

- (15) a. physical feelings: *samui* ‘be cold’ / *samugatte iru* ‘appear to be cold’;
itai ‘be hurt’ / *itagatte iru* ‘appear to be hurt’;
 b. emotions: *kanashii* ‘be sad’ / *kanashigatte iru* ‘appear to be sad’;
 c. desire to do something: *nomitai* ‘want to drink’ / *nomitagatte iru* ‘appear to want to drink’.

In the case of the *-te aru* construction, the tendency of the accusative version to be used with a subjective perspective can be attributed to the strong emphasis on purposeful action that this construction conveys. Just as it is not normal to report the feelings, emotions, and desires of an ‘out group’ member in Japanese without the use of some kind of evidential or indirect construction, it seems that it is equally inappropriate to report an ‘outsider’s’ purposeful or intentional action. This construction can be used in an objective way, to describe a situation that has come about as the result of the purposeful action of an Actor that is neither an insider nor an outsider (cf. examples (10) and (11)). However, whenever the Actor is identified as a known individual, and must therefore be categorized as ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’, the strong focus on the purpose of the action in this construction results in its subjective perspective.

7. Conclusion

This paper has confirmed the observations of previous scholars, showing that the accusative *-te aru* differs from the nominative *-te aru* in that it has a strong focus on purpose/intention/preparation. This focus is associated in this paper with the canonical transitive case marking that occurs in this construction.

The fact that the accusative *-te aru* construction is very often subjective in nature, with the Actor tending to be first person or an ‘insider’ of some kind, is related here to this strong sense of purpose. It is also related to a more general feature of the Japanese language: the fact that it is not normal to directly express the intentions or feelings of an ‘outsider’ in Japanese. For this reason, when the accusative *-te aru* is used to express the purposeful/preparatory action of an outsider, this is expressed indirectly, using an evidential or reported speech.

Contrary to the claims of previous authors, the accusative *-te aru* can be used in a highly objective way to describe a scene or a situation, provided that the action that brought that situation about is not attributed to either an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’. In this case, the accusative *-te aru* differs from the nominative *-te aru* only in that there is a focus on the purpose of the action described, rather than on the resultant state of the Undergoer.

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Appendix

All data discussed in this paper, except where otherwise acknowledged, is from a collection of Japanese novels on CD-ROM:

CD-ROM-ban Shinchô-bunko no 100-satsu (CD-ROM version: 100 books from Shinchô-bunko) 1995 Shinchô-sha Tokyo.

The novels examined, and the year in which they were first published, are given below:

- Akagawa J 1982 *Onna-shachô ni kanpai!* (Cheers to the Chairwoman!)
- Akutagawa R 1916 *Imogayu* (Yam Gruel)
- Akutagawa R 1917 *Un* (Luck)
- Akutagawa R 1918 *Jashû-mon* (The Gate of the Evil Religion)
- Akutagawa R 1921 *Kôshoku* (The Womanizer)
- Akutagawa R 1922 *Shunkan* (Shunkan)
- Endô S 1966 *Chinmoku* (Silence)
- Inoue H 1970 *Bun to Fun* (Bun and Fun)
- Inoue Y 1954 *Asunaro-monogatari* (The Tale of Asunaro)
- Itsuki H 1968 *Kaze ni fukarete* (Blow'n in the wind)
- Kawabata Y 1935 (revised 1947) *Yukiguni* (Snow Country)
- Kita M 1964 *Nire-ke no hitobito* (The House of Nire)
- Kurahashi Y 1965 *Sei-shôjo* (Sacred Girl)
- Sawaki K 1981 *Isshun no natsu* (A Momentary Summer)
- Shiina M 1985-1987 *Shinbashi-karasumori-guchi seishun-hen* (The Karasumori Exit at Shinbashi Station: Blue Spring Time). (First published serially over 18 months)
- Sono A 1978 *Tarô-monogatari kôkô-hen* (The tale of Taro: High School Life)
- Sono A 1979 *Tarô-monogatari daigaku-hen* (The Tale of Taro: University Life)