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A Study on the Acquisition of Japanese Auxiliary Verbs ～teiku and ～tekuru by Learners at Chinese Regional Undergraduate Universities

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Abstract

In Japanese, there are many expressions indicating movement, among which the usage of 'iku' (to go) and 'kuru' (to come) as auxiliary verbs is very important. The auxiliary verbs '~teiku' and '~tekuru' generally have two major usages: firstly, a directional usage indicating spatial movement based on a specific perspective such as that of the speaker within the text; secondly, a usage indicating the progression and development of events starting from a specific point in time. In Japanese, spatial directionality and the manner of grasping time are often expressed strongly from the speaker's perspective. Although '~teiku' and '~tekuru' are considered elementary grammar in textbooks, they are actually difficult to master.Therefore, for the above reasons, this paper focuses on '~teiku' and '~tekuru'. Through a questionnaire survey targeting second-year, third-year, and fourth-year Japanese language learners at Tangshan Normal University, it aims to identify which aspects learners are more prone to misuse, systematically compare the differences in their usage, and explore their similarities and differences in expressing spatial and temporal progression. The questionnaire survey yielded the following results:(1) The acquisition status of '~teiku' and '~tekuru' is not optimistic. Overall, this is a grammar point that is difficult to master.(2) Compared to '~tekuru', the usage of '~teiku' is more difficult to master.(3) Learners need to further strengthen their understanding of the spatial usage.(4) The survey found that the issue of verb conjugation preceding the auxiliary verbs '~teiku' and '~tekuru' is a topic that should be researched in the future.(5) The survey found that fourth-year Japanese learners had the best mastery, with the correct rate increasing as Japanese proficiency improved.

Keywords

~teiku; ~tekuru; Contrastive Study; Questionnaire Survey

1. Introduction

There are numerous expressions for movement in Japanese, and the usage of 'iku' and 'kuru' as auxiliary verbs is crucial. The auxiliary verbs '~teiku' and '~tekuru' primarily have two main functions: one is a directional usage indicating spatial movement based on a specific viewpoint, such as the speaker's; the other is a usage indicating the progression and development of events from a specific point in time. Japanese tends to strongly express spatial

directionality and temporal perception from the speaker's viewpoint. Although the auxiliary verb usage of '~teiku' and '~tekuru' is introduced as elementary grammar in textbooks, it is actually challenging to acquire.

Sugasawa (2002) pointed out that '~teiku' and '~tekuru', including their auxiliary verb forms, have various usages, making complete acquisition difficult. She suggested that for polysemous words, prototype meanings are acquired first, while non-prototypical ones are harder to use effectively. Previous research by scholars like Sugasawa (2002), Leng Limin & Sun Yanyan (2011), and Song Liyan (2014) has directly introduced the usage of '~teiku' and '~tekuru' and provided examples of their applicable scope. For instance, Song Liyan (2014) used corpora to examine preceding verbs of 'V+teiku/tekuru' and compared them with Chinese 'V+qu/lai' (go/come). Leng Limin & Sun Yanyan (2011) conducted survey research from the perspective of native language influence. However, there is relatively little research that accurately analyzes the degree of mastery and specific challenging aspects for Japanese learners through targeted surveys. Therefore, based on existing research, this paper will provide a detailed overview of the usage of '~teiku' and '~tekuru'. Focusing on these forms, it will conduct a questionnaire survey among second, third, and fourth-year Japanese majors at Tangshan Normal University to identify areas of frequent misuse, accurately compare the differences in their usage, and discuss their similarities and differences in expressing spatial and temporal aspects.

2. Research Method and Classification Criteria

2.1 Research Method

Based on the aforementioned research, this paper will introduce the definitions and usage of '~teiku' and '~tekuru', supported by numerous example sentences. The questionnaire was developed by categorizing example sentences obtained from the "Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese" (BCCWJ), a joint project of the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), into several groups according to their usage.The survey investigates the understanding of '~teiku' and '~tekuru' among Japanese learners across different academic years at Tangshan Normal University, analyzing their similarities and differences. Based on the questionnaire results, correct and incorrect usage patterns will be identified and analyzed. Through this research, the author hopes that Japanese learners can deepen their understanding of '~teiku' and '~tekuru' from temporal and spatial perspectives, master their usage, and apply them effectively in daily life and study.

2.2 Classification Criteria for '~teiku' and '~tekuru' in This Paper

Sugasawa (2002) classified the usage of '~teiku'/'~tekuru' into three categories: physical spatial action, cognitive usage, and temporal usage. Matsuoka (2018), in his "Handbook of Japanese Grammar for Teaching Beginners," distinguished between subject movement and object movement within spatial usage, relating them to the speaker's utterance position. For temporal usage, he noted that '~tekuru' expresses progression or change from before a reference time, while '~teiku' expresses progression or change from a reference time onwards, typically preceding change verbs.Liu Xing (2021) surveyed the usage of '~teiku' and '~tekuru' among Japanese learners in Yunnan Province, proposing new issues based on previous research. Drawing on these studies, this paper broadly classifies the usage of '~teiku' and '~tekuru' into seven categories based on the preceding action, movement method, movement state, direction relative to the speaker, disappearance/appearance, process of change, and continuation from a past point.

(1) Preceding Action

> Example: 加藤の宝酒造を舞台にした本格的な知財戦略が始まったと言っていいが、ただ特許を買ってくるだけで満足しないのが彼の真骨頂でもある。"Kato started saying that Takara Shuzo would begin a full-scale intellectual property strategy, and buying patents was his true prowess."(Yahoo! Chiebukuro)

"Kau (buy)" and "kuru (come)" represent two actions, indicating the sequence of actions here, where "kau" is realized before the action of "kuru." Thus, this is referred to as a sequential action linkage, where the action of the main verb (e.g., 'buy') is completed before the movement denoted by the auxiliary verb ('come') is realized.

Example of "~teiku":最初のころは、よりあいに来ると、送って来たお嫁さんに「なんで私だけ置いていくと。

"In the beginning, when I came to the gathering, I said to the bride who had been sent here, "Why am I the only

one being left behind?" (Yahoo! Chiebukuro)

(2) Method of Movement

Example 1: マーレンさんは助けを求めに、お屋敷の中へ走って行きました。(Andersen, Hans Christian.『自立』2002)Marlene ran into the mansion to seek help. (Andersen, Hans Christian. Independence, 2002)

Example 2: 「この町にお住まいですか？」「いや、ワシントンから飛んで来ました。」(シドニィ・シェルダン『時間の砂』1991)

"Do you live in this town?" "No, I flew here from Washington." (Sidney Sheldon, The Sands of Time, 1991)

Non-directional movement verbs (indicating simultaneous movement) are often used, such as hashiru(to run), oyogu(to swim), tobu(to fly), etc. In Example ①, the actions of "running" and "going" occur simultaneously, which translates to "ran into the mansion" in Chinese. In Example ②, the actions of "flying" and "coming" occur simultaneously, translating to "flew here from Washington" in Chinese.

(3) Movement

StateDescribes the manner or state of movement.

Example 1: 「毛布をかかえて**行きました**。」"I brought a blanket." (Yahoo! Chiebukuro)

Example 2: 「鉄砲をかつい**できました**。」"The gun ran away." (Yahoo! Chiebukuro)Expresses the state of movement during the action.

(4) Action Moving Away from or Towards the Speaker

Related to the direction of spatial movement relative to the speaker. '~teiku' indicates the subject moving away from the speaker's perspective. '~tekuru' indicates the subject moving closer to the speaker's perspective. Expresses physical movement distance.

Example 1:それと前後して、夫を車で駅まで送っ**ていく**。」(あらかわ菜美 『「自分の時間」生み出し作戦』1940) "Around that time, I saw my husband off to the station by car." (Driving Myself)

Example 2:うだいぶ蚊が飛んでますよね？昨日保育園から帰っ**てくる**と娘(１歳８ヶ月)は顔中、腕中蚊に刺されてました。」"Are the mosquitoes flying in? Yesterday, my daughter (1 year 8 months) got bitten all over her face and arms by mosquitoes after returning from daycare." (Yahoo! Chiebukuro)

This is the most basic usage, often used with verbs indicating directional movement like 'kaeru' (return), 'susumu' (advance), 'hagaku' (creep). It's fundamental for Chinese-Japanese translation.

(5) Disappearance and Emergence

"Teiku"expresses the disappearance of a phenomenon or state. It is often used with words like "erase," "lose," or "die." 'Tekuru' expresses the process by which a phenomenon or state comes into being from nothingness. It was used with actions like "appear," "be born," or "float up." It is typically used with grammatical elements expressing change.

Example 1:「流れに乗りきれなかった芸人は消えていくことになります。」(北野大『されど、たけしの兄です』1940)"Comedians who couldn't ride the wave will fade away." (Kitano Dai, 'Nevertheless, I Am Takeshi's Brother', 1940)

Example 2:「読んでいるんだからわかっているはずだけど、読みかたがまずいとわからないところも出てくる。」(鶴田洋子『話してみようよもっと！』1997)

"Since you're reading it, you should understand, but if your reading technique is poor, there will be parts you don't grasp." (Tsuruta Yoko, 'Let's Talk More!', 1997)

(6) Process of Change

Takakuni (2013) points out that the "take-teku" form is used in combination with verbs signifying change, such as

“become accustomed to,” “increase,” “decrease,” and “become heavier.”

Example 1 「それらの支出が行われると直接需要が増えていく。」(水谷研治『「縮少均衡」革命』1930)

“When these expenditures are made, direct demand increases.” (Kenji Mizutani, The Revolution of ‘Contractionary Equilibrium,’ 1930)

Example 2: 「最近、財布が小銭で多くなってくると、身軽にするためにキャッシュカードを使ってＳ銀行へ預けに行きます。」”Lately, when my wallet gets heavy with coins, I use my cash card to deposit them at S Bank to lighten my load.” (Yahoo! Chiebukuro)

Example 1 shows that making such expenditures increases direct demand. It illustrates the process of direct demand increasing, indicating a tendency for direct demand to rise when expenditures occur. There is momentum for development. Example 2 shows that an increase in wallet money indicates money entering the pocket.

“Tekeru” indicates the subject of movement shifts from farther away to closer to the speaker’s line of sight. It signifies a past state continuing from a past point in time to the present. The preceding verb is typically non-volitional, such as ‘change’ or “increase.” It indicates a process or some change has begun. In modern usage, it generally represents natural phenomena.

It can also express changes in the state of objective things, as well as represent psychological states. This too is what we often call something out of reach.

Both “teiku” and ‘tekuru’ can express the use of space and time. However, only “tekuru” can be used to indicate the beginning of an action.

(7) Continuation from a Certain Point in Time

Using “teiku” expresses the passage of time from the present into the future, while “tekuru” expresses the passage of time from the past into the present, both based on the speaker’s point of reference. This usage clearly indicates which point in time the conversation is centered on.

“Teiku” indicates that an action is developing continuously. It is typically used with vocabulary expressing time, such as “from now on” or “in the future.” Alternatively, it is used with expressions of conjecture, such as “I intend to” or “I suppose.”

Example 1: 「今後我が国においても同様の取組が求められていくものと思われる。」(厚生労働白書 2003)

“It is thought that similar initiatives will be required in our country going forward.” (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare White Paper 2003)

“Te-kuru” signifies that an action or change has progressed from the past up to the present. Using the “te-kita” form indicates that the change had already occurred, and it is generally combined with past time expressions.

Example 1: 「私でも何とかやっていけそうだという自信すら湧いてくる。」(岡田康司『されど護送船団は行く』1940)

“Even I began to feel a sense of confidence that I could somehow manage.” (Yasushi Okada, ‘Nevertheless, the Convoy Sails On’, 1940)

Example 2 当時の支店長は本店秘書役から赴任してきたばかりの高梨壮夫である。(佐藤　正明『ザ・ハウス・オブ・トヨタ』1940)

The branch manager at that time was Takeo Takanashi, who had just been transferred from the head office as a secretary. (Masaaki Sato, The House of Toyota, 1940)

(1) to (4) represent spatial usage, which is said to be difficult to grasp. (5) to (7)represent temporal usage, and it was inferred that their acquisition status is better than that of spatial usage.

3. Survey Results

3.1 Acquisition Status of Each Usage of '~teiku' and '~tekuru'

Based on the aforementioned usage classifications, a survey was conducted in this study. According to the survey results, which involved 30 participants (10 sophomores, 10 juniors, and 10 seniors), it was found that the acquisition outcomes for '~tekuru' were more favorable than those for '~teiku'. The specific findings are presented below.

(8) Inception of a Process:

Indicates the beginning of an action or effect, often with a subjective, psychological nuance.However,

such usage is confined exclusively to the form ~tekuru, as ~teiku does not possess a grammatical function as a word class.

Table 1. Acquisition Status of Usages of '〜tekuru'

Usage	Number of Correct Responses	Accuracy Rate
Preceding Action	11	36%
Method of Movement	16	53%
State of Movement	20	67%
Action Approaching the Speaker's Location	25	83%
Emergence/Appearance	27	90%
Process of Change	20	67%
Continuation from a Specific Point	17	57%
Inception of a Process (Action/Effect)	17	57%

Table 2. Acquisition Status of Usages of '〜teiku'

Usage	Number of Correct Responses	Accuracy Rate
Preceding Action	5	17%
Method of Movement	15	50%
State of Movement	19	63%
Action Moving Away from Speaker	20	67%
Disappearance	25	83%
Process of Change	20	67%
Continuation from a Specific Point	18	60%
Inception of a Process (Action/Effec)	0	0%

As illustrated by the survey results, for both '~teiku' and '~tekuru', the temporal usage of Appearance/Disappearance was the most successfully acquired. The usage with the lowest accuracy rate was the Preceding Action, which belongs to the spatial usages. Notably, the accuracy rate for the 'Preceding Action' usage of '~teiku' was particularly low, with only five Japanese learners demonstrating a grasp of it.

Regarding the acquisition status within spatial usages, the order of proficiency was as follows:Action Approaching the Speaker's Location > State of Movement > Method of Movement > Preceding Action. For temporal usages, the order was:Appearance/Disappearance > Process of Change > Continuation from a Specific Point.

Overall, the acquisition of temporal usages was more favorable than that of spatial usages, indicating that learners require further focused study on spatial applications.

3.2 Acquisition Status of '～teiku' and '～tekuru' by Learners at Different Proficiency

Table 3. Frequency of Correct Usage of "~teiku" and "~tekuru" by Learner Proficiency Level

Proficiency Level (n=10)	Frequency of Correct Usage: ~teiku	Number of Correct Responses
Second-year Students	18	32
Third-year Students	34	60
Fourth-year Students	59	95

According to the data presented in the table above, fourth-year students demonstrated the most favorable acquisition outcomes, while second-year students require further improvement in their proficiency level.

A positive correlation is observed between Japanese language proficiency and accuracy rates, with higher proficiency levels corresponding to increased accuracy. Numerically, advanced fourth-year learners achieved the best results, ranking first in accuracy rates.

The majority of these fourth-year learners have passed the N1 level of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test.However, when considered overall, the acquisition outcomes across all proficiency levels are far from optimistic.It must be acknowledged that these grammatical constructs present considerable difficulty for Chinese learners of Japanese.

4. Analysis of Results

4.1 Analysis of Easily Misused Usages

According to the data, the spatial usage is more difficult than the temporal usage. Natsue Sugaya (2002) states that the spatial usage distinguishes between the movement of the subject and the movement of the object, and depends on the speaker's position at the time of utterance. The action preceding "iku" and 'kuru' generally represents a sequential action in the form of "te".

Question 8: When I approached to tease him, he slowly stood up and said, "I'll go buy a lottery ticket," then bought five scratch-offs.

Here, the sequence of movements is indicated, with "buy" occurring before the action of "coming." Therefore, while it is also called a sequential action, the preceding and following words must be in a parallel relationship. Liu Xing (2021) separated the verbs.

(1) Verbs meaning to acquire something:buy, draw, take, pick up, receive, snatch, etc.

(2) Verbs meaning to relinquish something:deposit, place, deliver, forget, etc.

Cognitive actions are also included among commonly misused usages.

Question 6: My heart starts pounding. I can't tell if I'm serious or just messing around.

Here, it primarily indicates psychological suggestion and relates to one's subjective feelings.

4.2 Causes of Errors

As observed across learners at all proficiency levels—beginner, intermediate, and advanced—the most significant issue pertains to the omission of "～teiku" and "～tekuru." That is, in contexts where the use of these auxiliary verb forms would render the expression more natural in Japanese, learners exhibit a tendency to employ the dictionary form of the verb alone. This suggests a weak awareness of their appropriate usage.The underlying reasons for this phenomenon can be attributed primarily to the polysemous nature of "～teiku" and "～tekuru," as well as interference from the learners'first language (L1) and instructional materials. Furthermore, differences in teaching methodologies and learning environments may also contribute to variations in acquisition outcomes among learners.

4.2.1 Influence of the Native Language

Liu Xing (2021) states: "In Japanese, "～teiku" and "～tekuru" have a certain correspondence with Chinese '～去・～来'. While some usages correspond perfectly, others do not correspond completely, and some cannot be perfectly matched." Chen Xiangfeng (2017) conducted a comparative study of "～teiku" and "～tekuru." and "去/来"

in Japanese and Chinese. When expressing concrete movement, "～teiku" corresponds to Chinese "来," but non-corresponding cases also exist. For Chinese learners of Japanese, their native language perception poses a challenge in acquiring Japanese.

(1) Cases where a Chinese equivalent exists:

There was a historical context where the consciousness of the "individual" was strongly emerging as Japan advanced its modernization.

Translation: This reflects the historical context where the consciousness of the "individual" was strongly emerging as Japan advanced its modernization.

Here, it indicates the continuation of an action.

(2) Cases where no Chinese equivalent exists:

It seems like someone's outside, so I'll go take a look.

Translation: Outside seems like someone's there, I'll go check.

"～tekuru" originally expressed the meaning of "come," but it was translated as "go." In the translation process, the speaker's perspective is extremely important. The usage of auxiliary verbs must be further grasped.

4.2.2 The Impact of Polysemy

Sugaya (2002) suggests that iku/kuru, including the auxiliary verb take/tekuru, has various usages, making complete mastery difficult. Regarding polysemous words, it is noted that among the various meanings of a polysemous word, the prototypical meaning is acquired first, while non-prototypical meanings are difficult to master.

"I wonder if the roots stopped absorbing water due to the winter cold and withered away."

In Chinese, the expression "花枯萎去了" is not commonly used; instead, '花枯萎了' is frequently said. However, in Japanese, the use of the auxiliary verb "iku" creates a difference that Chinese learners find difficult to grasp.

What Japanese learners find difficult to master is the use of auxiliary verbs. For them, the distinction between when and how to use them based on meaning is not yet clear. Auxiliary verbs can also express the speaker's psychological attitude. For example, consider question 17 in the following survey.

Rumors like "it's not a normal company" are rampant, leading to such unexpected incidents.

From the example sentence, the speaker's perspective is that the new unexpected incident is within their field of vision, and the expression reflects their stance on what kind of impact it is having. Therefore, it is presumed that the complex usages and expressions conveying the speaker's psychological attitude, such as "～teiku" and "～tekuru，" are not easy for learners to acquire.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed the learning status of Japanese learners from spatial, temporal, and cognitive perspectives using the Modern Japanese Written Language Balanced Corpus. The analysis revealed that "～teiku" is more difficult to grasp than "～tekuru." Temporally, it shows better acquisition status than spatial or cognitive aspects. The primary reason for these results relates to the speaker's perspective.

Regarding cognitive usage, it is essential for Japanese learners to grasp the core meaning within the contextual framework. As the proficiency level of Japanese learners increases, their acquisition of '~teiku' and '~tekuru' demonstrates a marked improvement. This underscores the necessity for learners to further enhance their mastery level concerning the expression of action continuation.

When Chinese learners study auxiliary verbs, the paramount objective is to achieve comprehensive mastery of the usage of these grammatical items. To circumvent errors induced by native language (Chinese) interference, it is imperative to conduct a comparative analysis of the Chinese and Japanese languages from multiple perspectives. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the nuances and differences in how these verbs express directionality, aspect, and speaker perspective, which often diverge from Chinese patterns.

Furthermore, based on the aforementioned points, the usage of verbs preceding '~teiku' and '~tekuru' remains a significant and worthwhile topic for future research. Investigating the semantic constraints and typical verb collocations associated with these forms could yield valuable insights for both teaching and learning.

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Appendix: Survey Questionnaire on the Acquisition of Japanese Auxiliary Verbs ～teiku and ～tekuru

Questionnaire Instructions

This research aims to investigate the acquisition status of the Japanese auxiliary verb constructions ～teiku and ～tekuru among learners. Data will be collected through this questionnaire to analyze learners' mastery of their usage. The items in this questionnaire are largely adapted from example sentences obtained from language corpora. Participants are requested to carefully analyze the context in which ～teiku and ～tekuru are used. It is recommended to review the basic grammatical usage of these forms before responding.

This survey is conducted anonymously,and all responses will be kept strictly confidential, used solely for academic research purposes. Participants can therefore complete the questionnaire with confidence.

We sincerely appreciate your cooperation and thoughtful participation. Your input is invaluable to this study.

Thank you for your time and contribution to this academic research.

Academic Year:

Passed JLPT N1: ☐ Yes ☐ No

1.绳文時代の遺跡から＿＿＿シカやイノシシの骨には、石やつので作った矢じりがふかく突き刺さっていることがあり。

A.出てくる

B.出ていく

2.築きうることを基盤とし、その位置づけやイメージを知っていることによって意味を持って＿＿＿。

A.くる

B.いく

3.そこには日本が近代化を進め＿＿＿なかで、「個人」という意識が強く芽生えていた時代背景があります。

A.ていく

B.てくる

4.救命ボートで漂いながら、船長は、メドゥーサ号がスピードを上げつつ、闇のなかに消え ＿＿＿のを見送っていた。

A.ていく

B.てくる

5.「始まった、って感じね。このバンドはだんだんビッグに＿＿＿。

A.なっていく

B.なってくる

6.心臓がどきどき＿＿。自分が本気なのかふざけているのかよくわからない。

A.してくる

B.していく

7.パパとママがいっしょに連れ＿＿＿ってことがね。

A.ていく

B.てくる

8.ちょっかいだそうと近づくとやおらに立ち上がり「宝くじ＿＿」とスクラッチを五枚買ってきました。

A.買ってくる

B.買っていく

9.伝次が茶を飲み終えて、店を見＿＿＿と言い、立っていった。

A.ていく

B.てくる

10.しかし、あっという間に足りなくなって追加を取りにトーマス坊やは走って＿＿。

A.いく

B.くる

11.相手に与えることで、相手が「幸せ」になり、それが自分の「幸せ」に持つなが＿＿＿。

A.ってくる

B.っていく
12.最初のころは、よりあいに来ると、送って来たお嫁さんに「なんで私だけ置い_____と。
A.ていく
B.てくる
13.そして、インドのひとびととは、このカーストの中で人生を過ごし____。
A.ていく
B.てくる
14.「情報の海」をどのように解釈するかということになると、これと実に多種多彩に____。
A.なっていく
B.なってくる
15.すると絨毛そっくりの絨毛という突起が____。「人間は何できているの？」
A.見えてくる
B.見えていく
16.何回か、ラストまで歯を食いしばってがんばっているうちに、少しずつ地力がつい____といいと思う。
A.てくる
B.ていく
17.「普通の会社ではない」などの風説がはびこっているため、こんなハプニングも生まれ_____のだ。
A.てくる
B.ていく