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Projections of Aspect in Japanese*

Shin Fukuda
University of California, San Diego

Japanese aspectual verbs have previously been analyzed as control and raising verbs, with their different syntactic behaviors derived from the control/raising distinction. This paper argues against the control/raising analysis of Japanese aspectual verbs, showing that the standard diagnostics do not support the presumed control/raising distinction among Japanese aspectual verbs. As an alternative, Japanese aspectual verbs are analyzed as heading their own projections in two different positions, below and above *vP*. Under the proposed analysis, the apparent control/raising interpretations of Japanese aspectual verbs and their different syntactic behaviors derive from two positions of aspectual verbs with respect to the positions of the neighboring elements.

1. Introduction

Japanese aspectual verbs have previously been analyzed as control and raising verbs, and their different syntactic behaviors have been derived from the control/raising distinction. In this paper, I argue against the control/raising analysis of Japanese aspectual verbs, showing that the very distinction cannot be supported by the standard diagnostics for control/raising. As an alternative, I propose an analysis in which Japanese aspectual verbs head their own projections in two different positions, either immediately below or above *vP*. Under the proposed analysis, the apparent control/raising interpretations derive from scope relations between the two positions for aspectual verbs and the position of the external argument, [Spec, *vP*]. When an aspectual verb is above *vP* taking scope over the external argument, it is interpreted as *raising-like*. When an aspectual verb is below *vP* being under the scope of the external argument, it is interpreted as *control-like*. The proposed analysis also accounts for their differences with respect to passivization and subject honorification, under the assumption that the passive morpheme and the subject honorific verb occupy the position of *v*. Finally, a further prediction that the proposed analysis makes is shown to be borne out with additional data.

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2. Data and previous analyses

This paper focuses on four Japanese aspectual verbs, *hajime* ‘begin’, *tsuzuke* ‘continue’, *owar* ‘finish₁’, and *oe* ‘finish₂’, which have been discussed frequently and in depth in the literature (Shibatani 1973, 1978, Kuno 1987, Nishigauchi 1993, Kageyama 1993, 1999, Koizumi 1995, 1998, Matsumoto 1996). Previous studies identified three phenomena which classify these aspectual verbs into three groups: (i) selectional restrictions, (ii) passivization, and (iii) subject honorification. In what follows, I first introduce the three phenomena which show that while *oe* ‘finish₂’ and *owar* ‘finish₁’ are different from all the others, *hajime* ‘begin’ and *tsuzuke* ‘continue’ share the same characteristics. Then I summarize previous analyses of Japanese aspectual verbs, which derive the differences from the control/raising distinction.

2.1. Data

Previous studies have shown that the four Japanese aspectual verbs behave differently with respect to three phenomena, (i) selectional restrictions, (ii) passivization, and (iii) subject honorification. First, selectional restrictions on subjects single out *oe* ‘finish₂’ as it appears to be the only aspectual verb incompatible with an inanimate subject, as in (1) (Shibatani 1973: 69).

- (1) Buranko-ga yure hajime/tsuzuke/owar/***oe** -ta.
 swing-NOM swing begin/continue/finish₁/***finish₂** -PERF
 ‘The swing began/continued/finished₁/*finished₂ swinging.’¹

Second, these four aspectual verbs behave differently with respect to passivization. First of all, *hajime* ‘begin’, *tsuzuke* ‘continue’, and *oe* ‘finish₂’ all allow what is often called *long passive*, or passivization of an embedded object with the passive morpheme attached *only* to the matrix aspectual verbs (Shibatani 1973, 1978, Nishigauchi 1993).

- (2) Rombun_i-ga t_i yomi hajime/tsuzuke/oe **rare** -ta
 paper_i-NOM t_i read begin/continue/finish₂ **PASS** -PERF
 ‘The paper began/continued/finished to be read.’

In addition to *long passive*, *hajime* ‘begin’ and *tsuzuke* ‘continue’ also allow for a passive complement, as in (3) (Shibatani 1973: 85).

- (3) Kono-hon_i-ga t_i yom **are** hajime/tsuzuke -ta
 this-book_i-NOM t_i read **PASS** begin/continue -PERF
 ‘This book began/continued to be read.’

However, *oe* ‘finish₂’ does not have an option of embedding a passive complement (4) (Shibatani 1978: 152).

¹Abbreviations: NOM = nominative, ACC = accusative, GEN = genitive, TOP = topic, PL = plural, PERF = perfective, IMPERF = imperfective, IMP = imperative, H = honorific, PASS = passive

- (4) *Rombun-ga t_i yom **are** oe -ta
 paper-NOM t_i write PASS finish₂ -PERF
 'The paper finished being read.'

Finally, the fourth aspectual verb, *owar* 'finish₁', only allows for a passive complement; *long passive* is ungrammatical (5) (Matsumoto 1996: 176).

- (5) a. Kekka-ga hyojis **are** owar -ta
 result-NOM indicate PASS finish₁ -PERF
- b. *Kekka-ga hyojis owar **are** -ta
 result-NOM indicate finish₁ PASS -PERF
 'The results finished being posted.'

Thus, with respect to passivization, *oe* 'finish₂' and *owar* 'finish₁' behave differently from each other and from the two other aspectual verbs, *hajime* 'begin' and *tsuzuke* 'continue', which behave in the same way.

Subject honorification (SH) classifies the four aspectual verbs in the same way as passivization does. SH is used to express the speaker's respect toward the subject. It involves a complex morphosyntactic process, in which a verb is framed between two particles, 'o' and 'ni', and followed by another verb, *nar* 'become' (Suzuki 1989, Toribio 1990).

- (6) Sensei-ga **o-hanashi-ni** **nar** -ta
 teacher-NOM H-talk-H become -PERF
 'The teacher talked.'

With *hajime* 'begin' and *tsuzuke* 'continue', the SH markers may frame the embedded verb alone (*embedded SH*), as in (7a), or the aspectual verb and embedded verb together (*combined SH*), as in (7b) (Shibatani 1978).

- (7) a. Sensei-ga tegami-o **o-kaki-ni nari** hajime/tsuzuke -ta
 teacher-NOM letter-ACC H-write-H become begin/continue -PERF
- b. Sensei-ga tegami-o **o-kaki-hajime/tsuzuke-ni nar** -ta
 teacher-NOM letter-ACC H-write-begin/continue-H become -PERF
 'The teacher began/continued writing the letter.'

With *owar* 'finish₁', however, only *embedded SH* is grammatical (8) (Matsumoto 1996: 179).

- (8) a. *Sensei-ga tegami-o **o-kaki-owari-ni nar** -ta
 teacher-NOM letter-ACC H-write-finish₁-H become -PERF
- b. Sensei-ga tegami-o **o-kaki-ni nari** owar -ta
 teacher-NOM letter-ACC H-write-H become finish₁ -PERF
 'The teacher finished writing the letter.'

Finally, for *oe* ‘finish₂’, *combined* SH is the only option (9) (Kuno 1987: 104).²

- (9) a. Sensei-ga tegami-o o-kaki-oe-ni nar -ta
 teacher-NOM letter-ACC H-write-finish₂-H become -PERF
- b. *Sensei-ga tegami-o o-kaki-ni nari oe -ta
 teacher-NOM letter-ACC H-write-H become finish₂ -PERF
 ‘The teacher finished writing the letter.’

The differences among the four aspectual verbs with respect to the three phenomena are summarized in table 1.

Table 1: Summary of the data

	<i>oe</i> ‘finish ₂ ’	<i>owar</i> ‘finish ₁ ’	<i>hajime</i> ‘begin’ <i>tsuzuke</i> ‘continue’
<i>Non-volitional subject</i>	x	✓	✓
<i>Long passive</i>	✓	x	✓
<i>Passive complement</i>	x	✓	✓
<i>Combined SH</i>	✓	x	✓
<i>Embedded SH</i>	x	✓	✓

2.2. Previous analyses

Previously, the differences among the four Japanese aspectual verbs were derived from the control/raising distinction (Shibatani 1973, 1978, Kuno 1987, Nishigauchi 1993, Kageyama 1993, 1999, Koizumi 1995, 1998, Matsumoto 1996). Under the control/raising analysis, only *oe* ‘finish₂’ imposes selectional restrictions on subjects, because it is the only unambiguous control verb. This analysis is supported by the fact that idioms can preserve their idiomatic meanings under *hajime* ‘begin’, but not *oe* ‘finish₂’ (Nishigauchi 1993: 89).

- (10) Usawa-ga uwasa-o yobi hajime/*oe -ta
 rumor-NOM rumor-ACC call begin/*finish₂ -PERF
 ‘Rumors began/*finished to call/calling rumors.’
 (Rumors began to spread in various directions.)

The control/raising analysis also accounts for, although partially, the passivization and SH facts reviewed above. As a control verb, *oe* ‘finish₂’ has an external argument, making it compatible with passivization. On the other hand, *owar* ‘finish₁’ is a raising verb without an external argument. Thus, passivization is ungrammatical.³ The contrast between these two aspectual verbs with the SH facts can also be accounted for, if one assumes that SH also requires an external argument. Under such an assumption, *oe* ‘finish₂’ allows for *combined* SH since

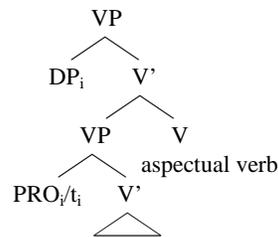
² As pointed out by Hideki Kishimoto (p.c.), the speakers’ judgments about the interaction of SH and aspectual verbs may vary.

³ This analysis assumes the ‘external argument suppression’ analysis of passive (Chomsky 1981).

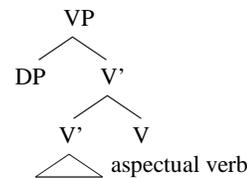
it has an external argument, whereas *owar* ‘finish₁’ can only allow *embedded* SH because it has no external argument.

Since the control/raising analysis alone does not offer an obvious account for the cases of *long passive* and the fact that *oe* ‘finish₂’ does not allow for *embedded* SH, Kageyama (1993, 1999) argued that the aspectual verbs select either a reduced complement (with no embedded subject) or a full complement (with an embedded subject). Under this analysis, *owar* ‘finish₁’ is a raising verb which requires a full complement (11a). With a full complement, *owar* ‘finish₁’ allows for a passive complement but disallows *long passive*, since movement of an embedded object over the embedded subject would yield a minimality violation. In contrast, *oe* ‘finish₂’ is a control verb which requires a reduced complement (11b). Because a reduced complement does not have a subject, *long passive* is expected to be grammatical with *oe* ‘finish₂’, while it cannot have a passive complement, since there is no external argument to ‘suppress’ in a reduced complement. Finally, *hajime* ‘begin’ and *tsuzuke* ‘continue’ take either type of the complements, allowing for both types of passive.

(11) a. full complement (i.e. VP)



b. reduced complement (i.e. V')



The control/raising analysis with the full/reduced complement distinction can also account for the fact that *oe* ‘finish₂’ does not allow for *embedded* SH, under the assumption that SH requires an external argument. Being a control verb, *oe* ‘finish₂’ is compatible with *combined* SH. Yet it is incompatible with *embedded* SH, since there is no external argument in a reduced complement (Kageyama 1993: 164).

3. Arguments against the control/raising analysis

Although the control/raising analysis in conjunction with the full/reduced complement distinction covers an impressive range of the data, the analysis is faced with a critical problem: the control/raising distinction among the aspectual verbs is not supported by the standard diagnostics for control/raising.

First, as seen above, idioms have been used to argue for the control/raising distinction among Japanese aspectual (10). However, idioms involving subjects are incompatible not only with *oe* ‘finish₂’, a presume control verb, but also with *owar* ‘finish₁’, a presumed raising verb.

- (12) a. Tonbi-ga taka-o um -u
kite-NOM hawk-ACC give_birth_to -IMPERF
‘A kite gives birth to a hawk. (An ordinary parent had a superior child.)’

- b. Tonbi-ga taka-o umi hajime/tsuzuke/*owar/*oe -ta
kite-NOM hawk-ACC give_birth_to begin/continue/*finish₁/*finish₂ -PERF
'A kite began to/continued to give birth to hawks.'
- (13)a. Rui-wa tomo-o yob -u
kind-TOP friend-ACC call -IMPERF
'A kind calls for its friends.' (≈ Birds of a feather flock together.)
- b. Rui-ga tomo-o yobi hajime/tsuzuke/*owar/*oe -ta
kind-NOM friend-ACC call begin/continue/*finish₁/*finish₂ -PERF
'A kind began/continued to call for its friends.'

Thus, the differences in the aspectual verbs' compatibility with idioms do not show that *oe* 'finish₂' selects its subject, while *owar* 'finish₁' does not.

Another common diagnostic for the control/raising distinction is imperative formation. Like idioms, imperative formation also fails to motivate the control/raising distinction among Japanese aspectual verbs: a presumed raising verb *owar* 'finish₁' is just as compatible with imperative formation as a presumed control verb *oe* 'finish₂' is (Shibatani 1973: 78).

- (14) Asu-madeni hon-o yomi owar -e!/oe -ro!
tomorrow-till book-ACC read finish₁ -IMP/finish₂ -IMP
'Finish reading the book by tomorrow.'

Finally, the presumed selectional restrictions imposed by *oe* 'finish₂' on its subject also suffer from confound. As noted by Nishigauchi (1993), *oe* 'finish₂' is different from other aspectual verbs as it requires its complement to be potentially telic. Thus, while *oe* 'finish₂' cannot have 'walking' as its complement (15a), it can have 'walking (up) a hill' (15b) (ibid: 88).

- (15)a. Kodomo-tachi-ga aruki hajime/tsuzuke/owar/*oe -ta
child-PL-NOM walk begin/continue/finish₁/*finish₂ -PERF
'The children begin/continued/finish₁/*finished₂ walking.'
- b. Kodomo-tachi-ga **sakamichi-o** aruki oe -ta
child-PL-NOM **hill-ACC** walk finish₂ -PERF
'The children finished walking (up) a hill.'

Thus, the ungrammaticality of (1) is due to the fact that the complement of *oe* 'finish₂' in (1), 'swinging', can only be interpreted as atelic. In fact, naturally occurring data show that *oe* 'finish₂' can have non-volitional subjects, as long as its complement is the right kind.

- (16)a. Basu-ga subete-no-kaabu-o magari oe...
Bus-NOM all-GEN-courner-ACC turn finish₂
'The bus finished turning all the corners...'⁴

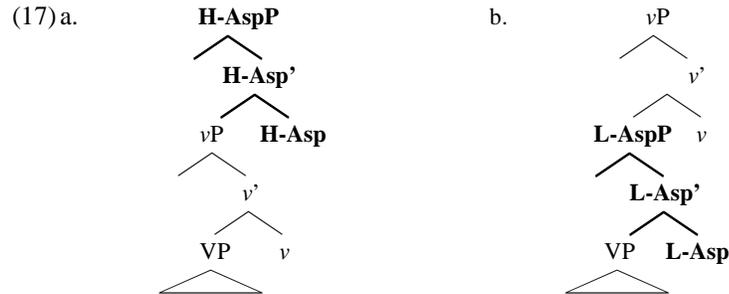
⁴ <http://www17.tok2.com/home/tabi65/wadai/peru2.htm>

- b. Densha-ga hashi-o watari oe -ta ato...
 train-NOM bridge-ACC cross finish₂ -PERF after
 ‘After a train finished crossing a bridge...’⁵

In sum, the standard diagnostics for control/raising do not support the assumption that Japanese aspectual verbs are control and raising verbs. Therefore, I conclude that the control/raising analysis of Japanese aspectual verbs, to which the distinction is essential, is untenable.

4. Proposal

As an alternative to the control/raising analysis, I argue that Japanese aspectual verbs are functional heads which project in two different positions in a clause, below and above *vP*, or *low-aspect* (17a) and *high-aspect* (17b), respectively.



Under this analysis, aspectual verbs are part of a mono-clausal structure, unlike the control/raising analysis which assumes a bi-clausal structure.⁶ When an aspectual verb is *high-aspect*, it provides its aspectual specification to *vP*. In contrast, when an aspectual verb is *low-aspect*, it provides its aspectual specification to *VP*. Aspectual verbs can be *low-* or *high-aspect* or both, depending on their aspectual specification. In what follows, I show how the proposed analysis accounts for the syntactic differences among the aspectual verbs, as consequences of the proposed two positions for the aspectual verbs with respect to the positions of neighboring elements, such as the external argument, the passive morpheme (*r*)*are*, and the SH verb *nar* ‘become’.

4.1. The distributions of the aspectual verbs

Under the proposed analysis, the aspectual specification of a given aspectual verb determines its distribution between *low-* and *high-aspect*. First, the fact that *oe* ‘finish₂’ requires its complement to be potentially telic (15) suggests that its function is to create a bound activity, or an accomplishment. Given the well-known generalization that only an internal argument can delimit an event (Tenny

⁵ http://home.interlink.or.jp/~soikusha/m2/topics/m2_0507.htm

⁶ The functional head analysis of situational aspect was originally proposed by Travis (1991) and Borer (1994). A very similar analysis for Romance aspectual verbs can be found in Cinque (2003).

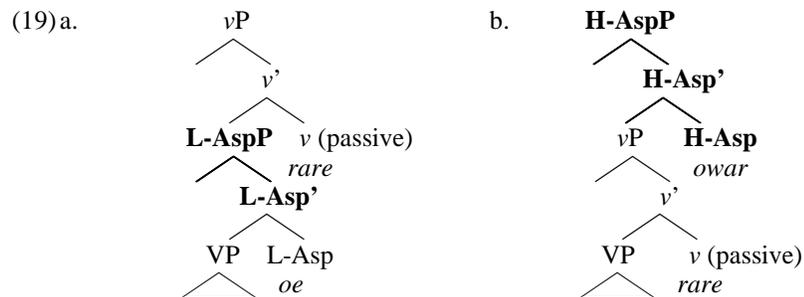
1989, 1992, 1994), I assume that the relevant domain for the composition of a delimit event is VP. As the ‘accomplishment-maker’, *oe* ‘finish₂’ must have access to VP. Therefore, it can only be *low-aspect*. This leaves *owar* ‘finish₁’, the other completive aspect, with *high-aspect*. I assume that *owar* ‘finish₁’ provides completive aspect to an atelic vP (i.e. activity). Unlike these two completive aspect verbs which have specific functions, no such division of labor exists for the inceptive and continuative aspect, *hajime* ‘begin’ and *tsuzuk* ‘continue’. Thus, they can be either *high-* or *low-aspect*, providing their aspectual specification to VP or vP.

4.2. The control/raising interpretations

In the proposed analysis, the apparent control/raising interpretations of Japanese aspectual verbs are consequences of scope relations between the two positions of aspectual verbs and the position of the external argument in [Spec, vP]. If an aspectual verb is *high-aspect*, it takes scope over the external argument. Thus, it is interpreted as *raising-like*. If an aspectual verb is *low-aspect*, it is under the scope of the external argument. Thus, it is interpreted as *control-like*. Under the proposed analysis, therefore, the apparent selectional restrictions imposed by *oe* ‘finish₂’ derives from the assumption that it is always *low-aspect*. Because it is always below the external argument, *oe* ‘finish₂’ always invokes *control-like* interpretation.

4.3. Passivization

The proposed analysis accounts for the passivization data straightforwardly, under the assumption that passive as an inactive *v* (Kratzer 1994, Chomsky 1995). As *low-aspect*, *oe* ‘finish₂’ is below *v*. Thus, it cannot have a passive complement, but it itself can passivize, instantiating *long passive* (19a). In contrast, *owar* ‘finish₁’ is *high-aspect*. Thus, it allows for a passive complement but cannot passivize. Thus, *long passive* is ungrammatical (19b).



Since *hajime* ‘begin’ and *tsuzuk* ‘continue,’ can be either *high* or *low-aspect*, they are compatible with both *long passive* and a passive complement.

4.3. Subject honorification

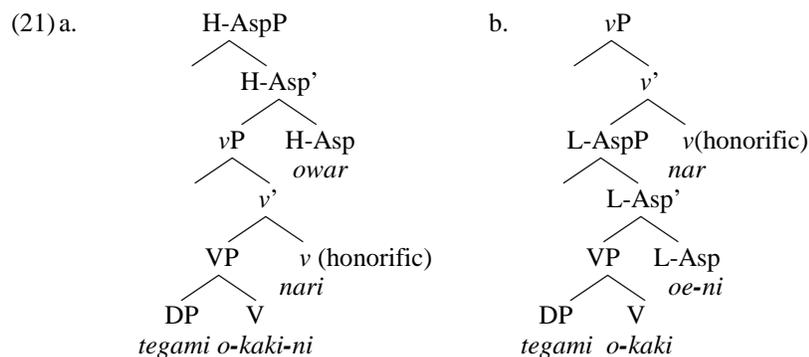
The subject honorification (SH) facts also receive a similar account, under the assumption that the verb *nar* ‘become’ in SH also occupies *v*. Many of previous

studies on SH agree that the complex created by the SH markers, *o-* and *-ni*, is a nominalized verbal projection, with *-ni* being a case marker (Suzuki 1989, Toribio 1990, Bobaljik and Yatsushiro 2006, Takita 2006). One argument for the nominal status of the complex is that it can be a subject (Takita 2006). However, it is important to note that the object of the nominalized verb must be marked with genitive case in this environment (20a). It bears accusative case only when the complex is followed by *nar* ‘become’ (20b).

- (20) a. [Sensei-no/*ga nimotsu-no/*o o-okuri]-ga okure -ta
 [teacher-GEN/*NOM package-GEN/*ACC H-send]-NOM delay -PERF
 ‘The teacher’s sending a package delayed.’
- b. Sensei-ga nimotsu-o o-okuri-ni nar -ta
 teacher-NOM package-ACC H-send-H become -PERF
 ‘The teacher sent the package.’

This observation can be taken to suggest that it is *nar* ‘become’ that provides the object accusative case, i.e. *nar* ‘become’ is a type of *v*.⁷

With the analysis of *nar* ‘become’ as a type of *v*, the SH facts receive the following account. First, *owar* ‘finish₁’, being *high-aspect*, is above *v*. Thus, it allows a sequence of the main verb, the honorific *v*, and itself (Hon-write-Hon-*v*_{HON}-finish₁), but *owar* ‘finish₁’ cannot intervene between the main verb and the honorific *v* (*Hon-write-finish₁-Hon-*v*_{HON}) (21a). On the other hand, being a *low-aspect*, *oe* ‘finish₂’ only allows for the latter sequence, in which it intervenes between the main verb and the honorific *v* (Hon-write-finish₂-Hon-*v*_{HON}) (21b). Thus, only *embedded* SH is grammatical with *owar* ‘finish₁’, while only *combined* SH is grammatical with *oe* ‘finish₂’.



5. Additional arguments for the proposed analysis

In this last section, I examine a prediction that the proposed analysis makes. The proposed analysis predicts that passivization can disambiguate the position of the

⁷ See Boeckx (2006) for an analysis of *nar* ‘become’ as *v* from a different prospect.

ambiguous aspectual verbs *hajime* ‘begin’ and *tsuzuke* ‘continue’. The ambiguous aspectual verbs in *low-aspect* should only allow for *long passive*, whereas they should only allow for passive complement when they are *high-aspect*. I present two cases where only *long passive* is grammatical with the ambiguous aspectual verbs and argue that the proposed analysis offers accounts.

5.1. Ambiguous aspectual verbs with different subjects

Matsumoto (1996) notes that *long passive* with the ambiguous verbs is grammatical only when the subject is animate (23b) (Matsumoto 1996:177).

- (22) a. Ame-ga konoha-o uchi tsuzuke -ta
rain-NOM leaves-ACC beat continue -PERF
‘Rain drops continued to fall on the leaves.’
- b. John-ga pistoru-o uchi tsuzuke -ta
J-NOM gun-ACC fire continue -PERF
‘John continued to fire the gun’
- (23) a. *Konoha_i-ga (Ame-niyotte) t_i uchi tsuzuke rare -ta
leave_i-NOM (rain-BY) t_i beat continue PASS -PERF
‘The leave(s) continued to be beaten by rain drops.’ (intended)
- b. Pisutoru_i-ga (John-niyotte) t_i uchi tsuzuke rare -ta
gun_i-NOM (J-BY) t_i fire continue PASS -PERF
‘The gun continued to be fired by John.’

Note that the subjects in these pairs are different not only in their animacy, but also in their thematic roles. While *John* is an agent executing the action of firing a gun, *ame* ‘rain’ is a theme undergoing an event of falling. One syntactic consequence of this difference is that *John* is generated in [Spec, vP], while *ame* ‘rain’ is presumably generated within VP. Thus, the proposed analysis correctly predicts that *tsuzuke* ‘continue’ can be *low-aspect* only in (22b), one with an *agent*, allowing *long passive* (23b). On the other hand, the proposed analysis also predicts that *tsuzuke* ‘continue’ must be *high-aspect* in (22a). Thus, passive complement should be grammatical with (22a). This prediction is also borne out.

- (24) Konoha_i-ga (Ame-ni) t_i ut are tsuzuke -ta
leave_i-NOM (rain-BY) t_i beat PASS continue -PERF
‘The leave(s) continued to be beaten by rain drops’

5.2. Ambiguous aspectual verbs and different interpretations

The following sentence is ambiguous between two interpretations.

- (25) Shikaisha-ga tosensha-o erabi tsuzuke -ta
MC-NOM winner-ACC choose continue -PERF
‘The MC continued to choose the winners.’

One reading is that there was a *single event* of choosing multiple winners. The other reading is that there were repeated *multiple events* of choosing winners. These two readings can be teased apart by adverbials that force one of them.

- (26) a. Shikaisha-ga tosensha-o **en'ento** erabi tsuzuke -ta
 MC-NOM winner-ACC forever choose continue -PERF
 'The MC continued to choose the winners forever.' (*single*)
- b. Shikaisya-ga tosensha-o **maitsuki** erabi tsuzuke -da
 organizer-NOM winner-ACC every_month choose continue -PERF
 'The MC continued to choose the winners every month.' (*multiple*)

The ambiguity can be associated with the two positions for the aspectual verbs in the proposed analysis. The *single event* reading obtains when the aspectual verb is *low-aspect*, keeping the external argument constant while repeating the internal choosing event. The *multiple event reading* obtains when the aspectual verb is *high-aspect*, repeating an entire choosing-a-winner event including the external argument. If this analysis is correct, it predicts that *long passive* but not passive complement would be natural with (26a) while the opposite should be the case with (26b). Although the contrast is subtle, the prediction is borne out.

- (27) a. Tosensha-ga **en'ento** erab (??are) tsuzuke (rare) -ta
 winner-NOM forever choose (??PASS) continue (PASS) -PERF
 'The winners continued to be chosen for a long time.'
- b. Tosensha-ga **maitsuki** erab (are) tsuzuke (??rare) -ta
 winner-NOM every_month choose (PASS) continue (??PASS) -PERF
 'The winners continued to be chosen every month.' (intended)

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I argued against the control/raising analysis of Japanese aspectual verbs and proposed an alternative analysis in which Japanese aspectual verbs are functional heads projecting in two different positions in a clause, either below or above vP. Under the proposed analysis, the apparent control/raising interpretations of Japanese aspectual verbs and their different behaviors with respect to passivization and subject honorification (SH) derive from the two positions of aspectual verbs with respect to the position of the external argument, the passive morpheme, and the SH verb. I have also shown with additional data that passivization disambiguates the position of the ambiguous aspectual verbs, as the analysis predicts.

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Department of Linguistics
 University of California, San Diego
 9500 Gilman Drive
 La Jolla, CA. 92093-0108, USA

fukuda@ling.ucsd.edu
<http://ling.ucsd.edu/~fukuda/>