

ผลกระทบของภาษาแม่และหนังสือเรียนภาษาญี่ปุ่นต่อการเลือกใช้
สกรรรมกริยาและอกรรรมกริยาภาษาญี่ปุ่นของผู้เรียนชาวไทย
The Effects of Mother-Language Interference and Commonly
Used Textbooks on the Selection of Japanese Transitive and
Intransitive Verbs in Thai Learners

วรางคณา วิริยะพันธ์¹

Warangkana Wiriyanan

¹ สาขาภาษาญี่ปุ่น คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏศรีสะเกษ
Japanese Language Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Sisaket Rajabhat University

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบที่ส่งผลต่อการเลือกใช้คู่กริยา
สกรรรมกริยาและอกรรรมกริยาในภาษาญี่ปุ่นและเพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบเหล่านั้น
ส่งผลต่อการรับรู้สกรรรมกริยาและอกรรรมกริยาในผู้เรียนชาวไทยอย่างไร ภาษาแม่และ
การเรียนการสอนส่งผลกระทบเป็นอย่างมากต่อการพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียน
 ดังนั้นเพื่อพัฒนาผู้เรียนชาวไทยต่อการเรียนภาษาญี่ปุ่น งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้จึงได้จัดทำ
แบบสอบถามเพื่อสอบถามถึงปัญหาต่อการรับรู้การเลือกใช้คู่กริยาและการสำรวจหนังสือ
เรียนภาษาญี่ปุ่นที่ใช้ในผู้เรียนชาวไทย เพื่อประมวลผลข้อมูลประสงค์งานวิจัย ในการศึกษา

มีผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยจำนวน 53 คน ซึ่งเป็นผู้เรียนชาวไทยระดับอุดมศึกษาในการตอบแบบสอบถามและได้มีการสำรวจถึงการปรากฏของคู่กริยาหรือการใช้เพียงกรรมกริยาหรือกรรมกริยาเท่านั้นที่ปรากฏในหนังสือเรียนภาษาญี่ปุ่นเพื่อศึกษาระดับความถี่ของคู่กริยาที่ปรากฏหากส่งผลต่อการรับรู้การเลือกใช้ภาษาญี่ปุ่น จากผลการศึกษาพบว่าภาษาแม่ของผู้เรียนส่งผลกระทบต่อการใช้กรรมกริยาหรือกรรมกริยา อีกทั้งยังปรากฏว่าความถี่ของการใช้กรรมกริยาที่ปรากฏในหนังสือเรียนและลำดับบทเรียนส่งผลต่อการเลือกใช้คู่กริยาของผู้เรียนชาวไทย

คำสำคัญ : คู่กริยา, กรรมกริยา, กรรมกริยา, การรับรู้ภาษา, หนังสือเรียน

Abstract

The purposes of this study were to investigate factors that influence the selection of Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs and how those factors affect Thai students' acquisition of Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs. Due to the key of language learning, the effects of mother language and language instruction have been highly supportive and counter to language improvement. To support those keys of learning, this study applied questionnaires and textbook observations to investigate whether these factors influenced the selection of transitive and intransitive verbs. 53 participants in Thai Japanese studies completed all the questionnaires. The results revealed that Thai learners had a strong preference for transitive verbs over intransitive verbs. Moreover, one of the important factors also found was that the impact of Japanese textbooks highly affected the selection of particular types of verbs. This study looked at Japanese textbooks that were commonly used in Thailand. The results showed that

transitive verbs were found more frequently than intransitive verbs. According to these results, the extensive introduction of a certain type of verb from the mother language effects and Japanese textbooks influence the selected Japanese verb type.

Keywords: Japanese Verb Pairs, Transitive, Intransitive, Language Acquisition, Textbook

1. Introduction

Due to the enormous number of transitive and intransitive verb pairings with the same root, the problem of studying transitive verbs with intransitive counterparts, also known as Japanese transitive and intransitive verb pairs, has become a problem for Japanese language learners (JFL). These verbs are important because they are related syntactically, semantically, and morphologically. For example, *aku* (intransitive) and *akeru* (transitive) both mean "to open". Additionally, *shimaru* (intransitive) and *shimeru* (transitive) both mean "to close". In other words, the potential forms of intransitive and transitive verbs are interchangeable (transitivity). According to this, JFL students struggle to decide whether to focus on using transitive verbs or their intransitive counterparts. Furthermore, as many experts have remarked, the transitive-intransitive difference is linked to Japanese aspect markers, particularly *te-iru* and *te-aru* (Mihara, 1997 cited by Makiko, 2004). The meanings of these aspect markers are determined by the type of transmitted verb with which they are related, such as progressive, resultant, stative, or possibly another form of event. According to Goldberg (2003),

the form and general features of the interpretation are inextricably linked in argument-structure formations. An intransitive construction is regarded to be something that is changing the state of doing something, whereas a transitive construction is supposed to be something that is acting on something else. According to this important, selecting suitable transitive or intransitive verbs according to the important linguistic functions of transitive-intransitive verb pairs in Japanese are one of the most difficult parts of the language for beginning-to-advanced learners (Makiko, 2004). According to these significant points, selecting appropriate transitive or intransitive verbs based on the important linguistic roles of transitive-intransitive verb pairs in Japanese is one of the most challenging sections of the language for beginning-to-advanced learners (Rose & Carson, 2014). Because intransitive-transitive verb pairs are introduced into Japanese language textbooks at a relatively early level, the challenges students have with these intransitive-transitive verb pairs might result in habitual errors being established early in the language acquisition process. According to Ishikawa (1991), cited by Makiko (2004), errors in identifying Japanese transitive-intransitive verbs are commonly found in linguistic practice. In order to overcome the obstacle of learning Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs, this study aims to find factors which influence Thai-speaking Japanese learners' selection of Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs. The difficulties that Thai learners face when learning transitive-intransitive verb pairings are discussed in order to better understand the study's purposes.

1.1 The Difficulties that Thai learners Face with Intransitive-Transitive Verb Pairs

Chawenkijwanich (2008) investigated Thai learners' use of transitive and intransitive verbs. As this study found, Thai learners misuse transitive and intransitive verbs as a result of their mother tongue's intervention (the Thai language interference). To put it another way, when Thai learners were invited to explain the meaning of a word in Thai, the meaning became illogical. Due to this, rather than carefully using the exact form, Thai learners tried to employ the verbs that they knew the meaning of in their own language instead. In addition, Chawengkijwanich (2008) discovered that Thai learners made greater mistakes in language learning (learning acquisition), preferring to use a particular transitive or intransitive verb that they were familiar with rather than selecting the verb that was used correctly and fit the meaning of aspect markers, especially for beginners. Saelim (2015) drew attention to her research findings, which revealed that mother language was a major factor influencing the choosing of Japanese transitive and intransitive verb pairs. In comparison to Japanese native speakers, Saelim (2015) investigated the use of transitive and intransitive verbs among Thai learners. According to the findings, because of the influence of their mother-language, Thai learners consciously utilized intransitive verbs more than transitive verbs. To support all the findings found from Thai learners, the research from Makiko (2004), who investigated how the number of particular types of verbs that English-speaking Japanese students frequently learned, such as the number of activities that contained only transitive verbs, affected their acquisition of Japanese transitive-

intransitive verb pairs, and how vocabulary teaching focused on the transitive rather than the intransitive counterpart, in line with other research in the JFL study. In addition, the study discovered three outcomes: The first result was that lexical differences between Japanese and English have caused problems; the second result was structural differences between the two languages that cause learners to prefer transitive verbs over intransitive verbs; and the third result was differences in the frequency with which intransitive and transitive verbs appear in language teacher instructions and textbooks. As a result, it may be negatively impacted if teachers were unable to schedule time to appropriately teach the content of transitive and intransitive verbs. Most teachers start with the aspect markers when teaching transitive and intransitive verbs (-te iru and -te aru). This might be one of the issues causing learners to be perplexed.

The purposes of this study were to investigate the influence of mother language interference, which arises when the mother language interferes with the selection of a particular transitive or intransitive verb among Thai learners. Also, to examine if the frequency of a certain type of verb in textbooks, the type of verbs used in textbook exercises, and the lesson order in textbooks have an impact on Thai learners' verb selection.

Objective(s)

The aims of this study were to study the effect of mother tongue interference; that was, whether the mother tongue interferes with the selection of a particular transitive or intransitive verb. Also, to investigate if the frequency of a particular form of verb used in textbooks, the type of

verbs used in textbook activities, and the lesson order found in textbooks influenced Thai learners in their selection following these research questions

(1) What factors influence the selection of a particular Japanese transitive or intransitive verb?

(2) How do those factors influence the selection of a particular Japanese transitive or intransitive verb?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Factors influence the selection of Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs.

Most factors that were studied on the issue of Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs are related to the effects of the mother language. However, there were two approaches which were the keys to the achievement of language learning and language acquisition. One of them was the approach which relied on language acquisition. Krashen (1982, cited in Benati, 2019) suggested that acquisition was a subconscious process which was related to the development of an internal and implicit system in learning languages. A *mother language effect* was realized with this approach. Otherwise, another one relied on learning. It was proposed that language learning was a conscious process and it was related to the development of explicit knowledge which was transferred by *the language instruction* to learners (Krashen, 1982, cited in Benati, 2019). According to this, it was inevitable to claim that language instruction was one factor that influences the achievement of language learning.

In order to achieve the objectives, this study focused on cognitive learning, which related to the study of the frequency of the input and output of language knowledge. It was about the resources or ordinary knowledge that learners received (Johnston, 2005). To study the frequency of the input and output of language knowledge, the Japanese textbook plays a significant role in showing how many verbs, sentences, and grammar rules were introduced to learners. Makiko (2004) examined how the acquisition of Japanese intransitive-transitive paired verbs by students (English-native speakers) of Japanese was affected by verb type. The results showed that the transitive verbs were easier to acquire than the intransitive verbs. According to the discussion of Makiko (2004), *The frequency of naturally using a certain type of verb* played an important role in influencing the acquisition of Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs. Furthermore, Morita (2004) claimed that most verbs found in Japanese textbooks (textbooks used to teach Japanese to foreign learners) were transitive verbs. Moreover, the forms of volitional sentences, such as "te kudasai", "mashou", and "nasai", were mostly used with the volitional verb, which was the type of transitive verb found in the Japanese textbooks. As a result, it was unavoidable that transitive verbs are easier to learn than intransitive verbs because the frequency of transitive verbs was higher. Moreover, intransitive verbs were defined as those that were difficult to understand for foreign learners. Additionally, the transitive verbs were more widely introduced to learners than the intransitive verbs. To sum up, the Japanese textbook was one factor that apparently affects the acquisition of Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs.

2.2 Instruction of the Japanese language in Thailand

Many courses in the Japanese language in Thailand have been established since the 1960s with support from the Japanese government (Kaewkitsadang & Srisattarat, 2012). In addition, public and private universities and schools launched Japanese language courses and began Japanese language major programs. To gain more effective use of Japanese courses in Thailand, in 1981, the Japanese language was assigned to the curriculum of high schools as a foreign language with the provided content curriculum from the Ministry of Education on the study of foreign languages. To achieve the curriculum objectives, Jongsutjarittam, Skulkru, and Sattayapong (2004) conducted a survey of basic Japanese textbooks used in Thailand. They found that the most popular Japanese textbooks were Nihongo Shoho, Minna no Nihongo (1-4), Shin Nihongo no Kiso (1-2), and Nihongo Yoroshiku (1-4). However, in 2004, *Akiko to Tomodachi (1-6)* as a Japanese textbook was provided for Thai high school learners. This textbook was developed with the cooperation of the Japan Foundation and the Ministry of Education for teaching the Japanese language at the Thai high school level. Approximately 80% of high schools used these textbooks in their studies and classroom instruction (Sangthongsuk & Hatta, 2006). According to previous research, this study repeated a survey of popular textbooks used in Thailand, and most learners indicated that Minna no Nihongo (1-4) and Akiko to Tomodachi (1-6) are the most popular textbooks that they have ever used in their studies.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Population and Samples

Thai learners who were taking Japanese as their major had varying levels of proficiency in the Japanese language at the Thai university. The Japanese levels were from the beginning to advanced levels. The participants in this study consisted of 53 participants, 1st year and 2nd year Japanese studies students.

3.2. Research Instrument

This study's design focused on quantitative analysis. It has primarily been used to obtain statistical information in linguistic field studies. The study required percentages, and 5 Likert-scales to answer the research questions. The data collection methods of this study were grouped into two sections as follows: questionnaires including demographic information and students' perception of mother language interference, and textbook observation. After data collection was accomplished, statistics were used as data analysis to provide the results. In order to complete this study, all sections processed systematically in order to provide the elicited insight into the study.

3.3. Collection of Data

Questionnaires were one method of data collection. It included 2 sections: demographic data (Japanese language proficiency, experience in learning Japanese, etc.) and a perception of the mother language effect for 12 items. Another method for determining the frequency of specific transitive and intransitive verbs in teaching was to examine Japanese

textbooks. Minna no nihongo 1st - 4th and Aikoto to tomodachi 1st - 6th were used in this study.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic data of participants

The findings found that most of the participants who were majoring in Japanese studies at "A" University in Thailand are both males and females, making up 28.30 percent and 71.10 percent of the participants, respectively. Their average ages were about 19.45 years old. According to the CEFR (Common European Frameworks), the JLPT level could be divided into three groups: N5–N4 as a beginner, N3 as an intermediate learner, and N2–N1 as an advanced learner. The participants who were in the beginning presented 39.62 percent, intermediate learners at 49.06 percent, and advanced learners at 11.32 percent. The average number of years participants have been learning the Japanese language was 4.60 years.

4.2 Questionnaires

The effects of the mother language factor for 12 items were covered in this portion of the questionnaire. Each item was adjusted to fit the research goals. The effects of mother language were discussed. According to those findings, 43.40 percent of participants believed that they were bewildered when using Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs. 35.85 percent of those questioned agreed that using incorrect verbs, especially those with special meanings that were difficult for them to grasp or making a poor decision. 49.06 percent of those answers agreed on

the importance of familiarity in which they always selected the verbs that they were familiar with. 33.96 percent found that the participants agreed that they could not distinguish between the situations in which they should use Japanese transitive or intransitive verbs in some situations. For the rest of the items, the findings could not determine their significant effects.

In addition, the findings found that 35.85 percent of the participants agreed with the use of transitive verbs more than Intransitive verbs because they were trained how to use transitive verbs more than intransitive verbs. 32.08 percent showed that the participants agreed with the clear explanation of the distinction between Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs from the teachers who they have learned with since they started learning the Japanese language. 32.08 percent found that the participants could understand each situation of-teiru. Also, 37.74 percent showed that the participants agreed to the instruction in which teachers should provide more explanation and information about the Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs' topics.

5. Discussion

5.1 Frequency of verbs found from “Minna no Nihongo “Agigoto to Tomodachi

There were a total of 320 verbs found in Minna no nihongo. They were separated into three types of verbs, such as transitive verbs, intransitive verbs, and verbal nouns. The first type was transitive verbs, including 135 verbs found at 42.19 percent, which was the highest percentage of all verbs found in the books. The second was intransitive

verbs, including 125 verbs found at 39.06 percent, and the last group was a verbal noun in the form of "suru construction" (名詞+する) which was found to have 60 verbs at 18.75 percent. The verbal nouns as suru construction were presented as "do" which was hugely presented as a transitive verb (Shimada & Kordoni, 2003). Due to this fact, grouping between the first and the last group of Minna no nihongo, the transitive verbs were more commonly used in teaching and forming sentences than the intransitive verbs.

From Akiko to tomodachi, the content profoundly focused on daily conversation and Japanese culture. Due to this difference, the frequency of verbs cannot be counted, so focusing on conversation forms was applied in this study. According to the conversation found from the Agigo to tomodachi, they often used sentences with volitional sentence-ending expressions such as "-masho", or "let us do something" ex. 聞いてみましょう (kiitemi-masho), 読んでみましょう (yondemi-masho), and 書きましょう (kaki-mashou), "-kudasai" or "please do something", ex. 開けてください (akete-kudasai), 教えてください (oshiete-kudasai). In addition, teiru as a progressive is also one of the volitional forms that can be found in the textbook. The volitional sentence is used with the volitional verb, which is the character of the transitive verb. This means that transitive verbs are frequently used in the context of volitional sentences (Tawa, 2009). Thus, the transitive verbs were often used for the vilitional forms. The frequency of the transitive verbs was obviously higher than the use of transitive verbs.

Due to the frequency of transitive verbs that were found to be higher than intransitive verbs, it affects students' learning familiarity and learning experience in terms of verb recognition in terms of verbs that they have ever seen in their classes and materials. Therefore, repetition of verbs is seen as one factor that impacts the acquisition of verbs when selecting a transitive or intransitive in a certain situation.

5.2 Effects of lesson order introduced by "Minna no Nihongo" and "Aigoto to Tomodachi" toward learners' perception

According to Shirai and Kurono (1998) and Nishi, (2008), the resultative -teiru was more difficult to understand than the progressive -teiru due to one factor, which was the arrangement of the content lesson. This study found that learners had a high tendency to select transitive verbs more than intransitive verbs, even though they could understand which transitive verb should be worked with a progressive -teiru and which intransitive verb should be worked with a resultative -teiru.

In the part of Minna no Nihongo, it included 50 chapters within four books. This book intensively focused on the functions of Japanese grammar. Due to this, all basic grammar rules were orderly introduced for beginners in this textbook. **From chapter 1 to chapter 27, the types of verbs have not been clearly explained in their functions.** It had only the introduction of a new verb occurring in each chapter and the explanation of some verbs with a certain particle, such as a verb pair of *da-su* and *de-ru* (出す・出る) where *da-su* always comes with *wo* or, を while *de-ru* always comes

with *ga* or, が and so on. According to this, even though the verb pair was found in an early chapter but no clear explanation was given, it made learners confused and try to remember the verbs and their particles regardless of the functions of the verbs themselves. The form of progressive-teiru was introduced in chapter 28, and then the form of resultative-teiru was introduced later in chapter 29. The explanations of intransitive verbs were given in chapter 29. According to these findings, this may reflect learners' learning to clearly understand the types of verbs. Moreover, from *Agigo* to *tomodachi*, there were 29 chapters for beginner to intermediate learners. Surprisingly, only a progressive -teiru was introduced as content in chapter 12, but resultative -teiru was not found. **In chapter 12, the progressive -teiru was taught** with action verbs such as *yo-mu* (読む) or *to read*, *ka-ku* (書く) or *to write*, *to-ru* (撮る) or *to take*, *ha-ku* (履く) or *to put on*, *ki-ru* (着る) or *to wear*, *nu-gu* (脱ぐ) or *to take off*, and etc. The content was to let learners describe the information about people's actions and how they dress by using the progressive -teiru. However, in terms of a resultative -teiru, we could not find it in this textbook. The effects of the introduction of fewer intransitive verbs cause the acquisition of fewer Japanese intransitive verbs. Anderson (2009) and Bardovi-Harlig (1999) claimed a **specific form-meaning mapping at the early stage of learning, wherein they combined a particular aspectual morpheme with a particular type of verb**. Thus, it could be concluded that one of the factors that influenced learners in selecting the transitive or intransitive verbs that matched up with the content

arrangement was that, at an early stage of learning a progressive -teiru, learners tended to use a particular type of verb, here transitive verbs, more often than intransitive verbs.

5.3 Limitation of the exercises from "Minna no Nihongo" and "Agigoto to Tomodachi"

The exercises in the textbooks were also important to analyze because they helped learners practice what they had learned and to assess how much they understood the grammar forms and rules in real life (Nilsson, 2006). Grant (1990) provided a classification of textbooks for the language classroom into two types: *traditional textbooks* and *communicative textbooks*. Traditional textbooks were those that involved learners learning the language as a system. Once they had learned the system, it was hoped that they were then equipped to use the language for their own purposes in any way they think. While the communicative textbooks are different, they created possibilities for learners to communicate in the language because they consisted of many communicative activities. As a result, students would be able to use the language when they had finished school (Grant, 1990). Based on the characteristics of each type of textbook provided by Grant (1990), this study put the textbook of **Minna no nihongo** into the category of **a traditional textbook**, and the **Agigo to tomodachi** was put into the category of **communicative textbooks**. To know the limitations, the characteristics of those types of textbooks were used to discuss the limitations from *Minna no nihongo* and *Agigoto to tomodachi*.

For example:

1. 暇なとき、いつも何をしていますか

(What do you usually do in your free time?).

Key: パソコンでゲームをします

(I plays game in computer)

Answer: パソコンでゲームをしています。

(I usually play games on the computer.)

(28th Lesson; Minna no nihongo)

Due to this, the exercise limited learners' thinking outside of boxes; it made learners remember rules and forms. Thus, cognitive learning rarely happened through this type of exercise. According to this, **the weakness of Minna no nihongo as a traditional textbook was that learners could not apply any rules they had learned in their lives.**

The manual of *Agigo to tomodachi* for teacher guidance was analyzed. Teachers were guided to start simple conversations with the use of a grammar form that they were going to teach learners without describing the rules and forms. It is suggested that they involve daily life situations to let learners think along and produce easy conversations without any correcting grammar rules. In addition, the content shown in this textbook mostly deals with the daily life situations that were happening in Thai society. Learners were required to produce the conversations through task activities such as describing how to go to a museum, how to reserve a hotel, etc. The audio of the example conversation was applied beforehand, and learners were then asked to produce the conversation. **These exercises with communicative textbooks benefit learners**

who use the language outside of school. Those exercises were communicative activities. Moreover, when students do things in the classroom, it was more likely that they would be able to do them in real life (Grant, 1990). To sum up, the exercises from the textbook were one of the factors that affected the understanding and the selection of types of transitive verbs.

5.4 A mother language (Thai) influences the selection of Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs.

As results showed in questionnaires, the mother language interference was explained in this part. According to Vandler (1967), the same type of verbs (transitive or intransitive verbs) was used in Thai for both progressive and resultative events, with aspect markers such as "kamlang+Vtr", "Vtr+yu", "kamlang+Vtr+yu", "kamlang+Vtr+yu", "kamlang+Vtr+yu", "kamlang+Vtr+yu". However, in Japanese, "kamlang+Vtr+yu", "Kamlang+Vtr+yu", "Vtr+teiru" and resultative events with aspect marker "Vin+teiru" were marked with different types of verbs (a particular transitive or intransitive verb). For example, "aku/akere", the classification of verbs in the Thai grammar system, provided an explanation (Boonyapipark, 1983). To begin, in Thai, "pəət" "aku/akeru" was classified as both a progressive and a state resulting case, so akeru as a transitive verb providing a progressive event, and aku as an intransitive verb providing a resultative event, as in Japanese. However, in Thai, "to open" or "pəət" was only considered a transitive verb type. As a result, Thai as a mother language could be confused about how to use them correctly in a Japanese context.

6. Suggestion

This research can benefit the improvement and development of Japanese textbooks in Thailand toward the instruction of Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs. In order to gain more knowledge and efficiency in learning Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs from Thai learners. However, this study cannot focus on the classroom process with the use of those Japanese textbooks. The classroom process conducted by teachers might provide more insights for this study. Thus, this study can imply future research to be studied in advance.

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Author

Miss Warangkana Wiriyapan

Japanese Language Program, Sisaket Rajabhat University

319 Thai Pantha Rd., Pho Sub-district, Mueang District,

Sisaket Province 33000

Tel: 093-4932326 Email: haenoont@gmail.com