

ON THE SOURCE OF LINGUISTIC TRANSFER IN THE LEARNING OF *-TE I-* IN L3 JAPANESE

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Abstract: This paper examines the source of linguistic transfer in L3 Japanese in the learning of the *-te i-* aspect marker, in a context where L1 is Romanian and L2 is English. The analysis of data from two groups of learners (25 beginners and 14 intermediate L3 learners) show that the source of transfer is L1 Romanian, in spite of the fact that some similarities between the properties of L3 and L2 could have favored transfer from L2 English. This conclusion is supported by the fact that, in a comprehension task, both proficiency groups of L3 learners interpreted *-te i-* predicates as having a habitual value more often than the native speakers who took part in this study. This non-facilitative transfer effect is still found with the intermediate group, mainly with activities, where no clear distinction is attested between the progressive and the habitual values of the *-te i-* predicates. Overall, L3 learners did not interpret *-te i-* predicates as progressive more often than the native speakers, which suggests that L2 cannot be the source of transfer.

Keywords: *-te i-*, aspect, L3 Japanese, L1 Romanian, L2 English, linguistic transfer

1. Introduction

Previous research on the acquisition of the aspect marker *-te i-* in L2 Japanese focused on settings in which the native language of the learners was English, Spanish, Korean, or Chinese (see Gabriele & Hughes 2015 for an overview). More recent studies added German, Russian, Bulgarian, and Ukrainian to the list of native languages (Sugaya & Shirai 2007). Several of these studies revealed the role of language transfer during the early stages in the L2 learning of aspect (Gabriele 2009, Sugaya & Shirai 2007) but, to the best of my knowledge, no studies looked into the source and nature of transfer in L3 Japanese in spite of the fact that an increasing number of recent studies have been probing into linguistic transfer in L3 (Flynn et al. 2004, Bardel & Falk 2007, Rothman & Amaro 2010, Rothman 2010, Westergaard et al. 2017, Westergaard 2021).

The learning of the *-te i-* marker has not been investigated in a setting with Romanian as L1 nor has it been discussed in relation to Japanese as L3. The present study aims to fill in these gaps. Extending the investigation to L3 Japanese, in a context where L1 is Romanian and L2 is English, allows the analysis of a new learning context where L1 does not have an overt progressive marker while L2 has one, but with different values than the similar Japanese marker.

The main goal of the present paper is to investigate the learning of the aspect marker *-te i-* in L3 Japanese by native speakers of Romanian who are (intermediate/advanced) L2 speakers of English. The focus is on the identification of the source and the (facilitative or non-facilitative) effects of linguistic transfer in the learning of this aspectual marker in L3 Japanese in a formal context. The following research questions are addressed:

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- (i) Do both L1 Romanian and L2 English serve as the source of linguistic transfer?
- (ii) Does proficiency level interact with crosslinguistic interference effects?

The paper is organized as follows: in Section 2 I present the main semantic properties of the aspect marker *-te i-* and the way in which it interacts with the aspectual value of the predicate with which it co-occurs. Section 3 summarizes the main findings reported in previous studies on the learning of *-te i-* in L2 Japanese. The main hypotheses with respect to linguistic transfer in L3 are presented in Section 4. Section 5 includes my own study on the source of transfer in L3 Japanese in a learning setting in which the L1 of the learners is Romanian and their L2 is English. Section 6 concludes.

2. The *-te i-* marker in a nutshell

-te i- is standardly analyzed as a marker of the progressive aspect in Japanese. According to Shirai (2000), it signals “focus on the durative phase of a state”, as in the example below:

- (1) Ken ga utatte iru.
Ken NOM sing-te be-PRS
'Ken is singing.'

Besides the progressive value illustrated in (1), *-te i-* can also have a resultative/experiential value (illustrated in 2 and 3) and a habitual one, as in (4) (Shirai 2000).

- (2) Mado ga aite iru.
window NOM open-te be-PRS
'The window is open.'
- (3) Ken wa hon o san-satsu kaite iru.
Ken TOP book ACC three-CLF write-te be-PRS
'Ken wrote three books.'
- (4) Ken wa saikin kuruma de gakkoo e itte iru
Ken TOP these days car INSTR school to go-te be-PRS
'Ken goes to school by car these days.'

These contextual values vary with the aspectual properties of the predicate. When associated with activities, the progressive interpretation prevails; in (5) the sentence is preferentially interpreted as denoting a situation which is ongoing at speech time (i). Activities with *-te i-* can also have a habitual value (ii).

- (5) Taroo wa umibe o hashitte iru.
Taro TOP beach LOC run-te be-PRS
(i) 'Taro is running on the beach.' (progressive)
(ii) 'Taro runs on the beach.' (habitual)

More marginally, an activity predicate with *-te i-* can also have a resultative/experiential value (Fujii 1966 in Ogihara 1998, Ohigara 1999, Shirai 2000, Sugita 2008). For example, the sentence in (6) can be interpreted as either progressive or resultative.

- (6) Ken ga ofuro de nete iru.
 Ken TOP bathroom LOC sleep-te be-PRS
 (i) 'He is sleeping in the bathroom.' (progressive)
 (ii) 'He is asleep in the bathroom.' (resultative)

With accomplishments, too, the preferred interpretation is the progressive one. But accomplishments with *-te i-* as well can have a habitual and a resultative value, as in (7):

- (7) Kare wa hon o kaite iru.
 he TOP book ACC write-te be-PRES
 (i) 'He is writing a book.' (progressive)
 (ii) 'He writes a book.' (habitual)
 (iii) 'He has written a book.' (resultative)

With achievements, however, the resultative interpretation is the preferred one (Shirai 2000, Sugita 2008). The sentence in (8) can have three interpretations: the resultative is the preferred one, but it can also have a habitual and a progressive interpretation.

- (8) Steve wa kyoukai de kekkon shite iru.
 Steve TOP church LOC wedding do-te be-PRS
 (i) 'Steve is married in church.' (resultative)
 (ii) 'Steve is getting married in church' (progressive)
 (iii) 'Steve marries in church.' (habitual)

With the resultative value, the predicate with *-te i-* denotes a situation that is the result of a previous event. Several studies consider this the perfective aspectual value of *-te i-* (Tsuji-mura 1996), illustrated in (9):

- (9) Kaeru ga shinde iru.
 frog NOM die-te be-PRS
 'The frog is dead.'

There is a special aspectual class of predicates, whose meaning is related to putting on/taking off clothes, such as *haku* 'wear' in *kutsushita-wo haku* 'put on socks'. Some linguists consider them accomplishments (Hara 2016), others argue that they have a double interpretation: they behave like achievements or like accomplishments (Shirai 2000). When the focus is on the action of putting on clothes, the clothing verb behaves like an accomplishment and in combination with *-te i-* it has a progressive reading. When the focus is on the punctual change of state, the predicate behaves like an achievement

and when marked with *-te i-* the interpretation is resultative. These predicates, in combination with *-te i-*, can have a progressive, a habitual and a resultative value.

- (10) Kare wa kyōshitsu de jīnzu o haite iru.
 he TOP classroom LOC jeans ACC dress-te be-PRS
 (i) ‘He is putting on the jeans in the classroom.’ (progressive)
 (ii) ‘He wears jeans in classroom.’ (habitual)
 (iii) ‘He is dressed in jeans in classroom.’ (resultative)

State predicates are generally incompatible with *-te i-*. Kindaichi (in Fujii, 1966) put forth a classification of Japanese verbs according to their compatibility with this aspect marker. According to this classification, verbs expressing existence (such as *iru* ‘to be’ [+animate] and *aru* ‘to be’ [-animate]) cannot occur with *-te i-*. Other state predicates, however, are preferentially used with this aspectual marker (e.g. *love, hate, know*).

- (11) Watashi wa Nancy o hidoku kiratte iru.
 I TOP Nancy ACC strongly hate-te be-PRS
 ‘I hate Nancy.’

Generally, the presence of certain adverbs such as *ima* ‘now’ or *mada* ‘yet’ (Ogihara 1998) favors the resultative interpretation. Fujii (1966, in Ogihara 1998), for example, notices that the resultative value of *-te i-* is possible in the presence of adverbs of the type *ima* ‘now’, while the experiential value is obtained with adverbs that locate the situation in the past, such as *kyonen* ‘last year’. The habitual interpretation is triggered by adverbs such as *yoku* ‘often’ or *saikin* ‘lately’.

The interpretation of *-te i-* with various aspectual classes is summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. The interaction of *-te i-* with aspectual classes of predicates. Preferred readings¹

	Activities	Accomplishments	Achievements	Clothing verbs
Progressive	+	+		+
Habitual				
Resultative			+	+

3. Aspect in L2 Japanese and linguistic transfer

The vast majority of studies on the L2 learning of *-te i-* focused on L1 English settings and, more specifically, on the resultative and the progressive interpretations of this aspectual marker. The Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai 1994) predicts that *-te i-*, as a progressive marker, will be preferentially used with activities during the

¹ The table does not include state predicates because the comprehension task used in the present study did not include sentences with state predicates.

early stages of acquisition. The learner will extend it to accomplishments and achievements, i.e. to telic predicates, later. This prediction, however, is challenged by the fact that the Japanese *-te i-* can be used with achievements, in which case the marked predicate has a perfective (resultative) value; according to the Aspect Hypothesis, perfective marking should apply to telic predicates first, i.e. we would expect *-te i-* to be used with achievements during the early stages.

The influence of L1 is discussed in several studies, among which Sheu (1997), Shibata (1999), Sugaya (2001), usually in relation to the predictions of the Aspect Hypothesis. Facilitative transfer from L1 in the L2 learning of the Japanese *-te i-* marker is reported in Shirai & Kurono (1998). Their investigation included two studies. One of them relied on conversational data (60 minutes/participant) and it involved three Chinese learners of Japanese as L2. Mandarin Chinese has a progressive marker, *zai*, which differs, however, from the Japanese *-te i-*: when occurring with achievements it does not yield a resultative reading². The results showed that the Chinese learners of L2 Japanese strongly associated the past tense marker *-ta* with achievements and the imperfective marker *-te i-* with activities, in accordance with the Aspect Hypothesis (Shirai & Kurono 1998). However, the association was stronger than the one attested with native speakers of Japanese. The L2 learners used *-ta* with achievements at an average rate of 78%, whereas the native speaker (the experimenter who conducted the interview) did so in only 54% of the cases. The tendency to use the imperfective marker with activities was also stronger with the L2 learners, who used *-te i-* with activities 55% (vs. 37% for the native speaker of Japanese). The authors tentatively suggest that the Chinese learners in the first study may have been influenced by the aspect marker *-zai* in the native language, which has a progressive value. The similarity between the L2 and the native language may have boosted the learning of the progressive value of *-te i-*.

Sugaya & Shirai (2007) also questioned whether the predicted association between the imperfective marker *-te i-* and the progressive interpretation would emerge in the case of L2 learners whose L1 lacks overt progressive marking. The two groups of L2 Japanese learners that took part in the study had English, German or a Slavic language as L1. The results confirmed, for the learners of lower proficiency, the prediction of the Aspect Hypothesis: *-te i-* was preferentially used with activity predicates to mark the progressive interpretation. But the prediction was not confirmed for the learners whose L1 lacks a morphological progressive marker. These results show, once again, the role of L1. The presence of a similar progressive marker may boost the acquisition of *-te i-* whereas its absence may have a non-facilitative effect.

One issue often discussed in the literature is the order of acquisition of the progressive and the resultative readings of *-te i-*. The main conclusion was that the resultative value is more difficult to acquire than the progressive one when it is not available in the L1 of the learners. L2 learners of Japanese with L1 English find it more difficult to identify the resultative than the progressive value of *-te i-* (Shirai & Kurono 1998).

² The authors also mention another durative imperfective marker, *-zhe*, but they do not say anything about its effect on various classes of predicates.

One important question in relation to L1 influence which was addressed in more recent studies is to what extent the L2 learner is able to successfully acquire L2 properties that are not found in L1 (Gabriele & McClure 2011) and whether this is more difficult than unlearning certain aspects of their L1 (Gabriele 2009) “in the absence of explicit input that indicates which properties of the first language (L1) are ruled out by the L2 grammar” (Gabriele 2009). Some authors consider that the acquisition of a new semantic representation is easier than the preemption of the existing L1 representation (Gabriele 2009).

4. Transfer in L3: Main hypotheses

The studies which investigate the source of transfer in L3 rely on the Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis (Schwartz & Sprouse 1996), i.e. they all assume that there is linguistic transfer. According to this hypothesis, during the early stages of L2 learning, properties of L1 are transferred to L2. But Universal Grammar constrains the interlanguage at all stages.

L3 learning involves two potential transfer sources: the native language and the L2. One core question addressed in L3 studies is whether both L1 and L2 affect the learning process. One further question is whether linguistic transfer proceeds on a property-by-property basis or as a whole. And finally, one further question targets the factor(s) which determine(s) the source of transfer.

In L3 learning the source of transfer, facilitative and non-facilitative, can be the native language, as in L2 learning (Herms 2014), even when the L3 learners are advanced speakers of the L2 involved. But it can also be the second language, as assumed by The L2 Status Factor model (Bardel & Falk 2007). This model builds on an important difference between L1 and L2 acquisition. The former is acquired implicitly and involves procedural memory, whereas the latter involves declarative memory (Ullman 2001) and explicit knowledge. L3 learning is similar to L2 learning. This predicts that the source of linguistic transfer will be the language that has the same status as L3, one that is stored in declarative memory, i.e. L2.

According to the Cumulative Enhancement Model (Flynn et al. 2004) any previously acquired language can be the source of transfer. Knowing languages L1 and L2 will contribute, cumulatively, to L3 learning. Transfer (positive or neutral) may be the cumulative positive effect of both languages. This approach denies the existence of negative transfer.

Other approaches adopt a selective transfer view and do not exclude non-facilitative transfer. An important ingredient of these approaches is “typological proximity” which is generally understood as psychotypology. Transfer is determined by the learner’s perception of the similarity/difference between the previously acquired languages and L3. The properties can be perceived as close or distant and as core and non-core (Kellerman 1979, 1983 in Westergaard et al. 2017). Linguistic transfer, during the early stages, will involve those properties which the learner perceives as close to L3.

Along the same line, Rothman (2011) puts forth the Typological Primacy Model, according to which choice of transfer source is determined by which of the two

previously known languages is perceived as typologically closer (overall) to L3. According to this view, proximity in “actual or perceived linguistic typology between the target L3/L_n measured against the grammars of the L1 and L2” (Rothman 2010: 26) is the most important variable.

Transfer is assumed to be complete and to take place in one step, it is wholesale transfer (Rothman 2015). Rothman & Cabrelli Amaro (2010) investigated the source of transfer in learning settings involving previous knowledge of English and of a Romance language, and another Romance language as L3. Their results show that transfer was from the other Romance language (irrespective of whether it was the L1 or the L2) even when this resulted in an erroneous structure and in spite of the fact that transfer from English would have been of the positive type. The Typological Primacy Model, however, has nothing to say about transfer in case typological proximity is irrelevant to certain language combinations.

More recently, the Linguistic Proximity Model (Westergaard et al. 2017, Westergaard 2021) has offered a more fine-grained view along the same line: transfer is selective and determined by language similarity. But according to this model it is not overall similarity which drives transfer. Cross-linguistic interference effects will be determined by the similarity (not necessarily identity) of some abstract properties of any of the prior languages and L3. Micro-variation is important. Both previously known languages remain available at all stages of L3 learning and they may interact with one another. Westergaard et al. 2017: 14) state that “crosslinguistic influence occurs when a particular linguistic property in the L_n input reveals abstract structural similarity with linguistic properties of the previously learned languages”. According to this view, structural similarity will be reflected in positive transfer. The L3 learner is assumed to use previously known grammars when parsing L3 input. Misanalysis of a property in this input as similar to L1 or L2 will be reflected in negative transfer.

Against this background, the present paper investigates the learning of grammatical aspect in L3 Japanese in an L1 Romanian L2 English setting.

5. The Study

5.1 Aim and predictions

The aim of this study is to identify the source of transfer in the learning of the *-te i-* aspect marker by L3 Japanese students whose native language is Romanian and who had knowledge of L2 English (at least at an intermediate level) at the time when they began the study of Japanese.

Romanian is standardly assumed to lack a morphological marker for the progressive aspect³, using the simple present or the imperfective past in contexts where Japanese uses *-te i-* with a progressive or a habitual value. The semantic representations of the Romanian sentence in (12) below correspond to the progressive and the habitual values of its *-te i-* counterpart.

³ This is the standardly assumed view. But see Avram (2003) and Stoica (2015) for a different point of view.

- (12) Copilul aleargă în parc.
 child-the run-PRS.3SG in park
 (i) ‘The child is running in the park.’
 (ii) ‘The child runs in the park.’

But a present tense sentence lacks a perfective value (be it resultative or experiential), even with achievements.

If we compare the Japanese *-te i-* to the English marker of the progressive, we notice that the latter has only the “progressive interpretation” (it locates the time of the event at/around the time of reference, Kearns 1991). The situation denoted by the predicate is interpreted as on-going at the time of reference and as having limited duration, i.e. as dynamic and temporary. It does not have the perfective value of *-te i-*, not even with achievements. When the progressive is found in habitual sentences, the habitual reading is conveyed by a temporal adverb (e.g. *always*) whereas the progressive marker indicates limited duration or emotional involvement on the part of the speaker. Shirai (2000) remarks that even when used with a habitual interpretation, the “imperfective *-te i-* denotes dynamicity and/or temporariness”. The similarity, however, does not include the use of the progressive with all achievements. In English, degree achievements in combination with *be -ing* may refer to on-going situations, changes of state, i.e. the sentence has a progressive interpretation, but the use of the progressive with purely lucky achievements is limited. The sentence must allow an iterative interpretation for the use of the progressive to be felicitous (as in 14b) or it should allow the slow-motion reading, e.g. in film commentaries (as in 14c):

- (13) The weather is cooling.
 (14) a. *She is spotting a friend in the middle of the crowd.
 b. Bill is constantly discovering web pages for lunatics.
 c. Mary is spotting her ex at the party at the moment.

(Avram 2020)

Importantly, in English, achievements with the progressive do not have a resultative reading. The sentences in (15) below refer to an approach to the change of state denoted by the predicate, not to the change of state:

- (15) a. The plane is landing.
 b. The man is recovering slowly.

In this study, I focus on the interpretation of *-te i-* in present tense sentences.

If the source of transfer in L3 learning is L1 Romanian, we predict learners to use the present tense simple instead of the *-te i-* form, i.e. to make errors of the type illustrated in (16), irrespective of the aspectual features of the predicate, when the progressive value is actually the intended one:

- (16) *Ken wa ima sushi o taberu.
 Ken TOP now sushi ACC eat-PRS
 Intended: ‘Ken is eating sushi now.’

The learners are expected to interpret the *-te i-* predicates as habitual and progressive. A sentence like (17), for example, will be associated with the semantic representations of the Romanian sentence in (18):

- (17) Kare wa heya de yonde imasu.
 he TOP room LOC read-te be-PRS.POL
 'He is reading in the room.'
- (18) El citește în cameră.
 he read-PRS.3SG in room
 (i) 'He is reading in his room.'
 (ii) 'He reads in his room.'

One further prediction is that if transfer is from L1, the Romanian L3 Japanese learners will not associate *-te i-* sentences with the resultative or the experiential interpretations. A sentence like (19), for example, will be interpreted as progressive, as in (i), not as resultative, as in (ii):

- (19) Sensei ga seitotachi no aida ni suwatte iru.
 teacher NOM students among LOC take.seat-te be-PRS
 (i) 'The teacher is taking a seat among the students.'
 (ii) 'The teacher has taken a seat among the students.'

For English native speakers, previous studies identified positive transfer from L1 when *-te i-* indicates a specific situation ongoing at reference time, but also a potentially negative transfer when the interpretation is resultative (Rohde 1996, Rocca 2002, Collins 2002, Sugaya & Shirai 2007). The resultative progressive is marginal in English and it is obtained only with state predicates of the type *sit, stand, lie, hang*, etc. (Kearns 1991).

- (20) A book is lying on the table.

If the source of transfer in L3 Japanese is English, as predicted by the L2 Status Factor hypothesis (Bardel & Falk 2007), we expect the progressive interpretation to be preferred, even with achievements, and at higher rates than with native speakers. For (21) below, L3 learners will choose the progressive interpretation in (i), not the resultative interpretation in (ii):

- (21) Kodomo wa haha no oyamari ni kitsuite iru.
 child TOP mother of mistake LOC realize-te be-PRS
 (i) 'The child is getting aware of his/her mother's mistake.'
 (ii) 'The child got aware of his/her mother's mistake.'

Summing up so far, if the source of linguistic transfer is L1 Romanian, we predict that the L3 learners of Japanese will treat *-te i-* sentences as present tense sentences with a habitual and a progressive interpretation, but not with a resultative one. The resultative

value will be learned at a later stage. If transfer is from L2 English, one expects only the progressive interpretation to be assigned to *-te i-*, even with achievements. For the habitual value, the predictions differ for L1 and for L2 transfer. Transfer from L1 Romanian should be reflected in the habitual interpretation of *-te i-* sentences, the latter possibly at rates higher than those attested with native speakers. Transfer from L2 English should be reflected in a weaker association with the habitual value. In both cases, the resultative value will be problematic.

The Linguistic Proximity Model (Westergaard et al. 2017) predicts transfer from English for the progressive value of *-te i-*. The preferred interpretation will be the progressive one, to the detriment of the resultative and the habitual values; the interpretation will be (initially) restricted to the semantic representation available in L2. The L3 learner is also predicted to misanalyse achievements with *-te i-* as similar to achievements with *be -ing*. This will result in non-facilitative transfer reflected in a delay in the learning of the resultative value of *-te i-*.

5.2 Task

In order to test the predictions in section 5.1 I designed a comprehension task which included 24 test sentences balanced across four conditions, illustrated below. As can be seen, in all the sentences the predicate was a present tense one.

(i) *-te i-* with activities:

- (22) Ken ga ofuro de nete imasu.
 Ken NOM bathroom LOC sleep-te be-PRS.POL
 (i) ‘Ken is sleeping in the bathroom.’ (progressive)
 (ii) ‘Ken sleeps in the bathroom. (habitual)
 (iii) ‘Ken is asleep in the bathroom.’ (resultative)

(ii) *-te i-* with achievements:

- (23) Steve wa kyoukai de kekkon shite imasu.
 Steve TOP church LOC marry do-te be-PRS.POL
 (i) ‘Steve is getting married in the church.’ (progressive)
 (ii) ‘Steve has got married in the church.’ (resultative)
 (iii) ‘Steve gets married in the church.’ (habitual)

(iii) *-te i-* with accomplishments:

- (24) Kare wa niwa de sakana no e o kaite imasu.
 he TOP garden LOC fish of picture ACC paint-te be-PRS.POL
 (i) ‘He is painting a picture of a fish in the garden.’ (progressive)
 (ii) ‘He paints a picture of a fish in the garden.’ (habitual)
 (iii) ‘He has painted a picture of a fish in the garden.’ (resultative)

(iv) *-te i-* with predicates which refer to putting on/taking off clothes:

- (25) Watashi wa kyōshitsu de jīnzu o haite imasu.
 I TOP room LOC jeans ACC wear-te be-PRS.POL
 (i) ‘I am wearing jeans in the classroom.’ (progressive)
 (ii) ‘I wear jeans in the classroom.’ (habitual)
 (iii) ‘I am dressed with jeans in the classroom.’ (resultative)

The participants received a Google form questionnaire, without a specific time limit. They had to choose one of three comprehension variants, as in (26), i.e. they were required to choose the answer which correctly explained the meaning of the sentence, in accordance with the aspectual properties of the predicate and the contribution of *-te i-*.

- (26) Kare wa kawa de oyoide imasu.
 he TOP river LOC swim-te be-PRS.POL
 (i) the sentence refers to a temporary action, ongoing at speech time
 (ii) the sentence refers to a general/habitual situation
 (iii) the sentence refers to a completed situation, with a result in the present.

5.3 Participants

39 L3 learners of Japanese took part in the study. They were all native speakers of Romanian and (intermediate and advanced) L2 speakers of English, foreign language students at the University of Bucharest.

25 students, age range 19-20, had been studying Japanese for 1 year at testing time. They were beginners; their proficiency level was N5⁴. The other 14 participants had been studying Japanese for 3 years at testing time. They were intermediate learners (B1/B2 or N4/N3). The participants had all been formally taught the values of *-te i-* prior to testing.

A control group of 39 native speakers of Japanese also took part in the study.

The details of the groups of participants are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Comprehension task. Participants

Group	Age range	Nr.	Proficiency level
L3 learners – beginners	19-20	25	N5 or A2
L3 learners – intermediate	23-26	14	N3 or B1/B2
L1 Japanese	17-55	39	Native language

⁴ The Japanese Language Proficiency Test has five levels: N1, N2, N3, N4 and N5. The lowest level is N5 and the most advanced level is N1. N3 is an intermediate level. Compared to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, N5 and N4 corresponds to A1 and A2 (beginners). The B level corresponds to N3, while N2 and N1 correspond to the C level.

5.4 Results

5.4.1 The group of beginners

Overall, the L3 learners gave more “progressive” responses ($M = 13.8$, $SD = 3.40$) than “habitual” ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 2.56$) or “resultative” ($M = 4.4.8$, $SD = 2.43$) ones. A one-way ANOVA (repeated-measures) at the $\alpha = .05$ level showed that the overall responses given by the beginners differed significantly across the progressive, habitual and resultative values: $F(2,48) = 53.2$, $p < .001$. Multiple post hoc t-tests with Bonferroni correction revealed that the group of beginners got significantly more “progressive” responses than both “resultative” ($t(24) = 8.73$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed)) and “habitual” ones ($t(24) = 7.34$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed)). The difference between “resultative” and “habitual” responses did not reach significance ($t(24) = -1.69$, $p > .05$ (two-tailed)).

Because the preferred value of *-te i-* sentences depends on the aspectual features of the predicate, I next analyzed the results by aspectual class in order to see to what extent L3 learners are sensitive to the interaction between situation-type aspect and viewpoint aspect. The raw data are given in Table 3. They indicate that activities and accomplishments with *-te i-* were preferentially interpreted as progressive. Achievements with *-te i-* triggered a relatively high number of “resultative” responses, but not significantly higher than “progressive” ones ($t(24) = -1.22$, $p = .23$ (two-tailed)).

The hybrid class of predicates which refer to putting on/taking off clothes triggered responses which indicate that the L3 learners treated this class as different from both accomplishments and achievements. This class triggered the highest number of “habitual” responses, but the difference between “habitual” and “progressive” responses does not reach significance ($t(24) = 0.98$, $p = .33$ (two-tailed)), i.e. the learners interpreted *-te i-* with this class as progressive and habitual, with no significant preference.

Table 3. L3 learners (N5). Responses (number⁵) per aspectual class

	Activities	Accomplishments	Achievements	‘Put on clothes’
Progressive	108	105	60	72
Resultative	5	14	77	17
Habitual	37	31	13	61

Summing up so far, overall the L3 learners (N5) associated *-te i-* with activities and accomplishments preferentially with the progressive value; they interpreted these sentences as locating an ongoing temporary situation at speech time. With achievements, however, they interpreted *-te i-* sentences as progressive and resultative at equal rates. With “put on/take off clothes” predicates, they did not show any preference for the progressive or the habitual value.

The comparison of the overall results of the group of L3 learners (N5) and native speakers is summarized in Figure 1.

⁵ The total number of responses per condition was 150.

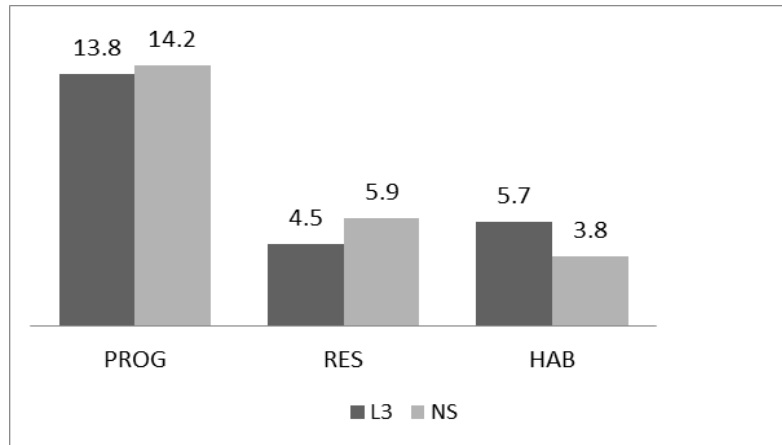


Figure 1. Overall results (mean). L3 learners and native speakers (NS)

Multiple t-tests revealed that the only difference which reaches significance is in relation to the “habitual” responses of the two groups: $t(48) = 2.67$, $p = .01$ (two-tailed), i.e. the L3 learners chose a “habitual” response more frequently than native speakers. The difference between “resultative” and “progressive” responses did not reach significance.

The comparison of the responses of the two groups by aspectual class reveals that both L3 learners and native speakers preferentially assign a progressive value to activities with *-te i-* but the L3 learners gave a significantly higher rate of “habitual” responses in this condition (see Table 4): $t(48) = 3.18$, $p = .002$ (two-tailed).

Table 4. Activities and *-te i-*. L3 learners vs. native speakers

	Progressive	Resultative	Habitual
L3 learners	72%	4%	25%
Control group	79%	11%	10%

With accomplishments (the data are summarized in Table 5), both groups preferentially assign a progressive interpretation to the *-te i-* predicates, but the rate is significantly higher with the group of native speakers: $t(48) = -3.26$, $p = .002$ (two-tailed). With accomplishments, just like in the activities condition, the L3 learners gave a significantly higher number of “habitual” responses than the native speakers: $t(48) = 2.99$, $p = .004$ (two-tailed).

Table 5. Accomplishments and *-te i-*. L3 learners vs. native speakers

	Progressive	Resultative	Habitual
L3 learners	70%	9%	21%
Control group	89%	3%	8%

With achievements, the L3 learners chose a progressive or a resultative interpretation, to the detriment of the habitual interpretation (see Table 6 below). But they did not show a clear preference for the progressive or the resultative value. In this respect, they differed from the native speakers, who showed a significant preference for the resultative value compared to the progressive: $t(24) = -2.63$, $p = .01$ (two-tailed). Otherwise, the comparison between the two groups shows that the rate of the various response types is relatively similar in this condition.

Table 6. Achievements and *-te i-*. L3 learners vs. native speakers

	Progressive	Resultative	Habitual
L3 learners	40%	50.7%	9.3%
Control group	33%	59%	8%

In the “putting on/taking off clothes” predicates condition the raw data (Table 7 below) suggest that the L3 learners gave more “progressive” answers than the native speakers of Japanese, but the difference does not reach significance. They gave significantly fewer “resultative” responses than the native speakers: $t(48) = -2.04$, $p = .04$ (two-tailed).

Table 7. Put on/take off clothes predicates and *-te i-*. L3 learners vs. native speakers

	Progressive	Resultative	Habitual
L3 learners	48%	12%	40%
Control group	36%	26%	38%

5.4.2 Interim conclusions

The results show that the progressive interpretation prevailed for the L3 learners, which indicates that they treat *-te i-* as a marker of the progressive viewpoint. Their overall rate of “progressive” responses is similar to the one attested with native speakers. This indicates that, at this learning stage, they know that *-te i-* can have a progressive value. It also suggests that the Romanian L3 learners of Japanese do not transfer the value of the progressive marker from their L2 English. They did not give a significantly higher number of “progressive” responses overall than the group of native speakers. This second conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the major difference between the L3 learners in this proficiency group and native speakers is found with the “habitual” responses. The L3 learners showed, overall, a higher preference for “habitual” responses than the group of native speakers.

The analysis of responses by aspectual class reveals a similar picture. With accomplishments, the L3 learners gave a lower number of “progressive” responses. With activities and accomplishments, the predictions of the Aspect Hypothesis are borne out by the data; the L3 learners of Japanese preferentially chose the “progressive” interpretation

of *-te i-*. But their responses differed from the ones of native speakers in two respects: (i) the L3 learners gave fewer “progressive” responses in the accomplishment condition than the native speakers; (ii) the L3 learners interpreted these aspectual predicates with *-te i-* as “habitual” at a significantly higher rate than the group of control.

The L3 learners did not preferentially interpret achievements with *-te i-* as resultative, while the native speakers showed a preference for the resultative reading of these predicates. At this stage, the L3 learners have not learnt *-te i-* with achievements yet, in line with what was reported in several previous studies (e.g. Shirai & Kurono 1998, Sugaya & Shirai 2007).

The L3 learners also differed from the native speakers with respect to the put on/take off clothes predicates; they chose the resultative value at a significantly lower rate than the native speakers (12% vs. 26% for the natives). The Romanian students interpreted this aspectual class with *-te i-* mainly as progressive, while the native speakers interpreted it both as progressive and resultative. These findings confirm, once again, that, at this stage, the resultative value of *-te i-* is the vulnerable one.

The fact that the L3 learners did not give a higher number of “progressive” responses than the group of native speakers, in conjunction with the fact that they gave a higher number of “habitual” responses than the native speakers, indicates that the source of transfer may have been L1, Romanian. The resultative value is problematic at this proficiency level. This may be interpreted as non-facilitative transfer from L1 or /and L2.

5.4.3 The group of intermediate learners

Overall the 14 intermediate learners chose the progressive interpretation more often than the habitual and the resultative ones. The results are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Overall results. Intermediate learners of L3 Japanese

Group	Progressive	Resultative	Habitual
L3 Japanese students	48.8% (n = 164)	25.9% (n = 87)	25.3% (n = 85)
Control group	58.3% (n = 196)	27.7% (n = 93)	13.9% (n = 47)

The results of an ANOVA test showed that, overall, the number of progressive, habitual and resultative interpretations given by the intermediate students who learn Japanese as L3 differ significantly ($F(2,26) = 11.2, p < .001$). A series of post-hoc tests revealed that, overall, the L3 Japanese students chose the progressive interpretation ($M = 11.7, SD = 3.62$) more often than the habitual one ($M = 6.07, SD = 2.84$) ($t(13) = 3.43, p = .004$ (two-tailed)) and more often than the resultative one ($M = 6.21, SD = 2.15$) ($t(13) = 3.93, p = .001$ (two-tailed)). The difference between the “habitual” and the “resultative” responses is not significant ($t(13) = -0.15, p = .88$ (two-tailed)).

The comparison of the overall results of the L3 learners with those of native speakers of Japanese revealed a significant difference only with respect to the “habitual” responses; the number of “habitual” responses given by the L3 students ($M = 6.07$;

$SD = 2.84$) is significantly higher than the natives' ($M = 3.36$; $SD = 0.57$): $t(14) = 26$, $p = .008$ (two-tailed).

The analysis of the results by predicate class showed that with activities, the L3 learners gave practically only “progressive” and “habitual” responses. The difference between these response types is not significant, i.e. they did not show a clear preference for either value (progressive or habitual): $t(13) = 1.69$, $p > .05$ (two-tailed). The native speakers, on the other hand, gave a significantly higher number of “progressive” than of “habitual” responses: $t(13) = 5.21$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed). The comparison of the two groups further revealed that the L3 learners gave significantly more “habitual” responses in the activities condition than the native speakers (37% compared to 12%): $t(26) = 2.71$, $p = .01$ (two-tailed). The data are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9. Results. The interpretation of *-te i-* with activity predicates

	Progressive	Resultative	Habitual
L3 Japanese	62%	1%	37%
Control group	71%	17%	12%

Another difference between the two groups of participants is related to the resultative value. This value represents 17% for the natives, while the L3 Japanese students gave only 1% “resultative” responses for the activity predicates associated with *-te i-*. We can conclude that these participants practically do not assign a resultative interpretation to activities with *-te i-*. The only answer of this type was found with the verb *neru* ‘to sleep’ which, in Japanese, is ambiguous between an activity and an achievement.

No significant difference was found with accomplishments, achievements or with put on/take off clothes predicates; the results of the two groups are similar. The intermediate L3 learners and the native speakers assign a similar interpretation to *-te i-* with these classes of predicates, as can be seen in Tables 10, 11 and 12 below.

Table 10. Results. The interpretation of *-te i-* with accomplishments

	Progressive	Resultative	Habitual
L3 Japanese	82%	0%	18%
Control group	90%	4%	6%

Table 11. Results. The interpretation of *-te i-* with achievements

	Progressive	Resultative	Habitual
L3 Japanese	14%	80%	6%
Control group	28%	64%	8%

Table 12. Results. The interpretation of *-te i-* with put on/take off clothes verbs

	Progressive	Resultative	Habitual
L3 Japanese	36%	22%	42%
Control group	44%	26%	30%

Since *-te i-* is standardly compared with the *-ing* progressive marker in English, Table 13 shows the progressive interpretation given by the two groups to each aspectual class included in the task.

Table 13. The progressive interpretation of *-te i-* by aspectual class

	Activities	Accomplishments	Achievements	Clothing verbs
L3 Japanese	62%	82%	14%	36%
Control group	71%	90%	28%	44%

As Table 13 shows, both the Romanian learners of Japanese and the Japanese native speakers gave the highest number of progressive responses in the accomplishment and in the activity conditions. The intermediate L3 learners did not assign *-te i-* a progressive interpretation more often than the native speakers with any aspectual class.

5.4.4 Interim conclusions

The results show that the intermediate group associated *-te i-* primarily with the progressive value; they treat *-te i-* as a marker of the progressive viewpoint. Their overall rate of “progressive” responses is not higher than the one attested with native speakers. This suggests that they do not transfer the value of the progressive marker from their L2 English.

Overall, the intermediate L3 learners gave more “habitual” responses than the native speakers, which indicates that the source of transfer is most probably their L1. This conclusion is supported by one more difference between the L3 learners in this group and native speakers. In the activities condition, the intermediate L3 learners did not show a clear preference for the habitual or the progressive interpretation of these predicates with *-te i-*, whereas the native speakers clearly preferred the progressive value. Unlike the group of beginners, the intermediate learners no longer gave a significantly higher number of “habitual” responses with activities; they interpreted activities with *-te i-* as either progressive or habitual, with no significant preference. The effects of L1 transfer begin to weaken at this stage.

The resultative value of *-te i-* is no longer problematic at this proficiency level.

6. Discussion and conclusions

The main question that I addressed in this study was whether the learning process of *-te i-* in L3 Japanese in an L1 Romanian L2 English context is affected by transfer and,

if it is, whether the source of transfer is L1 or L2. The results showed that the two groups of L3 learners differed from native speakers with respect to the habitual value; overall, both the beginners and the group of intermediate L3 learners gave more “habitual” responses than the native speakers who took part in this study. The significantly higher percentage of “habitual” responses suggests that the source of transfer may be L1. This non-facilitative transfer effect is still found with the intermediate group, mainly in the activities condition, where no clear distinction is made between the progressive and the habitual values of the *-te i-* predicates. The difference between the group of beginners and the group of intermediate learners with respect to the habitual value shows that L1 transfer effects are weakening as language proficiency is improving.

That the source of transfer cannot be L2 English is supported by the fact that the L3 learners did not give a significantly higher percentage of responses for the progressive interpretation, in any proficiency group. One cannot fully reject the effect of transfer from L2 at the very early stages. But the fact that with accomplishments the beginners gave significantly fewer “progressive” responses than the native speakers and significantly more “habitual” responses indicates that most probably L1, not L2 is the source of transfer.

The resultative value of *-te i-* with achievements was problematic only with the group of beginners. The intermediate learners did not differ from the control group of native speakers with respect to this value. The fact that the beginners assigned either a progressive or a resultative interpretation to these predicates, with no significant preference, indicates that as early as this proficiency level they had some knowledge of the resultative interpretation of achievements with *-te i-*. They gave a relatively high number of “resultative” responses only in this condition, whereas in all the other conditions the competition was between “progressive” and “habitual” responses.

More generally, the results of the present study show that transfer in L3 can be from L1 even when the targeted property is “closer” to a property of L2. In spite of the fact that in the learning setting which I investigated L1 Romanian lacks an overt marker of the progressive in finite clauses whereas L2 English has one, the data showed that most probably L1 Romanian is the source of early linguistic transfer in the acquisition of the *-te i-* marker in L3 Japanese.

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