

Tense and aspect in Japanese versus English

Tense: Indicates the relationship between times at which states/events take place

(1) How would we complete the following translations from English into Japanese?

(a) 'Yesterday, before I did my homework, I watched TV.'

Kinoo, syukudai-o _____ mae ni, terebi-o mi-ta.
yesterday homework-ACC { DO } before NI TV-ACC watch-TA

(b) 'Tomorrow, after I wash the car, I will make supper.'

Asita, kuruma-o _____ ato de, syokuzi-o tukuru.
tomorrow car-ACC { WASH } after DE meal-ACC make-RU

(2) What information about the timeline do we get from this sentence?

pro Nihon e ik-u mae ni, pro nihongo-o benkyoo.su.ru.
(I) Japan to go-RU before NI (I) Japanese study-RU
'Before I {GO} to Japan, I {STUDY} Japanese.'

(3) How can we translate this sentence?

Ken-wa [Aya-ga hon-o yonda] to it-ta
Ken Aya book read-TA C say-TA

Aspect: Represents the internal temporal structure of states/events

(4) How would we translate the following into English?

(a) Ken-wa susi-o tabe-te+i-ru.
Ken-TOP sushi-ACC eat-TE+I-RU

(b) Kaeru-ga sin-de+i-ru.
frog-NOM die-TE+I-RU

(5) Lexical aspect classes (illustrated for English)

- (a) state Aya knew French.
- (b) activity Aya ate apples.
- (c) accomplishment Aya ate an apple.
- (d) achievement Aya reached the summit.

(6) How would we translate these examples?

(a) Sono koto-o sir-u.
that fact know-RU

(b) Sono koto-o sit-te+i-ru. *that fact know-TE+I-RU*