

## Two layered System for Tense and Aspect in Japanese

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To give an adequate account for Japanese tense and aspect system, the following facts must be explained.

1. Unlike languages like Chinese, which has only aspectual distinction, there is tense distinction in Japanese.
2. In main clauses, tense is absolute, in the sense that it relates utterance time and the event time of the main clause predicate.
3. In some subordinate clauses, the tense is relative, in the sense that the tense form of the subordinate clause serves to relate the event time of the subordinate clause relative to the event time of the main clause predicates.
4. 3 does not apply to all subordinate clauses.
5. In some subordinate clauses, there is some asymmetry in the tense possibility relative to main clause tense form. If the tense form of the subordinate clauses are non-past both non-past and past tense forms are possible in the main clause, whereas if the tense form of the subordinate clauses are past, then only past tense forms are possible.
6. Related to 5, there are some subordinate clauses which can be used with tense-less main clause, such as imperatives and intentionals, only when subordinate tense is non-past.

In this paper, we will present a very simple compositional account for all the phenomena listed above by postulating separate projections for aspect and tense.