



# Separation of Gobi (Word Tail) and Setsubiji (Suffix) in A Construction of Japanese Predicate

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**Abstract.** Word tail (gobi) is one of the uniqueness of the Japanese language because languages in Indonesia only have suffix instead. Japanese language researchers consider that these two things have the same concept. Therefore, this study aims to examine gobi and suffix have the different concepts. The study approach used a descriptive qualitative with the method of analysis using identify and distributional methods. The results of data analysis indicate the word tail existence in Japanese is very distinctive that other languages do not have. So, it is necessary to distinguish it from the concept of suffixes. Suffixes are bound morphemes that have meaning. Language tails are constituents at the end of words and have tasks to attach morphemes in front of and behind them. Hypothetically, words and morphemes with tails include verbs, adjectives, and some suffixes. In addition, some Japanese words and morphemes have tails and some do not have any.

**Keywords:** Gobi, Suffix, Predicate, Morpheme.

## 1 Introduction

Each language has its own uniqueness that is sometimes not found in other languages. Likewise, Japanese has a uniqueness that Austronesia such as Bahasa Indonesia does not have any. The uniqueness of Japanese language is the existence of *gobi* or word tails in some types of Japanese words and morphemes. *Gobi* is word tails that simply come at the end of words or morphemes. As in a verb of *taberu* ‘eat’, it consists of word tails with *tabe-* and *-ru*. Mio [1] stated that *-ta* (past) and *-you* (invitation) are the word tails. It is strengthened by Yoshida [2] that is *-ta* (past) as a word tail. Besides, the verbs of *tabeta* ‘already ate’ and *tabeyou* ‘come on/ let’s eat’ consist of word tails with *tabe-* ‘eat’, *-ta* ‘already’, and *-you* ‘come on’.

Meanwhile, Japanese language has suffix term namely *setsubiji* or *setsubigo*. Suffixes are morphologically one type of affixes. A morpheme is the smallest unit of language that has meaning [3], [4], [5]. The language unit with only one phoneme and meaning can be grouped into morphemes. Affixes are morphologically bound morphemes attached behind root morphemes. Thus, the language units such as *-ru*, *-ta*, and *-you* can be included into the suffixes.

So that this study focuses on a concept of word tails and the concept of suffixes in Japanese. It is essential for Indonesian learners to learn in-depth Japanese grammar in distinguishing between two different concepts of word tails and suffixes. In fact, Austronesian languages (such as Indonesian and Javanese) do not have word tails concept, but they tend to use suffixes instead. On the other hand, in Japanese language research, these two different concepts still mix up and are considered as the same concept. For instance, Nasu [6] in a study of word tails, *onomatope* has not distinguished the word tail and suffix concept. Besides, Otsuka [7] stated that *-ppoi* (feels like) and *-rashii* (seems) as suffixes that have adjectives and word tails for adjective-*i*. Thus, Otsuka [7] considered suffixes and word tails to be the same concept.

This study is expected to propose a distinction between the concepts of word tail and suffix in Japanese. The discussion results are able to provide an understanding of the differences in suffix and word tail for Japanese learners from Indonesia.

## 2 Methods

A descriptive qualitative approach was used in this study using research object and data from a theory of Sudaryanto [8] which claimed that the research data is the research objects with context. The research object in this study are constituents of word tails and suffixes. The research data are sentences which there are word tails and suffixes in the predicates. Data was collected from two sources including the Japanese textbooks entitled *Minna no Nihongo Shokyuu (MNS) I* and *Minna no Nihongo Shokyuu (MNS) II* published by 3A Network and in the form of corpus data taken from BCCWJ (The Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese). It is available at <https://clrd.ninjal.ac.jp/bccwj/>. Data analysis used *agih* (distributional) and *padan* (identify) methods referring to Sudaryanto and Edi Subroto [9]. Data was proceeded and analysed to separate the concepts of word tails and suffixes in Japanese.

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Word Tail Conjugation

In Japanese linguistic theory, there is a term of *katsuyou gobi*. The term of *katsuyou* refers to internal changes of the words called conjugation. The conjugation is usually used to explain the changes in the internal construction of verbs. Meanwhile, nouns and adjectives are known as declinations [3]. In Japanese, both conjugation and declination are called *katsuyou*. Thus, *katsuyou gobi* can be considered as tail of the word conjugation. Also, the internal changes of words are in the form of word tails.

*Aruku* 'walking' is a conjugated verb that has changed in internal to be basic morphemes of *aruku*, *aruki*, *aruka*, and *aruke*. In the conjugation series, there is an unchanged part that is *aruk*. This part is also called a root morpheme (*gokon* as in Japanese), and the rest of the internal changes include *u*, *i*, *a*, and *e*. The phoneme

change occurs along with its hind constituents. For instance, the verb construction of *aruk-u-nara* ‘if it walks’ after phoneme of *-u-* is followed by constituent *-nara* (conditional); in the *aruk-i-masu* and *aruk-i-tai* after the *-i-* phoneme is followed by the *-masu* (expressing politeness) and *-tai* (expressing wishes) as the constituents; in the *aruk-a-nai* ‘does not move/run’ after the phoneme *-a-* is followed *-nai* (negative); and in the *aruk-e-ba* ‘if it walks’ after the phoneme *-e-* is followed *-ba* (conditional).

In addition to the constituent *-masu* and *-tai*, there was a researcher who indicated these are the word tails because they are at the end of the words. It is supported by Koike [10] that *-aru* as a word tail in the intransitive verb as in the underlined section on *kimaru* ‘is decided’ and *-eru* as the word tail in the transitive verb as in the verb of *kimeru* ‘to decide’. Furthermore, the word tails of *kimaru* and *kimeru* are *kimar-* and *kime-* instead of *kim-*. It emphasizes that the smallest units can be referred as morphemes if they have meanings. Also, it indicates the term of word tails tends to the concept of being at the end of the word. Besides, Koike [11] used the same concept on *-eru* and *-asu* as an intransitive verb marker. For instance, the underlined part on the verbs *fueru* ‘is added’ and *fuyasu* ‘is adding’. On these two verbs, *fue-* and *fuyas-* as the verb roots instead of *fu-* and *fuy-*. Therefore, the word tail is at the end of the word and not semantically related to meaning. Likewise, *gotou* or the head of word and *gochuu* or the middle of word are another term of the word tail. They basically refer to position [12], [13]. The word tail refers to the position at the end of word and the head of word refers to the beginning of the word position.

### 3.2 Suffixes in Japanese

Japanese is an agglutinative language. Most words are formed by merging morphemes. One of the agglutinative morphemes is an affix. Types of affixes are prefix, suffix, infix, and confix. The affix morpheme can attach to noun, adjective, or verb. It is indicated in the Harada’s [14] study that suffix *-teki* ‘-ly’ attaches to the noun of *dansei-teki* ‘manly’ and *josei-teki* ‘womanly’. Also, Tsumura [15] proved that the suffix *-kunai* (negative) attaches to adjective of *hen* ‘weird’ on a construction of *henkunai* ‘not weird’. Similarly, Hirano [16] indicated to the suffix of *-ppanashi* (to let), *houdai* (satisfied), *gachi* (easy), etc.

In the Japanese linguistics, aside from the term of *setsubiji*, there is the term of *setsubigo*. Japanese language has short suffixes, such as *-u* phoneme which expresses future tense in the verbs of *ka-u* ‘will buy’ and *oyog-u* ‘will swim’. On the other hand, it has a suffix morpheme with a broad construction beyond its basic morpheme. The suffix is in the form of a compound suffix consisting of several morphemes into one and has a new meaning. For example, in the construction of *tabe-nakerebanaranai* ‘must eat’, it has an imperative grammatical expression from the morpheme of *na-kereba-nara-nai* (negative + conditional + *nara* as the verb + negative). Suffixes that are constructively small are called *setsubiji* and those with the broad construction are called *setsubigo*. It is supported by Tamura [17] who alternately uses the term of *setsubiji* and *setsubigo* in both small and broad constituencies.

The Japanese language uses abundant and productive suffixes, especially in the construction of verb predicates. For instance, the predicate of *arukaseretakunai*

‘does not want to be let walking’ consists of basic morpheme of *aruka-* ‘walking’ + *-se-* (causative) + *-rare-* (passive) + *-taku-* (want) + *-nai* (negative). There are at least four suffixes affixed after the base morphemes.

Roni [18] stated that affixes are qualifiers in the predicate construction. By referring to the study, the qualifiers of the verb predicates in the suffixes include the following table.

**Table 1.** Types of Suffixes in Japanese.

Types of Suffixes	Suffix Examples
Single Suffixes	<i>-ba</i> (conditional)
	<i>-nagara</i> (whilst)
	<i>-hazuda</i> (must be)
	<i>-masu</i> (formal)
	<i>-nai</i> (negative)
	<i>-rareru</i> (passive)
	<i>-saseru</i> (causative)
Compound Suffixes	<i>-tekara</i> (after)
	<i>-temiru</i> (try)
	<i>-kamoshirenai</i> (possibility)
	<i>-naidekudasai</i> (prohibition)
	<i>-nakerebanaranai</i> (imperative)
	<i>-temoii</i> (permission)
Suffixes in rows	<i>-takunai</i> (want; negative)
	<i>-temitakunai</i> (try; want; negative)

All constituents constructing suffixes are able to be divided into three types. Firstly, single suffixes contain of only a single morpheme. Secondly, compound suffixes contain of two or more morphemes and they become a unity that has a new meaning. Indeed, each morpheme meaning constructs to be thinned or even omitted, then unify with the meaning of other morphemes which has a grammatical process to become a unity with the meaning. For instance, the suffix of *-nakerebanaranai* (imperative) contains of morphemes including *-na-* (negative), *-kereba-* (conditional), *-nara-* (become), and *-nai* (negative). Each morpheme with the meaning unites with the others into a compound suffix to be *-nakerebanaranai* and it has a new meaning that is imperative. Thirdly, suffixes in rows are different from the compound suffixes

because each meaning of the suffixes is independent. The existence of some morphemes are in rows, but the meaning does not change. For instance, it is showed in the construction of *nomitakunai* ‘I don’t want to drink’. If *nomi-taku-nai* is separated per morpheme with the meaning including (drink-want to-not), Each morpheme meaning would not be changed or even gone because the form and meaning are just in a row.

### 3.3 Concepts of Word Tail and Suffix

There are linguistic terms with the same concept for the use of word tail and suffix. The word tail and suffix are basically similar [2], [6], [7]. On the other hand, researchers used the different concept from the word tail and suffix [19], [20], [21]). Two different concepts are supposed to be given different terms with rules to keep a consistency in morphology theory arrangement. In fact, [19-20] indicates *-i-* in the underlined part construction of *yom-i-masu* ‘read’ as a constituent with neither meaning nor function. In contrast, [22] puts *-i-* as a constituent with either function or purpose for adverb in *secchakuzai* to attach the constituent after and before it.

In addition, Japanese learners usually use verbs to discuss word tails. The verbs of *uru* ‘sell’ and *taberu* ‘eat’ are lexically in the Japanese dictionary. These two verbs have the meaning from the part of *ur-* and *tabe-*, meanwhile *-u* and *-ru* do not have any meaning. They are just being adverb to *ur-* and *tabe-* to be verbs of *uru* and *taberu*. Therefore, *-u* and *-ru* as the word tails. This is proved that it is not only verbs have the word tail, but adjective-*i* (*keiyoushi*), such as *takai* ‘expensive’ and *samui* ‘cold’, have also word tails with *-i* because the meaning are from the part of *taka-* and *samu-* (expensive and cold). Likewise, the suffixes *-rareru* (passive) and *-saseru* (causative). Parts with passive and causative meanings are *-rare-* and *-sase-*. Meanwhile, *-ru* is a word tail as occurs in *taberu* ‘eat’. Due to this, the constituent *-u*, *-ru*, and *-i* are ideal examples of word tails.

Following is an example of suffixes to the construction of *tabesaserarenai* ‘is not let to eat’ consisting of *tabe-sase-rare-nai* which sequentially have the meaning of *eat-(causative)-(passive)-(negative)*. This construction can be dissected as shown below.

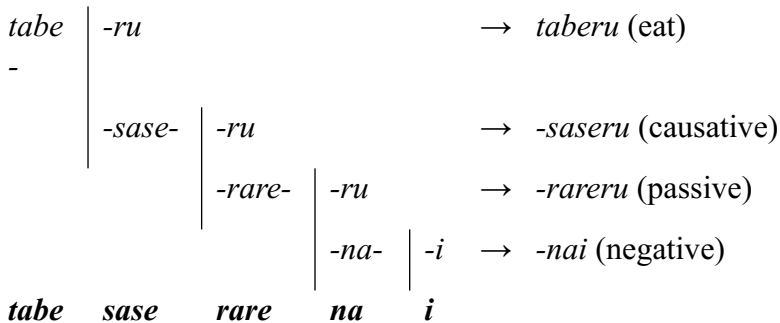


Fig. 1. Construction of *tabesaserarenai*

The construction of *tabesaserarenai* consists of constituent *taberu*, *-saseru*, *-rareru*, and *-nai*. Unchanged parts to the root morphemes include *tabe-*, *-sase-*, *-rare-*, and *-na-*. These constituents have meaning due to the root morphemes; meanwhile, *-ru* and *-i* in the *taberu*, *-saseru*, *-rareru*, and *-nai* have no meaning. The constituent *-ru* and *-i* are considered as the actual word tails.

However, [22] indicates that *-ru* and *-i* are to connect constituent both after and before it. For example, in the construction of *tabesaseru* ‘let to eat’, *-ru* in the *taberu* is omitted: *tabe*∅ (∅ shows that its *-ru* is omitted or being zero). Another example is on the construction of *yomitai* ‘want to read’ and *yomanai* ‘do not read’. The root morpheme that is lexically read in the dictionary is *yomu*. The morpheme of *yom-* and its word tail is *-u*.

On the other hand, there are types of words without word tails include adjective-na (*keiyoudoushi*) and noun. As an example, adjective-na of *bimbou* ‘poor’ and noun of *sensei* ‘teacher’ which both are root morphemes. Also, there are suffixes without word tails, such as conditional suffix *-ba* ‘if’ or *-nagara* ‘whilst’.

It is concluded that the word tails should be distinguished from suffixes. Suffixes are as same as verbs in the aspect of having root morphemes and there are suffixes with an ending part that is the word tail. The word tail is to connect the root verb morpheme at front with the suffix morpheme behind it. This can connect the root suffix morpheme at front with the suffix morpheme behind it as well.

According to the discussion above, types of words with word tails in the Table 1 can be added to the following Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Types of words that have the word tails.

Suffix types	Suffix Examples	Word Tails	
		Existence	Forms
Single Suffix	<i>-ba</i> (conditional)	X	X
	<i>-nagara</i> (whilst)	X	X
	<i>-hazuda</i> (certainty)	O	-da
	<i>-masu</i> (formal)	O	-u
	<i>-nai</i> (negative)	O	-i
	<i>-rareru</i> (passive)	O	-ru
	<i>-saseru</i> (causative)	O	-ru
Compound Suffix	<i>-tekara</i> (after)	X	X
	<i>-temiru</i> (try)	O	-ru
	<i>-kamoshirenai</i> (possibility)	O	-i
	<i>-naidekudasai</i> (prohibition)	O	-i

	<i>-nakerebanaranai</i> (imperative)	O	-i
	<i>-temoi</i> (permission)	O	-i
Verb	<i>taberu</i> (eat)	O	-ru
	<i>uru</i> (sell)	O	-u
Adjective <i>-i</i>	<i>samui</i> (cold)	O	-i
	<i>takai</i> (expensive)	O	-i
Adjective <i>-na</i>	<i>bimboona</i> (poor)	X	X
	<i>kanemochina</i> (rich)	X	X
Noun	<i>sensei</i> (teacher)	X	X
	<i>uma</i> (horse)	X	X

## 4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the word tail in Japanese is very distinctive which other languages do not have any so that it needs to be distinguished by the suffixes. The tails in the words and morphemes can be hypothetically stated as verbs, adjectives, and some suffixes. The word tail is the morpheme that aims to connect between a constituent at front and a word tail at back of the word. It is necessary to continue its study about connectors on types of words that do not have any tails. Because some Japanese words and morphemes have tails and some do not, so it needs to be analysed in further details on other types of words. As well as the *-da* constituent in *hazuda* morphem including *monoda*, *noda*, and others can be positioned as word tails.

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