

## Innovative Morphology: A case of verbal conjugation in Japanese

Natsuko Tsujimura and Stuart Davis  
Indiana University

One of the processes of coinage that Japanese speakers frequently utilize is shortening of loan words, such as *pan-suto* (<pantii sutokkingu “panty stocking”), *seku-hara* (<sekusharu harasumento “sexual harassment”), and *suupaa* (<suupaa maaketto “super market”). Common with the shortening process is a fairly innovative formation of denominal verbs. Examples include *sutabaru* (<Starbucks), *kopiru* (<copy), and *demoru* (<demonstration), and this type of innovative verbs has been increasingly popular. In this paper we will make a number of morphological observations concerning the innovative verbal conjugation, and will claim that the process is such that an output must conform to a specific morphophonological template.

One of the most interesting properties of innovative denominal verbs such as *sutabaru*, *kopiru*, and *demoru* is that while these verbs appear to be vowel-ending, leading to the morphological analysis of *sutaba-ru*, *kopi-ru*, and *demo-ru*, their past tense forms follow the conjugation pattern of consonant-ending roots: *sutabatta*, *kopitta*, and *demotta*. In accounting for this discrepancy, Sato (1975-6, 1985) and de Chene (1985) argue for /r/-epenthesis analyses, but it is left unexplained that there is no source to which the epenthetic /r/ is traced back in the roots of these innovative verbs. Another property of innovative denominal verbs is that the output of shortening of an original word in the present tense cannot end with the moraic nasal, as is shown in *raten* “Latin” + *ru* → *rateru*/\**ratenru*/\**ranru*, and *pinpon* “pingpong” + *ru* → *pinporu*/\**pinru*/\**pinponru*. Furthermore, regardless of the location of the accent in an original word, the accent of the output invariably falls on the root-final mora. This is shown in the gerund forms of denominal verbs since the gerundive suffix *-te* does not influence the location of the accent in verbal roots: *sutabatte*, *kopitte*, *demotte*, *ratette*, and *pinpotte*, all of which have the accent on the vowel before the final geminate, i.e., the root-final position. Based on these and a few additional observations, we shall propose that the formation of innovative verbs undergoes a morphophonological operation whose output must conform to the template of:

\*  
...(C)V(C)V-C]- (, where the asterisk indicates the accent )

### References

- de Chene, Brent (1985) *r*-Epenthesis and the Japanese verb. *Papers in Japanese Linguistics* 10. 172-207.  
Sato, Paul Tosio (1975-76) Loanwords and Japanese verbs. *Papers in Japanese Linguistics* 4. 147-157.  
Sato, Paul Tosio (1985) Denominal verbs with *-r*: A response to de Chene. *Papers in Japanese Linguistics* 10. 149-169.

### List of Technical Terms

Denominal verbs: verbs that are derived from nouns

Moraic nasal: a nasal sound that is considered a single mora on its own; not followed by a vowel (=ん)