

# The Japanese ‘*X wa Y o shiteiru*’ pattern as simple stative expressions

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the Japanese ‘*X wa Y o shiteiru*’ form, which represents the simple state or property of an object. After illustrating the basic features of the linguistic pattern, the paper examines how the pattern is formed by focusing on the conceptualizer’s cognition regarding objects. To conclude, the paper argues that the simple stative interpretation of the pattern derives from the process of subjectification proposed in the field of cognitive grammar.

## 1 Introduction

The Japanese expression in the form of ‘*X wa Y o shiteiru*’ is interpreted in several ways. Typically, a sentence of the pattern describes a progression of some activity or a state, shown respectively in (1) and (2).<sup>1</sup>

(1) *Hanako wa shukudai o shiteiru.*  
Hanako TOP homework ACC do.PROG  
‘Hanako is doing her homework.’

(2) *Taro wa nekutai o shiteiru.*  
Taro TOP necktie ACC do.STAT  
‘Taro is wearing a necktie.’

In this pattern, the continuative form of the verb *suru*, which may be interpreted as ‘do’ or ‘conduct’ in English, and an aspectual component *teiru*, which is used to mark several meanings including the progressive, the resultative state, or the simple state, constitute the predicate of a sentence involving a noun phrase Y.

In addition to the usages above, we also find cases in which a sentence of this pattern is interpreted as describing just a simple state or a property

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<sup>1</sup> Although (2) can also be interpreted as progressive aspect, ‘Taro is putting on a necktie’, we are not concerned with this interpretation here.

of the referent (cf. Kageyama 1990, 2004, 2009; Moriyama et al. 2015; Onishi 2016; Sato 2003; Sawada 2003, 2012; Tsujioka 2002; Tsunoda 2009), as in (3).

- (3) *Kanojo wa aoi me o shiteiru.*  
she TOP blue eye ACC do.STAT  
Lit. 'She is doing blue eyes.'  
'She has blue eyes.'

What is indicated in (3) is the physical attribute, *aoi me* 'blue eyes', of the referent, *kanojo* 'she'. I call this type of expression the simple stative 'X wa Y o *shiteiru*' pattern.

It has been pointed out in previous studies that sentences of this type do not have aspectually unmarked counterparts of the form 'X wa Y o *suru*', such as shown in (4).

- (4) \**Kanojo wa aoi me o suru.*  
she TOP blue eye ACC do  
Lit. 'She does blue eyes.'

This shows that the simple stative interpretation of the pattern is realized only in the *shiteiru* form. It has also been pointed out that the noun phrase Y must be accompanied by a modifier, otherwise the sentence is inappropriate, as seen in (5).

- (5) \**Kanojo wa me o shiteiru.*  
she top eyes ACC do.STAT  
Lit. 'She is doing eyes.'

This indicates that the simple stative 'X wa Y o *shiteiru*' pattern requires elements that characterize the noun in Y. Thus, the Japanese 'X wa Y o *shiteiru*' pattern has a unique usage that expresses a simple state of the referent. We can find a variety of examples of this type of sentence, as in (6).

- (6) a. *Hanako wa kireina yubi o shiteiru.*  
Hanako TOP beautiful finger ACC do.STAT  
Lit. 'Hanako is doing beautiful fingers.'  
'Hanako has beautiful fingers.'
- b. *Taro wa takumashii karada o shiteiru.*  
Taro TOP sturdy body ACC do.STAT  
Lit. 'Taro is doing sturdy body.'  
'Taro has a sturdy body.'
- c. *Sensei wa odayakana seikaku o shiteiru.*  
Teacher TOP calm personality ACC do. STAT  
Lit. '(Our) teacher is doing calm personality.'

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‘(Our) teacher has a calm personality.’

d. *Kono gurasu wa kawatta katachi o shiteiru.*  
this glass TOP peculiar shape ACC do. STAT

Lit. ‘This glass is doing peculiar shape.’  
‘This glass has a peculiar shape.’

e. *Kono kimono wa azayakana iro o shiteiru.*  
This kimono TOP brilliant colour ACC do. STAT

Lit. ‘This kimono is doing brilliant colour.’  
‘The colour of this kimono is brilliant.’

f. *Itachi wa neko kuraino ookisa o shiteiru.*  
weasel TOP cat about size ACC do. STAT

Lit. ‘A weasel is doing about the size of a cat.’  
‘A weasel is about as large as a cat.’

As shown in these examples, a sentence of the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern describes what the referent is like by referring to its body parts, structure, personality, or other attributes such as its shape, color, or size. Following Sato (2003), I also regard expressions in the attributive form ‘Y o shiteiru X’ as examples of the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern here.

An interesting point here is that a state or a property of the referent is described in terms of the verb *suru*, which typically represents an action or activity of the subject of the sentence. This paper aims to reveal how the simple stative interpretation is established in the ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern by focusing on a conceptualizer’s cognition.

## 2 The conditions on the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern

To reveal the mechanism of the formation of the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern, let us first examine the conditions on the pattern.

### 2.1 A conventional view

Sato (2003) examines the conditions on what I call the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern by observing a wide variety of examples. According to Sato, the sentences of the pattern describe only an “inherent attribute” of the referent, which Sato defines as “an innate attribute of X which is always possessed by X and cannot be assigned to X extrinsically subsequent to X’s origin” (Sato 2003: 22). According to Sato, entities such as a mole, a lump, a freckle, or wrinkles are not regarded as one’s innate attributes, and these cannot be described in the pattern. Sato claims that the sentence in (7), for example, instantiates this.

- (7) \**Hanako wa kurokute ookina hokuro o shiteiru.*  
Hanako TOP black big mole ACC do.STAT  
Lit. ‘Hanako is doing black big mole.’

Thus, in Sato’s (2003) view, the simple stative ‘*X wa Y o shiteiru*’ pattern is appropriate only when describing some “inborn” element.

Supporting Sato’s (2003) suggestion, Kageyama (2004) argues that the condition of the simple stative ‘*X wa Y o shiteiru*’ pattern can be explained from a perspective of the semantic-syntactic structure of the noun in the position of Y. In Kageyama’s (2004) explanation, since an inborn body part such as a finger is regarded as developed through the changes of one’s body in the womb, the owner of the body part, for example *Hanako* in (6a), can be assumed as the subject of a change event. Accordingly, the owner of those body part can be the subject of the sentence in the pattern in question. On the other hand, we cannot assume a human as a subject of change behind the formation of “acquired objects” such as a mole because those objects are generated from nothing. As a result, the owner of such an object cannot be put in the subject position of a sentence in the pattern. This is why, according to Kageyama (2009), a sentence such as (7) is inappropriate.

In this way, the simple stative ‘*X wa Y o shiteiru*’ pattern is thought to be appropriate only when describing an inherent property of the referent in Sato’s (2003) view. Kageyama’s (2004) argument, which focuses on the semantic-syntactic structure of the noun in the position of Y in the pattern, offers a theoretical explanation of this view.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2 An alternative view

Contrary to Sato’s (2003) view, Moriyama et al. (2015) suggest that a sentence that refers to an acquired object such as a mole can be appropriate under some conditions. For example, Moriyama et al. point out that (8) may be appropriate when we judge someone’s mole in the context of comparing several people’s moles.

- (8) *Kanojo wa kawaii hokuro o shiteiru.*<sup>3</sup>  
She TOP charming mole ACC do.STAT  
Lit. ‘She is doing a charming mole.’  
‘She has a charming mole.’

(Moriyama et al. 2015: 166)

From this perspective, Moriyama et al. claim that the formation of the pattern depends on a general pragmatic condition, which can be summarized as whether the nominal element in the position of Y is valid as depicting a referent’s characteristic feature. As a matter of fact, we can find actual examples of expressions as in (9) on the Internet.

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<sup>2</sup> Kageyama (2004) only takes up examples that refer to animate objects. However, Kageyama’s (2004) argument should also apply to sentences that refer to inanimate objects because the study is based on Sato (2003), which treats both animate and inanimate objects.

<sup>3</sup> This example is originally shown in Sato (2003) as an unnatural sentence.

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(9) a. *Ii hokuro shite-masu ne.*<sup>4</sup>  
 fine mole do.STAT-POL-SFP  
 Lit. '(X) is doing a fine mole.'  
 '(X) has a fine mole.'

b. *Ookina hokuro o shiteiru ookuno josei wa*  
 big mole ACC do.STAT many woman TOP  
*nayandei-masu.*<sup>5</sup>  
 worry.STAT-POL  
 Lit. 'Many women who is doing a big mole are suffering from that.'  
 'Many women who have a big mole are suffering from that.'

These sentences are appropriate even though they refer to a mole in the form of 'X wa Y o shiteiru' or 'Y o shiteiru X'. This appears to show that the simple stative interpretation of the 'X wa Y o shiteiru' pattern is not rigidly restricted by an inherent attribute of the referent, as is pointed out by Moriyama et al. (2015).

Moreover, the sentences in (10) appropriately describe an "acquired attribute" of the referent in the form of 'X wa Y o shiteiru'.<sup>6</sup>

(10) a. *Taro wa shiretsukyousei no-okage-de kireina*  
 Taro TOP orthodontics thanks.to even  
*hanarabi o shiteiru.*  
 dentition ACC do.STAT  
 Lit. 'Taro is doing even dentition thanks to orthodontics.'  
 'Taro has a regular set of teeth thanks to orthodontic treatment.'

b. *Hanako wa seikeishujyutsu no-okage-de hutae-mabuta*  
 Hanako TOP plastic.surgery thanks.to double-eyelid  
*o shiteiru.*  
 ACC do.STAT  
 Lit. 'Hanako is doing double eyelid thanks to plastic surgery.'  
 'Hanako has double eyelids thanks to the plastic surgery.'

c. *Ano ragubii senshu wa hagesii renshuu no-sei-de*  
 that rugby player TOP hard training due.to  
*sugoi gyouza-mimi o shiteiru.*  
 terrible cauliflower.ear ACC do.STAT  
 Lit. 'That rugby player is doing terrible cauliflower ears due to a hard training.'  
 'That rugby player has terrible cauliflower ears due to a hard

<sup>4</sup> [https://twitter.com/\\_haru562/statuses/837933223132815360](https://twitter.com/_haru562/statuses/837933223132815360)

<sup>5</sup> <http://etudiante-coquine.com/>

<sup>6</sup> My informants, three native speakers of Japanese, all judged each of these sentences as completely natural.

training.’

In these sentences, (10a) *kireina hanarabi* ‘a regular set of teeth’, (10b) *hutaе-mabuta* ‘double eyelids’, and (10c) *gyouza-mimi* ‘cauliflower ears’ are all acquired or developed attributes or traits, not inherent ones. These sentences are completely natural notwithstanding the fact that they do not refer to innate properties of the referent.

Furthermore, there are various examples that seem to describe the “extrinsic attribute” of the referent in terms of our sensory perception.

- (11) a. *Kono koohii wa sanmi-no-tsuyoi aji o shiteiru.*  
 this coffee TOP acid.strong taste ACC do.STAT  
 Lit. ‘This coffee is doing a strong acid taste.’  
 ‘This coffee has a strong acid taste.’
- b. *Kono sekken wa bara noyouna kaori o shiteiru*  
 this soap TOP rose like smell ACC do.STAT  
 Lit. ‘This soap is doing a smell like roses.’  
 ‘This soap has a smell like roses.’
- c. *Kono purin wa namerakana shitazawari o shiteiru.*  
 this pudding TOP smooth tongue.feel ACC do.STAT  
 Lit. ‘This pudding is doing a smooth feeling on the tongue.’  
 ‘This pudding has a smooth feeling on the tongue.’

Of course, the taste, smell, or feel of an object derives from its components or composition. However, the characterization of an individual object in terms of its taste, smell, or feel is fundamentally based on how we evaluate the object through our perception. Therefore, it may be reasonable to think that a property such as (11a) *sanmi-no-tsuyoi aji* ‘a strong acid taste’, (11b) *bara noyouna nioi* ‘a smell like roses’, or (11c) *namerakana shitazawari* ‘a smooth feeling on the tongue’ is extrinsically attributed to a specific (11a) *koohii* ‘coffee’, (11b) *sekken* ‘soap’, or (11c) *purin* (pudding) based on the speaker’s perceptual evaluation of these objects. Similarly, we can also find examples that describe the characteristic feature of the referent in terms of our bodily sensation.

- (12) a. *Kono ringo wa shakishakishita hagotae o shiteiru.*  
 this apple TOP crispy chewiness ACC do.STAT  
 Lit. ‘This apple is doing a crispy texture.’  
 ‘This apple has a crispy texture.’
- b. *Kono wain wa maroyakana kuchiatari o shiteiru.*  
 this wine TOP mellow palate.feel ACC do.STAT  
 Lit. ‘This wine is doing a well-rounded palate.’  
 ‘This wine has a well-rounded palate.’

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- c. *Kono taoru wa fuwafuwano tezawari o shiteiru.*  
this towel TOP fluffy touch.feel ACC do.STAT  
Lit. ‘This towel is doing a fluffy touch.’  
‘This towel has a fluffy touch.’

In these sentences, a property such as (12a) *shakishakishita hagotae* ‘a crispy texture’, (12b) *maroyakana kuchiatari* ‘a well-rounded palate’, and (12c) *fuwafuwano sawarigokochi* ‘a fluffy touch’ is attributed to each object based on our sensory evaluation. Thus, what is stated in each sentence in (11) and (12) is not an inherent attribute of the object, but an attribute given to the referent based on our sense of taste, smell, touch, or other types of physical sensation.

As seen here, the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern does not necessarily refer to an inherent attribute of the referent. Instead, the pattern seems to reflect the point we focus on and how we evaluate the referent when characterizing it. From this view, I suggest that the formation of the pattern depends on how the speaker construes and evaluates the object, rather than on the intrinsic properties of the object.

### 3 The semantic mechanism behind the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern

Based on the view presented in the previous section, let us now examine how the meaning of a state or a property of the referent came to be realized with the verb *suru* in the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern.

#### 3.1 On the meaning of ‘*suru*’ in the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ sentence

As mentioned before, what is interesting in the pattern in question is that a state or a property of some object is described in terms of the verb *suru* even though the verb typically expresses an activity of the subject. How then can we explain the mechanism behind this phenomenon? Regarding this issue, Tsunoda (2009) takes up several usages of *suru* and argues that the morphological, semantic, and syntactic properties of the verb are continuous between usages such as shown in (13) and (14).

- (13) *Taro wa nekutai o shiteiru.*  
Taro TOP necktie ACC do.RES  
‘Taro is wearing a necktie.’

- (14) *Taro wa akarui seikaku o shiteiru.*  
Taro TOP bright character ACC do.STAT  
‘Taro has a cheerful personality.’

According to Tsunoda (2009), *suru* is interpreted as representing “wearing” something in (13), while the verb represents “possession” of some property

in (14). (13) is interpreted as representing the resultative state of subject's putting on a necktie and (14) is describing the simple state of subject's possessing a certain character.<sup>7</sup> (14) corresponds to what we call the simple stative 'X *wa* Y *o shiteiru*' sentence. Tsunoda (2009) suggests that these two types of *suru* have a connection in some way, even though some differences are found between the two.

Although Tsunoda (2009) does not clearly show the relationship between the usages of *suru* in (13) and (14), I basically support Tsunoda's view, which supposes some connection between the two types. From this standpoint, I suggest that the simple stative meaning of the 'X *wa* Y *o shiteiru*' form derives from the original meaning of *suru*, which represents activity or agentivity of a subject, through the process of "subjectification" proposed in cognitive grammar.

### **3.2 The notion of subjectification**

Subjectification is a phenomenon which is briefly explained as the surfacing of a "subjective meaning" of a linguistic expression as a result of the recession of its objective meaning (cf. Langacker 1990, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2008). Langacker (1998) defines this as follows:<sup>8</sup>

Subjectification is the "laying bare" of conceptual operations which are immanent in the original lexical meanings and in that sense constitute their "deepest" property. (Langacker 1998: 88)

One example of subjectification is presented in (15). Let us see the meaning of *across* in each sentence below.

- (15) a. The child hurried across the busy street.  
b. The child is safely across the street.  
c. You need to send a letter? There's a mailbox across the street.  
d. A number of shops are conveniently located just across the street.  
e. Last night there was an altercation right across the street.  
(Langacker 1998: 75)

According to Langacker (1998), the meanings of *across* in (15a-15e) are respectively described as follows:

- (15') a. profiled objective movement by subject  
b. static location resulting from unprofiled, past, actual movement of subject  
c. static location as goal of unprofiled, envisaged, future movement

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<sup>7</sup> (13) can also be interpreted as representing the progression of the subject's activity.

<sup>8</sup> Originally subjectification was characterized as "the realignment of some relationship from the objective axis to subjective axis" (cf. Langacker 1990). The view offered here is a revised version.

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- of addressee
  - d. static location as goal of potential movement by a generalized or generic individual
  - e. static location, no physical movement implied
- (Langacker 1998: 75)

Here, an objective mover and its movement lose prominence as we move from (15a) to (15e), until any physical movement has faded away entirely. As a result, only the conceptualizer’s mental trace along a path to specify the subject’s location stands alone. This kind of gradual process of semantic attenuation, or surfacing of our mental operation, is what is called subjectification. Based on this view, the semantic extension of *across* from (15a) to (15e) is explained as subjectification of “physical movement” (Langacker 1998).

Another case of subjectification is observed in the semantic extension of *have* as instantiated in (16).<sup>9</sup>

- (16) a. Watch out—he has a gun!
- b. I have an electric drill, though I never use it.
- c. They have a good income from judicious investments.
- d. She often has migraine headache.
- e. He has a lot of freckles.

(Langacker 1999: 183)

In (16), the meaning of *have* ranges from immediate physical control (16a); to ownership with the possibility of physical access (16b); to more abstract kinds of ownership (16c); to situations where the subject interacts with the object in any way controlling it (16d); to instances where the subject’s role is limited to its reference point function (16e). According to Langacker (1999), the subject of the sentence plays a role as a reference point for establishing mental contact with the object in the *have* construction in (16). In the semantic extension from (16a) to (16e), the subject’s “immediate physical control” of objects is gradually stripped away until only the mental contact from the subject to the object that associates the two elements is left. Thus, varying degrees of attenuation of immediate physical control are supposed behind the semantic development of *have* in (16).

As shown in the case of *across* and *have*, subjectification is a series of processes of semantic change in which the fundamental meaning of a lexical item is actualized with the attenuation of its objective meaning. Langacker claims that subjectification plays an important role in various types of semantic change and grammaticalization.

### 3.3 Subjectification of ‘*suru*’ in the ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern

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<sup>9</sup> See also Heine (1997) and Hayase (2002) on this issue.

The simple stative interpretation of the ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern is also considered to have been established through the process of subjectification. As seen in the previous subsection, English *have* has developed varying degrees of subjective uses. Langacker (1995) shows (17) as an example of the subjective use of the verb.<sup>10</sup>

(17) I have brown eyes.

(Langacker 1995: 64)

What is described in (17) is a property of the subject. In this sentence, *have* represents a part-whole relationship between the subject and object based on the conceptualizer’s mental trace from the subject to the object. The subject’s physical control on the object is thought to have attenuated in this sentence (cf. Langacker 1995). Interestingly, this type of sentence is often translated as a simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ sentence in Japanese. For example, one dictionary interprets the English sentences in (18) as Japanese sentences with the ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ form as shown in the parentheses.<sup>11</sup>

(18) a. Annie has blue eyes.

(*Anii wa aoi me o shiteiru.*)

b. Mary has silken hair.

(*Mearii wa kinu noyouna kami o shiteimasu.*)

c. She has such a pretty face.

(*Kanojo wa totemo kawaii kao o shiteiru.*)

This suggests that the simple stative interpretation of the ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern derives from a semantic attenuation of the verb *suru* similar to the case of the development of *have* in (17).

What aspect, then, is attenuated in the semantic change of *suru* here? Let us consider this issue with examples (1), (2), and (3).

(1) *Hanako wa shukudai o shiteiru.*

‘Hanako is doing her homework.’

(2) *Taro wa nekutai o shiteiru.*

‘Taro is wearing a necktie.’

(3) *Kanojo wa aoi me o shiteiru.*

‘She has blue eyes.’

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<sup>10</sup> Langacker (1995) says that (17) is the case in which “the subject is little more than a reference point for locating the objects” (Langacker 1995: 64). This means that (17) has the same status as (16e).

<sup>11</sup> From Unabridged Genius English-Japanese Dictionary (Konishi Tomoshichi, Minamide Kosei and Taishukan shoten)

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The sentence in (1) describes the progression of physical activity, and *suru* represents the action of “putting on” here. What is described in (2) is a resultative state of physical activity, and *suru* represents the state of “wearing” in this sentence. In these two types of sentences, *suru* represents an active meaning, and they have aspectually unmarked counterparts, such as shown in (19).

- (19) a. *Hanako wa yuushoku-mae ni shukudai o suru.*  
Hanako TOP dinner.before LOC homework ACC do  
‘Hanako does her homework before having dinner.’
- b. *Taro wa shigoto no-toki nekutai o suru.*  
Taro TOP job when necktie ACC do  
‘Taro wears a necktie when he is on duty.’

On the other hand, the sentence in (3) simply describes an attribute of the subject and the active meaning is entirely absent in *suru* here. For this reason, this type of sentence does not have aspectually unmarked counterparts, as shown in (4).

- (4) \**Kanojo wa aoi me o suru.*

Here, the referent is conceptualized as if it were actively or autonomously maintaining or possessing its characteristic property. In short, in this type of sentence, the state or property of the subject is described on the basis of a subjectively induced interpretation of referent’s agentivity by the conceptualizer. This is why the meaning of a state or a property of the referent is realized with the verb *suru* in the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern even though no actual activity is assumed behind the situation.

As I explained before, subjectification of *have* in (17) is characterized as attenuation of “physical control” of the subject. In the case of the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern, what is supposed to be attenuated is the physical activity or agentivity of the subject. In this case, the subject of the sentence is thought to function as a “false agent” even though it is not an agent performing some actual activity. Based on this view, I propose that the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern developed through subjectification of activity or agentivity of the subject.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.4 Examples that support our view

The following examples, which describe the attributes of inanimate objects in the form of ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’, seem to show that our view is correct.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Kageyama (2009) points out that a sentence of the simple stative ‘X wa Y o shiteiru’ pattern has a low transitivity at the sentence level (Kageyama 2009: 15-17). In my view, this results from attenuation of the activity or agentivity of *suru* in this usage through the process of subjectification.

<sup>13</sup> Although these are my examples, they all originate in actual examples on the Internet. In fact, we can find a wide variety of examples of this type.

- (20) a. *Ano kuruma wa marui me o shiteiru.*  
that car TOP round eye ACC do.STAT  
Lit. 'That car is doing round eyes.'  
'That car has round eyes (=headlight).'
- b. *Sono wain botoru wa nade-gata o shiteiru.*  
the wine bottle TOP sloping-shoulder ACC do.STAT  
Lit. 'The wine bottle is doing sloping shoulders.'  
'The wine bottle has sloping shoulders.'
- c. *Kono neji wa rokkakkei-no atama o shiteiru.*  
this screw TOP hexagon head ACC do.STAT  
Lit. 'This screw is doing a hexagonal head.'  
'This screw has a hexagonal head.'

According to Kageyama (1990) and Sato (2003), a sentence referring to a part of an inanimate object is inappropriate in the simple stative 'X wa Y o *shiteiru*' pattern, which is shown in examples below (Kageyama 1990: 25).<sup>14</sup>

- (21) a. \**Sono ie wa akai yane o shiteita.*  
the house TOP red roof ACC do.STAT.PST  
Lit. 'The house was doing a red roof.'
- b. \**Sono hon wa katai hyoushi o shiteiru.*  
the book TOP hard cover ACC do.STAT  
Lit. 'The book is doing a hard cover.'

To be sure, the examples in (21) are both quite unnatural. However, the sentences in example (20) are all appropriate even though they describe the attributes of inanimate objects by referring to their constituent parts. Notice here that these sentences refer to a part of a referent as if it were a human or animal body part. This means that part of an inanimate object can be appropriately described in the simple stative 'X wa Y o *shiteiru*' pattern when the object is compared to a living thing. From this fact, it seems reasonable to suppose that the simple stative interpretation of the pattern is based on the vestige of activity of the verb *suru* that remains after a process of subjectification.

## 4 Conclusion

This paper discussed the Japanese linguistic pattern that represents the simple state or property of an object in the 'X wa Y o *shiteiru*' form. First, in

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<sup>14</sup> Regarding this issue, Sato (2003) claims that a sentence such as *Ano kuruma wa akai bodi o shiteiru* 'That car has a red body.' is "obviously inappropriate" (Sato 2003: 28, 32). As a matter of fact, however, we readily find actual examples that describe the body of a car in the form 'X wa Y o *shiteiru*' on the Internet.

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Section 1, I introduced a case in which the Japanese 'X wa Y o shiteiru' pattern is interpreted as representing a simple state of the referent. Second, in Section 2, I examined the condition of the formation of the pattern. I pointed out that the formation of the pattern is not determined by the intrinsic nature of the object, but by the speaker's construal and evaluation of the object. I then examined the semantic mechanism giving rise to the simple stative 'X wa Y o shiteiru' pattern in Section 3. I proposed that the simple stative interpretation of the pattern is realized through the attenuation of the meaning of activity or agentivity of the subject, which is regarded as a process of subjectification. From what has been discussed in this paper, I claim that the simple stative interpretation of the 'X wa Y o shiteiru' pattern is realized through the conceptualizer's subjective interpretation of the referent and the backgrounding of the active meaning of the verb *suru*. Thus, in order to provide an adequate explanation of the emergence of the linguistic pattern in question, it is advantageous to take into account the subjective interpretation of objects and events.

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