

Verbal Predicate Constructions in Japanese: The Relationship between Verb Roots and Suffixes

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This study examines the relationship between verb roots and suffixes in Japanese predicate constructions. Data are drawn from the second editions of the textbooks *Minna no Nihongo Shokyū* I and II. A qualitative descriptive approach is adopted, using document analysis, morpheme segmentation, and paradigmatic comparison. Data were purposively selected from verb-form summary tables and instructional sections illustrating suffix functions in context. The analysis distinguishes consonant-final and vowel-final roots, including /i/ and /e/ subtypes. The findings show that root class determines allomorph selection and morphophonemic alternations, whereas suffixes encode tense, polarity, politeness, ability, voice, volition, and interclausal relations. Suffixation can also produce new stems that serve as bases for subsequent formation. This regularity does not imply that every sequence has transparent morpheme boundaries or permits a literal translation. Constructions involving auxiliary verbs and adjective-forming suffixes require categorical distinctions. The study provides a mapping linking root classes, suffix realisations, and grammatical functions. This mapping offers a basis for teaching that explains relationships among forms while acknowledging the limitations of pedagogical data for generalisations about Japanese usage as a whole.

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Introduction

Japanese verbal predicates exhibit a close relationship between lexical meaning and grammatical information. A verb can retain its lexical identity while its ending changes to express

tense, negation, ability, or the speaker's orientation towards the addressee. Knowledge of vocabulary alone is therefore insufficient for understanding predication. Readers need to identify the component supplying the basic

meaning, the component expressing grammatical categories, and the constraints governing their combination. This relationship is particularly important in teaching Japanese as a foreign language, especially when different forms are introduced progressively through textbooks.

In this article, root refers to the lexical element used as the basis for paradigmatic comparison. Stem refers to a base that can take a subsequent element and may include the output of an earlier formation. The two sometimes coincide but are not invariably identical. A suffix, in turn, is a bound element following a base. These operational definitions are necessary because Japanese writing does not automatically reveal morpheme boundaries. Kana represent sound units that may cross the analytical boundary between root and suffix. Segmentation therefore cannot be performed simply by counting characters or deleting the final kana (de Chene, 2016).

The distinction between consonant and vowel roots provides a convenient means of relating verb forms. The status of these representations nevertheless remains a theoretical issue. Nasukawa (2010) proposes an analysis that rejects consonant-final stems in phonological representation. Such differences show that similar surface forms can be explained through different assumptions. This article explicitly adopts consonant-root and vowel-root analyses as descriptive tools, without treating them as the only possible mental representations.

The relationship between roots and suffixes also concerns the organisation of grammar. In Distributed Morphology, word formation is related to syntactic structure and the realisation of functional elements (Siddiqi, 2010). Research on Japanese complex predicates, meanwhile, shows that morphological and syntactic units do not always correspond straightforwardly (Iida & Sells, 2008). These approaches caution against identifying every element following a verb as a suffix. Sequences containing connectives, auxiliary verbs, particles, or copulas must be analysed according to their respective structures.

The ordering of bound elements also requires explanation. Cross-linguistic research relates affix ordering to phonological information, morphological constraints, syntactic structure, and semantic scope (Manova & Aronoff, 2010; Rice, 2011). Berg (2025) examines verbal morpheme order from a typological perspective, while Hahn et al. (2022) relate it to processing efficiency. These frameworks help formulate questions about how elements close to the root modify the base of predication and how subsequent elements add information. Textbook data alone, however, do not permit direct testing of these processing hypotheses.

From a learning perspective, formal regularity does not guarantee uniform ease of acquisition. Research on learners of Japanese reveals processing differences across conjugation classes (Yi et al., 2023). Studies of child acquisition likewise demonstrate the importance of input frequency and morphophonological complexity (Tatsumi et al., 2018a). These findings support explanations that relate rules to examples, but they do not justify transferring first-language acquisition findings directly to adult Indonesian learners. Acquisition research is used here as an interpretive context rather than as evidence for the effectiveness of a teaching method.

Minna no Nihongo was selected because its two volumes present basic and more advanced forms in a connected pedagogical sequence. Summary tables permit comparisons among forms of the same lexeme, while lesson examples illustrate their use. The textbooks can thus be treated as instructional documents amenable to linguistic analysis. The data remain pedagogical materials constructed by the textbook authors; they are not treated as samples of spontaneous conversation or as measures of usage frequency in the community.

The study is restricted to regular consonant-root and vowel-root verbs in the standard Japanese presented in the two textbooks. Irregular verbs, specialised honorific paradigms, and lexically exceptional forms are excluded from the core generalisations. The research questions are: what root types are found; what suffix types and

functions accompany them; and how do root class, formal alternations, and suffix ordering build predicates? The contribution lies in an integrated mapping of root classes, suffix allomorphs, derived stems, and the boundaries of complex constructions, supported by verifiable data codes and source locations. This contribution is analytical and pedagogical; it does not claim that the root or suffix classifications themselves are newly discovered.

2. Methods

The study adopts a qualitative descriptive design based on document analysis. Its primary sources are *Minna no Nihongo Shokyū I* and *Minna no Nihongo Shokyū II*. The analysis centres on the *Dōshi no fōmu* ('verb forms') tables on printed page 229 of Volume I and pages 222–223 of Volume II. Contextual data are drawn from Lessons 4, 13, and 44. This selection provides coverage of diverse categories without claiming an exhaustive count of all verb tokens in the two volumes (Three A Network, 2012, 2013).

Regularity must also be delimited at the level of individual forms. The source table includes *いく* *iku* 'go', alongside *いった* *itta* 'went' and *いって* *itte* 'go and ...' (X01, exception data; Three A Network, 2012, p. 229). Although this lexeme is conventionally assigned to Group I, its past and connective forms do not follow the productive /k/-final pattern illustrated by D01. This

exception is excluded from the core generalisations without revising the classification of Group I as a whole. Similarly, the presence of Group III in the source tables does not warrant its inclusion in the regular-verb sample. These restrictions prevent the term regular from obscuring known exceptions.

The unit of analysis is a paradigm or a predicate fragment with explicitly defined boundaries. A single code may therefore encompass several forms of the same lexeme. The number of codes is not equivalent to the number of lexemes, suffixes, or occurrences in the textbooks. The sample comprises nine consonant-root paradigms, two vowel-root paradigms, three paradigm extensions, and six predicate fragments. Purposive selection was used to illustrate contrasts in root class, morphophonemic variation, and category change rather than to calculate the predominance of particular types.

Codes take the form MNN-I-229-D01 or MNN-II-223-D12. The first component identifies the textbook series, the Roman numeral identifies the volume, the following number identifies the printed page, and D identifies the analytical data item. For ease of reading, the discussion uses abbreviated forms such as D01. These codes were devised by the researcher.

Table 1. Data register and source locations

Code	Unit examined	Printed location
MNN-I-229-D01–D09	Paradigms of <i>kaku</i> , <i>isogu</i> , <i>yasumu</i> , <i>yobu</i> , <i>shinu</i> , <i>tsukuru</i> , <i>tsukau</i> , <i>motsu</i> , and <i>naosu</i>	I, 229, verb-form table
MNN-I-229-D10–D11	Paradigms of <i>taberu</i> and <i>miru</i>	I, 229, verb-form table
MNN-II-223-D12–D14	Further forms of <i>kaku</i> , <i>taberu</i> , and <i>miru</i>	II, 223, verb-form table
MNN-I-034-D15	Four polite forms of <i>yasumu</i>	I, 34, Lesson 4, Practice A7

Code	Unit examined	Printed location
MNN-I-116-D16	<i>Tabetai</i> in a completed gap-fill example	I, 116, Lesson 13, Exercise 3, example
MNN-II-154-D17	<i>Nomisugimashita</i>	II, 154, Lesson 44, Sentence Pattern 1
MNN-II-154-D18	<i>Tsukaiyasui</i>	II, 154, Lesson 44, Sentence Pattern 2
MNN-II-154-D19	<i>Warenikui</i>	II, 154, Lesson 44, Example Sentence 4
MNN-II-154-D20	<i>Naite iru</i> in a question	II, 154, Lesson 44, Example Sentence 1

The scanned pages were inspected visually. Japanese forms were transcribed without furigana, and pedagogical spacing was normalised. The kana forms in the tables were retained to avoid introducing unnecessary orthographic interpretations. Surface forms are romanised using Hepburn, whereas analytical representations use forms such as *kak-*, *mot-*, and *tsukan-*. Hyphens indicate morpheme boundaries, and slashes enclose sound segments. English translations of subjectless forms are provided as predicate equivalents, thereby avoiding the invention of agents or sentential contexts.

The analysis compared dictionary, polite, negative, past, and connective forms. Invariant and alternating material was compared to identify roots and suffix realisations. The resulting analysis was then checked against potential, volitional, imperative, conditional, passive, and causative forms. Derived forms were reanalysed as stems for subsequent suffixation. Morphophonological research was used to constrain segmentation interpretations, particularly because different representations may yield the same surface forms (de Chene, 2016; Nasukawa, 2010).

Validation involved rechecking forms, codes, locations, and consistency across paradigms. The study did not involve a second annotator, processing experiments, or measurements of learning outcomes. Connections with acquisition are therefore presented as pedagogical considerations. The findings of Tatsumi and Pine (2016), Tatsumi et al. (2018b), and Tatsumi et al. (2021) are used to demonstrate the importance of input patterns and formal representations; neither factor is measured here.

3. Results

3.1 Verb root types and the distribution of their forms

Paradigmatic comparison yields two principal classes. The first has consonant-final roots and corresponds to Group I, or godan. The second has vowel-final roots and corresponds to Group II, or ichidan. The term ‘root’ is used operationally at the level of the lexemes compared, rather than as a claim that no base can undergo further derivational analysis. The following table presents the types, examples, romanisations, English meanings, and source codes.

Table 2. Root types in the regular-verb data

Class and subtype	Analytical root	Textbook form and romanisation	English translation	Data
Consonant /k/	kak-	かく, kaku	write	D01
Consonant /g/	isog-	いそぐ, isogu	hurry	D02
Consonant /m/	yasum-	やすむ, yasumu	rest; take time off	D03
Consonant /b/	yob-	よぶ, yobu	call	D04
Consonant /n/	shin-	しぬ, shinu	die	D05
Consonant /r/	tsukur-	つくる, tsukuru	make	D06
Consonant /w/	tsukaw-	つかう, tsukau	use	D07
Consonant /t/	mot-	もつ, motsu	hold; carry	D08
Consonant /s/	naos-	なおす, naosu	repair; correct	D09
Vowel /e/	tabe-	たべる, taberu	eat	D10
Vowel /i/	mi-	みる, miru	see; watch	D11

Source for Table 2: Three A Network (2012, p. 229). The nine consonant subtypes represent variation within a single conjugation class, while /i/ and /e/ are subtypes of a single vowel class.

With consonant roots, the ending of the dictionary form includes both lexical material and a grammatical marker. D01 presents かく *kaku* ‘write’; かきます *kakimasu* ‘write, polite’; がかかない *kakanai* ‘do not write’; かいた *kaita* ‘wrote’; and かい *kaite* ‘write’. This comparison supports the root *kak-*, although its final consonant is not always realised without change. The vowels preceding the polite

and negative elements differ, while combinations with past or connective elements produce forms that depart further from mechanical concatenation. Regularity must be formulated across the paradigm as a whole.

The /g/ subtype parallels /k/ but differs in its voiced outputs. In D02, いそいだ *isoida* ‘hurried’ corresponds to いそいで *isoide* ‘hurry’. The /m/, /b/, and /n/ subtypes form another morphophonemic group: D03 やすんだ *yasunda* ‘rested’; D04 よんだ *yonda* ‘called’; and D05 しんだ *shinda* ‘died’. Their shared nasal output does not mean that the three roots have the same final

consonant. Their identities are distinguished by the negative and dictionary forms, so analysing a single form in isolation can be misleading.

The /r/, /w/, and /t/ subtypes all exhibit gemination in certain past forms. D06 つくった *tsukutta* ‘made’; D07 つかった *tsukatta* ‘used’; and D08 もった *motta* ‘held’ have superficially similar outputs despite differences in their root-final segments. The representation *tsukaw-* is adopted because /w/ surfaces in the negative environment, although the dictionary form is *tsukau*. For *mot-*, the surface romanisation *motsu* reflects the altered realisation of /t/ before /u/. Orthographic forms thus do not always directly reveal the identity of root segments.

The /s/ subtype retains a different pattern in the same environment. D09 presents なおした *naoshita* ‘repaired’ and なおして *naoshite* ‘repair’. The unit *shi* in surface romanisation corresponds to /s/ and its accompanying vowel in the morphophonemic analysis. This difference explains why all godan verbs cannot be taught through a single instruction to add an ending. Grouping by final consonant is necessary, but these groups remain part of a related conjugational system rather than nine entirely separate systems.

The /e/ vowel root retains *tabe-* in D10: たべます *tabemasu* ‘eat, polite’; たべない *tabenai* ‘do not eat’; たべた *tabeta* ‘ate’; and たべて *tabete* ‘eat’. The non-past marker in its dictionary form is *-ru*. The /i/ vowel root behaves similarly in D11: みます *mimasu* ‘see, polite’; みない *minai* ‘do not see’; みた *mita* ‘saw’; and みて *mite* ‘see’. The difference in root vowel does not

produce a difference in the principal paradigm.

Class identification must be based on several forms, particularly for verbs ending in the sound sequence *ru*. Both D06 and D10 end in *ru* in the dictionary form, but the first root ends in /r/ and the second in /e/. Deleting *ru* from every word would therefore misrepresent the consonant class. Experiments on Japanese morphology show that generalisation to novel forms is not always straightforward, so a descriptive classification should not be directly equated with a psychological procedure necessarily used by speakers (Vance, 1991).

The nine consonant subtypes do not imply equal numbers of lexical members. Including one paradigm per subtype merely ensures that differences in root endings are represented in the sample. For /n/ roots in particular, D05 illustrates formal alternations, but the meaning of death restricts the appropriateness of some uses in particular situations. The availability of a form in a conjugation table does not automatically ensure the pragmatic felicity of every sentence containing it. Morphological productivity, semantic compatibility, and social appropriateness must therefore be distinguished when examples are used in class. Learners can understand a shared formal pattern without having to produce every possible utterance in all communicative contexts.

3.2 Suffix types and their grammatical functions

Table 3 summarises the suffix categories and their realisations in the sample. Parentheses in *-(r)u* or *-(s)ase-* indicate alternation according to base class, not freedom to add segments at the speaker’s discretion. The form *-masu* is presented as

the citation form of the politeness paradigm. Complex forms involving other elements are discussed separately to

prevent the category ‘suffix’ from expanding without limits.

Table 3. Suffixes and their realisations in the data

Category	Realisation pattern	or Example romanisation	and English translation	Data
Non-past	<i>-u / -ru</i>	かく kaku; たべる taberu	write; eat	D01, D10
Past	<i>-ta / -da</i> with alternations	かいた kaita; たべた tabeta	wrote; ate	D01, D10
Negation	<i>-anai / -nai</i>	かかない kakanai; たべない tabenai	do not write; do not eat	D01, D10
Politeness	<i>-masu</i> on the combining stem	やすみます yasumimasu	rest, polite	D15
Volitional	<i>-ō / -yō</i>	かこう kakō; たべよう tabeyō	let us write; let us eat	D12, D13
Imperative	<i>-e / -ro</i>	かけ kake; たべろ tabero	write!; eat!	D12, D13
Conditional	<i>-eba / -reba</i>	かけば kakeba; たべれば tabereba	if one writes; if one eats	D12, D13
Potential	<i>-e / -rare-</i>	かけます kakemasu; たべられます taberaremasu	can write; can eat, polite	D12, D13
Passive	<i>-are- / -rare-</i>	かかれそうです kakaremasu; たべられます taberaremasu	be written; be eaten, polite	D12, D13
Causative	<i>-ase- / -sase-</i>	かせます kakasemasu; たべさせます tabesasemasu	make or let someone write; eat, polite	D12, D13

Category	Realisation pattern	or	Example romanisation	and	English translation	Data
Desiderative	-tai after the appropriate base		食べたい tabetai		want to eat	D16
Connective	-te / -de with alternations		かいて kaite; たべて tabete		write and ...; eat and ...	D01, D10
Excessive	-sugi- forms a verbal base		飲みすぎました nomisugimashita		drank too much, polite	D17
Ease	-yasui forms adjectives		使いやすい tsukaiyasui		easy to use	D18
Difficulty or resistance	-nikui forms adjectives		割れにくい warenikui		hard to break	D19

The non-past forms in D01 and D10 provide the dictionary forms, but their meanings are not restricted to events occurring at the time of speaking. Habitual or future interpretations depend on the predicate and context. By contrast, -ta and its variants provide the past contrast in the paradigms examined. Temporal relations cannot be reduced to replacing a single final character. Research on tense and aspect marking shows that verbs' lexical meanings contribute to the distribution and interpretation of grammatical forms (Shirai, 1998a; Shirai & Kurono, 1998).

Negation clearly depends on base class. D01 uses -anai after a consonant root, whereas D10 uses -nai after a vowel root. This selection can be described as allomorphy, while acknowledging that other theories may locate the boundaries differently. The negative past forms in the same summary are かかなかった *kakanakatta* 'did not write' and たべなかつた *tabenakatta* 'did not eat'. The

negative element undergoes further inflection, so the full sequence cannot be reduced to attaching -ta to a complete form ending in -i. Spencer (2008) discusses the complex relationship between verbal and adjectival categories in Japanese negation.

Politeness differs from polarity and tense. D15 presents やすみませ *yasumimasu* 'rest, polite'; やすみません *yasumimasen* 'do not rest, polite'; やすみました *yasumimashita* 'rested, polite'; and やすみませんでした *yasumimasen deshita* 'did not rest, polite' (Three A Network, 2012, p. 34, Practice A7). The final sequence contains *deshita*, making it inappropriate to treat it as a single transparent suffix. The polite paradigm realises several categories through internal forms that require separate explanation.

Volitional, imperative, and conditional forms alter the contribution of the predicate to the utterance. D12 かこう *kakō* 'let us write' and D13 たべよう *tabeyō* 'let us eat'

illustrate the pair *-ō* and *-yō*. The corresponding imperatives are *kake* and *tabero*, and the conditionals are *kakeba* and *tabereba*. The volitionals are translated here as invitations, although they can also express intention, depending on context. These categories should not be equated with changes in tense, since each regulates a different aspect of modality or propositional relations.

The potential forms a new base that can subsequently take politeness marking. In D12, *kak-* corresponds to *kake-*, whereas D13 presents *taberare-*. Vowel-root potential and passive forms can coincide on the surface. D14 likewise records *みられます* *miraremasu* ‘can see’ or ‘be seen, polite’, according to the column examined. Formal identity does not eliminate structural and semantic differences. Studies of changes in the potential by Matsuda (1993) and Ito and Mester (2004) demonstrate the relevance of relationships within paradigms; the innovative variants they examine are not additional textbook data in the present study.

The passive and causative concern the organisation of participants. In D12, *kakaremasu* places the writing event within passive predication, whereas *kakasemasu* adds a causative or permissive relation. D13 shows the contrast between *taberaremasu* and *tabesasemasu*. Aoyagi (2021) examines the structural relationship between voice and causative morphology. The textbook tables establish only correspondences between forms and are therefore insufficient to determine all adversative readings, degrees of coercion, or argument configurations available in actual usage.

The desiderative occurs in D16 *食べたい* *tabetai* ‘want to eat’, in a completed gap-fill example (Three A Network, 2012, p. 116, Exercise 3, example). Identifying this location prevents a form supplied by the researcher from being confused with the source text. The form *-tai* expresses desire and behaves like an adjective in its inflection. Regularity in the verbal source therefore does not guarantee that all subsequent forms retain verbal status. Category change is an aspect of the root–suffix relationship that needs to be taught.

The forms *-te* and *-de* provide connectives for larger constructions. D20 contains *泣いている* *naite iru* ‘be crying’, as a fragment of a question in a Lesson 44 example (Three A Network, 2013, p. 154, Example Sentence 1). Its analysis involves the connective form of *nak-* and the auxiliary verb *iru*. This sequence is not classified as a single simple suffix. Distinguishing progressive and resultant-state readings in Japanese aspectual constructions requires attention to lexical meaning and context, as discussed by Shirai (1998b).

D17 *飲みすぎました* *nomisugimashita* ‘drank too much, polite’ illustrates an excessive element that produces a verbal base and takes polite past marking. By contrast, D18 *使いやすい* *tsukaiyasui* ‘easy to use’ and D19 *割れにくい* *warenikui* ‘hard to break’ produce adjectival predication (Three A Network, 2013, p. 154). D19 also shows that *-nikui* can express an object’s resistance to change rather than merely an agent’s difficulty in performing an action. These three forms demonstrate the need to distinguish semantic function from the category of the output.

3.3 Root–suffix relationships in predicate formation

The first relationship is selectional: root class restricts the form of the element that can follow it. In the analysis adopted here, consonant roots require realisations different from those of vowel roots in several categories. D01 and D10 offer the clearest comparison because the category meaning can be held constant while the base class changes. Allomorph selection is not a stylistic choice. It is part of grammatical knowledge concerning combinations of bases and subsequent elements, although some areas still require lexical knowledge.

The second relationship is morphophonemic. The combination of a root and a suffix can alter the realisation of segments around the boundary. For example, *kaita* and *kaite* in D01 exhibit an environment different from that of *kakimasu* or *kakanai*. The past form is therefore not analysed as evidence that the root has lost its lexical identity. That identity is recovered through paradigmatic relations. De Chene (2016) emphasises that descriptions of alternations must consider evidence capable of distinguishing analyses: generating the correct form alone does not resolve every explanatory issue.

The third relationship involves successive stem formation. Potential and causative forms can produce bases that take subsequent elements. D12 *kakasemasu* ‘make or let someone write, polite’ can be represented as *kak-ase-masu*, and D13 *tabesasemasu* ‘make or let someone eat, polite’ as *tabe-sase-masu*. These representations show that the politeness suffix follows a causative base rather than attaching only to the root directly. A

complex word thus contains layered relationships that a root-plus-one-ending model cannot capture.

The data also show that a combining base is not synonymous with a root. In D15, *yasumi-* is the base preceding the polite forms, whereas its analytical root is *yasum-*. In D10, the base *tabe-* coincides with the vowel root in the environments examined. This distinction explains why the pedagogical instruction ‘delete *masu*’ can yield a practical base for certain exercises without invariably identifying the root. This instruction operates on particular surface forms and needs a clearly defined scope. When learners move from polite patterns to negative or dictionary forms, relationships across paradigms remain necessary to identify the appropriate class and realisation.

The term suffix in the table does not place every category at the same analytical level. Imperatives and conditionals are presented as operational realisations that permit direct comparison, whereas potentials and causatives are discussed as stem-forming elements. This distinction allows the textbook patterns to be explained without first resolving every debate about the boundary between inflection and derivation. The data permit verification of form correspondences and their distributions. Interpretations concerning deeper structure constitute an additional analytical step that must be made explicit. This approach retains the value of description while permitting evaluation within other theoretical frameworks.

The fourth relationship concerns semantic scope. In polite causatives, the causal or permissive relation forms part of the predication that is subsequently presented

politely to the addressee. In D17, the excessive reading arises from the combination of drinking and the excessive element, after which past and politeness information completes the form. Linear order has interpretive consequences, but this does not mean that every pair of categories can be reordered to produce a new reading. Language-specific and element-specific constraints require investigation, as research on affix ordering suggests (Manova & Aronoff, 2010; Rice, 2011).

The fifth relationship involves the coexistence of productive patterns and knowledge of particular forms. Bybee (1995) relates regular morphology to lexical organisation, while Albright and Hayes (2003) demonstrate the importance of environment-sensitive generalisations in research on English. Both perspectives help explain why Japanese paradigms require rules alongside examples. Cross-linguistic transfer of these models must nevertheless be constrained: the present data reveal formal relationships rather than direct evidence about lexical storage or computational mechanisms in learners' brains.

This comparison also clarifies the limitations of translation as a means of identifying morphemes. The English equivalents in the tables help readers understand the contribution of a predicate, but English may express the same category through separate words. The number of words in a translation does not indicate the number of Japanese morphemes. Conversely, two distinct Japanese forms may receive similar English equivalents when context is unavailable. The analysis therefore prioritises the distribution of forms in the source and then uses

translation to explain the relevant meanings. For categories with more than one reading, equivalents are restricted to the function of the column or context examined. This approach reduces the risk of treating a translation as the internal structure of the source language. It also helps teachers explain that semantic equivalence between the languages often involves different ways of packaging grammatical information; translation exercises should therefore be supplemented with paradigmatic observation and contextual examination of predicate use in subsequent learning activities.

3.4 Pedagogical consequences and limits on generalisation

Mapping roots and suffixes allows instruction to begin with pairs of forms displaying invariant and alternating components. Teachers can ask learners to identify roots in coded data and then compare the same category across different classes. Subsequent activities distinguish morphophonemic outputs, derived stems, and constructions with auxiliary verbs. This sequence of exercises is an analytically motivated proposal rather than the outcome of a classroom experiment. Acquisition research indicates that input and usage experience affect the ability to generalise (Ellis, 2002; Tatsumi et al., 2018a).

Instruction in meaning must accompany instruction in form. Learners who successfully form an aspectual expression may not understand all its contextual readings. Ishida's (2004) study of recasts targeting Japanese aspectual forms demonstrates the relevance of feedback and form–function mapping. In an instructional design based on the present analysis, correction can direct attention first to base

selection and then to utterance meaning. The success of such an intervention must, however, be tested separately with specified participants and learning conditions before effectiveness can be claimed.

Classroom assessment can distinguish identification, formation, and interpretation tasks. Identification requires students to determine root class from several paradigm members. Formation requires them to select the realisation of a category appropriate to a base. Interpretation requires them to explain the information added by the element in a predicate fragment. These tasks yield different kinds of evidence; successful memorisation of a table does not automatically demonstrate an ability to interpret sentences. Teachers can also record whether errors concern base class, sound alternations, or meaning selection. Such records allow more focused feedback without assuming that all errors arise from the same rule.

The textbook sequence can serve as an introductory pathway, followed by analytical regrouping. Forms introduced in different lessons can be placed side by side to reveal previously dispersed relationships. Such regrouping does not require changing the entire textbook sequence but provides reflective activities once several forms are familiar. Students gain opportunities to explain why the forms are related and when the same base requires different realisations. In research applications, each activity needs stated objectives, participants, and success measures so that its benefits can be evaluated empirically rather than assumed from the orderly appearance of a table.

Finally, the pedagogical sample limits the scope of the conclusions. Summary tables deliberately foreground regular contrasts and therefore do not represent proportions of use in communication. Typological and processing studies provide explanatory perspectives but are not tested quantitatively here (Berg, 2025; Hahn et al., 2022). The article's empirical contribution is a verified analysis of the listed units; its analytical contribution is the relationship among root class, suffix realisation, and output category. Distinguishing these contributions keeps the pedagogical recommendations proportionate to the evidence.

4. Conclusion

Regular verbal predicate constructions in the *Minna no Nihongo* data can be explained through relationships among root class, the selection of suffix realisations, and successive stem formation. Consonant-final roots have several subtypes differing in morphophonemic alternations, whereas /i/- and /e/-final vowel roots follow parallel principal patterns. Class identity cannot be determined from a single orthographic ending. Comparing several forms is a more defensible procedure for separating lexical material from grammatical information.

The suffixes in the sample express tense, negation, politeness, volition, ability, voice, and linkage. Their relationships with roots encompass allomorph selection, sound alternations, and the creation of bases for subsequent formation. Some elements produce adjectival categories, whereas aspectual constructions involve connective forms and auxiliary verbs. The entire sequence following a root therefore cannot be treated as a uniform class of endings. Formal identity does not invariably entail

functional identity, as illustrated by the potential and passive forms of vowel roots.

The mapping, supported by codes and source locations, provides a verifiable basis for instructional development. Teaching can connect paradigms, morpheme boundaries, and semantic contexts without relying on the isolated memorisation of forms. These findings nevertheless describe a textbook sample rather than establish

frequency generalisations about Japanese or demonstrate instructional effectiveness. Future research can expand the data inventory, introduce inter-annotator checks, and test learners' comprehension and production. These steps would allow the relationship between roots and suffixes to be investigated both as a matter of linguistic structure and as a measurable instructional target.

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