# 'Join them and join in':
# The turn-medial *-te* form in Japanese conversation[*]

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## Abstract

This study examines the turn-medial *-te* form in Japanese casual conversation. In the standard theory of Japanese, the *-te* form has been examined through its syntactic role as a clause conjunction. However, as far as conversation is concerned, the usages of this turn-medial *-te* form are yet to be fully examined. Hence, using the methodologies of conversation analysis and discourse analysis, I will examine the turn-medial *-te* form to understand how it functions in conversation. In particular, I will be examining how the *-te* form projects that further talk will follow after the form and also how the speaker can use it to hold the turn. I will also examine the *-te* form as an environment for the other conversational party to join in by producing response tokens, which is a minimal way to demonstrate their continued participation in discourse. Therefore, this study aims to clarify that the *-te* form is more than just a clause conjunction and that the *-te* form has important usages in conversation.

## Keywords

Japanese language, clause conjunctions, *-te* form, conversation analysis, discourse analysis

## Introduction

A fundamental function of the *-te* form is that it connects clauses together (e.g. Hasegawa, 1996; Ono, 1990; Tamori, 1976; Watanabe, 1994). This syntactic approach has been a key area of study for the *-te* form in the past. The conjunctive *-te* form occurs in a turn-medial position in conversation, which is demonstrated with the following example.

(1) [Sayaka and Tae: 478]

| Tae: | *sore* | *o* | ***tabete*** | *jinmashin* | *ga* | *deta* | *kamoshirenai.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | that | OBJ | eat-TE | rash | SUB | came.out | probably |

'((I)) eat ((anglerfish liver)) and ((I)) might get a rash'

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In example (1), the *-te* form *tabete* connects together the clause *sore o tabete* 'I eat anglerfish liver' with *jinmashin ga deta kamoshirenai* 'I might get a rash'. It joins together the two clauses into one complete syntactic utterance *sore o tabete jinmashin ga deta kamoshirenai* 'after eating anglerfish liver, I might get a rash'. Hence, the primary function of the *-te* form, as shown by this example, is a clause conjunction.

More than just joining clauses together, the *-te* form can also give meaning to the clause it connects. In other words, the *-te* form has various semantic relations (cf. Hasegawa, 1996; Kuno, 1973; Martin, 1975; Oishi and Matsumoto, 1998; Tamori, 1976). As shown by this example, the conjunctive *-te* form has a 'cause-effect' semantic relation (Hasegawa, 1996: 767; Martin, 1975: 480; Tamori, 1976: 310, 312, 314).[1] The *-te* form marks the preceding event (i.e. the eating of the anglerfish liver) as the cause of the following event (i.e. getting a rash). This shows that the *-te* form can be described through the grammatical (or semantic) relationship it has with the clauses it connects together.

These previous studies have shed light on some aspects of the use of the conjunctive *-te* form. However, their contributions are very limited with respect to conversation and consequently, the actual roles of the turn-medial *-te* form in conversation are yet to be explored. This is because the syntactic approach to the *-te* form does not take into consideration how the *-te* form is actually used in conversation. Problematically, it also only considers how the speaker uses the form and it does not consider its influence on the other conversational party. Furthermore, it does not take into consideration the conversation environment of the *-te* form. That is, it does not consider the syntactic, prosodic and pragmatic properties of the *-te* form altogether, which consequently does not consider how the speaker is using it in conversation.

In summary, the present study will explore the *-te* form in conversation. This will be done through examining: the quantitative aspect of the *-te* form, examples of the turn-medial *-te* form in conversation and how the other conversational party can use the *-te* form as a brief turn entry opportunity to produce a response token.


## Data and methodology

The data for this study was collected and transcribed by Chiharu Mukai for her study on response tokens in Japanese (Mukai, 2004).[2] It is an approximately 150-minute corpus of 6 dyadic conversations. Each conversation is 10-30 minutes. In total, approximately 66000 characters transcribed. The participants were female native Japanese speakers who were friends aged in their mid-twenties to early thirties, and the conversations were recorded in the Tokai and Kanto regions of Japan during 2001-2002.

The original researcher aimed to get the most natural conversations because naturally occurring, recorded conversation is regarded the basic form of language use (Liddicoat, 2004: 8; Schegloff, 1996: 54). This was done by giving the participants cassette tapes to record a conversation in a time and place of their choosing without the presence of the researcher. The participants' names were changed in the transcriptions to protect their privacy.

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[1] See Hasegawa (1996) for more on the *-te* form's various semantic relations.
[2] I would like to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to Chiharu Mukai for allowing me to use the corpus via my supervisor Duck-Young Lee.

In terms of presentation, the caption above each example will state the conversational pair and then the line in the conversation that the example originated from. Furthermore, each example will have a transcription of the conversation in the first line, an interlinear word-by-word English gloss in the second line and an English translation in the third line. The recorded data was transcribed using the conversation analysis transcription convention (cf. Gardner, 1995; Mukai, 2004; Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff et al., 1977).

It is also important to note that numerous dialects are actively used in different areas across Japan. The focus of this study is Tokyo-standard modern Japanese, but there are also dialectical differences regarding the conjunctive *-te* form. For instance, in Kansai dialect, the verb *kau* 'to raise (animals)' is conjugated as *koote* whereas in Tokyo-standard Japanese it is conjugated differently, as *katte* (Martin, 1975: 475). Nonetheless, the term 'Japanese' will be used to refer to the Tokyo-standard modern Japanese, unless otherwise specified.

With regards to methodologies, I will use conversation analysis and discourse analysis. Conversation analysis will be used to explain how the *-te* form is used in conversation through examining its role in turn-taking and conversation management, while discourse analysis will be used to study the interplay between the *-te* form and its role in socio-cultural discourse.

In more detail, conversation analysis (henceforth CA) is the study of natural talk in interaction. A primary goal of CA is to describe how participants understand and accomplish social actions in conversation to achieve interactional goals (Goodwin and Heritage, 1990: 283). Within CA, a key area of study is turn-taking because conversation is viewed as a sequence of 'turns' taken by each participant. This can be seen through how the examples have been presented in this study. Regarding the way that participants take turns, Sacks et al. (1974) propose a turn-taking system for conversation that has a 'turn construction component' and a 'turn allocation component'. With regards to the study, this methodology will help to determine the role that the *-te* form has in the construction of turns and how speaker change is managed.

Next, discourse analysis (henceforth DA) is an approach that has no set definition or method. It is an umbrella term that can be used to describe a variety of approaches to the study of written and spoken discourse used in various fields such as sociolinguistics, computational linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, conversation analysis and artificial intelligence (Brown and Yule, 1983: viii; Mullany, 2012: 510; Schiffrin et al., 2008: 1). The common denominator in all these approaches to studying discourse is the recognition that discourse has a significant role in our everyday lives and it is a social action. In DA, the participants themselves have an active role in creating discourse. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that discourse is not a separate, isolated entity – humans shape it and give it meaning, not just simply use it, because they are the source of its existence. Hence, the *-te* form will not just be examined through how it is used in conversation, but also why it is being used.

## Quantitative analysis

I will firstly examine the quantitative aspect of the turn-medial *-te* form's prosodic characteristics. The spontaneous nature of conversation gives rise to a variety of factors that may influence the occurrence of the turn-medial *-te* form. Thus, by examining the potential influential factors, this will determine the significance that certain factors (albeit the quantifiable ones) have with regards to the *-te* form. To determine the extent to which prosody has a role in indicating

that the speaker will produce further talk, the table below outlines the frequencies for the different prosodic characteristics of the turn-medial *-te* form.

| Prosodic characteristics | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| No prosodic breaks | 139 | 30.0 |
| Continuing intonation: continuing contour with a slight fall (';') | 175 | 37.8 |
| Continuing intonation: continuing contour with a slight rise (',') | 97 | 21.0 |
| Continuing intonation: level intonation ('_') | 15 | 3.2 |
| Final intonation: falling terminal contour ('.') | 30 | 6.5 |
| Final intonation: rising contour ('?') | 3 | 0.6 |
| Final intonation: contour that rises more than a continuing contour, but less than a rising contour ('¿') | 4 | 0.9 |
| Total | 463 | 100 |

Figure 1. Prosodic characteristics of turn-medial *-te* forms

The table firstly shows that no prosodic break have been observed in 30.0% (139/463) of cases. Furthermore, the continuing intonational cues ';', ',' and '_' for turn-medial *-te* forms were 37.8% (175/463), 21.0% (97/463) and 3.2% (15/463) respectively. This large portion of occurrence, 62.0% (287/463) in total, is well justifiable given that it is the case of the turn-medial use of the *-te* form where the turn is meant to continue. Another interesting observation is the fact that the turn-medial *-te* form also occurs with final intonational cues, which were '.', '?' and '¿', and they were used 6.5% (30/463), 0.6% (3/463) and 0.9% (4/463) respectively. In total, this accounts for 8.0% (37/463) of all turn-medial *-te* forms. This points to the spontaneous nature of conversation, where both continuing and final intonation may occur with the turn-medial *-te* form.


**Projecting further talk**

The turn-medial *-te* form has a role in projecting that further talk will follow after the *-te* form. In the following section, the turn-medial *-te* form will be analysed through three cases. That is, the turn-medial *-te* form with: no prosodic break, a prosodic break with continuing intonation and a prosodic break with final intonation.

As previously discussed, the *-te* form is known in grammar as a clause conjunction that can connect two clauses together. In conversation, when a speaker utters the conjunctive *-te* form, this can hearably indicate to the co-participants that one or more spoken components will be added to the talk-in-progress rather than the talk coming to an end. Talk with multi-components

like this are called 'compound TCUs'[3] (cf. Lerner, 1991; Lerner, 1996). That is to say, after the first component of the compound TCU (i.e. *-te* form marked clause), a second component follows afterwards.

Illustrating the turn-medial *-te* form in its role to project further talk, let us first observe the following example of the *-te* form without a prosodic break. In example (2), Sayaka is asking Tae about whether she likes the taste of anglerfish liver. The target *-te* form occurs in line 3.

(2) [Sayaka and Tae: 476]

| 1 | Tae: | *atashi* | *wa* | *ankimo* | *suki* | *dakedo : ; =* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | I | TOP | anglerfish.liver | like | but | | |
| | | 'I like anglerfish liver but' | | | | | | |
| 2 | Saya: | = °*nn :*°; | | | | | | |
| | | hm | | | | | | |
| | | 'Hm' | | | | | | |
| 3 | Tae: | =*sore* | *o* | **_tabete_** | *jinmashin* | *ga* | *deta* | *kamoshirenai.*= |
| | | that | OBJ | eat-TE | rash | SUB | came.out | probably |
| | | 'After eating ((anglerfish liver)), ((I)) might get a rash' | | | | | | |
| 4 | Saya: | =*a ho : nto : ,* | *nanka;* .h↑ *sugoi* | *ne : , kimo* | *toka* | *mo* | *ne* | |
| | | oh really | um | incredible FP | liver | or.something | also | FP |
| | | 'Oh really, um *.h* ((it is)) incredible ((that)) the liver or something ((is)) also, you know' | | | | | | |

This example shows the speaker Tae using the *-te* form without a prosodic break to project further talk. Tae's turn in line 1 is the first component of a compound TCU, as indicated by the conjunctive particle *dakedo* 'but' that projects another component to the talk-in-progress. Sayaka acknowledges Tae's talk in line 2 with the response token *nn* 'hm'. Tae's talk-in-progress is continued to line 3 where there is another conjunctive form. This time, it is the *-te* form *tabete*, which derives from the verb *taberu* 'to eat'. The *-te* form joins together the clause *sore o taberu* 'I eat anglerfish liver' with the clause that follows it. With this turn-medial *-te* form, there is no prosodic break. This indicates that the speaker has not completed their turn yet and projects a further component to the talk-in-progress, which is the clause *jinmashin ga deta kamoshirenai* 'I might get a rash'. Here, the *-te* form joins the two clauses into one complete syntactic utterance *sore o tabete jinmashin ga deta kamoshirenai* 'after eating anglerfish liver, I might get a rash'. The end of Tae's TCU is a possible point for speaker change and Sayaka becomes the speaker in line 4.

The turn-medial *-te* form also occurs with prosodic breaks to project further talk. The following is an example of the turn-medial *-te* form with continuing intonation. In example (3), Tae is talking to Sayaka about a retired Japanese man living in Thailand, who is married to a Thai woman. The target *-te* form occurs in line 1.

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[3] Sacks et al. (1974) propose that conversation has a 'turn construction component'. In more detail, turns are constructed through units of talk called 'turn constructional units' (henceforth TCU). Turns comprise of one or more TCUs. TCUs can be completed through three linguistic properties: syntax (either as sentential, clausal, phrasal or lexical units), prosody and pragmatics (cf. Ford and Thompson, 1996).

(3) [Sayaka and Tae: 401]

1    Tae:    *>sono    hito<    tsurego                    ga    ite* *: ; (.)    de*
             that    person    child.by.a.former.marriage    SUB    exist-TE    and

2            *kekko : n \*shi\*ta n    datte,    =ni nen    mae [ni,*
             married.NM    BE.QT    two.years    before
             '((She)) has a child by a former marriage and (.) and ((they)) got married 2 years
             ago'

3    Saya:                                              *[nn : [ : ;*
                                                        hm
                                                        'Hm'

4    Tae:                                                    *[.hh    de    ima    ga*
                                                             and    now    SUB

5            *ne    hutari        no    kodomo    ga    onaka    ni    iru    $no(h)$.*
             FP    two.people    GEN    child    SUB    stomach    in    exist    FP
             '.hh And now they are having a child'

This example shows the speaker Tae using the turn-medial *-te* form with continuing intonation to project further talk. Tae in line 1 produces the first component of a compound TCU. This is indicated by *ite*, which is the conjunctive *-te* form of the verb *iru* 'to exist'. The *-te* form *ite* is produced with a sound stretch (marked by ':' in the transcription) and continuing intonation (marked by ';'). In particular, continuing intonation alongside this syntactically and semantically incomplete utterance at this point marks the speaker's talk as incomplete. This projects that further talk, i.e. that another component of the talk-in-progress, will follow. Hence, the *-te* form *ite* joins the first component of the compound TCU in line 1 *sono hito tsurego ga iru* 'she has a child by a former marriage' with the second component of the compound TCU in lines 1-2 *de kekkonshitan datte ninen mae ni* 'and they got married two years ago'. This is followed by Sayaka's acknowledgement of the talk-in-progress, the response token *nn* 'hm', in line 3 and then the continuation of Tae's previous talk in lines 4-5.

    Next, lets us observe an example of the turn-medial *-te* form with final intonation, which is also being used as a turn-holding strategy. Prosodic cues, such as continuing intonation, are important to signal that the speaker will continue talking. However, the turn-medial *-te* form can also occur with prosodic completeness cues. In example (4), Rumi is telling Yumi about being pulled over by the police. The target *-te* form occurs in line 3.

(4) [Rumi and Yumi: 630]

1    Yumi:    *de    yatteta    no¿=*
             and    happened    FP
             'And ((what)) happened?'

2    Rumi:    *=kenmon    yatteta    yo.=    kuruma    tometa    mon.=*
             inspection    happened    FP    car    pulled.over    NM

3            *nanni-    patokaa    tomatte    keesatsukan    ga    **tattete**. (.)*
             what    patrol.car    pull.up-TE    police.officer    SUB    stand-TE

4            *de : ; (1.0)    patokaa (1.0)    to : ;    doko    de    surechigatta n    dakke.*
             and    patrol.car    and    where    at    passed.NM    BE.Q

'((There)) was a police inspection, you know. ((I)) pulled over the car. What-patrol cars were pulled up and police officers were standing there and (.) and (1.0) patrol car (1.0) and where was it when ((I)) encountered ((the inspection))'

This example shows the speaker Rumi using the turn-medial *-te* form being used final intonation and as a turn-holding strategy. Rumi's description of being stopped by the police spans lines 2 to 4. The target *-te* form *tattete* occurs in line 3, which derives from the verb *tatteru* 'to be standing'. The *-te* form in this instance is produced with final intonation (marked by '.'). This means the turn can be seen as completed prosodically. However, other cues signal that Rumi has not finished her turn. One cue is syntactic incompleteness. That is, as a clause conjunction, the *-te* form projects that further components will be added to the talk-in-progress. The use of the particle *de* 'and', which is a shorten form of the sentence connective *sorede* 'and so', further emphasises that more talk will be produced. The greater context of the talk, i.e. Rumi's incomplete storytelling about being pulled over by the police, is also another cue that Rumi's turn is not finished yet. Furthermore, Rumi's talk contains a number of disfluencies including latched talk (marked by '=' in line 2), cut-offs (marked by '-' in line 3) and pauses (marked by '(.)' and '(x.x)' in lines 3 and 4 respectively). These are indicative of same-turn repair and may indicate that the speaker is having difficulty producing her talk (e.g. Liddicoat, 2011: 214-221). However, the speaker deploys devices such as sound stretches (marked by ':' in line 4), and conjunctive verb forms and particles (indicated by *tomatte* 'to stop', *tattete* 'to be standing' and *de* 'and' in lines 3-4) to ensure that her turn will not end. In other words, with its semantically incomplete nature, the *-te* form is used to project further talk and thus may be adopted by the speaker as a useful strategy to maintain speakership.

### Turn entry opportunity for response tokens

From the co-participant's point of view, the *-te* form provides a perfect environment for the production of response tokens.[4] That is, the speaker has produced the first component of the compound TCU ending in the *-te* form. Before the original speaker starts the second component of the compound TCU, the co-participant produces a short, non-flooring turn. Hence, in the terminology of Ford and Thompson (1996: 150), the *-te* form in this instance is a 'local pragmatic completion point' because though further talk is being projected, it still serves as an opportunity for co-participants to show their involvement in the conversation. The notion of 'involvement'[5] is important for the continuation and maintenance of conversation. In particular, there are various interactional strategies that are employed to demonstrate this. Response tokens are one such strategy used by co-participants to show their involvement in conversation. Within the corpus, response tokens were found to occur frequently around turn-medial *-te* forms, as demonstrated by the table below.

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[4] The term 'response will be used to refer to "conversational objects that indicate that a piece of talk by speaker (sic.) has been registered by the recipient of that talk" (Gardner, 2001: 13).
[5] The notion of 'involvement' will be used as it is viewed as necessary for successful conversation because it depends on all the participants' cooperation and continued investment in conversational involvement (e.g. Arndt and Janney, 1987; Besnier, 1994; Chafe, 1982; Chafe, 1985; Daneš, 1994; Gumperz, 1982; Lee, 2007; Ogi, 2012; Selting, 1994; Tannen, 1982; Tannen, 1985; Tannen, 1989).

| Response token | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| No response token given | 279 | 60.3 |
| Response token given | 184 | 39.7 |
| Total | 463 | 100 |

Figure 2. Frequencies of response tokens around turn-medial *-te* forms

Taking into account that co-participants provided a response token for 39.7% of turn-medial *-te* forms, it seems that the co-participants use the *-te* form as an opportunity to align themselves as the co-participant.

In order to determine whether the co-participant's use of response tokens is either related or unrelated to the prosodic characteristics of the turn-medial *-te* form, a Pearson $\chi^2$[26] test of independence was performed. This is done upon the following two-way contingency table:

| Prosodic characteristics | Frequency (no response token) | Percentage (%) | Frequency (response token) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No prosodic break | 139 | 30.0 | 15 | 8.2 |
| Continuing intonation | 287 | 62.0 | 159 | 86.4 |
| Final intonation | 37 | 8.0 | 10 | 5.4 |
| Total | 463 | 100 | 184 | 100 |

Figure 3. Prosodic characteristics of turn-medial *-te* forms without and with response tokens

The result of the Pearson $\chi^2$ test is that whether a response token is given is indeed related to the prosodic characteristics of the *-te* form. From the Pearson $\chi^2$ test, the test statistic $X^2$ is 39.0 with 2 degrees of freedom and a *p*-value of $3.3 \times 10^{-9}$. Based on a *p*-value of 0.05, the association between prosodic characteristics of the *-te* form and the occurrence of response tokens is statistically significant. However, this does not guarantee the occurrence of response tokens around the turn-medial *-te* form.

In more detail, the following table lists the prosodic characteristics of the *-te* form around response tokens.

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[6] The Pearson $\chi^2$ test of independence statistic: $\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \sum_{j=1}^{c} \frac{(O_{i,j} - E_{i,j})^2}{E_{i,j}}$

whereby *r* is the number of rows and *c* is the number of columns. The degrees of freedom is (*r*-1)(*c*-1). $O_{i,j}$ refers to the *i*th row and *j*th column entry in the observed contingency table, while $E_{i,j}$ refers to the *i*th row and *j*th column entry in the expected contingency table.

$E_{i,j}$ (where *n* is the number of cells) is calculated as: $E_{i,j} = \frac{(\sum_{n_c=1}^{c} O_{i,n_c}) \cdot (\sum_{n_r=1}^{r} O_{n_r,j})}{n}$

| Prosodic characteristics | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| No prosodic breaks | 15 | 8.2 |
| Continuing intonation: continuing contour with a slight fall (';') | 107 | 58.2 |
| Continuing intonation: continuing contour with a slight rise (',') | 42 | 22.8 |
| Continuing intonation: level intonation ('_') | 10 | 5.4 |
| Final intonation: falling terminal contour ('.') | 9 | 4.9 |
| Final intonation: rising contour ('?') | 1 | 0.5 |
| Final intonation: contour that rises more than a continuing contour, but less than a rising contour ('¿') | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | 184 | 100 |

Figure 4. Prosodic characteristics of turn-medial *-te* forms around response tokens

When response tokens occur around the turn-medial *-te* form, this form overwhelmingly has continuing intonational cues. These cues, marked by ';', ',' and '_', were found 58.2% (107/184), 22.8% (42/184) and 5.4% (10/184) of cases respectively. In total, 86.4% (159/184) of turn-medial *-te* forms that occurred with response tokens had continuing intonation.

On the other hand, final intonational cues, marked by '.', '?' and '¿', were found 4.9% (9/184), 0.5% (1/184) and 0.0% (0/184) of cases respectively. In total, this is 5.4% (10/185). This suggests that prosodic cues, i.e. continuing intonation, can be an important indicator of whether response tokens are produced around turn-medial *-te* forms. It is a rather well-expected result in the sense that continuing intonation indicates the speaker's intention to continue the current talk and the co-participant provides a response token to indicate their intention to maintain the role of listener.

Let us now consider the kind of response tokens that were actually used in the corpus, which will be shown in the following table.

| Response token | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| *nn* 'hm' | 163 | 88.6 |
| *aa* 'ah'/'oh' | 8 | 4.3 |
| *hun* 'huh' | 4 | 2.2 |
| *hee* 'oh really' | 3 | 1.6 |
| *soo* 'it is so' | 2 | 1.1 |
| *aa honto* 'oh really' | 1 | 0.5 |
| *aa soo nanda* 'oh it is so' | 1 | 0.5 |
| *soo da ne* 'it is so, isn't it' | 1 | 0.5 |
| *uwa* 'wow' | 1 | 0.5 |
| Total | 184 | 99.8[7] |

Figure 5. Frequencies of response tokens around turn-medial *-te* forms

The table shows that out of 184 frequencies of response tokens following turn-medial *-te* form, 88.6% (163/184) were the response token *nn*. Previous studies also found that the response token, *nn*, is frequently used around conjunctive particles such as *-te* (cf. Mizutani, 1988; Mukai, 2004; Ward and Tsukahara, 2000). *Nn* and another response token *aa*, which occurred 4.3% (8/184), can be categorised as continuers. In total, continuers account for 92.9% (171/184). Clancy et al. (1996: 381) claimed that there is a high frequency use of continuers in Japanese because "it does not require any syntactic/semantic analysis". Furthermore, Schegloff (1982: 81) identifies the role of continuer as one of the important functions of response tokens, as the co-participant uses it indicate that they are still listening and this encourages the speaker to continue talking. That is, the co-participant is demonstrating their involvement in the conversation. Response tokens thus give a brief opportunity for the co-participant to align themselves as a listener and thus inviting the current speaker to continue talking.

It is important to note that response tokens have various functions in spontaneous conversation. Hence, in addition the continuer function to encourage the speaker to continue speaking, another function that it could possess is the 'acknowledgement' function. This is used "to show agreement and understanding of the content" (Tanaka, 2004: 157). That is, it is used to acknowledge the speaker's talk. In the corpus, these response tokens are *aa soo nan da* with 0.5% occurrence (1/184), *soo* with 1.1% (2/184) and *soo da ne* with 0.5% (1/184). In total, the acknowledgement function account for 2.2%[8] (4/184) of response tokens around the turn-medial *-te* form.

Response tokens can also have a 'newsmaker' function. It is similar to the acknowledgement function because both are used to acknowledge the talk-in-progress. However,

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[7] The sum of the individual percentages does not add to 100% because of rounding.
[8] Note that the sum of the individual percentages does not add to the total percentage because of rounding.

the newsmarker function is different because it is used to show peaked interest in the speaker's talk due to information that is both new and significant for the co-participant (cf. Gardner, 2001: 14; Goodwin, 1986: 207; Tanaka, 2004: 159-160). In the corpus, response tokens with this function include *hun* with 2.2% occurrence (4/184), *hee* with 1.6% (3/184), *aa honto* with 0.5% (1/184) and *uwa* with 0.5% (1/184). In total, the newsmarker function accounts for 4.9% (9/184) of response tokens around the turn-medial *-te* form.

In all, each function of the response tokens highlights how the co-participant can show their involvement in the conversation through minimal, non-flooring turns. Not only that, but they can also function to signal to the speaker that the co-participant is acknowledging that significant information has been given and that information may even be newsworthy for the co-participant.

Keeping these points in mind, example (5) below illustrates the continuer feature of response tokens. In the following, Tae has been talking about a friend who had a love affair with a married man. The target *-te* form occurs in line 1.

(5) [Sayaka and Tae: 78]

| 1 | Tae: | *wakaretai* | *tte* | *yuu* | *no* | *mo* | **atte** *: , =* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | want.break.up | QT | say | NM | also | exist-TE |

'((She)) wants to break up with ((him)) also and'

| 2 | Saya: | *= nn : ;* |
|---|---|---|
| | | hm |

'Hm'

| 3 | Tae: | *nanka* | *mo* | <u>*chan*</u>*toshita : ,* | *ona :* | *idoshi* | *gurai* | *no (.)* | *sukina* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | um | also | upstanding | woman | same.age | about | GEN | like |

| 4 | | *hi\*to* | *ga\*,* | *dekinai* | *to* | *wakarerare\*na : i* | *toka* | *itte\*,* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | person | SUB | can-NEG | CONJ | can.break.up-NEG | or.something | say-TE |

'Um, also, an upstanding ((person)) about her age and is someone she likes, ((but)) if ((she)) cannot ((get)) ((a person like that)) ((she)) couldn't break up ((with him)) or something((she)) said'

In line 1, Tae uses the *-te* form *atte*, which derives from the verb *aru* 'to exist'. This *-te* form has a sound stretch (marked by ':') and continuing intonation (marked by ','), which are prosodic cues that the TCU is still in progress. In the corpus, 86.4% (159/184) of turn-medial *-te* forms had continuing intonation and a response token occurring around it. Alongside syntactic and semantic incompletion, prosodic cues have a strong role in indicating that more talk will follow after the *-te* form. These are cues that also signal a 'local pragmatic completion point' (Ford and Thompson, 1996: 150) where the co-participant can acknowledge the talk-in-progress through response tokens. That is to say, after the utterance of the *-te* form marked clausal unit *wakaretai tte yuu no mo atte* 'she wants to break up with him also and' in line 1, Sayaka utilises the *-te* form as a brief turn entry opportunity to utter a response token. In line 2, she does this by uttering the response token *nn* 'hm'. In its role as a continuer, the co-participant Sayaka is aligning herself as the co-participant through the response token *nn*, which encourages Tae to continue producing the talk-in-progress. Furthermore, the use of response tokens shows that co-participants can continue and maintain their involvement in the conversation whilst they are in the role of the co-

participant. After the response token in line 2, Tae continues the TCU from line 1 into lines 3-4. This shows that *-te* form can become a brief turn entry opportunity for co-participants to utter a response token.


## Summary

The *-te* form is primarily used in conversation to project that further units of talk will be produced after the *-te* form. It also has a turn-holding role, ensuring that the speaker maintains speakership. Furthermore, the importance of the conjunctive *-te* form in conversation is not just limited to the speaker. That is, it is an opportunity for the co-participant to produce a response token around the turn-medial *-te* form. This signals they are still adopting the role of co-participant, which consequently encourages the speaker to produce further talk. Not only this, the turn-medial *-te* form is also an opportunity for the co-participant to show their involvement in a minimal way.

## Transcription symbols

| | |
|---|---|
| [ | overlapping talk onset |
| ] | overlapping talk termination |
| = | 'latching'; no gap or overlap between the completion of one utterance and the beginning of another utterance |
| (x.x) | elapsed length of silence; measured in tenths of seconds |
| (.) | very short pause or micropause (less than 0.2 seconds) |
| ; | continuing intonation; continuing contour with a slight fall |
| , | continuing intonation; continuing contour with a slight rise |
| _ | continuing intonation; level pitch |
| . | final intonation; falling terminal contour |
| ? | final intonation; rising contour |
| ¿ | final intonation; contour that rises more than a continuing contour but less than a rising contour |
| x̱x̱x̱ | contour of the syllable moves initially at level tone |
| x ̱: x | contour of the syllable falls and then rises |
| xx̱ : | contour of the syllable rises and then falls |
| word | stress in talk through pitch or amplitude or both |
| : | prolongation of immediately prior talk; multiple colons indicate further prolongation |
| >word< | faster than surrounding talk |
| *word* | creaky voice |
| - | cut-off |
| .hh | audible inhalations; inbreath |
| $word$ | laughing while talking, which is audibly detectable |
| (( )) | transcriber's commentary |
| **word** | feature of interest |

## Interlinear gloss abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| BE | various forms of the 'be' verb |
| CONJ | conjunctive marker |
| FP | sentence-final particle |
| GEN | genitive |
| NEG | negative |
| NM | nominaliser |
| OBJ | object marker |
| Q | question marker |
| QT | quotative marker |
| SUB | subject marker |
| TE | *-te* form |
| TOP | topic marker |

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