

‘As though’ in Danielle Steel

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0. On January 11th, 1997, I was in a bookstore in the Honolulu International Airport at Honolulu, Hawaii, in the United States of America, looking for something to read on a plane which was to leave for Japan in an hour. I found a book entitled *Five days in Paris*. The title, especially “Paris”, prompted me to buy the book, because I teach in the Department of French Literature. This was my first encounter with Danielle Steel. Her name was not, to tell the truth, familiar to me at that time. It was only after coming back to Japan that I discovered that she is one of the best-selling female writers in the United States, and that some of her books had already been translated into Japanese and are being enjoyed by many Japanese readers. In reading some of her books, I found something very interesting and intriguing: the frequency of occurrence of the expression ‘as though.’ I had never read a book where so many tokens of ‘as though’ can be found and this made me want to undertake this study.

The expression ‘as though’, like ‘as if’, can be translated into Japanese by ‘Marude/Atakamo...de arukano yōni.’ As will be explained in the next chapter, ‘as if’ tends to be used much more often than ‘as though’, and so we can find many works dealing with the former expression. On the other hand, it seems to be difficult to find many works which deal with the latter one in detail. Therefore, in this article, we would like to focus our attention on ‘as though.’ The aim of this paper is thus to show some of the syntactic properties of ‘as though’ and to compare them with those of ‘as if.’ Our intention is, however, to go farther than that. We consider this study to be one of the preliminary ones for our ultimate aim: that is,

the comparison of the expressions 'as though' and 'as if' with their counterpart in French 'comme si' from the viewpoint of contrastive linguistics, not from that of comparative linguistics.

1. Is 'as if' completely identical with 'as though'? It is a little bit difficult to provide a definite answer to this question. Numerous attempts to do so have already been made by scholars. Some scholars say that there are no differences between the two at all, while others say that there are. Let us pause here to look briefly at what some of these scholars think regarding this question.

Jespersen (1940, 1970: 385) is of the view that they are almost the same, saying that "*As if* and *as though* express the same idea [...] There is no appreciable difference between the two forms, though *as if* is perhaps more frequent in colloquial speech than *as though*." Poutsma (1926: 731) is of the same opinion as Jespersen, stating that "The conjunctive word-group *as if* and *as though* are used indiscriminately, but the latter is less familiar than the former." They are of the opinion that there is no practical difference between 'as if' and 'as though' but the former is more frequently used than the latter. They are thus among the scholars who recognize no differences between the two expressions. On the other hand, as Inoue (1993: 63) shows, there are some scholars such as Partridge, Opdycke and Whiteford/James who take the position that these expressions are different. Partridge (1947: 22–23) says, for example, that "In short, *as though* connotes comparison, whereas *as if* stresses possibility or potentiality — or their opposite, impossibility." And Inoue (1993: 63) adds that "[...] have in common with their remarks in that *as if* implies possibility, probability or potentiality, while *as though* emphasizes comparison or concession." However, as is shown in Inoue, Hirota (1974: 151–152) and Koura (1988: 39–40), in almost all the dictionaries they referred to, 'as if' was almost always regarded as the same lexical item as 'as

though' and no clear distinctions were drawn between them, which supports the views presented by Jespersen and Poutsma. In this study, therefore, we consider 'as though' to be identical with 'as if', at least from the semantic viewpoint.

2. As we mentioned in the last chapter, in this study we consider 'as though' to be semantically identical with 'as if.' What is interesting to investigate is whether there are some clear differences in their syntactic behavior. In this chapter, we would like to concentrate our attention on the syntactic aspects of their usage.

2. 1. Here, to begin with, we would like to examine the frequency of occurrence of 'as if' and of 'as though.' Jespersen (1942: 385) states, as has already been cited in the preceding chapter, that "[...] *as if* is perhaps more frequent in colloquial speech than *as though*" and Poutsma (1926: 731) also says that "[...] the latter (=as though) is less familiar than the former (=as if)." Both of them agree that 'as if' is used more frequently than 'as though.' Some useful data collected by some Japanese scholars are available to us to support their views. You will find a table summarizing their data below. There is one thing to note regarding this table: the way they carried out their research differs a little bit; for instance, both Inoue (1993: 64–65) and Hirota (1974: 152) take into consideration whether the tokens of 'as if' and 'as though' appear in conversation or in a written style, while Koura (1988: 38) does not take that kind of distinction into account. Their data will not be displayed in detail here partly because of this difference and partly because of the problem of space. Thus, we will confine ourselves to using their data to make a table which simply indicates the number of 'as if' tokens and that of 'as though' tokens in their studies, neglecting the difference of style of the context in which they are found.

Table 1

Name of scholar	Number of tokens		Total
	as if	as though	
Inoue	421	83	504
Hirota	209	102	311
Koura	546	114	660
Total	1176	299	1475

Among these scholars, Hirota hesitates to say that 'as if' is used more often than 'as though', taking into account the fact that one of the authors whose work he takes up in his study uses 'as though' almost as frequently as 'as if.' But on the basis of the statistics given in the table above, it seems valid to say that, in general, 'as if' is used much more often than 'as though.'

Now, we would like to show what we have got after examining several books written by Danielle Steel. First, let us look at the works we deal with here.

Table 2

Title	Year of publication	Number of pages
A: <i>Kaleidoscope</i>	1987	419
B: <i>No Greater Love</i>	1991	384
C: <i>Mixed Blessing</i>	1992	416
D: <i>The Gift</i>	1994	275
E: <i>Accident</i>	1994	439
F: <i>Five Days in Paris</i>	1995	291
Total		2,224

As can be seen from this table, we examined six of her books, or a total of 2,224 pages. The next table indicates the number of 'as if' tokens and 'as though' tokens found in these works. It shows that in 2,224 pages, we found 10 tokens of 'as if' and 567 tokens of 'as though.' If you compare the data shown above with those presented by the three Japanese scholars discussed, it is easy and also sur-

Table 3

Book (abbreviations indicated above)	Number of tokens		Total
	as if	as though	
A	1	196	197
B	2	105	107
C	1	94	95
D	4	60	64
E	1	72	73
F	1	40	41
Total	10	567	577

prising to note that we found nearly fifty times more ‘as though’ tokens than ‘as if’ tokens. Since the number of works we refer to here is not very large, considering the fact that she has already published more than forty books, it is a little bit dangerous to assert, based on the data given in the table above, that she always uses ‘as though’ instead of ‘as if.’ But as far as the data shown above are concerned, and compared with the general trend indicated by the data collected by other scholars, we may be justified in saying that she is much more likely to use ‘as though’ than ‘as if.’ It would be reasonable to attribute this phenomenon to her preference in style. Jespersen (1940: 385) says “Some recent writers use *as though* either exclusively or much oftener than *as if* [...]; others prefer *as if*.” This tendency to use ‘as though’ far more often than ‘as if’ is one of the characteristics of Danielle Steel’s style.

2. 2. 2. In addition to the construction ‘as though’ + clause, ‘as though’ can be followed by various kinds of elliptical structures. R. Quirk et al (1985: 1110) states that “The subordinators *as*, *as if*, and *as though* introduce nonfinite and verbless clauses [...]” and that “*As if* and *as though* may also introduce *to-infinite* clauses [...]”. What they call ‘nonfinite and verbless clauses’ are generally thought of as cases of ellipsis. H. W. Fowler & F. G. Fowler (1931, 1958: 165) say that

when a clause begins with *as if*, it must be remembered that there is an ellipsis." The same kind of comment can be found in R. B. Long & D. R. Long (1971: 148). They say that "A noteworthy variety of ellipsis occurs in subordinate-interrogative sentences begun by *as if* and *as though* [...]. In construction, what we have in sentences like these is subordinate-interrogative clauses begun and marked by *if* or by a *though* which means *if*, contained within larger elliptical subordinate-interrogative clauses begun and marked by *as*. Judging from the description here, we can say that they regard 'as though' as identical with 'as if.' In order to make clear what types of phrases follow 'as though', we list some examples obtained from our corpus, construction by construction.

2. 2. 2. 1. 'as though' + to-infinitive

- 1) And as though to prove what he thought, just as he approached, she stepped gracefully out of the pool, and with one swift gesture, wrapped herself in a towel, and when he looked up again, she was gone.

(F., p. 58)

- 2) "Now", she smiled at her two daughters as though to forget what they had just been, "where are we going for lunch?"

(E., p. 300)

2. 2. 2. 2. 'as though' + present participle

- 3) She lay there for a long time, unable to sleep, and wishing him awake, and finally he opened his eyes and looked at her, as though sensing her anxiousness.

(D., p. 247)

- 4) "I'm too old to think about it now," Pilar said firmly, as though trying to convince himself.

(C., p. 82)

2. 2. 2. 3. 'as though' + past participle

- 5) He looked at Arthur for merest instant and then quickened his pace, as

- though terrified to lose the girl. (A., p. 21)
- 6) He laughed, as though amused by him. (B., p. 310)

2. 2. 2. 4. ‘as though’ + prepositional phrase

- 7) She stared at Margaret as though in great pain. (A., p. 295)
- 8) Malcom took a step toward her again, and then suddenly looked at Patrick as though for the first time. (B., p. 363)

2. 2. 2. 5. ‘as though’ + adjective (adjectival phrase)

- 9) “Mama?” he asked, as though sure that there was some reasonable explanation. (B., p. 129)
- 10) But Hilary sat in the living room as though numb. (A., p. 120)

Here is a table showing the frequency of occurrence of these kinds of elliptical constructions.

Table 4

BOOKS	TO-V	V-ing	V-ed	Adj.	Prep.	Total
A	3	20	1	3	3	30
B	2	1	1	1	5	10
C	2	6	0	0	0	8
D	1	1	0	0	0	2
E	2	0	0	0	0	2
F	1	0	1	0	0	2
Total	11	28	3	4	8	54

Table 3 indicates that a total of 567 instances of ‘as though’ were found in the six books, but the table above only accounts for 54 of these. It means that the other instances of ‘as though’ are all followed by complete clauses. From what has been shown above, although the number of occurrence is a little bit small, it should be concluded that ‘as though’ is followed by exactly the same constructions as those which follow ‘as if.’

3. In this article, we have surveyed some linguistic aspects of the expression "as though." From what we have examined in the preceding chapters, we may go on to the following conclusions.

In the first place, we may note the following concerning the frequency of occurrence of "as if" and "as though." As the data, gathered by several scholars, have shown, generally speaking, "as if" is used much more often than "as though." In Danielle Steel's works, however, the author uses "as though" almost exclusively, and rarely "as if", which is just the opposite of the general tendency. This is one of the characteristics of her style. The results support the comment made by Jespersen (1940: 385) that "Some recent writers use *as though* either exclusively or much oftener than *as if*. (Di Trollope, Hugh Walpole, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Beatrice Harraden, Anthony Hope); other prefer *as if*." This is the first point to note.

In the second place, regarding the syntactic aspects of "as though", we have seen what types of phrases or constructions may follow it. As is often mentioned, "as though" can be followed by a complete clause just as in the cast of "as if." "As though" can also be followed by certain elliptical constructions. It has become clear from our data that the kinds of ellipsis which follow "as though" are exactly the same as those which follow "as if." Our results serve to illustrate the prevailing idea that both "as if" and "as though" can be used without there being any practical difference. However, the question of what kinds of constructions are most or least frequently used is still to be examined.

In the third place, "as though" occurs very often with verbs such as "be", "look", "feel" and less frequently with "seem" and "sound." This phenomenon agrees with the explanation in Quirk et al (1985: 1175), although they say that "as though" is used with them more rarely than "as if."

Finally, among the problems we have not dealt with here is the mood, tense and form of the verb that appears in the clause following "as if" and "as though", which we would like to examine on another occasion.

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