# Relationship between compound verbs and light verb constructions in Japanese

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1. Introduction and goals Lieber (1992: 80) observes that the least productive English compounds are those containing verbs. In Japanese, on the contrary, the most productive and most widespread are compounds with verbs, such as lexical compound verbs, which feature two verbs joined together, for example, *kasi-dasu* (lend and send). The combination of two verbs can also form compound verbal nouns, which can be also called light verb constructions (LVCs), such as *tati-yomi suru* (stand-read light verb). In the literature on light verb constructions generally, there has been discussion of whether light verb constructions have the same semantics as their non-light counterparts (e.g., take a shower vs. shower). However, far too little attention has been paid to the word formation of the compound verbal nouns, also the similarities and differences between compound verbs and compound verbal nouns. In this study, we explore the similarities and differences between compound verbs and compound verbal nouns. Note that the second component (V2) in compound verbal nouns ends with a continuative form (*Ren'yoo* kei/the "*masu*" stem) and functions as a deverbal noun (VN). VNs occur directly in front of the light verb *suru* without requiring a case particle, which also shows verbal properties, indicating a reference to an event and perhaps incorporating argument-taking properties. Since VNs can also function as a noun without the light verb *suru*, it cannot instead just be analyzed as a verbal compound. In addition, it is not possible to use a simplex verb with the light verb. We argue for the dual character of compounds involving verbs using event-headedness (Pustejovsky 1995); that is, the stability of morphosyntactic structures across categories and the sensitivity of meanings vary by category.

2. Morphosyntactic structure: Stability across categories The derivation of *kiri-taosu* (cut-fell) and *kiri-uri*(cut-sell) is illustrated in (1) and (2), both *kiri* (cut) and *taosu* (fell) and *kiri* (cut) and *uri*(sell) is visible in the interpretation of a larger structure. The argument conflation shown in (3) and (4) support this. In (3), the external argument *taro* and the internal argument *ki*(tree) are inherited by the two components *kiru* (cut) and *taosu* (fell). The same thing occurs in (4).
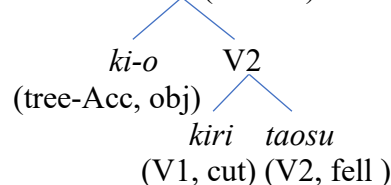
(1) Compound verb: kiri-taosu (cut-fell) (2) Compound verbal noun: kiri-uri (cut-sell)
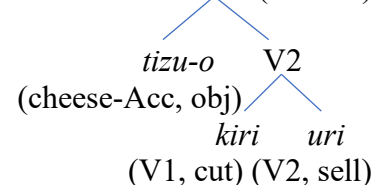
(3) a. Taro ga   ki-o   kiri-taosu.
    Taro Nom tree-Acc cut-fell
    "Taro cut and fell the tree"
  b.Taro ga ki-o kiru / taosu.

(4) a. Taro ga   tizi-o   kiri-uri suru.
    Taro Nom cheese-Acc cut-sell light verb
    "Taro cut and sell cheese"
  b. Taro ga   tizi-o kiru / uru.

3. Meaning sensitivity: Variability across categories This support comes from an examination of the scope ambiguity of the adverb. A sentence containing the verb *kill* and an adverb such as *almost*, such as *Jack almost killed Jill*, may be ambiguous. That is, it yields two possible interpretations: (a) Jack almost caused Jill to die, and (b) Jack caused Jill to almost die. This ambiguity derives from the fact that the rules of syntax allow *almost* to appear in different positions that can modify either underlying predicate. In (7) and (8), the phrase *mousukoside… tokoro datta* can be used to express *almost*, and it could also modify different underlying predicate.

(7) Mousukoside ie-o   tate-naosu tokoro datta noni,   jyama-ga   hait-ta.
    Almost   house-Acc build-fix tokoro-Past though, disturbing-NOM get in-Past.
    "I almost rebuilt my house, but it got in the way"

(8) Mousukoside ie-o   tate-naosi suru   tokoro datta noni, jyama-ga   hait-ta.

Almost   house-Acc build-fix light verb   tokoro-Past though, disturbing-NOM get in-Past.

"I almost rebuilt my house, but it got in the way"

There are two possible readings for (7): a) I was thinking about rebuilding my house, but it was getting in the way while I was preparing to do so, or b) the house has been rebuilt but not completely. By contrast, (8) has only one reading: I was thinking about rebuilding my house, but it was getting in the way while I was preparing to do so. Thus, (7) *tate-naosu* has the result reading, but (8) *tate-naosi suru* does not have it. This finding suggests that they do not completely share a meaning. Furthermore, that has further implications in terms of the order of the sub-events. As for a compound verb *kiri-taosu* (cut-fell), there is a resultative interpretation of the tree falling as a result of the cutting event. On the contrary, the compound verbal noun *kiri-uri* (cut-sell) has only temporal relations between the events of cutting and selling, instead of resultative interpretation of the cheese selling as a result of the cutting event.

4. Event-headedness in compounds Event-headedness (Pusetjovsky1988; 1995) indicates a type of foregrounding and backgrounding of event arguments. An event structure includes a configuration whereby events are ordered both by temporal precedence and by relative prominence. Headedness is a property of all event sorts, but in particular, it distinguishes a set of transitions, specifying what part of a matrix event is being focused by the lexical item in question.

Because *tate-naosu* and *tate-naosi* share the root *tate-naos-*, lexical information can be represented as shown in (9) and (10). Using the concept of event-headedness, we propose that for the compound verb *tate-naosu*, E1expresses process, and E2 expresses state, in which the persistence of the two events is the focus of interpretation. This makes it possible for the adverbs to take scope not only over E1 but also over E2. By contrast, in compound verbal nouns, where the initial event e_1 is headed, the focus is on the action bringing about a state. In other words, it is possible for compound verbs to have two heads in event structure, but on the other hand, there can be only one head in the event structure for compound verbal nouns.

(9) *tate-naosu*

EVENSTR = E1 = e_1: process
E2 = e_2: state
RESTR = $<_\alpha$
HEAD = $e_1 \cdot e_2$

(10) *tate-naosi (suru)*

EVENSTR = E1 = e_1: process
E2 = e_2: state
RESTR = $<_\alpha$
HEAD = e_1

This is also supported by the cooccurrence with an action/result-oriented adverb. In (11a), *youyaku* (finally) modifies the result of *tate-naosu*, which is grammatical. However, it becomes ungrammatical when *youyaku* cooccurs with *tate-naosi suru*. In (12), *hayaku* (quickly) modifies the action of *tate-naosu*, which it is grammatical both in (12a) and (12b).

(11) a.Youyaku hurui ie-o   tate-naosita
       Finally   old   house-Acc build-fix-Past.
       "rebuilt the old house finally"
    b.*Youyaku hurui ie-o   tate-naosi-sita.
       Finally   old house-Acc build-fix-suru-Past
       "rebuilt the old house finally"

(12) a. Hayaku hurui ie-o   tate-naosita.
        Quickly old house-Acc build-fix-Past
        "rebuilt the old house quickly"
    b. Hyaku hurui ie-o   tate-naosi-sita.
       Quickly old house-Acc build-fix-Past
       "rebuilt the old house quickly"

5. Conclusion This study investigates the theoretical puzzles that arise between compound verbs and compound verbal nouns in Japanese. We observed that such compounds may share a morphosyntactic structure but nevertheless have differentiated meanings because a difference appears in event-headedness. Besides, we argue that it should not be attributed to the presence of the light verb, the compound structure itself dictates a specific event structure.

References Lieber, Rochelle (1992) Compounding in English. *Rivista di Linguistica* 4(1): 79-96
        Pustejovsky, James (1995) *The Generative Lexicon*. MIT.