On the Raising Class of Japanese Compound Verbs

Compound verbs are formed quite productively in Japanese. Syntactic compound verbs (as opposed to lexical compound verbs) have transparent syntax, and are divided into the raising classes (e.g. *dasu ‘start’, *kakeru ‘about to’) and the control classes (oe*ru ‘finish’, sokon*eru ‘fail’, na*osu ‘repeat’) (Kageyama 1993, Koizumi 1999). Many works, explicitly or implicitly, take both V₁ and V₂ to be full verbs regardless of whether syntactic compounds are of the control or raising type. In this paper, I advance a different view that verbs in the second position have different categorical status. Specifically, I suggest that V₂ in the raising class behaves as a de-lexicalized semi-auxiliary verb selecting infinitival TP, whereas control V₂ in the raising class behaves like a full lexical verb taking another lexical verb as its complement, as schematically illustrated in (1).

(1) a. [[[ V₁] T_{inf} ] V₂]
   b. [[[ V₁ ] ] V₂]

I will argue for this proposal by showing that in certain contexts, V₂ in the raising class, but not V₂ in the control class, displays the same syntactic behavior as aspectual auxiliary verbs like -te iku/kuru/simau [igo/come/finish] ‘be/finish-\text{-}ing’.

There are at least three kinds of arguments that the raising verb of syntactic compounds selects infinitival TP as its complement. One argument comes from the fact that the raising verbs, but not the control verbs, can take an aspectual auxiliary verb in the te-form as its complement, just like auxiliary verbs in the te-form, as in (2).

(2) a. Kare-ga kusuri-o herasi-te iki- {dasi/*oe/*sokone}-ta.
   he-NOM medicine-ACC reduce go-{start/finish/fail}-PST
   ‘He {started/finished/failed in} reducing medicine.’
   b. Kare-ga kusuri-o herasi-te it-te {simat/mi}-ta.
   he-NOM medicine-ACC reduce go finish/try-PST
   ‘He {ended up/try} reducing medicine.’

The te-form can be assumed to head infinitival TP, since it originates as a perfective marker tu. Thus, the fact that the verb in the te-form can follow the main verb V₁ in the raising class shows that the second verb selects a tense projection syntactically, like auxiliary verbs. Another argument can be adduced from (3).

(3) a. Kare-ga syuu-ni ikkai hasiri-{dasi/*oe/*sokone}-ta.
   he-NOM week-in once run-{start/finish/fail}-PST
   ‘He {started/finished/failed in} running once a week.’
   b. *Kare-ga syuu-ni ikkai hasiri-te {simat/mi}-ta.
   he-NOM week-in once run finish/try-PST
   ‘He {ended up/try} running once a week.’

In the raising construction, the frequency adverb syuu-ni ikkai ‘once a week’ can specify the frequency of the act described by the main verb, but in the control construction, it cannot. Given that this frequency meaning comes from a temporal property of a lower clause, it is reasonable to say that the raising verb should select infinitival TP as its complement, even when it is contiguous with the main verb. What is more, the examples in (4) illustrate that the raising verbs, but not the control types of compound verbs, cannot be embedded under the causative sase.

   Ken-NOM Mari-DAT meal-ACC reduce-{start/finish/fail}-CAUS-PST
References


