

ABSTRACT

A Study of Sentential Compounds in Japanese Word Formation

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The subject of this study is a linguistic form in which nouns and suffixes are directly followed by elements that are equivalent to a sentence. In this research, this linguistic form is regarded as a linguistic phenomenon in which elements equivalent to a sentence are wrapped inside the compound word, and the author of this paper calls it ‘sentential compound.’

Normally, a sentence ending with the imperative form, volitional form, or sentence-ending particle cannot precede the compound word. Moreover, such a sentence cannot directly modify nouns without citation markers. Sentential compound is an ungrammatical expression, but in recent years, many examples of sentential compounds have been observed in blogs, SNS, daily conversations, etc. However, in conventional Japanese language research, the sentential compound is considered to be an exceptional linguistic phenomenon, and it has not been described and considered in detail as the subject of research. Therefore, its actual status has not been clarified.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the appearance status of sentential compounds, to empirically describe their formal and semantic features, and to theoretically elucidate the mechanism of Japanese that enables the formation of sentential compounds.

Part 1 describes the outline of the research and provides a discussion of previous research. Part 2 examines the situation of appearance of sentential compounds and provides a general overview to sentential compounds. In addition, based on the collected examples, it describes the formal and semantic features of sentential compounds and clarifies their overall picture.

First, for the examples collected, about 15,000 data were collected using a corpus containing web text, and it was found that at least 232 kinds of nouns and suffixes could become the latter part of sentential compounds. Many of the semantic features of the form that become the latter part of sentential compounds tend to represent abstract concepts. For example, language behavior, sentiment, nature, activity, or action.

It was found that a sentence of any structure could become the preceding part. In addition, in the elements equivalent to the sentence in the preceding part, a notational feature in which symbols such as exclamation marks, question marks, emoticons, and pictographs were often used was observed. However, although the degree of freedom in the combination of the preceding part and the latter part is high, not all sentences can be regarded as the preceding part. The sentence that expresses modality tends to be in the preceding part, and the modality and meaning of the nouns and suffixes in the latter part have high affinity.

Part 3 focuses on the sentential compounds whose latter parts are “HATSUGEN (speech, utterance),” KAN (feeling),” “TEIDO (degree),” and “KOGEDI (attack).” It describes the formal and semantic characteristics of each part as respective theories.

Part 4 clarifies why a peculiar linguistic expression called “sentential compound” can be formed and is widely used in modern Japanese. Specifically, it clarifies that the formation and use of sentential compounds are supported in a complex manner by (1) the element attribute of the word composition acquired by citing, (2) parallelism with various properties of typical words, and (3) expressiveness unique to sentential compounds.

First, for (1), the morphological foundation that supports the formation of sentential compounds has the nature of citation. The cited words acquire the function as a component of the language unit according to the background environment where the citation is inserted. Due to the nature of this citation, even in a sentence-equivalent element that cannot normally be the preceding part of the compound noun, the sentence-equivalent element functions as a one-word component.

For (2), this study showed that the properties found in sentential compounds are similar to the various properties of typical compound nouns in terms of syntactic, lexical, and phonological aspects. This similarity is the basis for the use of sentential compounds as compound nouns, even if they are morphologically peculiar.

(3) is an expression effect that can be expected by using sentential compounds. It has (a) an expression effect unique to the cited word and (b) an expression effect unique to the deviant expression. The former is to convey a concrete image of the object of expression to the listener in a realistic manner from the perspective of the speaker, and the latter is to arouse the listener’s interest. Such expression effects do not occur with common compound words. They are the basis of motivation for the use of sentential compounds.

This study has shown that cited words can be word components. From this, it was found that citation research, which has traditionally focused on sentence units in syntax theory and discourse research, can also focus on word units in word composition theory, and it is significant that the range of citation research has expanded. In addition, linguistic forms similar to sentential compounds were already observed in the Heian period and are presumed to be a universal linguistic phenomenon in Japanese. It is suggested that the results of this research can also contribute to the diachronic research of Japanese.