

The Japanese Light Verb Construction and Zero-Derivation
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The purpose of this presentation is to examine the categorical status of verbal nouns in the Japanese light verb constructions as shown in (1), and to show some evidence that the verbal nouns can be recognized as verbs, rather than nominals. Further, I argue that zero-derivation (Marchand 1969) is involved in the derived verbal category.

- (1) ?? John-ga Mary-kara zaisan-o bossyu-o si-ta
John-NOM Mary-FROM property-ACC confiscation-ACC did
'John confiscated property from Mary.'

(Note that (1) is marginally acceptable despite the effect of the double-'o' constraint (cf. Sells 1988, Kageyama 1993, Saito and Hoshi 2000)).

To illustrate the point, let us consider the following representations (2a-b):

- (2) a. ?? John-ga Mary-kara zaisan-o [_{NP} [_N bossyu]]-o si-ta
b. ?? John-ga Mary-kara zaisan-o [_V [_N bossyu]-Ø_{VZ}]-o si-ta

In (2a), which has been often assumed in the literature, the grammatical category of the verbal noun is identified with N(P). On the other hand, in the structure (2b), which I adopt here, it is categorized as a verb, owing to zero-derivation.

There is some empirical evidence in support of the claim. The first evidence that the verbal noun in the relevant construction holds verbal properties comes from the following contrast:

- (3) a. * John-ga Mary-kara zaisan-o [[_{ADJ} rifujin-na] bossyu]-o si-ta
b. ?? John-ga Mary-kara zaisan-o [[_{ADV} rifujin-ni] bossyu]-o si-ta

The example (3a), in which the adjective 'rifujin-na (unreasonable)' is attached to the verbal noun, yields the degraded result. In contrast, the example (3b) where the verbal noun is modified by the adverb 'rifujin-ni (unreasonably)' does not show such an effect. Thus, the fact that the verbal noun can be modified by the adverb, but not by the adjective, suggests that the categorical status of the verbal noun be analyzed as a verb. If we assume it to be nominal, we could not account for those facts. The second evidence that the resulting verbal property involves zero-derivation comes from the fact that the effect of Myers's (1984) generalization appears in (4b):

- (4) a. ?? John-ga Mary-kara zaisan-o [bossyu]-o si-ta
b. * John-ga Mary-kara zaisan-o [[_{affix} sai-[bossyu]]]-o si-ta

According to the generalization, zero-derived words do not allow further affixation. If so, we may conclude that the contrast between (4a-b) is due to the consequence that the affix 'sai-' in (4b) is attached to the zero-derived verb.