

## ■ Compounding

Compounding refers to the combining of two or more independent words, and it occurs with *wago* (words of Japanese origin), *kango* (words of Chinese origin), and *gairaigo* (loan words). In principle, words of the same type combine to create compound words, and the part of speech of the compound word is determined by that of the word that comes at the end. If the last word is a verb in the adverbial form, the compound word becomes a noun (e.g., *ameagari* ‘end of the rain’), and if the last word is the stem of an adjective, the compound word becomes a *na*-adjective (e.g., *kimijika* ‘short-tempered’).

Compounding may restrict the meaning of the word thus created (e.g., *akaji*. which means ‘deficit’, and does not mean ‘red letter’.)

The structure of a compound word basically follows the relationship among the words that are used to form the compound. Various types of relationship are: comparison, contrast, juxtaposition (e.g., *oyako* ‘parents and children’; *deiri* ‘going in and out’) and modification and supplementation (e.g., *oyagokoro* ‘parental tenderness’; *deokure* ‘getting a late start’). Some phonological changes, such as sequential voicing, euphonical changes, vowel switching, and sandhis (e.g., *sakadaru* ‘sake barrel’; *makuragi* ‘railroad ties’) tend to occur in the process of compounding, except when the compounds are in relationship of comparison and contrast (e.g., *oyako* ‘parent and child’; *kusaki* ‘herbaceous plants and trees’).

### ● Compound Nouns

When the last word in the compound is a noun, what comes before is, for the most part, a noun, an adjective stem, or the adverbial form of a verb (e.g., *akikusa* ‘autumn plant’; *aokusa* ‘young green leafy plant’; *karekusa* ‘dead grassy plant’). When the last part is the adverbial form of a verb, it is important to know if the verb can be used with *+suru*. Compound nouns can be classified into four types: noun+adverbial form of verbs (e.g., *hitogoroshi + suru* ‘to commit a murder’ but *hitodōri* ‘people coming and going+ \**suru*), adverbial form of verbs + adverbial form of verbs (e.g., *mikiki* ‘to see and hear’+ *suru* but *misugi* ‘to watch too much’+ \**suru*).

- (1) minaoshi : suru : minaosu
- (2) mikiki : suru : (no verb form)
- (3) misugi : \*suru : misugiru
- (4) miosame : \*suru : (no verb form)

### ● Compound Verbs

Compound verbs can be formed with nouns, adjectives, and adverbs (onomatopoeia) (e.g., *ikizuku* ‘to breathe, to be alive’, *chikazuku* ‘to approach’, *furatsuku* ‘to reel, to wander’). There are many ways of forming compound verbs. The process of forming compound verbs in Japanese is very productive, and compound verbs are important in Japanese language instruction and learning. They are classified into two major types based on the verb at the end.

- (1) Lexical compounding. Semantic constraints (e.g., in *mimawaru* ‘patrol, doing the round’ is the primary meaning) and lexical combining constraints (e.g., *mawaru* only combines with durational verbs. \**Shini* ‘die’ *mawaru*) apply. Major types of semantic relationships between the constituent words are: manner & means (e.g., *kiritaosu* ‘to cut down’ → *kitte taosu* ‘to

topple by way of cutting’; attendant circumstances: *asobikurasu* ‘to loaf all the time’ → *asobinagara kurasu* ‘to live one’s life having fun’; alternate action (e.g., *nakisakebu* ‘to cry frantically’ → *naitari sakendari suru* ‘to cry and shout’); aspect (e.g., *furiyamu* ‘to stop raining/snowing’ → *furu no ga yamu* ‘the action of falling stops.’ The case particle in the word-final verb may govern the compound verb (e.g., {*ni*} *noru* ‘to ride’ + {*o*} *mawasu* ‘to turn’: *kuruma o norimawasu* ‘to ride around in a car’; {*o*} *kamu* ‘to bite’ + {*ni*} *tsuku* ‘to attach’: *ashi ni kamitsuku* ‘to bite one’s leg’).

- (2) Grammatical (syntactic) compounding. The constituent words are in complementary relationship. In this type of compounding, constraints that are at work in (1) above do not apply. Therefore compounding of this type is very productive. The major types of semantic relationship between the constituent words are 1. aspect (e.g., *miowaru* ‘to finish watching’ → *miru koto ga owaru* ‘to finish the act of watching’); 2. excess (e.g., *misugiru* ‘to watch too much’ → *miru koto ga sugiru* ‘to overdo the act of watching’); 3. possibility (e.g., *miuru* ‘to possibly watch’ → *miru kanōsei ga aru* ‘there is a possibility that one watches’).

Type (2) of compounding is different type (1) in what can be used in the position of the first verb.

1. Use of *sō suru* to substitute the original verb (e.g., *Watashi wa miuru. Kare mo sōshiuru.* ‘I will possibly see it. He also may do so’);
2. Use with nominal verbs (e.g., *benkyō shiuru* ‘will possibly study’);
3. Honorific verb forms (e.g., *o kaki ni nariuru* ‘will possibly write’);
4. Passive and causative forms (e.g., *sareuru, saseuru*).

One must be careful when a word has both usages, (1) and (2). *Soto e mochidasu* ‘to carry something outside’ (moving something to the outside (1)) vs. *ame ga furidasu* ‘rain starts to fall’ (starting up, (2)); *Hito ni hanashikakeru* ‘to talk to someone’ (object-oriented (1)) vs. *iikakeru* ‘to start saying something’ (starting up, (2)). The order in which the process of compounding occurs with the constituent words is first (1) and then (2); the reverse does not occur (e.g., *kiritaoshi + kake + hajimeru* ‘about to start cutting down’).

### ● Compound Adjectives

Nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs (onomatopoeia) may be combined to form compound adjectives. Examples: *nadakai* ‘famous’; *kogekusai* ‘smelling scorched’, *hosonagai* ‘long and slender’, *horonigai* ‘slightly bitter tasting’. The productivity of this type of compounding is not very high.

→複合語 Compound Words (3-C), 語と形態素 Words and Morphemes (2-B), 語構成 Word Formation (2-B)

### ● References

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