

A lexical construction across a clausal boundary: an analysis of the Japanese self-quotative construction *kana to omou*

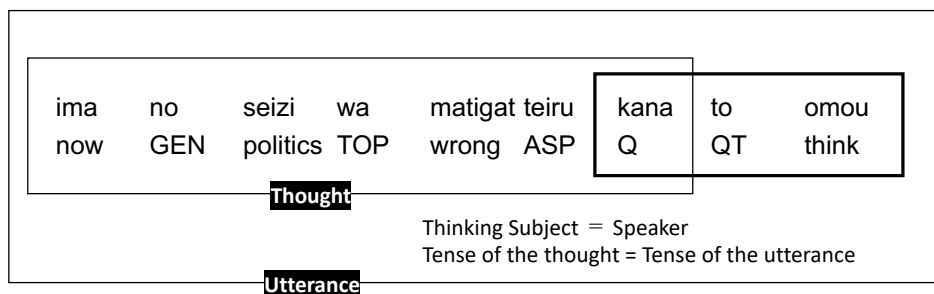
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The present study offers a corpus-based analysis on a lexical construction in Japanese which appears to span across a clausal boundary. In Japanese, *omou* 'to think' is a complement taking predicate (CTP) used to present one's own thought. The head-final structure of Japanese places a CTP after a complement, allowing *omou*, together with a quotative particle *to*, to be immediately preceded by a variety of sentence-final epistemic markers. In Example (1), *to omou* is immediately preceded by a questioning marker *kana*.

(1) *ima no seizi wa matigat teiru kana to omou*
now GEN politics TOP wrong ASP Q QT think

In example (1), the speaker is stating their personal opinion that "today's politics is wrong" (*ima no seizi wa matigat teiru*) by the use of *to omou* (Moriyama 1992). However, the questioning particle *kana* marks doubt about the proposition (Nitta 1991). Without *to omou*, the speaker is uncertain or doubtful about today's politics being wrong. Despite the apparent mismatch in meaning between *kana* and *to omou*, examples with *kana to omou* are widely attested in present-day Japanese (e.g., Suzuki 2015). The present study addresses this issue.

The hypothesis this study presents is that *kana to omou* as a whole has become constructionalized, developing a non-compositional meaning of expressing a speaker's certain opinion in a hedged way. In parallel with other mental state predicates such as *to think* in English (e.g., Thompson 2002), some studies have argued that *omou* is an epistemic marker expressing the speaker's subjective stance at the moment of utterance, in contrast to its conjugated forms such as progressive *omotteiru* (e.g., Nakau 1979; cf. Narrog 2012). This means that in self-quotations of *omou*, two 'situations' converge such that the thinking subject and the speaker, and the tense of the thought and the utterance, are equivalent (Sunakawa 1987). This structure is demonstrated in the diagram below. The proposed hypothesis assumes this structure as a necessary condition in which two epistemic markers *kana* and *to omou* form a construction.



To test the hypothesis, the study combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the non-compositional meaning of *kana to omou*. Using the Corpus of Everyday Japanese Conversation (CEJC) (Koiso et al. 2022), annotated for usage contexts, 745 examples

of all conjugated forms of "kana to omou" were retrieved. Quantitative results show that the present tense *kana to omou* is significantly used in contexts such as meetings and conversations with unfamiliar interlocutors, patterns that are not observed for other conjugated forms. Furthermore, the study qualitatively analyzes some predicates for which speakers express uncertainty with *kana* alone but certainty with *kana to omou*.

Overall, the present findings provide empirical evidence in favor of analyzing the present tense *kana to omou* as a lexical unit. Implications of the findings are discussed, particularly in relation to the growing awareness in usage based Construction Grammar on entrenched multi-word units that span across syntactic boundaries (e.g., Goldberg 2019).

Glosses

ASP	aspect
GEN	genitive
Q	questioning particle
QT	quotative particle
TOP	topic marker

References

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