
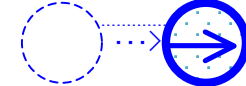


## (In)transitivity of a possessive verb in Japanese

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The crucial difference between HAVE-possessive and BE-possessive is that a transitive verb is used in the former while an intransitive verb is used in the latter. Most of Japanese verbs have a morphological marking for transitivity or intransitivity. *Motsu*, which is one of the verbs used to represent possessive relations, however, doesn't make a morphological distinction between the transitive and intransitive uses. This study explores the contrasts between HAVE-possessive and BE-possessive, transitivity and intransitivity, and related phenomena in the possessive expressions.

Japanese is a typical BE-language. The construction with the existential verb can express a wide variety of possessive relations. The use of transitive *motsu*-construction is, in contrast, limited to alienable ones. As opposed to *have*, *motsu* has not been grammaticalized yet. The verb itself is perfective and usually used with an aspectual suffix '-teiru', which can focus on either the action or the result phase in the "control cycle" (Langacker 2002). We can see a wide spectrum of the *motsu*-construction in the examples below. It represents physical control or possession in the transitive uses, while it denotes the meaning of 'hold', 'endure', 'sustain', or 'last' in the intransitive uses: Transitivity is highest in (1a) and intransitivity is highest in (1f), which is imperfective without the suffix.

1 a		<i>Kare-wa te-ni kenjyu-wo mot-teiru.</i> 3sg.m.-TOP hand-LOC gun-ACC 'He has a gun in his hand'	Action<force> Result<stasis>	transitive
1 b		<i>Kare-wa Tokyo-ni mise-wo mot-teiru.</i> 3sg.m.-TOP Tokyo-LOC shop-ACC 'He has a shop in Tokyo'		
1 c		<i>Ano mise-wa kare-no hitogara-de mot-teiru.</i> that shop-TOP 3sg.m.-GEN personality-OBL 'His personality keeps the shop going'	Action<force> Result<stasis>	intransitive
1 d		<i>Ano mise-wa ricchijoken-de mot-teiru.</i> that shop-TOP location-OBL 'Having a good location, the shop keeps going'		
1 e		<i>Ano mise-wa yoku mot-teiru.</i> that shop-TOP well 'The shop is running well'		
1 f		<i>Kono denchi-wa yoku motsu.</i> this battery-TOP well 'This battery lives long'	Baseline <stasis>	

*Have* and *motsu* have some features in common; they originally designate the sense of physical control; they are not passivized; and so on. Despite the similarities, the former has got through the process of subjectification and still keeps the transitive form while the latter has established the intransitive use. The intransitive use of *motsu* is quite similar to the existential construction in some sense. What distinguishes it from the existential one is that it implies force dynamics (Talmy 1988) in the meaning. Kawabata(2011) points out that the profile on the result phase prevents *motsu* from grammaticalization or subjectification. The present discussion focuses on the correlation between the verbal aspects and their grammaticalization or subjectification in the possessive verbs.

## References

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