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A plausible analysis of the Japanese light verb *naru* construction *

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1. Introduction

In a light verb construction, a complex predicate is formed through the combination of a semantically light verb and its argument(s), where the main predicative content is carried by the nominal element, rather than the verb itself (cf. Jespersen 1942). The main concern of this paper is to provide a plausible analysis of the Japanese light verb construction with *naru* ‘become’ such as *benkyoo-ni naru* ‘studying-DAT become’ where *naru* is combined with a verbal noun like *benkyoo* ‘studying’ followed by a dative case. This type of Japanese light verb construction with *naru* has not received as much attention as those with *suru* ‘do’. This paper particularly focuses on what kind of argument structure should be postulated for the light verb *naru*. To answer this research question, the argument structure of *naru* is examined and justified by comparing it with the argument structures of the light verb *suru* discussed in Kishimoto (2019, 2025). It is concluded that *naru* takes ‘theme(VN)’ as its argument, which is similar with the non-agentive type of *suru* (Kishimoto 2019, 2025).

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the core data of the light verb *naru* construction and shows the syntactic and semantic peculiarities of the current construction. In section 3, it is first shown how *suru* has been analyzed in previous studies, followed by a discussion of the argument structure of *naru*, along with the syntactic structure of the light verb *naru* construction. Section 4 discusses the semantic characteristics of the oblique argument and argues that the light verb *naru* construction can be divided into two types: one that requires a modifier to the verbal noun and the other type that does not have such a requirement. Section 5 is a conclusion.

2. The light verb *naru* construction

This section first discusses that the constructions like (1) below can be considered as one type of the light verb construction, which has not received much attention.¹

- (1) *Kaigai-no shikitari-ga John nitotte/no benkyoo-ni na-tta.*
Foreign-GEN custom-NOM John for/ GEN studying-DAT become-PST
‘(Learning) foreign customs became a learning experience for John.’

The predicate *benkyoo-ni naru* ‘studying-DAT become’ in (1) consists of a verbal noun *benkyoo* ‘studying’ and the verb *naru* ‘become’, forming one type of complex predicates

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¹ List of abbreviations: ACC=accusative, ALL=allative, COMP=complementizer, CONJ=conjunctive, COP=copula, DAT=dative, GEN=genitive, NEG=negation, NOM=nominative, NMLZ=nominalizer, PST=past, TOP=topic

where the main predicative content is carried by the nominal element. This is confirmed by the fact that sentence (1) would be ungrammatical if the verbal noun *benkyoo* ‘studying’ is omitted as shown in (2).

- (2) **Kaigai-no shikitari-ga John nitotte/no na-tta.*
 foreign-GEN custom-NOM John for/GEN become-PST
 Intended: ‘(Learning) foreign customs became a learning experience for John.’

The fact that the semantic burden of (1) relies on the verbal noun can also be confirmed by looking at (3), which shows that the nominative case marked noun *kaigai-no shikitari* ‘foreign customs’ can occur within the verbal noun phrase as its argument. In such a case, the argument is case-marked by a genitive case *no* followed by the verbal noun.

- (3) *Kaigai-no shikitari-no benkyoo*
 foreign-GEN custom-GEN studying
 ‘the study on foreign customs’

Overall, the observations above indicate that sentences like (1) show one type of light verb constructions. However, (1) is not a typical light verb construction regarding the argument alignment. In general, *benkyoo* ‘studying’ requires an agent and a theme. When the verbal noun *benkyoo* ‘studying’ is combined with the light verb *suru* ‘do’ indicating an action of studying, the agent argument appears in a syntactically higher position than the theme argument as shown in (4)

- (4) *John-ga kaigai-no shikitari nitsuite no benkyoo-o shi-ta.*
 John-NOM foreign-GEN custom about GEN studying-ACC do-PST
 ‘John learned the foreign customs.’

In (4), the agent *John* is realized as a subject and the theme *kaigai no shikitari* ‘foreign customs’ is marked with the genitive case *no*, appearing inside the verbal noun phrase. In (1), on the other hand, the theme argument *kaigai-no shikitari* ‘foreign custom’ is realized as the subject. The agent argument *John* in (4) corresponds to the argument marked either by *nitotte* or *no* in (1) and this argument represents an experiencer role. The experiencer argument can be considered as an oblique argument since *John* in (1) is omissible as shown in (5).

- (5) *Kaigai-no shikitari-ga benkyoo-ni na-tta.*
 Foreign-GEN custom-NOM studying-DAT become-PST
 ‘(Learning) foreign customs became a learning experience.’

The examples (1) and (4) show that the argument realization differs although both the light verb *naru* ‘become’ and *suru* ‘do’ select the same verbal noun *benkyoo* ‘studying’. While the Japanese light verb construction depicted by *suru* ‘do’ plus verbal nouns like (4) has been attracted attention for over 35 years (Grimshaw and Mester 1988, Miyagawa 1989, Terada 1990, Tsujimura 1990, Kageyama 1993, Uchida and Nakayama 1993, Miyamoto and Kishimoto (2016), Kishimoto 2019, 2025), examples of *naru* ‘become’ predicates like (1) have not received much attention except Yu (2016, 2020). In Yu (2016, 2020), it is argued that the light verb *naru* ‘become’ like (1) shows different behaviors

from the other *naru* predicates that have been discussed in the literature (cf. Sato 2005). It is shown in Yu (2016, 2020) that the new type of *naru* ‘become’ does not mean a change of state unlike the typical use of *naru* ‘become’. For instance, *naru* ‘become’ in a sentence like *John ga kyooju-ni natta*. ‘John became a professor.’ describes the change of state of the subject *John*. The *naru* ‘become’ in (1) is also different from what Sato (2005) calls *Keisanteki Suiron no naru* ‘Computational reasoning *naru*’ and *Taijinteki kooi no naru* ‘Interpersonal behavior *naru*’ (See Sato (2005) for the definition of the both types of *naru*). In these two types of *naru*, Sato (2005) analyzes that the *naru* does not mean a change of state because it can be replaced by the copular verb *da*. With respect to this point, Yu (2016, 2020) show that the light verb *naru* in (1) is different from both *Keisanteki Suiron no naru* ‘Computational reasoning *naru*’ and *Taijinteki kooi no naru* ‘Interpersonal behavior *naru*’ because *naru* in (1) cannot be replaced with the copular verb *da* as shown in (6).

- (6) **Kaigai-no shikitari-ga John nitotte/no benkyoo da.*
 foreign-GEN custom-NOM John for/GEN studying-DAT COP
 ‘(Learning) foreign customs is a learning experience for John.’

Accordingly, it is concluded in Yu (2016, 2020) that the *naru* in examples like (1) belongs to a different type from the other three types of *naru*, and the new type of *naru* is named “The Fourth Type of *naru*”. In what follows, this paper sheds light on the argument structure and the argument realization of the new type of *naru* like (1), which is not mentioned in Yu (2016, 2020). It is shown that the argument structure of *naru* ‘become’ shares with the argument structure of the non-agentive type of *suru*.

3. The argument structure of *suru* and *naru*

Due to the space limitations, this section provides a brief review of previous analyses of the light verb construction with *suru*, with a special focus on its argument structure. It then suggests that the light verb *naru* shares the same argument structure as the non-agentive type of *suru* discussed in Kishimoto (2019, 2025).

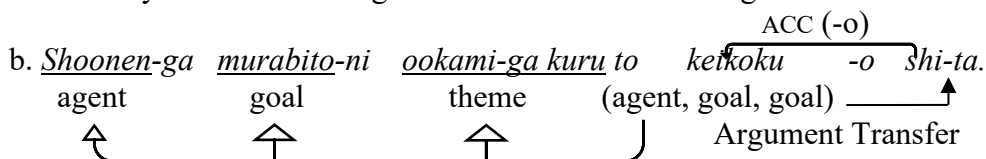
3.1. Arguments over *suru*

Grimshaw and Mester (1988), which is the classic and most influential study of the argument structure of the light verb *suru*, postulates that *suru* does not obtain any arguments in its argument structure. It is suggested in Grimshaw and Mester (1988) that the arguments of the verbal noun transfers to the argument structure of *suru* by an operation they call *Argument Transfer*. This is depicted as in (7).

- (7) a. *keikoku* (agent, goal, theme)
 b. *suru* () < ACC >
 c. *keikoku* () + *suru* (agent, goal, theme) < ACC >

(7a) indicates that the verbal noun *keikoku* ‘warning’ takes the thematic roles of agent, goal, and theme in its argument structure. (7b) represents that *suru* does not take any thematic roles in its argument structure but it only assigns an accusative case. (7c) shows that the arguments of the verbal noun is transferred to the argument structure of *suru* when the verbal noun is combined with *suru*. With this in mind, the argument realization of (8a) is explained by (8b) (Grimshaw and Mester 1988).

- (8) a. *Shoonen-ga murabito-ni ookami-ga kuru to keikoku -o shi-ta.*
 boy-NOM villager-DAT wolf-NOM come COMP warning-ACC do-PST
 ‘The boy warned the villagers that the wolf was coming.’



(8b) shows that the agent and goal and theme arguments of *keikoku* ‘warning’ is first transferred to *suru* and then the agent is assigned to *shoonen* ‘boy’, the goal to *murabito* ‘villager’, and theme to *ookami-ga kuru* ‘wolf coming’. The accusative case of *keikoku* ‘warning’ is assigned by *suru*. As a result, sentence (8a) would be borne out.

Contrary to Grimshaw and Mester (1998), the recent studies of Kishimoto (2019, 2025) argue that the light verb *suru* possesses an argument structure. Kishimoto (2019, 2025) suggest that there can be postulated two types of argument structures in accordance with whether *suru* is agentive or non-agentive. The agentive type of *suru* like sentences of (8a) possesses an argument structure depicted in (9).

- (9) *suru* : <agent, goal, theme(VN)>

(9) shows that *suru* takes agent and goal and VN as its arguments, where ‘theme(VN)’ is designated as a label for the theme role assigned to the VN (Kishimoto 2025: 242). In addition, the theme role, *ookami ga kuru*, is assigned by the verbal noun (VN) and it is extracted from the VN by Argument Ascension as (10) illustrates.

- (10) *Shoonen*<agent>-ga *murabito*<goal>-ni *ookami-ga kuru to* [_{VNP} *ookami-ga kuru*
keikoku<theme>]-o *shi-ta*<agent, goal, theme(VN)>.
 Argument Ascension
-

In contrast, the non-agentive type of the light verb construction with *suru* such as (11a) is different from the agentive type in that the non-agentive type of *suru* bears an argument structure like (11b). In (11b), *suru* only selects VN as its argument.

- (11) a. *Kazan-ga funka-o shi-ta.*
 volcano-NOM eruption-ACC do-PST
 ‘The volcano erupted.’
 b. *suru* : <theme(VN)>

The derivation of (11a) is explained as shown in (12). In (12), the argument *kazan* ‘volcano’ which is assigned a theme role from the verbal noun *funka* ‘eruption’ is extracted to the subject position by Argument Ascension.

- (12) *Kazan-ga* [_{VNP} *kazan funka*<theme>]-o *shi-ta*<theme(VN)>.
 Argument Ascension
-

The argument structure of the agentive type of *suru* and that of the non-agentive type of *suru* differ in that the agent and goal roles of the agentive type are assigned from *suru*

while the theme role of the (non)agentive type is assigned from the verbal noun. In Kishimoto (2019, 2025), it is argued that this difference gives rises to syntactic distinctions between the agentive type and the non-agentive type. According to Kishimoto (2019, 2025), the two types of *suru* constructions behave differently in scrambling, topicalization, relativization, and pseudo-clefting.

(13) The diagnosis of (non) agentive types

Operation to VN	Scrambling	Topicalization	Relativization	Pseudo-clefting
Agentive Type	ok	ok	ok	ok
Non-agentive Type	*	*	*	*

It is argued in Kishimoto (2019, 2025) that the VN of the agentive type can be moved to a position higher than the subject by the syntactic operations of scrambling, topicalization, relativization, and pseudo-clefting while the VN of the non-agentive type cannot undergo such syntactic operations due to “Proper Binding Condition” effect. These facts are confirmed by following examples. Example (14) shows an agentive type of *suru* and it is illustrated in (15) that the verbal noun *jogen* ‘advice’ can undergo such syntactic operations.

- (14) *Sensei-ga gakusei-ni jogen-o shi-ta.*
 teacher-NOM student-DAT advice-ACC do-PST
 ‘The teacher gave advice to the student.’

(15) a. Scrambling

Jogen-o sensei-ga gakusei-ni shi-ta.
 advice-ACC teacher-NOM student-DAT do-PST
 ‘The teacher gave advice to the student.’

b. Topicalization

Jogen-wa sensei-ga gakusei-ni shi-ta.
 advice-TOP teacher-NOM student-DAT do-PST
 ‘As for advice, the teacher gave it to the student.’

c. Relativization

Sensei-ga gakusei-ni shi-ta jogen
 teacher-NOM student-DAT do-PST advice
 ‘the advice which the teacher gave to the student’

d. Pseudo-clefting

Sensei-ga gakusei-ni shi-ta no-wa jogen da.
 teacher-NOM student-DAT do-PST NMLZ-TOP advice COP
 ‘What the student gave to the student was advice’

(16), in contrast, shows that the verbal noun *funka* ‘eruption’ in the non-agentive type of *suru* of (11) cannot undergo such syntactic operations.

(16) a. Scrambling

?/**Funka-o kasan-ga shi-ta.*
 eruption-ACC volcano-NOM do-PST
 ‘The volcano erupted.’

b. Topicalization

**Funka-wa kasan-ga shi-ta.*

eruption-TOP volcano-NOM do-PST
 ‘As for eruption, the volcano did it.’

c. Relativization

*[*kazan-ga shi-ta*] *funka*
 volcano-NOM do-PST eruption
 (Lit.) ‘the eruption which the volcano did’

d. Pseudo-clefting

*[*Kazan-ga shi-ta*] *no-wa funka da.*
 volcano-NOM do-PST NMLZ-TOP eruption COP
 ‘What the volcano did was eruption’

Cases from (14) to (16) indicate that if the verbal noun can be moved to a position higher than the subject by the syntactic operations of scrambling, topicalization, relativization, and pseudo-clefting then the *suru* possesses the argument structure of the agentive type *suru*. If the VN cannot undergo such operations then the *suru* possesses the argument structure of the non-agentive type *suru*. It is reasonable to conclude that the light verb *suru* highly likely possesses argument structures because such distinctions between (15) and (17) would not be borne out if *suru* does not take arguments as suggested in Grimshaw and Mester (1988).

3.2. Application of Kishimoto’s diagnosis to *naru*

Having reviewed that the light verb *suru* has two different types of argument structures, this section shows that the light verb *naru* also possesses the argument structure of <theme(VN)> by looking at the facts that the VN in the light verb *naru* constructions cannot undergo the syntactic operations of scrambling, topicalization, relativization, and pseudo-clefting.

(17) a. Scrambling

?/**Benkyoo-ni Kaigai-no shikitari-ga (John nitotte) na-tta.*
 studying-DAT foreign-GEN custom-NOM John for become-PST
 ‘(Learning) foreign customs became a learning experience for John.’

b. Topicalization

**Benkyoo-wa Kaigai-no shikitari-ga (John nitotte) na-tta.*
 studying-TOP foreign-GEN custom-NOM John for become-PST
 (Lit.) ‘As for learning, (learning) foreign customs became for John.’

c. Relativization

**Kaigai-no shikitari-ga (John nitotte) na-tta benkyoo*
 foreign-GEN custom-NOM John for become-PST studying
 (Lit.) ‘the learning which the (learning) foreign customs became’

d. Pseudo-clefting

**Kaigai-no shikitari-ga (John nitotte) na-tta no-wa*
 foreign-GEN custom-NOM John for become-PST NMLZ-TOP
benkyoo da.
 studying COP
 (Lit.) ‘What (learning) foreign customs became for John was learning’

(17a-d) represent that the verbal noun *benkyoo* ‘studying’ cannot be moved to a position higher than the subject by the syntactic operations of scrambling, topicalization,

relativization, and pseudo-clefting. These facts represent that the light verb construction with *naru* is parallel to the light verb construction with the non-agentive *suru*. Accordingly, the argument structure of *naru* can be postulated as the same as that of the non-agentive *suru* shown below in (18).

(18) *naru* : <theme(VN)>

Therefore, the arguments of the light verb *naru* construction would be realized in a similar manner with the non-agentive *suru* constructions as (19) shows.

(19) *Kaigai-no shikitari-ga [VNP Kaigai-no shikitari benkyoo<theme>]-ni*
 foreign-GEN custom-NOM foreign-GEN custom studying -DAT
na-tta <theme(VN)> Argument Ascension
 become-PST

(19) shows that the theme role *kaigai-no shikitari* ‘foreign custom’ is first assigned from the verbal noun and then moves to the subject position by Argument Ascension. One now might wonder whether the oblique argument *John* in (1) is the argument of the verbal noun or the argument of *naru*. The fact that the oblique argument in (1) is the argument of the verbal noun can be confirmed by looking at Argument doubling and the ‘deputy’ interpretation.

Kishimoto (2019, 2025) claims that the agentive-type of light verb *suru* constructions allows the ‘deputy’ interpretation as (20) describes. (20) can have a goal argument *Eri* marked with *e-no* ‘to-GEN’ optionally (i.e. the postposition *e* indicates that the argument is identified as a goal) in addition to a goal argument *Ken*, meaning that the teacher gave *Ken* advice that he/she was supposed to give to *Eri*.

(20) *Sensei-ga Ken-ni [Eri-e-no jogen]-o shi-ta.*
 teacher-NOM Ken-DAT [Eri-to-GEN advice-ACC do-PST
 ‘The teacher gave Eri’s advice to Ken.’

In (20), there are two goal arguments, *Eri* and *Ken*. Kishimoto (2019, 2025) argues that this is possible because the goal argument *Ken* is assigned by the light verb *suru* while the goal argument *Eri* is assigned by the verbal noun *jogen* ‘advice’. In accordance with this deputy interpretation, (21a) shows that it is not possible to use two different theme role arguments. This fact is similar with the non-agentive *suru* construction as (21b) shows (Kishimoto 2019, 2025).

- (21) a. **Kaigai-no shikitari-ga (kawarini) [kokunai-no shikitari-no]*
 foreign-GEN custom-NOM on.behalf domestic-GEN custom-GEN
benkyoo-ni na-tta.
 studying-DAT become-PST
 (Lit.) ‘(Learning) foreign customs became a learning experience on behalf of learning domestic customs.’
 b. **Fuji-san-ga [Asama-yama-no funka]-o shi-ta.*
 Fuji-Mt-NOM Asama-Mt-GEN eruption-ACC do-PST
 ‘Mt. Fuji had Mt. Asama’s eruption.’

In the non-agentive type of light verb *suru* constructions of (21b), it is not possible to contain an extra theme argument *Asama-yama* ‘Mt. Asama’, in addition to the theme subject *Fuji-san* ‘Mt. Fuji’. Similar remarks hold for (21a). In the light verb *naru* construction of (21a), it is not possible to contain an extra theme argument *kokunai-no shikitari* ‘domestic custom’, in addition to the theme subject *kaigai-no shikitari* ‘foreign custom’. Please note that one participant at *The International Argument Alternation Workshop* pointed out that sentences like (22a) sound grammatical even though there appear two different theme roles, *kaigai-no shikitari* ‘foreign custom’ and *bunka* ‘culture’. However, these two arguments cannot be considered in a similar manner with (21a) because *kawarini* ‘on.behalf’ is not possible to co-occur in the sentence, showing that the deputy interpretation does not obtain here.

- (22) a. *Kaigai-no shikitari-ga [subarashii bunka-no] benkyoo-ni na-tta.*
 foreign-GEN custom-NOM wonderful culture-GEN studying-DAT become-PST
 (Lit.) ‘(Learning) foreign customs became a learning experience on behalf of learning wonderful cultures.’
- b. **Kaigai-no shikitari-ga kawarini [subarashii bunka-no]*
 foreign-GEN custom-NOM on.behalf wonderful culture-GEN
benkyoo-ni na-tta.
 studying-DAT become-PST
 (Lit.) ‘(Learning) foreign customs became a learning experience on behalf of learning wonderful cultures.’

Let us now look at the possibility that whether we can take two different oblique arguments in (1). (23) shows that the oblique argument marked with *nitotte* in (1) cannot have deputy interpretation and therefore it can be concluded that the oblique argument is not assigned from *naru* but it is assigned from the verbal noun *benkyoo* ‘studying’.

- (23) **Kaigai-no shikitari-ga John nitotte [Mary-no benkyoo-ni] na-tta.*
 foreign-GEN custom-NOM John for/GEN Mary-GEN studying-DAT become-PST
 (Lit.) ‘(Learning) foreign customs became a learning experience for John on behalf of Mary.’

3.3. Theoretically predicted facts

If my proposal is on the right track, it is predicted that the light verb *naru* construction will show the same descriptive patterns in argument ellipsis and the specificity condition effect as the non-agentive type *suru* constructions. This prediction is right as shown below. (24a) shows that the non-agentive light verb construction with *suru* is not acceptable if the verbal noun is omitted while the theme subject is overtly expressed (Kishimoto 2025:256). Similar remarks hold for the *naru* construction as (24b) represents.

- (24) a. **Kinoo-wa ano kazan-ga funka-o shi-ta-ga,*
 yesterday-TOP that volcano-NOM eruption-ACC do-PST-CONJ
kyoo-wa kono kazan-ga shi-ta.
 today-TOP this volcano-NOM do-PST
 ‘That volcano erupted yesterday, and this volcano did today.’
- b. **Kinoo-wa kaigai-no shikitari-ga benkyoo-ni*
 yesterday-TOP foreign-GEN custom-NOM studying-DAT

na-tta-ga, kyoo-wa kokunai-no shikitari-ga na-tta.
 become-PST-CONJ today-TOP domestic-GEN custom-NOM become-PST
 ‘(Learning) foreign customs became a learning experience yesterday, and
 (learning) domestic customs became a learning experience today.’

In addition, (25a) and (25b) show that the verbal nouns cannot be modified by definite expressions like *kyonen* ‘last year’ in both the non-agentive type *suru* and the light verb *naru*.

- (25) a. ?**Kazan-ga [kyonen-no funka]-o shi-ta.*
 volcano-NOM [last.year-GEN eruption-ACC do-PST
 (Lit.) ‘The volcano did last year’s eruption.’
 b. **Kaigai no shikitari-ga kyonen-no benkyoo ni na-tta.*
 foreign-GEN custom-NMLZ last.year-GEN studying-DAT become-PST
 (Lit.) ‘(Learning) foreign customs became last year’s learning experience.’

The similarities shown above between the non-agentive *suru* type of the light verb *suru* construction and the light verb *naru* construction indicate that it is reasonable to claim that the light verb *naru* possesses the argument structure of <theme(VN)> in a similar manner with the non-agentive *suru* of the light verb *suru* construction.

4. Thematic roles of the oblique argument

Before concluding this paper, I would like to claim that there are two distinct thematic roles of the oblique argument. One is beneficiary as (26) shows. In (26a), the oblique argument *watashitachi* ‘we’ is understood as a beneficiary, and so is *kare* ‘he’ in (26b). *watashitachi* ‘we’ in (26a) receives a benefit from the deal and *kare* ‘he’ in (26b) receives a benefit from walking.

- (26) a. *Kono torihiki-ga watashitachi-no toku-ni naru.*
 this deal-NOM we-GEN benefit-DAT become
 ‘This deal will benefit us.’
 b. *Sampo-ga kare nitotte daietto-ni na-tta.*
 walking-NOM he for diet-DAT become-PST
 ‘Walking helped him lose weight.’

The other one is malefactive as (27) represents. In (27), the oblique argument *anata* ‘you’ is understood as a malefactive because *anata* ‘you’ will be harmed by telling lies.

- (27) *Uso-wa anata-ni totte son-ni naru.*
 lies-TOP you-DAT for harm-DAT become
 ‘(Telling) lies will harm you.’

The fact that the oblique argument can be understood as either beneficiary or malefactive can be confirmed by looking at the comparison below.

- (28) a. *Taro-wa gengogaku-o benkyoo shi-ta ga, nanimo minitsuite i-nai.*
 Taro-TOP linguistics-ACC studying do-PST CONJ, nothing acquire be-NEG
 ‘Taro studied linguistics, but nothing has stuck with him.’

- b. **Gengogaku-wa Taro nitotte benkyoo-ni na-tta ga,*
 linguistics-TOP Taro for studying-DAT become-PST CONJ,
nanimo minitsuite i-nai.
 nothing acquire be-NEG
 ‘Linguistics was a learning experience for Taro, but nothing really stuck with him.’

The subordinate clause followed by the conjunction *ga* in (28a) is the agentive light verb *suru* construction. In this case, it is possible to cancel the result that will be brought about by the action of studying. In contrast, such a cancelation is not possible in the light verb *naru* construction of (28b), showing that *Taro* here is not merely the doer of the action of studying but the experiencer who undergoes a benefit that will be brought about by the action of studying linguistics.

Lastly, it is noted that some verbal nouns of the light verb *naru* predicates require obligatory modifiers as shown in (29).

- (29) a. *Ryuugaku-ga gakusei nitotte *(ii) keiken-ni naru.*
 studying.abroad-NOM student for good.experiencing-DAT become
 ‘Studying abroad can be a good experience for students.’
 b. *Kobe-e-no hoomon-ga watashi nitotte *(tanoshii) ryokoo-ni na-tta.*
 Kobe-ALL-GENvisit-NOM I for fun.travelling-DAT become-PST
 ‘The visit to Kobe turned out to be a fun trip for me.’

(29) shows that the verb nouns *keiken* ‘experiencing’ in (29a) and *ryokoo* ‘travelling’ in (29b) do not combine with the light verb *naru* ‘become’ on their own, but the sentences become acceptable when modifiers like *ii* (‘good’) are added to the verbal nouns. This is because the oblique argument *gakusei* ‘student’ in (29a) and *watashi* ‘I’ in (29b) cannot be understood as an experiencer argument without such modifiers.²

5. Conclusion

This paper has pointed out that there is a new type of the Japanese light verb construction with the light verb *naru* and has shown that it is plausible to claim that *naru* in the light verb *naru* construction possesses the argument structure of <theme(VN)>, which is the same argument structure as the non-agentive type of *suru* in the light verb *suru* construction. As a side effect of our proposal, in response to the contentious debate over

²The examples in (i) represent some other lists of those verbal nouns that require obligatory modifiers with *naru*. Those in (ii) represents the verbal nouns that do not require such modifiers. Due to the space limitations, I would not discuss further about the details of the data in the lists.

- (i) *gakusyuu-ni naru* (learning-DAT become), *keiken-ni naru* (experience-DAT become), *taiken-ni naru* (hands-on experience-DAT become), *shigoto-ni naru* (work-DAT become), *hanashi-ni naru* (talk-DAT become), *undo-ni naru* (exercise-DAT become), *toreningu-ni naru* (training-DAT become), *ryokoo-ni naru* (trip-DAT become), *seikatsu-ni naru* (living-DAT become), etc.
 (ii) *benkyoo-ni naru* (study-DAT become), *kyoouiku-ni naru* (education-DAT become), *toku-ni naru* (benefit-DAT become), *son-ni naru* (damage-DAT become), *daietto-ni naru* (diet-DAT become), etc.

whether *suru* has argument structures, this paper implies that it is necessary to posit argument structures for *suru*. If both *sure* and *naru* do not have argument structures, then the *suru* and *naru* constructions under the discussion would have the same syntactic structure, contrary to fact.

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