

The grammaticality of Japanese passives

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The grammaticality of Japanese passives has been well studied from various perspectives (Harada, 1973; Hoshi, 1994; Howard & Niyekawa-Howard, 1976; Ishikawa, 1985; Ishizuka, 2012; Kitagawa & Kuroda, 1992; Kubo, 1992; Kuno, 1973; Kuroda, 1965, 1979, 1985; Miyagawa, 1989; Oshima, 2003; Perlmutter, 1973; Shibatani, 1990, 1995; Terada, 1990; Teramura, 1982; Uda, 1994; among many others), though it has not been fully explained – one of the unsolved problems is *split passivizability*, referring to cases where one and the same verb forms a grammatical passive in some contexts but an ungrammatical passive in other contexts though their corresponding active sentences are fully well-formed.¹ This study proposes that Japanese passives are not derived from role suppression but from a sort of complex predicate formation, involving a matrix verb *r/are* and a base verb, and this complex a-structure contributes to split passivizability.

I propose that the verb *r/are* is a ditransitive verb with a transitive variant, expressing *affectedness*. The verb *r/are* selects a subject, a complement clause and optionally a 'by-phrase' in f-structure; these three arguments are realized as an *affectedee*, an *event* and an optional *affector* in a-structure.

The fact that a subject and a 'by-phrase' are selected by *r/are* is suggested by the example sentences in (1)-(4) below. The passive sentences in (1b) and (2b) are derived from the transitive verb *morat(w)* 'receive'; the former is well-formed but the latter is ill-formed, although their corresponding active sentences in (1a) and (2a) are all well-formed. Similarly, the intransitive verb *taore* 'collapse' demonstrates split passivizability in (3)-(4). This clearly indicates that a subject and a 'by-phrase' can influence the well-formedness of passive sentences.

1.
 - a. ACTIVE
Yoko-ga *neko-o morat-ta*.
Yoko-NOM cat-ACC receive-PAST
'Yoko **received** a cat.'
 - b. PASSIVE
neko-ga Yoko-ni *moraw-are-ta*.
cat-NOM Yoko-by receive-PASS-PAST
'A cat was **received** by Yoko.'
2.
 - a. ACTIVE
Yoko-ga *shoosan-o morat-ta*.
Yoko-NOM praise-ACC receive-PAST
'Yoko **received** praise.'

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- b. PASSIVE
 shoosan-ga* *Yoko-ni* **moraw-are-ta.
 praise-NOM Yoko-by receive-PASS-PAST
 Intended: 'Praise was **received** by Yoko.'
- 3.
- a. ACTIVE
Yoko-ga **taore-ta**.
 Yoko-NOM collapse-PAST
 'Yoko **collapsed**.'
- b. PASSIVE
Ichiro-ga *Yoko-ni* **taore-are-ta**.
 Ichiro-NOM Yoko-by collapse-PASS-PAST
 'Ichiro was **collapsed** on by Yoko (Ichiro had Yoko **collapse** on him).'
- 4.
- a. ACTIVE
isu-ga **taore-ta**.
 chair-NOM collapse-PAST
 'A *chair* **collapsed**.'
- b. PASSIVE
 Ichiro-ga* *isu-ni* **taore-are-ta.
 Ichiro-NOM chair-by collapse-PASS-PAST
 Intended: 'Ichiro was **collapsed** on by a *chair* (Ichiro had a *chair* **collapse** on him).'

This study argues that the matrix verb *r/are* projects a PRED feature, AFF(ectedness), as defined in (5) below. The AFF feature consists of an af(fecte)e *x*, an optional af(fecto)r *y* and an ev(ent) *z*; these three roles are defined as $[-r]$, $[-o]$ and $[+c]$, respectively (cf. Falk, 2001, 2005). The AFF feature denotes that an affectee *x* is affected in an event *z*, initiated by an affector *y*. The a-structure of *r/are* is 'incomplete' in denotation, and this obligates *r/are* to enclose a base verb as the event *z* role in a-structure.

5. *r/are*:

| | | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|
| | <i>afe</i> | <i>afr</i> | <i>ev</i> |
| | | | |
| a-structure: | 'AFF | ⟨ <i>x</i> | (<i>y</i>) <i>z</i> ⟩' |
| | $[-r]$ | $[-o]$ | $[+c]$ |

This study adopts attribute-value matrices to represent a-structure; the a-structure in (6) below expresses the passive sentence in (2b) above. In (6), connotation, f_1 and f_2 , represents control configurations: a matrix *x* (*neko* 'cat') controls an embedded *y* (a theme) and a matrix *y* (*Yoko*) controls an embedded *x* (a recipient). Adopting control equations in f-structure, this study proposes that *r/are* specifies for two control configurations in a-structure, $((\uparrow x) = (\uparrow z a^+))$ and $(\uparrow y) = (\uparrow z x)$. The former denotes that an affectee *x* optionally controls an argument *a* embedded in an event *z*; whereas the latter denotes that an affector *y*, if present, obligatorily controls the *x* role of a base verb.

6. a-structure:

| | |
|----------|---|
| PRED | 'AFF ⟨(↑ <i>x</i>) ((↑ <i>y</i>)) (↑ <i>z</i>)⟩' |
| <i>x</i> | [PRED 'CAT'] : f_1 |
| | ⋮ |
| <i>y</i> | [PRED 'NAME _{<i>y</i>} '] : f_2 |
| | ⋮ |
| <i>z</i> | [PRED 'RECEIVE ⟨(↑ <i>x</i>) (↑ <i>y</i>)⟩'] |
| | <i>x</i> f_2 |
| | <i>y</i> f_1 |
| | ⋮ |

This study also proposes that Japanese passives are not only subject to the well-formedness conditions for a- and f-structures, but also subject to a language-specific condition, concerning whether the referent of a subject is understood as the 'most affected' participant in an event, which I term the *Relative Affectedness Condition* (RAC). Relative affectedness expresses a relative value of affectedness between two or more participants in an event, denoting which participant is more affected than the other. The fundamental idea is that, if an affectee *x* controls an embedded 'patient-like' role and an affector *y* controls an embedded 'agent-like' role, the former is understood as more affected than the latter, because the former is acted on by the latter (e.g., *Ichiro-ga Yoko-ni but-are-ta* 'Ichiro was hit by Yoko'); this satisfies the RAC. It follows that Japanese passives are unacceptable if an affectee *x* controls an embedded 'agent-like' role and an affector *y* controls an embedded 'patient-like' role, because the former is not the 'most affected' participant (e.g., **kega-ga Yoko-ni kurushim-are-ta* 'injury was suffered from by Yoko'); this violates the RAC.

A complexity arises from cases where a predicator selects two 'patient-like' roles, or cases where an affectee does not control any embedded arguments, as exemplified by *morat(w)* 'receive' and *taore* 'collapse' in (1)-(4) above. In these cases, the RAC is satisfied by the overall understanding of how a base event takes place: an *autonomous* affector, having potential to influence a base event, is regarded as less affected than an affectee, which is specified as affected by *r/are*.

In sum, the grammaticality of Japanese passives is determined by the RAC, the composition of a-structure and the status of a 'by-phrase' as autonomous, in a complex clausal structure.

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