

On Japanese Indirect Passives

This paper attempts to provide a new way of looking at the syntactic structure of the so-called indirect passives in Japanese, demonstrating, contrary to Hoshi (1999), that *ni yotte* passives are divided into two types: *ni yotte* direct passives and *ni yotte* indirect passives. I argue that various syntactic properties of *ni/ni yotte* indirect passives can be captured by the interaction between the distinct functions of the passive morpheme *-(r)are* and the syntactic structure of the event denoted by indirect passives.

As indicated by Kuno (1973), when a passive verb (i.e., verb affixed by *-(r)are*) is intransitive (e.g., *nak* ‘cry’ and *sin* ‘die’), the *ni* passive is possible (= (1a)), but the *ni yotte* passive is ill-formed (= (1b)).

- (1) a. Bill-ga hahaoya-ni nak/sin-are-ta b. *Bill-ga hahaoya-ni yotte nak/sin-are-ta
 -NOM mother-by cry/die-PASS-PAST -NOM mother-by cry/die-PASS-PAST
 ‘Bill was affected by his mother’s crying/dying.’

Hoshi (1999) attributes the above contrast to the assumption that *-(r)are* in *ni yotte* passives obligatorily absorbs the accusative Case and suppresses the external theta-role of the passive verb: intransitive verbs take no accusative NP to be absorbed and thus cannot occur in *ni yotte* passives. However, observe the following example, in which the accusative Case is retained even in the *ni yotte* passive:

- (2) Bill-ga nanimonoka-ni yotte hahaoya-o satsugais-are-ta
 -NOM someone-by mother-ACC murder-PASS-PAST
 ‘Bill was affected by someone’s murdering his mother.’

Hoshi’s analysis would thus force us to assume that NP-movement must occur in (2), as shown in (3).

- (3) [_{TP} Bill_i-ga [_{NP} nanimonoka-ni yotte t_i hahaoya-o satsugais]-are]-ta]

However, it is quite obscure whether NP-movement is really involved in (2). Since *satsugais* ‘murder’ is a transitive verb with a single object, the surface subject NP *Bill* can never be regarded as an internal argument of the passive verb. Another possibility is that *Bill*, a possessor of the noun *hahaoya* ‘mother’, may undergo possessor raising (cf. Kubo 1992, Pykkänen 2008). This suggests that the accusative Case is not always absorbed in *ni yotte* passives, although the surface subject is still derived by NP-movement. More crucially, consider (4), where there is no possessor-possessee relation between the surface subject and the object NP. This clearly shows that *-(r)are* in *ni yotte* passives does not have to induce either Case absorption or NP-movement.

- (4) San-nin-no gakusei-ga shidookyoozyu-ni yotte Chomusukii-no kangae-o hiteis-are-ta
 three-CL-GEN student-NOM supervisor-by Chomsky-GEN idea-ACC reject-PASS-PAST
 ‘Three student were affected by his supervisor’s rejecting Chomsky’s idea’

Notice that the numeral quantifier *san-nin* ‘three-CL’ in (4) cannot float as shown in (5). This is because there is no gap that can license the floating numeral quantifier.

- (5) *[Gakusei]_i-ga shidookyoozyu-ni yotte san-nin_i Chomusukii-no kangae-o hiteis-are-ta
 student-NOM supervisor-by three-CL Chomsky-GEN idea-ACC reject-PASS-PAST

This sharply contrasts with the direct passive with *ni yotte* in (6), where the gap (i.e., trace) created by NP-movement and the floating numeral quantifier can c-command each other (Miyagawa 1989).

- (6) [Terorisuto]_i-ga CIA-ni yotte t_i san-nin_i syasatsus-are-ta
 terrorist-NOM -by three-CL shoot-dead-PASS-PAST
 ‘Three terrorists were shot to death by CIA.’

We can thus conclude that Hoshi’s account of the ill-formedness of (1b) can no longer be maintained: *ni yotte* passives are allowed even when *-(r)are* does not induce Case absorption, keeping the accusative object NP intact. Let us now call such *ni yotte* passives having no corresponding active counterparts “*ni yotte* indirect passives”. Therefore, the question still remains why passive verbs cannot be intransitive in *ni yotte* indirect passives. We argue that the answer lies in how the event structure of indirect passives is syntactically represented.

It should be noted that the event described by the indirect passive in (2), for example, consists of two sub-events: e_1 (someone murdered Bill’s mother) and e_2 (Bill is affected by e_1) (Washio 1993, 1995). I propose that the event interpretation of the indirect passive is closely linked to its syntactic structure, assuming that an eventuality predicate such

as HAVE, CAUSE, DO, and BECOME exists as a light verb (Huang 1997). Given those eventuality predicates, the surface form of a verb (e.g., ‘open’ in *open the door*) can be derived by the amalgamation of the root verb (e.g., $\sqrt{\text{open}}$) and an eventuality predicate (e.g., CAUSE) in narrow syntax (cf. Hale & Keyser 1993, 2002). Thus, *ni yotte* indirect passives can be represented as in (7), where the relevant event interpretation of indirect passives is properly encoded: $-(r)are$ is a verb taking a non-finite TP complement ($=e_1$) (*a la* Kuroda’s (1979) bi-clausal analysis) as well as an affix that is eventually attached to a verb, and the surface subject NP gets assigned an “affectee” theta role via HAVE in the matrix vP ($=e_2$).

(7) [TP [_{vP} NP-*ga* [_v [_{VP} [TP [_{vP} [PP NP-*ni yotte*] [_v [_{VP} NP-*o* \sqrt{V}] CAUSE]]]]] $-(r)are$] HAVE]]]

There are some details to be worked out in (7). First, although the external theta-role in the embedded vP is suppressed by $-(r)are$ and the Spec vP becomes vacant, the accusative Case is kept as it is. In fact, this is the possibility suggested by Comrie (1977): object promotion (Case absorption) and subject demotion (suppression of the external theta role) might be independent processes. Descriptively speaking, $-(r)are$ has two different functions in *ni yotte* passives: $-(r)are$ in the *ni yotte* indirect passive induces only subject demotion, whereas $-(r)are$ in the *ni yotte* direct passive, like English *-en*, triggers both object promotion and subject demotion ($=$ (6)). Second, [PP NP-*ni yotte*] must be adjoined to vP denoting a “causing event” ($=vP_{\text{CAUSE}}$) because *ni yotte* also means ‘cause/reason’ (Kinsui 1997). This is presumably because NP-*ni yotte* originally comes from a sentence such as [NP-*ga* NP-*ni yoru*] in (8), where *yoru* is a main verb having the meaning of ‘cause’ and NP-*ni* ‘NP-DAT’ is the causer of the event designated by NP-*ga* ‘NP-NOM’.

(8) keisatsu-wa [sono kootsuziko-ga kare-no inshyu unten-ni yoru to] syutyous-ite-iru
 police-TOP that traffic accident-NOM he-GEN drunken driving-DAT cause COMP claim-PROG-PRES
 ‘The police are claiming that his drunken driving causes the traffic accident.’

Given the semantic property of [PP NP-*ni yotte*], we can now see why intransitive verbs are incompatible with the *ni-yotte* indirect passive: *ni-yotte* in indirect passives is semantically licensed when it is adjoined to vP_{CAUSE} . Since *nak* ‘cry’ and *sin* ‘die’ denote an action ($=$ ‘do crying’) and a change of state ($=$ ‘become dead’), respectively, their vP structures do not contain CAUSE, but instead have DO ($=$ action) and BECOME ($=$ change of state) as a light v as shown in (9).

(9) a. [_{vP} NP [_v [_{VP} $\sqrt{\text{nak}}$] DO]] b. [_{vP} NP [_v [_{VP} $\sqrt{\text{sin}}$] BECOME]]

In contrast to *ni yotte* indirect passives, *ni* indirect passives have the structure in (10). Since, unlike *ni yotte*, *ni* is a dative Case marker, the eventuality predicate in the embedded clause need not be restricted to CAUSE, passive verbs can be intransitive as in (1a).

(10) [TP [_{vP} NP-*ga* [_v [_{VP} [TP [_{vP} NP-*ni* [_{VP} (NP-*o*) \sqrt{V}] CAUSE/DO/BECOME...]]] $-(r)are$] HAVE]]]

In (10) we assume that NP-*ni* is base-generated in the Spec vP as a logical subject of the embedded clause and moves to the embedded Spec TP. This is empirically true. Consider (11), where the dative Case-marked NP *Tom* as well as the surface subject NP *Bill* in the matrix Spec TP can be the antecedent of the subject-oriented anaphora *zibun* ‘self’ ($=$ (11a)), although *ni yotte*-marked NP cannot act as subject ($=$ (11b)) (cf. N.A. McCawley 1972, Kuno 1973). This is consistent with the assumption that [PP NP-*ni yotte*] is an adjunct adjoined to vP_{CAUSE} .

(11) a. Bill₁-ga Mary₂-ni zibun_{1,2}-no heya-de tabako-o suw-are-ta
 -NOM -DAT self-GEN room-in cigarette-ACC smoke-PASS-PAST
 ‘Bill was affected by Mary’s smoking in his/her room’
 b. Bill₁-ga Mary₂-ni yotte zibun_{1,*2}-no heya-de hahaoya-o satsugais-are-ta
 -NOM -by self-GEN room-in mother-ACC murder-PASS-PAST
 ‘Bill was affected by Mary’s murdering his mother in his/her room’

Therefore, it follows that $-(r)are$ in the *ni* indirect passive has another different function: it triggers neither object promotion nor subject demotion. Note, incidentally, that given the two independent functions of $-(r)are$, there might be a fourth type of passive construction where $-(r)are$ induces only object promotion. The possible candidate is *ni* direct passives: the logical object moves to the Spec TP, but NP-*ni* can appear in the Spec vP to receive the external theta role.

Selected References: Hoshi, Hiroto.1999. Passives, in *The Handbook of Japanese Linguistics*, 191-235. Huang, C.-T. James. 1997. On lexical structure and syntactic projection, *Chinese Languages and Linguistics* 3, 45-89. Washio, Ryuichi. 1995. *Interpreting Voice*. Kaitakusha.