

A review of arguments supporting the direct/indirect passive distinction

Ueyama, Ayumi

Department of Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Kyushu University : Professor

Hayashishita, J.-R.

University of Otago

Takai, Iwao

Faculty of Humanities, Kyushu University

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Ayumi Ueyama
J.-R. Hayashishita
Iwao Takai

1. Introduction

With the passive construction in English, the subject of the sentence is the theme/patient role argument of the main verb. In Japanese, in addition to such passives, there are passives whose subject is not the theme/patient role argument of the verb. For example, (1) is a case where the subject is the theme/patient role argument of the verb, and (2) a case where the subject is not even an argument of the verb.^{1,2}

- (1) a. Kaori ga noraneko ni hikkakareta rasio.
Kaori NOM stray:cat by scratch:PASS:PAST seem

‘Apparently, Kaori was scratched by the stray cat.’

- (2) b. Kaori ga noraneko ni heya no hasira de tumetogisareta
Kaori NOM stray:cat by room GEN pillar at clawing:PASS:PAST
rasio.
seem

‘Apparently, it happened to Kaori that the stray cat clawed a pillar inside the room.’

(Cf. Noraneko ga heya no hasira de tumetogisita rasio.)

‘Apparently, the stray cat clawed a pillar inside the room.’)

Following standard practice, in this paper we will refer to the passive construction whose subject is a theme/patient role argument of the main verb as the *direct passive* and the one whose subject is something else as the *indirect passive*.

Researchers generally agree that Japanese passives are heterogeneous phenomena.³ Although the analyses they employ may differ, researchers all acknowledge that there are two types of the passive morpheme *rare*. Given the presence of passive sentences like (2), there is consensus that in some cases the passive morpheme *rare* functions to add an extra argument to the verb (henceforth the argument-adding *rare*). It is generally understood that the passive construction involving the argument-adding *rare* gives rise to the meaning of some animate object been ‘affected’.⁴ It is also generally understood that in some cases passives are neutral in meaning, i.e. they do not add any additional meaning to their active sentence counterpart, so most researchers assume that the passive morpheme *rare* in those cases functions similarly to the English passive morpheme. Researchers may use different theoretical frameworks for the description of this passive morpheme, but it is not too far off to regard their descriptions as stating that it removes the agent role argument of the main verb (henceforth the argument-reducing *rare*), and prompts the theme/patient role argument to be the subject of the passive construction. There are, however, two main schools of thought regarding when the argument-adding *rare* and the argument-reducing *rare* are involved, respectively.

The first group, including McCawley (1972), Kuno (1973), Saito (1982), Miyagawa (1989) and Shibatani (1990), maintains the following:

- (3) a. If a passive sentence is an instance of the direct passive, then it involves the argument-reducing *rare*.
b. If a passive sentence is an instance of the indirect passive, then it involves the argument-adding *rare*.

In other words, they argue that the direct/indirect distinction is theoretically significant. According to them, (1) for example, involves the argument-reducing *rare*, but (2) the argument-adding *rare*.

By contrast, Kuroda (1979/1992) considers what marks the agent phrase is important; he theoretically distinguishes between passives whose agent phrase is marked with *ni* as in (1) and (2), and those whose agent phrase is marked with *niyotte* as in (4).

- (4) Sengetu rekisiaru tatemono ga kensetugaisya niyotte
last:month historical building NOM construction:company by
kowasareta.
demolish:PASS:PAST

‘The historical building was demolished by the construction company last month.’

Kuroda’s position is summarized as (5).⁵

- (5) a. If a passive sentence has the agent phrase marked by *niyotte*, then it involves the argument-reducing *rare*.
b. If a passive sentence has the agent phrase marked by *ni*, then it involves the argument-adding *rare*.

This paper is part of our research project to address the issue of when the argument-adding *rare* and the argument-reducing *rare* are involved, respectively. In particular, we will review the arguments put forward by McCawley (1972), Kuno (1973), Saito (1982), Miyagawa (1989) and Shibatani (1999) for their position in (3), and show that they are, at best, inconclusive.⁶

2. A review of arguments supporting the direct/indirect passive distinction

2.1. McCawley (1972) and Kuno (1973)

McCawley (1972) and Kuno (1973) maintain that the direct passive has a mono-clausal structure where *rare* is directly combined with the verb and then with the subject (i.e. the theme/patient role argument of the verb). But they assume that the indirect passive has a bi-clausal structure where the passive morpheme *rare* is first combined with a sentence and then with the subject (i.e. an added argument). For example, (6a) and (7a) are analyzed as (6b) and (7b), respectively.

- (6) a. Taroo ga (sensei ni) sikarareta.
Taro NOM (teacher by) scold:PASS:PAST

‘Taro was scolded (by the teacher).’

- b. [_S Taroo ga (sensei ni) sikarare ta]

- (7) a. Taroo ga sensei ni Hanako o sikarareta.
Taro NOM teacher by Hanako ACC scold:PASS:PAST

‘Taro had Hanako scolded by the teacher.’

- b. [_S Taroo ga [_S sensei ga Hanako o sikar] rare ta]

We may thus consider McCawley and Kuno as taking the position that the direct passive involves the argument-reducing *rare*, but the indirect passive the argument-adding *rare*.

They provide the examples in (8) and (9) to justify their adoption of the mono- and bi-clausal analyses for the direct and indirect passives, respectively.

- (8) (= Kuno 1973: Example [21a], p.299, slightly adapted)
Mary wa John ni zibun no uti de korosareta.
Mary TOP John by self GEN house in kill:PASS:PAST
'(Lit.) Mary was killed by John in self's house.'

- (9) (= Kuno 1973: Example [33], p.305, slightly adapted)
Mary wa John ni zibun no uti de hon o
Mary TOP John by self GEN house in book ACC
yomaserareta.
read:CAUSE:PASS:PAST
'(Lit.) Mary was made by John to read the book in self's house.'

According to them, *zibun* 'self' must be referentially dependent on Mary in (8) while it can take its value from either Mary or John in (9). Assuming that *zibun* must be referentially dependent on the surface subject of the sentence, they take the reported (non-)ambiguity as evidence that the direct passive (e.g. (8)) has a mono-clausal structure while the indirect passive (e.g. (9)) has a bi-clausal structure.

Howard and Niyekawa-Howard (1976) and Kuroda (1979/1992), however, demonstrate that the argument by McCawley and Kuno is not valid.

We introduce Kuroda's discussion here. Kuroda points out that there are cases where the indirect passive does not give rise to the reference ambiguity of *zibun*; thus, the referent of *zibun* being not ambiguous is not a characteristic solely of the direct passive. For example, (10a) is a case where a phrase including *zibun* is added to the indirect passive in (10b), but the referent of *zibun* must be Mary.

(10) a. (= Kuroda 1979/1992: Example [10], p.185, slightly adapted)⁷

Mary wa John ni zibun no heya de atama o
Mary TOP John by self GEN room at head ACC
warareta.
break:PASS:PAST

'(Lit.) Mary had her head broken by John in self's room.'

b (= Kuroda 1979/1992: Example [9], p.185, slightly adapted)

Mary wa John ni atama o warareta.
'Mary had her head broken by John.'

Kuroda furthermore shows that analyzing the direct passive uniformly with the indirect passive with the bi-clausal structure, we can estimate when the referent of *zibun* is not ambiguous. For example, the two unambiguous cases, i.e. (8) and (10a), are analyzed as (11a) and (11b), respectively.

(11) a. [_s Mary] ga [_s John ga zibun no heya de Mary] o koros] rare ta]

b. [_s Mary] ga [_s John ga zibun no heya de atama] o war] rare ta]

As Kuroda points out, one may say that the referent of *zibun* is not ambiguous

when the subject of the passive is identical to, or bears the part-whole relation to, the direct object of the embedded clause.

Furthermore, we note that there are also instances of the direct passive that give rise to the reference ambiguity of *zibun*. For example, in (12), Saburo may be greeting Jiro from Jiro's girlfriend's room or Saburo's girlfriend's room.

- (12) Jiro ga Saburo ni zibun no gaarufurendo no heya kara
Jiro NOM Saburo by self GEN girl:friend GEM room from
aisatusareta rasiï
greet:PASS:PAST seem

'Apparently, Jiro had Saburo greet him from his girlfriend's room'

We therefore conclude that the argument by McCawley (1972) and Kuno (1973) based on the reference (non-)ambiguity of *zibun* is not valid.

2.2. Saito (1982)⁸

Saito (1982) is in response to Kuroda (1979/1992). He argues that if we analyzed the direct passive on a par with the indirect passive with the bi-clausal structure, as Kuroda does, we would necessarily have an unpronounced NP *pro* that corresponds to the passive subject in the lower clause. As we will explain below, Saito considers this problematic, and therefore maintains instead that the direct passive involves the argument-reducing *rare*, and the theme/patient role argument of the verb is moved to the subject position leaving a trace.

Saito's argument makes reference to the causative construction and the *double-o constraint*. First, he notes that the *o-* and *ni-*causatives can both be constructed from a sentence with an unergative verb; see (13).⁹

- (13) Mary ga John {o / ni} arukasetta.
Mary NOM John ACC DAT walk:CAUSE:PAST
'Mary {made / let} John walk.'

However, with a verb taking *ga*- and *o*-marked arguments, only the *ni*-causative is possible (see (14a)), and this applies also to cases where the *o*-marked argument is an unpronounced NP *pro* (see (14b)).

- (14) a. Mary ga John {*o / ni} hon o yomaseta.
Mary NOM John ACC DAT book ACC read:CAUSE:PAST
'Mary made/let John read the book.'
- b. Kono hon_i wa Mary ga John {*o / ni} *pro*_i yomaseta.
this book TOP Mary NOM John ACC DAT read:CAUSE:PAST
'This book_i, Mary made/let John read it_i.'

According to Saito, the unacceptable status of (14a) and (14b) are due to the violation of the double-*o* constraint, which restricts the assignment of *o* only to one NP per clause.

He then points out that both the *o*- and *ni*-causatives are possible in the causative-passive sentence as in (15).

- (15) Mary ga John {o / ni} (damatte) Tom ni
Mary NOM John ACC DAT not:opening:mouth Tom DAT
sikararesasetta.
rebuke:PASS:CAUSE:PAST
'Mary {made / let} John be scolded by Tom without saying anything.'

Saito argues that under the uniform treatment of the direct passive with the indirect passive, the *o*-causative in (15) is necessarily analyzed as (16), which comes from the direct passive in (17a), which in turn is based on the active sentence in (17b). Crucially, according to him, this would violate the double-*o* constraint, assigning *o* to *John*_i and *pro*_i, thus leading us to expect the *o*-causative in (15) is unacceptable, contrary to fact.

(16) Mary ga [_S John_i o [_S(damatte) Tom ni *pro*_i sikar] are] sase ta

(17) a. [_S John_i ga [_S (damatte) Tom ni *pro*_i sikar] are ta]

b. Tom ga John o sikar ta

Saito maintains that if we assume that the direct passive is analyzed with the argument-reducing *rare*, involving the relevant movement and its trace (see (18)), then the double-*o* constraint is not violated, and thus the acceptable status of the *o*-causative in (15) can be accounted for.

(18) John_i ga (damatte) Tom ni *t*_i sikarare ta.

We are reluctant to accept Saito's argument for the following reason. As noted, Kuroda would analyze the passive embedded in (16) as (17a). Notice that *John*_i belongs to the higher clause while *pro*_i is part of the lower clause; thus, the double-*o* constraint is not violated, correctly leading us to expect the *o*-causative in (15) to be acceptable.

2.3. Miyagawa (1989)

2.3.1. Miyagawa's two generalizations

Miyagawa (1989) also pursues the thesis that the direct passive is analyzed with the argument-reducing *rare*. His argument is based on floating quantifiers. First, based on the contrast between (19a) and (19b), Miyagawa assumes that a quantity expression can be floated out of an argument but not out of an adjunct.

(19) a. (= Miyagawa 1989: Example [28], p.27, slightly adapted)

Gakusei ga sannin hon o katta
student NOM three:CL book ACC buy:PAST

'Three students bought a book.'

b. (=Miyagawa 1989: Example [45a], p.31, slightly adapted)

*Hito ga tiisai mura kara hutatu kita
person NOM small village from two:CL come:PASS

'People came from two small villages.'

To explain the assumption under discussion, he appeals to the mutual c-command condition, which says that a floated quantity expression and its host NP must mutually c-command each other. According to him, with (19b), due to the presence of the post position *kara* 'from', *tiisai mura* 'small villages' fails to c-command *hutatu* 'two-CL'; hence, it is ungrammatical.

He then maintains the generalization that with the direct passive a quantity expression cannot be floated out of the *ni*-phrase, but such is possible with the indirect passive; see (20).

(20) a. (= Miyagawa 1989: Example [78], p.169, slightly adapted)

*Taroo ga sensei ni hutari sikarareta.
Taro NOM teacher by two:CL scold:PASS:PAST

'Taro was scolded by two teachers.'

b. (= Miyagawa 1989: Example [79], p.169, slightly adapted)

Hahaoya ga kodomo ni hutari sinareta.
mother NOM child by two:CL die:PASS:PAST

'Two children died on their mother.'

Based on this generalization, Miyagawa concludes that the *ni*-phrase is an adjunct in the direct passive but an argument in the indirect passive; thus, unlike the indirect passive, the direct passive is understood to involve the argument-reducing *rare*.

As an additional evidence for the thesis that the direct passive involves the argument-reducing *rare*, he puts forwards the contrast in (21).

(21) a. (= Miyagawa 1989: Example [66], p.38, slightly adapted)

Yuube, kuruma ga doroboo ni nidai nusumareta.
last night car NOM thief by two:CL steal:PASS:PAST

'Last night, two cars were stolen by a thief.'

b. (= Miyagawa 1989: Example [73], p.41, slightly adapted)

*Kodomo ga ame ni hutari hurareta
child NOM rain by two:CL fall:PASS:PAST

'Two children were rained on.'

According to Miyagawa, a quantity expression can be floated far away from the subject NP of the direct passive as in (21a) because the subject NP is moved from the internal argument position leaving a trace, which has the mutual c-command configuration with the floated quantity expression. But such a long-distance floating is not possible with the subject NP of the indirect passive, for it is base-generated in the position where it appears, and thus there is no trace available to satisfy the mutual c-command condition.

2.3.2. On his first generalization

Kitagawa & Kuroda (1991) challenge Miyagawa's first generalization, i.e. a quantity expression can be floated out of an argument but not out of an adjunct. They first assume, based on the contrast between (22) and (23), that whether or not a quantity expression can be floated out of a given NP depends on the amount of pragmatic and/or semantic content added to the NP.

(22) (= Kitagawa & Kuroda 1991: Example [57a],p.30, slightly adapted)

*sabaku de hito ni sannin atta
desert on people DAT three:CL met

'(I) met three people on the desert.'

(23) (= Kitagawa & Kuroda 1991: Example [57b],p.30, slightly adapted)

sabaku de Amerikazin ni sannin atta.
desert on Americans DAT three:CL met

'(I) met three Americans on the desert.'

Then, they maintain that the floating of a quantity expression out of the agent

ni-phrase of the direct passive is possible, but, as expected, its naturalness depends on pragmatic and/or semantic factors. In support, they report, for example, that unlike (24), (25) is acceptable.

(24) (= Kitagawa & Kuroda 1991: Example [54a], p.27, slightly adapted)

#Sono hannin wa patoroorutyuu no keikan ni hutari
that criminal TOP during:patrol GEN police by two
mokugekisareteita.
watch:PASS:being:PAST

‘That culprit was seen by two policemen on patrol.’

(25) (Kitagawa & Kuroda 1991: Example [53d], p.27, slightly adapted)

Hannin wa honno suufun no aida ni
culprit TOP just a:few:minutes GEN interval during
toorikakatta tuukoonin ni hutari mokugekisareteimasu
passing:by passerby by two witness:PASS:being:PRES

‘The culprit was seen by two passers-by during those few minutes.’

As to the unacceptability of (24), they say, “We can perhaps ascribe such difficulty, however, to the pragmatic anomaly that arises when we attempt distributive interpretation in these sentences since the multiple occurrences of an event involving only a single agent can hardly be expressed in a natural way in each of [54a-c].” We agree with Kitagawa & Kuroda’s factual assessment. Furthermore, we point out that with the indirect passive, too, the floating of a quantity expression out of the agent *ni*-phrase is not possible in certain contexts; see (26).

- (26) *Noriko ga tyoonan o sensei ni sannin sikararete
Noriko NOM oldest:son ACC teacher by three scold:PASS
otikondeiru rasii.
depress:being seem

‘Apparently, Noriko is depressed, having had her oldest son told off by three teachers.’

2.3.3. On his second generalization

We also find examples that seem counter to Miyagawa’s second generalization, i.e. a quantity expression cannot be floated far away from the subject NP of the indirect passive. For example, the sentences in (27) are acceptable.

- (27) a. Kodomo ga norainu ni sannin asi o kamareta.
child NOM stray:dog by three:CL leg ACC bite:PASS:PAST

‘Three children had their legs bitten by a stray dog.’

- b. Nihonzin ga Siria de kokumusyoo no yakunin
Japanese:person NOM Syria at State:Departme GEN officer
ni zyuugonin pasupooto o bossyuusareteita.
by fifteen:CL passport ACC revoke:PASS:being:PAST

‘It turned out that 15 Japanese citizens had their passports revoked by an officer of the State Department in Syria.’

We thus conclude that neither of the generalizations that Miyagawa (1989) put forward in support of the thesis that the direct *passive* is analyzed with the argument-reducing *rare* are valid.

2.4. Shibatani (1990)

Shibatani (1990) is another supporter of the thesis that the direct passive involves the argument-reducing *rare*. He maintains that unlike the indirect passive, the direct passive allows a situation where the agent is not identifiable. Based on this assumption, he concludes that the *ni*-phrase expressing the agent is an adjunct and thus the passive morpheme involved in this type of passives is the argument-reducing *rare*.

(28) (= Shibatani 1990: Example [129b], p.325, slightly adapted)

Kodomotati wa sikarareta
child:PL TOP scold:PASS:PAST

‘The children were scolded.’

For example, regarding (28), he says on p.325, “A point to be noticed here is that the passive clauses are complete without an agentive nominal in the sense that the valency requirement imposed by the predicate is fully satisfied.”

We can, however, find instances of the indirect passive where the agent is not identifiable. Shibatani himself introduces the following example.

(29) (= Shibatani 1990: Example [135a], p.327, slightly adapted)

Taroo wa man'in densya de asi o humareta
Taro TOP packed train in leg ACC step:on:PASS:PAST

‘Taro had his foot stepped on in a packed train.’

We would argue that examples like (29) are counterexamples to his assumption. Shibatani, however, does not consider this so; he instead maintains that

sentences like (29) are actually instances of the direct passive. As a justification, he argues that (29) does not connote the adversative meaning of the subject being inconvenienced. Shibatani's remark on (29) makes us wonder how exactly to differentiate between indirect and direct passives. His response is found on pp.327-328:

“The fact that sentences of the (29)-type [the example number adjusted by the authors] are direct passive poses a certain problem regarding the valence or argument structure of the verbs involved such as *naguru* ‘hit’ and *humu* ‘step on’, which are normally understood to be two-place predicates. Our understanding of direct passivization as a valency-reducing phenomenon forces us to allow a provision that these predicates may take more than two arguments underlyingly, especially two object-like arguments in addition to an agent.”

We are hesitant to accept Shibatani's argument that the direct passive involves the argument-reducing *rare*, for the simple reason that he does not provide a clear way of differentiating between the indirect and direct passives, and hence we cannot evaluate his crucial assumption that unlike the indirect passive, the direct passive allows a situation where the agent is not identifiable.

Incidentally, one criterion Shibatani seems to use to determine what counts as the direct passive is that it does not connote the adversative meaning of the subject's being inconvenienced; see the discussion above. But he acknowledges on p.330 that for some cases, the direct passive may also be associated with the adversative meaning under discussion. We thus conclude that this criterion is also not usable.

3. Conclusion

In this paper, we have reviewed some of the arguments for the thesis that the direct passive involves the argument-reducing *rare*, namely McCawley (1972), Kuno (1973), Saito (1982), Miyagawa (1989), and Shibatani (1990). In our assessments, their arguments are all, at best, inconclusive. We point out, however, that what we have seen above does not preclude the possibility that the direct passive may involve the argument-reducing *rare*. In fact, we argue in Hayashishita et al. (2019) that the direct passive involves the argument-reducing *rare* in some cases and the argument-adding *rare* in other cases.

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Notes

- 1 In this paper, we use the following abbreviations: NOM = nominative; ACC = accusative; DAT = dative; GEN = genitive; TOP = topic; PRES = present; PASS = passive; PL = plural; CL = classifier; COMP = complementizer; COP = copula.
- 2 The underlying form of the passive morpheme is /rare/; it appears as *rare* after vowel-ending verbs and *are* after consonant-ending verbs. Throughout the paper, the relevant passive morphemes in the example sentences are boldfaced.
- 3 Kuno (1983; 1986) is an exception. He aims for a uniform analysis to cover all types of passives, and attempts to explain their differences through pragmatic considerations.
- 4 One of the earliest references for this thesis is Yamada (1908).
- 5 The precursor of Kuroda (1979/1992) is Matsusita (1930), who also differentiates the *niyotte*-passive from the *ni*-passive while pursuing the uniform analysis for the *ni*-passive. Kinsui (1993) also pursues the same view.
- 6 We will review the argument by Kuroda (1979/1992) for the position in (5) in Hayashishita et al. (2019).
- 7 For the examples in (10), we have supplied the word-by-word glosses and English translations.
- 8 Our understanding of Saito (1982) is based on Hoshi (1999); Saito (1982) was not acces-

sible to us.

- 9 The underlying form of the causative morpheme is /sase/; it appears as *sase* after vowel-ending verbs and *ase* after consonant-ending verbs. In this section, the causative morphemes in the example sentences are boldfaced.

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