

Review of “The Passive in Japanese: A Cartographic Minimalist Approach” by Tomoko Ishizuka. (Linguistik Aktuell/Linguistics Today 192) Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012.

Since Kuroda’s (1965) seminal work, passive has been one of the most intensively studied phenomena within Japanese syntax. Japanese sentences that involve the verbal suffix *-(r)are* (the passive morpheme) exhibit a variety of properties, which motivated the classifications of constructions involving *-(r)are* as illustrated in (1).

- (1) a. Hanako-ga Taroo-no musuko-o sarat-ta¹
 H-NOM T-GEN son-ACC kidnap-PST
 ‘Hanako kidnapped Taro’s son.’ (active)
- b. Taroo-no musuko-ga Hanako-ni saraw-are-ta
 T-GEN son-NOM H-DAT kidnap-PASS-PST
 ‘Taroo’s son was kidnapped by Hanako.’ (DIRECT PASSIVE)
- c. Taroo-no musuko-ga Hanako-niyotte saraw-are-ta
 T-GEN son-NOM H-DAT kidnap-PASS-PST
 ‘Taroo’s son was kidnapped by Hanako.’ (NIYOTTE PASSIVE)
- d. Taroo-ga Hanako-ni musuko-o saraw-are-ta
 T-NOM H-DAT son-ACC kidnap-PASS-PST
 ‘Taroo had his son kidnapped by Hanako.’ (POSSESSIVE PASSIVE)
- e. Jiroo-ga Hanako-ni Taroo-no musuko-o saraw-are-ta
 J-NOM H-DAT T-GEN son-ACC kidnap-PASS-PST
 ‘Jiroo was affected by Hanako kidnapping Taro’s son.’ (INDIRECT PASSIVE)

The *direct passive* (1b) and *niyotte passive* in (1c) superficially resemble prototypical passive constructions in languages like English, as they appear to involve a process in which the active internal argument, *Taro’s son* in (1a), becomes the subject. Although the only difference between (1b) and (1c) appears to be the morphological form of the *by*-phrase, it has been argued that only the *niyotte passive* (1c) is a true passive due to selectional restrictions on the subject of the *direct passive* (1b) (Hoshi 1999 provides a survey of relevant literature). The *possessive passive* (1d) is characterized as involving a possessor-possesum relation between the subject (e.g. *Taro*) and the internal argument (e.g. *musuko* ‘son’), while the *indirect passive* (1e) is characterized as having a subject that bears no thematic relation with the verb, and this subject is interpreted as ‘affected’ by the event denoted by the rest of the sentence.

In addition to its function in ‘passive’ constructions, *-(r)are* also functions as an honorific marker (2b) and a root possibility (ability) modal marker (i.e. the potential form) with verbs ending in vowels (2c).²

- (2) a. Hanako-ga kono ie-o tate-ta
 H-NOM this house-ACC build-PST
 ‘Hanako built this house.’

¹ Abbreviations: ACC = accusative, DAT = dative, DEP = depictive, GEN = genitive, HON = honorific, NOM = nominative, PASS = passive, PST = past,

² The possibility modal marker with consonant-ending verbs is *-e* (e.g. *hashir-e-ru* ‘can run’.)

- b. Sensei-ga kono ie-o tate-**rare**-ta
 teacher-NOM this house-ACC build-HON-PST
 ‘The teacher built this house.’ (HONORIFIC)
- c. Hanako-ga kono ie-o tate-**rare**-ta
 H-NOM this house-ACC build-CAN-PST
 ‘Hanako was able to build this house.’ (POTENTIAL)

Most previous studies of the morpheme *-(r)are* deal only with the data represented in (1) (with a few notable exceptions such as Hasegawa 1988). While these studies argue for different ways of cutting the ‘passive’ pie, they generally assume that the *indirect passive*, as in (1e), is fundamentally different from the other passive constructions, as it is analyzed as having a base-generated thematic subject.

The Passive in Japanese: A Cartographic Minimalist Approach by Tomoko Ishizuka (a revision of her UCLA dissertation) is the latest and arguably most comprehensive treatment of constructions that involve the morpheme *-(r)are*. The study’s core claim is that sentences with *-(r)are* always involve a derived subject, and it proposes a unified analysis of (1) and (2) based on the ‘smuggling’ approach to passivization (Collin 2005). The study’s ambitious goal is to account for all the instances of *-(r)are* in (1) and (2) based on a small number of properties identified with the morpheme (3) and its interactions with general properties of Japanese.

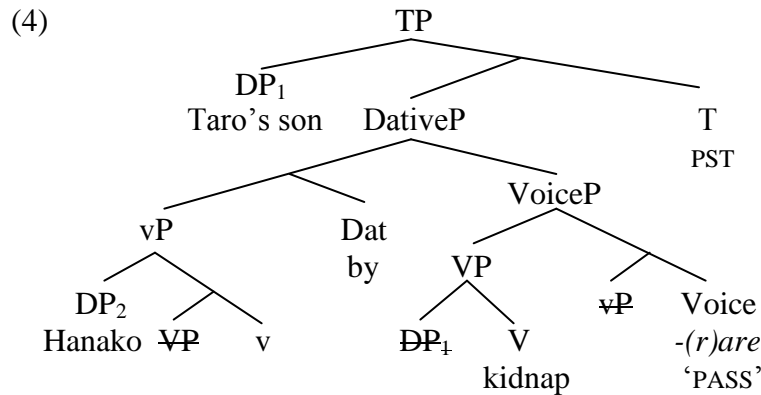
- (3) a. *-(r)are* is an instance of the functional head Voice.
 b. *-(r)are* never introduces its own argument.
 c. *-(r)are* takes an active vP as its complement.
 d. *-(r)are* has an EPP feature that attracts a VP to its specifier.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the book, summarizing previous analyses of the Japanese passive and introducing empirical and theoretical arguments against them. It also gives a brief initial sketch of the proposed analysis, its initial motivations, and its theoretical background.

Chapter 2 introduces the analysis in (3) and provides an account of *-(r)are* as both a run-of-the-mill passive marker and an honorific marker. According to the analysis, the four properties of the morpheme in (3) require that sentences with *-(r)are* involve an active vP complement that embeds a VP. It is this embedded VP that moves to [Spec, VoiceP] to satisfy the EPP feature of *-(r)are*, and by doing so “smuggle” the DP that ends up becoming the passive subject. It is argued that this requirement rules out structures that arguably involve a non-active vP or lack a VP, accounting for much of the relevant empirical data.

In Chapter 3, Ishizuka provides her justifications for the main thesis – that all *-(r)are* sentences involve a derived subject. Ishizuka argues that most of the passive constructions that have previously been analyzed as involving base-generated subjects (i.e. gap-less) involve derived subjects that have either a genitive or oblique phrase as their source. An account of the *ni* phrase (*by*-phrase) in the *direct passive* is also provided. Unlike Collin’s (2005) analysis of the English passive, in which *by* is a Voice head, the Voice head in the Japanese passive is the passive morpheme *-(r)are* itself in the proposed analysis. Thus, the *by*-phrase marker *-ni* cannot be analyzed as Voice. Instead, Ishizuka argues, *-ni* is the head of a functional projection *dative phrase* that takes a VoiceP as complement and a vP as specifier. Therefore, what we see as the

by-phrase (*-ni* phrase) in *direct passive* sentences is a remnant of the vP with an external argument as its specifier, which is itself a specifier of a dative phrase headed by *-ni*. Under the proposed analysis, therefore, a *direct passive* such as (1b) has the following underlying structure.



Chapter 4 analyzes passive sentences (i) with a *-ni* phrase (*direct passive*), (ii) with a *-niyotte* phrase (*niyotte passive*), and (iii) without a *by*-phrase (*short passive*). Ishizuka proposes that unlike the *direct passive*, which involves a dative phrase with a remnant vP as specifier, which in turn contains an external argument as its specifier, the *niyotte* and *short passives* involve a vP with a PRO external argument. Under this analysis, the *niyotte* phrase is an adjunct that introduces a causer, which is co-indexed with a PRO external argument in [Spec, vP].

Chapter 5 revisits the literature and re-evaluates three standard empirical arguments for distinguishing the *indirect* and *direct passives*: (i) the *ni*-phrase licenses floating numeral quantifiers in the *indirect passive* but not in the *direct passive*; (ii) the *ni*-phrase is not readily omitted in the *indirect passive* but can be in the *direct passive*; and (iii) the *ni*-phrase can bind the subject-oriented anaphor *jibun* ‘self’ in the *indirect passive* but not in the *direct passive*. Ishizuka argues that these arguments fail to motivate the alleged dichotomy either because the relevant generalizations have not been characterized accurately or the observed contrasts are not coextensive with the dichotomy.

Chapter 6 provides further supporting arguments for the derived subject analysis of the passive constructions and arguments against the claim that subjects of certain passive sentences, especially *indirect passives*, are thematic. Ishizuka provides reconstruction effects and scope facts involving passive subjects as further empirical arguments for the derived analysis of passive subjects, and she argues that the thematic analysis of subjects of *indirect passives* is untenable because (i) the empirical arguments presented in previous studies are based on limited data and (ii) defining the right thematic role for subjects of *indirect passives* is difficult, if not impossible. As an alternative, Ishizuka argues that the source of the ‘affected’ interpretation often associated with passive subjects is the thematic roles (possessor, goal, or source) that the derived subjects receive in their original positions, while the ‘adversative’ interpretation associated with some passive subjects is a pragmatic effect of verbal lexical semantics and world knowledge.

Chapter 7 deals with ‘extra-thematic passives’ (i.e. passives without active sources). While many speakers including Ishizuka herself judge extra-thematic passives as unacceptable, some speakers find them acceptable under certain contexts or when an adjunct is present. The chapter discusses possible differences in speakers’ grammar and provides a tentative analysis of

the grammar of speakers who accept extra-thematic passives: that it has an option of postulating a silent verb that licenses the source of the derived subject.

Chapter 8 concludes the book, summarizing the proposal and briefly discussing its implications.

The book is the first major research published on *-(r)are* in the Minimalist Program framework since Hoshi's (1999) standard-setting survey on Japanese passives. It represents an important contribution to Japanese syntax for both empirical and theoretical reasons. Theoretically, it incorporates the latest developments in analysis of passives in the Minimalist Program framework by adopting Collin's (2005) influential smuggling analysis of the English passive. Empirically, it provides a much needed critical examination of the empirical generalizations that have played important roles in previous analyses of Japanese passives.

The book's most important contribution, I believe, comes from its careful and thorough re-examinations of the data and generalizations in the relevant literature. In defense of her thesis – that all sentences with *-(r)are* involve a derived subject – Ishizuka meticulously examines different cases of passive sentences that arguably involve a thematic subject, and presents an alternative account that involves a derived subject for each of them. While she may not address every possible case, she successfully demonstrates that the empirical evidence for some widely-held assumptions about Japanese passives is not as clear as commonly assumed. For instance, Ishizuka argues that prototypical examples of the *indirect passive* such as (5a) should be analyzed as derived from an active counterpart that has an oblique phrase that corresponds to the passive subject (5b).

- (5) a. Taroo-ga ame-ni hur-are-ta
 T-NOM rain-DAT fall-PASS-PST
 'Taro was rained on.'
 b. Ame-ga Taroo-ni hut-ta
 rain-NOM T-DAT fall-PST
 'Rain descended on Taro.'

Ishizuka's examination of the data makes another important contribution to our understanding of sentences with *-(r)are*, because it identifies a small set of 'passive' sentences for which the derived subject analysis faces empirical challenges, such as (6).

- (6) a. Ken-ga Naomi-ni nak-are-ta
 K-NOM N-DAT cry-PASS-PST
 'Ken was adversely affected by Naomi crying.'
 b. #Naomi-ga Ken-ni nai-ta
 N-NOM K-DAT cry-PST
 ('Naomi cried because of Ken.')
- (7) a. #Sono hanashi-ga Naomi-ni nak-are-ta
 That story-NOM N-DAT cry-PASS-PST
 ('The story was adversely affected by Naomi crying.')
- b. Naomi-ga sono hanashi-ni nai-ta
 N-NOM that story-DAT cry-PST
 'Naomi cried because of that story.'

Under the derived subject analysis, the subject in (6a) has the oblique phrase in (6b) as its source. As Ishizuka discusses, however, the oblique phrase can only be inanimate as in (6b) and (7b), while the passive subject must be animate, as (6a) and (7a) show. If the derived subject analysis is to be maintained, this animacy contrast must be explained.

While the book makes important empirical contributions, some of the assumptions that are necessary for the derived subject analysis to account for all of the cases to which it is applied are problematic. Two types of problematic assumptions have to do with (i) *v*'s selection of its complement and (ii) silent verbal elements. The first case, from Chapter 3, is illustrated in (8): only (8b) is acceptable although both examples involve unergative verbs.

- (8) a. *Ken-ga Naomi-ni oyog-are-ta
 K-NOM N-DAT swim-PASS-PST
 ('Ken was affected by Naomi swimming.')
- b. Ken-ga Naomi-ni nak-are-ta
 K-NOM N-DAT cry-PASS-PST
 ('Ken was affected by Naomi crying.')

Ishizuka argues that (8a) is unacceptable because *oyog-* 'swim' is a 'pure unergative verb' whose projection of *vP* lacks a *VP*. The verb in (8b), *nak-* 'cry', in contrast, is assumed to involve a *VP*. However, many speakers would note that the acceptability of (8a) is improved significantly by adding an adjunct that provides a context that supports the 'adversative' interpretation of the subject (9).

- (9) Ken-ga Naomi-ni hadaka-de oyog-are-ta
 K-NOM N-DAT naked-DEP swim-PASS-PST
 'Ken was affected by Naomi swimming naked.'

Cases like (9) are addressed in Chapter 8, where Ishizuka argues that the presence of the adjunct indicates the presence of a silent verb 'do', which licenses a *VP*. The necessary assumptions appear to be that (i) the unergative structure can be either with or without a *VP* and (ii) the presence of a *VP* can be determined by presence of an adjunct.

A similar but arguably more problematic case is illustrated in (10).

- (10) a. *Taroo-ga tomodachi-ni jibun-no ie-ni tsuk-are-ta
 T-NOM friend-DAT self-GEN house-LOC arrive-PASS-PST
 ('Taro was adversely affected by his friend arriving at his house.')
- b. Taroo-wa tomodachi-ni jibun-no ie-ni saki-ni tsuk-are-ta
 T-NOM friend-DAT self-GEN house-LOC before-DAT arrive-PASS-PST
 'Taro was adversely affected by his friend arriving at his house before he did.'

(10a) is also analyzed in Chapter 3. Its unacceptability is argued to be due to the verb *tsuk-* 'arrive' selecting a small clause complement. Since small clauses are not *VP*s, the EPP requirement of *-(r)are* cannot be satisfied in (10a). However, (10a) is similar to (8a) in that the presence of an adjunct significantly improves its acceptability, as shown in (10b) (the judgment

is mine). Under the proposed analysis, the same verb *tsuk-* ‘arrive’ would have to be analyzed as selecting a VP in (10b). The undesirable implication is that verbs can change their selectional restrictions depending on the presence of certain adjuncts.

Another problematic assumption is made in the proposed analysis of the following contrast.

- (11) a. *Taroo-ga musuko-ni kaidan-kara ochi-rare-ta
 T-NOM son-DAT stairs-from drop-PASS-PST
 (‘Taroo was fallen by his son from the stairs.’)
 b. Kato-san-ga kaidan-kara ochi-rare-ta
 K-Mr.-NOM stairs-from drop-HON-PST
 ‘Mr. Kato fell from the stairs.’

The verb *ochi-* ‘drop’ is unacceptable in the *direct passive* (11a), but acceptable in an honorific sentence (11b). Ishizuka accounts for the ungrammaticality of (11a) by assuming that (11a) involves a non-active vP, as the verb *ochi-* ‘drop’ is an unaccusative verb. The same verb is acceptable in (10b), however, because honorific sentences involve a silent *v* that encodes the semantics of ‘honor’, and introduces an external argument. The problem is that the assumed presence of the silent *v* ‘honor’ appears to be motivated solely by the desire to maintain the derived subject analysis of honorific sentences. The same criticism applies to the silent verb ‘do’ postulated to account for the contrast between (8a) and (9).

Some additional non-trivial issues in the proposed analysis remain unresolved. One clear obstacle to the claim that all instances of passive sentences have a derived subject is that, when the source of the derived subject is a PP, the postposition must disappear in the derivation of the passive. Ishizuka shows that the disappearing of PPs is also observed with relative clause formation in Japanese, but provides no account for how the postpositions end up disappearing in either case. Finally, the claim that *-ni* in the *ni*-phrase is the head of a dative phrase that selects for a VoiceP headed by *-(r)are* raises questions as well. For instance, under the assumption that *-ni* takes a VoiceP as its complement, the question is how their linear order can be accounted for – if *-ni* is structurally higher than *-(r)are*, *-ni* is expected to follow *-(r)are*, contrary to fact (see (4)).

In sum, the book makes an important contribution to our understanding of the morpheme *-(r)are* by presenting a thorough and careful examination of the relevant data that suggests that the empirical evidence for some of the widely-held assumptions about Japanese passive is not as strong as commonly assumed. It also makes an important theoretical contribution to the Minimalist Program framework, as it proposes and defends a unified analysis of the different types of sentences with *-(r)are* based on the smuggling approach to passivization. The problem in the proposed analysis is, however, that it makes a number of unsubstantiated assumptions in order to account for some of the key data. Any future work on *-(r)are* should pay close attention to what Ishizuka’s careful examination of the data shows and address the analytical issues that her analysis faces.

References:

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