Feature Compositions of Little v’s in Passives

Miyoko Yasui
Dokkyo University
myasui@dokkyo.ac.jp

1. Properties of Passives and the Main Claims of this Study

**Property I:** Passive morphemes productively attach to simple and morphologically complex transitive verbs.

(1) a. John was kill-ed by Mary.  
   \[\text{Root + Passive}\]
   b. John-ga Mary-ni koros-(r)are-ta.  
   \[\text{NOM by kill-PASS-PAST}\]
(2) a. The system was simpl-if-i-ed.  
   \[\text{Complex Stem + Passive}\]
   b. Sisutemu-ga kanryaku-ka-s-(r)are-ta.  
   \[\text{NOM simplification-do-PASS-PAST}\]

**Property II:** Accusative DPs are promoted to subject position. Dative and possessor DPs are also promoted in some languages with accusative in-situ.

(3) a. John was given the award by the committee.  
   \[\text{Dat→Nom}\]
   \[\text{NOM committee-by award-ACC give-PASS-PAST}\]
   c. Er bekam die Blumen geschenkt.  
   \[\text{(German)}\]  
   \[\text{He-nom got the flowers-ACC given}\]
   'He was given the flowers.'
(4) Ég fékk bókina senda  
   \[\text{(Icelandic)}\]  
   \[\text{I-NOM got the book-ACC sent-PASS}\]
   'I got the book sent (to me).'
   \[\text{(cited by Sigruðsson and Wood 2013 from Sigruðsson 2012:25)}\]
(5) a. [John-no kao]-ga Mary-ni yotte ker-(r)are-ta.  
   \[\text{GEN face- NOM by kick-PASS-PAST}\]
   'John’s face was kicked by Mary.'
   b. John-ga Mary-ni (yotte) kao-o ker-(r)are-ta.  
   \[\text{Possessor→Nom}\]
   'John was kicked in the face by Mary.'
(6) Maria fick cykeln förstörd.  
   \[\text{(Swedish)}\]  
   \[\text{got the bike destroy-PASS}\]
   'Maria's bike got destroyed.'
   \[\text{(cited by Sigruðsson and Wood 2013 from Klingvall 2011:61)}\]

**Property III:** Besides gapped passives like (3)-(6), the Japanese passive rare can form gapless passives like (7) and (8). The appearance of a dative NP requires the stipulation (9).

(7) John-ga Mary-ni suteezi-de odor-(r)are-ta.  
   \[\text{NOM DAT stage-on dance-PASS-PAST}\]
   'John was affected by Mary’s dancing on the stage.'
John-ga bookan-ni Mary-no kao-o ker-(r)are-ta.  
\[ \text{Transitive Stem} \]

NOM DAT GEN face-ACC kick-PASS-PAST

‘John was affected by a thug’s kicking Mary’s face’

(9) Rare can optionally license dative on its external argument.

Three Kinds of Rare in Japanese: Passive, Potential, Honorific (and Zihatu)

(10) a. *Taro-wa gityoo-ni erab-(r)are-rare/-(r)e-rare-ru  
\[ \text{pass+potential} \]

TOP chairperson-COP choose-PASS-POT_{LOW}/POT_{LOW}=PASS-NONPAST

‘Taro is able to be chosen as a chairperson.’

b. Taro-wa gityoo-ni erab-(r)are-u-ru  

TOP chairperson-COP choose-PASS-POT_{HIGH}=NONPAST

‘It is possible that Taro will be chosen as a chairperson.’ (Fukuda: this workshop)

Irregularities of Potential Rare: S(uru) (‘do’) + potential rare → deki

(11) 1-nensei-ni ratengo-ga benkyoo *-s(r)are/-deki-ru.  

First-year student-DAT Latin-NOM study-do-POT_{LOW}=NONPAST

‘First-year students can study Latin.’

Prohibition of Double Rare besides (10a)

\[ \text{potential+honorific} \]

Prof. Yamada-DAT that student-NOM teach-POT_{LOW}=HONORIFIC-NEG

‘Prof. Yamada (honorific) cannot teach that student.’


Prof. Yamada-DAT that student-NOM teach-POT_{LOW}=HONORIFIC-NEG

c. *Yamada-sensei-ga sono gakusei-ni sonkeis-(r)are-rare ta.  

Prof. Yamada-NOM that student-by respect-PASS-HONORIFIC-PAST

‘Prof. Yamada (honorific) was respected by that student.’

d. *Yamada-sensei-ga sono gakusei-ni nakituk-(r)are-rare ta.  

Prof. Yamada-NOM that student-DAT plead-PASS-HONORIFIC-PAST

‘Prof. Yamada (honorific) was affected by that student’s pleading with him.’

Main Claims:

(13) Active and passive verbs are selected by functional heads (little v’s) that share two features pertaining to Burzio’s generalization: it provides stems with (i) an external argument position and (ii) accusative Case.

(14) Language-specific properties of passives should not be reduced to the featural differences of little v’s (apart from (9)) but to the morphological/PF properties of a designated nominal available in each language for passives listed in (16) (Jaeggli 1986 and Baker, Johnson and Roberts 1989): -EN in Germanic/ Romance languages, pro in Japanese and Chinese, and di and short agentive nominals in Indonesian exemplified in (15). See Yasui 2013b.

(15) a. Saya dijemput (oleh dia).  

I di.meet by him ‘I was met by him.’ (Sneddon 1996:248)

b. Dia kami jemput  

‘He us met ‘He was met by us.’ (Sneddon 1996:249)

(16) a. –EN is morphologically bound and has PF content, while pro is not morphologically bound
and lacks PF content.

b. The little $v$ for Japanese transitives has a variety of exponents, while that for passives is always $(r)are$.

c. Germanic/Romance languages have an overt expletive, while Japanese does not.

- **UG has active little $v$’s (or active voice) but no passive little $v$’s per se (or direct passive voice, indirect passive voice, impersonal passive voice and so on).**

2. **Classification of Japanese Passives**

- An agentive $ni$ (yotte) phrase is optional and lacks the subjecthood in passives with Property II.

(17) **Direct/Canonical Passive** (with a gap in object position)

$\text{Mary}_i$-wa $\text{John}_j$-ni (yotte) zibun$_i$/$_{yj}$-no uti-de $\text{koros}$-(r)are-ta.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TOP by self$_i$/$_{yj}$-GEN house-in kill-PASS-PAST} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘Mary was killed by John in her/*his house.’

(18) **Possessor Passive** (with a gap as the possessor of the object)

$\text{John}_i$-ga $\text{Mary}_j$-ni (yotte) zibun$_i$/$_{yj}$-no heya-de kao-o tatak-(r)are-ta.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{NOM by self$_i$/$_{yj}$-GEN room-in face-ACC hit-PASS-PAST} \\
\end{array}
\]

'John was slapped in the face by Mary/*his room.'

⇒ A $ni$ (yotte)-phrase in gapped passives is an adjunct.

- In contrast, passives with Property III without a gap (indirect Passives) disallow a $ni$ yotte phrase, and a $ni$ phrase is obligatory, showing the subjecthood.

(19) A subcase of (17) that allows only $ni$ yotte (Inoue 1974:83)

$\text{Kurusii sokoku } \text{hukki undo}$-ga $\text{yuusi-ni yotte}$/*-ni tuduke-rare-ta. difficult homeland return movement-NOM volunteer by continue-PASS-PAST  ‘The uphill struggle to return to the homeland was continued by volunteers.’

⇒ the same as $ni$ yotte in (17)

(20) **Yuusi-ni yoru** kurusii sokoku hukki undo (noun-modifying usage)

volunteer done-by difficult homeland return movement

‘The uphill struggle to return to the homeland by volunteers’

(21) Kurusii sokoku hukki undo-wo $\text{yuusi-ni yotta}$ (main verb usage)

difficult homeland return movement-TOP volunteer by depend-PASS

‘The uphill struggle to return to the homeland was done by volunteers.’

⇒ The verb $yor$ (‘be based on/be caused by’) involved in the so-called agentive phrase $ni$ yotte requires an eventive subject in non-passive constructions such as (20) and (21). $Ni$-phrases in gapped passives are grammaticalized form reduced from $ni$ yotte, while those in gapless passives are dative arguments. See Yasui (2013a, to appear).

(22) Transitive:

A thug/bookan
θext
v’
[√KICK/√KER-∅] √P
<√KICK/√KER> [John’s face/John-no kao] θint/Acc

The verbal stem merges with an internal DP, followed by the merger with a little [v ∅]. The verbal stem head-moves onto [v ∅]. The resultant amalgam licenses Acc on the internal DP, and merges with a full DP as its external argument.

(23) Direct/Canonical Passive: (5a)

[v ∅]/[v rare] m-merger
θext
m-merger
[√KICK-∅-EN]/[v √KER-(r)are-pro] √P
<√KICK/√KER> [John’s face/John-no kao] θint/Acc

In (23), –EN/pro ‘absorb’ Acc and act as an external argument; the agentive phrases in (1a,b) and (5a) are adjuncts. cf. (17) ⇒ Bowers (2010), Collins (2005), and Ishizuka (2010, 2012)

(24) Possessor Passives: (5b)

[v rare] m-merges with pro. The verbal stem head-moves onto [v rare-pro]. Given (9), the resultant amalgam can license Acc and Dat. Suppose that Dat goes to pro, which acts as an external argument for the reason given for (23), and Acc to the head of the internal argument.

Given (16c), one possibility is to raise the possessor Mary to fill the spec,TP rather than marking it with genitive within the object NP, which results in (24).

The spec,TPs of gapped passives like (23)/(24) with pro call for no special interpretation; it is the internal argument and its possessor, respectively.
(25) **Dative Passive:** (3a)
- Suppose that double object verbs can license Acc and Dat (with the help of Larsonian shell structure or ‘get’ in German/Dutch Alexiadou&Schäfer 2013). As in (24), it is possible that –EN ‘absorbs’ Dat, while Acc is assigned to the theme DP. The theme DP stays in-situ and the recipient DP goes out of vP for EPP/Case reasons.

\[
\text{vP} \rightarrow \sqrt{\text{GIVE-}[v-\emptyset-\text{EN}]} \quad \theta_{\text{ext/Dat}} \quad \text{John} \quad \theta_{\text{recipient}} \quad <\sqrt{\text{GIVE}> \quad \text{NP} \quad \text{the award} \quad \theta_{\text{theme/Acc}}
\]

(26) **Indirect Passives:** (8)

\[
\text{TP} \rightarrow \text{John-ga} \quad \text{Nom} \quad \text{T'} \quad \sqrt{\text{KER-rare-[T ta]}} \\
\text{vP} \quad \sqrt{\text{P}} \quad <\sqrt{\text{KER-[v rare]}>} \\
\text{bookan-ni} \quad \theta_{\text{ext/Dat}} \quad \text{v'} \\
\text{[Mary-no kao-o]} \quad \theta_{\text{int/Acc}} \quad <\sqrt{\text{KER}>}
\]

- Since *pro* is phonetically empty as stated in (16a), the exponent *rare* can be: [v rare-pro] or [v rare]. Direct and possessor passives are gapped, involving the former. Indirect passives are gapless; *rare does not m-merge with pro*.
- The thematic/Case requirements of the root \(\sqrt{\text{KER}}\) are satisfied within \(\text{vP}\) just as in the transitive (22) except that the external DP is licensed by *rare* with Dat according to (9).
- Given (16c), the spec,TP should be filled with an argument but it cannot be thematically related to the verbal amalgam; hence, it receives a non-thematic (or adversative) interpretation that is compatible with the core meaning of *rare*: its external argument is affected by the event expressed by its verbal complement.
- Given the absence of *pro* in (26), (18) follows: the dative NP is obligatory as [v rare]’s external argument, cannot be replaced by *ni yotte*, and behaves like a subject. Shibatani (1990:326-328) claims that indirect passives are cross-linguistically rarer than direct and possessor passives. The asymmetry can be attributed to the extra interpretive requirement on the spec,TP in the former.
- Suppose that *rare* neither merges with *pro* nor licenses dative. If this were possible, (27) would result, but the intended active reading (‘a thug kicked Mary’s face’) is realized as the active form without *rare* in (22).

(27) *Bookan-ga Mary-no kao-o ker-(r)are-ta.

thug-NOM GEN face-ACC kick-PASS-PAST

- (27) is ‘blocked’ by the simpler expression in (22) just like *gloriousity* is blocked by *glory*. If *rare* is non-distinct from the transitive light verb with respect to (i) and (ii) stated in (13), it still should exhibit properties that are not shared by the latter; *rare must either m-merge with pro or license dative.*
4. Passives in Other Languages

Chinese BEI

    \[\text{Bei hit PERF him}\]
    ‘Zhangsan was hit (*him).’

b. Zhangsan bei Lisi da le.
    \[\text{Bei hit PERF him}\]
    ‘Zhangsan was hit by Lisi.’

(29) a. Zhangsan, bei Lisi da-le ta yi-xia.
    \[\text{Bei hit-PERF him once}\]
    Lit. ‘Zhangsan was hit him once by Lisi.’

b.(* )Zhangsan bei Lisi da-le Wangwu
    \[\text{Bei hit-PERF}\]
    ‘Zhangsan was adversely affected by Lisi’s hitting Wangwu.’

- English *for* is a Prep COMP (cf. Emonds 1985), while *bei* is a light v Prep (COMP).
- According to Huang, A. Li & Y. Li (HLL 2009: ch. 4), short passives without agent phrases like (28a) were attested historically prior to long passives with agent phrases like (28b), and they are more robust in having disallowed a resumptive object strictly as shown in (28a). Long passives with resumptive pronouns used to be allowed extensively and are possible now if a VP is more complex as in (29a). Moreover, (29b) is marginally acceptable under the adversative interpretation.
- Based on the evidence that *bei Lisi* in (28b) is not movable as a constituent, HLL claim that *bei* is a two-place lexical verb selecting a complement clause and an experiencer subject and that it exceptionally Case-licenses the complement subject.
- But *bei* cannot take a DP object unlike ECM verbs such as *believe*. One possibility is to assume that *bei* can be a hybrid of v and a prepositional complementizer like *for* in English infinitives (or *with* in participial constructions such as "with tears running down her cheeks"), which is reasonable since Chinese prepositions used to be verbs, *for* in English infinitive clauses ECMs its complement subject, and a *for* DP is not movable just like *bei* DP: *For which senator were they anxious __ to keep his cool?* (Radford 1981:51)

(28a) \[\xrightarrow{\text{vP}} \]
\[\left[\text{v bei-pro]}-\sqrt{\text{DA}}\right.\]
\[\text{θext/Acc} \quad \sqrt{\text{P}}\]
\[\text{Zhangsan θint}\]
\[\left.<\sqrt{\text{DA}>}\right.\]

(29a,b) \[\text{Like rare in Japanese, *bei* has property (9). *Bei* does not m-merge with *pro*. Acc goes}
\[\text{to the internal DP. *Bei* ECMs the external DP. The spec,TP is filled with an argument that is not}
\[\text{thematic related to the verbal stem.}

(28b) \[\text{The verbal root merges with *pro*, and the spec,TP is base-generated; it is interpreted like}
\[\text{‘Zhangsan is for Lisi to hit’ on a par with ‘the book is for you to read.’}

- The above analysis is far from persuasive. See also Huang (2013): Non-canonical passives are formed by superimposing on the main predicate a higher semi-lexical verb whose meaning may include on or more points in the **causative-unaccusative spectrum.**
**Impersonal Passives in German/Dutch**

(30) Es wurde getanzt. ‘There was dancing.’

\[
\text{TP} \\
\text{Nom} \quad \text{T'} \\
\text{wurde} \quad \text{vP}^* \\
\sqrt[n]{\text{TANZ}[-\nu]} \text{-EN} \sqrt[n]{\theta_{\text{ext/Acc}}} \\
\text{<}\sqrt[n]{\text{TANZ} >}
\]

- Given Hale&Keyser’s analysis of unergative, (30) involves a transitive light verb, and \(–\text{EN} \) ‘absorbs’ Acc and \(\theta_{\text{ext}}\) just as in (23). The \text{spec,TP} can be filled with an expletive given (16c), unlike in Japanese indirect passives.

---

**References**


_____ (2013b) Prepositional versus verbal causativizers. NELS 40.