

Semantics of the Passive and Causative Suffixes in Japanese

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0. Introduction.

The passive and causative constructions have been widely analyzed in syntax, semantics and pragmatics. In semantics, Comrie (1981) discusses the degree of "control" retained in the causative situation by the causee. He argues that the relations among agent, force, instrument, and patient is not a set of discrete semantics relations, but rather a continuum as a whole, which can be regarded as a continuum of control. Thus, he considers one's deliberate falling down "full control", one's careless falling down "potential control" and one's being pushed down "no control." My analyses of the suffixes of the causatives and passives in Japanese show that the semantics of the causative suffix -(s)ase indicates the full or potential control and that of the passive suffix -(r)are no control in the part of the referent of the subject. In this paper, I focus on the conceptual domain of the Japanese passive suffix and causative suffix, demonstrating that these suffixes exhibit an interesting dichotomy in terms of the concept of "control." Our analysis shows that the inherent semantic nature of the passive suffix -(r)are is "no control" and that of the causative suffix -(s)ase is "control." With this semantic analysis, the complicated use and interpretations of the passive, causative and passive-causative sentences in Japanese have become much simpler than that with the traditional and recent analyses of these constructions.

Since we use a term "external control" which is defined in a much narrower sense than Comrie's term "control.", the term "external control" will be defined in section 1. In section 2, our analysis of the inherent semantic nature of the Japanese passive suffix and in section 3, that of the Japanese causative suffix will be demonstrated. In section 4, degree of control in Japanese passive-causatives will also be examined. The last section will conclude the paper.

1. Definition of the concept of Control.

Comrie (1981) discusses the totality of semantic roles such as agent, force, instrument, experiencer and patient in a universal inventory. According to him, these semantic roles are a continuum along which is characterized as a continuum of control and there is a degree of control such as full control, potential control and no control, as exemplified in (1).

- (1)a. Full control: I broke the vase on purpose.
- b. Potential control not exercised: I carelessly broke the vase.
- c. No control: I was pushed down to the concrete and broke the vase.

The notion of control discussed in Comrie is related to a cause and its resultant effect: How the resultant effect is brought about and whether the agent's intentionality is involved. If the agent's intentionality is a part of the definitional meaning of control, a lexical decomposition approach must be applied. However, the Japanese passive and causative suffixes are bound morphemes which cannot function as lexical items independent of their stems and verbs. Therefore, it is not possible to take the lexical decomposition approach to the analyses of the suffixes.

For the above reason, Comrie's definition of "control" cannot apply to it is to the current study. We will only consider a notion of "external control" as defined in an extremely narrow sense in (2).

- (2) It should be said that there is "external control" when a resultant effect is brought about, through force, order, or permission of the referent of the subject, by an agent who is not the referent of the subject. Conversely, it should be said that there is "no external control" when the resultant effect is brought about without any cause on the part of the referent of the subject.

Thus, the sentences in (1) are not examples of the term "external control" in the sense of (2), since all the sentences denote that the agent of the direct causer of the action (i.e. the person who broke the vase) is the referent of the subject.

subject. I will explain our definition of "external control" with the examples in (3).

- (3)a. I made my brother do the homework.
- b. The sky became clear.
- c. Bill was told not to come to the office any more by the manager
(and he did not come/ but he came).

The resultant effect of (3a) is that 'my brother' did the homework. The doer of the action of doing homework is not the referent of the subject, 'I'. That is, 'my brother' did the homework because of the controller 'I': The controller made his brother do the action by order, or some sort of physical or psychological force, manipulation and so forth. In this case, as Comrie claims, there is a degree of control: The degree of control in the case of (3a) may be full control or potential/partial control, depending on how the controller made his brother do the homework. The brother might have had no choice but to do the homework, or he might have been able not to do it. As for (3b), it is not stated that how the sky became clear. In fact, it would be difficult to imagine that someone can possibly clear the sky or that someone prevents the sky from becoming cleared. According to our definition of "external control", the referent of the subject must have control or power over the situation. It is difficult to claim that the sky in (3b) has the power to make itself clear the clouds: The cause is most likely the winds. Thus, it should be said that (3b) indicates "no external control." In (3c), the manager, who is not the referent of the subject, is the controller. he possesses only potential control over Bill's coming to the office. As seen in the parentheses, Bill could listen to the manager or does not have to listen to him. In either case, the referent of the subject has no control over the action of the manager having told him to come to the office. Therefore, according to our definition of "external control", it should be said that (3c) indicates "no external control."

The concept of control, thus, includes human capability to affect someone's state or action or change of a situation. Through this paper, we will use the term "control" in the narrow sense of "external control" as stated

in (2): When there are two agents, the doer of an action is not the referent of the subject and the referent of the subject is the controller. This controller possesses either full or potential controlling power over the "doer". When the agent is not the referent of the subject who is not the causer of the agent's action, the sentence indicates that the referent of the subject possesses "no control" over the situation.

In the following section, passives in Japanese will be discussed. It demonstrates that the Japanese passive suffix -(r)are indicates "no control" in the part of the referent of the subject over the agent's action which affects the referent of the subject, the speaker or both.

2. The Japanese Passive Suffix -(r)are.

The analyses of the Japanese passives have been extensively done in syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Kuno (1976) classifies the passives into two categories: the pure passives and the adversity passives. According to the traditional analysis of the passives like the one proposed by Kuno, the pure passives represent a neutral description of an event, while the adversity passives produce connotations that the referent of the subject has been affected by the agent's action. The typical examples of the pure passives and the adversity passives are illustrated in (4) and (5).

(4) The Pure Passives.

- a. Sono tatemono wa 1940-nen ni tate-rare-ta.
 that building Top. -year in build-pass-pst.
 "The building was build in 1940."
- b. Hiroshi wa sensei ni shikar-are-ta.
 teacher agnt scold-pass-pst.
 "Hiroshi was scolded by the teacher."