

JAPANESE PASSIVE AND CAUSATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Teruhiro Ishiguro

Several attempts have been made to describe the process of generation of certain Japanese constructions by applying simple surface transformation on the surface structures of a kernel sentence or a sentence which is a derivation of a kernel sentence. But all of them have some defects in not being able to explain the generation of all the possible sentences with the same structure.

For example, let us pick up Mr. Tang's grammar.¹ According to Mr. Tang's analysis, any Japanese sentence can be obtained as the result of transformation on a kernel structure.² Namely, a passive sentence is obtained from an active counterpart of it; a causative sentence from a non-causative counterpart applying some morphemic changes of the verbs and other form classes. However, this concept is basically mistaken, for we can find many sentences which can not be generated by simply applying the rules which he gives. More specifically, Mr. Tang's Rule T5 writes:³

$$SD : \frac{X}{1} + \frac{NP}{2} + \frac{ga}{3} + \frac{Y}{4} + \frac{Nhu}{5} + \frac{o}{6} + \frac{V+r}{7} + \frac{Z}{8}$$

SC : 1+5+3+4+2+6+7+8 (Permutation)

6 \longrightarrow *ni*

7 \longrightarrow *rare* replaces 7

and as an example,

kimi ga Taroo o tataita 'You beat Taroo'

→ Taroo ga kimi ni tatakareta 'Taroo was beaten by you' is given. This rule works fine as far as the above example goes. However there are some problems involved in this analysis which prevent us from accepting it without objections.

First, Mr. Tang's interpretation of '*rare*' as an auxiliary is basically mistaken, because we cannot delete '*rare*' without changing the meaning of the whole sentence. This suggests that it is much more appropriate to regard '*rare*' as a verb, as will be discussed later in this paper.

Secondly, there are many sets of sentences in Japanese that do not accept the above structural changes. For instance, supposing the passive sentence,

boku ga titi ni sinareta 'I was left alone by my father's death'

we are not able to find its active counterpart, because

*titi ga boku o sinda

is an unacceptable sentence. Neither can we find an active counterpart of

Hanako ga okaasan ni osiri o butareta 'Hanako was beaten by her mother on the hip'

because the formal active counterpart

*okaasan ga Hanako ni osiri o butta

is also unacceptable.

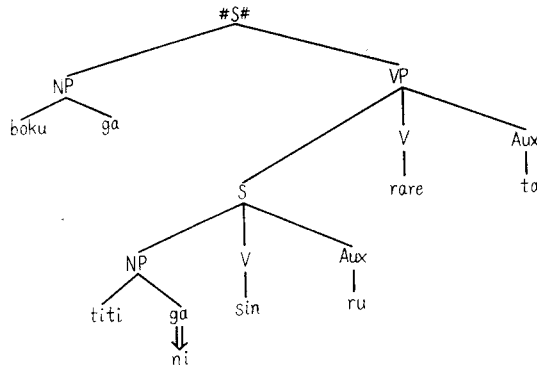
Consequently, we must discover an almighty rule by which all these constructions are properly generated. What we do need is a set of rules which can take care of the generation of a surface structure from an overall generalized underlying structure.

We would like to consider the passive and the causative constructions in this model. Both constructions have the PS rules as follows :

$$\begin{aligned} \#S\# &\longrightarrow \text{NP} + \text{VP} \\ \text{VP} &\longrightarrow (\text{NP}) (\text{S}) \text{V} \\ \text{VP} &\longrightarrow \text{NP} + \text{Copula} \\ \text{NP} &\longrightarrow (\text{Det}) (\text{S}) (\text{N}) \\ &\text{(simplified)} \end{aligned}$$

1. Passive : NP+S+rare...

Diagram 1



Passive Particle Changing Rule I: The particle *ga* of the Subject-NP of the embedded sentence becomes *ni*. (obligatory)

Applying the above rule, we obtain

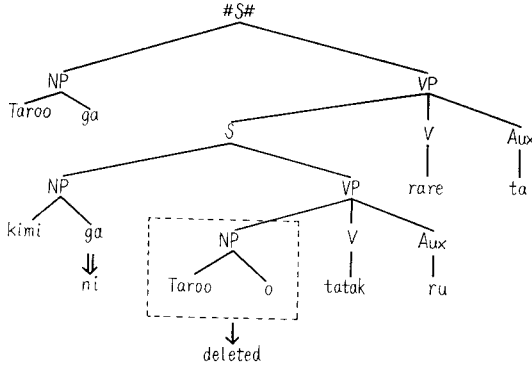
boku ga + titi ga + sin + ru + rare + ta⁴

→ boku ga titi ni sinareta.

The first example given on page 116 is analyzed as follows :

Ex.: Taroo ga kimi ni tatakareta 'Taroo was beaten by you.'

Diagram 2



Taroo ga + kimi ga + Taroo o + tatak + ru + rare + ta

→ Taroo ga kimi ni tatakareta.

First, applying *Passive Particle Changing Rule I* which changes the Subject NP of the embedded sentence, *i. e.* *kimi ga*, into *N + ni*, *i. e.* *kimi ni*. Next, in order to obtain the expected structure, we have to delete the NP which is the immediate constituent of VP in the embedded sentence, *i. e.* *Taroo o*. This can be handled by the following rule :

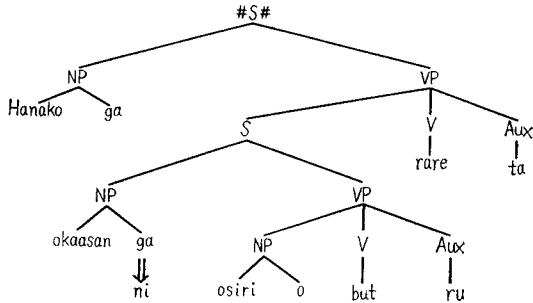
Passive-Causative NP Deletion Rule :⁵ Any NP in the embedded sentence which has a noun identical with the noun in the Subject-NP and / or the Object-NP in the matrix sentence is deleted. (obligatory)

Let us examine our rules on the last example which we formerly

cited on page 116.

Ex.: Hanako ga okaasan ni osiri o butareta 'Hanako was beaten by her mother on the hip.'

Diagram 3



Applying our *Passive Particle Changing Rule I*, we obtain the transformation :

Hanako ga + okaasan ga + osiri o + but + ru + rare + ta
 → Hanako ga okaasan ni osiri o butareta.

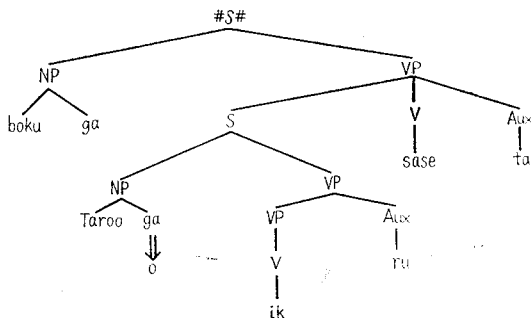
We do not have to apply our *Passive-Causative NP Deletion Rule* in this case because we do not have any NP whose noun part is identical with the noun in the Subject-NP in the matrix sentence.

2. Causative : NP + (NP) + S + sase. . .

(i) When an intransitive verb is embedded.

Ex.: boku ga Taroo o ikaseta 'I made Taroo go.'

Diagram 4



boku ga + Taroo ga + ik + ru + sase + ta

→ boku ga Taroo o ikaseta.

We can obtain the above transformation by setting the following rule :

Causative Particle Changing Rule I: When the Verb in the embedded structure is an intransitive verb, the particle of the Subject-NP, *i. e.* N+ga, is changed into *o*, thus making N+*o*. (obligatory)

However, quite often, we observe that N+*ni* is used instead of N+*o* without changing the meaning of the whole sentence drastically. For example,

boku ga Taroo o ikaseru

and

boku ga Taroo ni ikaseru

are used in a similar situation. Yosiyuki Kuroda states that this

change of the particle takes place when the willingness of the actor is involved in the action expressed by the intransitive verb of the embedded sentence.⁶ But it is very doubtful whether we should include such a semantic consideration in our description. Therefore I would like to briefly state the possible occurrence of N+*ni* instead of N+*o* as follows :

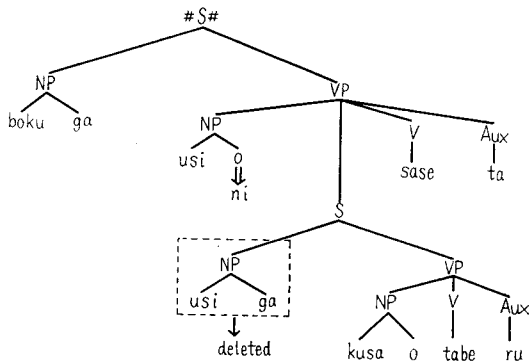
Causative Particle Changing Rule II: The changed particle *o* can be rechanged to *ni* when the Verb of the embedded sentence is intransitive, or when the Object-NP which is the immediate constituent of the VP of the embedded sentence is deleted because of implicit understanding. (optional)

2'. Causative : NP+NP⁷ +S+sase...

(ii) When a transitive verb is embedded.

Ex.: boku ga usi ni kusa o tabesaseta 'I made a cow eat grass.'

Diagram 5



boku ga + usi o + usi ga + kusa o + tabe + ru + sase + ta

→ boku ga usi ni kusa o tabesaseta.

For the above given transformation we necessitate the following rules :

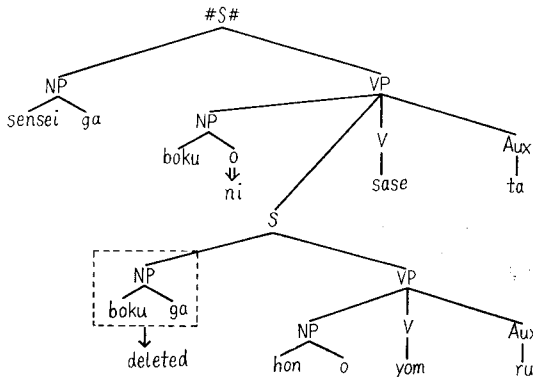
Causative NP Deletion Rule: Delete the Subject NP of the embedded sentence when its noun part is identical with the noun of the NP which is placed immediately before the whole embedded sentence. (obligatory)

Causative Particle Changing Rule III: Change the particle *o* to *ni* in the NP which is the immediate constituent of the VP of the matrix sentence, when there occur two successive NPs with *N+o*. (obligatory)

Let us examine our rules on another example :

Ex.: sensei ga boku ni hon o yomaseta 'The teacher made me read the book.'

Diagram 6



sensei ga + boku o + boku ga + hon o + yom + ru + sase + ta

→ sensei ga boku ni hon o yomaseta

By applying our rules we can obtain the above transformation.

3. Passive of Causative: NP+S+S+VP

In order to generate this construction we have to consider two levels of underlying embedded sentences under the VP of the matrix sentence. Also we have to consider the following two cases:

- (i) When the Verb of the embedded sentence in the lowest level is intransitive.
- (ii) When the Verb of the embedded sentence in the lowest level is transitive.

because the processes of the changes of the particles in the above two cases are different.

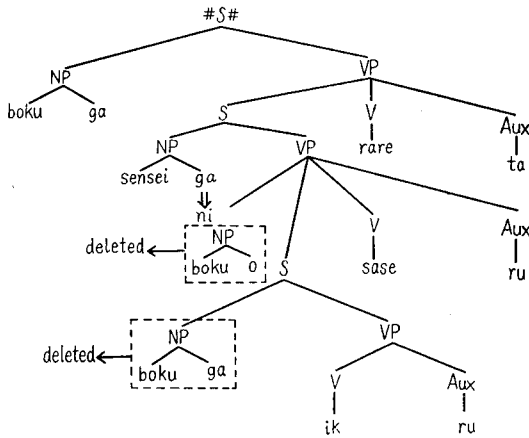
- (i) When the Verb in the embedded sentence in the lowest level is intransitive.

In this case we have an underlying phrase structure as the following:

$$\begin{aligned} \#S\# &\longrightarrow \text{NP+S+S+VP} \\ &\longrightarrow \text{NP+NP+NP+S+VP+VP} \\ &\longrightarrow \text{NP+NP+NP+NP+VP+VP+VP} \end{aligned}$$

Ex.: boku ga sensei ni ikaserareta 'I was made to go by the teacher.'

Diagram 7



Starting from the lower level, we have 'boku ga iku' embedded in the Causative matrix. Applying *Causative NP Deletion Rule*, we delete the Subject-NP of the lowest level. Thus we get

sensei ga boku o ikaseru.

Next, this structure is embedded in the Passive matrix, where the particle of the Subject-NP of the Causative semi-matrix is changed from *ga* to *ni* according to *Passive Particle Changing Rule I*. The next step is the deletion of the two NPs, namely, the NP which was formally the Subject-NP of the emedded sentence and the NP which was the immediate constituent of the VP of the embedded sentence applying *Passive-Causative NP Deletion Rule*. Thus finally we obtain.

boku ga sensei ni ikaserareta.

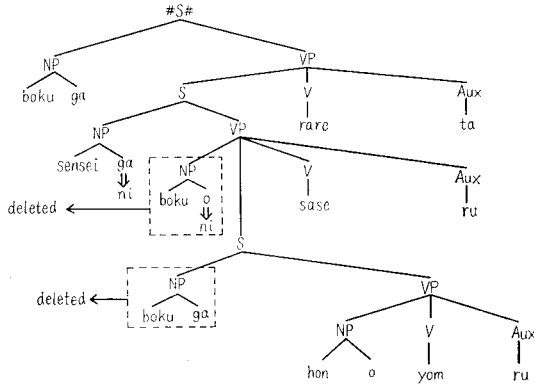
- (ii) When the Verb in the embedded sentence in lowest level is transitive.

In this case we have an underlying phrase structure as the following :

#S# → NP + S + S + VP
 → NP + NP + NP + S + VP + VP
 → NP + NP + NP + NP + NP + VP + VP + VP

Ex.: boku ga sensei ni hon o yomaserareta 'I was made to read a book by the teacher.'

Diagram 8



Starting from the lower level embedding, we have

boku ga hon o yomu

embedded in the Causative matrix where we have deletion of the Subject NP of the embedded structure according to our *Causative NP Deletion Rule*. What we obtain then is

*sensei ga boku o hon o yomaseru.

As the next step, we have to change the particle of the second NP *o* into *ni* applying our *Causative Particle Changing Rule III*, which changes the structure into

sensei ga boku ni hon o yomaseru.

Next, this structure is embedded in the Passive matrix, where the particle of the Subject-NP changes from *ga* to *ni* according to our *Passive Particles Changing Rule I*, and then we have the deletion of the NP which has a noun identical with the noun of the Subject NP in the matrix structure by our *Passive-Causative NP Deletion Rule*. As the final step we can obtain

boku ga sensei ni hon o yomaserareta.

4. Causative of Passive: NP+S+S+VP

Causative of Passive is a very dubious and controversial construction in Japanese. In some dialects, this structure is naturally used sometimes, but in most cases, it is not, probably because of difficulty for comprehension of the meaning it conveys.⁸

Again we have to consider two cases possibly to occur:

- (i) When the Verb of the embedded sentence in the lowest level is intransitive.
- (ii) When the Verb of the embedded sentence in the lowest level is transitive.

because the analysis to be introduced later reveals an interesting fact.

- (i) When the Verb of the embedded sentence in the lowest level is intransitive.

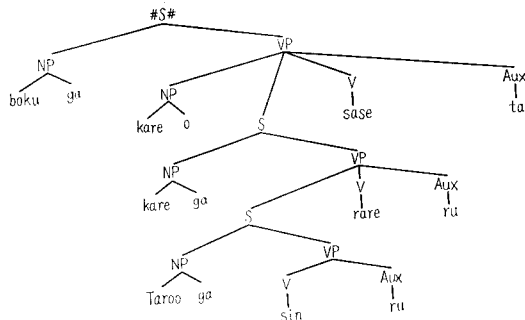
In this case we have the following underlying structure :

$$\begin{aligned} \#S\# &\longrightarrow NP+NP+S+S+VP \\ &\longrightarrow NP+NP+NP+S+VP+VP \\ &\longrightarrow NP+NP+NP+NP+VP+VP+VP \end{aligned}$$

However we failed to generate any natural, meaningful sentence having this structure. Consequently, we may conclude, when an intransitive verb is the verb of the embedded sentence in the lowest level, Causative of Passive does not exist in Japanese. The following unacceptable example will illustrate the impossibility of the generation of this structure.

Ex.: * boku ga kare o Taroo ni sinaseseta.

Diagram 9



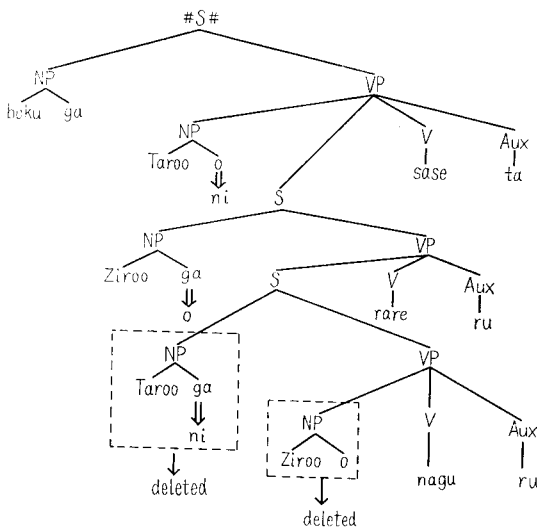
- (ii) When the Verb of the embedded sentence in the lowest level is transitive.

In this case the underlying phrase structure is :

#S# \longrightarrow NP+NP+S+S+VP
 \longrightarrow NP+NP+NP+S+VP+VP
 \longrightarrow NP+NP+NP+NP+NP+VP+VP+VP

Ex.: boku ga Taroo ni Ziroo o naguraseseta *I kept Taroo letting Ziroo being hit.'

Diagram 10



Starting from the lowest level, the structure

Taroo *ga* Ziroom *o* naguru

is embedded into the Passive matrix, resulting

Ziroom *ga* Taroo *ni* nagurareru

with the change of the particle in the Subject-NP of the embedded sentence from *ga* to *ni* by our *Passive Particle Changing Rule I*, and, at the same time, with the deletion of the NP which is the immediate constituent of the VP of the embedded sentence by our *Passive-Causative NP Deletion Rule*. The next step is the embedding of this passive structure into the Causative matrix. When this is done, rather complicated changes of the particles take place, which may be taken care of by the following *Causative-Passive Particles Changing Rule*

Causative-Passive Particles Changing Rule: The Particles *o* of the NP which is the immediate constituent of the VP of the Causative matrix sentence is converted to *ni*, and at the same time, the particle *ga* of the NP which is the Subject-NP of the passive embedded sentence is converted to *o*. (obligatory)

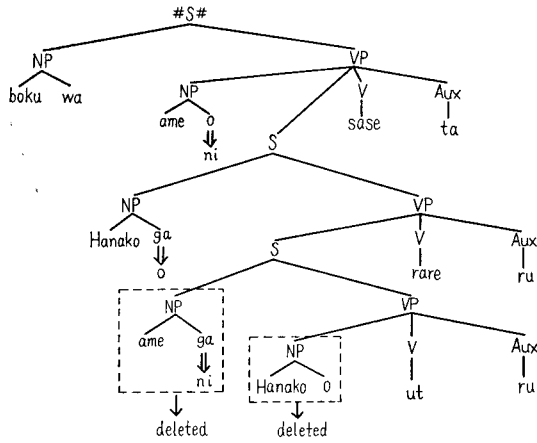
Applying the above rule, we can obtain

boku *ga* Taroo *ni* Ziroom *o* nagurareseteta.⁹

Next example may better illustrate the possibility of the occurrence of this construction.

Ex.: boku wa ame *ni* Hanako *o* utaresaseteta 'I kept letting Hanako be hit by the rain.'

Diagram 11



Starting from the lowest level

ame ga Hanako o utu

is embedded in the Passive semi-matrix, and generates

Hanako ga ame ni utareru

by our *Passive Particle Changing Rule I* and *Passive-Causative NP Deletion Rule*. Then this Passive construction is embedded into the Causative matrix with the change of particles by our *Causative-Passive Particles Changing Rule*, and the secondary application of the *Passive-Causative NP Deletion Rule* to delete N+ni phrase in the embedded passive sentence. By the above procedure we obtain

boku wa ame ni Hanako o utaresaseta.

Curiously enough, majority of the native speakers of Japanese on whom I tested the acceptability of the above sentence accepted it as a natural, perfectly acceptable sentence, even though many of them rejected the acceptability of

boku ga Taroo ni Ziroo o naguraresaseta.

The above mentioned fact may suggest that there might be something to do with the basic functional difference of the two transitive verbs, though they are used in the two formally similar structures, *i. e. naguru* and *utu*. However, at this point, I would like to preserve this question as a starting point of my further speculation.

Notes

1. Tang, Charles T. "A Transformational Analysis of Japanese Verbs and Verb Phrase." Unpublished Master's thesis, the University of Texas, 1964.
2. *Ibid.* Introduction, p. 2.
3. *Ibid.* p. 40.
4. In this paper I am not going to deal with morphophonemic changes that occur in Verb-Auxiliary combination.
5. This is called *Passive-Causative NP Deletion Rule* because this is to be applied again in the Passive-Causative construction.
6. Kuroda, S. Y. "Causative Forms in Japanese," *Foundation of Language*, 1 (1965), pp. 33-35.
7. This NP appears always as N+o.
8. I composed several actual examples of this construction and tested them on some native speakers of Japanese to ask about their acceptability. The result was as introduced above.
9. I found that some native speakers of Japanese did not accept this as a meaningful sentence. They claimed that this is identical with the structure 'boku ga Taroo ni Ziroo o naguraseteta' meaning "I made

Taroo hit Ziroo." This fact may bring forth an interesting issue concerning psychology of understanding which will be discussed by the author in some other opportunity.