

Where, how and why do passives in Japanese and Korean differ?— A parallel corpus account

In the Japanese grammatical tradition, various scholars have classified the passive from the point of view of "subjectivity" (Matsushita 1930, Kuroda 1979, among others). In a recent study, Shibatani (2003) observes that when the action is directed toward the speaker's sphere (i.e. the speaker or his in-group members), the passive is used obligatorily in Japanese, and possibly other languages. Such a passive is considered a subjective- or empathy-loaded expression (a la Kuno & Kaburaki 1977) in that it describes the event from the speaker's perspective. To test the validity of Shibatani's observation, we undertook a parallel corpus-based study of the passive in Japanese and Korean using the Japanese novel TOTTOCHAN and its Korean translation. The story is a first-person narration, specifically chosen to assess the subjectivity effect on the use of the passive. Following Masuoka (1991), we classified the passives into three categories: Affected passive (AFP), Agent defocusing passive (ADP) and Attributive passive (ATP). The results of our survey are tabulated below.

	AFP	ADP	ATP	Total
Japanese	51	21	7	79
Korean	22	14	3	39

Our study reveals that Japanese radically differs from Korean in the domain of subjective AFP. Previous studies exclusively focused on a sub-class of AFP called the "adversative passive", and it was argued that Japanese shows a greater latitude than Korean toward the indirectness of the effect on the subject posed by the event in question (cf. Shibatani 1985, Washio 1993, Chung 1993, Kim 1994). Nevertheless, these studies failed to identify another sub-class of AFP which is semantically neutral. We refer to such expressions as "perspective-sensitive passives" which depict an event from the viewpoint of a Patient which outranks the Agent on the "empathy" hierarchy. The breakdown of AFPs is as follows.

AFP	Total tokens	Neutral	Adversative	Benefactive
Japanese	51	24	24	3
Korean	22	1	18	3

Japanese abounds with semantically neutral passives that assign topicality to the patient. These perspective-sensitive passives play a crucial role in the organization of Japanese discourse, where it is obligatory to maintain topic continuity. Korean, on the other hand, almost completely lacks this category (see 1-4).

This is an area where Korean differs radically from Japanese. The previous studies mentioned above did not uncover this crucial difference since they confined their data to passive sentences in isolation. We claim that the robust presence of semantically neutral perspective-sensitive passives in Japanese is a reflection of a higher degree of subjectivity as compared to Korean. Similar results were attested in a parallel corpus study of another novel—KOKORO—as well.

In sum, recruiting passives to depict an event from the viewpoint of the speaker or an in-group member and maintaining topic continuity throughout the discourse seems to be more salient in Japanese than in Korean. Moreover, the notion of "subjectivity" may hold the key to understanding these cross-linguistic differences, not only in regard to passives, but in other domains of grammar also as demonstrated by Uehara (To appear).

Data (English versions are from "Totto-chan" translated by Dorothy Britton, Kondansha)

- (1) J tottotyan-ga mama-ni **turer-are-te** hazimete
 Tottochan-NOM mother-by take along-PASS-CONJ for the first time
 tomoegakuen-ni kita asa
 Tomoegakuen-to came morning
 K thotho-ka emma-lul ttala cheum tomoey hakwen-ey
 Tottochan-NOM mother-ACC follow first Tomoegakuen-to
 wassten nal achim
 came day morning
 E "...the morning Totto-chan first arrived at Tomoe Gakuen with Mother."
- (2) J "tekkotyan, tekkotyan" to **yob-are-ru-no-o** "tottotyan, tottotyan"
 Tekkochan, Tekkochan QUO call-PASS-RU-NOML-ACC "Tottochan, Tottochan"
 to omoikonde ita
 QUO presume was
 K "theychukhoccang, theychukhoccang" hako pwulunun-kes-ul
 Tekko-chan, Tekko-chan QUO call-NOML-ACC
 "thothoccang, thothoccang" ilako tutko mit-ess-ten kes-ita.
 Totto-chan, Totto-chan QUO hear believe-PST-NOML-DECL
 E "So everyone called her Tetsuko-chan. But it did not sound quite like Tetsuko-chan to her. Whenever anyone asked her what her name was, she would answer, "Tottochan"."
- (3) J Ryootyan-ga zutto "motte kite yaru"-to Migitakun-kara
 Ryochan-NOM for a long time "I will bring it for you"-QUO Migitakun-from
iw-are-te ita-kara datta
 say-PASS-ASP-hence COP.PAST
 K "...lanun mal-ul swuepsi tulewa-ss-ki ttaymwun-ita
 ... QUO talk-ACC so many times listen-PST-cause-DECL
 E "After all, Migita had been telling him for ages that he would bring him some."
- (4) J okasan-ni **tanom-are-te** ie-kara otukaikago-nanka motte
 mother-by request-PASS-CP house-from shopping basket-like carrying
 yaoyasan-ni iku-no-nara hazukasikunainda kedo....
 green grocer-to go-NOML-if not embarrassing but...
 K cip-eyse emma simpwulum-ulo sicangpakwuni kathun
 Home-at mother errand-by shopping basket like
 kes-ul tul-ko....
 something-ACC take-CONJ
 E "No one minded being sent to buy vegetables by his mother...."

Selected references

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