Direct “Indirect” Passives in Japanese

Synopsis: This paper provides a movement analysis of Possessive Indirect Passives (PosP) in Japanese, which have been analyzed as a biclausal structure similar to Adversity Indirect Passives (AdP) (Kim 2011, a.o.), or as Possessor Raising (Pylkkänen 2008, a.o.). More precisely, I argue that when non-adverse (or neutral) reading is available, PosP is structurally a direct passive, in which Major Object (MO; 1a, 4) moves up to the subject position, as in (1b). I further argue that availability of neutral PosP is conditioned by affectedness of a Theme argument.

(1) a. MO Construction \[ Nom_1 \text{ Acc}_1 \text{ Acc}_2 V-T \quad (\text{Acc}_1 \text{ MO}; \text{Possessor}, \text{Acc}_2: \text{Possessee}) \]
b. Possessive Passive \[ \text{Nom}_k \text{ Dat}/by \ t_k \text{ Acc}_V \text{ V-PASS-T} \quad (\text{Nom}; \text{Possessor}, \text{Acc}; \text{Possessee}) \]

Passives: In addition to direct passives like English by-passive, Japanese has indirect passives: AdP (2) and PosP (3). In (2), the subject, which is based in the matrix clause, is adversely affected by the event described by the embedded clause (e.g., John envies Bob for being praised by Mary). In (3), the subject and the Acc object hold a possessive relation. With respect to the derivation of the nominative subject and the status of the possessor, I argue against both biclausal analyses and Possessor Raising analyses, and instead propose a movement analysis for PosP.

   \[ \text{Nom} \quad \text{DAT} \quad \text{ACC} \quad \text{Praise-PASS-PAST} \quad \text{Nom} \quad \text{DAT} \quad \text{Brother-ACC} \quad \text{Praise-PASS-PAST} \]
   ‘John had Mary praise Bob.’ (AdP)  ‘John got Mary praise his brother.’ (PosP)

b. [\text{TP} \text{Nom} \text{ DAT ACC V-PASS-T}]  b. [\text{TP} \text{Nom} \text{ DAT ACC V-PASS-T}]

Neutral Reading: I illustrate contra Oshima (2006) and Kim (2012) that possessive relations do not guarantee neutral reading. When an embedded predicate does not have either negative or positive connotations (i.e., neutral; e.g., ‘play the piano, read a book’), the sentence necessarily has adversity reading (Shibatani 1994). Even when the relation is body-part or inalienable (e.g., ‘cut the hair’), adversity reading can be obligatory. Thus, whether or not neutral reading can be achieved is not determined by presence of possessive relation, or by types of the relation.

Affectedness: I demonstrate that, in order to achieve neutral reading, the surface subject, rather than object, needs to be directly affected by an action denoted by the predicate. Subtle differences in (3) illustrate this requirement; Mary should (presumably talk to him) praise John by virtue of praising his brother. If it is the case that John is affected by an event where Mary praises his brother, however, the sentence indicates an adverse influence to John. I claim, then, that the surface subject should be selected by the predicate as a Theme argument (Acc object merely supplies details about the Theme (Ishii 1989)). I also show the similarity between neutral PosP and MO Construction (4) (Honda 2009, Hoshi 1999) with respect to meanings and conditions.

(4) Mary-ga John-i-o, hissini (kare-i-no) ani-(nokoto)-o hometa.
   \[ \text{Nom} \quad \text{ACC(MO)} \quad \text{Hard} \quad \text{he GEN} \quad \text{Brother-of-that-ACC} \quad \text{Praised} \]
   ‘Mary praised John about his brother hard.’

Movement: I propose the structure (5), where a Theme subject is based in the MO position.

(5) Nom Dat t_{Nom} (= MO) [\text{NP pro Acc }] V_{PASS-T} \quad (Nom = pro: \text{Possessor}, Acc: \text{Possessee})

Illustrating (non-)subjecthood of Dat, I argue that neutral PosP has a monoclusal structure. Also, since surface subject is selected by the predicate, I claim that the subject starts out of the object position. Moreover, (4) excludes Possessor Raising analyses, according to which the subject is derived through raising directly from the possesive NP to the surface subject position. The fact that a resumptive pronoun kare may appear as well as MO suggests that the possessor position can be occupied by pro. Furthermore, I point out that some examples used to support non-movement analyses are adverse PosP, which I assume has an AdvP-type biclausal structure.

Thus, shedding light on somewhat overlooked factors, e.g., non-adversity, affectedness, MO position, this study makes a step for a unified account toward passives in Japanese.
References