

## A Note on the Object DP in the Possessor Passive\*

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### 1. Introduction

This paper discusses a syntactic property of the object DP, which denotes an entity that is in some sense possessed by the surface subject, in the possessor passive construction as exemplified in (1):

- (1)      Emi-ga      Ken-ni(yotte) *kodomo-o* home-rare-ta  
             Emi-Nom Ken-by            child-Acc praise-Pass-Past  
             ‘Emi had her child praised by Ken.’

In Homma (1995), the possessor passive construction is analyzed to be derived via the movement of the possessor DP from a VP-internal position to the surface subject position, as in (2):<sup>1</sup>

- (2)      [Emi<sub>i</sub>-ga Ken-ni(yotte) [<sub>VP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> [<sub>V</sub> [kodomo-o] home]]]-rare-ta]

This paper focuses on the rest of the VP and shows that there are instances of the possessor passive construction where the object DP is apparently affected by the passivization. This is the case with the object DP in such cases as exemplified in (3):

- (3) a. Nakajima-ga Prost-ni *hidari-ria-o/-ni* butuker-are-ta  
       Nakajima-Nom Prost-by left-rear-Acc/-Dat bump-Pass-Past  
       ‘Nakajima had his left rear tire bumped by Prost.’  
       b. ano-giin-ga                    yatoo-ni                    *sekkaku-dasita-*  
       that-congressman-Nom opposition-party-by with-effort-submitted-  
       *hooan-o/-ni* hantais-are-ta  
       bill-Acc/-Dat oppose-Pass-Past  
       ‘The congressman had the bill that he submitted with effort opposed  
       by the opposition party.’

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<sup>1</sup> See Homma (1995) for some empirical evidence for this analysis. A similar analysis is made in Terada (1990) and Kubo (1993).

- c. sono-mati-ga nanimonoka-ni *rekisiteki-kenzoobutu-no*  
 that-town-Nom someone-by historic-house-of  
*dobei-o/-ni* rakugakis-are-ta  
 mud-wall-Acc/-Dat scribble-Pass-Past  
 ‘The town had the mud wall of its historic house spoiled with graffiti by someone.’

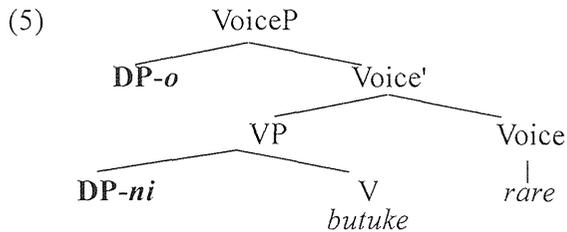
An interesting property of these examples is that the possessee object DP can appear with either the Accusative or the Dative Case, whereas it can only occur with the Dative Case in the active counterpart:

- (4) a. Prost-ga *Nakajima-no hidari-ria \*-o/-ni* butuke-ta  
 Prost-Nom Nakajima-of left-rear-Acc/-Dat bump-Past  
 ‘Prost bumped against Nakajima’s left rear tire.’
- b. yatoo-ga *ano-giin-ga sekkaku-dasita-*  
 opposition-party-Nom that-congressman-Nom with-effort-submitted-  
*hooan \*-o/-ni* hantaisi-ta  
 bill-Acc/-Dat oppose-Past  
 ‘The opposition party objected to the bill that the congressman submitted with effort.’
- c. nanimonoka-ga *sono-mati-no rekisiteki-kenzoobutu-no*  
 someone-Nom that-town-of historic-house-of  
*dobei \*-o/-ni* rakugakisi-ta  
 mud-wall-Acc/-Dat scribble-Past  
 ‘Someone scribbled on the mud wall of the town’s historic house.’

In the following sections, I show that some instances of the object DP in the possessor passive construction are in fact not the argument of the lexical verb, but occur as an argument selected by the passive auxiliary *rare*.

## 2. Syntax of the Accusative Possessee Argument

What is the source of the Accusative Case in the passives in (3)? The fact that the Accusative Case in these cases is only possible in the passive strongly suggests that this Accusative Case is not assigned by the verb but by the passive auxiliary verb *rare*. If so, we predict that the relevant possessee Accusative DP is not located within the lower VP, but in the projection headed by *rare* for Case-assignment. The difference between the relevant Dative and the Accusative argument is illustrated in (5):



Indeed, the following facts tell us that the relevant possessee argument with the Accusative Case, but not the one with the Dative Case, is located outside the VP.

Firstly, there is a phenomenon in Japanese in which a WH-phrase has an interpretation corresponding to that of the negative polarity item (henceforth, NPI) *any* when contained in a constituent that the particle *mo* is attached to:

- (6) Mai-wa [*dono-gakusei-ga kanemoti-da-to-mo*] omottei-nai  
 Mai-Top which-student-Nom rich-be-Comp-*mo* think-not  
 ‘Mai does not believe that any students are rich.’

If a WH-phrase is not in the *mo*-attached constituent, the WH-phrase cannot be interpreted as *any*:

- (7) \* *dono-gakusei-ga* [ Mai-ga kanemoti-da-to-mo ] omottei-nai  
 which-student-Nom Mai-Nom rich-be-Comp-*mo* think-not  
 ‘\*Any students do not believe that Mai is rich.’

With this property in mind, let us consider the following:

- (8) a. sono-sensyu-ga (reesu-de) *doko-ni* butuke-*mo*-s-are-nak-atta  
 that-racer-Nom race-in where-Dat bump-*mo*-do-Pass-Neg-Past  
 ‘That racer did not have any part (of his car) bumped.’  
 b. ??sono-sensyu-ga (reesu-de) *doko-o* butuke-*mo*-s-are-nak-atta  
 that-racer-Nom race-in where-Acc bump-*mo*-do-Pass-Neg-Past
- (9) a. ano-giin-ga yatoo-ni *dono-hooan-ni*  
 that-congressman-Nom opposition-party-by which-bill-Dat  
 hantaisi-*mo*-s-are-nak-atta  
 object-*mo*-do-Pass-Neg-Past  
 ‘That congressman did not have any of the bills opposed by the opposition party.’

- b. ??ano-giin-ga                      yatoo-ni                      *dono-hooan-o*  
 that-congressman-Nom opposition-party-by which-bill-Acc  
 hantaisi-*mo*-s-are-*nak*-atta  
 object-*mo*-do-Pass-Neg-Past

Though the judgment is not perfectly clear, it seems that sentences (8b) and (9b), where the relevant argument appears with the Accusative Case, are somewhat degraded compared with (8a) and (9a). If this contrast is a real one, then we can account for it in terms of the structural difference between the Dative and the Accusative possessee. The Dative is situated within the VP, as in an active sentence, which means that it is contained in the constituent that *mo* is attached to. On the other hand, the relevant Accusative DP is outside the *mo*-attached constituent.

If *mo* is attached to the projection of the passive auxiliary, on the other hand, so that the Accusative possessee as well as the Dative possessee is contained in the domain of *mo*, the sentence is acceptable with the NPI interpretation of the possessee DP:

- (10) a. sono-sensyu-ga (reesu-de) *doko-ni*    butuker-are-*mo*-si-*nak*-atta  
 that-racer-Nom race-in where-Dat bump-Pass-*mo*-do-Neg-Past  
 ‘That racer did not have any part (of his car) bumped.’  
 b. sono-sensyu-ga (reesu-de) *doko-o*    butuker-are-*mo*-si-*nak*-atta  
 that-racer-Nom race-in where-Acc bump-Pass-*mo*-do-Neg-Past
- (11) a. ano-giin-ga                      yatoo-ni                      *dono-hooan-ni*  
 that-congressman-Nom opposition-party-by which-bill-Dat  
 hantais-are-*mo*-si-*nak*-atta  
 object-Pass-*mo*-do-Neg-Past  
 ‘That congressman did not have any of his bills rejected by the  
 opposition party.’  
 b. ano-giin-ga                      yatoo-ni                      *dono-hooan-o*  
 that-congressman-Nom opposition-party-by which-bill-Acc  
 hantais-are-*mo*-si-*nak*-atta  
 object-Pass-*mo*-do-Neg-Past

Another fact that tells us of the structural difference between the Accusative and the Dative possessee has to do with the scope-taking property of these possessee DPs. First, consider:

- (12) sono-sensyu-ga *subete-no taiya-ni* butuke-sae-si-ta  
 that-racer-Nom all-of tire-Dat bump-even-do-Past  
 ‘That racer even bumped all the tires.’

It is possible to interpret the Dative possessor QP *subete-no taiya-ni* to take narrow scope with respect to the particle *sae*. Thus this sentence can have either of the two interpretations in (13):

- (13) a. For every tire, that racer even bumped it. (ALL > EVEN)  
 b. That racer even did the following: he bumped every tire.  
 (EVEN > ALL)

This ambiguity is retained in the passive counterpart in (14):

- (14) Yamada-sensyu-ga *subete-no taiya-ni* butuke-sae-s-are-ta  
 Yamada-racer-Nom all-of tire-Dat bump-even-do-Pass-Past  
 ‘Yamada had all the tires of his car bumped.’  
 (ALL > EVEN, EVEN > ALL)

In contrast, it is at least very difficult for the Accusative possessor QP to take narrow scope under *sae*. Compare (15) with (14):

- (15) Yamada-sensyu-ga *subete-no taiya-o* butuke-sae-s-are-ta  
 Yamada-racer-Nom all-of tire-Acc bump-even-do-Pass-Past  
 ‘Yamada had all the tires of his car bumped.’  
 (ALL > EVEN, ??EVEN > ALL)

This contrast with respect to the scope property follows straightforwardly from the proposed structural difference between the Accusative and the Dative possessee argument. While the Dative possessor lies within VP, its Accusative counterpart is located outside the VP, as shown in (16):

- (16)
- 
- ```

graph TD
  VoiceP --> DPo[DP-o]
  VoiceP --> VoicePrime[Voice']
  VoicePrime --> VPsae[VP-sae]
  VoicePrime --> Voice[Voice]
  VPsae --> DPni[DP-ni]
  VPsae --> V[V]
  V --> butuke[butuke]
  Voice --> rare[rare]
  
```

It is also predicted that the Accusative possessee, as well as its Dative counterpart, can be in the scope of *sae* if *sae* is attached to the projection of the passive auxiliary. Consider:

- (17) Yamada-sensyu-ga *subete-no taiya-ni/o* butuker-are-*sae*-si-ta  
 Yamada-racer-Nom all-of tire-Dat/-Acc bump-Pass-even-do-Past  
 ‘Yamada had all the tires of his car bumped.’

Whichever Case particle is attached, it is possible for the possessee QP to take narrow scope with respect to *sae*.

### 3. DP-*o* as an Argument of *Rare*

Having observed that the relevant Accusative possessee DP lies in the projection of the passive auxiliary *rare*, we might then ask whether it is raised into this projection from within VP (as in (18a)), or is base-generated in this projection of the passive auxiliary (as in (18b)).

- (18) a. [<sub>VoiceP</sub> DP<sub>i</sub>-*o* [<sub>Voice'</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> *t<sub>i</sub>* V] *rare*]]  
 b. [<sub>VoiceP</sub> DP-*o* [<sub>Voice'</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> V] *rare*]]

From the facts that we observed in Section 2, we can say that the more adequate analysis is (18b), where the Accusative possessee DP does not move from within VP, but is base-generated in VoiceP as an argument of the passive auxiliary *rare*.

Firstly, let us observe that scrambling and passivization, two instances of movement operations on DPs, exhibit the reconstruction effect for the NPI licensing and the relative scope with the VP-attached *sae*, as shown in (19) and (20):

- (19) Scrambling:  
 a. *dono-zigyoo-o<sub>i</sub>* sono-iinkai-ga *t<sub>1</sub>* *tubusi-mo-si-nak-atta*  
 which-project-Acc the-committee-Nom abandon-*mo*-do-Neg-Past  
 ‘The committee did not abandon any of the projects.’  
 b. *subete-no zigyoo-o<sub>i</sub>* sono-iinkai-ga *t<sub>1</sub>* *tubusi-sae-si-ta*  
 all-of project-Acc the-committee-Nom abandon-even-do-Past  
 ‘The committee even abandoned all the projects.’  
 (ALL > EVEN, EVEN > ALL)

(20) Subject of Direct Passives:

- a. *dono-zigyoo-ga tubusi-mo-s-are-nak-atta*  
 which-project-Nom abandon-*mo*-do-Pass-Neg-Past  
 ‘Lit. \*Any of the projects was not abandoned.’
- b. *subete-no zigyoo-ga sono-iinkai-niyotte tubusi-sae-sare-ta*  
 all-of project-Nom that-committee-by abandon-even-Pass-Past  
 ‘All the project were even abandoned.’

As we see, the scrambled DP and the subject of direct passives are licensed as an NPI (in (19a) and (20a)) and interpreted with respect to scope (in (19b) and (20b)) in their base positions in VP, where they are in the domain of *mo* and *sae*.

With this in mind, consider (8b) and (15) again, which are repeated as (21) and (22), respectively:

- (21) ??*sono-sensyu-ga (reesu-de) doko-o butuke-mo-s-are-nak-atta*  
 that-racer-Nom race-in where-Acc bump-*mo*-do-Pass-Neg-Past
- (22) *Yamada-sensyu-ga subete-no taiya-o butuke-sae-s-are-ta*  
 Yamada-racer-Nom all-of tire-Acc bump-even-do-Pass-Past  
 ‘Yamada had all the tires of his car bumped.’  
 (ALL > EVEN, ??EVEN > ALL)

The fact that the Accusative possessee DP is not licensed as an NPI (in (21)) or interpreted as taking narrow scope (in (22)) shows that this Accusative DP is not moved from within VP as in (18a), but is base-generated outside VP as in (18b). This suggests that the Accusative possessee is not an argument of the verb, but an argument selected by the passive auxiliary *rare*.

Then a question arises as to what occupies the object position inside the VP, if the Accusative possessor DP is base-generated in VoiceP. One possibility is to say that this position is occupied by the empty pronominal *pro*, which takes the Accusative DP in VoiceP as its antecedent. This seems to be supported by the fact that at least some speakers marginally allow a full DP as the object inside VP:

- (23) a. ? *ano-giin-ga yatoo-ni sekkaku-dasita-*  
 that-congressman-Nom opposition-party-by with-effort-submitted-  
*hooan-o sono-mottomo-zyuuyoona-bubun-ni hantais-are-ta*  
 bill-Acc its-most-important-part-Dat object-Pass-Past  
 ‘The congressman had the most important part of the bill that he submitted with effort rejected by the opposition party.’

- b.? sono-mati-ga nanimonoka-ni rekisiteki-kenzoobutu-no  
 that-town-Nom someone-by historic-house-of  
 dobei-o *itiban-medatu-tokoro-ni* rakugakis-are-ta  
 mud-wall-Acc most-conspicuous-part-Dat scribble-Pass-Past  
 ‘The town had the most conspicuous part of the mud wall of its historic  
 house spoiled with graffiti by someone.’

In contrast, it is impossible to accommodate a full DP if the relevant possessee argument appears with the Dative Case, which in the present analysis is assumed to occupy the object DP inside VP:

- (24) a. \* ano-giin-ga yatoo-ni sekkaku-dasita-  
 that-congressman-Nom opposition-party-by with-effort-submitted-  
 hooan-ni *sono-mottomo-zyuuyoona-bubun-ni* hantais-are-ta  
 bill-Dat its-most-important-part-Dat object-Pass-Past  
 b. \* sono-mati-ga nanimonoka-ni rekisiteki-kenzoobutu-no dobei-ni  
 that-town-Nom someone-by historic-house-of mud-wall-Dat  
*itiban-medatu-tokoro-ni* rakugakis-are-ta  
 most-conspicuous-part-Dat scribble-Pass-Past

The contrast between (23) and (24) cannot be accounted for if we were to assume that the Accusative DP in question is raised via movement from the object position to a position in VoiceP.

A second question has to do with the syntactic position of the Accusative DP in sentence (1), repeated here as (25), whose active counterpart is in (26):

- (25) Emi-ga Ken-ni(yotte) *kodomo-o* home-rare-ta  
 Emi-Nom Ken-by child-Acc praise-Pass-Past  
 ‘Emi had her child praised by Ken.’  
 (26) Ken-ga *Emi-no kodomo-o* home-ta  
 Ken-Nom Emi-of child-Acc praise-Past  
 ‘Ken praised Emi’s child.’

Since the object DP in this case is invariably Accusative in both the active and the passive, one cannot tell from its surface form whether the Accusative DP in the passive is syntactically different from its counterpart in the active. Moreover, the two tests that distinguish the Accusative and the Dative possessee DP in Section 2 cannot tell us whether the Accusative DP in (25) is in the projection of Voice or in

that of the verb. Consider:

- (27) Emi-ga Ken-niyotte *dono-kodomo-o* home-*mo-s-are-nak-atta*  
 Emi-Nom Ken-by which-child-Acc praise-*mo-do-Pass-Neg-Past*  
 ‘Emi did not have any of her children praised by Ken.’
- (28) Emi-ga Ken-niyotte *subete-no kodomo-o* home-*sae-s-are-ta*  
 Emi-Nom Ken-by all-of child-Acc praise-even-do-Pass-Past  
 ‘Emi had all her children even praised by Ken.’  
 (ALL > EVEN, EVEN > ALL)

The fact that (27) is grammatical and that (28) is scopally ambiguous only shows that the relevant Accusative DP can be situated in VP, and does not prove that it is in the projection of Voice. However, the discussion in the present paper enables us to maintain, unless there is evidence to the contrary, that the Accusative DP *kodomo-o* in (25) is syntactically ambiguous: it may be within VP, or may be in the projection of Voice as an argument of the passive auxiliary.

#### 4. Conclusion and Implications

This paper has discussed the syntax of passive sentences with an Accusative possessee object DP in the possessor passive construction in Japanese. We have found out that there is an Accusative-marked possessee DP that can only appear in passive sentences but not in their active counterparts. We have also found out that the relevant Accusative possessee, in contrast to its Dative counterpart, can be located in the projection of the passive auxiliary, not within VP, and be in the Case-checking relation with the passive auxiliary.

With respect to the first point, the Case-related property of the passive auxiliary *rare* has been discussed in the past literature. Saito (1982) and Nakamura (1991) analyze *rare* as a morpheme that absorbs Case optionally, unlike the passive morpheme *-en* in English, which absorbs Case obligatorily (Chomsky (1981), Jaeggli (1986)). Washio (1990) takes a somewhat different stance in that *rare* obligatorily absorbs Case when affixed to a verb. The analysis in this paper, however, leads us to say that *rare*, as well as being a Case-absorber, indeed retains the ability of assigning Accusative Case to a DP.

The second point is reminiscent of the proposal made by Kuroda (1979) and Hoshi (1991) that the subject in Japanese passives can be a theta-position, where the surface subject DP is base-generated. Our discussion suggests that there are indeed two different theta-marked positions in the domain of the passive auxiliary *rare* in the passive construction in Japanese.

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