A Comparative Study of the Intermediate Causation Construction in Japanese and Chinese

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This research focuses on constructions, which encode the causative act as a single event even with the understood existence of an intervening causer, as in (1).

(1) a. Watashi-wa   biyoin-de   kami-o   kit-ta.   [Japanese]
         I-Top   salon-at   hair-Acc cut-Past
     b. wo zai meirongyuan jian le   toufa.   [Chinese]
         I   at   salon   cut   Past hair
         '(Lit.) I got my hair cut at the salon.'

The sentences in (1) have a normal direct causative meaning (i.e. *I cut my hair by myself*), with the subject acting as agent.   These can be also interpreted as intermediate causation, where it is not the subject *I*, but some implicit agent that cuts the subject's hair.   In this case the subject *watashi or wo* "I" acts as an experiencer. We will call the expression with the latter interpretation the intermediate causative construction (henceforth ICC).

In this research, we will clarify the difference of license conditions on ICCs in the two languages.   Specifically, we propose that in both languages ICC interpretation is associated with some result meaning denoted by the predicate.   In Chinese it is licensed by the result meaning inferred from the whole of the predicate with the verbs of either activity or accomplishment type (Vendler (1967)), while in Japanese by the accomplishment type predicate with the semantic focus on the result. Then we will explain the shift from agent to non-agent (i.e. experiencer) interpretation under the framework of Jackendoff (2007).

Most previous studies assume that Japanese has two semantic constraints on ICCs: one is concerned with the relationship between subject and object and the other with the type of verb.   Let us first consider the former constraint.   The relationship between subject and object must be a whole-part one (cf. Sato (1994), among many others).   Observe the following example:

(2)   Taro-wa   kino   biyoshitsu-de {(Taro-no) /*Hanako-no}
        Taro-Top   yesterday salon-at   Taro-Gen/Hanako-Gen
        kami-o   kit-ta.
        hair-Acc   cut-Past
        'Taro cut {(his) / *Hanako's} hair at a salon yesterday'

In (2), the ICC interpretation is available when the relationship between *Taro* and *kami* 'hair' is in a whole-part relationship. Such an interpretation, however, is unavailable when *Taro* and *Hanako-no kami* 'Hanako's hair' do not make a whole-part relationship. One may find apparent counterexamples like *Taro-wa shacho-no kuruma-o shurishi-ta* 'Taro repaired his boss's car', in which although the relationship between Taro and his boss's car is not a whole-part one, the ICC interpretation can obtain. This example, however, can be treated along the same as that in (2); the boss's car can be considered to be temporarily under the control of *Taro*, and thus a temporal whole-part relationship can be established.

  This constraint also works on the Chinese counterpart, as shown in (3).

(3) Zhangsan$_i$ zai meirongyuan jian le {toufa$_i$ /*Lisi de toufa}.
    Zhangsan at salon   cut Past hair$_i$ Lisi Gen hair
    'Zhangsan cut {his/*Lisi's} hair at a salon.'

A question to be raised here is where the semantic constraint on the relationship between subject and object comes from. According to Miyakoshi (2014), this constraint can be attributed not to the linguistic issue, but to more general wisdom, something like the sensory role human brains have; we can experience events, which happen to at least part of our bodies or our belongings as their participants.

  Next, as claimed by Ikegami (1982), among many others, Japanese verbs must be classified into result verbs involving complex events, which specify a resulting state of carrying out an action, but not into manner verbs, which specify the manner of carrying out an action. According to Rappaport Hovav and Levin (2010), result verbs and manner verbs can be formalized as in (4a) and (4b), respectively.

(4) a. result verbs: [x ACT ON y] CAUSE [y BECOME<*ROOT*>]
  b. manner verbs: [x ACT$_{<ROOT>}$ ON y]

Result verbs such as *kiru* 'cut' can be used in ICCs, but manner verbs lacking BECOME event such as *massajisuru* 'massage' cannot occur in the construction, as shown in (5).

(5) * Taro-wa tai-shiki massaji-ten-de zenshin-o tatai-ta.
    Tao-Top Thai-style massage-shop-at general-Acc hit-PAST
    '(Lit.) Taro had a general massage at a Thai massage-shop.'

There are some result verbs which cannot occur in the construction. For example:

(6)   * Taro-wa   massaji-ten-de   kata-o   momi-hogushi-ta.
              Taro-Top   massage-shop-at shoulder-Acc   knead-relax-Past
              '(lit.) Taroo had his shoulders kneaded and relaxed at a shop.'

Crucially, the unacceptability of (6) suggests that in Japanese for a sentence to be an ICC, the verb must have no manner meaning component; although the V-V compound *momihogusu* 'to relax by kneading' involves the BECOME event, it cannot be accepted as having a non-agent interpretation (cf. Sawada (2010:9)).

      Interestingly enough, contrary to the analogy of the above semantic constraint between the two languages, the verbal semantic constraint in Japanese is not the same as that in Chinese: the Chinese version of (6) is totally acceptable as ICCs, as shown in (7).

(7)   Zhangsan zai taishi meirong yuan anmo le   jianbang.
              Zhangsan at   Thai   massage shop anmo   Past   shoulders
              '(lit.) Zhangsan got his shoulders massaged at a Thai massage-shop.'

The verb *anmo* 'to massage' in Chinese is a manner verb without result meaning entailment. Nevertheless (7) does have the ICC interpretation. This can be explained if we assume that in Chinese it is the pragmatic factor that is responsible for providing the result denotation when the predicates do not have it inherently, while in Japanese the predicate plays the crucial role of providing the result denotation. The above empirical facts lead us to conclude that although the constraint on predicates in Japanese is more crucial than on Chinese predicates, ICCs in both languages need result meaning components in their predicates.

      A question to be raised here is why the predicate in ICCs must have a result meaning. To answer it, we look at the fact that the availability of ICCs differs among languages; as is well known, they are used in English sporadically (e.g., *John built a new house*, *?I cut my hair at a salon*, **I flexed my muscle at a massage shop, etc.*). This fact leads us to assume that Japanese and Chinese, but not English, have a linguistic system which works to turn the theta role of the subject as an agent into an experiencer, and it is the verbal semantic constraint that cause the system to work. Our assumption is represented in (8), where is based on the framework of Washio (1993) and Jackendoff (2007):

(8)
$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{CAUSE (} [\alpha], [\text{V-ed } [\beta]])\\ {}_{\text{EVENT1}}\ \text{AFF (} [\varphi]^{\alpha}, [\beta_i]) \end{array}\right]\\ {}_{\text{EVENT2}}\quad \text{EXP (} [\gamma] , [E_1]) \end{array}\right]$$

(8) shows that ICCs consist of two subevents; one is a causative event in which the causer is [φ], which represents a participant not encoded linguistically, and the causee is [β]; the other involves the Experience (EXP) function that takes an experiencer [γ] as the first argument and the causative event [E_1] as the second argument. Under our assumption, Japanese and Chinese have the Experience (EXP) function that can be introduced non-lexically, while English introduces it lexically, that is, by using *have* or *get* in constructions such as *I {had/got} my hair cut*.

Crucial to our assumption is that the EXP function in both languages is available only when the participant in an event potentially has both agent and experiencer thematic roles. It should be noticed here that the subject of an ICC has not only the experiencer thematic role but also the agent potentially. This follows from native speakers' intuition that the referents of the subjects in (1) are expected to ask someone to cut their hair. Thus, we can safely say that in ICCs the agent thematic role that the subject potentially has is "backgrounded" conceptually, and that it is the semantic structure of result verbs that causes backgrounding.

Recall the representation of result verbs in (4a), where an idiosyncratic verb meaning represented by *<ROOT>* is involved in the BECOME event. This leads us to suggest that the BECOME event is conceptually more focused than the ACT event. The suggestion can be supported by the allowance for agent suppression and the ban on object deletion (e.g., *Kabin-ga wareta* 'The vase broke' and **Jon-ga watta* 'John broke'). Thus, the heavy focus on the BECOME event may highlight the aspect of the subject as an experiencer, and then the EXP function becomes available. When it is available, the event described in (1) has the conceptual structure as in (9):

(9)
$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{CAUSE (} [\alpha], [\text{CUT } [\beta]]) \\ {}_{\text{EVENT1}} \text{ AFF (} [\varphi]^{\alpha}, [\text{HAIR}_i]^{\beta}) \end{array} \right] \\ {}_{\text{EVENT2}} \quad \text{EXP (} [I_i] , [E_1]) \end{array} \right]$$

To sum up, Japanese and Chinese have the EXP function that takes as the first argument an experiencer to be encoded as the subject in the ICC, and in both languages it may be introduced non-lexically. It becomes available when a result verb meaning focuses on the aspect of the participant as an experiencer; the participant can get the experiencer thematic role when the patient thematic role is assigned to its part body or its belongings.