

■ Voice

Voice is a syntactic phenomenon where the verb and the noun that construct a sentence undergo change of form and alter their case relationships. That is, the verb, which has the pivotal role of being the predicate of the sentence, displays a special form, and contrasts morphologically with the basic form. The source of this morphological contraposition in the predicate, however, is the perspective as to what is expressed as the central theme of the sentence, and this concerns the function of communication. Thus, to discuss this grammatical phenomenon known as voice, one must deal with both the characteristics of the verb forms and the swapping of syntactic relationship on the one hand, and the functional aspect of communication on the other.

Voice is a grammatical category proper to verbal predicate sentences; it does not occur in adjectival predicate sentences or nominal predicate sentences. The type of relationship seen in verbal predicate sentences, such as *Kō wa Otsu ni Eigo o oshieru* ‘A teaches English to B’ vs. *Otsu wa Kō ni (or Kō kara) Eigo o oshierareru/osowaru/narau* ‘B is taught by / is taught by / learns English from B,’ shows that the contrast involved in voice is multi-faceted. That is, the lexical contrast between *oshieru* ‘teach’ and *narau* ‘learn’, and also between *oshieru* and *osowaru* ‘gets instruction’, is in competition with the active and passive forms of the shared verb, *oshieru*. The contrast seen in *oshieru* vs. *narau* is sometimes called lexical voice.

The contrasting relationship seen in the active (basic) sentence vs. the passive sentence, and in the basic (non-causative) sentence vs. the causative sentence, is at the center of voice in Japanese. The form of the predicate portion shows the contrasting relationship between *suru* vs. *sareru*, and *suru* vs. *saseru*. The phonetic resemblance between *-rare-* and *-sare-*, which respectively characterize the passive and the causative is significant. Also syntactically, in the causative and passive contrasting relationship, transformational and derivational relationships are observed. In both *Tarō ga Jirō o nagutta* ‘Taro hit Jiro’ and *Jirō ga Tarō ni nagurareta* ‘Jiro was hit by Taro’, the same incident is described from different perspectives; the difference between the sentences is the contrast between the active and (direct) passive, which involves a transformational relationship, whereas the contrast between active and indirect passive seen in *Ame ga futta* ‘Rain fell/It rained’ and *Tarō wa ame ni furareta* ‘Taro got rained on’ involves a derivational relationship. The final, indirect passive example shows a double sentence structure, stating the situation from the viewpoint of *Tarō*, who has no role in the previous, basic sentence. The difference between these two sentences arises from the concern as to how the incident relates to the parties involved, and what type of syntactic contrast the difference signifies. It is not based on the concern as to whether there is adversity involved (semantic consideration), or what type of verb (transitive vs. intransitive) is used. It is true that indirect passive expressions generally express adversity, and that intransitive verbs form only indirect passive sentences. However, indirect passive formation should be looked at separately from the issue of adversity. Beneficence, which is seen as the opposing concept to adversity, is expressed with the expression *-te morau*, while *-rareru* excludes the benefactive meaning and limits itself to adversity.

In the causative, the same contrast in the transformational relationship and the derivational relationship is observed as in the passive. Example 1: *Kare wa tagaku no shakkin ni nayande ita*

‘He was agonizing over his large debt’ and *Tagaku no shakkin ga kare o nayamasete ita* ‘His large debt distressed him’ express the same situation but in two different forms. It is a contrast between a non-causative sentence and a causative sentence. Example 2: *Musuko ga kaimono ni itta* ‘The son went shopping’ and *Hahaoya ga musuko ni kaimono ni ikaseta* ‘the mother let the son go shopping’ presents a contrast between a basic sentence and a causative sentence based on a derivational relationship. The latter is a double structure sentence which is a statement from the viewpoint of someone (the mother) who has no part in the former sentence. The contrast shown in Example 1 appears with verbs that describe human psychological conditions, such as *yorokobu* ‘be pleased’, *kanashimu* ‘be saddened’, *iradatsu* ‘be irritated’, *odoroku* ‘be surprised’, *kandō suru* ‘be impressed’, and *shitsubō suru* ‘be disappointed’, while the contrast in Example 2 appears with verbs that describe physical and social activities of human beings, such as *iku* ‘go’, *asobu* ‘have fun’, *neru* ‘sleep’, and *tatsu* ‘stand up’. Psychological activities such as *yorokobu* and *odoroku* are not actions one initiates actively; they are conditions that a person experiences as they occur. It is widely known that the causative form signifies permission and non-interference when the focus is on the will of the doer.

→受動文の種類 Types of Passive Sentences (2-E), 使役 Causative (2-E), 自動詞と他動詞 Intransitive and Transitive Verbs (2-B), ヴォイスの研究 Study of Voice (7-D)

● References

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