

# A Note on the “Outer Object” in Japanese Possessor Passives\*

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This paper provides an additional piece of evidence for the syntactic property of the “outer object” in possessor passive sentences in Japanese, and shows that the “outer object” is derived in different ways in *ni* and *ni yotte* passives. This proposal is supported by the presence/absence of scope reconstruction effect with the “outer object” QP.

**Keywords:** *Ni* passive, *Ni yotte* passive, Possessor passive, Quantifier scope

## 1. Introduction: the Outer Object in Possessor Passives

This paper examines the syntactic property of the Accusative-marked object denoting a possessee in possessor passive sentences in Japanese. Firstly, it provides an additional piece of evidence that certain occurrences of the Accusative-marked possessee object are located in an outer projection above VP in Japanese possessor passives. Then we show that this possessee object outside VP (henceforth, Outer Object) is derived in different ways in *ni* and *ni yotte* passives, in a fashion parallel to the derivation of the Nominative subject in these two types of passive.

Possessor passives in Japanese have been characterized as forming a subtype of direct passives (Terada (1990), Kubo (1990), Homma (1995), Hoshi (1999), Ishida (2015), Kaga (2016)) in that their surface subject, marked by the Nominative *-ga*, corresponds to a VP-internal argument.

- (1) a. Taroo-ga sikar-are-ta  
Taro-Nom scold-Pass-Past  
‘Taro was scolded.’  
b. Taroo-ga seiseki-o sikar-are-ta  
Taro-Nom grade-Acc scold-Pass-Past  
‘Taro had his grade scolded.’  
(2) a. [Taroo<sub>i</sub>-ga [VP e<sub>i</sub> sikar ]-are-ta]

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- b. [Taroo<sub>i</sub>-ga [<sub>VP</sub> *e<sub>i</sub>* seiseki-o sikar ]-are-ta]

As the subject *Taroo-ga* in (1a) corresponds to the internal argument, as in (2a), so is the subject in (1b): the subject in (1b) *Taroo-ga* corresponds to a VP-internal argument as shown in (2b).<sup>1</sup> While the previous works on Japanese possessor passives has centered around the syntactic derivation of the surface nominative subject, the object that denotes the possessee of the subject has been assumed to be retained in its original object position, namely the complement of the verb.

In Homma (2011) I pointed out the existence of an Outer Object by observing the examples 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 hooan-o/-ni*  
 that-Diet.member-Nom opposition.party-by with.effort-submitted bill-Acc/-Dat  
 hantais-are-ta  
 oppose-Pass-Past  
 ‘That Diet member had the bill that he submitted with effort opposed by the opposition party.’
- c. sono-mati-ga nanimonoka-ni *rekisiteki-kenzoobutu-no dobei-o/-ni*  
 that-town-Nom someone-by historic-house-of mud.wall-Acc/-Dat  
 rakugakis-are-ta  
 scribble-Pass-Past  
 ‘The town had the mud wall of its historic house spoiled with graffiti by someone.’

What is noteworthy with these examples is that the Dative objects that denote the possessee of the nominative subject can also be marked by the Accusative particle *-o*, while the Accusative particle does not appear in the active counterpart of these examples, as shown in (4):

<sup>1</sup> The previous works referred to in the text differ as to the precise position of the empty category corresponding to the subject. Terada (1990), Kubo (1990), and Ishida (2015) argue that the subject originates from within the object NP denoting a possessee, the position where the possessor argument appears in corresponding active sentences. In contrast, Homma (1995), Hoshi (1999), and Kaga (2016) argue that the surface subject is a second internal argument distinct from the possessee argument, which receives the Affectee role from the verb.

- (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-Diet.member-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 dobei \*-o/-ni*  
 someone-Nom that-town-of historic-house-of mud.wall-Acc/-Dat  
 rakugakisi-ta  
 scribble-Past  
 ‘Someone scribbled on the mud wall of the town’s historic house.’

This fact tells us that it is the passive auxiliary *rare* that is responsible for the Accusative marking of the possessee argument. If so, then the next question is where this Accusative object is Case-marked. Homma (2011) argues that the Accusative objects in (3) appear in the position distinct from their Dative counterparts, as in (5):

- (5) a. [VoiceP [DP hidari ria-o]<sub>i</sub> [VP *e<sub>i</sub>* butuke] rare]-ta  
 b. [VoiceP [VP *e<sub>i</sub>* [DP hidari ria-ni]<sub>i</sub> butuke] rare]-ta

As shown in (5a), the Accusative object is in a projection outside of the VP, which is assumed to be the projection of the passive auxiliary, which is why we call this object an “Outer Object.” On the other hand, its Dative counterpart lies in its VP-internal original position, as in (5b).

## 2. Evidence for the Syntactic Position of the Outer Object

One piece of evidence for the syntactic position of the Outer Object in possessor passives, as argued in Homma (2011), has to do with the syntactic licensing of WH-phrases serving as negative polarity items (henceforth, NPI WH-phrases) as in (6):

- (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.’

In Japanese a WH-phrase such as *dono*-N-Case has an interpretation that corresponds to *any* in English when c-commanded by the particle *mo* that is in turn c-commanded by the negative *nai*. If a WH-phrase is not c-commanded by *mo*, it cannot be an NPI WH-phrase.

- (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.’

Homma (2011) shows that this syntactic property of NPI WH-phrases helps distinguish the syntactic position of a *ni*-marked possessee argument and that of one that bears the Accusative particle *-o*.

- (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

If we assume that an occurrence of *mo* immediately following a verb is attached to VP, the degraded acceptability of (8b) can be explained by saying that the *o*-marked WH-phrase *doko-o* lies outside the VP that *mo* is attached to, while the acceptability of (8a) tells us that the *ni*-marked counterpart *doko-ni* lies inside VP.

The distinct positions for the Outer Object and the Dative possessor can also be diagnosed by what is known as VP-preposing. Recall the structure in (5) for the part of the possessor passive sentences with an Outer Object and a Dative-marked possessor argument.

- (9) (= (5))  
 a. [VoiceP [DP hidari ria-*o*]<sub>i</sub> [VP *e*<sub>i</sub> butuke] rare]-ta  
 b. [VoiceP [VP *e*<sub>i</sub> [DP hidari ria-*ni*]<sub>i</sub> butuke] rare]-ta

The Outer Object in (9a) lies outside the projection headed by the verb *butuke* so that the sequence Outer Object-V (*hidari ria-o butuke*) does not form a constituent, while the sequence involving the

Dative counterpart *hirari ria-ni butuke* does form one. Therefore, it is predicted that the latter sequence may undergo VP-preposing, while the former may not. This prediction is borne out.

- (10) a. \**taiya-o butuke-sae<sub>i</sub> Nakajima-ga raibaru sensyu-ni e<sub>i</sub> s-are-ta*  
 tire-Acc bump-even Nakajima-Nom rival.racer-by do-Pass-Past  
 ‘Nakajima even had his tire bumped by a rival racer.’
- b. \**zyuuyoo hooan-o hantaisi-sae<sub>i</sub> soori-ga kanzityoo-ni e<sub>i</sub>*  
 important bill-Acc oppose-even Prime.Minister-Nom Secretary-Genenral-by  
 s-are-ta  
 do-Pass-Past  
 ‘The Prime Minister even had an important bill opposed by the Secretary-General.’
- (11) a. *taiya-ni butuke-sae<sub>i</sub> Nakajima-ga raibaru sensyu-ni e<sub>i</sub> s-are-ta*  
 tire-Acc bump-even Nakajima-Nom rival.racer-by do-Pass-Past  
 ‘Nakajima even had his tire bumped by a rival racer.’
- b. *zyuuyoo hooan-ni hantaisi-sae<sub>i</sub> soori-ga kanzityoo-ni e<sub>i</sub>*  
 important bill-Acc oppose-even Prime.Minister-Nom Secretary-Genenral-by  
 s-are-ta  
 do-Pass-Past  
 ‘The Prime Minister even had an important bill opposed by the Secretary-General.’

The Outer Object possessee cannot be preposed along with the verb, as shown in (10), while the Dative possessee can. Thus this supports the analysis in (5), where the Outer Object lies in an outer projection above VP.

The proposed structure in (5) (= (9)) also predicts that the Outer Object possessee argument is allowed to move along with the verb plus the passive auxiliary. This is also borne out. VP-preposing may move the sequence consisting of the possessee argument, the verb and the passive auxiliary whether the possessee argument is marked with the Accusative or the Dative.

- (12) a. *raibaru sensyu-ni taiya-o/ni butuke-rare-sae<sub>i</sub> Nakajima-ga e<sub>i</sub> si-ta*  
 rival.racer-by tire-Acc/Dat bump-Pass-even Nakajima-Nom do-Past  
 ‘Nakajima even had his tire bumped by a rival racer.’
- b. *kanzityoo-ni zyuuyoo hooan-o/ni hantais-are-sae<sub>i</sub> soori-ga*  
 Secretary-Genenral-by important bill-Acc/Dat oppose-Past-even Prime.Minister-Nom  
 e<sub>i</sub> si- ta

do-Past

‘The Prime Minister even had an important bill opposed by the Secretary-General.’

The above evidence strongly suggests that the Outer Object and the Dative possessee argument in Japanese possessor passive sentences appear in distinct syntactic positions: the Outer Object possessor argument appears outside the VP headed by the verb, while the Dative counterpart lies within VP. If this is correct, then the next question is how the Outer Object appears in the outer position. In the next section I suggest two different derivations for the Outer Object possessee argument: the Outer Object is base-generated in the outer position in *ni* passives, while it undergoes movement from its original VP-internal position in *ni yotte* passives.

### 3. The Outer Object in *Ni* and *Ni Yotte* Possessor Passives

In Japanese direct passive sentences, the NP denoting the agent may appear either in the form of NP-*ni* or NP-*ni yotte*.

- (13) a. Taroo-ga Yamada-sensei-**ni** home-rare-ta  
 Taro-Nom Yamada-teacher-by praise-Pass-Past  
 ‘Taro was praised by Professor Yamada.’  
 b. Taroo-ga Yamada-sensei-**ni yotte** home-rare-ta  
 Taro-Nom Yamada-teacher-by owing praise-Pass-Past

In (13a) the agent DP *Yamada-sensei* appears with *ni*, while the same argument is followed by *ni yotte* in (13b). Kuroda (1979) and Hoshi (1991, 1999) argue that (13a) and (13b) involve different derivations of the surface nominative subject: while the subject of *ni yotte* passives, as in (13b), undergoes movement from the object position to its surface subject position, the subject of *ni* passives, as in (13a), is base-generated and is assigned the theta role which may be called Affectee in its surface subject position. These two different modes of derivation of the subject are illustrated in (14):<sup>2</sup>

(14) Kuroda (1979), Hoshi (1991, 1999)

- a. *ni*-passive: Taroo<sub>i</sub>-ga [<sub>VP</sub> Yamada-sensei-**ni** [<sub>PRO<sub>i</sub></sub> home]] –rare-ta

<sup>2</sup> The claim that the subject of *ni* passives allows only a certain type of nominals and thus is a theta-marked position is also made by Kitagawa and Kuroda (1992), who provide extensive arguments for their analysis along these lines.

Taro-Nom Yamada-teacher-by praise-Pass-Past  
 ‘Taro was praised by Prof. Yamada.’

- b. *ni yotte*-passive: Taroo<sub>i</sub>-ga [<sub>VP</sub> Yamada-sensei-**ni yotte** [<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> home]] –rare-ta  
 Taro-Nom Yamada-teacher-by owing praise-Pass-Past

As a piece of evidence for this derivational difference, Kuroda points out the following examples:

- (15) a. \**kaikai-ga* gityoo-**ni** sengens-are-ta  
 opening-Nom chairperson-by announce-Pass-Past  
 ‘The opening of the meeting was announced by the chairperson’  
 b. *kaikai-ga* gityoo-**ni yotte** sengens-are-ta  
 opening-Nom chairperson-by owing announce-Pass-Past

(Kuroda (1979))

A DP headed by an abstract noun such as *kaikai* cannot be the subject of the *ni* passive sentence in (15a) while its *ni yotte* counterpart allows the same DP as its subject. This is accounted for, as Kuroda and Hoshi argue, by saying that the theta role assigned to the subject position in *ni* passives is compatible only with nouns denoting a human, and thus is incompatible with abstract nouns such as *kaikai*. On the other hand, the subject position in *ni yotte* passives does not involve this theta role and thus is free from this restriction.

This derivational difference for the subject of *ni* passives on one hand and that of *ni yotte* passives is also confirmed by observing the presence or the absence of the scope reconstruction effect with the subject of *ni* and *ni yotte* passives. Observe the following examples:

- (16) a. *hutari-no syain-ga* syatyoo-**ni** *subete-no kyuryoobi-ni* home-rare-ta  
 2.Cl-of employee-Nom president-by all-of payday-on praise-Pass-Past  
 ‘Two employees were praised on every payday by the president.’  
 [unambiguous: two > every, \*every > two]  
 b. *subete-no eigoka-no* *gakusei-ga* Yamada-sensei-**ni**  
 all-of English.department-of student-Nom Yamada-teacher-by  
*getuyoobi-ka-kayoobi-ni* sikar-are-ta  
 Monday-or-Tuesday-on scold-Pass-Past  
 ‘Every student in the English department was scolded on either Monday or Tuesday by Professor Yamada.’

[unambiguous: every > or, \*or > every]

- (17) a. *hutari-no syain-ga syatyoo-ni yotte subete-no kyuuryoobi-ni home-rare-ta*  
 2.Cl-of employee-Nom president-by owing all-of payday-on praise-Pass-Past  
 ‘Two employees were praised on every payday by the president.’

[ambiguous: two > every, every > two]

- b. *subete-no eigoka-no gakusei-ga Yamada-sensei-ni yotte*  
 all-of English.department-of student-Nom Yamada-teacher-by owing  
*getuyoobi-ka-kayoobi-ni sikar-are-ta*  
 Monday-or-Tuesday-on scold-Pass-Past  
 ‘Every student in the English department was scolded on either Monday or Tuesday by Professor Yamada.’

[ambiguous: every > or, or > every]

The examples in (16) and (17) are instances of *ni* and *ni yotte* passives, respectively. Observe that the subject QP in (16) does not exhibit the scope reconstruction effect with respect to the VP-adjunct QP, whereas the subject QP in (17) does. The subject QP *hutari-no syain-ga* in (16a), for example, may take wide scope over the VP adjunct QP *subete-no kyuuryoobi-ni*, but it cannot take narrow scope under the latter QP. Thus (16a) may denote a situation where there are just two employees who were praised on every payday (the “two > every” reading), but it cannot mean that on each payday a different set of two employees was praised (the “every > two” reading). On the other hand, the *ni yotte* passive sentences in (17) exhibit the scope reconstruction effect that their *ni* passive counterpart in (16) lacks. (17a) may be interpreted as describing the situation that involves a different set of two people on each day (the “every > two” reading).

The presence/absence of scope reconstruction effect with the subject QP can be explained if we assume that the subject of *ni* passives is base-generated in the subject position, whereas the subject of *ni yotte* passives is derived by the movement from the object position to the subject position, as argued by Kuroda (1979) and Hoshi (1991, 1999).

Now consider the following examples:

- (18) *Representative Yamada drafted a bill and asked his senior representatives to give him some professional advice, but . . .*

- a. *Yamada-giin-ga hutatu-no hooan-o senpai giin-ni*  
 Yamada-Rep.-Nom two-of bill-Acc senior representative-by



*subete-no tooinbi-ni*            hantais-are-ta

all-of      attendace.day-on oppose-Pass-Past

‘Rep. Yamada had two of his bills opposed on every attendance day by his senior representatives.’

[unambiguous: two > ever, \*every > two]

- b. Yamada-giin-ga    *subete-no hooan-o* senpai giin-**ni**            *getuyoobi-ka kayoobi-ni*  
Yamada-Rep.-Nom all-of    bill-Acc senior representative-by Monday-or Tuesday-on  
hantais-are-ta  
oppose-Pass-Past

‘Rep. Yamada had all his bills opposed either on Monday or Tuesday by his senior representatives.’

[unambiguous: every > or, \*or > every]

- (19) *Representative Yamada drafted a bill and asked his senior representatives to give him some professional advice, but . . .*

- a. Yamada-giin-ga    *hutatu-no hooan-o* senpai giin-**ni**            **yotte**  
Yamada-Rep.-Nom two-of    bill-Acc senior representative-by owing  
*subete-no tooinbi-ni*            hantais-are-ta  
all-of      attendace.day-on oppose-Pass-Past

‘Rep. Yamada had two of his bills opposed on every attendance day by his senior representatives.’

[ambiguous: two > every, every > two]

- b. Yamada-giin-ga    *subete-no hooan-o* senpai giin-**ni**            **yotte**  
Yamada-Rep.-Nom all-of    bill-Acc    senior representative-by owing  
*getuyoobi-ka kayoobi-ni* hantais-are-ta  
Monday-or    Tuesday-on oppose-Pass-Past

‘Rep. Yamada had all his bills opposed either on Monday or Tuesday by his senior representatives.’

[ambiguous: every > or, or > every]

The examples in (18) and (19) all involve an Outer Object QP and a VP-adjunct QP. The examples in (19), instances of *ni yotte* passives, are ambiguous between the wide and the narrow scope reading of the Outer Object QP. (19a), for example, may describe either a situation involving two bills that received criticism every day by Yamada’s senior representatives (the “two > every” reading) or one where on each of the attendance days Rep. Yamada got a different set of two bills

criticized by his senior representatives (the “every > two” reading). On the other hand, the examples in (18), which are minimally different from those in (19), are felt to have only one interpretation with respect to the scope of the two QPs: the Outer Object QP may only take the wide scope over the VP-adjunct QP.

If this is a fact, then it shows that the Outer Object in *ni* and *ni yotte* possessor passives undergoes a derivation parallel to that of the subject as discussed by Kuroda (1979) and Hoshi (1991, 1999): the Outer Object in *ni* possessor passives is base-generated in the outer projection above VP, a position asymmetrically c-commanding a VP-adjunct, whereas the Outer Object in *ni yotte* possessor passives undergoes movement from its underlying object position in VP, a position lower than a VP-adjunct. This is summarized as follows:

- (20) a. NP-ga NP<sub>i</sub>-o NP-**ni** [<sub>VP</sub> *pro*<sub>i</sub> V] rare  
 b. NP-ga NP<sub>i</sub>-o NP-**ni yotte** [<sub>VP</sub> *t*<sub>i</sub> V] rare

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has provided an additional piece of empirical evidence for the analysis in Homma (2011) that the Outer Object in possessor passives in Japanese lies outside VP, arguably in the projection of the passive auxiliary *rare*. It has also argued that the Outer Object undergoes different derivations in *ni* and *ni yotte* possessor passives, a fact that has been unnoticed in the previous literature on Japanese passives. This latter finding constitutes a piece of contribution to the study of Japanese passives in that the syntactic property of the surface subject in *ni* and *ni yotte* passives is also true of the Outer Object in possessor passives.

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