

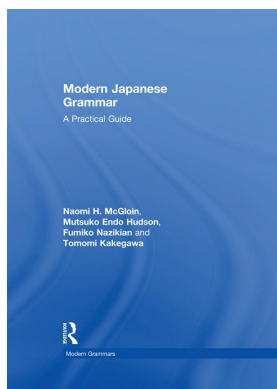
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The passive construction

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21

The passive construction

In active sentences, the subject is the agent that performs the action denoted by the verb. In passive sentences, the subject is the receiver of the action, and the agent may or may not be expressed in the sentence. There are two types of passive constructions in Japanese, direct (regular) and indirect (adversative).

21.1 Passive forms

The verb ending changes to passive form as follows:

Ru-verbs: final **-ru** changes to **-rareru**.

<i>Dict. Form</i>		<i>Passive</i>	<i>Dict. Form</i>		<i>Passive</i>
miru 'see'	→	mirareru	taberu 'eat'	→	taberareru

U-verbs: final **-u** changes to **-areru**. For **-u** verbs whose dictionary forms end in **u** (う) (e.g. **ka-u** 'to buy'), insert 'w' as in **kaw-areru**.

<i>Dict. Form</i>		<i>Passive</i>	<i>Dict. Form</i>		<i>Passive</i>
toru 'take'	→	torareru	matsu 'wait'	→	matareru
yomu 'read'	→	yomareru	suu 'inhale'	→	suwareru

Irregular verbs change as follows:

<i>Dict. Form</i>		<i>Passive</i>	<i>Dict. Form</i>		<i>Passive</i>
suru 'do'	→	sareru	kuru 'come'	→	korareru

Once verbs are in the passive form, they conjugate like **ru-verbs** (see 12.1).

Stative verbs; e.g. **aru** '(for inanimate things) to exist,' **iru** 'need,' and **dekiru** 'can do,' are not used in passive constructions except for **iru** '(for animate things) to exist.'

21.2 Regular passive

- **Sentence structure:** subject-**wa/ga** agent-**ni** transitive V(passive)

In the active sentence, the subject is the agent of the action denoted by the verb and the direct object is the receiver of the action. In regular passive sentences, the object of the active sentence becomes the subject (marked by **wa** or **ga**), and the agent, if it is expressed, is marked by the particle **ni** 'by.' Only transitive verbs can be used in the regular passive.

The following sentences exemplify an active sentence with a direct object and its passivized sentence.

ni yotte passive

- Active 洋子さんは研さんをなぐさめた。
Yooko-san wa Ken-san o nagusameta.
 Yoko consoled Ken.
 Subject = Agent = Yoko; DO = Ken.
- Passive 研さんは洋子さんになぐさめられた。
Ken-san wa Yooko-san ni nagusamerareta.
 Ken was consoled by Yoko.
 Subject = Receiver of action = Ken; Agent = Yoko.

As shown above, **Ken-san** – the direct object of the first (active) sentence – becomes the subject in the second (passive) sentence. Note also that the agent, **Yooko-san**, is indicated by the particle **ni**.

Some other examples are listed below.

- 武史さんは同僚に褒められました。
Takeshi-san wa dooryoo ni homeraremashita.
 Takeshi was praised by his colleague.
- 妹は先生にしかられたそうです。
Imooto wa sensee ni shikareta soo desu.
 I hear that my little sister was reprimanded by her teacher.

One of the most frequently used verbs in the passive construction is the verb **iu** ‘to say.’

- 子供の頃、よく親に勉強しなさいと言われました。
Kodomo no koro, yoku oya ni benkyoo shinasai to iwaremashita.
 When I was a child, I was often told to study by my parents.
- 渋谷は若者の街と言われています。
Shibuya wa wakamono no machi to iwarete imasu.
 Shibuya is said to be a town for young people.

The passive form is also used as an honorific expression. See 29.3 for explanation and examples of honorific usage of V-(r)areru form.

21.3 *ni yotte* passive

- **Sentence structure:** subject-wa/ga agent-**ni yotte** transitive V(passive)

In some cases the agent of a regular passive sentence (but not of an adversative passive sentence) is marked by **ni yotte** ‘by.’ The **ni yotte** passive construction can be used in the following cases.

Product/creation: the subject is something that is produced or created

- この小説は夏目漱石によって (not に) 書かれた。
Kono shoosetsu wa Natsume Sooseki ni yotte (not ni) kakareta.
 This novel was written by Soseki Natsume.

Formal or impersonal statements

- 優秀な学生たちは教師たちによって (に is also possible) 賞賛された。
Yuushuu na gakusee-tachi wa kyooshitachi ni yotte (ni is also possible) shoosan saretu.
 Outstanding students were commended by the teachers.

A similar passive sentence does not allow **ni yotte** when it is personal and informal.

- 私は今日先生たちに/によって褒められた。
Watashi wa kyoo sensee-tachi ni/ni-yotte homerareta.
 I was commended by the teachers today.

In cases where both **ni** and **ni yotte** are possible markers of the agent of a passive sentence, the choice is stylistic: **ni yotte** is more formal and literary.

遭難者たちが自衛隊に/によって救出された。

Soonansha-tachi ga jieetai ni/ni yotte kyuushutsu sareta.

Survivors were rescued by the Self-Defense Force.

21.4 Adversative passive

The adversative passive sentence expresses that the subject of the sentence is affected, usually adversely, by what is expressed in the rest of the sentence. The subject of an adversative passive sentence is not an overt constituent of the corresponding active sentence but is the indirect receiver of the act performed by the agent. That is, someone who does not appear in the corresponding active sentence is added to the sentence as the subject when making the adversative passive sentence. Both transitive and intransitive verbs can be used in adversative passive sentences.

21.4.1 Adversative passive with transitive verb

■ **Basic structure:** subject-wa/ga agent-ni DO-o transitive V(passive)

When the verb of an adversative passive sentence is transitive, the direct object (DO) of the corresponding active sentence remains the DO in the adversative passive construction.

Active 親が日記を読んだ。

Oya ga nikki o yonda.

My parent read the diary.

Subject = Agent = parent; DO = diary

Passive 私は親に日記を読まれた。

Watashi wa oya ni nikki o yomareta.

I was adversely affected by my parent's reading my diary.

(Lit. I was read my diary by my parent.)

Subject = person affected = I; Agent = parent; DO = diary

In the adversative passive sentence above, the person indirectly affected by the action, **watashi**, is added to the sentence as the subject, even though he/she does not appear in the active sentence. The agent of the action in the adversative passive is marked by the particle **ni**, as in the regular passive. The meaning denoted by this type of passive is similar to what is expressed by English passive sentences formed by using *get*.

私はルームメイトに車を使われた。

Watashi wa ruumumeeto ni kuruma o tsukawareta.

My roommate used my car and I was adversely affected. (I got my car used by my roommate.)

友達はすりに財布を盗まれた。

Tomodachi wa suri ni saifu o nusumareta.

My friend got his wallet stolen by a pick-pocket.

21.4.2 Adversative passive with intransitive verb

■ **Basic structure:** subject-wa/ga agent-ni intransitive V-(passive)

When the verb is intransitive, there is no direct object. The person indirectly affected by the action is added to the sentence as the subject, and the agent of the action is marked by the particle **ni**, as in the regular passive. There is no direct translation of this type of passive into English because English intransitive verbs do not have a passive form. The meaning denoted in this type of passive is often expressed by 'on me/him/her' etc. in English.

Adversative passive

- Active 雨が降った。
Ame ga futta.
 It rained.
 Subject = Agent = rain
- Passive 私は雨に降られた。
Watashi wa ame ni furareta.
 It rained on me (Lit. I was rained on.)
 Subject = I = person affected; Agent = rain.
- Active 子供が泣いた。
Kodomo ga naita.
 The child cried.
 Subject = Agent = child
- Passive 私は子供に泣かれた。
Watashi wa kodomo ni nakareta.
 The child cried on me. (Lit. I was cried by the child.)
 Subject = I = person affected; Agent = child.

Although it is most common to use the adversative passive when the subject is negatively affected, it is also possible to use it when the subject is positively affected.

母親は教師に子供のことを褒められて喜んだ。

Hahaoya wa kyoooshi ni kodomo no koto o homerarete yorokonda.

The mother was delighted because the teacher spoke well of her child.

(Lit. The mother was delighted to be praised about her child by the teacher.)

21.4.3

Passive sentence with inanimate subject

An inanimate entity can be the subject of a regular passive sentence in Japanese, just as in English, but an inanimate subject is not used in Japanese as commonly as it is in English when a human agent is explicitly included in the sentence.

- Active 子供が窓ガラスを割った。
Kodomo ga mado garasu o watta.
 A child broke the window.
 Subject = Agent = a child, DO = the window
- Passive 窓ガラスが子供に割られた。
Mado garasu ga kodomo ni warareta.
 The window was broken by a child.
 Subject = the window, Agent = a child

When a human agent needs to be included in the passive sentence, it is more common to use the adversative passive with a human subject instead of making the inanimate entity the subject of the regular passive.

隣人は子供に窓ガラスを割られた。

Rinjin wa kodomo ni mado garasu o warareta.

My neighbor was negatively affected by some kid's breaking his/her window.

An inanimate entity is commonly used as the subject of a passive sentence when the agent is also inanimate or the agent is not stated in the sentence.

舟が波にさらわれた。

Fune ga nami ni sarawareta.

The boat was swept away by the waves.

最近はおい子供たちの間でも、携帯電話が使われている。

Saikin wa osanai kodomo-tachi no aida demo, keetai denwa ga tsukawarete iru.

Recently, cell phones are used even among small children.

21.5 Causative passive

Causative passive sentences express that the subject of the sentence is made/forced to do something by someone. The verb form changes as follows:

	<i>Dict. Form</i>	<i>Causative passive</i>
Irregular verbs	suru 'do'	sase-rareru
	kuru 'come'	kosase-rareru
Ru-verbs: Change final -ru to sase-rareru .		
	kiru 'wear'	ki-sase-rareru
	taberu 'eat'	tabe-sase-rareru

U-verbs: There are two ways of deriving causative passive forms. One way is to change final **-u** to **-ase-rareru**. Another way is to change **-u** to **-asareru**. The latter shorter form is more common in speech.

yomu 'read'	yom-ase-rareru; yom-asareru
iku 'go'	ik-ase-rareru; ik-asareru

- (1) With **-u** verbs ending in **u** (う), as in **kau** 'to buy,' change **-u** to **-w-aserareru** or **-w-asareru**.

kau 'buy'	kaw-aserareru or kaw-asareru
tsukau 'use'	tsukaw-aserareru or tsukaw-asareru

- (2) When the final syllable of **-u** verbs ends with **-su**, only the longer form **-ase-rareru** form exists. The causative passive form for **hanasu** 'talk, speak,' therefore is **hanas-ase-rareru**.

Once in the causative passive form, all verbs conjugate like a **ru**-verb. (see 12.1)

■ **Sentence structure of causative passive:**

agent (forced performer of the action) **wa/ga** forcer **ni** DO **o** V(causative passive)

私は母に部屋を掃除させられた。

Watashi wa haha ni heya o sooji saserareta.

I was made to clean the room by my mother.

子供たちは毎日宿題をさせられます。

Kodomo-tachi wa mainichi shukudai o saseraremasu.

Children are made to do their homework everyday.

If the agent is forced to do something due to circumstances, expressions similar to 'have to' or 'cannot help doing' are used instead of the causative passive construction.

急に大雨が降り出したので、ずぶぬれになるしかなかった。

Kyuu ni ooame ga furidashita node, zubunure ni naru shika nakatta.

It started to pour suddenly, so we couldn't help getting soaked.

車が故障して、タクシーに乗らなければならなかった。

Kuruma ga koshoo shite, takushii ni noranakereba naranakatta.

My car broke down and I had to take a taxi.

NOTE

21.6 Other ways to express passive meaning

Some verbs express a passive meaning even though they are not in the passive form.

21.6.1 Intransitive verbs that are passive in meaning

Intransitive verbs such as **kimaru** ‘to be decided,’ **naoru** ‘to be cured,’ and **kandoo suru** ‘to be moved’ are passive in meaning.

結婚式の日取りが決まった。

Kekkonshiki no hidori ga kimatta.

The wedding date was decided.

病気が治った。

Byooki ga naotta.

The illness was cured.

21.6.2 Some verbal nouns + *ni naru*

Some expressions with verbal noun + **ni naru** express a passive meaning, though such examples are limited in number.

上司にご馳走になった。

Jooshi ni go-chisoo ni natta.

I was treated to dinner by my boss.

病気のと看、皆のお世話になった。

Byooki no toki, minna no osewa ni natta.

When I was sick, I was taken care of by everyone.

▶ 7.1.2

21.6.3 Verb (plain nonpast) + *koto ni naru*

The V(plain nonpast) + **koto ni naru** structure is used to express that something was decided by external forces or circumstances or in consultation with someone else.

留学することになった。

Ryuugaku suru koto ni natta.

It was decided that I would study abroad.

来月引っ越すことになりました。

Raigetsu hikkosu koto ni narimashita.

It has been decided that we will move next month.

▶ 86.2

21.6.4 Causative *te*-form + *morau*

The *te*-form of a causative verb used with the auxiliary verb **morau** expresses ‘to be allowed to do.’

▶ 20.4.3

私はピアノを習わせてもらった。

Watashi wa piano o narawasete moratta.

I was allowed to take piano lessons. (My parents let me take piano lessons.)

私は学生時代に留学させてもらいました。

Watashi wa gakusee jidai ni ryuugaku sasete moraimashita.

I was allowed to study abroad when I was a student.

21.7

Understanding causative, adversative passive and causative passive sentences

Below is a comparison of causative, adversative passive and causative passive constructions.

Causative:	X wa/ga Y ni/o V-(s) aseru ‘X makes Y do V’ (Y = doer).
Adversative passive:	X wa/ga Y ni V-(r) areru ‘X is adversely affected by Y’s doing V’ (Y = doer).
Causative passive:	X wa/ga Y ni V-(s) ase-rareru ‘X is forced to do V by Y’ (X = doer).

The following sentences illustrate these patterns. In all of these sentences, Hanako is the one who sang a song.

- 太郎は花子に歌を歌わせた。(causative)
Taroo wa Hanako ni uta o utawaseta.
 Taro made Hanako sing a song.
- 太郎は花子に歌を歌われた。(adversative passive)
Taroo wa Hanako ni uta o utawareta.
 Hanako sang a song (and Taro was bothered by it.)
- 花子は太郎に歌を歌わせられた。(causative passive)
Hanako wa Taroo ni uta o utawaserareta.
 Hanako was made to sing a song by Taro.

In the causative sentence, Taro (the subject) is the causer and Hanako (the indirect object) is the doer. Normally, the sentence means that Hanako did not want to sing, but was forced to sing. In the adversative passive sentence, Taro (the subject) is the person who is negatively affected by Hanako’s singing. Perhaps Hanako is bad at singing and Taro did not want to hear her singing. In the causative passive sentence, Hanako (the subject) was made to sing a song. The implication is that Hanako did not want to sing.