

Voice of the Japanese Language
--- on the cases of passive, autogenic, and potential constructions ---

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In English grammar we use the term “passive *voice*” referring to a passive construction. In Japanese the passive construction is not referred to as 受動の「声」 but as 受動態 (ジュドータイ). But I thought 「受動の声」 can reveal the essential passive meaning much better because a passive sentence expresses voice of the subject person or any living creatures or any object with which the speaker empathizes.

Passive constructions have been analyzed by linguists in the 60's using the so-called transformational grammar proposed by Noam Chomsky which derives a surface sentence from the underlying unpronounceable sentence by using a set of rules. In the pre-Chomsky era a passive sentence 「メアリーはジョンにだまされた」 is derived from 「ジョンはメアリーをだました」 by making the direct object 「メアリー」 the subject of the passive sentence and by making the original subject 「ジョン」 a phrase 「ジョンに」 and changing 「だました」 into 「だまされた」. Such a mechanical derivation may be acceptable in school grammar, but not so in Chomsky's linguistic analysis, because it doesn't show the real semantics behind the surface sentence. The underlying representation is very roughly something like (メアリーは (ジョンが メアリーを damas-)-rare-ta) event). Mary's voice is expressed in this passive sentence. Mary got herself involved in a bad happening (できごと = things that happen). The passive sentence expresses the subject's emotion (negative or positive pathos (パトス) with some exceptions as I explain in my talk.

In my latter half of my talk I will attempt to connect passive sentences with potential expressions (可能形 (カノーケー)), polite expressions (敬語 (ケーゴ)) and autogenic expressions (自発形 (ジハツケー)), among others.