

## Transitivity Tests for Japanese Verbs (Hino)

### References

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tives, which mark underlying agents with *o* (P.21).

Therefore, it can be said that the pattern 'NP<sub>1</sub> *ga* NP<sub>2</sub> *o*' has higher transitivity than the pattern 'NP<sub>1</sub> *ga* NP<sub>2</sub> *ni*.'

As Jacobsen (P.18) points out, there are some degree of redundancy in the parameter B, C, D, E, G, H, and I. However, when more than one parameter among them can be applied in such a case as (6) and (7), transitivity contrasts of sentences become more clear.

### **Abbreviations**

Acc: accusative

Asp: aspect

Caus: causative

Dat: datve

Nom: nominative

Obl: oblique

Pass: passive

Past: past

Top: topic

following sentence patterns:

(8) *ga-o* > (9) *ga*<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, (8) has higher transitivity than (9).

### 3. Affectedness of O

The degree to which an action is transferred to a patient is a function of how completely that patient is affected. Compare the following sentences:

(10) *hahaoya wa kodomo o kaimono ni ik-ase-ta.*

Mother Top child Acc shopping Obl go-Caus-Past

‘Mother made her child go shopping.’

(11) *hahaoya wa kodomo ni kaimono ni ik-ase-ta.*

Mother Top child Dat shopping Obl go-Caus-Past

‘Mother got her child go shopping.’

In (10), the object *kodomo* ‘child’ is marked by the accusative *o* whereas in (11), it is marked by the dative *ni*. Shibatani (1976 : 252) calls the former ‘*o* causative’ and the latter ‘*ni* causative’ and points out that the former has more ‘coercive’ connotation than the latter, i.e., *kodomo* ‘child’ was ‘coerced’ to go shopping by *hahaoya* ‘mother’ in (10) whereas less coerciveness is implied in (11). Thus, *hahaoya* ‘mother’ affects *kodomo* ‘child’ more in (10) than in (11).

Jacobsen points out in this respect as follows:

Non-coercive causatives marking underlying agents with *ni* are less paradigmatically transitive in case marking than coercive causa-

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2. Jacobsen explains that events such as hitting, eating, killing, and throwing, where a direct and total manipulation of an object by agent is involved appear to be canonically transitive. That is, the sentence (8) has the highest transitivity. On the other hand, the sentence (9) has the lowest transitivity since passive morpheme *rare* intransitivizes the verb *naguru* and converts non-agent (or patient) entity to nominative status.

- (7) Denki **ga** tsuke-te-aru  
 light Nom switch on-Ger-Asp  
 ‘The light is on.’

*tsuke-ta* ‘switched on’ in (6) is an instantaneous action while *tsuke-te aru* ‘be on’ in (7) denotes a state. Therefore, (6) has a more punctual meaning than (7).

These sentences can also be distinguished in terms of Agency. That is, the agent *Taroo* is visible in (6) while the agent is invisible in (7) although (7) implies that someone switched on the light. Agency hierarchy is (6)>(7).

In terms of both Punctuality and Agency, therefore, (6) has higher transitivity than (7).

This result corresponds to the following sentence pattern:

- (6) *ga-o* > (7) *ga*

## 2. Agency

Participants high in Agency can effect a transfer of an action in a way that those low in Agency cannot. Compare the following active and passive sentences:

- (8) Taroo **ga** Hanako **o** nagut-ta.  
 Taroo Nom Hanako Acc hit-Past  
 ‘Taroo hit Hanako.’

- (9) Hanako **ga** Taroo ni nagur-are-ta.  
 Hanako Nom Taroo by hit-Pass-Past  
 ‘Hanako was hit by Taroo.’

The agent *Taroo* is the subject in the active sentence (8) while it is downgraded to the oblique in the passive sentence (9). Therefore, the agency hierarchy is (8)>(9). This agency hierarchy corresponds to the

### 1. Punctuality

Actions carried out with no obvious transitional phase between inception and completion have more effect on their patients than actions which are inherently on-going. Consider the following sentences:

- (3) Taroo **wa** mizu **o**/\*ga non-da.  
 Taroo Top water Acc/\*Nom drink-Past  
 ‘Taroo drank water.’
- (4) (Watashi **wa** ) mizu **ga/o** nomi-tai.  
 (I Top) water Nom/Acc drink-want  
 ‘I want to drink water.’
- (5) Taroo **wa** eigo **ga**/\*o dekiru.  
 Taroo Top English Nom/\*Acc can  
 ‘Taroo can [speak] English.’

Among the above sentences, (3) has the most punctual meaning since *non-da* ‘drank’ is an instantaneous action. *nomi-tai* ‘want to drink’ in (4) and *dekiru* ‘can do’ in (5) are both [+ stative] according to Kuno (1973 : 143). However, (4) is more punctual than (5) since *nomi-tai* ‘want to drink’ shows temporary physical sense whereas *dekiru* denotes state and has no punctual meaning at all. Punctuality hierarchy, therefore, is as follows:

(3)>(4)>(5)

This order is parallel to the following Jacobsen’s sentence patterns:

(3) *ga-o* > (4) *ga-ga* or *ga-o* > (5) *ga-ga*

Therefore, high punctuality is proportion to high transitivity.

Next, consider the following sentences:

- (6) Taroo **ga** denki **o** tsuke-ta.  
 Taroo Nom light Acc switch on -Past  
 ‘Taroo switched on the light.’

the basic case-marking patterns<sup>1</sup> to set up a hierarchy of transitivity as follows:

NP<sub>1</sub> *ga* NP<sub>2</sub> *o*: the paradigmatically transitive case pattern

NP<sub>1</sub> *ni* NP<sub>2</sub> *ga* (object marker): an intermediate degree of transitivity

NP<sub>1</sub> *ga* NP<sub>2</sub> *ga*: the same as above

NP<sub>1</sub> *ga*: the paradigmatically intransitive case pattern

Jacobsen points out that both the *ga-o* and *ni-ga* patterns represent two participants while the *ga* pattern represents one participant, hence, the former patterns can have higher transitivity than the latter according to the parameter A. He also points out that *ni-ga* and *ga-ga* pattern correlate with a low degree of transitivity according to the parameter B, C, D, E, G, H, and I. The example sentences are as follows:

(1) Taroo *ni* wa eigo *ga* dekiru.

Taroo Dat Top English Nom can

'Taroo can [speak] English.'

(2) (Boku *wa*) inu *ga* kowai.

I Top dog Nom afraid

'I am afraid of dogs.'

In what follows, the degree of transitivity will be determined by contrasting the sentences in terms of not only Punctuality, Agency, and Affectedness of O but also the case-marking patterns that correspond to the degree of transitivity.

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1. In the following three sentence patterns, *ga* in *ga-o* pattern is frequently substituted by topic *wa*, and *ni* in *ni-ga* pattern is also substituted by *wa* or *niwa* in the following whole example sentences in terms of naturalness. Therefore, *ga-o* pattern includes *wa-o* pattern, and *ni-ga* (or *ga-ga*) pattern includes *wa-ga*, and *niwa-ga* patterns.

# Transitivity Tests for Japanese Verbs

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The prototypical transitive verb has an agentive subject and a theme direct object whose referent is visibly affected by the action denoted by the verb (O'Grady 1996 : 33). Hopper and Thompson (1980 : 251-252) suggest that transitivity is a matter of degree and propose the following parameters to determine degree of transitivity:

	HIGH	LOW
A. Participants	2 or more participants	1 participant
B. Kinesis	action	non-action
C. Aspect	telic	atelic
D. Punctuality	punctual	non-punctual
E. Volitionality	volitional	non-volitional
F. Affirmation	affirmative	negative
G. Mode	realis	irrealis
H. A (Agency)	A high in potency	A low in potency
I. Affectedness of O(Object)	O totally affected	O not affected
J. Individuation of O	O highly individuated	O non-individuated

In Japanese, the prototypical transitive verb takes a direct object marked by the accusative *o* and the prototypical intransitive verb takes a subject marked by the nominative *ga*. Jacobsen (1982 : 14-21) presents