

## Transitive Anticausatives: A Case Study in Japanese

Anticausative events are generally expressed by intransitive verbs in English (e.g., *The vase broke*) but they can also be described by reflexive expressions (*reflexive anticausatives*, hereafter) in many other languages such as German, as in (1) (Geniušienė 1987; Haspelmath 1987; Cornips and Hulk 1996; Schäfer 2008; Koontz-Garboden 2009; Heidinger 2010; Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou, and Schäfer 2015; among many others). Relatedly, Schäfer (2022) observes that languages such as German and French possess what he calls *transitive anticausatives* (e.g., *The clouds changed their shape*), which are semantically anticausative but syntactically transitive because they take a possessor subject DP and a possessed object DP. The example in (2a) is a reflexive anticausative sentence and that in (2b) is a transitive anticausative in French. Sentence (2b) is transitive but the external argument DP *Les nuages* ‘the clouds’ is not causally involved in the event denoted by the verb. Schäfer (2022) claims that the subject DP of transitive anticausatives denotes no external theta role and is selected by expletive Voice, which selects a DP in its specifier position but does not provide a thematic role for the DP (Schäfer (2008); Alexiadou et al. (2015)). In other words, the existence of transitive anticausatives in a language suggests the availability of expletive Voice in the language. In this paper, I investigate similar transitive sentences in Japanese and argue that Japanese shows no evidence of the existence of transitive anticausatives.

Japanese exhibits a few instances that are similar to transitive anticausatives observed in other languages (e.g., *Kumo-ga katachi-o kae-ta* ‘The clouds changed their shape’). Schäfer (2022) claims that transitive anticausatives can be diagnosed by the occurrence of causer PPs and the unavailability of passivization. It is generally observed that causer PPs are compatible with (reflexive) anticausatives. The example in (3a) includes an intransitive anticausative and is compatible with both types of causer PPs: *kyoufu-de* ‘by strong winds’ and *kyoufu-no eikyou-de* ‘by the influence of strong winds.’ *Kyoufu-de* implies a direct causation whereas *kyoufu-no eikyou-de* evokes a subsidiary causation which indirectly causes the change of state denoted by the verb. This semantic difference is concerned with the (un)acceptability of the sentence in (3b), in which the indirect causer PP *Kyoufu-no eikyou-de* is preferred to the direct causer PP *kyoufu-de*. This fact suggests that, in (3b), the subject DP *kumo* ‘cloud’ retains an external theta role and it contradicts the direct causation expressed by the causer PP *kyoufu-de*; the indirect causer PP *kyoufu-no eikyou-de* is compatible because it indicates a subsidiary condition that enables the subject DP with an external theta role to undergo the event denoted by the verb. Regarding passivization, reflexive anticausatives generally resist passivization because the external argument has no external theta role to be absorbed. I claim that the anomaly of sentence (4) cannot be attributed to the absence of an external theta role of an external argument because sentence (5a), which describes a change of position of an actor (*autocausatives* (Geniušienė, 1987); *endoreflexives* (Haspelmath, 1987)) cannot be passivized even though the subject DP retains the theta role as an actor who changes his position. I propose that the external argument of the transitive sentence in (3b) possesses an actor role metaphorically and this sentence describes a change of position, in parallel with (5a). To sum up, this paper investigated apparent instances of transitive anticausatives in Japanese and concluded that Japanese shows no evidence of the existence of transitive anticausatives.

## Data

- (1) Das Wasser kühlt sich ab.  
the water cools REFL down  
'The water cools down.'  
(Schäfer (2008:37))
- (2) a. [La forme [des nuages]] a changé /s'est modifiée.  
the shape of.the clouds has changed/SE is modified  
'The shape of the clouds has changed/modified.'
- b. [Les nuages] ont changé / ont modifié [leur forme].  
the clouds have changed/ have modified their shape  
'The clouds have changed/modified their shape.'  
(Schäfer (2022: 86))
- (3) a. {Kyoufu-de / Kyoufu-no eikyuu-de} kumo-no katachi-ga kawar-ta.  
{strong.wind-by / strong.wind-GEN influence-by} cloud-GEN shape-NOM change(intr.)-PAST  
'The clouds changed their shape due to strong winds.'
- b. {??Kyoufu-de / Kyoufu-no eikyuu-de} kumo-ga katachi-o kae-ta.  
{strong.wind-by / strong.wind-GEN influence-by} cloud-NOM shape-ACC change(tr.)-PAST  
'The clouds changed their shape due to strong winds.'
- (4) # Katachi-ga kumo-niyotte kae-rare-ta.  
Shape-NOM cloud-by change(tr.)-PASS-PAST  
'The shape was changed by the cloud.'
- (5) a. Kare-ga karada-o nobasi-ta.  
he-NOM body-ACC stretch(tr.)-PAST  
'He stretched his body.'
- b. # Karada-ga kare-niyotte nobas-are-ta.  
body-NOM cat-by stretch(tr.)-PASS-PAST  
'The body was stretched by him.'

## Selected References

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