

On the importance of being silent or pronounced; English *-able* and Japanese *-rare* potentials compared

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English 'modal' and Japanese 'passive' Potential Constructions

	English: 'weak' or 'bound' <i>-able</i> potential	Japanese: (Shibatani 1985). 'bound' <i>-rare</i> (=passive) potential
Passive Potential	a) The dress is wearable . b) The dress is wearable by Mary.	a) <i>Sono doresu-ga ki-rare-ru.</i> the dress-nom wear-pass-prs b) <i>Mary-ni sono doresu-ga ki-rare-ru.</i> Mary-dat the dress-nom wear-pass-prs
Active Potential	c) *Mary is wearable the dress. Int: 'Mary can wear the dress.' d) *John is sleepable . Int: 'John is able to sleep.'	c) <i>Mary-ga sono doresu-o ki-rare-ru.</i> Mary-nom the dress-acc wear-pass-prs d) <i>John-ga ne-rare-ru.</i> John-nom sleep-pass-prs

→ Japanese potentials show wider distribution, i.e. active potentials (c) and (d).

Questions

- Why can a passive morpheme *-rare* yield an 'active' (nom-acc) syntax?
- Where does the modality interpretation in *-rare* potentials come from?
- Why do *-able* potentials have 'passive' alignment?
- Why does Japanese allow active potential constructions, but not English?

Towards a leanest possible modular account !

Shared properties:

- > Identical structural make up in both languages.
—MOD and VOICE_{PASS}.

Different properties:

- > Spell-out options differ (epp_v=bound):

	Modal (ability)	Voice (passive)
English	<i>-able</i> A epp _v	[silent] epp _v
Japanese	[silent]	<i>-rare</i> epp _v

- Relative merge order is left free:

[Mod>Voice or Voice>Mod]

- Spell out patterns yield more merge options for Japanese.

We assume

- ❖ general structural building principles, with highly decompositional & derivational syntax.
- ❖ a complement cannot remerge with the selecting head (Abels 2003, Kayne 2005).

Proposal

- > Potential constructions (minimally) involve two heads: **Modal** and **Voice (passive)**.
- > Different options in **spell-out**: being **silent** or pronounced, **bound** or not in **Mod**, and (perhaps) **labeling** (A or V).

Passive potentials

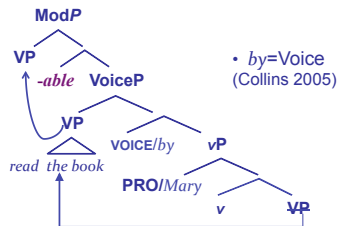
Available in both languages!

- The merge order [Mod>Voice>v>V] (e.g., *can be read*) converges in **both languages**.

English & Japanese Passive potentials

English

- (1) The dress is **wearable** (by Mary).



Lexical properties are satisfied!

VOICE—[silent] or by

- Complement property must be satisfied by vP with movable VP (*vP cannot remerge with the head*. (Abels 2003, Kayne 2005))
- Bound (epp_v) property: Internal merge of VP with Voice—Smuggling (Collins 2005).

ModP—*-able*

- Bound (epp_v) property: satisfied by moving VP to Spec, *-able*.

Japanese

- (2) *Sono doresu-ga ki-rare-ru.*
the dress-nom wear-pass-prs
'The dress is wearable.'

Same as English!

VOICE—*-rare*

- Complement property: satisfied by vP with movable VP.
- Bound epp_v property: satisfied by internal merge of VP with Voice (Ishizuka 2012)

The derivation successfully converges!

Active potentials

Only possible in Japanese. Why?

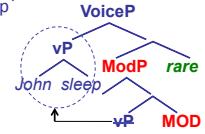
- VOICE>MOD only converges in Japanese, not in English, due to its **spell-out** option!

Japanese Active potentials

- (3) *John-ga ne-rare-ru.*
John-nom sleep-pass-prs
'John is able to sleep.'

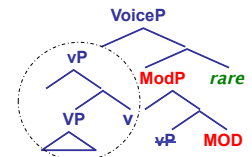
Unergative

Unlike passives, *smuggling works!*



Transitive

- (4) *Mary-ga sono doresu-o ki-rare-ru.*
Mary-nom the dress-acc wear-pass-prs
'Mary can wear the dress.'



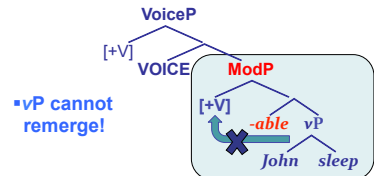
- Bound epp_v property of *-rare* is satisfied by internal merge of vP, **stranding Mod**.

English Active Potentials

derivation fails!

- (5) *John is **sleepable**.
Int: 'John is able to sleep.'

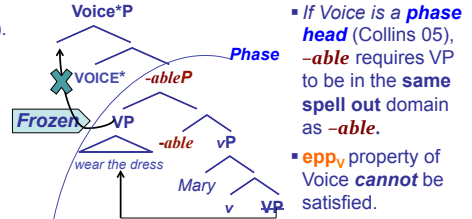
Unergative



•vP cannot remerge!

- (6) *Mary is **wearable** the dress.
Int: 'Mary can wear the dress.'

Transitive



- If Voice is a **phase head** (Collins 05), *-able* requires VP to be in the **same spell out domain** as *-able*.
- epp_v property of Voice **cannot** be satisfied.

Conclusion

- Potential constructions consist of **Voice_{PASS}** & **Modality** heads, which can be **silent**.
- The distributional differences between Japanese & English potentials reside in **difference in spell-out patterns, which determines the relative order of merge**.
- **General pattern** with epp_v: if a head is **pronounced**, the specifier is **frozen** (cannot move further because it needs to be in the **same spell-out domain** as the head); if **silent**, there is no such requirement.

→ **Silent or not matters!**

Selected References

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- Ishizuka, 2012. The passive in Japanese. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Kayne, R. 2005. Movement & Silence. Oxford University Press.
- Shibatani, M. 1985. Passive and related constructions: A prototype analysis. *Language* 61 (4): 821-848.