The 'passivized' high applicative construction in Japanese

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Abstract. The literature on applicatives has assumed that a high applicative morpheme introduces an applied argument, thus making the ability to increment the valency the defining property of high applicatives. In this paper, however, we challenge this apparently uncontroversial view by proposing that the Japanese high applicative morpheme *-te kure* does not introduce an applied argument, whereas its synonymous expression *-te moraw* does affect the valency. Just as an unaccusative verb and a passive voice, *-te kure* is shown to prevent an external-argument from being merged in its specifier position, thereby indicating the parallelism among the three layers.

Keywords: Japanese high applicatives (*-te kure/moraw*), external arguments, demotion, passives, unaccusatives

1 Introduction

The formal theory of (high) applicatives has significantly developed since the 2010's, when applied arguments in a wide range of genealogically unrelated languages started receiving a unified treatment (McGinnis 2001; 2005; McGinnis and Gerdts 2003; Jeong 2006; Pylkkänen 2002; 2008). Japanese is a language with many high applicative expressions, and is therefore often cited in discussions of applicatives in syntax (Pylkkänen 2002; 2008; Nishigauchi 2014; Hasegawa 2018; Aoyagi 2010; 2020; Ikawa 2022), semantics (Kuno and Kaburaki 1977; Kubota and Uegaki 2009; Bosse et al. 2012; Tomioka and Kim 2017), pragmatics (Yamada 2020; 2022) and historical linguistics (Shiina 2021; Yamada to appear).

A commonly-adopted assumption found in the literature about high applicatives is that they introduce an applied argument. For example, consider the sentence from the Bantu language Chaga in (1)a, in which a non-selected argument is introduced by an applicative suffix:

(1) Chaga

a. *N-á-í-lyì-í-à* ***m-kà*** *k-élyá.*
FOC-1.SG-PRS-eat-HA-FV 1-wife 7-food
'He is eating food for his wife.' (Pylkkänen 2008: 11)

b. [$_{\text{voiceP}}$ he [$_{\text{Voice'}}$ Voice [$_{\text{HighApplP}}$ wife [$_{\text{HighAppl'}}$ High-Appl [$_{\text{VP}}$ eat food]]]]]

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In an attempt to explain such argument augmentation, Pylkkänen (2008), for example, proposes the hierarchical structure in (1)b, thereby assuming a special functional projection dedicated to introducing a new argument, high applicative phrase, or High-ApplP. Although one can argue where this high applicative projection is merged (Bosse et al. 2012; Aoyagi 2010; 2020), there has been no controversy that it is responsible for adding to the number of arguments.

The current study, however, challenges this apparently correct analysis that all high applicative expressions must introduce an argument. Rather, it claims that some high applicative expressions do NOT affect the number of arguments. The evidence for such non-argument-augumenting high applicatives comes from the point-of-view applicatives in Japanese namely *-te kure* (Nishigauchi 2014; Hasegawa 2018). In Section 2, some important properties of this *-te kure* construction are presented, and juxtaposed with its synonymous expression *-te moraw*, which is, however, analyzed as an argument-augmenting high applicative. To explain the peculiarity of an applicative that does not affect the valency (as opposed to the canonical argument-augmenting high applicative), the current study argues in Section 3 that the contrast is analyzed in a way parallel to the active/passive voice distinction. Then in Section 4, a theoretical implication for cross-linguistic diversity of applicatives is presented.

2 Data

2.1 Japanese high applicative expressions

Japanese has two distinct strategies for introducing an applied argument. The first is to use an adjunct phrase, which roughly corresponds to the English phrase *for the sake of*, as shown in (2).

(2) a. *Taro-ga hasit-ta.*
Taro-NOM run-PST
'Taro ran.'

b. *Taro-ga* [*Hanako*-***no tame-ni***] *hasit-ta.*
Taro-NOM Hanako-GEN sake-for run-PST
'Taro ran for (the sake of) Hanako.'

The second strategy is to place a high applicative suffix. An adversity passive is a frequently cited instance (Pylkkänen 2008), as illustrated in (3).

(3) a. *Taro-ga hasit-ta.*
Taro-NOM run-PST
'Taro ran.'

b. *Hanako-ga Taro-ni hasir-**are**-ta.*
Hanako-NOM Taro-DAT run-PASS-PST
'Taro ran, which malfactively affected Hanako.'

In addition to this malfactive suffix, Japanese also has some benefactive high applicatives. For example, *-te moraw* '-CV HA' introduces an applied beneficiary argument (n.b., CV is a converb suffix):

(4) a. *Taro-ga hasit-ta.*
Taro-NOM run-PST
'Taro ran.'

b. *Hanako-ga Taro-ni hasir-**te morat**-ta.*
Hanako-NOM Taro-DAT run-CV HA-PST
'Taro ran, which benefactively affected Hanako.'

A semantically synonymous expression of *-te moraw* is *-te kure*, which also carries a benefactive meaning: since the logical form $P \wedge \neg Q$ behaves as a contradiction iff P and Q are semantically equivalent ($P = Q$), we can conclude from the data in (5) that the core meanings of *-te moraw* and *-te kure* are truth-conditionally identical.

(5) a.*[$_P$ *Taro-wa hasir-**te kure**-ta*] *ga,* [$_Q$ *Taro-ni hasir-**te moraw***]*-anak at-ta.*
Taro-TOP run-CV HA-PST but Taro-TOP run-CV HA-NEG COP-PST
'*Taro ran, from which I benefited, but he did not run, although I would have benefited from his running.'

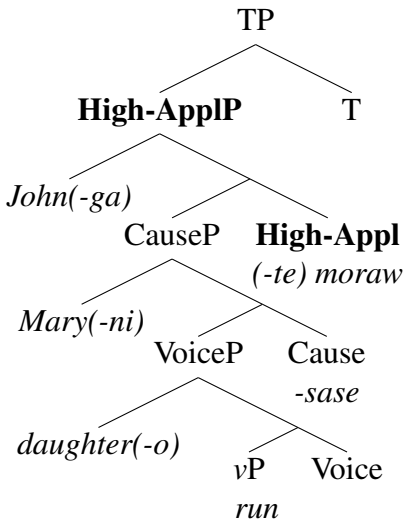
b.*[P *Taro-wa hasir-**te** **morat**-ta*] *ga,* [Q *Taro-wa hasir-**te** **kure**]-nak at-ta*
Taro-TOP run-CV HA-PST but Taro-TOP run-CV HA-NEG COP-PST
'*Taro ran, from which I benefited, but he did not run, although I would have benefited from his running.'

In her influential monograph, Pylkkänen (2008) proposes that applicative suffixes project a applicative phrase below VoiceP, and they are classified according to their position in the hierarchy: whether ApplP is higher or lower than VP. In a similar vein, Hasegawa (2018) analyzes Japanese applicatives. More recent studies, however, argue that, based on several semantic and morphosyntactic observations, the high ApplP is positioned even higher than VoiceP (Aoyagi 2010; 2020; Bosse et al. 2012). For example, as illustrated in (6), Japanese *-te moraw* is consider to occupy a position higher than the causative suffix *-(s)ase*.

(6) *John-ga {Mary/*watasi}-ni musume-o hasir-ase-te morat-ta.*
John-NOM Mary/I-DAT daughter-ACC run-CAUS-CV HA-PST
'John have Mary let his daughter run.'

Following the literature, particularly Aoyagi (2010; 2020), we consider the structure in (7) for *-te moraw*. However, there are several reasons to believe that *-te kure* has a different syntactic structure.

(7)



2.2 Observation 1: Overtness of the beneficiary

While *-te moraw* explicitly introduces an applied beneficiary, as shown in (4), *-te kure* cannot have an overt benefactive participant, as shown below.

(8) a. *Taro-ga hasit-ta.*
Taro-NOM run-PST
'Taro ran.'

b. *Taro-ga (*Hanako-ni) hasir-**te** **kure**-ta.*
Taro-NOM Hanako-DAT run-CV HA-PST
'Taro ran, which benefactively affected Hanako.'

If one wishes to make the beneficiary overtly pronounced, we need to choose the adjunct strategy (= (2)), as exemplified in (9)a.

(9) a. *Taro-ga [Hanako-no tame-ni] hasir-**te** **kure**-ta.*
Taro-NOM Hanako-GEN sake-for run-CV HA-PST
'Taro ran, which benefactively affected Hanako.'

b. *Taro-ga* [*Hanako-no tame-ni*] *hasit-ta.*
Taro-NOM Hanako-GEN sake-for run-PST
'Taro ran for Hanako.'

Crucially, the expression *-te kure* is not responsible for introducing *Hanako* in (9)a—because even if it is absent, *Hanako* can still be introduced in the sentence, as shown in (9)b. The presence of an overtly pronounced benefactive participant is independent from the use of *-te kure*. Rather than seeing *-te kure* introducing an argument, it is more reasonable to see the adjunct phrase *-no tame-ni* incorporating an additional participant in the event structure.

Readers may find this view at odds with the assumption in the literature which treats *-te kure* as a canonical argument-augmenting high applicative expression. For example, compare (11) with (10)a (cf., Hasegawa 2018):

(10) a. *Taro-ga hon-o yon-da.*
Taro-NOM book-ACC read-PST
'Taro read a book.'

b. *Taro-ga Hanako-ni hon-o yon-da.*
Taro-NOM Hanako-ni book-ACC read-PST
'Taro read Hanako a book.'

(11) *Taro-ga Hanako-ni hon-o yon-**de** **kure**-ta.*
Taro-NOM Hanako-DAT book-ACC read-CV HA-PST
'Taro read Hanako a book, which benefactively affected the speaker.'

Certainly, unlike (9)b, the sentence in (11) sounds acceptable. When compared to (10)a, a *ni*-marked argument appears to be introduced. However, note that the verb *yom-* 'read' does have a ditransitive use, as in (10)b. Crucially, the meanings of *yom-* in (10) are different. In (10)a, it can mean that Taro read a book to himself (silently), while in (10)b, Taro read the book out loud so as to let other (typically illiterate) people understand what it says. The sentence in (11) cannot mean that Taro silently read the book to himself, from which Hanako benefited; instead, he read aloud so that Hanako could understand the book's contents. Even if we concede that (11) is derived from (10)a, it predicts that (10)b can also produce another *ni*-phrase, when combined with *-te kure*, to introduce an additional beneficiary, but as shown in (12), this prediction is not borne out. For these reasons, the *Hanako* in (11) should not be considered as being introduced by *-te (de) kure*, but as an indirect object of the ditransitive verb.

(12) **Taro-ga Yoshiko-ni Hanako-ni hon-o yon-**de** **kure**-ta.*
Taro-NOM Yoshiko-DAT Hanako-DAT book-ACC read-CV HA-PST
'Taro read Hanako a book, which benefactively affected Yoshiko (intended).'

2.3 Observation 2: Case assignment

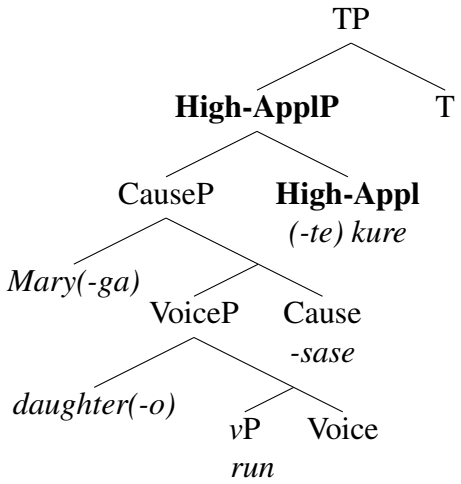
If we assume *-te kure* introduces a benefactive argument, the Case assignment is a conspicuous failure. In (7), the Spec of High-ApplP is the closest position to T, which syntacticians usually assume is the nominative assigner. So if *-te kure* has the same structure, the benefactive argument introduced by the High-Appl must be assigned a nominative case. This prediction is borne out with *-te moraw*, but empirically contradicts the data with *-te kure*, as in (9)b and (13), in which the *Doer* (Spec of VoiceP) or the *Causer* (Spec of CauseP) is marked with *-ga*.

(13) *(*John-ni) {Mary/*watasi}-ga musume-o hasir-ase-te kure-ta.*
John-DAT Mary/I-NOM daughter-ACC run-CAUS-CV HA-PST
'Mary (*I) made my daughter run, from which the speaker (*John) benefited.'

3 Proposal

To reflect the observations so far, we posit that *-te kure* does not take any DP in its Spec. Instead, we propose the structure in (14) (cf., as mentioned above, we maintain the same structure from (7) for *-te moraw*):

(14)



The observations made in Section 2 are explained as follows. First, the high applicative phrase of *-te kure* is defective, and does not allow for an external or internal merge to happen in its Spec position. Therefore, (9)b is ungrammatical. In contrast, the *ni*-marked argument in (11) is introduced by a low-applicative, somewhere lower than VoiceP, just as the literature assumes (Pylkkänen 2002; 2008).

Second, the nominative marker is licensed by T-head, which probes down and agrees with the first noun phrase it encounters. In the case of (14) it should be the NP in CauseP (if there is a CauseP) or the NP in VoiceP (if CauseP is absent). In either case, a beneficiary is never *ga*-marked. In contrast, *-te moraw* projects a Spec, in which a beneficiary is externally-merged, T finds the beneficiary before it sees the *Causer* or *Doer*. Hence, the beneficiary receives the nominative case.

Some might wish to propose a different approach. For example, one could assume that *-te kure* has the same structure as *-te moraw* in Narrow Syntax, but the phonological feature of the beneficiary in the Spec of High-Appl becomes phonologically inactive (deleted) on its way to PF. However, such an analysis has several problems. First, it is unclear why the Spec of High-ApplP is obligatorily deleted with *-te kure*, but not with *-te moraw*. Second, it cannot explain the lack of an intervention effect. If there were a noun phrase in Spec of High-ApplP, then T would see this relevant position/feature in the Spec of High-ApplP before it reaches and agree with the noun in CauseP or VoiceP, which is expected to cause an intervention effect. The sentence below would then be predicted to be correct, but this prediction is not borne out.

(15) **Mary-ni musume-o hasir-ase-te kure-ta.*
Mary-DAT daughter-ACC run-CAUS-CV HA-PST
'Mary made my daughter run, from which I benefited (intended).'

If our discussion is on the right track, then what does our analysis imply? Notice that the contrast in the presence/absence of a Spec position is not specific to the discussion of applicatives, and has been extensively discussed in the literature of Voice and transitive/unaccusative distinction. Our analysis, therefore, proposes that *v*, Voice, and High-Appl all behave alike in that some

must suppress an externally-merged argument. So to speak, *-te kure* is seen as a 'passivized' high applicative expression.

4 Conclusion and future directions

In this paper, we have presented the view that Japanese has two distinct types of high applicative expressions: *-te moraw*, which introduces an external-argument, and *-te kure*, which does not affect the valency. To explain these differences, we have proposed that *-te kure* lacks a specifier, in a way analogous to how an unaccusative verb and a passive morpheme are analyzed.

The direction hinted in this paper can be expanded from many possible perspectives. From a theoretical perspective, one can ask some deep (and ambitious) questions. What other projections have a comparable demotion-strategy? What (grammatical) principle is responsible for the distribution of projections with a demotion? For example, TP (in any language) seems incapable of introducing an argument, and not all languages have developed a 'passivized' High-ApplP. How does such variation emerge?

Comparison with low-applicatives also deserves our attention. As in (16), *kure* is also used as a low-applicative. However, unlike the high applicative use, the beneficiary (or, more precisely, the recipient) can be overtly flagged as a *ni*-marked argument. Although the fact that high and low applicatives have the same phonological exponents may suggest some commonality between the two, we need to develop a theory as to why these syntactically different expressions are pronounced the same way.

(16) *Taro-ga* *Hanako-ni* *hon-o* ***kure**-ta.*
Taro-NOM Hanako-DAT book-ACC LA-PST
'Taro gave a book to Hanako.'

From a crosslinguistic perspective, one can go out on a limb by suggesting that there is a typological implicational hierarchy that guarantees that if a language is equipped with a 'passivized' High-ApplP, it must also have an argument-introducing High-ApplP. However, this seemingly plausible generalization is challenged by Edo period Japanese. Researchers have revealed that *-te moraw* is, in fact, a latecomer in contemporary Japanese. Since *-te kure* started being used much earlier than *-te moraw* came into use (Shiina 2021; Yamada to appear), (un)markedness of 'passivized' high applicatives needs careful attention in future research.

Finally, if our analysis is correct, we can expect to find other languages that also exploit a 'passivized' high applicative. Marten (2003) points out that in some Bantu languages, there are applicatives that do not change valency, and just function pragmatically. As Marten and Downing (2019: 286) put it, "[c]omparatively little attention has as yet been paid to pragmatic and usage aspects of applicatives" (as opposed to valency-augmenting applicatives). Therefore, we believe that our unification offers a theoretical platform useful for future research on applicative expressions in genealogical unrelated languages (see also Pacchiarotti and Fernando 2022).

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