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ON PASSIVIZABILITY OF IDIOMS IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

1 INTRODUCTION

Idioms have been used as a diagnostic to prove that movement operations exist in human languages. Chomsky (1980) mentions that such idiomatic expressions as in (1a) can undergo movement rules, giving (1b) or (1c).

- (1) a. John took care of Bill.
- b. Care was taken of Bill.
- c. Care seems to have been taken of Bill.

The idiom chunk *care* can appear separately from the other idiom chunks, and it is assumed that *care* is moved from the complement position of *take*. Given that (1b) is grammatical and has the same interpretation as (1a), we can argue that the passivization involves a movement operation where a complement of a verb is raised to the subject position. Subject positions of passive sentences are therefore non- θ positions. These arguments are also supported by the fact that idiom chunks cannot be subjects of *tough* sentences, as shown in (2b).

- (2) a. Tabs were kept on Mary.
- b. *Tabs were easy to keep on Mary. (Lasnik and Fiengo 1974: 541)

This is because the subject position of a *tough* sentence is a θ position and an idiom chunk is never generated separately from the rest of the idiomatic expression. Thus, if an idiom chunk appears separately, there is a movement of the idiom chunk in the sentence. For this reason, we use idioms to prove that there is a movement in the passive.

Hoshi (1991) distinguishes *niyotte* passives from *ni* direct passives in Japanese by using this kind of diagnostics.¹ He argues that the *niyotte* passive is the Japanese

¹ For more discussion on the differences between *niyotte* passives and *ni* direct passives, see Hoshi (1991, 1999).

(3) a. *Chuui-ga John-ni haraw-are-ta.
 heed-Nom John-by pay-Pass-Past
 'Heed_i was affected by John's paying it_i.' <*ni* direct passive>
 b. Chuui-ga John-ni yotte haraw-are-ta.
 heed-Nom John-to due pay-Pass-Past
 'Heed was paid by John.' <*niyotte* passive>
 (Hoshi 1991:70–71)

Mihara and Hiraiwa (2006: 140), however, cast doubt on Hoshi's analysis. They argue that it is doubtful whether *chuui* 'heed' in (3) is really an idiom chunk because it allows modification by *zyuubunna* 'enough', as shown in (4).

- Moreover, they propose that “true” idiom chunks cannot be passivized in Japanese by demonstrating the active-passive pair of the true VP idiom *X-ni goma-o sur(u)* ‘flatter X’, as shown in (5).

- (5) a. Taroo-ga sensei-ni goma-o sur-ta. (sur-ta → sutta)
Taro-Nom teacher-Dat sesame-Acc grind-Past
'Taro flattered the teacher.' <active>
- b. *Goma-ga Taroo-niyotte sensei-ni sur-are-ta.
sesame-Nom Taro-by teacher-Dat grind-Pass-Past
(Lit.) 'Sesame was ground to the teacher by Taro.' <passive>

In this paper, I will prove that idiom chunks can be passivized both in English and Japanese and provide additional support for Hoshi's claim that *niyotte* passives correspond to *be* passives. Moreover, I will show that Japanese idiom chunks can be

ON PASSIVIZABILITY OF IDIOMS IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

passivized more freely than English ones, contrary to Mihara and Hiraiwa's (2006) observation. I will also explain why some idiom chunks in Japanese have been considered unpassivizable.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 shows that there exist some unpassivizable idioms not only in Japanese but also in English. Section 3 demonstrates that most Japanese idiom chunks can be passivized as long as a focus movement or a *wh*-movement occurs. In order to explain these phenomena, I introduce the focus-agreement parameter proposed in Miyagawa (2005, 2007, 2010) in section 4. This parameter is directly related to the property of SPEC-T. In section 5, I consider why the passivizability of idiom chunks differs between English and Japanese, based on Miyagawa's analysis. Section 6 focuses on a set of examples that seem to be counterexamples to the proposal discussed in section 5. Section 7 presents the conclusion of this paper.

2 PASSIVIZABLE AND UNPASSIVIZABLE IDIOMS

As we have seen in section 1, some idioms can passivize in English, as previously shown in (2) and repeated as (6) below.

- (6) a. Tabs were kept on Mary.
b. *Tabs were easy to keep on Mary.

Given the different levels of acceptability for these two sentences, we can consider *tabs* in (6a) to have been raised from the complement position of *keep*. In this way, it is possible to claim that the English idiomatic expression *keep tabs on* can be passivized.

On the other hand, as Mihara and Hiraiwa (2006) argue, it seems impossible to passivize Japanese idioms such as *X-ni goma-o sur(u)* 'flatter X', *giron-ni mizu-o kaker(u)* 'put a damper on a discussion', and *X-ni [sirahano-ya]-o tater(u)* 'single out X', as shown in the following:

- (7) a. *Goma-ga Taro-niyotte sensei-ni sur-are-ta.
sesame-Nom Taro-by teacher-Dat grind-Pass-Past
(Lit.) 'Sesame was ground to the teacher by Taro.' (= (5b))
b. *Mizu-ga Taro-niyotte giron-ni kaker-are-ta.
water-Nom Taro-by discussion-Dat put-Pass-Past
(Lit.) 'Water was put on a discussion by Taro.'
(Mihara and Hiraiwa 2006: 140)
c. *[Sirahano-ya]-ga Taro-niyotte Hanako-ni tater-are-ta.
[white-feather-arrow]-Nom Taro-by Hanako-Dat put-Pass-Past
(Lit.) 'An arrow with white feathers was put on Hanako by Taro.'

These sentences produce only literal meanings; there are no idiomatic interpretations for them.

However, there are some idioms that are unpassivizable not only in Japanese but also in English. The following examples are well-known English idiomatic expressions that have no passive counterparts:

- (8) a. John kicked the bucket.
b. *The bucket was kicked by John.
 - (9) a. John shot the breeze.
b. *The breeze was shot by John.
 - (10) a. Hannah blew off steam.
b. *Steam was blown off by Hannah.
- (Stanley 2001: 64)

Considering these facts, it seems that there are at least two kinds of idioms, one of which is passivizable and the other is unpassivizable. Let us call the former “Type I idiom” and the latter “Type II idiom.”

2.1 Type I Idioms

As I mentioned above, Type I idioms can passivize. In English, idioms such as *take advantage of NP*, *keep tabs on NP*, etc., belong to this type. In this subsection, I will present some properties shared by Type I idioms.

First, modifiers can appear in this type of idiom. It is possible to put a modifier before the idiom chunk, as follows:

- (11) Full advantage is taken of facilities nearby. (Nunberg et al. 1994: 521)

The following sentence shown in (12), which is taken up by Mihara and Hiraiwa against Hoshi’s claim, has almost the same structure as (11) in that the subjects are idiom chunks with modifiers.

- (12) [Zyuubunna chuui]-ga syusaisya-niyotte haraw-are-nakat-ta.
[enough heed]-Nom promoter-by pay-Pass-Neg-Past
‘Enough heed was not paid by the promoter.’ (= (4))

According to Mihara and Hiraiwa’s argument that true idiom chunks cannot be modified, the idiom *take advantage of NP* would be counted as a non-idiomatic expression. Yet this argument does not explain why *advantage* in *take advantage of NP* can be the subject of the passive but not the subject of a *tough* sentence, as in (13).

ON PASSIVIZABILITY OF IDIOMS IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

- (13) a. Advantage was taken of Mary.
 b. *Advantage was easy to take of Bill. (Lasnik and Fiengo 1974: 541)

Therefore, as long as the expression *take advantage of NP* is an idiom, *chuuui-o hara(u)* ‘pay heed’ is also an idiomatic expression and thus, an example of a Type I idiom in Japanese. In this respect, Hoshi’s analysis is on the right track and supports the argument that the derivation of *niyotte* passives in Japanese is similar to the derivation of *be* passives in English.

Second, the interpretation of a sentence that contains a Type I idiom is unambiguous. As we will see below, Type II idioms have both idiomatic and literal interpretations. In contrast, Type I idioms have only idiomatic readings.²

As a result, the complement of the verb in a Type I idiom is assigned only one θ role, whereas at least two kinds of θ roles can be assigned to the complement of the verb in a Type II idiom, depending on whether the sentence has a literal interpretation or an idiomatic interpretation.

Chomsky (1981: 37) assumes a special θ role for idiomatic arguments. He calls the θ role of *advantage* in *take advantage NP* “#.” This θ role is for so-called *quasi-arguments*. Accordingly, the complement of the verb in a Type II idiom can be assigned either # or a regular θ role, such as Patient.³ In contrast, the complement of the verb in a Type I idiom is always assigned #.

Idioms are generally considered to be noncompositional. According to Nunberg et al. (1994), parts of Type I idioms, however, can function as antecedents for pronouns.

- (14) a. We thought tabs were being kept on us, but they weren’t.
 (Nunberg et al. 1994: 502)
 b. Care was taken of the infants, but it was insufficient.
 (Chomsky 1981: 327)

In addition, the number of the pronoun must be identical with that of the antecedent.

- (15) a. They claimed full advantage_i had been taken of the situation, but it_i wasn’t.
 b. *They claimed full advantage_i had been taken of the situation, but they_j weren’t.
 (Nunberg et al. 1994: 506–507)

Based on these facts, Nunberg et al. suggest that Type I idioms are not noncompositional since parts of Type I idioms carry parts of their idiomatic meanings. For example, *take* in *take advantage of NP* is assigned a meaning roughly

² Chomsky (1980: 150) mentions the following: “For example, ‘John kicked the bucket’ can mean either that John hit the bucket with his foot or that he died. And ‘John took advantage of Bill,’ while it has no literal reading, has essentially the same syntactic structure as ‘John took food from Bill,’ namely: NP-V-NP-PP, with further labeled bracketing.”

³ In the following section, I will assume that the complement of the verb in a Type II idiom is assigned not # but another special θ role.

paraphrasable as ‘derive’, and *advantage* means something like ‘benefit’. This analysis can also be applied in Japanese. The word *chuui* in the idiom *chuui-o hara(u)* has the meaning ‘heed’.

One might claim that it is wrong to consider Type I idioms as true idioms in the first place since they are not noncompositional. Yet these expressions cannot appear in *tough* sentences or *ni* direct passive sentences, and thus there is no doubt that they are idioms.

2.2 Type II Idioms

Type II idioms are idioms that cannot passivize. In English, *kick the bucket*, *shoot the breeze*, and *blow off steam* are examples of Type II idioms. In Japanese, *X-ni goma-o sur(u)*, *giron-ni mizu-o kaker(u)*, and *X-ni [sirahano-ya]-o tater(u)* belong to this category of idioms.

What is particular about Type II idioms is that they have a literal reading in addition to an idiomatic reading. Sentence (16) presents a Japanese example and has two interpretations shown in (17a, b). Sentence (18) presents an English example and has two interpretations shown in (19a, b).⁴

- (16) Taroo-ga (Yamada sensei-ni) goma-o sur-ta. (sur-ta → sutta)
 Taro-Nom (Professor Yamada-Dat) sesame-Acc grind-Past
- (17) a. Taro flattered Professor Yamada.
 b. Taro ground sesame (to Professor Yamada).
- (18) John kicked the bucket.
- (19) a. John died.
 b. John hit the bucket with his foot.

(17a) and (19a) are idiomatic readings of (16) and (18), and (17b) and (19b) are literal readings of (16) and (18), respectively. Since (16) and (18) both have two readings, there are two base structures to derive these sentences.

If (16) or (18) is changed to the passive, they no longer have idiomatic readings, and only the literal readings are possible. This observation means that passivization only works with the derivation that produces a literal reading, which is a simple transitive sentence, and that Type II idioms *per se* cannot passivize.

It is possible to raise two questions here. First, why is it impossible to passivize Type II idioms? Given that passivization is simply a syntactic operation, it is unclear why the operation cannot apply to Type II idioms, since there are no syntactic differences between Type I and Type II idioms. I will answer this question in section 5.

Second, are there alternate ways to passivize Type II idioms? As we will see below, there are some cases where Type II idioms can passivize in Japanese.

⁴ It is easier to get the literal reading in (16) if we omit the dative argument.

ON PASSIVIZABILITY OF IDIOMS IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

3 SOME CASES WHERE TYPE II IDIOMS CAN PASSIVIZE

We have observed that Type II idioms cannot passivize. More precisely, sentences containing a Type II idiom do not have idiomatic readings in the passive.

However, if a phrase other than the idiom moves to the sentence-initial position, passive sentences containing a Type II idiom do have idiomatic readings. Consider the following examples:⁵

- (20) a. ?Yamada sensei-ni-mo, goma-ga Taroo-niyotte
Professor Yamada-Dat-also sesame-Nom Taro-by
sur-are-ta.
grind-Pass-Past
'Professor Yamada is one of the people who Taro flattered.'
- b. ?[Hanako-no-giron]-ni-mo, mizu-ga Taroo-niyotte
[Hanako-Gen-discussion]-Dat-also water-Nom Taro-by
kaker-are-ta.
put-Pass-Past
'Hanako's discussion is one of the things that Taro put a damper on.'
- c. ?Hanako-ni-mo, [sirahano-ya]-ga Taroo-niyotte
Hanako-Dat-also [white-feather-arrow]-Nom Taro-by
tater-are-ta.
put-Pass-Past
'Hanako is one of the people who Taro singled out.'

Although the sentences in (20) are a little bit awkward, if a phrase with the particle "*mo*" moves to the sentence-initial position, the sentence has an idiomatic interpretation in addition to a literal interpretation.⁶ Moreover, the movement of a

⁵ Harada (1977) also points out that the idiom [sirahano-ya]-o tater(u) can passivize. He presents sentences where a phrase other than the idiom is raised to the sentence-initial position, as illustrated below:

- (i) Kare-ni [sirahano-ya]-ga tater-are-ta.
him-Dat [white-feather-arrow]-Nom put-Pass-Past
'He was singled out.' (Harada 1977: 93)

He also takes up other idioms like *keri-o tucker(u)* 'bring ... to an end', *keti-o tucker(u)* 'criticize', and *saba-o yom(u)* 'cheat in counting', but, in these sentences, what is raised to the sentence-initial position is a phrase other than the idiom chunk.

- (ii) a. [[Kono-mondai]-ni]-wa korede keri-ga tucker-are-ta.
[[this problem]-Dat]-Top at this point end-Nom attach-Pass-Past
'This problem was brought to an end at this point.'
- b. [[Kono-bunkseki]-ni]-wa keti-ga tucker-are-ta.
[[this analysis]-Dat]-Top meanness-Nom attach-Pass-Past
'This analysis was criticized.'
- c. [[Kono-tookei]-ni]-wa daibu saba-ga yom-are-tei-ru.
[[this statistics]-Dat]-Top quite mackerel-Nom read-Pass-Progress-Pres
'This statistics is quite cheated in counting.' (ibid.)

⁶ Although all the informants judged (20) and (21) to be awkward, they also interpreted idiomatic readings for (20) and (21) whereas they only got literal readings in (7). The awkwardness in (20) and (21) may stem from a functional reason, but I leave this issue for future research. What is important here is whether the idiomatic interpretation is possible in the passive sentences.

wh-phrase to the sentence-initial position also makes it possible to get an idiomatic reading.

- (21) a. ?[Dono sensei]-ni goma-ga Taroo-niyotte
 [which teacher]-Dat sesame-Nom Taro-by
 sur-are-ta no?
 grind-Pass-Past Q
 ‘Which teacher did Taro flatter?’
 b. ?[Dono-giron]-ni mizu-ga Taroo-niyotte kaker-are-ta no?
 [which discussion]-Dat water-Nom Taro-by put-Pass-Past Q
 ‘Which discussion did Taro put a damper on?’
 c. ?Dare-ni [sirahano-ya]-ga Taroo-niyotte tater-are-ta no?
 who-Dat [white-feather-arrow]-Nom Taro-by put-Pass-Past Q
 ‘Who did Taro single out?’

Yet, these idioms cannot appear in *ni* direct passive sentences, as shown in (22).

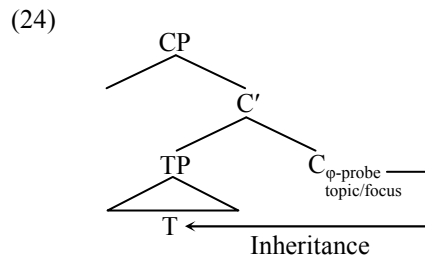
- (22) a. *Yamada sensei-ni-mo, goma-ga Taroo-ni sur-are-ta.
 Professor Yamada-Dat-also sesame-Nom Taro-by grind-Pass-Past
 b. *[Hanako-no-giron]-ni-mo, mizu-ga Taroo-ni
 [Hanako-Gen-discussion]-Dat-also water-Nom Taro-by
 kaker-are-ta.
 put-Pass-Past
 c. *Hanako-ni-mo, [sirahano-ya]-ga Taroo-ni
 Hanako-Dat-also [white-feather-arrow]-Nom Taro-by
 tater-are-ta.
 put-Pass-Past
 (23) a. *[Dono sensei]-ni goma-ga Taroo-ni sur-are-ta no?
 [which professor]-Dat sesame-Nom Taro-by grind-Pass-Past Q
 b. *[Dono-giron]-ni mizu-ga Taroo-ni kaker-are-ta no?
 [which discussion]-Dat water-Nom Taro-by put-Pass-Past Q
 c. *Dare-ni [sirahano-ya]-ga Taroo-ni tater-are-ta no?
 who-Dat [white-feather -arrow]-Nom Taro-by put-Pass-Past Q

These idioms can appear only in *niyotte* passives, suggesting that Type II idioms can passivize in Japanese. On the other hand, Type II idioms cannot passivize in English. Contrary to Mihara and Hiraiwa’s (2006) observation that Japanese idioms are unable to passivize, Japanese idioms can passivize more freely than English idioms. The next question that emerges is why the movement of phrases other than the idiom chunks makes it possible to passivize Type II idioms.

4 THE FOCUS-AGREEMENT PARAMETER AND THE EPP ON T

In order to answer the question above, I introduce the focus-agreement parameter proposed in Miyagawa (2005, 2007, 2010).

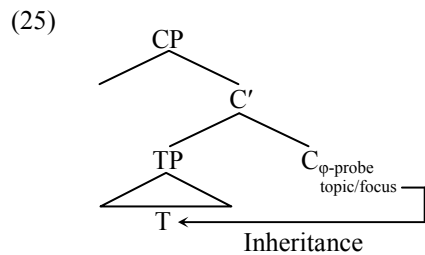
Miyagawa proposes that a language is either agreement-prominent or focus-prominent, and that the EPP-feature on T interacts with either the ϕ -probe, which corresponds to the uninterpretable ϕ -feature, or the topic/focus feature.⁷ According to his analysis, both the ϕ -probe and the topic/focus feature are postulated at C instead of T. English is an agreement-prominent language and the ϕ -probe on C percolates down from C to T, as shown in (24).



(adapted from Miyagawa 2010: 19)

Thus, what agrees with the ϕ -probe, namely the nominative subject, is always raised to SPEC-T due to the EPP-feature on T, which interacts with the ϕ -probe.

Japanese is a focus-prominent language and the topic/focus feature percolates down to T, as shown in (25).



(ibid.)

Thus, what agrees with the topic/focus feature is always raised to SPEC-T due to the EPP-feature, which means that the nominative subject is not necessarily raised to SPEC-T in Japanese.

⁷ Note that the focus here refers not to “informational focus” but to “identificational focus” in É. Kiss’s (1998) dichotomy.

4.1 A-Movement in Japanese

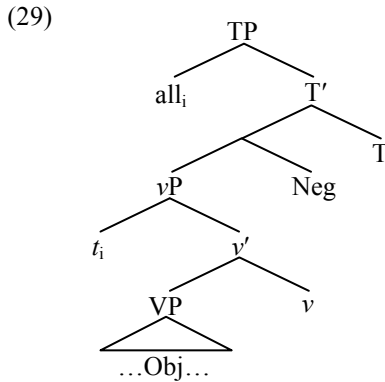
Miyagawa presents the following examples to show that phrases other than nominative subjects are raised to SPEC-T in Japanese:

- (26) Taroo-ga *zen'in-o* sikar-anakat-ta.
 Taro-Nom all-Acc scold-Neg-Past
 ‘Taro didn’t scold all.’
 not > all (all > not)
- (27) *Zen'in-ga* siken-o uke-nakat-ta.
 all-Nom test-Acc take-Neg-Past
 ‘All did not take the test.’
 *not > all, all > not
- (28) Siken-o_i *zen'in-ga* t_i uke-nakat-ta.
 test-Acc all-Nom take-Neg-Past
 ‘All didn’t take the test.’
 not > all, all > not

(Miyagawa 2010: 74–75)

As illustrated in (26), the Japanese universal quantifier *zen'in* ‘all’ may be interpreted as the partial negation ‘not all’.⁸ This is because ‘all’ is inside the c-command domain of negation.

In contrast, when the universal quantifier is in the subject position, it is interpreted outside the scope of negation. In this way, partial negation is impossible because negation does not c-command the subject position. Miyagawa assumes that the structure of (27) is (29).

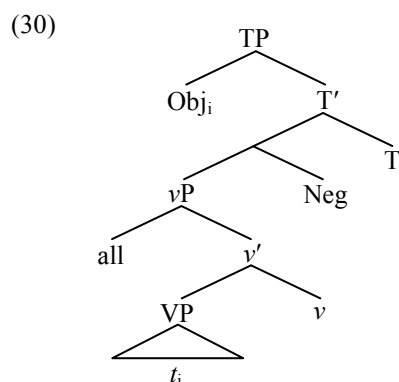


(ibid.: 75)

However, when the object is raised to the sentence-initial position, as in (28), the subject, which is the universal quantifier, is interpreted inside the scope of negation,

⁸ According to Miyagawa (2010), the reading, ‘all > not’, is due to a collective reading of ‘all’.

and partial negation becomes possible. Miyagawa suggests that the object is raised to SPEC-T by scrambling, and that the subject ‘all’ stays in situ at SPEC-*v*, as shown in (30).⁹

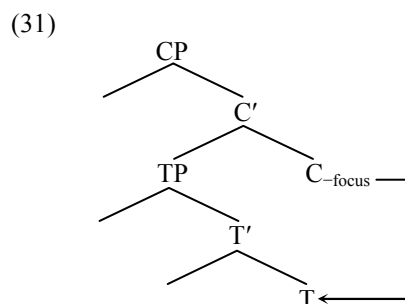


(Miyagawa 2010: 76)

Thus, the subject ‘all’ is c-commanded by negation, and partial negation becomes possible. What is important here is that phrases other than the nominative subject can move to SPEC-T in Japanese.

4.2 Topic and Focus

Japanese is a focus-prominent language, in which topic or focus phrases agree with T. According to Miyagawa (2010), what is inherited from C to T is the feature “–focus”, as shown in (31).



(ibid.: 87)

⁹ Following the requirements imposed by the notion of phases, Miyagawa assumes that the object must first move and adjoin to *v*P before it moves to SPEC-T in (30).

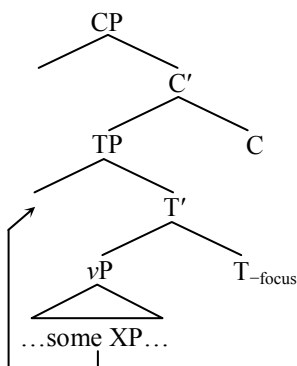
Miyagawa's assumption about the topic/focus feature is as follows:

- (32) The default feature for topic/focus is $-\text{focus}$ (topic).

(Miyagawa 2010: 86)

In other words, the feature $-\text{focus}$ is the topic feature, which requires that something should move to SPEC-T if focused phrases do not appear. What is then raised to SPEC-T is interpreted as topic. There is no agreement if focused phrases do not appear and the feature $-\text{focus}$, which is inherited by T, simply requires that something should fill SPEC-T, as illustrated in (33).

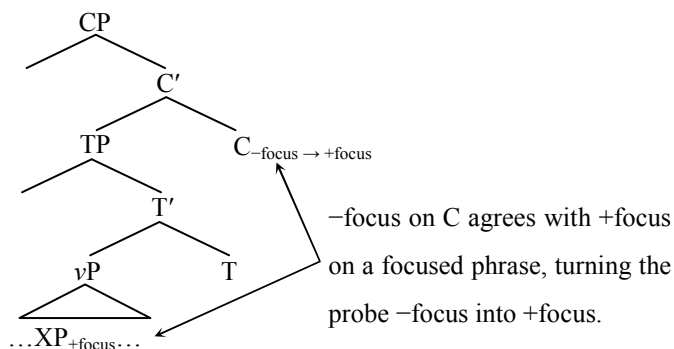
- (33)



(ibid.: 88)

In contrast, if a focused phrase, which has the feature $+\text{focus}$, appears, it agrees with $-\text{focus}$ at C, and this $-\text{focus}$ is valued as $+\text{focus}$ by the goal, i.e. the focused phrase, as shown in (34).

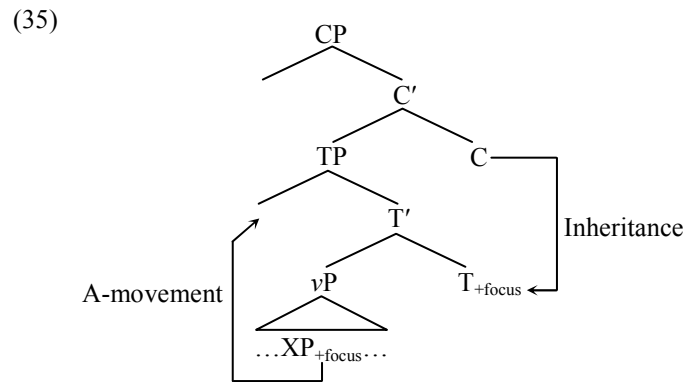
- (34)



(ibid.)

ON PASSIVIZABILITY OF IDIOMS IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

Next, +focus is inherited by T from C, and the phrase that has +focus is raised to SPEC-T, as shown in (35).



(Miyagawa 2010: 88)

To sum up, if a focused phrase appears, it is raised to SPEC-T; otherwise, something is raised to SPEC-T and it is interpreted as topic.

4.3 +focus in Japanese

According to Miyagawa, one example of the phrase with +focus in Japanese is the *mo* 'also' expression, and thus phrases with the particle *mo* are raised to SPEC-T. It is possible to find evidence to support this claim. First, phrases with *mo* carry focus stress, as illustrated in (36).

- (36) a. Taroo-wa HON-o katta.
 Taro-Top book-Acc bought
 'Taro bought a book.'
 b. TAROO-*mo* hon-o katta.
 Taro-also book-Acc bought
 'Taro also bought a book.'

(ibid.: 63)

If the sentence does not contain a *mo* expression, the sentence has neutral intonation, with the object receiving default prominence, as in (36a).

Second, the *mo* phrase is interpreted outside the scope of negation, as shown in (37a). This is because the *mo* phrase is raised to SPEC-T, as shown in (37b).

- (37) a. John-ga hon-mo kaw-anakat-ta.
 John-Nom book-also buy-Neg-Past

‘A book is one of the things that John did not buy.’

(Miyagawa 2010: 64)

- b. John-ga [TP hon-mo [vP t_{Subj} [VP t_{Obj} kaw-anakat-]] ta]
- (ibid.: 68)
-

Third, a weak cross over violation is suppressed in (38b), and the *mo* phrase binds the reciprocal ‘each other,’ as in (39).

- (38) a. ?*[Sakihodo $e_i e_j$ yonda hito_i]-ga futatu-izyou-no
 [just.now read person]-Nom two-more.than-Gen
 meiwaku meeru_j-o kesita.
 spam mail-Acc deleted
 ‘The person who read them just now deleted more than two pieces of spam mail.’

- b. Futatu-izyou-no meiwaku meeru_j-mo [sakihodo $e_i e_j$ yonda
 two-more.than-Gen spam mail-also [jut.now read
 hito_i]-ga t_j kesita.
 person]-Nom deleted
 (Lit.) ‘More than two pieces of spam mail also, the person who read them just now deleted.’

(ibid.: 66–67)

- (39) Taroo-to Hanako-mo_i otagai-no sensei-ga t_i suisensita.
 Taro-and Hanako-also each.other-Gen teacher-Nom recommended
 (Lit.) ‘Taro and Hanako also, each other’s teachers recommended.’

(ibid.: 67)

In this case, the movement of *mo* to SPEC-T is A-movement, not \bar{A} -movement.

Miyagawa assumes that *wh*-phrases also have +focus. The Q feature on the question C itself is an interpretable feature and thus unable to probe *wh*-phrases. Therefore, Miyagawa proposes that a *wh*-phrase has the focus feature, which agrees with C.

Miyagawa (2001) claims that the *wh*-feature, which corresponds to the focus feature, is on T instead of C in Japanese, and that the scrambling of a *wh*-phrase to SPEC-T counts as overt *wh*-movement. In other words, *wh*-phrases are raised not to SPEC-C but to SPEC-T in Japanese. This claim can be verified by the following examples:

- (40) a. Hanako-to_i zen’in-ga t_i asoba-nakat-ta.
 Hanako-with_i all-Nom t_i play-Neg-Past
 ‘With Hanako, all did not play.’
 *not > all, all > not
- b. Dare-to_i zen’in-ga t_i asoba-nakat-ta no?
 who-with_i all-Nom t_i play-Neg-Past Q
 ‘With whom, all didn’t play?’

not > all, (all > not)

(Miyagawa 2001: 317–318)

In (40a), the subject ‘all’ is raised to SPEC-T and only the wide-scope reading of ‘all’ relative to negation is possible. This fact shows that PPs cannot fulfill the EPP requirement of T. However, negation can take scope over the subject ‘all’ in (40b), indicating that the *wh*-PP *dare-to* ‘who-with’ in (40b) agrees with T and is raised to SPEC-T. Specifically, the *wh*-PP in (40b), but not the “normal” PP in (40a), contains a feature that matches a feature on T, and this agreement enables the *wh*-PP to move to SPEC-T. Therefore, the *wh*-feature in Japanese is on T.

5 PROPOSAL

As we have observed, Type I idioms can passivize both in English and Japanese, while Type II idioms can passivize neither in English nor Japanese. However, if a phrase other than the idiom chunks, e.g. a *mo* phrase or a *wh*-phrase, is raised to SPEC-T, it becomes possible to passivize Type II idioms in Japanese.

Although idiom chunks like *advantage* in *take advantage of NP* are assigned the θ role #, I suggest that this θ role is assigned only in Type I idioms, not in Type II idioms. I will assume another special θ role for the complement of the verb in a Type II idiom. According to Nunberg et al. (1994), *advantage* in *take advantage of NP* means something like ‘benefit’. In this respect, the argument assigned the θ role # has some kind of interpretation but its precise meaning is deficient or vague.

In contrast, *the bucket* in *kick the bucket*, which is a Type II idiom, lacks an interpretation and does not have any meaning at all.¹⁰ Given that the phrase *kick the bucket* does not exist as a phrase in the lexicon but is generated by the merging operation $V + DP = [_{VP} V DP]$ in narrow syntax, the DP *the bucket* must be assigned some θ role by the verb *kick*, since external merges occur due to θ roles (see Chomsky (2008)). I assume that semantically vacuous arguments are assigned an imaginary θ role, which is different from #. I call this θ role “*i*” after an imaginary number in mathematics, and *the bucket* in *kick the bucket* is assigned this θ role.

In order to explain the passivizability of idioms, let us assume the following condition:

(41) Condition on Imaginary Theta Role (CIT)

The argument that is assigned the θ -role *i* cannot be topic or focus.

According to Miyagawa (2005, 2007), the phrase at SPEC-T is interpreted as topic at the interface provided a focused phrase does not appear. This interface system would use the input from syntax, which has the structure in (42), and impose the

¹⁰ In contrast to Type I idioms, parts of Type II idioms cannot be antecedents for pronouns, as illustrated in the following example:

(i) *John kicked the bucket yesterday, and Mary kicked it the day before. (Stanley 2001: 64)

informational structure of topic-focus.¹¹

- (42) $\left[\underbrace{[TP \dots]}_{\text{topic}} \underbrace{[vP \dots]}_{\text{focus}} \right]$ (Miyagawa 2005: 214)

Thus, when a focused phrase does not appear, the phrase at SPEC-T is automatically interpreted as topic by the interface system.¹² Since the phrase at SPEC-T is interpreted as topic at the interface, it is natural to assume that the condition in (41) is an interface condition.

By assuming CIT in (41), we can explain why (43)(= (8b)) and (44)(= (7a)) are unacceptable.

- (43) *The bucket was kicked by John.
 (44) *Goma-ga Taroo-niyotte sensei-ni sur-are-ta.
 sesame-Nom Taro-by teacher-Dat grind-Pass-Past
 (Lit.) ‘Sesame was ground to the teacher by Taro.’

English is an agreement-prominent language, and the ϕ -probe is inherited by T from C. Thus, the nominative subject is necessarily raised to SPEC-T and interpreted as topic based on the structure in (42). In (43), the idiom chunk *the bucket* is at SPEC-T, resulting in a violation of CIT.

On the other hand, there are two derivations for (44). In one derivation, *goma* has +focus, which means *goma* is focused. In this case, –focus on C agrees with +focus on *goma*, and it is valued as +focus. This feature is then inherited by T, and *goma* is raised to SPEC-T. The idiom chunk *goma*, which is assigned the θ -role *i*, is focus in this derivation, hence a violation of CIT. In the other derivation, *goma* does not have +focus and there is no focused phrase in (44). In this case, *goma* is the nearest phrase from T, and therefore it is raised to T by the EPP. Again, this is a violation of CIT because the idiom chunk *goma* is interpreted as topic based on (42).

Of course, if (43) and (44) do not have idiomatic readings and instead have literal readings, they are acceptable. In this case, however, the θ -role that is assigned to the complements of the verbs is Patient, not *i*. As a result, no violation of CIT is induced.

A final question remains: why are the sentences in (45a)(= (20a)) and (45b)(= (21a)) acceptable?

- (45) a. ?Yamada sensei-ni-mo, goma-ga Taroo-niyotte
 Professor Yamada-Dat-also sesame-Nom Taro-by
 sur-are-ta.
 grind-Pass-Past

¹¹ Note that “focus” in (41) is identificational focus whereas “focus” in (42) is informational focus.

¹² As we saw in 4.2, Miyagawa (2010) assumes that the feature on C is –focus when C does not agree with any focused phrase, and that the only thing this feature requires is that its specifier be filled, which Miyagawa calls “pure” EPP nature of topic.

ON PASSIVIZABILITY OF IDIOMS IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

- ‘Professor Yamada is one of the people who Taro flattered.’
 b. ?[Dono sensei]-ni goma-ga Taroo-niyotte
 [which teacher]-Dat sesame-Nom Taro-by
 sur-are-ta no?
 grind-Pass-Past Q
 ‘Which teacher did Taro flatter?’

In order to answer this question, let us discuss the structure of the passive. Matsuoka (2003) suggests the structure of passive sentences in Japanese is the following:

- (46) [_{TP} T [_{VP} DP_j [_{V'} DP_i-niyotte [_{V'} v [_{VP} V t_j]]]]] (see also Honda (2009))

Matsuoka adopts Chomsky’s (2001) proposal that the head of vP optionally has an EPP-feature and triggers the movement of an internal argument to a specifier of vP. Matsuoka also claims that DP_j, which is an internal argument, is raised to SPEC-v in (46).

One might wonder whether the *niyotte*-phrase is a DP or a PP. Matsuoka (2001) discusses this question, pointing out the following examples:

- (47) *Taroo-wa [seikatu-sidoo-no sensei]-niyotte huta-ri
 Taro-Top [discipline-supervision-Gen teacher]-by 2-CL
 sika-are-ta.
 scold-Pass-Past
 ‘Taro was scolded by two teachers in charge of school discipline.’
 cf. Taroo-wa [huta-ri-no seikatu-sidoo-no sensei]-niyotte
 Taro-Top [2-CL-Gen discipline-supervision-Gen teacher]-by
 sika-are-ta.
 scold-Pass-Past (Matsuoka 2001: 82)

In Japanese, a floated numeral quantifier (FQ) can modify an NP, and the FQ and the NP must c-command each other (Miyagawa (1989)). Accordingly, an FQ cannot modify an NP within a PP. In (47), since the FQ *huta-ri* cannot modify the NP *seikatu-sidoo-no sensei*, the *niyotte*-phrase is a PP. This explains the difference between (48a) and (48b).

- (48) a. Taroo-niyotte_i zen’in-ga t_i nagur-are-nakat-ta.
 Taro-by all-Nom hit-Pass-Past
 (Lit.) ‘By Taro, all were not hit.’
 *not > all, all > not
 b. Dare-niyotte_i zen’in-ga t_i nagur-are-nakat-ta no?
 whom-by all-Nom hit-Pass-Past Q
 (Lit.) ‘By whom, all weren’t hit?’
 not > all, (all > not)

Although partial negation is not possible in (48a), the universal quantifier *zen'in* is interpreted inside the scope of negation in (48b), where the *niyotte*-phrase is raised to T instead of the internal argument. This interpretation is possible because the *wh*-PP can satisfy the EPP requirement of T, as we have seen in 4.3. This indicates that the internal argument *zen'in* is c-commanded by negation in (48b), and it is at SPEC-*v* in (46).

Considering the discussion above, we can conclude that something other than the internal argument can be raised to SPEC-T in Japanese passive sentences. Since *mo* phrases and *wh*-PPs can be raised to SPEC-T, it is natural to assume that the idiom chunk *goma* stays at SPEC-*v* in (45). In this way, there is no violation of CIT in (45), although (45) is the passive of a Type II idiom.

Furthermore, CIT is also related to active sentences. As we have observed in 4.1, the accusative object can be raised to SPEC-T in Japanese. In that case, the nominative subject stays at SPEC-*v*. The reason why (49) is unacceptable is that the idiom chunks are raised to SPEC-T, which leads to a violation of CIT.

- (49) a. *Goma-o_i Taroo-ga sensei-ni *t_i* sur-ta. (sur-ta → sutta)
 Sesame-Acc Taro-Nom teacher-Dat grind-Past
 (Lit.) 'Sesame, Taro ground to the teacher.'
- b. *Mizu-o_i Taroo-ga giron-ni *t_i*
 Water-Acc Taro-Nom discussion-Dat
 kaker-ta. (kaker-ta → kaketa)
 put-Past
 (Lit.) 'Water, Taro put on the discussion.'
- c. *[Sirahano-ya]-o_i Taroo-ga Hanako-ni *t_i*
 [white-feather-arrow]-Acc Taro-Nom Hanako-Dat
 tater-ta. (tater-ta → tateta)
 put-Past
 (Lit.) 'A white feather arrow, Taro put on Hanako.'

Therefore, the reason why the passive of Type II idioms is not acceptable is not that the passivization of Type II idioms *per se* is impossible; rather the idiom chunks assigned the θ -role *i* cannot be raised to SPEC-T due to CIT. In English, the passive of a Type II idiom is always unacceptable since the nominative subject is necessarily raised to SPEC-T. In contrast, Type II idioms can passivize in Japanese because phrases other than the nominative subject can be raised to SPEC-T.

One might point out the following as counterexamples:

- (50) a. kosi-o_i Taroo-ga *t_i* orosita benti
 hip-Acc_i Taro-Nom *t_i* lowered bench
 'the bench where Taro sat down' (Miyagawa 2007: 54)
- b. Kosi-o_i John-ga *t_i* orosita.
 hip-Acc_i John-Nom lowered
 'John sat down.' (adapted from Hoshi 1991: n.29)

ON PASSIVIZABILITY OF IDIOMS IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

Miyagawa (2007) uses the example in (50a) as the evidence that A-movement scrambling can move an idiom chunk. In (50), the idiom chunk *kosi-o* in the idiom *kosi-o oros(u)* ‘sit down’ is A-moved to SPEC-T. Note that this idiom cannot passivize, as shown in (51).

- (51) *Kosi-ga John-niyotte oros-are-ta.
 hip-Nom John-by lower-Pass-Past.
 ‘His hip was lowered by John.’ (Hoshi 1991: n.29)

Since *kosi-o oros(u)* cannot passivize, this idiom seems to be a Type II idiom, while the idiom chunk can be A-moved. In this way, these examples function as counterexamples to the proposal discussed here.

However, the idiom *kosi-o kaker(u)*, which has the same meaning as *kosi-o oros(u)*, leads to a different conclusion. A-movement scrambling cannot move *kosi-o*, as shown in (52), and the passivization of *kosi-o kaker(u)* is impossible, as shown in (53).

- (52) a. *kosi-o_i Taro-ga t_i kaker-ta benti (kaker-ta → kaketa)
 hip-Acc_i Taro-Nom t_i sit-Past bench
 b. *Kosi-o_i Taro-ga t_i kaketa.
 hip-Acc_i Taro-Nom t_i sat
 (53) *Kosi-ga Taro-niyotte kaker-are-ta.
 hip-Nom Taro-by sit-Pass-Past
 (Lit.) ‘His hip was sat by Taro.’

In fact, there are some differences between *kosi-o oros(u)* and *kosi-o kaker(u)*, as illustrated in the following examples:

- (54) a. *Taro-ga kurumaisu-ni kanzya-no kosi-o kaketa.
 Taro-Nom wheelchair-on patient-Gen hip-Acc sat
 b. Taro-ga kurumaisu-ni kanzya-no kosi-o orosita.
 Taro-Nom wheelchair-on patient-Gen hip-Acc lowered
 ‘Taro sat the patient down on the wheelchair.’

The subject may not be the inalienable possessor of *kosi* in *kosi-o oros(u)*, but the subject must be the inalienable possessor of *kosi* in *kosi-o kaker(u)*. Thus, *kosi-o oros(u)* does not have the same idiomatic nature as *kosi-o kaker(u)*, and it is questionable whether *kosi-o oros(u)* is a true idiom. Since the idiom chunk in *kosi-o kaker(u)*, which has the same meaning as *kosi-o oros(u)*, cannot be raised to SPEC-T in either the active or the passive, we can conclude that (50) and (51) are not counterexamples to our proposal.

Note that the passive of the idiom *kosi-o kaker(u)* is not acceptable even though the phrase other than the idiom chunk is raised to SPEC-T.

- (55) *[Dono benti]-ni kosi-ga Taroo-niyotte kaker-are-ta no?
 [which bench]-Dat hip-Nom Taro-by sit-Pass-Past Q
 (Intended meaning) ‘Which bench did Taro sit down on?’

We must therefore find another way to explain the unacceptability of (55), despite the fact that there is no violation of CIT. I will discuss this problem in the next section.¹³

6 SOME EXCEPTIONS

6.1 Possessor-Raising Construction

Japanese has a large set of idiomatic expressions containing references to parts of the human body, such as *hone-o or(u)* ‘take great pains’, *hara-o tater(u)* ‘feel irritated’, in addition to *kosi-o kaker(u)*. These idioms cannot passivize.

- (56) a. Taroo-ga sono sigoto-ni hone-o or-ta. (or-ta → otta)
 Taro-Nom the work-Dat bone-Acc break-Past
 ‘Taro took great pains with the work.’
 b. *Hone-ga Taroo-niyotte sono sigoto-ni or-are-ta.
 bone-Nom Taro-by the work-Dat break-Pass-Past
 (Lit.) ‘His bone was broken with the work by Taro.’
 (57) a. Taroo-ga Hanako-ni hara-o tater-ta. (tater-ta → tateta)
 Taro-Nom Hanako-Dat stomach-Acc stand-Past
 ‘Taro felt irritated with Hanako.’
 b. *Hara-ga Taroo-niyotte Hanako-ni tater-are-ta.
 Hanako-Nom Taro-by Hanako-Dat stand-Pass-Past
 (Lit.) ‘His stomach was stood with Hanako by Taro.’

These idioms seem to be Type II idioms, but they are different from other Type II idioms because the passive of these idioms is unacceptable even though phrases other than the idiom chunks are raised to SPEC-T.

- (58) a. *Sono sigoto-ni-mo, hone-ga Taroo-niyotte or-are-ta.
 the work-Dat-also bone-Nom Taro-by break-Pass-Past
 (Intended meaning) ‘The work is one of the things that Taro took great pains with.’

¹³ Hoshi (1991: n.29) explains the unacceptability of (51) as follows: “I speculate that the ungrammaticality of [(51)] is due to the existence of some condition, which states informally that an inalienably possessed NP cannot be passivized.” In the next section, I will discuss the reason why an inalienably possessed NP cannot be the subject of a passive sentence.

ON PASSIVIZABILITY OF IDIOMS IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

- b. *Dono sigoto-ni hone-ga Taroo-niyotte or-are-ta no?
 which work bone-Nom Taro-by break-Pass-Past Q
 (Intended meaning) ‘Which work did Taro take great pains with?’

Thus, one might consider these examples to be counterexamples to our proposal.

Yet, there are important differences between these idioms and the Type II idioms we have discussed. In (56a) and (57a), the subjects are the inalienable possessors of the internal arguments, and their θ -roles are not Agent but Patient or Experiencer. In Japanese, this kind of expression also appears in the sentences that do not contain idiomatic expressions, which are called “Possessor Raising Constructions (PRC).” Hasegawa (2001, 2004) proposes that (59) has the structure in (60).

- (59) Tomoko-ga kosi-o itame-ta.
 Tomoko-Nom back-Acc hurt-Past
 ‘Tomoko_i hurt her_i back.’
- (60) [IP [I' [VP [VP [DP [DP Tomoko] [D' D kosi]] itame]] v] -ta]]

The subject *Tomoko* is base-generated as a possessor of the object *kosi* ‘back’ and undergoes Possessor Raising, which detaches the possessor from the host DP and attaches it to the maximal projection immediately above, i.e. VP. The object *kosi* is assigned accusative Case from *v*, and the raised possessor moves to SPEC-I to receive nominative Case.

Hasegawa claims that the light verb *v* in (60) assigns accusative Case but it does not project the external argument. Thus, there is no Agent in (59). Interestingly, this kind of sentence does not have the passive counterpart.

- (61) *Kosi-ga Tomoko-niyotte itamer-are-ta.
 back-Nom Tomoko-by hurt-Pass-Past.
 (Intended meaning) ‘Tomoko hurt her back.’

In the literature (e.g. Jaeggli (1986)), it has been stated that the passive morpheme is an argument that receives an external θ -role and accusative Case. In this way, the passive morpheme is compatible with only verbs that assign both an external θ -role and accusative Case. Accordingly, PRC, as in (59), does not have the passive counterpart. The sentences in (51), (53), (55), (56b), (57b), and (58) are ungrammatical because they are the passive of PRC. Since CIT is irrelevant to the ungrammaticality of these sentences, they cannot serve as counterexamples to our proposal.

6.2 Unaccusative Idioms

We have claimed that idiom chunks cannot be raised to SPEC-T, but how can we explain the following sentence?

- (62) Hara-ga tat-ta.¹⁴
 stomach-Nom stand-Past
 ‘One felt irritated.’

It seems that the idiom chunk *hara* is raised to SPEC-T because it is at the sentence-initial position. This idiom might be a counterexample to our proposal.

There are many unaccusative idioms in Japanese, such as *me-ga iku* ‘get attracted’, *te-ga kakaru* ‘need efforts’, and *keti-ga tuku* ‘be criticized’. Kishimoto (2010) suggests that the nominative subject is not raised to SPEC-T in these idioms.

Kishimoto uses the *bakari*-construction as a diagnostic to clarify the syntactic position of arguments. Let us consider the following sentence:

- (63) Kodomo-ga manga-o yon-de-bakari i-ru.
 child-Nom comic-Acc read-Ptcp-only be-Pres
 ‘The child is only reading the comics.’ (Kishimoto 2010: 631)

According to Kishimoto’s analysis, in (63), *bakari* ‘only’ is an adverbial particle attached to AspP, which selects *vP*. The object is c-commanded by *bakari*, but the subject is not. Therefore, *bakari* can associate with the object but not the subject in (63). In other words, *bakari* can be associated with elements included within *vP*, but not those elements residing in TP.

This diagnostic can tell us whether an argument is within *vP* or not. Kishimoto suggests that not only the object in (64a) but also the subject in (64b), which is the intransitive counterpart of (64a), are within *vP*.

- (64) a. Mary-ga kodomo-no sewa-ni te-o
 Mary-Nom child-Gen care-Dat hand-Acc
 kake-te-bakari i-ta.
 hang-Ptcp-only be-Past
 ‘Mary was putting efforts on only the child care.’
 b. Kodomo-no sewa-ni te-ga kakat-te-bakari i-ta.
 child-Gen care-Dat hand-Nom hang-Ptcp-only be-Past
 ‘Only the child care needed efforts.’ (ibid.: 653)

In both variants of the idioms, the *ni*-marked PP can be the focus of *bakari*. This means that the PPs are inside *vP*, and that the idiom chunks *te-o* in (64a) and *te-ga* in

¹⁴ Koji Fujita pointed out this example to me.

(64b) are also inside *vP*, since the idiom chunks must follow the PPs. We can therefore confirm that the nominative subject is not raised to SPEC-T in (64b).

Now let us return to (62). This idiom has the transitive counterpart, as in (65), and the *ni*-marked PPs can be the focus of *bakari* in both (66a) and (66b), which represent the transitive-intransitive pair.

- (65) Taroo-ga Hanako-ni hara-o tate-ta.
 Taro-Nom Hanako-Dat stomach-Acc stand-Past
 ‘Taro felt irritated with Hanako.’
- (66) a. Taroo-ga Hanako-ni hara-o tate-te-bakari i-ta.
 Taro-Nom Hanako-Dat stomach-Acc stand-Ptcp-only be-Past
 ‘Taro felt irritated with only Hanako.’
 b. Hanako-ni hara-ga tat-te-bakari i-ta.
 Hanako-Dat stomach-Nom stand-Ptcp-only be-Past
 ‘One felt irritated with only Hanako.’

Therefore, the nominative subject, i.e. the idiom chunk *hara*, is not raised to SPEC-T, and the acceptability of (62) does not contradict our proposal.¹⁵

7 CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have observed that there are two types of idioms in English and Japanese: Type I idioms and Type II idioms. Type I idioms have only idiomatic readings and can passivize, while Type II idioms have literal readings as well as idiomatic readings and cannot passivize. These differences exist because idiom chunks in Type II idioms are assigned the special θ -role *i* and phrases assigned this θ -role cannot be raised to SPEC-T. English is an agreement-prominent language where the nominative subject is obligatorily raised to SPEC-T, and thus Type II idioms cannot passivize. On the other hand, Japanese is a focus-prominent language where phrases other than the nominative subject can be raised to SPEC-T. Therefore, Type II idioms can passivize in Japanese, provided the idiom chunk stays at SPEC-*v*. These idioms can appear only in *niyotte* passives, and it is possible to passivize Japanese idioms. Hoshi’s (1991) claim that *niyotte* passives correspond to *be* passives in English is thus correct, contrary to Mihara and Hiraiwa’s (2006) observation. Furthermore, by adopting Hasegawa’s (2001) analysis that the external argument is not projected in PRC, we can explain why the idioms that refer to parts of the human body are unpassivizable.

¹⁵ It is unclear what is raised to SPEC-T in (62). Kishimoto (2010) suggests that, in Japanese, the EPP feature is not assigned to T if the subject is not a full-fledged argument, i.e. an idiom chunk; however, the EPP requirement is always imposed on finite T in English. I assume that (62) is a kind of PRC, and that *pro* is raised to SPEC-T as the inalienable possessor of *hara*, but I leave this issue for future research.

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