

## A Preliminary Note on the Causer/Affectee Ambiguity\*

Tomokazu Takehisa  
McGill University/ University of Tokyo

ttakeh@po-box.mcgill.ca

### *Abstract*

*This paper discusses the sentential subjects that can be interpreted either as Causer or as Affectee and argues for the existence of lexical causative verbs that check accusative Case without assigning an external theta-role. Hence, it presents a challenge to Burzio's generalization (Burzio (1986)). Moreover, it suggests, by analogy to direct causation, that the notion of direct affectedness should require the subject NP to possess the object NP in the Affectee interpretation. Japanese data are mainly discussed with frequent reference to English. This work is based on the Principles-and-Parameters framework (Chomsky (1995)).*

*Keywords: Burzio's Generalization, The Causer/Affectee Ambiguity, Possession, Affectedness, Causation*

### **1. Introduction**

The Causer/Affectee ambiguity was discussed by Inoue (1974, 1976) in relation to the context where "Experiencers" can appear, and since then has been given attempts to account for it in the studies on Japanese syntax and semantics (Amano (1995), Hirakawa (1998), Kageyama (1996), Suzuki (1997), among many others). Examples of the Causer/Affectee ambiguity are illustrated below:<sup>1,2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Affectee reading of the ambiguity is known as adversative causatives in the literature. However, though it is the most salient reading, the adversative reading is not the only reading available: the non-causative, non-adversative reading is also available. Moreover, the term seems to fail to capture the fact that, when the Affectee interpretation is available, the Causer

- (1) a. John broke his arm.  
 b. John-ga            ude-o            ot-ta (<or-ta)  
    John-Nom        pro arm-Acc     break(Tr)-Past

In (1a), *John* can be interpreted either as the person who caused his own arm to break (Causer) or as the person whose arm someone else broke (Affectee).<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, exactly the same ambiguity can be observed in the Japanese counterpart in (1b). The two languages are in parallel except for the fact that the possessive pronoun need not be used to indicate the relation of inalienable possession between *John* and *arm*.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the Causer/Affectee ambiguity in Japanese and English and clarify fundamental issues underlying this phenomenon. Specifically, we will see that, when the subject is interpreted as Affectee, the verb checks accusative Case without assigning an external theta-role. The unaccusative status of the verb will be shown by illustrating two arguments: the Affectee subject fails to control into the purpose clause and no passive counterpart is formed from the Affectee interpretation. Given this, it will be argued that Burzio's generalization cannot be maintained and hence must be rejected or at least relaxed. Moreover, it will be suggested that the requirement that the Affectee subject should possess the object is not a source of, but rather a consequence of the Affectee interpretation. This is an argument against any approach that tries to derive the Affectee interpretation in terms of coreference between the subject NP and the possessor argument inside the possessed NP. The evidence comes from the fact that the Affectee interpretation is available even when a possessor argument disjoint from the subject is overtly realized inside the possessed NP.

The paper is organized as follows: section 2 examines the possessive relation between the subject and object NPs in the Affectee interpretation. Section 3 focuses on the condition on the verbs in the ambiguity. Section 4 argues that the verbs in the Affectee interpretation are transitive in terms of feature checking but unaccusative in terms of thematic marking, and that the condition on the possessive relation between the

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reading is always available, but not the other way around (except for the idioms). Hence, the Causer/Affectee ambiguity.

<sup>2</sup> *Or*- 'break (Tr.)' in (1b) can be analyzed as  $\sqrt{\text{BREAK}}$  and a phonological realization of Voice (Tr, in his term), which is null in this case, attached to it (Nishiyama (1998)). (The notation of the root is borrowed from Pesetsky (1995).) The difference is not crucial here.

<sup>3</sup> Note that Affectee does not necessarily imply adversity. Moreover, a methodological note is in order: I use the term Affectee instead of Experiencer to refer to the subject NP with the non-Causer interpretation, despite the fact that it is rather pervasive to call it Experiencer in the previous literature. Although it may be eventually possible to find a linguistically relevant property shared by these two classes, no studies have explicitly shown this so far, to the best of my knowledge. Hence, it is methodologically plausible to regard them as distinct at the current stage of investigation.

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subject and object NPs is derived in terms of direct affectedness, which is developed by analogy to direct causation. Section 5 is a summary. The discussion focuses on Japanese with frequent reference to English.

### 2. The Possessive Relation in the Affectee Interpretation

As we saw in (1), there are sentences in which the subject can be interpreted either as Causer or as Affectee. However, the distribution of Affectee is much more constrained than that of Causer, and it is not always possible to obtain the ambiguity. One of the conditions proposed in the literature is the possessive relation between the subject and the object. More specifically, the subject must be in possession of the object. Thus, in (1), *John* is the possessor of the object (*arm*). This condition can be observed in the following examples as well. The judgments are given on the assumption that each sentence in (2) is uttered context-initially.

- (2) a. Taroo-ga ude-o ot-ta  
Taroo-Nom pro arm-Acc break(Tr)-Past  
'Taroo broke his arm' ('Lit. Taroo broke arm')
- b. Taroo-ga kare-no ude-o ot-ta  
Taroo-Nom he-Gen arm-Acc break(Tr)-Past  
'Taroo broke his arm'
- c. Taroo-ga zibun-no ude-o ot-ta  
Taroo-Nom self-Gen arm-Acc break(Tr)-Past  
'Taroo broke his arm' ('Lit. Taroo broke self's arm')
- d. Taroo-ga Ziroo-no ude-o ot-ta  
Taroo-Nom Ziroo-Gen arm-Acc break(Tr)-Past  
(\*Affectee reading)  
'Taroo broke Ziroo's arm'
- e. Taroo-ga ootoo-no ude-o ot-ta  
Taroo-Nom pro brother-Gen arm-Acc break(Tr)-Past  
(\*Affectee reading)  
'Taroo broke his brother's arm' ('Lit. Taroo broke brother's arm')
- f. Taroo-ga migite-no koyubi-no hone-o ot-ta  
Taroo-Nom right hand-Gen little finger-Gen bone-Acc break(Tr)-Past  
'Taroo broke the bone of his right hand's little finger'  
('Lit. Taroo broke his right hand's little finger's bone')

In (2), the head nouns in the object NP are body-part nouns, which denote inalienable

possession. In (2a-c), *pro*, a third-person singular masculine pronoun, and a subject-oriented long-distance reflexive anaphor occupy the specifier position of the inalienably possessed NP. When they are coreferential with the subject NP, the possessive relation is established and the Affectee interpretation is available. On the other hand, except for (2c), when they are disjoint in reference from the subject, the possessive relation cannot be established between the subject and the object and only the Causer interpretation is available. In (2d) and (2e), an r-expression and a kinship term occupy the specifier position of the possessed NP, respectively. Since they are disjoint in reference from the subject, the possessive relation does not hold between the subject and the object NPs and the subject can only be interpreted as Causer. In fact, (2e) is interesting when we compare it with (2f). Both cases involve relational nouns, but only (2f) can have the Causer/Affectee ambiguity. This is because the relational noun in (2e), *otooto* 'brother' denotes an individual and occupies the specifier position of the possessed NP, thereby blocking the possessive relation between the subject NP and the possessed NP. On the other hand, in (2f), multiple possessive phrases are allowed inside the possessed NP. The nouns appearing inside the possessed NP, *migite* 'right hand', *koyubi* 'little finger', and *hone* 'bone' are all body-part nouns, and they form a part-whole relation between one another. Specifically, a bone is a part of a little finger, and a little finger is a part of a right hand, which is ultimately Taroo's. Given that the part-whole relation is transitive, they all belong to Taroo. Therefore, the possessive relation holds between the subject and the possessed NP in this case.

Consider the English counterparts of (2), illustrated below. English sometimes parallels with Japanese and sometimes does not.

- (2) a'. \*Taroo broke arm  
 b'. Taroo broke his arm  
 c'. \*Taroo broke self's arm  
 d'. Taroo broke Ziroom's arm (\*Affectee reading)  
 e'. Taroo broke his brother's arm (\*Affectee reading)  
 f'. \*Taroo broke his right hand's little finger's bone  
 f'. Taroo broke his right hand little finger bone.

(2a'), (2c') and (2f') are ruled out as English sentences. It should be pointed out that the ungrammaticality of these examples is rooted in a difference independent of the availability of the Causer/Affectee ambiguity. Specifically, English does not have *pro* or a subject-oriented long-distance reflexive anaphor in its lexicon. Moreover, it

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exploits the root compound rather than the stacking of possessive D (-'s) phrases.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is safe to assume that Japanese and English are parallel with respect to the availability of the Causer/Affectee ambiguity.

Then, consider (3), where alienably possessed nouns are involved in the object position.

- (3) a. Hanako-ga sode-o yabui-ta  
 Hanako-Nom sleeve-Acc rip(Tr)-Past  
 'Hanako ripped her sleeve'
- b. Taroo-ga kaze-de boosi-o tob-asi-ta  
 Taroo-Nom wind-in pro hat-Acc fly(Intr)-Cause-Past  
 'Taroo had his cap flown in the wind'  
 ('Lit. Taroo flew his cap in the wind')
- c. Taroo-ga reizooko-no yasai-o kusar-ase-ta  
 Taroo-Nom fridge-Gen vegetables-Acc rot(Intr)-Cause-Past  
 'The vegetables in the fridge rotted on Taroo'  
 ('Lit. Taroo rotted his vegetables')
- d. Yamada-kyozyu-ga kazi-de kenkyuusitu-no hon-o  
 Prof. Yamada-Nom the fire-in office-Gen books-Acc  
 moy-asi-ta  
 √ burn(Intr)-Cause-Past  
 'Prof. Yamada had his books in the office burned in the fire'  
 ('Lit. Prof Yamada burned his books in the office in the fire')

(3a) and (3b) involve (part of) the goods the person wears. In these cases, there is a condition on the Affectee reading: the person who will be interpreted as Affectee should wear the goods. Thus, if Hanako ripped a sleeve of a shirt in the closet, only the Causer reading is available. What we can say in face of these examples is that nouns denoting clothes can behave in the same way as body-part nouns under the condition that they are worn, and that no significant distinction is found between alienable and inalienable possession. The latter point is illustrated more clearly in (3c) and (3d) both of which involve alienably possessed nouns and no condition can be stated, unlike the case of cloths. In these cases, there is no reasonable way to characterize any further, beyond the possessive relation. Note that there is a difference between Japanese and

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<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Bobaljik (personal communication) pointed out to me that it may be the case that the stacking of possessive D phrases is prohibited only in cases where body-part nouns are involved, as it is possible to say phrases like "John's mother's brother's son."

English. Thus, (3a) is allowed, but (3b) is not in English, as the glosses show. Moreover, (3c) and (3d) are ruled out as well. Therefore, English has a stricter condition on the possessive relation in the Affectee interpretation. At present, it is not clear whether this represents a linguistically significant difference between the two languages, and hence I will leave this issue open.

Recall that the judgments in (2) are given as if the sentences were uttered context-initially. The Affectee reading is available even though the possessor is overtly spelled out in some cases. Such cases require a very rich context (e.g., the transplantation of arms, etc.) and the judgments are hard to come by. See (4) below, where the judgments are given for the Affectee reading.<sup>5,6,7</sup>

- (4) a. ?Hanako-ga Yosiko-no (syatu-no) sode-o yabui-ta  
 Hanako-Nom Yosiko-Gen (shirt-Gen) sleeve-Acc rip(Tr)-Past  
 'Hanako ripped a sleeve of Yosiko's shirt'
- b. ?Taroo-ga kaze-de titioya-no boosi-o tob-asi-ta  
 Taroo-Nom wind-in pro father-Gen cap-Acc fly(Intr)-Cause-Past  
 'Taroo flew his father's hat in the wind' (Inoue (1976))
- c. \*Taroo-ga reizooko-no Ziroo-Gen yasai-o  
 Taroo-Nom fridge-Gen Ziroo-Gen vegetables-Acc  
 kusar-ase-ta  
 rot(Intr)-Cause-Past  
 'Ziroo's vegetables in the fridge rotted on Taroo'  
 ('Lit. Taroo rotted Ziroo's vegetables')

<sup>5</sup> Alan Bale (personal communication) pointed out to me that the following example is felicitous with the Affectee interpretation if Bill's arm is transplanted into John.

(i) John broke Bill's arm.

<sup>6</sup> A caution is in order: if *-tesimaw* 'end up' is attached to the verb, all the examples in (4) will be perfectly felicitous, but in a different reading.

<sup>7</sup> When the relative clause, which serves to provide the context, is attached to the object, the examples in (4) sound less deviant. For instance, see (i) below:

(i) Taroo-ga kaze-de sonotoki kabutteita titioya-no boosi-o tob-asi-ta  
 Taroo-Nom wind-in at that time pro wore father-Gen cap-Acc fly(Intr)-Cause-Past  
 Taroo had Father's hat he wore at that time flown in the wind'  
 ('Lit. Taroo flew Father's hat he wore at that time in the wind')

However, (4c) and (4d) still sound deviant even if the relative clause is attached.

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- d. \*Yamada-kyozyu-ga kazi-de kenkyuusitu-no Tanaka-sensei-no  
 Prof. Y.-Nom the fire-in office-Gen Prof. T.-Gen  
 hon-o moy-asi-ta  
 books-Acc  $\sqrt{\text{burn}}$ -Cause-Past  
 'Prof. Yamada had Prof. Tanaka's books in the office burned in the fire'  
 ('Lit. Prof Y. burned Prof. T.'s books in the office in the fire')  
(Inoue (1976))
- e. ?Taroo-ga Zi-roo-no ude-o ot-ta  
 Taroo-Nom Zi-roo-Gen arm-Acc break(Tr)-Past  
 'Taroo broke Zi-roo's arm'

An interesting point to note here is that examples with alienably possessed nouns such as *yasai* and *hon* cannot be saved by the pragmatic context.

In this connection, it is worth pointing out that the cases where VP-deletion is involved can be taken to be the evidence that the possessive relation between the subject and the object is crucial in obtaining the Affectee interpretation.<sup>8,9</sup> See (5) below, where coreference is indicated by coindexing:

- (5) John broke his arm, and Bill did  $\emptyset$ , too [ $\emptyset$ = break his arm]  
 a. John<sub>1</sub> broke his<sub>3</sub> arm, and Bill<sub>2</sub> did  $\emptyset$ , too [ $\emptyset$ = break his<sub>3</sub> arm]  
 (\*Affectee reading)  
 b. John<sub>1</sub> broke his<sub>1</sub> arm, and Bill<sub>2</sub> did  $\emptyset$ , too [ $\emptyset$ = break his<sub>1</sub> arm]  
 (\*Affectee reading)  
 c. John<sub>1</sub> broke his<sub>1</sub> arm, and Bill<sub>2</sub> did  $\emptyset$ , too [ $\emptyset$ = break his<sub>2</sub> arm]

(5) is four-way ambiguous: in (5a), *his* refers to the person other than John and Bill, and *John* and *Bill* can only be interpreted as Causer. (5b) is a case of strict identity, and *his* in the elided VP refers to *John*. In this case, the first conjunct satisfies the conditions on the Affectee interpretation, while the second does not. Due to the parallelism requirement on VP-deletion, only the Causer interpretation is available. In (5c), *his* in the elided VP refers to *Bill* (sloppy identity), and both the conjuncts satisfy the conditions on the Affectee interpretation, thereby yielding the Causer/Affectee ambiguity. Note that, due to the parallelism requirement, there is no such interpretation that the subjects in the two conjuncts are interpreted differently. They

<sup>8</sup> For VP-deletion, see Fiengo and May (1994), May (1985), Sag (1976), Tancredi (1992), Williams (1977), among many others.

<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, no comparable example is available in Japanese.

can only be interpreted uniformly: either as Causer or as Affectee.

Summarizing so far, the possessive relation required for the Affectee interpretation can be alienable and inalienable. Moreover, under the rich context, it is possible to obtain the Affectee interpretation even in cases where the possessor argument disjoint from the subject is overtly realized inside the possessed NP, as long as the possessed N belongs to the class of nouns denoting inalienable possession. Furthermore, English has a stricter restriction on the possessive relation in the Affectee interpretation than Japanese. Nevertheless, English also allows the possessive relation between the subject and the possessed NP whose possessor is disjoint from the subject under the rich context.

Let us briefly look at the possessor argument. First, consider the following sentence below:<sup>10</sup>

- (6) Taroo-ga Ziroo-ga {pro/kare-no/zibun-no} ude-o ot-ta  
 T.-Nom Z.-Nom {pro/he-Gen/self-Gen} arm-Acc break(Tr)-Past  
 to it-ta  
 Comp say-Past  
 'Taroo said that Ziroo broke his arm'

Assume that the sentence is uttered context-initially so that the antecedent of the pronominals, i.e., *pro* or *kare* 'he', cannot be a person salient in the discourse. We have only two possible alternatives for the antecedent of the pronominals: *Taroo* and *Ziroo*. Moreover, since *zibun* 'self' is a subject-oriented long-distance reflexive anaphor and *Taroo* and *Ziroo* are the matrix and the embedded subject, respectively, either of them can be the antecedent of the anaphor. Therefore, *pro*, *kare* 'he', and *zibun* 'self' behave in the same way in the choice of the antecedent in (6).

This said, let us restrict our attention to the pronoun to keep the parallelism between Japanese and English, and consider the possible interpretations of (6), as represented in (7), where coreference is indicated by coindexing:

- (7) a. Taroo-ga Ziroo<sub>1</sub>-ga kare<sub>1</sub>-no ude-o ot-ta to it-ta  
 (Ziroo = Causer or Affectee)  
 'Taroo said that Ziroo<sub>1</sub> broke his<sub>1</sub> arm'

<sup>10</sup> As is well known, the successive occurrences of nominative phrase degrade acceptability for some reason. To avoid this, it is useful to embed the sentence under the nominalizer *koto* 'the fact that'.



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- b. *Taroo*<sub>1</sub>-ga *Ziroo*-ga *kare*<sub>1</sub>-no *ude*-o *ot-ta* to *it-ta*  
(*Ziroo* = Causer)  
'*Taroo*<sub>1</sub> said that *Ziroo* broke his<sub>1</sub> arm'

In (7a), *Ziroo* is coreferential with the pronoun inside the possessed NP, and the possessive relation holds between them. In this case, we obtain the Causer/Affectee ambiguity. On the other hand, when the possessive relation holds between *Taroo* and the possessed NP, the ambiguity disappears and only the Causer interpretation is available to *Ziroo*. The same is true of English, as the glosses show. The contrast between (7a) and (7b) suggests that the possessive relation should hold between the two NPs in the same clause. Furthermore, the following examples suggest that the possessive relation holds between the subject and the object, not between any NPs inside the same clause.

- (8) a. *Taroo*-no *titioya*<sub>1</sub>-ga *kare*<sub>1</sub>-no *ude*-o *ot-ta*  
Taroo-Gen father-Nom he-Gen arm-Acc break(Tr)-Past  
(T's father = Causer or Affectee)  
'*Taroo*'s father<sub>1</sub> broke his<sub>1</sub> arm'
- b. *Taroo*<sub>1</sub>-no *titioya*-ga *kare*<sub>1</sub>-no *ude*-o *ot-ta*  
Taroo-Gen father-Nom he-Gen arm-Acc break(Tr)-Past  
(T's father = Causer)  
'*Taroo*<sub>1</sub>'s father broke his<sub>1</sub> arm'

In (8a), the subject, *Taroo-no titioya* 'Taroo's father' is coreferential with the pronoun inside the possessed NP, and hence the possessive relation holds between the subject and the object, yielding the Causer/Affectee ambiguity in the interpretation of the subject. In (8b), where *Taroo* is coreferential with the pronoun, since the possessive relation does not hold between the subject and the object, the subject can only be interpreted as Causer. English parallels with Japanese in this case, too. This shows that an NP can be interpreted as Affectee in the fixed position.

### 3. The Verb Class in the Affectee interpretation

As we saw in the last section, the possessive relation plays a role in obtaining the Affectee interpretation. However, the possessive relation alone cannot give rise to the Affectee interpretation. We also have a condition on the verb class. Clearly, the following examples cannot have the Affectee interpretation even though the possessive relation holds between the subject and the object:

- (9) a. Taroo-ga                      ude-o                      nagut-ta (<nagur-ta)  
 Taroo-Nom pro arm-Acc punch-Past  
 (\*Affectee reading)  
 'Taroo punched his arm'
- b. Ziroo-ga    migiasi-o                      ket-ta (<ker-ta)  
 Ziroo-Nom right leg/foot-Acc kick-Past  
 (\*Affectee reading)  
 'Ziroo kicked his right leg/foot'

Harley (1995) reports that causatives formed from unaccusatives can give rise to the Causer/Affectee ambiguity. To distinguish unaccusatives from unergatives, Harley uses Numeral Quantifier Float (Miyagawa (1989a, b)) as a diagnostic for unaccusativity. Miyagawa observed that a numeral quantifier must be associated with the NP that it modifies or the trace left by that NP under the mutual c-command relation. Thus, if a numeral quantifier is inside the VP, we expect that a sentence involving an unaccusative is permitted, given that the argument of an unaccusative, unlike that of an unergative, is generated inside the VP. See (10) and (11) below. In all the examples, the "left edge" of VP is marked by a VP adverbial, and a numeral quantifier is inside the VP.

- (10) a. Zyookyaku-ga    hikooki-ziko-de    nihyaku-nin    sin-da  
 passenger-Nom airplane-accident-in 200-Cl    die-Past  
 '200 passengers died in the airplane accident.'
- b. mikan-ga    hako-no-naka-de    go-ko    kusat-tei-ta<sup>11</sup>  
 tangerine-Nom box-Gen-inside-in 5-Cl    rot-TEI-Past  
 '5 tangerines have (already) rotted inside the box'
- (11) a. \*gakusei-ga    tosyokan-de    futa-ri    warat-ta  
 students-Nom library-in 2-Cl    laugh-Past  
 'Two students laughed in the library'
- b. \*gakusei-ga    undoozyoo-de    futa-ri    hasit-ta  
 students-Nom athletic field-in 2-Cl    run-Past  
 'Two students ran in the athletic field'

As the judgments clearly indicate, we can conclude that (10) involve unaccusatives and (11) unergatives. Given this, consider the following examples:

<sup>11</sup> The example involves the stativizer *-tei-*, which is presumably composed of the consecutive ending of a verb and the existential/locative verb *i(r)*, but it does not affect the present discussion.

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- (12) a. Tanaka-san-ga musuko-o sin-ase-ta  
 Mr. Tanaka-Nom son-Acc die-Cause-Past  
 'Mr. Tanaka's son die on him'  
 ('Lit. Mr. Tanaka caused his son to die')
- b. Taroo-ga yasai-o kusar-ase-ta  
 Taroo-Nom pro vegetables-Acc rot-Cause-Past  
 'The vegetables rotted on Taroo'  
 ('Lit. Taroo caused the vegetables to rot')
- (13) a. Taroo-ga musuko-o waraw-ase-ta  
 Taroo-Nom son-Acc laugh-Cause-Past  
 (\*Affectee reading)  
 'Taroo made his son laugh'
- b. Taroo-ga musuko-o hasir-ase-ta  
 Taroo-Nom son-Acc run-Cause-Past  
 (\*Affectee reading)  
 'Taroo made his son run.'

The verbs in (12) are unaccusatives, while those in (13) are unergatives, as the same verbs are involved as in (10) and (11). Moreover, the examples in (12) clearly contrast with those in (13) in that the former can give rise to the Causer/Affectee ambiguity. Furthermore, consider (14).

- (14) a. Taroo-ga ude-o ot-ta (<or-ta)  
 Taroo-Nom pro arm-Acc break(Tr.)-Past  
 'Taroo broke his arm'
- a'. Taroo-no ude-ga or-e-ta  
 Taroo-Gen arm-Nom  $\sqrt{\text{break}}$ -Intr-Past  
 'Taroo's arm broke'
- b. Hanako-ga sode-o yabui-ta  
 Hanako-Nom pro sleeve-Acc rip(Tr.)-Past  
 'Hanako ripped her sleeve'
- b'. Hanako-no sode-ga yabuk-e-ta  
 Hanako-Gen sleeve-Nom  $\sqrt{\text{rip}}$ -Intr-Past  
 'Hanako's sleeve ripped'
- c. Tanaka-san-ga kazi-de ie-o moy-asi-ta  
 Mr. Tanaka-Nom the fire-in pro house-Acc  $\sqrt{\text{burn}}$ -Cause-Past  
 'Mr. Tanaka had his house burned in the fire'  
 ('Lit. Mr. Tanaka burned his house in the fire')

- c'. Tanaka-san-no ie-ga kazi-de moy-e-ta  
 Mr. Tanaka-Gen house-Nom the fire-in  $\sqrt{\text{burn}}$ -Intr-Past  
 'Mr. Tanaka's house burned'

In (14a-c), the subject can be interpreted as Affectee as well as Causer in addition to the above two cases. As is clear in (14a'-c'), the verbs in (14) have the unaccusative alternants, and fall under the generalization Harley made: causatives formed from unaccusatives can give rise to the Causer/Affectee ambiguity.

One might wonder why (12) can be treated on a par with (14). Specifically, the causatives in (12) involve non-alternating unaccusatives and a causative morpheme  $-(s)ase$ , and, since the unaccusatives, unlike those in (14), do not undergo the causative alternation, they are regarded as analytic causatives. However, Harley assumes, following Miyagawa (1995), that  $-(s)ase-$  is the default causative morpheme that is inserted as a result of an elsewhere condition (Kiparsky (1973)), and that non-alternating unaccusatives undergo the causative alternation by combining the default causative morpheme.<sup>12</sup> The important point here is that  $-(s)ase-$  is a mere phonological realization and does not necessarily correspond to a morpheme that gives rise to the interpretation of analytic causative. Therefore, although  $-(s)ase-$  attaches to the verbs in (12), the causatives formed are lexical causatives in the sense that they denote a single event, and hence they do not differ from (14). If we adopt this view, there is no significant distinction between (12) and (14) in the relevant aspects.

To sum up the discussion so far, we can give the following generalization on the condition on the verbs in the Causer/Affectee ambiguity.

- (15) Unaccusative verbs that form direct causatives can give rise to the Causer/Affectee ambiguity.

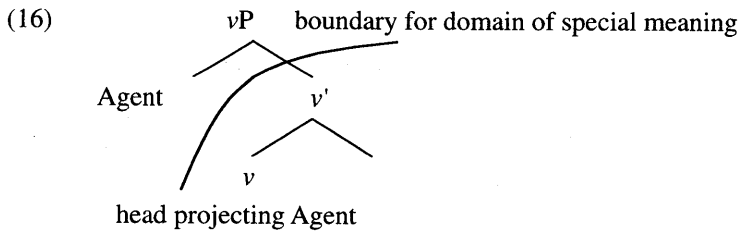
Note that (15) is a *necessary* condition. As such, not all the verbs that satisfy (15) can give rise to the Causer/Affectee ambiguity, by definition. If verbs that do not fall under (15) do give rise to the Causer/Affectee ambiguity, they should be taken to indicate either that (15) still needs refining or that some other factor is involved in the Causer/Affectee ambiguity.

In relation to (15), it is worth mentioning that Marantz (1997) proposes a

<sup>12</sup> Since Miyagawa and Harley assume Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz (1993, 1994)), phonological features are provided after syntax by Vocabulary Insertion, and at this point, if a syntactic CAUSE head does not specify its phonological realization, it can be realized as  $-(s)ase-$  according to the Paninian elsewhere principle. Thus, *sin(u)* and *kusar(u)* do not specify their phonological realization. Hence, *sin-ase-(ru)* and *kusar-ase-(ru)*.

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syntactically defined boundary for domain of special meaning. Specifically, he makes the generalization that no idioms involve a fixed Agent, an eventive-passive, and a causative morpheme with lower agentive verb, and he further shows that this generalization can be syntactically characterized. See (16) below.



(Marantz 1997: 208)

What Marantz proposes is that there is a locality domain for special meaning and this domain can be defined by *v*, i.e., a head projecting agent. He also cites Miyagawa (1995) and Harley (1995) as evidence for his generalization. However, the examples he cites are true idioms, which involve radical semantic drift (e.g., *tob-as* “fly-make” = demote someone to a remote post). Moreover, the examples we are discussing are purely compositional and not fixed at all, and hence they should be regarded as distinct from the Causer/Affectee ambiguity.

### 4. The Source of the Affectee Interpretation

In the last two sections, we have characterized the conditions on the Affectee interpretation. Now, we turn to the question of where Affectee comes from.

#### 4.1 *The Structural Position of Affectee*

I would like to consider the structural position of Affectee first. Since Causer and Affectee are not available in a sentence simultaneously, we may assume that they compete for the same structural position. However, the evidence suggests that they are in different positions. First, consider the following sentences, cited from Roeper (1987):

- (17) a. The ship sank.  
b. The ship was sunk.

(17a) and (17b) involve an unaccusative and a passive, respectively. It is well known

that they show the following contrast that is due to the presence/absence of the external argument.

- (18) a. \*The boat sank to collect the insurance.  
 b. The boat was sunk to collect the insurance.

In (18a), since the unaccusative does not have an external argument, nothing controls PRO in the rationale, resulting in ungrammaticality. On the other hand, since passives can be formed from verbs with an external argument, the passive sentence assures the presence of an external argument in (18b), be it null or realized as *by*-phrase, and hence the external argument controls PRO in the rationale clause. Moreover, the difference between unaccusatives and verbs with an external argument can be elucidated in the formation of passives. That is, as mentioned above, since passives can be formed from verbs with an external argument, verbs with an external argument can undergo passive formation, but unaccusatives cannot.

Given these, consider (19) and (20). These examples show that Affectee is not an external argument.

- (19) a. John broke his arm to collect the insurance. (\*Affectee reading)  
 b. John's arm was broken by him. (\*Affectee reading)
- (20) a. hokenkin-o moraw-tame-ni John-ga ude-o ot-ta  
 the insurance-Acc receive-for John-Nom arm-Acc break(Tr.)-Past  
 (\*Affectee reading)  
 'John broke his arm to collect the insurance'
- b. John-no ude-ga kare-ni(yotte) or-are-ta  
 John-Gen arm-Nom he-by break(Tr.)-Past  
 (\*Affectee reading)  
 'John's arm was broken by him'

Since the Affectee interpretation is not available when the tests for the external argument are applied, it is safe to conclude that Affectee is not an interpretation assigned to an external argument, but to an internal argument. Given this, the verbs involved in the Affectee interpretation are unaccusative in terms of theta-marking but transitive in terms of feature checking. This clearly raises a challenge to Burzio's generalization (Burzio (1986)), and any analysis that assumes the tight correlation between an external theta-role and accusative Case must be reconsidered.

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### 4.2 Direct Affectedness<sup>13</sup>

We have seen that Affectee is an internal theta-role. Now, we turn to the question of where Affectee comes from.

Two alternatives immediately come up. One is to assume that some independent head assigns Affectee to an internal argument, i.e., below the complement of *v*. The other is to assume that Affectee is derived in terms of the possessive relation, or more precisely, the coreference relation between the subject and the possessor inside the possessed NP. Clearly, the latter approach is unfeasible because we saw in section 2 that there are cases in which the possessor argument disjoint from the subject is overtly realized. In such cases, coreference is simply impossible. Moreover, coreference is not a syntactic notion, and the possessor arguments are realized as pronouns. Given the standard assumption, what syntax says about pronouns is that they must not be interpreted as coreferential with an NP in its local domain. In other words, syntax does not determine which NP is coreferential with a pronoun, unlike reflexives.<sup>14</sup> Then, consider the first alternative. Since we are trying to figure out what we have never seen, it is helpful to proceed by analogy. Let us consider direct causation. As is well known, direct causation denotes a single event and the subject directly acts on the object. Thus, a sentence like *John broke a cup* is appropriate for a situation in which John dropped a cup and it broke, but not for a situation in which John pushed a bottom which was connected to some device specially designed to break cups, and the device broke a cup. Hence, what is crucial in this case is that John must be a participant in the event of breaking a cup. By analogy, let us assume the same sort of notion and call it direct affectedness. Then, as in direct causation, let us further assume that Affectee must be a participant in the event denoted by VP. If we have this assumption, we can explain why a peculiar condition must be satisfied in cases where alienably possessed nouns are involved as well as in cases where the possessor argument is overtly realized inside the inalienably possessed NP. Since we can naturally explain the cases where the subject is not coreferential with the possessor, it is more plausible to assume direct affectedness than to invoke coreference between the subject and the possessor, in order to account for the Causer/Affectee ambiguity.

Moreover, since we have direct and indirect causation, it is natural to suppose that we have indirect affectedness as well as direct affectedness. Obviously, indirect

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<sup>13</sup> The material in this subsection grows out of the discussion with Jonathan Bobaljik. I am grateful to him for suggesting me to consider the first alternative in the text and a notion corresponding to direct causation.

<sup>14</sup> The same holds in the case of subject-oriented long-distance reflexive anaphors as well, since they can take an NP outside their local domain as an antecedent.

passives can instantiate such a notion. By analogy to the relation between direct and indirect causation, we expect that the conditions imposed on indirect affectedness are much laxer than those imposed on direct affectedness, and this is the case.

- (21) a. Mary<sub>1</sub>-ga John-ni [pro<sub>1</sub> ototo]-o hihans-are-ta  
 Mary-Nom John-by brother-Acc criticize-Pass-Past  
 ‘Mary had her brother criticized by John’  
 (‘Lit. Mary was criticized (her) brother by John’)
- b. Mary<sub>1</sub>-ga John-ni [[pro<sub>1</sub> ototo-no] taido]-o hihans-are-ta  
 Mary-Nom John-by brother-Gen attitude-Acc criticize-Pass-Past  
 ‘Mary had her brother’s attitude criticized by John’  
 (‘Lit. Mary was criticized (her) brother’s attitude by John’)
- c. Mary<sub>1</sub>-ga John-ni [[[pro<sub>1</sub> ototo-no] taido-no] henka]-o  
 Mary-Nom John-by brother-Gen attitude-Gen change-Acc  
 hihans-are-ta  
 criticize-Pass-Past  
 ‘Mary had the change of her brother’s attitude criticized by John’  
 (‘Lit. Mary was criticized the change of (her) brother’s attitude by John’)

(Toyoshima (n.d.): (58) – (60) with minor modifications)

It is well known that indirect passives do not necessarily require the subject to be coreferential with an element in the same clause (See Kubo (1990)). The parallel between the Causer/Affectee ambiguity and indirect passives argues for the approach advocated here.

In this subsection, we have compared two approaches to the Causer/Affectee ambiguity, and concluded that direct affectedness and is more plausible than the approach invoking coreference between the subject and the possessor. Moreover, since indirect passives can be take to instantiate indirect affectedness. This parallel can also argue for direct affectedness. Although a more close examination is necessary, I hope to have shown the initial plausibility to the approach in terms of direct affectedness.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have seen that, to account for the Causer/Affectee ambiguity, it is plausible to assume an independent head that assigns Affectee to an internal argument. Moreover, since the verbs in the Affectee interpretation are unaccusative in terms of



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thematic interpretation but transitive in terms of feature checking, they present a challenge to Burzio's generalization. Furthermore, two conditions are imposed on the Affectee interpretation: one is that the possessive relation between the subject and the object; the other is that a verb must be an unaccusative that undergoes the causative alternation. We have shown that the former condition can be naturally explained in terms of direct affectedness, which is developed by analogy to direct causation, and that any approach invoking coreference between the subject and the possessor inside the object NP fails to account for the cases where the possessor disjoint from the subject is overtly spelled out. The second condition remains to be explained.

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