Yet Another Piece of Evidence for the Common Base Approach to Japanese Causative/Inchoative Alternations

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Abstract

This paper presents yet another argument for the view that both the causative and inchoative verbs in the Japanese causative alternation are syntactically equally complex, derived independently from common bases. While morphological considerations alone suggest that such an approach must be taken to account for cases involving equipollent alternations, which have overt morphemes for both the causative and inchoative affixes, the question remains unsettled as to whether there are cases where such processes as causativization of inchoative verbs or anti-causativization of causative verbs are involved. In an attempt to answer this question, this paper examines the three approaches to the causative alternation by utilizing the possibility of having idiomatic interpretations as a probe into the syntactic structure. Evidence from idioms reveals that the common base approach still fares better. As a further consequence, postulation of a phonologically null morpheme is forced for some causative and inchoative affixes.

1 Introduction

It has been standard since the early days of generative grammar that causative verbs are assumed to be syntactically more complex than their inchoative counterparts, reflecting their semantic complexity. While specific analyses like Dowty (1979) are long gone, their spirit remains alive and well and has been instantiated in later theoretical constructs such as Lexical Conceptual Structure (e.g., Rappaport and Levin, 1988) and double VP structure (e.g., Hale and Keyser,

1993). Moreover, while structural complexity per se is independent of the issue of the derivational relationship between the causative and inchoative alternants, it has been also standard to assume that causatives are virtually derived from their inchoative counterparts via operations like Predicate Raising in Generative Semantics or Head Movement in the GB/MP framework. Thus, the causativization approach, which views causatives as based on inchoatives, has been influential across a variety of theoretical perspectives.

Two more approaches can be discerned as alternatives to handle the derivational relationship between the two alternants. One involves the process of anticausativization of causative verbs (e.g., Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1995), and the other approach, proposed by researchers like Piñón (2001) and Alexiadou et al. (2006), is the common base approach, where both the causative and inchoative alternants are derived independently from an identical root. The three possible approaches to the causative/inchoative alternation are given in (1).[1]

(1) a. *The Causativization Approach*
Causatives are derived from inchoatives.
b. *The Anticausativization Approach*
Inchoatives are derived from causatives.
c. *The Common Base Approach*
Causatives and inchoatives are derived from their common bases.

Japanese sheds light on this issue of derivation from a different angle: the language is very well known for having rich derivational and in-

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[1] See Haspelmath (1993) for a classification of the alternation in terms of markedness relations. In this paper, I focus on ways to relate the two alternants of a pair syntactically.

flectional systems of verbal morphology, and the morphosyntax of the causative/inchoative alternation is one of the well-studied domains of investigation. A list of the causative/inchoative affix pairs is given in (2), which is in large part based on Jacobsen (1992:258ff.). [2,3]

(2)   CAUS/INCH   e.g., √V-C-NPST/√V-I-NPST

  a. -e-/-ar-   ag-e-ru/ag-ar-u
                    'rise/raise'

  b. -s-/-r-   kae-s-u/kae-r-u
                    'return(C)/return(I)'

  c. -s-/-re-   kowa-s-u/kowa-re-ru
                    'break(C)/break(I)'

  d. -s-/-ri-   ta-s-u/ta-ri-ru
                    'add/suffice'

  e. -as-/-e-   korog-as-u/korog-e-ru
                    'roll(C)/roll(I)'

  f. -as-/-i-   nob-as-u/nob-i-ru
                    'extend/stretch'

  g. -os-/-i-   ot-os-u/ot-i-ru
                    'drop/fall'

  h. -akas-/-e-   obiy-akas-u/obi-e-ru
                    'threaten/fear'

  i. -e-/-or-   kom-e-ru/kom-or-u
                    'fill/become filled'

  j. -e-/-are-   wak-e-ru/wak-are-ru
                    'divide(C)/divide(I)'

  k. -as-/-Ø-   koor-as-u/koor-Ø-u
                    'freeze(C)/freeze(I)'

  l. -e-/-Ø-   ak-e-ru/ak-Ø-u
                    'open(C)/open(I)'

  m. -se-/-Ø-   ni-se-ru/ni-Ø-ru
                    'model after/resemble'

  n. -Ø-/-e-   mog-Ø-u/mog-e-ru
                    'pluck off/come off'

  o. -Ø-/-ar-   tog-Ø-u/tog-ar-u
                    'sharpen(C)/sharpen(I)'

  p. -Ø-/-Ø-   hirak-Ø-u/hirak-Ø-u
                    'open(C)/open(I)'

Unless powerful morphophonological rules manipulating the underlying phonological strings are assumed to apply,[4] morphological considera-

tions alone suggest that the common base approach must be taken to account for equipollent alternations, as in (2)a–(2)j, which involve overt affixes for both the causative and the inchoative alternants. However, the same line of reasoning also suggests that causativization of inchoative verbs and anticausativization of causative verbs may be involved in (2)k–(2)m and (2)n–(2)o, respectively. Since there are no a priori reasons to reject the possibility that more than one system coexists in a language, the issue remains unsettled as to whether these two processes are called for to account for the above examples.

Thus, this paper takes up the issue by investigating data involving (2)k–(2)o in a different light, with the availability of idiomatic interpretations. Specifically, I will show that neither the causativization approach nor the anticausativization approach can be maintained even in cases where they initially appear to be plausible and thus that the common base approach should be taken all across the board, which in turn justifies postulating that some causative and inchoative morphemes are phonologically null.

The paper is organized as follows: in section 2, I will introduce the assumptions about idioms adopted in this paper. In section 3, I will examine the three approaches to the causative alternation in turn, in light of the availability of idiomatic interpretations, arguing for the common base approach. Section 4 briefly discusses ditransitive causatives and their related forms. Section 5 concludes the paper.

This paper is couched within the general framework of Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz, 1993), but, this work being of a descriptive nature, I believe the result can be imported into any other framework.

2   Idioms and Structures

Idioms have received much attention because they present the test case for the principle of compositionality (see the works in Everaert et al., 1995 and Nunberg et al., 1994). While they are not compositional, displaying varying degrees of semantic drift, phrasal idioms are structurally constrained as well as non-idiomatic phrases.

As proposed by O'Grady (1998), Everaert (2010) and Bruening (2010), the structural constraints can be reduced to the selectional properties of particular lexical items. Thus, for the

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[2] The following abbreviations are used: ACC = accusative; CAUS, C = causative; COM = comitative; COMP = complementizer; DAT = dative; DIM = diminutive; DV = dummy verb; GEN = genitive; HON = honorific; INCH, I = inchoative; INST = instrumental; NPST = nonpast; PST = past; TRANS, T = transitive; √V = verbal root.

[3] In the following, the symbol Ø indicates either the presence of a phonologically null morpheme or the absence of a morpheme, depending on the approach one endorses.

[4] See Miyagawa (1998) for such an attempt (cf. Nishiyama, 1998). Under the causativization approach, he proposes a set

of rules to the affix pairs in (2) within the framework of Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz, 1993).

present purposes, I assume, following O'Grady (1998), that idioms are subject to the Continuity Constraint: the component parts of an idiom must form a chain of selectional relations, expressed in terms of head-to-head relations.
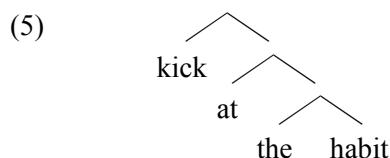
According to the Continuity Constraint, an idiom like *kick the habit* has the following chain of relations, indicated by the arrows:

(3) [$_{VP}$ [$_V$ kick] [$_{NP}$ [$_D$ the] [$_N$ habit]]]]
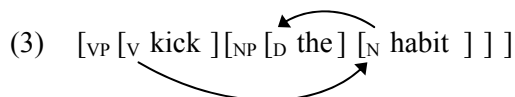
In (3), the chain is established via head-to-head relations: the verb selects the noun, which in turn selects the definite article.[5] This chain of relations serves as a unit for special meaning. In the following, I will call the smallest constituent containing such a chain a minimal idiomatic constituent (MIC for short) and indicate it with a circle, as illustrated in (4):[6]

(4)
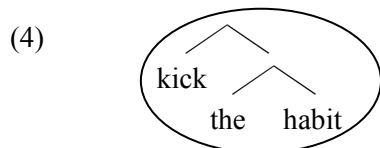
Moreover, if a structural relation involved in the chain is disrupted, then the related unit for special meaning is disrupted, making an idiomatic interpretation unavailable, as shown in (5):

(5)

Furthermore, the Continuity Constraint also predicts that an idiom's component parts can be modified without losing its special meaning only if its chain of relations is not disrupted, as illustrated in (6):

(6) [$_{VP}$ [$_V$ kick] [$_{NP}$ [$_D$ the] [$_{AP}$ filthy] [$_N$ habit]]]

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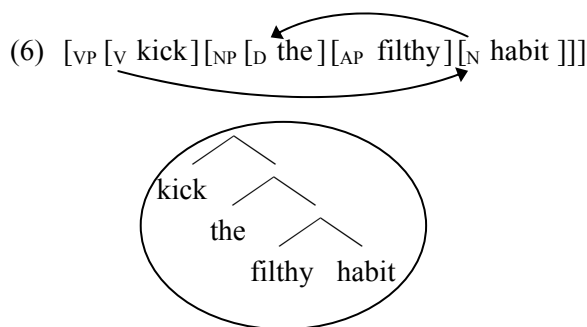
[5] It is crucial that D does not take NP as its complement, as Bruening (2010) also assumes.
[6] MIC is employed to indicate a unit for special meaning for the purpose of presentation.

Likewise, adding more structure does not affect an idiom if its chain is kept intact, as in (7).

(7)
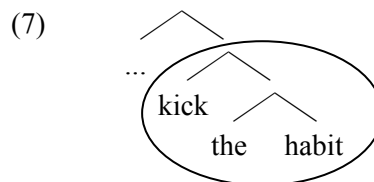
Given these assumptions, we will turn to the approaches to the causative alternation.

3   The Causative Alternation and Idioms

3.1   Causativization of Inchoative Verbs

The causativization approach takes it that causatives are derived from inchoatives by affixation of a causative morpheme. Consider the structures in (8), where B, I, and C represent a base (with extra materials such as NP), an inchoative morpheme, and a causative morpheme, respectively:
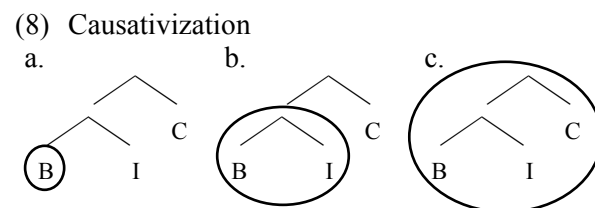
(8) Causativization

The possible combinations of MICs and idioms predicted in the causativization approach are shown in Table 1: for instance, if [B] is an MIC (i.e., (8)a), then it is expected that [B], [B I], and [[B I] C] can form idioms.

	Minimal Idiomatic Constituent		
	[B]	[B I]	[[B I] C]
Idiom [B]	OK	*	*
Idiom [B I]	OK	OK	*
Idiom [[B I] C]	OK	OK	OK

Table 1: Predicted Combinations

The structural asymmetry encoded should be reflected in the realm of idiomatic interpretations. As McGinnis (2004) discusses, since the causative alternant contains its inchoative counterpart in the causativization approach, it is predicted that, if an idiomatic interpretation is possible with an inchoative, it should be possible with the causative counterpart as well. Moreover, not all causative idioms have the inchoative counterparts, another consequence of the assumption that the causative contains the inchoative.

Good candidates for this causativization treatment are the affix pairs in (2)k–(2)m, whose inchoative affixes are assumed to be phonologically null, or alternatively, it is also possible to assume that there is no inchoative affix involved and the base itself is an inchoative verb. If the latter assumption is adopted, the difference between (8)a and (8)b dissolves, but the aforementioned predictions made by the causativization approach are not affected at all.

This said, consider the causative/inchoative pairs in (9)–(11), where an inchoative verb can appear as part of an idiom, while its causative counterpart cannot. Since the pattern observed in these examples cannot be predicted, as shown in Table 1, it is clear that the causativization approach should be excluded even in cases where it might appear to be appropriate.

(9) a. * ude-o   tat-e-ru
          arm-ACC   √stand-CAUS-NPST
     b.   ude-ga   tat-Ø-u
          arm-NOM   √stand-INCH-NPST
          'have good skills'

(10) a. * ki-o   sum-as-u
          mind-ACC   √over-CAUS-NPST
     b.   ki-ga   sum-Ø-u
          mind-NOM   √over-INCH-NPST
          'console oneself, feel satisfied'

(11) a. * X-ni   kyak.koo-o   abi-se-ru
          X-DAT foot.light-ACC √pour-CAUS-NPST
     b.   X-ga   kyak.koo-o   abi-Ø-ru
          X-NOM foot.light-ACC √pour-INCH-NPST
          'become the center of attention'

Let us see the other possible patterns displayed by the causative/inchoative pairs: in (12)–(14), both the alternants can form idioms, while only the causative alternant can in (15)–(17). These two patterns can be dealt with by (8)a and (8)c, respectively.

(12) a. X-to   kata-o   narab-e-ru
          X-COM shoulder-ACC √line.up-C-NPST
          'rival X'
     b.   X-to   kata-ga   narab-Ø-u
          X-COM shoulder-NOM √line.up-I-NPST
          'rival X'

(13) a. haba-o   kik-as-u
          width-ACC √take.effect-CAUS-NPST
          'have great influence'
     b.   haba-ga   kik-Ø-u
          width-NOM √take.effect-INCH-NPST
          'have great influence'

(14) a. on-ni   ki-se-ru
          gratitude-DAT √put.on-CAUS-NPST
          'try to make someone feel indebted'
     b.   on-ni   ki-Ø-ru
          gratitude-DAT √put.on-INCH-NPST
          'feel indebted'

(15) a. in'nen-o tuk-e-ru
          fate-ACC √attach-CAUS-NPST
          'make a false charge'
     b. * in'nen-ga tuk-Ø-u
          fate-NOM √attach-INCH-NPST

(16) a. kuti.ura-o   aw-as-u
          mouth.back-ACC √meet-CAUS-NPST
          'rearrange a story so as not to contradict
           each other '
     b. * kuti.ura-ga   aw-Ø-u (>a-u)
          mouth.back-NOM √meet-INCH-NPST

(17) a. X-ni   hiya.mizu-o   abi-se-ru
          X-DAT cold.water-ACC √pour-C-NPST
          'discourage X'
     b. * X-ga   hiya.mizu-o   abi-Ø-ru
   X-NOM cold.water-ACC √pour-I-NPST

In face of the counterexamples to the causativization approach in (9)–(11), one might wonder if their MICs are disrupted in the causative examples, where idiomatic interpretations are impossible. However, invoking structural disruption to account for the cases at hand would leave us with no account of the pairs in (12)–(14): it is quite unlikely that adding the same causative affix sometimes does and sometimes does not alter the structure of an MIC.

Therefore, we can conclude that the causativization approach makes too strong predictions about idiomatic interpretations. It is not always true that, if an idiom is possible with an inchoative, it is possible with its causative counterpart.

3.2 Anticausativization of Causative Verbs

The anticausativization approach predicts exactly the opposite to those made by the causativization approach. Specifically, it predicts that, if an idiomatic interpretation is possible with a causative, then it should be possible with its inchoative counterpart, as shown in Table 2 below. This is because the inchoative contains the causative in this approach, as represented in (18).

(18) Anticausativization
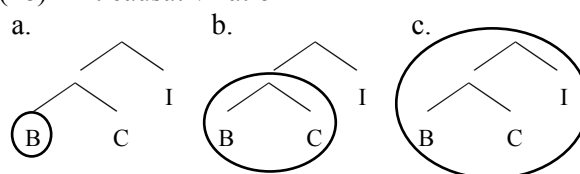
|		Minimal Idiomatic Constituent		
		[B]	[B C]	[[B C] I]
Idiom	[B]	OK	*	*
	[B C]	OK	OK	*
	[[B C] I]	OK	OK	OK

Table 2: Predicted Combinations

Moreover, if an inchoative is part of an MIC, as in (18)c, then the idiomatic interpretation is not available with its causative counterpart.

The causative/inchoative affix pairs in (2)n and (2)o are considered, as an anticausativization analysis can be applied to them easily, with no need to assume powerful morphophonological processes. As is the case with the causativization approach, what is predicted not to exist can be detected: the pairs in (19) and (20) cannot be accounted for in this approach. The pairs in (21) and (22) and those in (23) and (24) can be accounted for by (18)a and (18)c, respectively.

(19) a. (ko-)mimi-ni hasam-Ø-u
　　　　DIM-ear-DAT √put.between-CAUS-NPST
　　　　'overhear, happen to hear'
　　b. * (ko-)mimi-ni hasam-ar-u
　　　　DIM-ear-DAT √put.between-INCH-NPST
(20) a. sira-o kir-Ø-u
　　　　white-ACC √detach-CAUS-NPST
　　　　'dissemble, pretend not to know'
　　b. * sira-ga kir-e-ru
　　　　white-NOM √detach-INCH-NPST
(21) a. hone-o or-Ø-u
　　　　bone-ACC √break-CAUS-NPST
　　　　'take the trouble'
　　b. hone-ga or-e-ru
　　　　bone-NOM √break-INCH-NPST
　　　　'be troublesome'
(22) a. te-o husag-Ø-u
　　　　hand-ACC √obstruct-CAUS-NPST
　　　　'have one's hands tied'
　　b. te-ga husag-ar-u
　　　　hand-NOM √obstruct-INCH-NPST
　　　　'one's hands are tied.'
(23) a. * kosi-o kudak-Ø-u
　　　　waist-ACC √crush-CAUS-NPST
　　b. kosi-ga kudak-e-ru
　　　　waist-NOM √crush-INCH-NPST
　　　　'chicken out'
(24) a. * oku.ba-ni mono-o hasam-Ø-u
　　　　molar-in stuff-ACC √put.btwn-C-NPST
　　b. oku.ba-ni mono-ga hasam-ar-u
　　　　molar-in stuff-NOM √put.btwn-I-NPST
　　　　'beat around the bush'

By the same token as in the last subsection, we cannot invoke structural disruption to handle the counterexamples without losing an account of the pairs such as in (21) and (22), where idioms are available with both the causative and the inchoative alternants.

However, up to this point, I have simplified the discussion somewhat, ignoring the possibility that there is a distinct syntactic head immediately above the constituent headed by a causative morpheme, i.e. Kratzer's (1996) VOICE or its equivalent, which introduces an agent argument. If this head is assumed to be present, we will need to consider the following structure as a possible MIC, in addition to those in (18) (and (8)).

(25)
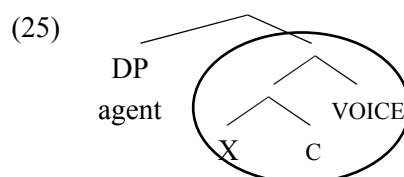
The MIC in (25) opens up the possibility of explaining examples like (19) and (20) (and also (15)–(17) in the last subsection) in terms of structural disruption. That is, the causative idioms have the MIC in (25), while their inchoative counterparts do not. As it appears, some causative idioms, such as (20)a, do indeed have the MIC in (25), instantiating the possibility just mentioned, while some like (19)a do not. As represented in the structure in (25), the divide is at the obligatory presence of an agent. Specifically, if a causative idiom has VOICE as part of its MIC, as in (25), then the presence of an agent is necessarily implied. On the other hand, if VOICE is not part of its MIC, then the presence of an agent is not required.

Evidence for the divide comes from data involving a classic constituency test known as *soo suru* replacement, the Japanese version of *do so* replacement. It is well known that this process has a constraint to the effect that a verb selecting a volitional agent must be replaced (Shibatani, 1978), as shown in (26).[7]

(26) a. *Agentive Verb*
　　　　Taroo-ga hasir-ta(>hasit-ta), Ziroo-mo
　　　　T.-NOM run-PST　　　　　　Z.-also
　　　　{soo si-ta/ hasit-ta}
　　　　 so do-PST/ run-PST
　　　　'Taroo ran. Ziroo did so, too.'

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[7] I simply assume that "accidental" agents are not the same as (volitional) agents and should be treated differently. However, the question remains open on this point.

b. *Non-agentive Verb*
Taroo-ga   tentoo-si-ta, Ziroo-mo
T. -NOM   fall-DV-PST Z.-also
{ *soo si-ta/   tentoo-si-ta}
   so   do-PST/ fall-DV-PST
'Taroo fell. Ziroo {did so, too/also fell}.'

Applied to (19)a and (20)a, this test yields the following results, suggesting that VOICE is part of the MIC in (20)a, but it is not in (19)a.

(27) a. Taroo-ga sira-o   kir-Ø-ta (>kit-ta),
         T.-NOM   white-ACC √detach-CAUS-PST
         Ziroo-mo {soo si-ta/   kit-ta}
         Z.-also   so do-PST/ (see above)
         'Taroo dissembled. Ziroo did so, too.'
     b. Taroo-ga uwasa-o   ko-mimi-ni
         T.-NOM   rumor-ACC   DIM-ear-DAT
         hasam-Ø-ta (>hasan-da), Ziroo-mo
         √put.between-CAUS-PST   Z.-also
         {*soo si-ta/   ko-mimi-ni hasan-da}
           so   do-PST/ (see above)
   'T. overheard a rumor. Z. did so, too'

The upshot is that, even though some causative idioms involve an MIC like (25) and thus an analysis invoking structural disruption can account for the impossibility of idiomatic interpretations in, say, (20)b, causative idioms like (19)a cannot be analyzed as having the MIC in (25), and the contrast found in (19) remains a problem to the anticausativization approach.

Therefore, we can conclude that the anticausativization approach fails for the same reason as the causativization approach: it makes too strong predictions concerning idiomatic interpretations.

3.3 Causativization and Inchoativization of Common Bases

Unlike the approaches we saw above, the common base approach predicts no implicational relations between the causative and inchoative idioms, as neither alternant structurally contains the other, only sharing the common base, as depicted in (28). Note that an account invoking the MIC in (25) is available in this approach as well.

(28) The Common Base Approach
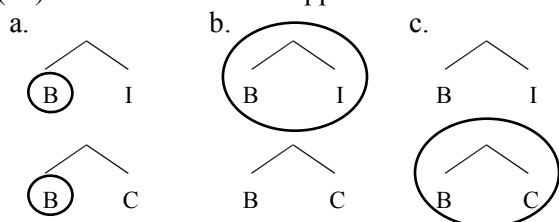
	Minimal Idiomatic Constituent		
	[B]	[B I]	[B C]
Idiom [B]	OK	*	*
Idiom [B I]	OK	OK	*
Idiom [B C]	OK	*	OK

Table 3: Predicted Combinations

Importantly, as Table 3 shows, the common base approach can handle all the patterns properly: both the causative and inchoative alternants can form idioms, as in (29) and (30), only the inchoative alternant can form an idiom, as in (31) and (32), and only the causative alternant can form an idiom, as in (33) and (34).

(29) a. X-o   haku.si-ni   modo-s-u
         X-ACC blank.paper-DAT √back-C-NPST
         'bring X back to square one'
     b. X-ga   haku.si-ni   modo-r-u
         X-NOM blank.paper-DAT √back-I-NPST
         'X goes back to square one'
(30) a. X-o   ki-ni   kak-e-ru
         X-ACC mind-DAT √hook-CAUS-NPST
         'have X in *one's* mind'
     b. X-ga   ki-ni   kak-ar-u
         X-NOM mind-DAT √hook-CAUS-NPST
         'X is on *one's* mind'
(31) a. *X-ni   o-hati-o   mawa-s-u
         X-DAT HON-bowl-ACC √roll-CAUS-NPST
     b. X-ni   o-hati-ga   mawa-r-u
         X-DAT HON-bowl-NOM √roll-INCH-NPST
         'X's turn comes around'
(32) a. * X-to   sooba-o   kim-e-ru
         X-COMP market-ACC √fix-CAUS-NPST
     b. X-to   sooba-ga   kim-ar-u
         X-COMP market-NOM √fix-INCH-NPST
         'It is generally considered that X'
(33) a. (o-)tya-o   nigo-s-u
         HON-tea-ACC √muddy-CAUS-NPST
         'varnish, patch up, cover up'
     b. *(o-)tya-ga   nigo-r-u
         HON-tea-NOM √muddy-INCH-NPST
(34) a. ude-ni   yori-o   kak-e-ru
         arm-DAT twist-ACC √hook-CAUS-NPST
         'put all *one's* skills'
     b. * ude-ni   yori-ga   kak-ar-u
         arm-DAT twist-NOM √hook-INCH-NPST

Furthermore, the common base approach predicts that each of the alternants with an identical root can form a different idiom. This prediction is borne out, as shown in (35) and (36), though there are not so many examples of this kind.

(35) a. asi-o   tuk-e-ru
         foot-ACC   √attach-CAUS-NPST
         'establish a relation'
     b. asi-ga   tuk-Ø-u
         foot-NOM   √attach-INCH-NPST
         'get traced, come to light'
(36) a. atama-o   sag-e-ru
         head-ACC   √lower-CAUS-NPST
         'apologize; thank'
     b. atama-ga   sag-ar-u
         head-NOM   √lower-INCH-NPST
         'admire, respect; be impressed '

This also lends support to the common base approach to the causative alternation in Japanese.

4   Extension: Ditransitive Causatives

We have established that the causative alternation can be best analyzed in terms of the common base approach. We have also noted that an MIC like (25) is needed for idioms which require that the presence of an agent be implied.

The common base approach can account for further patterns displayed by verbal roots such as *mi-* '√see', which has three alternants, the ditransitive (causative), the transitive, and the intransitive (inchoative). As given in (37), each of the alternants can form a different idiom.

(37) a. me-ni   mono-o   mi-se-ru
         eye-DAT thing-ACC √see-CAUS-NPST
         'teach someone a lesson'
     b. X-o   oo.me-ni   mi-Ø-ru
         X-ACC large.quantity-DAT √see-T-NPST
         'overlook X, pardon X'
     c. X-ga   me-ni   mi-e-ru
         X-NOM eye-DAT √see-INCH-NPST
         'X is a foregone conclusion'

Even a cursory look at idioms based on the transitive alternant reveals that they display variability as to the interpretation of the nominative argument. First, we need to assume idioms like (38)b involve VOICE as part of their MICs, as in (39) (cf. (25)), and thus, no causative counterpart is available, as shown in (38)a.[8]

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[8] The examples in (i) show the same contrast as in (38), but (i)a may receive a different treatment: *me* 'eye' can only be associated with the "subject" argument.
   (i) a. *X-ni Y-o   siroi me-de   mi-se-ru
              X-DAT Y-ACC white eye-INST √see-CAUS-NPST
        b. X-ga Y-o   siroi me-de   mi-Ø-ru
              X-NOM Y-ACC white eye-INST √see-INCH-NPST
   'X looks coldly upon Y'

(38) a. * X-ni   (Y-no) asimoto-o mi-se-ru
              X-DAT Y-GEN foot-ACC   √see-C-NPST
      b.   X-ga   (Y-no) asimoto-o mi-Ø-ru
              X-NOM Y-GEN foot-ACC   √see-T-NPST
           'X takes advantage of (Y's) weakness'
(39)
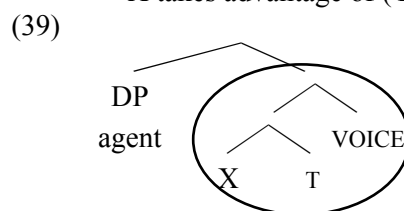
The following example corroborates that the nominative arguments in (38)b is associated with volition, the hallmark of agentivity.

(40) Taroo-ga kyaku-no asimoto-o mi-Ø-ta,
     T.-NOM   client-GEN foot-ACC   √see-T-PST
     Ziroo-mo soo si-ta
     Z.-also   so   DV-PST
     'Taroo took advantage of his client's weak point. Ziroo did so, too.'

Next, other transitive idioms have an MIC like (41), where APPL, a head comparable to VOICE, selects an affectee, a cover term for non-agentive arguments construed as perceiver, possessor, recipient and so on (cf. Pylkkänen, 2008).

(41)
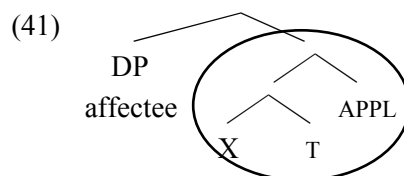
The relevant example is given in (42)b. Compare this to (42)a, which shows that the idiomatic interpretation is impossible with the ditransitive causative counterpart. Note that the nominative argument in (42)b cannot be construed as an agent, as shown in (43).

(42) a. * X-ni   naki-o   mi-se-ru
              X-DAT cry-ACC √see-CAUS-NPST
      b.   X-ga   naki-o   mi-Ø-ru
              X-NOM cry-ACC √see-TRANS-NPST
           'X suffer for his/her own deed'
(43) Taroo-ga naki-o   mi-Ø-ta,   Ziroo-mo
     T.-NOM   cry-ACC √see-T-PST Z.-also
     {*soo si-ta/   naki-o   mi-Ø-ta}
       so   DV-PST/ cry-ACC √see-T-PST
     'T. suffered for his deed. Z. did so, too'

The contrast in (42) shows again that the causativization approach is not viable even in the case of ditransitive causatives: it would be possi-

ble to form (42)a out of (42)b by having a causative morpheme and VOICE, an agent-introducing head, above the structure in (41). Given, moreover, that it is implausible to derive the transitive from the ditransitive causative considering the morphological makeup, the common base approach is the only approach that is left to account for the contrast in (42). Specifically, the MIC in (41) is not formed with the ditransitive causative, which does not involve a transitive morpheme. Although the details need to be more fully worked out, this line of thought can handle the puzzling pattern displayed by (42), and hopefully, provide a more coherent picture of the relationship between syntactic structure and idioms.

5 Concluding Remarks

This paper has presented an argument for the common base approach to the causative alternation in Japanese. The argument is of a simple, brute-force nature and takes into account various alternatives including even the ones which might be dismissed as implausible without a moment's thought. However, it clearly shows, by utilizing the locality requirements imposed on phrasal idioms, that the causative and inchoative verbs in the causative alternation are best analyzed in terms of the common base approach. Thus, it is not the case, at least morphosyntactically, that causatives are derived from their inchoative counterparts or the other way around. This conclusion, then, further justifies another conclusion: the symbol Ø in (2)k–(2)p must represent a phonologically null morpheme, not the absence of a causative or inchoative morpheme.

As a final note, the issue taken up in this paper is independent of other important ones concerning the morphology and semantics of the causative/inchoative alternation in Japanese. I hope that further research will clarify the conclusions reached here and their relations to other aspects of the alternation.

Acknowledgments

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