ARTICLE

Mother Tongue Interference in Japanese Passive Sentence Teaching
—— Analysis Based on Functional Grammar

Zhe Liu*
School of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Lanzhou University, Lanzhou, Gansu, 730030, China

Article history:
Received: 28th August 2018
Revised: 10th September 2018
Accepted: 8th October 2018
Published Online: 31st October 2018

Keywords:
Passive sentence
Mother tongue interference
Functional grammar
Viewpoints

1. Introduction

In a passive sentence, the object of action and action is generally used as the subject. Japanese uses "に、から and によって" to indicate the main body of the action, while Chinese uses "被、叫、受 and 让" to indicate the subject of the action. The use of passive sentences in Japanese is very high. Nakajima (1995) believes that the use of passive sentences in Japanese is three times that of Chinese passive sentences. This is difficult for Chinese-speaking learners to understand. The following example sentences are taken from the typical Japanese primary textbook "Preliminary Japanese".

A: 昨日は嫌なことばかりありました。
B: どんなことがあったのですか。
A: ①友達に誕生日に招待されて、夕方家へ帰るときのことです。遅くなったので急いで駅まで行きました。ところが、電車の事故があって、②駅で三十分くらい待たされてしまいました。やっと電車が来たのでが、込んでいて③隣の人に足を踏まれてしまいました。それから、駅の階段を下りようとした時、今度は④後ろの人に押されて、転びました。
B: それは災難でしたね。怪我はしませんでしたか。
A: ええ、幸い怪我はしませんでした。しかし、駅を出ようとすると切符がないのです。
B: おとしたのですか
A: いいえ、⑤財布と一緒に電車の中で盗まれたらしいます。
B: すりにすられたのですね。駅の人にお話ししたか。
A: ええ、駅の事務室へ行って、財布と切符を盗まれたと話しました。すると、駅員はすぐ警察に連絡してくれました。ところが、なかなか警察が来ないのです。⑥事務室で十五分くらい待たされました。

*Corresponding Author:
Zhe Liu,
School of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Lanzhou University,
No. 199 Donggang West Road, Chengguan District, Lanzhou, Gansu, 730030, China;
E-mail: ryuzhe@lzu.edu.cn.
A: やっと駅を出て、⑦家へ帰ろうとすると途中で雨に降られてしまいました。
B: それは気の毒でしたね。

① 朋友生日时(我)被邀请。
朋友过生日时邀请我。
② 在车站,我被等了三十分钟左右。
在车站,我等了三十分钟左右。
③ (我)被旁边的人踩了脚。
④ (我)被后边的人推倒了。
⑤ 好像在电车里, (车票)和钱包一起被偷了。
⑥ 被贼扒去了。
⑦ (我)被在办公室等了十五分钟左右。
回家时,在路上下起了雨。

The underlined parts of the above Japanese conversational text are passive sentences. When observing the Chinese passive sentences corresponding to these passive sentences, it will be found that the direct translations into passive sentences are very unnatural in the ①, ②, ⑦, ⑥ Japanese example sentences, and they are not established as Chinese. Why are the Japanese passive sentences established, and half of the Chinese passive sentences are not established? In addition, why are the subjects "私" (I) in the ①, ③, ④, ⑦ Japanese example sentences omitted naturally? The author holds the above questions, mainly from the perspective of functional grammar to analyze the differences between the pragmatic conditions of the two, in order to be able to apply to Japanese teaching.

2. Viewpoint Relationship

People use language to convey information. The active sentence is described by the subject of the action, that is, the person who performs the action. Correspondingly, the position of the subject of the passive sentence appears as the passive person or the recipient of the action.

(1) a. 次郎は 太郎を 殴った。(Active)
   b. 太郎が 次郎に 殴られた。(Passive)

The example sentences (1a, b) and (2a, b) are all about what happens between the two characters "Jiro" and "Taro". (1a, b) are the active sentences; (2a, b) are the passive sentences, the two sentences are expressed in the same way in theory, but different grammatical forms are used. The difference between (1) and (2) is that the viewpoints of the speakers' descriptions of the matter are different. The speaker uses the verb "殴る" (打) in the example of active sentence (1a, b). The action side of this action (the person who beats) is the subject, and the passive side (the person who is beaten) is placed in the object position. In the active sentence here, the speaker falls on the agent side. In contrast, in the example of passive sentence (2a, b), the viewpoint falls on Taro (the patient side). Here, the speaker uses the passive sentence and the passive person as the subject, so the speaker will fall on the passive side.

In other words, generally speaking, if the speaker places the viewpoint on the agent side, the active sentence is used; if the viewpoint is placed on the patient side, corresponding to the active sentence, the passive sentence is used.

From the perspective of functional grammar, Hisano (1978) 7-9 introduced the concept of Empathy:

E (subject) >E (object) >E (the previous subject of the passive sentence)

Empathy (Pragmatic Empathy), in pragmatics, refers to the emotional communication between the two sides of speech communication, which can imagine and understand the other side's intentions. This means that it is easier for the speaker in Japanese to put the viewpoint on the object. It is the most difficult to make the viewpoint fall in the previous subject of the passive sentence. The person who is spoken to also understands the other side's words by defaulting on this knowledge. In addition, Nakajima (1995) believes that Japanese is a "speaker-centered" language. Correspondingly, Jianming Lu (1996) and Nakajima (1995) believed that Chinese is a language that is "fact-centered and values the theme".

(3) a. 私たちが ご主人に 一番早く案内された部屋 は お気に入りの書斎だった。
   b. 主人 首先带我们参观了他最喜欢的书房。
(ご主人が 一番早く私たちに案内した お気に入りの書斎を）

In the example sentence (3a), the speaker is the recipient of the act of leading (visiting). The viewpoint falls on the side of the speaker (recipient) and the speaker "we" is the subject. In the translation process, if the Chinese of the example sentence (3a) is to be translated, in general, the active sentence of (3b) is more appropriate, as there is no need to put the viewpoint on the speaker in Chinese.

(4) a. 那苹果 我 已经 吃了。
   b. 我 已经 吃了 那苹果。
   c. 他 已经 把那苹果 吃了。
   d. 我 已经 吃了 那苹果。

The example sentence (4a) is the act of ownership (possessing). The viewpoint appears on the side of the subject (the person who has the apple) and the subject "we" is the object. It is the most difficult to make the viewpoint fall on the previous subject of the passive sentence. The speaker uses the verb "是" (是) in the example of active sentence (4a). The subject side of this action (the person who has the apple) is the subject, and the passive side (the apple) is placed in the object position.

2. Viewpoint Relationship

People use language to convey information. The active sentence is described by the subject of the action, that is, the person who performs the action. Correspondingly, the position of the subject of the passive sentence appears as the passive person or the recipient of the action.

(1) a. 次郎は 太郎を 殴った。(Active)
   b. 太郎が 次郎に 殴られた。(Passive)

The example sentences (1a, b) and (2a, b) are all about what happens between the two characters "Jiro" and "Taro". (1a, b) are the active sentences; (2a, b) are the passive sentences, the two sentences are expressed in the same way in theory, but different grammatical forms are used. The difference between (1) and (2) is that the viewpoints of the speakers' descriptions of the matter are different. The speaker uses the verb "殴る" (打) in the example of active sentence (1a, b). The action side of this action (the person who beats) is the subject, and the passive side (the person who is beaten) is placed in the object position. In the active sentence here, the speaker falls on the agent side. In contrast, in the example of passive sentence (2a, b), the viewpoint falls on Taro (the patient side). Here, the speaker uses the passive sentence and the passive person as the subject, so the speaker will fall on the passive side.

In other words, generally speaking, if the speaker places the viewpoint on the agent side, the active sentence is used; if the viewpoint is placed on the patient side, corresponding to the active sentence, the passive sentence is used.

From the perspective of functional grammar, Hisano (1978) 7-9 introduced the concept of Empathy:

E (subject) >E (object) >E (the previous subject of the passive sentence)

Empathy (Pragmatic Empathy), in pragmatics, refers to the emotional communication between the two sides of speech communication, which can imagine and understand the other side's intentions. This means that it is easier for the speaker in Japanese to put the viewpoint on the object. It is the most difficult to make the viewpoint fall in the previous subject of the passive sentence. The person who is spoken to also understands the other side's words by defaulting on this knowledge. In addition, Nakajima (1995) believes that Japanese is a "speaker-centered" language. Correspondingly, Jianming Lu (1996) and Nakajima (1995) believed that Chinese is a language that is "fact-centered and values the theme".

(3) a. 私たちが ご主人に 一番早く案内された部屋 は お気に入りの書斎だった。
   b. 主人 首先带我们参观了他最喜欢的书房。
(ご主人が 一番早く私たちに案内した お気に入りの書斎を）

In the example sentence (3a), the speaker is the recipient of the act of leading (visiting). The viewpoint falls on the side of the speaker (recipient) and the speaker "we" is the subject. In the translation process, if the Chinese of the example sentence (3a) is to be translated, in general, the active sentence of (3b) is more appropriate, as there is no need to put the viewpoint on the speaker in Chinese.

(4) a. 那苹果 我 已经 吃了。
   b. 我 已经 吃了 那苹果。
   c. 他 已经 把那苹果 吃了。
   d. 我 已经 吃了 那苹果。

The example sentence (4a) is the act of ownership (possessing). The viewpoint appears on the side of the subject (the person who has the apple) and the subject "we" is the object. It is the most difficult to make the viewpoint fall on the previous subject of the passive sentence. The speaker uses the verb "是" (是) in the example of active sentence (4a). The subject side of this action (the person who has the apple) is the subject, and the passive side (the apple) is placed in the object position.
In the normal Chinese order, the sentence that expresses the meaning of Japanese meaning "私はそのリンゴを食べた.", if translated literally into Chinese, becomes "我已经吃了那苹果." But according to Chinese habits, the sentence "那苹果" (そのリンゴ) is not the subject, but the theme. According to the general Chinese habits, if you want to emphasize "那苹果" (そのリンゴ), then put the "那苹果" at the beginning of the sentence like (4a) to emphasize. Therefore, when teaching Japanese passive sentences to Chinese-speaking learners, the author believes that the viewpoint relationship in functional grammar should be introduced first to clarify the similarities and differences between Chinese and Japanese viewpoints.

3. When the Action Side IS First Person

As mentioned above, the viewpoint relationship between Japanese and Chinese is different, so that Chinese-speaking learners will have an understanding problem of "when the action side is first person" when learning Japanese passive sentences.

(5) 我は ジョンに 僕は ジョンに 殺された。
I was hit by John.

(6) ジョンは 我は ジョンに 殺された。
John was hit by me.

In the example sentence (5), the viewpoint falls on the speaker 我 (僕, I), this is more natural; And as in the example sentence (6), the viewpoint is placed on the passive side, thus the Japanese and English are not natural. In Chinese here, because 约翰 (John) is the subject, it is usually placed at the beginning of the sentence. Therefore, Chinese-speaking Japanese learners often create problematic sentences like "～は私に～(被我～)". Therefore, when learning Japanese passive sentences, if the viewpoint relationship in the functional grammar is introduced on the basis of the basic grammar, it is also possible to avoid the occurrence of the error that the "when the action side is first person ".

4. Subject Omission

As described above, Japanese is a "speaker-centered" language, and Chinese is a language that is "fact-centered and values the theme". Chinese-speaking Japanese learners have problems with subject omission when learning passive sentences.

(7) (僕は) 学部長に推薦された（留学できるようにになった。）
(我) 被院长推荐

(8) (私は) 会社に推薦されたが …
朋友请求我 …

(9) (私) はご来訪されたが …
(我) 被朋友请求 …

(10) 急いでるのに, アシスタントにしつこく謝られ

4. When the Subjects Is Non-creature

From the perspective of functional grammar, Hisano (1978)[4-6] put forward the following viewpoint: People's viewpoint hierarchy is: It is easier for the speaker to put the viewpoint on the human side[6]:

E (human) > E (creatures except human) > E (non-creature)

Viewpoint hierarchy of the surface structure: The speaker is more likely to focus on the subject side.

E (subject)>E (non-subject)
Consistency of viewpoints: In a single sentence, theoretically, there can be no contradiction in the relationship of pragmatic empathy.

With regard to something, when people and things are involved, it is easier to describe the sentence in which the viewpoint falls on the person than on the object in the Japanese. In addition, it is easier to describe the person or object on the side of the viewpoint in the position of the subject.

(13) a. The apple was eaten by John.
   b. そのリンゴは太郎に食べられた。
   c. 那个苹果被太郎吃了。

The subject of (13a-c) is the non-creature (the apple, そのリンゴ and 那个苹果), The action side is (John, Taro). According to the human personality hierarchy, the speaker is more likely to obtain "pragmatic empathy" from the latter. On the other hand, the viewpoint hierarchy subject (the apple, そのリンゴ and 那个苹果) according to the surface structure is more empathetic than the non-subject (John, Taro), which violates the consistency of the viewpoint, so the Japanese passive sentence of (13b) is very unnatural, but the sentences of Chinese and English are established.

There are very few sentences in non-biological language in Japanese. People tend to use the sentence pattern of "human" as the subject. Correspondingly, there are many sentences patterns in Chinese that use "non-creature" as the subject.

(14) a. 衣服被花子穿走了。
   b. あの洋服は花子に着られた。
   c. This dress was worn by Hanako.

(15) a. 灯被太郎关了。
   b. 電気は太郎に消された。
   c. The light was turned out by Taro.

(16) a. 洋服被花子打扫得干干净净。
   b. この洋服は、花子にきれいに掃除された。
   c. This room was cleaned by Hanako.

In the example sentences (14-16), the subjects are dress, light and room (洋服, 電気 and 部屋), all of which are non-creatures, and the actions of 太郎, 花子 (Taro, Hanako) and her are humans, because both the contradiction of the viewpoint is contradictory, the Japanese sentence is not established. However, Chinese and English sentences are appropriate under the same conditions. Because Chinese non-creature subjects(14) are very common. Therefore, when teaching passive sentences to Chinese-speaking learners, it is necessary to consider from the viewpoint that there is few non-creature subjects in Japanese. On the basis of the basic grammar, functional grammar is introduced as a supplement.

5. Conclusion

Based on functional grammar, this paper analyzes the problem of mother tongue interference in Chinese-speaking learners when learning Japanese passive sentences. Focusing on the viewpoint relationship, Japanese is the language of "speaker-centered", while Chinese is a language that is "fact-centered and values the theme". This not only greatly affects the frequency of use of passive sentences, but also makes Japanese has no first person action side; more subject omissions of passive sentences; does not use non-creatures as action sides. The author believes that if there is a certain functional grammar on the basis of traditional grammar introduced in Japanese teaching, it will help students understand. In addition, there are many places in the Japanese language teaching15 that can be introduced in the functional grammar. This article is only a glimpse of the huge Japanese grammar teaching system.

References


DOI: https://doi.org/10.30564/ret.v1i4.337