

# DO-language and BECOME-language

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## 1. Introduction

When we express a certain matter in a sentence, we assay the matter unconsciously (or sometimes consciously). By the ways of the analyses (in short, depending on how to grasp the matter), we can classify language into two types. The first type is man focused language, which focuses on the man (or things), the agent in the matter. In other words, it aims to express the event by the way of referring to “the MAN does —”. Another type is situation focused language, which focuses on the matter itself. It aims to express the event by the way of referring to “the MATTER becomes —”. The former is also called DO-language and the latter is also called BECOME-language. I will try to compare English as the representative of DO-language with Japanese as the representative of BECOME-language. And I also would like to mention the difference of the social background through several characteristics that each language has.

## 2. DO and BECOME

### 2.1 THING and MATTER

Man focused language grasps the event by means of focusing on its agent (man or thing), and situation focused language grasps the event by means of focusing on the matter as a whole. Therefore naturally, in man focused language, the event is expressed by thinking that the MAN (or THING) DO something, and in the same way, in situation language, it is expressed by thinking that the MATTER BECOMES. Here I use capital letter words like MAN or DO to represent conceptual elements, not specific lexical items.

Let's compare the following sentences:

- (1) He is likely to come.
- (2) It is likely that he will come.

(1) is the expression of DO-type, and (2) is the expression of BECOME-type. In sentence (1), the subject is he (MAN), and in sentence (2), the subject is it which is the provisional subject of the following *that*-clause (MATTER). The contents of each sentence are the same, but the object of focus is different.

Consider the next examples:

- (3) Do you know the comet which is getting close to the earth for the first time in seventy two years.
- (4) Do you know that the comet getting is close to the earth for the first time in seventy two years.

Sentence (3) catches the matter by means of focusing on *the comet* (THING), and on the other hand, sentence (4) catches the matter by means of focusing on *that the comet is getting close* (MATTER). It can be said that sentence (3) draws out the element of THING (*the comet*) by the relative pronoun (*which*), and contrastively, sentence (4) veils the element of THING into the *that*-clause. Ikegami states that Japanese wraps THING by MATTER;...English takes out THING from MATTER and exposes it. (Ikegami:258 my translation). The reason that we Japanese have a sense of incongruity against sentence (3) is because, maybe, we feel the impression of something expositive and direct. Japanese like more indirect and objective expressions. This is likely to be related to the ambiguity in Japanese and the clearness in English, and I will mention this in section 4 later.

## 2.2 HAVE and BE

Depending on the focus point (thing or matter) in the event, the event is expressed in two expression types; that is, DO-type and BECOME-type. Strictly speaking, there are two more types, which are classified in the same way as DO-type and BECOME-type. They are HAVE-type and BE-type. HAVE-type is the expression which focuses on the agent just like DO-type, and BE-type is the expression which focuses on the matter just like BECOME-type. While the pair of DO-type and BECOME-type appears when we express the change of event, the pair of HAVE-type and BE-type appears when we express the state. And we can see well the contrast of HAVE-type and BE-type in existential sentences.

Let us compare the following examples:

- (5) Your company has good products.
- (6) There are good products in your company.

Sentence (5) is a HAVE-type expression, and sentence (6) is a BE-type expression. Each sentence represents the state, that is, existence. But sentence (5) expresses it like “something HAVE —” focusing on the thing, while sentence (6) expresses it like “there BE — in some place ” focusing on the matter.

Then, we can make a table of the classification of these four types as follows:

|        |       |        |
|--------|-------|--------|
|        | thing | matter |
| change | DO    | BECOME |
| state  | HAVE  | BE     |

After this, I will consider especially the contrast of DO type and BECOME type more deeply.

### 3. The Causative and the Passive

The concept of the causative and passive exists in both English and Japanese, but the way of perceiving the situation and tendency to express that in language are somewhat different each other. It seems that these differences are caused by the property of each language which I have mentioned so far: man focused language and situation focused language. The causative has the meaning that a thing (or man) gets a person to do some matter, and it implies the existence of man (agent) positively. On the other hand, in the passive expression, the agent is something additional and optional, and it is omitted occasionally. So compared with the active voice expression, the element of agent is weak in the passive voice expression. In short, English accepts the causative expression positively which fits man focused language, and Japanese does not accept it so positively because it is considered not fit situation focused language.

I will try to consider this notion more deeply looking about the causative by taking up personification, and about the passive by taking up the active voice and the passive voice.

#### 3.1 Personification

It is obvious that the causative and personification are closely related. Look at the followings:

- (7) Hunger caused him to commit the crime.
- (8) The heat makes me feel languid.

These are the typical sentences that are expressed with the personification : that is, inanimate subject constructions. It makes the inanimate entity (contains something abstract) the subject and personifies it. We can see this technique in English frequently. The sentences (7) and (8) in the above examples contain the causative verbs *cause* and *make* respectively. By using these causative verbs, the inanimate entity (*hunger* and *heat*) can be the subject and be conspicuous in the sentence.

Therefore it can be said that English has a tendency to extend the concept of agent from man to inanimate entity. And it is not to much too say that the personification is the most Englishlike expression. On the other hand, it can also be said that the personification is not Japaneselike expression. The personification may even be regarded as strange and unnatural expression in Japanese, which has little concept of agent and causative.

Then how would the situation which is expressed in the sentence I gave before be expressed in Japaneselike expression? Let's look at the following sentences:

- (7)' He committed the crime because he was very hungry.
- (8)' I feel languid because it is hot.

The part of agent in sentence (7) and (8) comes to the part of the subordinate

clause (or adverbial phrase occasionally) in sentence (7)' and (8)'. In Japanese, as the concept of inanimate subject is weak, the inanimate entities (*hunger* in (7) and *heat* in (8)) come to the part which represents the reason of the matter in sentence (7)' and (8)', far from being the subject. This comparison may arise from man focused language and situation focused language.

Next let's consider the following sentences:

(9) The elevator took us to the top floor.

(10) A few minutes' bus ride brought us to the theatre.

These sentences don't use the causative verbs like *cause* or *make*, but they have meanings of causative. In sentence (7) and (8), we considered causative expressions which use causative verbs. But strictly speaking, it would be suitable to call these inanimate subjects the "causer" rather than the agent. On the other hand, the inanimate subjects in sentences (9) and (10) are the agent of the sentence unquestionably. The expressions of sentences (7) and (8) are relatively accepted in Japanese, but the expressions of sentences (9) and (10) are difficult to accept in Japanese. In addition, English likes using the verbs which contains the causative meanings themselves like *remind* and *enable*.

It can be said that English uses the causative expression as the daily expressions, while it is the unfamiliar expression in Japanese.

### 3.2 The Active Voice and the Passive Voice

We can classify the ways of expressing the event or situation into two types depending on which we focus on, the agent or the patient in the event: that is, the active voice and the passive voice. In the active voice, the event is expressed like "the agent does something to the patient," focusing on the agent. And in the passive voice, the event is expressed like "the patient is affected by the agent" focusing on the patient.

In this section, I consider the relation between the pair of the active voice and the passive voice and the pair of DO-language and BECOME-language under the hypothesis that the passive voice changes DO-type expression to BECOME-type expression.

It is obvious that the active voice is DO-type expression which focuses on the agent, but we feel a sense of incongruity a little to say that the passive voice is BECOME-type expression which has little concept of the agent. Because the agent doesn't disappear completely although indeed the concept of the agent is weak in the passive voice.

Let us consider the following sentences:

(11) John hit Mary.

(12) Mary was hit by John. (Ikegami:222)

Sentence (12) is the passivised version of (11). But generally, it is common that the

phrase which contains the agent is optional and can be omitted in the passive voice. Actually Quirk says that four in five passive voice sentences do not contain the specified agent in modern English. (Quirk *et al.*: 1972: 807). But even if the agent disappears from the surface by omitting it, the existence of the agent is still implied.

Well then, isn't there any expression which gets us not to be conscious of the agent in English? Let's look at the followings:

(13) John opened the door.

(14) The door opened. (Ikegami:222)

These sentences are not the contrast of the active voice and the passive voice but the contrast of the transitive verb construction and the intransitive verb construction. The verb *open* is a transitive verb in sentence (13), and it is an intransitive verb in sentence (14). Sentence (13) is the expression which focuses on the agent, and sentence (14) is the expression which focuses on the patient. Unlike the occasion of the passive voice, in sentence (14), we don't feel the existence of the agent on the meaning as well as on the surface. And sentence (14) catches the event focusing on the matter, and expresses the course of event. Surely sentence (14) is a BECOME-type expression. But not every event is expressed in such two types by the transitive verb and intransitive verb. In other words, not every verbs function as both the transitive verb and the intransitive verb, such as the verb *open*. For example, let's consider the following sentences:

(15) John hit the door.

(16)\*The door hit. (Ikegami:222,223)

Sentences (15) and (16) do not make a contrast as is made between (13) and (14). In this case, the following passive voice sentence is suitable as BECOME-type expression which contrasts with sentence (15), DO-type expression:

(17) The door was hit.

There is a question whether the transitive verb has the causative function or not. It is explained by Ikegami as follows:

In the case of the transitive verb which has the causative function (for example, *open*), the contrast between DO-type expression and BECOME-type expression stands up with the pair of a transitive verb and an intransitive verb. While in the case of the transitive verb which doesn't have the causative function (for example, *hit*), it stands up with the pair of the active voice and the passive voice. (Ikegami:224 my translation)

It seems to be difficult to say the passive voice expression is BECOME-type expression since there remains the concept of agent in the sentence. But it can be said that the passive voice expression has equal function of BECOME-type as the

intransitive verb expression.

In this section, I considered the relation between the causative/passive and DO-language/BECOME-language. According to these considerations, it would be said that the causative is close to DO-language which has strong concept of agent, and the passive is close to BECOME-language which has little concept of agent in contrast with the active voice. And it can be said that the comparison is not the linguistic question but the question of the social background in which each language exists.

I would like to consider that in the next section.

#### **4. The Social Backgrounds of DO-language and BECOME-language**

I have mentioned the comparison between English and Japanese by the classification of DO-language and BECOME-language. Is the concept of DO and BECOME only the linguistic concept? Language is closely related to the national characteristic and culture of the country as it is said, "We can learn the national characteristic best by means of mastering the mother tongue of the country. The mother tongue contains everything in the soul of the country, and therefore, language reflects each country most." (Doi:6,7 my translation).

Lastly in this section, I'd like to consider the relation between each language and their social backgrounds under the concept of DO and BECOME.

##### 4.1 Clearness and Ambiguity

Generally, it is said that English is a concise and clear language, and Japanese is an ambiguous and unclear language. The adjectives of *clear* and *ambiguous* are used when we say about the characteristics of Westerners and Japanese people. We sometimes see the phenomenon in which Japanese people are hurt by the Westerners' direct and impudent manner, and the Westerners are irritated by the Japanese's noncommittal and indecisive manner. That may be due to the impressions of their expressions and the way of speaking. Of course, they don't speak with intention of hurting or irritating. Is that an act of the characteristics of the clearness and ambiguity which each language has itself?

As I mentioned in section 2.1, English tends to take out the thing from the matter, while Japanese tends to wrap the thing up in the matter. The expression which exposes the thing refers to the event directly and clearly. On the other hand, the expression which wraps the thing refers to the event indirectly and ambiguously by blurring the outline of the thing by the matter.

And the omission of the subject is given as the grammatical difference between English and Japanese. It can be said that there is no sentence which does not have a subject in English. But in Japanese, the subject is omitted frequently, and that

would rather be common in oral conversation.

In short, English expresses even the elements that we Japanese think it does not need to say, therefore, English does not get the hearer to guess what the speaker wants to say. On the other hand, Japanese has many vague and ellipted expressions, therefore, it tends to get the hearer to guess that. Of course, there are intimated expressions in English also, but it isn't as frequent as Japanese. It seems that the clearness in English and the ambiguity in Japanese are concerned to the degree of dependence on the hearer. Let's consider that next.

#### 4.2 Independence in DO and Dependence in BECOME

English is spoken on the assumption that they can't convey what they want to say to the hearer unless they express it; therefore, it can be said that English is an independent language which doesn't rely on the hearer's guess. On the other hand, Japanese is spoken on the assumption that the hearer may guess what the speaker wants to say even if they don't express it; therefore, Japanese is a dependent language which considerably relies on the hearer's guess. That seems to be related to how much weight each language has in each society as the means of communication. In short, it can be said that Japanese doesn't have the weight as much as English as the means of communication. In Japan, language isn't so absolute as the means of communication because the concept of guessing the mind each other, even if they don't express, has developed. On the other hand for Westerners, language occupies an important position as the means of communication because the concept of guessing each other is weak, so they speak carefully not to cause the misunderstandings. Considering further, that may be also concerned with the single race nation and the multiracial nation.

The contrast of the independence and dependence can be reflected by the contrast of DO and BECOME in the wording. When they cancel their presence at the party, Westerners may say, "I can't come to the party", and Japanese may say, "The situation in which I can't come to the party has arisen". We feel the independence in DO-language which focuses on the man and expresses the event directly, and we feel the dependence in BECOME-language which focuses on the situation and expresses the event indirectly. It can be said that is caused because Westerners tend to put the blame for the event on the man, and Japanese people tend to put the blame for the event on the elements other than the man.

From these considerations, it can be said that the concept of DO and BECOME in DO-language and BECOME-language is not only the linguistic concept such as Englishlike and Japaneselike. It is closely connected with the concept of Westernlike and Japanlike in the social backgrounds such as the nation and culture which each language belongs to and the nationality of the users of each language.

## 5. Conclusion

On account of the opposite property between English and Japanese, they are compared by various viewpoints. I took up the contrast of DO-language and BECOME-language as one of the topic for the comparison. It seems that this comparison comes from the difference of the way of grasping the event, as if it is close to the difference of the person's sense.

It can be said that DO-type expression which focuses on the man in the event is the expression which comes from the sense of Westerners. And in the same way, BECOME-type expression which focuses on the matter itself is the expression which comes from the sense of Japanese people.

In short, the concept of DO and BECOME in these two languages is deeply related to the social backgrounds such as the nationalities and cultures which shoulder each language.

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