

# Interaction Between Text Genres and Constructions

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The relationship between text genres and constructions has attracted a great deal of attention in recent studies (Nikiforidou & Fischer (eds.) 2015). A dynamic interaction between constructions and their elements at various levels has been consistently observed. Each genre comprises various text types, each of which exhibits particular conventionalized patterns and thus can be taken to be a construction in broad sense, and for each text type an appropriate set of clausal constructions serves as constituting elements. A text type can be defined as a set of properties that characterize the text as, for example a “fact report” in the journalistic genre, or a “description of the scene” in fictional narratives, which affects elements’ properties as well as the property of the elements’ influence on the text.

Shiba (2015) examines passive constructions in four types of genres: (1) conversation in fiction, (2) narrative parts in fiction, (3) reports in newspapers, and (4) academic articles. Shiba demonstrates that some constructions exhibit highly uneven distributions across genres, appearing much more frequently in some genres than others. However, she does not explore the results in detail, and does not consider, for example, the positions of those constructions in texts or their relationship with other constructions occurring in the same text. We surveyed passive constructions of the type that we refer to as “hold-event passive constructions” in “The Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese”:

## (1) Hold-Event Passive Construction

Form: [ TIME.NP PLACE.NP EVENT.NP-ga HOLD.V-(r)are-ru ]  
time place theme -NOM. HOLD-PASS.-TENS.

Meaning: At a certain time in a particular place, an event is held.

“*Sakujitu daigaku-de taikai-ga hirak-are-ta.*”

There was a congress at the university yesterday.

This construction consists of hold-event type verbs, such as *okonau* (hold), *hiraku* (open), *kaisaisuru* (open), and *moyoosu* (hold). It appears abundantly in “Report Texts” in the journalistic genre and contributes to the objectivity or neutrality of the text by means of defocusing the agent(s) and highlighting the occurrence of the event. Moreover, we found a subkind of the construction observed mainly in “Sports Report Texts”, exemplified in (2):

## (2) Hold-Event Passive Construction -Theme Topicalized Type

*Dai 3kai taikai-wa sakujitu Osaka-de okonaw-are, ...*

the third meeting-TOP yesterday Osaka-in hold-PASS.

The third meeting was held yesterday in Osaka, and...

Normally the topic marker *-wa* functions to show old information in the text. However, in this construction type, the theme (the subject) is topicalized albeit the construction is used at the beginning of the text. In any other kinds of text genre, such as academic essay, placing this construction at the beginning would lead to unnaturalness. We can observe here that the genre-specific characteristic of “Sports Report Texts” leads to the admissibility conditions of the construction, so as to allow highlighting the event briefly in a limited number of words and indicate the status of the subject as the discourse topic. This can be seen as a case of interaction between text genre and clausal construction; the property of the hold-event passive construction influences the property of the report text and at the same time report text property affects the way the subject is expressed in the hold-event passive construction.

## References

- Nikiforidou, Kiki & Fischer, Kerstin (eds.). 2015 *Constructions and Frames* 7(2)  
Shiba, Ayako. 2015 *Gendai nihongo no ukemi-kobun taipu to tekusuto janru* (Japanese passives: construction types and text genres). Tokyo: Izumi shoin.