

***Ra-nuki*: Language change in progress**

I. Background, part 1: The passive

(1) Consonant verbs vs. vowel verbs

| | | | | |
|-----|--------|----------|--------|----------------------|
| (a) | motu | motanai | motta | 'hold' |
| | kaku | kakanai | kaita | 'write' |
| | odoru | odoranai | odotta | 'dance' |
| (b) | taberu | tabenai | tabeta | 'eat' |
| | nobiru | nobinai | nobita | 'stretch' (intrans.) |

(2) Passive: What is the morpheme? Does it differ for (a)/(b)?

| | | | | |
|-----|------------|----------------|-------------|------------|
| (a) | motareru | 'be held' | motarenai | motareta |
| | kakareru | 'be written' | kakarenai | kakareta |
| | odorareru | 'be danced' | odorarenai | odorareta |
| (b) | taberareru | 'be eaten' | taberarenai | taberarera |
| | nobirareru | 'be stretched' | nobirarenai | nobirareta |

(3) What are the uses of the passive?

(a) Prototypical passive — promote object to syntactic subject

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| keeki-ga | tabe-rare-ta | |
| <i>cake-NOM</i> | <i>eat-PASS-PST</i> | 'The cake was eaten.' |

(b) "Adversative" passive — sometimes with no change in argument structure

| | | | |
|--|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Ken-wa | keeki-o | tabe-rare-ta | (<i>keeki-ga</i> also possible) |
| <i>Ken-TOP</i> | <i>cake-ACC</i> | <i>eat-PASS-PST</i> | |
| Colloquial translation: 'Ken had the cake eaten on him.' | | | |

(c) Passive morphology can be used as a form of subject honorific — no change in argument structure

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Sensei-ga | keeki-o | tabe-rare-ta | |
| <i>teacher-NOM</i> | <i>cake-ACC</i> | <i>eat-PASS-PST</i> | 'The teacher ate the cake.' |

II. Background, part 2: The potential

(4) Potential: What is the morpheme? Does it differ for (a)/(b)?

| | | | | |
|-----|------------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| (a) | motareru | 'can hold' | motarenai | motareta |
| | kakareru | 'can write' | kakarenai | kakareta |
| | odorareru | 'can dance' | odorarenai | odorareta |
| (b) | taberareru | 'can eat' | taberarenai | taberarera |
| | nobirareru | 'can stretch' | nobirarenai | nobirareta |

- (5) How do the passive and potential morphemes compare?

| | <i>After consonant verb</i> | <i>After vowel verb</i> |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>passive</i> | -are- | -rare- |
| <i>potential</i> | -e- | -rare- |

- (6) Two complications involving the potential:

- (a) The form for vowel verbs is ambiguous with the passive
 (b) The difference between the vowel-verb and consonant-verb forms of the potential is greater than for almost all other suffixes:

| | <i>After consonant verb</i> | <i>After vowel verb</i> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>nonpast</i> | -u | - <u>r</u> u |
| <i>provisional</i> | -eba | - <u>r</u> eba |
| <i>passive</i> | -are- | - <u>r</u> are- |
| <i>causative</i> | -ase- | - <u>s</u> ase- |
| <i>volitional</i> | -oo | - <u>y</u> oo |
| <i>imperative</i> | -e | -ro |
| <i>potential</i> | -e-(ru) | -rare-(ru) |

III. *Ra-nuki* examples

- (7) There is another version of the potential for vowel verbs, often encountered in colloquial Japanese speech and casual writing — called *ra-nuki*, i.e., “*ra*-less”

- (a) “Standard” form: taberareru taberareta nobirareru nobirareta
 (b) *ra-nuki* form: tabereru tabereta nobireru nobireta

- (8) *Ra-nuki* forms are often stigmatized or complained about as “bad Japanese” — they represent a newer, non-traditional form

• Example rant: <https://記事作成代行.jp/grammatical-mistakes/>

- (9) However, there are very obvious linguistic reasons for this form to have arisen:

| | <i>After consonant verb</i> | <i>After vowel verb</i> |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>passive</i> | -are- | -rare- |
| <i>potential (standard)</i> | -e- | -rare- |
| <i>potential (ra-nuki)</i> | -e- | -re- |

- (a) Is the *ra-nuki* potential for vowel verbs ambiguous with the passive?
 (b) How different are the vowel-verb and consonant-verb *ra-nuki* potential forms?

(10) Sometimes, forms like the following are observed:

Verb root: syaber- 'chat, speak' (rather colloquial)

Expected potential: syabereru, syabereta, ...

Observed potential: syabrareru, syabrareta, ...

- What has happened here?

Sociolinguists call this *hypercorrection*, and it arises when there is “linguistic insecurity”; compare English *between you and I*