It is widely believed in the literature that the animate subjects of passive sentences of Japanese are affected from the events, and it has been assumed that the process of the recognition of this “affectivity” (Kuroda 1979) is related to the intuition of native speakers of Japanese.

The purpose of this study is to clarify the factors which support the recognition of the “affectivity” detected in the passive sentences which have animate subject, analyzing the syntactic features of these constructions and the semantic relevance of the elements of sentence.

For this purpose, about 4000 sentences extracted from the corpus, which is composed of 44 modern Japanese novels, was examined in this study, taking into account that the semantic relevance between the subject and the other elements of passive sentence are related to the process of recognition of the “affectivity”.

The classification adopted for analysis is based on semantic verb categories and semantic relevance between subject and the other elements. It is argued that the semantic relevance between the subject and the complement of passive sentences, or between the subject and the elements that describe situations of events are classifiable into eight types: [family members and other fellow], [body part],
On the basis of this classification, passive sentences collected from the corpus are divided into two types: A and B.

The Type A is a group of cases in which direct object or indirect object of the verb represents in subject position, and the Type B, that of the others.

On the Type A, we can capture the “affectivity” naturally, but on the Type B, it is not simple to comprehend why we can feel the “affectivity” of subject. In order to look into carefully, the Type B is subdivided into more detailed types.

B-1 subject related with complement (①~ ③; by case (kaku) in passive sentence)

① wo-kaku
- Taro ga tomodachi ni atama wo tatakareru.
  (“Taro is hit on the head.”)
- Taro ga goutouni musuko wo korosareru.
  (“A son of Taro is killed by robbery.”)
- Taro ga (tomodachi ni yotte) ryoushin ni seiseiki furyou wo moras areru.
  (“A friend of Taro disclose to his parentes that he has bad grades in school.”)

② ni-kaku
- Taro ga Hanako ni kata ni te wo oka reru.
  (“Hanako put her hand on shoulder of Taro.”)
- Taro ga senotakai hito ni mae no sekis ni suwar areru.
  (“A tall gentleman sit on the seat front of Taro.”)
- Taro ga tsuma ni shinareru.
  (“Taro’s wife dies.”)

③ to-setsu (clause)
- Taro ga tomodachi ni hakayokunaratakainoda to kimetsukareru.
  (“He believes that Taro doesn’t want to be friend of him.”)

B-2 subject related with other element that describes situations of event
(by situation in event)
1. “space”
   ・Taro ga aru otoko no hito ni mayoko de tabako wo suwareru.
   （“A tall gentleman smokes next to Taro.”）

2. “time”
   ・Taro ga shikenn bennkyou no massaitsyu ni aru hito ni piano wo hikareru.
   （“A man play the piano when taro was studying hard for the exame.”）

3. “cause”
   ・Taro wa musume ga manbiki wo shita node mise no hito ni keisatsu wo yobareru.
   （“People call the police because a girl (daughter of Taro) steals stuff shop.”）

The analysis made in this study shows us that the “affectivity” is related to the link of the subject to the event expressed in the sentence, and this link is derived from semantic relevance between the subject and the complement, and between the subject and elements that describe the situation of the event. Further, the relevance between the subject, other elements such as modifiers, adverbials, etc., and the context can support the link.

It will be assumed that the recognition of “affectivity” of passive animate subject comes from syntactic features of passive sentence, and it helps the intuition of native speakers Japanese.