Lecture 3. Subject-related processes: passive and antipassive
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1. Valence changing operations

- Valence: information about verbal arguments and the grammatical functions associated with them (i.e. the linking of semantic roles and grammatical functions).
- Valence changing operations usually affect the S, A and P arguments and may be reflected in verbal morphology or periphrastic/analytical constructions.

- A-backgrounding operations
  - Anticausative: the A is completely removed from the argument structure
    
    (1) a. Vera zakryla dver’
        b. Dver’ zakryla-s’
            (*Veroj)
            Russian
            ‘Vera closed the door.’
            ‘The door closed (*by Vera).’
    
    - Passive: the A is demoted
      
      (2) Taroo-ga sensei-ni sikar-are-ta
          Japanese
          ‘Taroo was scolded by the teacher.’

2. Some properties of passives

- Passivization is a realignment of grammatical functions and thematic roles (detransitivization). Descriptively, it involves two operations:
  
  (i) the demotion of the A argument from the subject role
  (ii) the promotion of a non-agent (P) argument to the subject role (S)

- However, the second operation (the promotion of non-agent) is optional.

- First, passives are usually formed from transitive verbs.

  (3) a. The boy kissed the girl
      b. The girl was kissed by the boy.

  But in some languages passives can be formed from intransitives. This is called impersonal passive.

  (4) Es wurde getanzt
      German
      ‘There was dancing.’

- Second, in some languages the non-agent argument (P) does not acquire the subject status.

  (5) a. Abuga b’ata-wa danči-e-ni.
      Udeghe (Tungussic)
      father boy-ACC curse-PAST-3SG
      ‘The father cursed the boy.’

      b. B’ata-wa abuga-du danči-wo:-ni.
      boy-ACC father-DAT curse-PAS.PAST-3SG
      ‘The boy was cursed by his father.’
● In transformational theories passives are derived by movement (a syntactic operation).

● In non-transformational theories passivization is a lexical rule. *Lexical rules*: rules that derive one lexical entry from another in a systematic way and apply in the lexicon.

(6) strange strange-ness
    polite polite-ness
    happy happi-ness
    etc.

● Passivization can be described as a lexical rule which realigns grammatical functions and semantic roles:

(7) \( \begin{array}{c|c|c|c|}
\text{kiss} & \text{<agent, patient>} & \text{active} \\
\text{SUBJ} & \text{OBJ} \\
\text{be kissed} & \text{<agent, patient>} & \text{passive} \\
\text{(OBL}\_\text{agt}) & \text{SUBJ} \\
\end{array} \)

● A lexical analysis of passives explains some unexpected data. Lexical rules have exceptions and idiosyncratic gaps, e.g. *possibleness. This also applies to passives:

(8) a. John resembles Bill. b. You humour eludes me
    *Bill is resembled by John. *I am eluded by your humour.

● Syntactic effects associated with passive: Passive turns P into S to meet subject requirements.

(9) Fred wants [ _____ to see Henrik]
    *Fred wants [ Henrik to see _____ ]
    Fred wants [ _____ to be seen by Henrik]

(10) Fred went to the store and [ _____ was seen by Henrik ]
     Fred saw Mary [ _____ being hit by Henrik]

● Functional effects associated with passive: The A argument is not salient for the speaker or its identity is unknown. This is reflected in syntax: the A is either demoted to a non-subject role or is altogether absent (agentless passive or anticausative).

3. Syntactic accusativity vs. syntactic ergativity

● The basic question in languages with ergative/absolutive alignment: what is the subject in (transitive) constructions - the ergative A or the absolutive P?

● *Morphological vs. syntactic ergativity*: coding vs. behavioural properties of core arguments

Morphological (or ‘surface’) ergativity: ergative-absolutive case/agreement alignment, i.e. P behaves like S in terms of morphological marking

Syntactic accusativity: A behaves like S in syntactic processes (but they differ in case marking in case marking in languages with ergative absolutive alignment).

Syntactic (or ‘deep’) ergativity: P behaves like S in syntactic processes (in addition to have the same case marking, the absolutive).
• Syntactic ergativity is quite rare. The majority of the morphologically ergative languages are syntactically accusative. That is, morphologically ergative languages are considerably more common than syntactically ergative languages.

• Relevant syntactic processes: control (an argument of the subordinate verb is suppressed under identity with an argument of the governing verb), relativization, reflexivization, coordinate deletion, etc.

• Despite exhibiting ergative-absolutive case marking, Warlpiri (Pama-Nyungan, Australian), identifies A with S consistently in its syntax (Hale 1968). Warlpipi is thus morphologically ergative and syntactically accusative.

- Temporal clauses in *-rninja- are control structures; they are controlled by the subject of the main clause (the intransitive S in the absolutive or the transitive A in the ergative)

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(11) a. ngarrka ka wirnpirlim [Ø karli jarti-rinja-karra] 
   man(ABS) PRES whistle-NONPAST boomerang(ABS) trim-TEMP-COMP 
   S
   ‘The man is whistling while trimming the boomerang.’

   b. wati-ngki marlu nya-ngu [Ø jarti-rinja-karra-rlu] 
   man-ERG kangaroo(ABS) see-PAST run-TEMP-COMP-ERG 
   A P
   ‘The man saw the kangaroo while he (the man) was running.’
```

- In the following examples, S and A are treated alike syntactically in that they remain unexpressed with the non-finite verb of the complement clause.

In (12a) the S of the non-finite verb *parnka* ‘to run’ is left unexpressed and is interpreted as coreferential with *kurdu* ‘child’, the object of the main clause. In (12b) the A of the non-finite verb *kati- ‘to tread on’ is left unexpressed and interpreted as coreferential with *kurdu* child’.

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(12) a. ngarrka-ngu kurdu nyangu [______ parnka-n'Ola-kerra ] 
   man-ERG child(ABS) saw run-NMLZ-COMP 
   S
   ‘A man saw a child run.’

   b. ngarrka-ngu kurdu nyangu [______ warna kati-rninjia-kerra ] 
   man-ERG child(ABS) saw snake(ABS) tread-NMLZ-COMP 
   A P
   ‘A man saw a child step on a snake.’
```

- This construction cannot be used with a covert P; for instance, it could not be used for ‘A man saw a child being abducted by a social worker’.

• Dyirbal (Dixon 1972): a language with syntactic ergativity (diacritics simplified)

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(13) control relation in non-finite purpose clauses: subject control

a. bayi yara walma-n'u [__ wayn'd'il-i] 
   the man(ABS) get-up-REAL go.downhill-PURP 
   S
   ‘The man got up in order to go downhill.’

b. balan d'ugumbil bangul yara-ngu balga-n [__ badi-gu] 
   the woman(ABS) the man-ERG hit-REAL fall-PURP 
   P A
   ‘The man hit the woman so that she/*he would fall.’
```
relativization: you can only relativize the subject

a. ŋad’a bayi yara [ ___ bani-ŋu] bura-n
   1SG the man(ABS) come.here-REAL see-REAL
   S
   ‘I saw the man who came here.’

b. balan d’ugumbil [ŋad’a ___ bura-ŋu] n’ina-n’u
   the woman(ABS) 1SG see-REAL sit-REAL
   A   P
   ‘The woman that I saw is sitting.’

c. *baya yara [ ___ balan d’ugumbil bura-ŋu] bani-n’u
   the man(ABS) the woman(ABS) see-REAL come.here-REAL
   A   P
   ‘The man who saw the woman came here.’

Syntactic ergativity is also found in Kalkatungu (Pama-Nyungan, Australian) (Blake 1993) where S/P controls cross-clausally for zero anaphora. The following Kalkatungu examples illustrate an intransitive clause (15a) and a transitive clause (15b).

(15)  a. Thuarr ntuu-pia ngamputhati-nha
   snake(ABS) hole-LOC disappear-LOC
   ‘The snake disappeared in a hole.’

b. Thuku-yu thuarr ari-mi
   dog-ERG snake (ABS) eat-FUT
   ‘The dog will eat the snake.’

Like Warlpiri, Kalkatungu exhibits morphological ergativity. As with the Warlpiri examples it is assumed that an argument of the subordinate verb has been suppressed under identity with an argument of the governing verb.

In (16a) S is covert, just as it would be with examples from Warlpiri and English. In (16b) P is covert – compare this with the Warlpiri examples in which the zero-expressed argument in the transitive subordinate clause is the A.

Note that the best translation into English involves the use of a passive in order to allow cross-clausal reference (i.e. there is only one argument in the passive clause, so it is S).

(16)  a. martu-yu nanya thuarr [_____ ngamputhati-nyin]
   mother-ERG saw snake disappear-PART
   S
   ‘Mother saw a snake disappearing.’

b. martu-yu nanya thuarr [_____ thuku-yu ari-nyin]
   mother-ERG saw snake dog-ERG eat-PART
   P  A
   ‘Mother saw a snake being eaten by a dog.’
   *Mother saw a snake [______ eating a dog ].

So in Kalkatungu, only S and P can be systematically suppressed with a non-finite verb.
Which argument is the subject in such systems?

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(4) **Antipassive**

- Antipassive: While syntactically accusative languages often have passive constructions that permit promotion of a P to an S (often for the purpose of cross-clausal reference), syntactically ergative languages use the antipassive to achieve a similar goal.

But unlike passives, antipassives downplay the centrality of a P argument, rather than an A argument.

- In the antipassive the verb or verb phrase contains some overt marker of intransitivity, e.g. it may take an explicit marker of intransitivity, inflect like an intransitive verb, etc. depending on the formal characteristics of intransitive verbs in that language.

A appears in the absolutive case. P of the transitive clause is demoted to an oblique or is omitted.

Case marking:

- ergative construction: A = ERG  P = ABS
- antipassive construction: A = ABS  (P = DAT)

- In Dyirbal: the suffix -ŋa(y)/-na(y) is added to a transitive verb

(17) a. ergative construction

\[
\text{bayi bargan bangul yara-ŋgu d’urga-n’u} \\
\text{the wallaby(ABS) the man-ERG spear-REAL} \\
P \quad A
\]

‘The man is spearing a wallaby.’

b. antipassive construction

\[
\text{bayi yara bagul bargan-gu d’urga-na-n’u} \\
\text{the man(ABS) the wallaby-DAT spear-ANTIPAS-REAL} \\
A \quad P
\]

‘The man is spearing a wallaby.’

- In the antipassive construction A (the absolutive argument) is the SUBJ.
Dyirbal relativization, cf. (14c)

bayi yara [bagal-ŋa-ŋu — bagul yuri-gu] banaga-n’u
theman(ABS) spear-ANTIPAS-REL the kangaroo-DAT return-REAL
A P
‘The man who speared the kangaroo returned.’

● Antipassive in Kalkatungu

In the antipassive construction the A is encoded as S (absolutive) and the P in the dative.

(19) thuku thuarr-ku ari-li-nytyangu
dog(ABS) snake-DAT eat-ANTIPAS-HABIT
A P
‘The dog eats snakes.’

In (20) the A of the dependent verb is coreferential with thuarr ‘snake’ in the higher clause. The antipassive is used to enable the A to be expressed as the S of the derived intransitive arili-. Cf. (16b).

(20) martu-yu nanya thuarr [ _____ pukutyurr-ku ari-li-nyin ]
mother-ERG saw snake mouse-DAT eat-ANTIPAS-PART
A P
‘Mother saw a snake eating a mouse.’

● Change of grammatical functions:

In syntactically ergative languages in the “basic” ergative construction the P is a subject. In the antipassive construction the A is the subject and the P is oblique. So the antipassive verb is syntactically intransitive.

This makes the antipassive construction somewhat parallel to the passive construction in nominative-accusative languages: passive demotes the agent from SUBJ to OBL, while antipassive demotes the patient from SUBJ to OBL.

 Normally the antipassive construction is used when the P is pragmatically less prominent than the A: it may be indefinite or unknown to the speaker or it is not affected by the event.

● The antipassive lexical rule?

(5) Mixed ergative and accusative syntax

● Many Austronesian languages have both accusative and ergative clauses, allowing a variations within a single language.

● For instance, in Balinese (Bali and Lombok) the preverbal position is the ‘grammatical subject’ (sometimes called ‘pivot’) in syntax, regardless of which voice marking appears (Wechsler & Arka 1998).

Example (21b) contains a verb in the Objective Voice (OV).

(21) a. ia pules. b. bawi-ne punika tumbas tiang.
3 sleep pig-DEF that OV buy 1
‘(S)he is sleeping.’ ‘I bought the pig.’

But the same verb in the Agentive Voice (AV), indicated by a homorganic nasal prefix replacing the initial consonant, encodes its A as subject, as in (22):
(22) tiang numbass bawi-ne punika.
   I AV.buy pig-DEF that
   ‘I bought the pig.’

- If this is correct, then transitive P in (21b) and intransitive S in (21a) are syntactically grouped together as subjects, so (21b) is syntactically ergative. But in (22) P behaves like S, so it is syntactically accusative.

- How do we know that the preverbal position is associated with the subject role?

- Relative clauses: If a language allows relativization at all, it allows subjects to relativize (Keenan & Comrie 1977).

In Balinese only the pivots can be relativized: S/P in OV clauses (23a) and S/A in AV clauses (24a). Non-pivots cannot be relativised ((23b) and (24b), and neither can obliques (25), see Wechsler & Arka (1998).

(23) a. Gapped grammatical function = P of OV verb (syntactically ergative)

   anak-è cenik [ane gugut cicing] ento
   person-DEF small [REL OV.bite dog] that
   ‘the child whom the dog bit’

   b. *Gapped grammatical function = A of OV verb

   *cicing [ane anak-è cenik ento gugut]
   dog [REL person-DEF small that OV.bite]
   Intended: ‘the dog that bit the child’

(24) a. Gapped grammatical function = A of AV verb (syntactically accusative)

   I Warta [ane maca koran].
   Art Warta [REL AV.read newspaper]
   ‘Warta who read the newspaper’

   b. * Gapped grammatical function = P of AV verb

   *koran [ane I Warta maca].
   newspaper [REL Art Warta AV.read]
   Intended: ‘the newspaper that Warta read’

(25) a. Ia ngejang pipis-ne di paon
   3 AV.put money-3POSS at kitchen
   ‘He put his money in the kitchen.’

   b. *di paon [___ ia ngejang pipis-ne
   at kitchen REL 3 AV.put money-3POSS
   Intended: ‘in the kitchen, where he put his money’

- Control: Only a subject of a subordinate clause (and not other grammatical functions) can be controlled by (i.e. take as an antecedent) the subject of a matrix clause.

In Balinese, only the P of an OV verb or the A of an AV verb, can be a controllee (Wechsler & Arka 1998)

(26) a. Gapped grammatical function = S

   Tiang edot [___ teka].
   1 want come
   ‘I want to come.’
b. Gapped grammatical function = A of AV

Tiang edot [___ meriksa dokter]
1 want AV examine doctor
‘I want to examine a doctor.’

c. Gapped grammatical function = P of OV

Tiang edot [___ periksa dokter].
1 want OV examine doctor
‘I want to be examined by a doctor.’

(27) a. Gapped grammatical function = A of OV

*Tiang edot [dokter periksa ____].
1 want doctor OV examine
Intended: ‘I want to examine a doctor.’

b. Gapped grammatical function = P of AV

*Tiang edot [dokter meriksa ____].
1 want doctor AV examine
Intended: ‘I want to be examined by a doctor.’

● Could the OV-construction be a passive?

This view is untenable, as it has none of the properties typical of passives. First, there is no passive verb morphology: OV is morphologically unmarked. Instead, it is the morphologically marked voice (AV) that resembles actives in accusative languages.

Second, the post-verbal A in OV is not the oblique ‘by-phrase’ characterizing passives, but is rather a term. In Balinese, which lacks morphological case, all obliques are expressed as PPs, while terms are NPs. The post-verbal agent is always an NP (or a clitic pronoun). Moreover, in passive A phrases are optional (and often analyzed as adjuncts) but the A in OV-constructions is crucially obligatory.

● Could the AV-construction be an antipassive?

Antipassivization demotes the P argument, which has the effect in a syntactically ergative system of making the A an S. However, there is no evidence that the P in a Balinese AV clause is oblique.

Wechsler & Arka (1998) argue that the effect of the AV morphology is not to demote the P, but rather to simply make the A of a transitive clause the ‘grammatical subject’ (pivot), i.e. to create the isomorphism between syntactic structure, semantic structure and information structure.

Further references