Processes that Change Grammatical Relations

Tallerman, chapter 7: pp. 188-204
Syntactic Processes

• Syntactic processes that change grammatical relations:
  – Passive construction
  – Antipassive construction
  – Applicative construction

• Syntactic processes affect constituents, subjects, direct objects, and indirect or oblique objects.
Passives

• The passive construction and transitive verbs.
  • The doctor has examined Bill.
    Bill has been examined (by the doctor).
  • We stole three Ming vases yesterday.
    Three Ming vases were stolen (by us) yesterday.
  • This rare and lovely weather phenomenon is called a fogbow.
    [Parade, 4/6/03, p. 26]

– Passive sentences are intransitive
  • Subject of the active sentence > demoted to a by-phrase or deleted.
  • Object of the active sentence > promoted to subject of the passive.
  • Passive contains auxiliary be + past participle of the main verb.
– Evidence that the preverbal noun-phrases in the passive sentences are subjects:
  • Subject-verb agreement
  • Nominative case pronouns.

– Passives are very common crosslinguistically
  • Applies to a transitive clause and forms an intransitive clause.
  • Core arguments of a verb change their grammatical relations.
    – Former object becomes subject.
    – Former subject becomes oblique or is deleted.
  • The verb changes form.
– Some languages have an auxiliary-plus-main verb passive like English:

- **German**
  - Der Frost verdarb den Apfel.
    the:NOM frost spoil:PAST the:ACC apple
    ‘The frost spoiled the apple.’
  - Der Apfel wurde vom Frost verdorben.
    the:NOM apple became by:the:DATIVE frost spoil:PAST-PARTICIPLE
    ‘The apple was spoiled by the frost.’

- **Welsh**
  - Egłur-odd y darllenydd y sefyllfa.
    explain:PAST the lecturer the situation
    ‘The lecturer explained the situation.’
  - Cafodd y sefyllfa ei egluro (gan y darllenydd).
    get:PAST the situation its explain by the lecturer
    ‘The situation was explained (by the lecturer).’
    (Lit., The situation got its explaining by the lecturer.)

– The most common auxiliaries are verbs like ‘be’, ‘become’, ‘get’ and ‘receive.’
Many languages have a specifically passive form of the main verb: a **morphological passive**.

- **Chamorro**
  - Si Juan ha dulalak si Jose.
    - PN 3SG:SU follow PN
    - ‘Juan followed Jose.’
  - D-in-ilalak si Jose as Juan.
    - PASSIVE-follow PN by
    - ‘Jose was followed by Juan.’

- **Japanese**
  - Sensei wa Taroo o sikatta.
    - Teacher TOPIC ACC scold:PAST
    - ‘The teacher scolded Taro.’
  - Taroo wa sensei ni sikar-are-ta.
    - TOPIC teacher DATIVE scold-PASSIVE-PAST
    - ‘Taro was scolded by the teacher.’

- **Gilbertese**
  - E kamate-a te naeta te moa.
    - It kill-it the snake the chicken
    - ‘The chicken killed the snake.’
  - E kamate-aki te naeta (iroun te moa).
    - It kill-PASSIVE the snake by the chicken
    - ‘The snake was killed (by the chicken).’
Passive constructions occur most often in languages that are syntactically and morphologically accusative, but some ergative languages do have passives:

- **Greenlandic Eskimo**
  - Angut-ip arnaq-Ø  taku-vaa
    man-ERG  woman-ABS see-3SG:3SG
    ‘The man(A) saw the woman(O).’
  - Arnaq-Ø (anguti-mit) taku-tau-puk
    woman-ABS man-by  see-PASSIVE-3SG
    ‘The woman(S) was seen (by the man).’

- **Kalchikel**
  - ríoj x-Ø -qa-ch'aj  ri-ts'ieq
    we  CPL-3SG:ABS-1PL:ERG wash the-clothes
    ‘We(A) washed the clothes(O).’
  - ri-ts'ieq  x-Ø - ch'a:j
    the-clothes CPL-3SG:ABS-wash:PASSIVE
    'the clothes(S) were washed.'
  - x-Ø-ch'aja-taj  ri-ts'ieq
    CPL-3SG:ABS-wash-TAX.PASSIVE  the-clothes
    'the clothes(S) (all) got washed.'
• The passive construction and intransitive verbs
  – Some languages have “impersonal passives”, where the subject of an intransitive verb is demoted, and the passive verb has no subject or has a dummy subject.
    • Welsh
      – Can-odd y côr neithiwr.
        Sing-PAST the choir last.night
        ‘The choir sang last night.’
      – Can-wyd (gan y côr) neithiwr.
        Sing-PAST:PASSIVE by the choir last.night
        ‘There was singing (by the choir) last night.’
        (Lit., ‘Was sung by the choir last night.’)
    • German
      – Die Kinder schliefen
        the children sleep:PAST
        ‘The children slept.’
      – Es wurde (von den Kindern) geschlafen.
        It became by the children sleep:PAST.PARTICIPLE
        ‘There was sleeping (by the children).’
        (Lit., It was slept by the children.’)
– Even transitive sentences can appear as impersonal passives:

• **Irish:**
  – Thug siad Siobhán abhaile inniu
    brought they Joan home today
    ‘They brought Joan home today.’
  – Tugadh Siobhán abhaile inniu
    brought.IMPERS Joan home today
    ‘Joan was brought home today.’

• The object is not promoted in the Irish sentence, but the subject is demoted.
Antipassives

• A second construction changing grammatical relations is the antipassive, found exclusively in ergative languages.
  – Applies to a transitive clause (the active clause) and forms an intransitive clause.
  – A argument (ergative) promoted > S argument (absolutive)
  – O argument demoted > oblique, or is deleted.
  – Changes in the morphology of the verb signal antipassivization.
• The meaning of the antipassive sentence reflects demotion of the object in many cases.

• Promotion of A argument to S is sometimes needed for syntactic constructions that target S/O arguments.
– Demotion of O argument.
  
  • Greenlandic Eskimo
    – arna-p niqi-Ø niri-vaa
      woman-ERG meat-ABS eat-3SG:3SG
      ‘The woman(A) ate the meat(O).’
    – arnaq-Ø niqi-mik niri-NNig-puq
      woman-ABS meat-with eat-ANTIPASSIVE-3SG
      ‘The woman(S) ate some of the meat.’
  
  – Chukchee
    – ∂ tl∂ g-e keyng- ∂ n penr∂ -nen
      father-ERG bear-ABS attach-3SG:3SG:PAST
      Father(A) attacked the bear(O)
    – ∂ tl∂ g-∂ n penr∂ -tko-g?e keyng-et∂
      father-ABS attack-ANTIPASSIVE-3SG:PAST bear-DATIVE
      ‘Father(S) ran at the bear.’
  
  • Kaqchikel
    – rioj x-e-qa-ch’ak rie
      we CPL-3PL:ABS-1PL:ERG-beat them
      ‘We(A) beat them(O).’
    – rioj x-oj-ch’ak-on
      we CPL-1PL:ABS-beat-ANTIPASSIVE
      ‘We(S) won.’
• In both accusative systems and ergative systems, S is the unmarked argument.

• Primary grammatical relations
  – Syntactically accusative systems:
    • S+A = Subject NPs
  – Syntactically ergative systems:
    • S + O = Absolutive NPs
– Promotion of A argument in Dyrbal:

**English: S/A (Subject) Pivot**

Use Passive to promote O to S

- [Mother\(_i\) saw Father\(_j\)] and [Ø\(_i\), returned]
- [Father\(_j\) was seen by Mother\(_i\)] and [Ø\(_j\) returned.]

**Dyrbal: S/O (Absolutive) Pivot**

Use Antipassive to promote A to S

- [ngum\(_a\) yabu-nggu\(_i\) bura-n] [Ø\(_j\) banaga-n\(\nu\)u]
  father:ABS mother-ERG see-PAST return-PAST
  ‘Mother(A) saw Father(O) and [he] (S) returned.’
- Yabu\(_i\) bural-nga-n\(\nu\)u nguma-gu\(_j\)] [Ø\(_i\) banaga-n\(\nu\)u]
  mother:ABS see-ANTIPASSIVE-PAST father-DATIVE return-PAST
  ‘Mother(S) saw Father and [she](S) returned.’
Applicatives

• Oblique NP or indirect object > promoted to direct object (“applied object”).
• Former direct object > demoted to second object or oblique.
• Changes may occur in the morphology of the verb.

• **English:** Dative Shift for Recipient or Beneficiary
  – My brother sold his bike to Sue.
  – My brother sold Sue his bike.
  – I baked a cake for Kim.
  – I baked Kim a cake.
– **Indonesian**
  
  - Mereke mem-bawa [daging itu] [kepada dia] they TRANS-bring meat the to him ‘They brought the meat to him.’
  - Mereka mem-bawa-kan [dia] [daging itu] they TRANS-bring-APPLIC him meat the ‘They brought him the meat.’

– **Chichewa**
  
  - Mbidzi zi-na-perek-a [msampha] [kwa nkhandwe] zebras SU-PAST-hand-ASPECT trap to fox ‘The zebras handed the trap to the fox.’
  - Mbidzi zi-na-perek-er-a [nkhandwe] [msampha] Zebras SU-PAST-hand-APPLIC-ASPECT fox trap ‘The zebras handed the fox the trap.’
• Applicatives Can Occur in Ergative Languages:
  – Dyirbal
    • Yabu nguma-nggu balga-n yugu-nggu
      mother:ABS father-ERG hit PAST stick-INSTRUMENTAL
      ‘Father hit mother with a stick.’
    • Yugu nguma-nggu balgal-ma-n yabu-gu
      stick:ABS father-ERG hit-APPLIC-PAST mother-DATIVE
      ‘Father used a stick to hit mother.’

• Recipients, locatives, beneficiaries, goals, and instruments can all be promoted to applied (direct) object in different languages
• **English**
  
  – Indirect object can be promoted to direct object through dative shift, and then can be promoted again to subject through passivization:
    
    • John gave a book to Mary
    • **Dative shift**: John gave Mary a book.
    • **Passive**: Mary was given a book by John.
  
  – Note that indirect objects cannot in general be promoted to subject directly:
    
    • *Mary was given a book to by John.*
– **Chichewa**

- Only the applied object functions as a direct object with regard to then being promotable in the passive:
  - Kalulu a-na-gul-ir-a mbidzi nsapato
    hare SU-PAST-buy-APPLIC-ASPECT zebras shoes’
    ‘The hare bought the zebras shoes.’
  - Mbidzi zi-na-gul-ir-idw-a nsapato ndi kalulu
    zebras SU-PAST-buy-APPLIC-PASSIVE-ASPECT shoes by hare
    ‘The zebras were bought shoes by the hare
  - *Nsapato zi-na-gul-ir-idw-a mbidzi ndi kalulu
    shoes SU-PAST-buy-APPLIC-PASSITIVE-ASPECT zebras by hare
    ‘*Shoes were bought the zebras by the hare.’
• **French**
  – No applicative construction or dative shift, so recipient can never be the subject of passive.
    • Marie a donné un cadeau à Pierre.
      Marie has give:PAST.PARTICIPLE a present to Pierre
      ‘Marie has given a present to Pierre.’
    • *Marie a donné Pierre un cadeau.
      Marie has give:PAST.PARTICIPLE Pierre a present
      (Marie has given Pierre a present)
    • Un cadeau a été donné à Pierre par Marie
      a present has been give:PAST.PARTICIPLE to Pierre by Marie
      ‘A present has been given to Pierre by Marie.’
    • *Pierre a été donné un cadeau par Marie.
      Pierre has been give:PAST.PARTICIPLE a present by Marie.
      (‘Pierre has been given a present by Marie.’)