

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 verderb 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
 - Eglur-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

- rioj 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 niqu-Ø niri-vaa
woman-ERG meat-ABS eat-3SG:3SG
‘The woman(A) ate the meat(O).’
- arnaq-Ø niqu-mik niri-**NNig**-puq
woman-ABS meat-with eat-ANTIPASSIVE-3SG
‘The woman(S) ate some of the meat.’

– Chukchee

- ɔtlɔg-e keyng- ɔn penrɔ-nen
father-ERG bear-ABS attach-3SG:3SG:PAST
Father(A) attacked the bear(O)’
- ɔtlɔg-ɔn penrɔ-**tko**-gʔe keyng-etɔ
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-ɔj-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

- [nguma_j yabu-nggu_i bura-n] [Ø_j banaga-n^yu]
father:ABS mother-ERG see-PAST return-PAST
‘Mother(A) saw Father(O) and [he] (S) returned.’
- Yabu_i bural-nga-n^yu nguma-gu_j] [Ø_i banaga-n^yu]
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-PASSITVE-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.')