Processes that Change Grammatical Relations

Tallerman, chapter 7: pp. 188-204
Saeed, chapter 6: 164-170.

Syntactic Processes

• Syntactic processes that change grammatical relations:
  – Passive construction
  – Antipassive construction
  – Applicative construction
  – Causative construction
• Syntactic processes affect constituents, subjects, 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**
    – Eglur-odd y darllenyyd y sefyllfa.
      explain:PAST the lecturer the situation
      ‘The lecturer explained the situation.’
    – Cafodd y sefyllfa ei egluro (gan y darllenyyd).
      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 (angut-i-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-tsi'eq
    CPL-3SG:ABS-3PL-ERG wash the-clothes
    ‘We(A) washed the clothes(O).’
  - ri-tsi'eq x-Ø - ch'a:j
    the-clothes CPL-3SG:ABS-ed:PASSIVE
    ‘the clothes(S) were washed.’
  - x-Ø-ch'aja-taj ri-tsi'eq
    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 patient is not promoted in the Irish sentence, but the agent is demoted.

• **Discourse function of Passives**
  
  – Kuno (1987): subject of passive must be receiver of speaker’s empathy:
    
    • Mary had quite an experience at the party she went to last night.  
      – An eight-foot-tall rowdy harassed her.  
      – She was harassed by an eight-foot-tall rowdy.
    
    • Mary had quite an experience at the party she went to last night.  
      – She slapped an eight-foot-tall rowdy in the face.  
      – #An eight-foot-tall rowdy was slapped in the face by her.
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 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
    – ṭlōg-e keyng- npenr -nen
      father-ERG bear-ABS attach-3SG:3SG:PAST
      Father(A) attacked the bear(O)
    – ṭlōg- npenr -tko-g?e keyng-etō
      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.’

– Promotion of A argument to S
  • Primary grammatical relations
    Accusative systems: S + A = Subject NPs
    Ergative systems: S + O = Absolutive NPs
  • Both passives (in accusative systems) and
    antipassives (in ergative systems) promote non-
    primary arguments into primary arguments.
  • Kaqchikel (as well as other Mayan languages) has a
    second antipassive construction, called the “focus
    antipassive”, which serves to promote A arguments
    into primary argument position for purposes of
    focus preposing, relative clause formation and
    question formation
– Achike x-Ø-u-nim
  who CPL-3SG:ABS-3SG:ERG push
  ‘Who did he push?’

– Achike x-Ø-nim-o
  who CPL-3SG:ABS-push-FOCUS.ANTIPASSIVE
  ‘Who pushed him?’

– Por ri x-Ø-bana-taj,
  for REL CPL-3SG:ABS-do-TAX.PASSIVE

  ma-jun x-Ø-ban-o-ta.
  not-one CPL-3SG:ABS-push-FOCUS.ANTIPASSIVE-IRREALIS

  Ri-ruchulef x-Ø-ban-o
  the-earth CPL-3SG:ABS-do-FOCUS.ANTIPASSIVE
  ‘Because what happened, nobody did it. The earth did it.’

– *ri-ruchulef x-Ø-u-ban
  the earth CPL-3SG:ABS-3SG:ERG-do.

• Dyirbal coordination
  – Ellipsis revolves around a SUBJECT PIVOT in English
    » Chris, disturbed Lee and Ø, complained bitterly.
    » *Chris disturbed Lee, and Ø, complained bitterly.
    » Lee, was disturbed by Chris and Ø, complained bitterly.
    » Chris, greeted Lee and then Ø, kissed Mel.
    » *Chris, greeted Lee, and then Mel kissed Ø.
    » Chris, greeted Lee, and then Ø, was kissed by Mel.
    » Lee, was kissed by Chris and then Ø, was kissed by Mel.

  – In Dyirbal, which is syntactically ergative, ellipsis revolves around an ABSOLUTIVE PIVOT.
    » [ngumai yabu-nggu bura-n] [Ø, banaga-n’u]
      father:ABS, mother-ERG, see-PAST [ ] return-PAST
      ‘Mother(A) saw father(Ø) and [he](S) returned.’
Other processes that change grammatical relation

- **Applicatives**
  - Oblique NP or indirect object > promoted to object.
  - Former object > demoted to second object or oblique.
  - Changes may occur in the morphology of the verb.

  - **English**
    - 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.’

– 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.’

– datives, locatives, beneficiaries, goals, instrumental
– **Chichewa**

- Kalulu a-na-gul-ir-a mbidzi nsapato  
  hare SU-PAST-buy-APPLIC-ASPECT zebras shoes  
  ‘The hare bought shoes for the zebras.’  
  (I.e. ‘The hare bought the zebras shoes.’)

- Mbidzi zi-na-0bul-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-idw-a mbidzi (ndi kalulu)  
  shoes SU-PAST-buy-APPLIC-PASSIVE-ASPECT zebras by hare  
  ‘*Shoes were bought the zebras by the hare.’

- However, in Kinyarwanda (and other languages), both objects behave like prototypical objects.

– **French**

- No applicative construction or dative movement, and indirect object cannot be 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.’)
• **Causatives**
  
  • **Korean**
    
    – Cini-ka wus-ŋ ss-ta  
      Jinee-NOM smile-PAST-INDIC  
      ‘Jinee smiled.’
    
    – Kiho-ka cini-ka wus-ke ha-ŋ ss-ta  
      Keeho-NOM Jinee-NOM smile-COMP do-PAST-INDIC  
      ‘Keeho caused Jinee to smile.’

  
  • A new subject is introduced.
  • Former subject demoted > object, or oblique argument, or deleted
  • Verb adding causation is introduced.