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VOICE PARAMETERS*

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1. INTRODUCTION

While the currently prevailing views on voice consider it as a formal relation-changing phenomenon triggered by either a syntactic or morphological requirement (see Dixon 1979, Chomsky 1981, Perlmutter and Postal 1983, Mel'čuk 1993), this paper develops the traditional notion of voice, which considers it to be an expression of grammatical meanings. It is contended here that the opposition of the grammatical meanings in question holds the key to a better understanding of not only the forms of voice constructions and their synchronic distribution but also of their diachronic development.

2. FUNDAMENTAL OPPOSITION AND ITS PROTOTYPICAL MANIFESTATIONS

The traditional view holds that voice represents the meaning relationship between the (referent of the) subject and the action denoted by the verb. For example, Kruisinga (1925: Part 3:167-8) states that: 'Voice is the name for a verbal form according as it primarily expresses the action or state with regard to its subject, which may be represented as acting (*active voice*), undergoing (*passive voice*), or affected by its own action (*reflexive* [middle] *voice*).' Whereas this and other traditional views see the opposition between active and passive in terms of whether the subject represents an actor, or agent, or an undergoer, or patient, consideration of the so-called impersonal passives would require a slightly broader view of the passive category if it were to embrace both personal and impersonal passives, both of which in fact stand in opposition to active forms.

Although there are languages, e.g. Irish and Southern Paiute, which contain an impersonal passive construction distinct from a personal passive construction, a large number of languages make use of the same grammatical means in expressing these two types of passive construction. This is seen not only among Indo-European languages, as shown in (1) below, but also in the languages belonging to other families, e.g. Uto-Aztecan Yaqui as illustrated in (2) below:

(1) Dutch (Perlmutter 1978)

- a. *De kaas werd door de kinderen gegeten.*
the cheese became by the children eat.PP
'The cheese was eaten by the children.'
- b. *Hier wordt (er) veel gewerkt.*
here becomes there a lot work.PP
'It is worked here a lot.'

(2) Yaqui (Langacker 1976:32)

- a. *hu kuču bʷaʔa-wa-k ʔim ʔusi-m-mea*
 that fish eat-PASS-PAST my child-PL-with
 'The fish was eaten by my children.'
- b. *tuisi yiʔi-wa-k*
 much dance-PASS-PAST
 'There was much dancing.'

While it is true that personal passives are more prevalent than impersonal passives (see below), the traditional views on passive have been unduly slanted toward personal passives—largely because English does not have an impersonal passive?—, failing to appreciate the intimate connection they show with impersonal passives. Impersonal passives, understood as constructions lacking a referential subject nominal, share with personal passives an important grammatical property of not containing a subject instigating an action, thereby contrasting with active constructions whose subject expresses an agent instigating an action. Thus, personal passives and impersonal passives share a grammatical meaning fundamental to the voice system, yet there is clear preponderance toward the former; personal passives are distributed more widely than impersonal passives, and the latter are rare when transitive verbs are involved (see below). One of the tasks that this paper attempts to undertake is the resolution of this apparent paradox.

Our method is to posit fundamental meaning distinctions among different voice categories. From the prototypical manifestations of the categories, we draw a principle that dictates the distribution of different types of voice constructions. Let us posit the following as the fundamental opposition in grammatical meanings among the three major voice categories of active, passive, and middle.

(3) *Fundamental opposition*

Active category: Action occurs under the subject's control.

Passive category: Action occurs not under the subject's control but under that of another entity apart from the subject.

Middle category: Action occurs under the subject's control and its development is confined within the sphere of the subject.

We assume these categories to have prototypical expressions such that certain voice forms or constructions have privileged status as prototypical members, or as the best representatives, of the categories.

(4) *Prototypical manifestations of the fundamental opposition:*

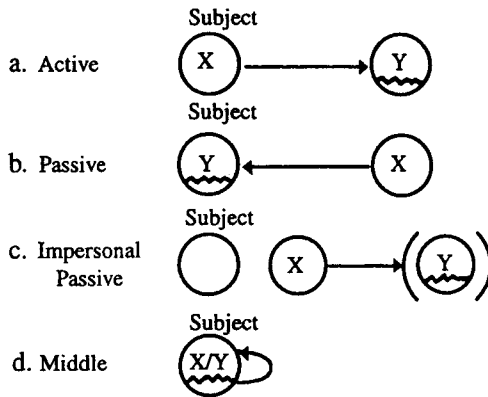
Active form: The subject, as an agent, instigates an action that extends to an independent entity, patient, affecting it in such a way that it results in an altered state; e.g. *Bill killed John*.

Middle form: The subject instigates an action that affects itself in such a way that it undergoes a change of state; e.g. the equivalents in languages with a clear middle of *Bill killed himself*, *Bill combed his hair*, *Bill sat (seated himself)*, *Bill turned*.

Passive form: The subject, a patient, is in an altered state from undergoing a change of state caused by the action instigated by an independently functioning agent; e.g. *Bill was killed (by John)*.

In understanding the nature of voice contrast, the analogy of spatial directionality of action alluded to by von der Gabelentz (1861) is helpful. Gabelentz's analogy can be diagrammatically represented as below (see Barber 1975, Stein 1979, Kemmer 1993):

(5)



(X = agent; Y = patient)

Notice that between active and passive, the contrast is maximized, as in active action emanates within the subject and develops outwardly and reaches the patient, while in passive the action emanates in another entity apart from the subject, which functions as a receiving end of the action. This diametric opposition, as depicted in (5a) and (5b), is expressed by an active sentence and a personal passive. Impersonal passives, on the other hand, do not maximize the contrast, as their subject slot is not filled by a referential nominal functioning as a recipient or the goal of the action. Middle is truly in the middle between active and passive in that its subject is both the instigator and the recipient of an action at the same time. Again, the active-middle opposition does not maximize contrast to the extent the opposition between active and personal passive does, and this fact has an important bearing on the diachronic development of middle forms. The prevalence of personal passives over impersonal passives and the instability of the middle voice system are considered to be a reflection of the following principle, which appears to be an eminently plausible functional principle of language.

(6) *Principle of Maximization of Contrast*

Maximize the contrast in grammatical meaning as much as possible.

3. VOICE DOMAIN

In section 2, we referred to the traditional views of voice citing Kruisinga (1925). The traditional understandings of voice appear correct on three accounts; namely in that 1) they consider voice to represent a meaning relationship between the grammatical subject and the action denoted by the verb, 2) that they refer to the category of grammatical subject, and 3) they refer to action. We have already discussed the first point in the preceding section. Reference to the grammatical subject in the discussion of the active-passive opposition predicts that this opposition typically obtains in those languages in which the category of grammatical subject is firmly

established, this category embracing the agent of a transitive clause and the sole argument of an intransitive clause (see Dixon 1979). Indeed, in those languages, e.g. ergative-type languages and Philippine languages, where the category of grammatical subject is not clearly established, the active-passive opposition usually does not obtain. Finally, reference to action in the traditional understandings of the active-passive opposition is an important one, as it has direct relevance to the task of defining the domain in which voice contrast obtains.

Unfortunately, the traditional approaches did not take this reference to action quite seriously, resorting, instead, to the notion of syntactic transitivity in defining the voice domain. This mistake was inherited by the transformational grammar, which, in a formal manner, required the structure to have a direct object for it to undergo the passive transformation. However, the notion of action is independent of syntactic transitivity, though a transitive clause typically expresses an action. That is, action is expressed by both intransitive verbs and transitive verbs, and accordingly the action-based understanding of voice would predict that the active-passive opposition obtains with both intransitive verbs and transitive verbs as long as they denote actions. Here again, the exclusion of impersonal passives has had an unfortunate consequence, as intransitive-based passives are typically realized as impersonal passives.

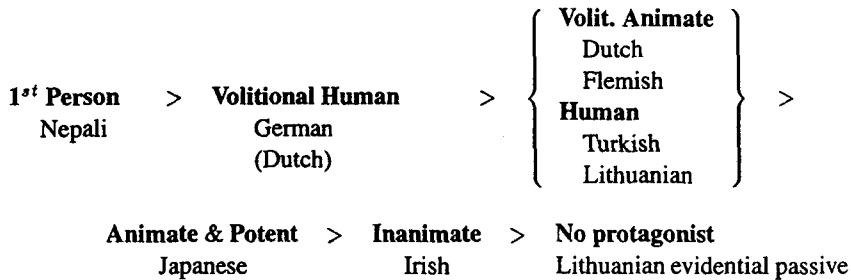
A proper perspective, of course, is to take both impersonal and personal passives into account in the consideration of the voice domain. Relational Grammar (Perlmutter and Postal 1983) has made some progress in this respect in distinguishing two types of intransitive verbs, unergatives and unaccusatives. By grouping the unergative predicates with transitive verbs as those having a subject in their basic clause structure, in contrast to unaccusative predicates whose basic clause structure contains an object rather than a subject, Relational Grammar has succeeded in accounting for the basic fact that both transitive and intransitive verbs of action define a domain in which active-passive contrast obtains.

The basic correctness of this approach is shown by the contrast exhibited by the Dutch examples below, in which non-action intransitive verbs fail to yield grammatical impersonal passives.

(7) Dutch (Perlmutter 1978)

- a. *Er wordt door de kinderen op het ijs geschaatst.*
'It is skated by the children on the ice.'
- b. **In dit weeshuis wordt er door de kinderen erg snel gegroeid.*
'In this orphanage, it is grown fast by the children.'
- c. **In de zomer wordt er hier vaak verdronken.*
'In the summer it is often drowned here frequently.'

However, it turns out that languages rarely demarcate the voice domain as consistently along the action/inaction line as suggested by the Relational Grammar analysis. Instead, languages are sensitive to different parameters derived from those properties making up the idealized agent, namely the first person agent. The following is a summary of the parameters arranged in a hierarchic pattern with language samples exemplifying the boundaries of the voice domain for intransitive verbs.

(8) *Parameters for intransitive-based passives*

The most restricted are languages like English that do not permit impersonal passives. Next comes Nepali, which permits intransitive-based passives only with implied first person agent. The restriction of this construction, exemplified below, apparently is a manifestation of the volitionality requirement as seen in Dutch intransitive-based passives in that the volitional status of an agent is directly accessible only to the speaker, namely the first person.

(9) Nepali (Indo-Aryan):

- a. *mə ghər-ə gə-ē* (Active)
I.NOM home-to go-1SG.PAST
- b. *ghər-ə gə-i-io* (Impersonal passive)
home-to go-PASS-3SG.PAST
'(I/*You/*He) went home.'

(Bandhu 1973:54-55)

The interpretation of the first person-restriction of the Nepali intransitive-based passives in terms of the notion of evidentiality seems correct in view of the fact that such forms are usable with a second-person agent interpretation only when they are used as questions (Pokharel 1996). This case shows an interesting contrast to the Lithuanian evidential passive, which has the widest domain of voice contrast, but which disclaims the speaker's direct knowledge of the reported incident (see below).

The additional data below indicate that Nepali has generalized the first person volitional agent requirement to embrace other agent-like first persons such that controllable actions and processes contrast with uncontrollable processes.

- (10) a. *mə hās-ē*
I.NOM laugh-1SG.PAST
'I laughed.'
- b. *hās-i-io*
laugh-PASS-3SG.PAST
'(I/*You/*He) laughed.'
- (11) a. *mə birami bhə-ē*
I.NOM ill become-1SG.PAST
'I became ill.'
- b. *birami bhə-i-io*
ill become-PASS-3SG.PAST
'(I) became ill.'

(Bandhu 1973:55)

- (12) a. *mə-lai cila-io*
I-DAT itch-3SG.PAST
'I itched.'
- b. **cila-i-io*
itch-PASS-3SG.PAST
- (13) a. *mə-lai jadō bhə-io.*
I-DAT cold become-3SG.PAST
'I felt cold.'
- b. **jadō bhə-i-io.*
cold become-PASS-3SG.PAST
- (14) a. *mə-lai dukhə bhə-io*
I-DAT sadness become-3SG.PAST
'I am sad.'
- b. **dukhə bhə-i-io*
sadness become-PASS-3SG.PAST

The languages drawing the line at the volitional human protagonist have already been illustrated by the Dutch examples in (7), which is paralleled by German as well. However, there is apparently some inconsistency among Dutch speakers as to whether the protagonists of impersonal passives are restricted to only humans or they can include animals. Frajzyngier (1982: 283) reports that the following sentences referring to animal activities 'were emphatically rejected by a Dutch speaker who is not a linguist':

- (15) *Er wordt geblaft/gehinnikt/gekrast/gemiauwd.*
'It is (being) barked/whinnied/crowed/meowed.'

My Dutch-speaking consultants, mostly linguists, accept these sentences without any problems aligning themselves with certain Flemish speakers, who accept the Flemish equivalents quite readily. There are thus two groups of Dutch speakers, one rejecting forms such as (15), like German speakers, and the other accepting them.

The Relational Grammar account of impersonal passives in terms of the unaccusative hypothesis comes into conflict with all the languages that permit impersonal passives below the line of the volitional protagonist. For example, we see a clear contrast between the situation exemplified by Dutch in (7) and the following, where both Turkish and Lithuanian permit non-volitional protagonists to be involved in impersonal passive forms. Notice that Lithuanian impersonal passives permit the overt expression of the protagonist in the genitive form.

- (16) Turkish (Biktimir 1986:59-60)

- a. *Göl-de boğul-un-ur.*
lake-LOC drown-PASS-AOR
'In the lake is drowned/People drown in the lake.'
- b. *Bu yetimhane-de çabuk büyü-n-ür.*
this orphanage-LOC quickly grow-up-PASS-AOR
'Is grown up quickly in this orphanage/They grow up quickly in this orphanage.'

(17) Lithuanian (Emma Geniušienė, p.c.)

- a. *Vaik-ai greit auga.* (active)
 children-NOM.PL fast grow
 'Children grow fast.'
- a'. *Vaik-ų greit auga-m-a.* (impersonal passive)
 children-GEN fast grow-PRES.PASS.PARTNEUTR
 'Children do grow fast.'

Both Turkish and Lithuanian, however, do not permit non-human protagonists in their impersonal passive so that the Turkish forms below are not possible when interpreted as referring to the activities carried out by animals, and the Lithuanian forms are all ungrammatical.

(18) Turkish (Biktimir 1986:59-60)

- a. **Orman-da insan-lar-dan kaç-ıl-ıyor.*
 forest-LOC human-PL-ABL run away-PASS-PROG
 '(It) is run away from people in the forest.'
- b. **Gece sokak-ta havlan-ıl-ıyor.*
 night street-LOC howl-PASS-PROG
 '(It) is howled on the street at night.'

(19) Lithuanian (Emma Geniušienė, p.c.)

- a. **Triušiai greit auga-m-a.*
 rabbit-GEN.PL fast grow-PRES.PASS PART-NEUTR
 'Rabbits grow fast.'
- b. **Triušiai visada bėga-m-a nuo žmoni-u.*
 rabbit-GEN.PL always run-PRES.PASS PART-NEUTR from people-GEN
 'Rabbits always run away from people.'
- c. **Ten vilkai staugia-m-a.*
 there wolf-GEN.PL howl-PRES.PASS.PART-NEUTR
 'There is howling of wolves.'
- d. **Žolė greit auga-m-a.*
 grass-GEN fast grow-PRES.PASS.PART-NEUTR
 'It is grown fast by grass.'

Comparison of Dutch/Flemish and Turkish/Lithuanian indicates that while the former have generalized the constraint along the parameter of volitional action to take in animal activities, the latter have generalized along the humanness parameter taking in non-volitional human protagonists while barring animal protagonists. In both developments, it is clear that extensions of the category of the human agent are involved.

The intransitive-based passives in Japanese present a slight complication. First of all, Japanese passives of this type increase valency in contradistinction to the normal pattern, where both intransitive-based passives and transitive-based passives reduce valency. Secondly, the Japanese forms convey the sense of inconvenience that the speaker associates with the referent of the passive subject. For example, (20b) below involves a newly introduced subject, which is not part of the valency structure of the verb root, and furthermore it conveys the sense that Taro was adversely affected by the event of Hanako's dying.

(20) Japanese

- a. *Hanako ga sin-da.*
 NOM die-PAST
 ‘Hanako died.’
- b. *Taroo wa Hanako ni sina-re-ta.*
 TOP DAT die-PASS-PAST
 ‘Taro was adversely affected by Hanako’s dying.’

Despite these characteristics that set the Japanese adversative passive apart from the intransitive-based passive constructions in other languages, the Japanese adversative passive is sensitive to the agent-based hierarchy. Action verbs are easily converted to adversity passive, while process verbs with an inanimate subject resist the conversion, as indicated by the contrast below:

(21) Japanese

- a. *Taroo wa kyuuni Hanako ni hasira-re-ta.*
 TOP suddenly DAT run-PASS-PAST
 ‘Taro was adversely affected by Hanako’s running suddenly.’
- b. **Taroo wa kyuuni to ni aka-re-ta.*
 TOP suddenly door DAT open-PASS-PAST
 ‘Taro was adversely affected by the door’s opening suddenly.’

The cut-off point for the adversative passive in Japanese falls between these two extremes at the point where animates and potent inanimates are separated from other inanimates, and thus the following involving animate and potent inanimate protagonists are all grammatical:

(22) Japanese

- a. *Taroo wa inu ni hitobanzuu hoe-rare-ta.*
 TOP dog DAT all night howl-PASS-PAST
 ‘Taro was adversely affected by the dog’s howling all night.’
- b. *Taroo wa ame ni hura-re-ta.*
 TOP rain DAT fall-PASS-PAST
 ‘Taro was adversely affected by the rain’s falling.’
- c. *Taroo wa natu kusa ni oisige-rare-ta.*
 TOP summer grass DAT grow vigorously-PASS-PAST
 ‘Taro was adversely affected by the summer grass’s growing vigorously.’

According to Noonan (1994), Irish has an impersonal passive construction distinct from the personal passive construction. The impersonal passives can be formed from both intransitive and transitive verbs, and ‘with the exception of sentences formed with the copular verb *is*, all Irish sentences have an impersonal counterpart...’ (284). Another class of exception is sentences with non-referential subjects such that (24a’) and (24b’) are ungrammatical in contrast to forms such as (23a’) and (23b’) with referential protagonists.

(23) Irish (Noonan 1994:288, p.c.)

- a. *Seasann carranna anseo.*
 stand cars here
 ‘Cars stop here.’

- a'. *Seasta anseo.*
stand-IMPERS here
'One stops here/Cars stop here.'
- b. *Tá an féar fás.*
is the grass growing
'The grass is growing.'
- b'. *Táhar ag fás.*
is-IMPERS at growing
'There is growing (going on)'
- (24) Irish (Noonan 1994:289)

- a. *Tá sé ag cur fearthainne go trom.*
is it at put-NOMIN rain-GEN ADV-PART heavy
'It is raining hard.'
- a'. **Táhar ag cur feathainne go trom.*
is-IMPERS at put-NOMIN rain-GEN ADV-PART heavy
- b. *Tá sé fuar.*
is it cold
'It is cold.'
- b'. **Táhar fuar.*
is-IMPERS cold
'It is cold.'

The widest possible intransitive-based passive is represented by the so-called evidential passive in Lithuanian, which permits passive forms involving not only various kinds of non-human and inanimate protagonist, but also no referential protagonist as in (25d).

(25) Lithuanian evidential passives (Emma Geniušienė, p.c.)

- a. *Čia žolės aug-t-a.*
here grass.GEN grow-PAST.PASS.PART-NEUT
'It seems grass grew here.'
- b. *Čia žolės bū-t-a.*
here grass.GEN be-PAST.PASS.PART-NEUT
'It seems there used to be grass here.'
- c. *Tų triusių taip greit aug-t-a kad apsidairy-t ne-spėy-au.*
those rabbits so fast grow-PAST.PASS.PART-NEUTR that look.roud-INF
not-manage-1SG.PAST
'(Judging by the result) these rabbits grow so fast that I never noticed how.'
- d. *Nakt-į snig-t-a.*
night-ACC snow-PAST.PASS.PART-NEUTR
'(It seems) it snowed at night.'
(cf. *Nakt-į snig-o.* 'It snowed at night.')

Compared with the parameters defining the voice domain for intransitive verbs, those pertaining to the voice domain for transitive verbs appear less conspicuous. Indeed, passivization of transitive verbs has been treated fairly mechanically on the basis of syntactic transitivity in terms of the presence of a direct object as in the traditional grammar and the transformational

grammar. The difference between the two cases is partly due to the fact that while intransitive verbs divide themselves into two classes—action verbs with an agent subject and process verbs involving a patient subject—transitive verbs tend to be action-process verbs involving an agent subject and a patient object. Yet, even a language such as English that appears to have generalized the passive domain to a considerable extent imposes a restriction such that purely stative verbs do not permit passive conversion even if the active structure contains a direct object. Verbs such as *lack*, *become*, *fit*, *suit*, *resemble*, *weigh*, etc. do not passivize despite the fact that they take a direct object. In other words, the very basic idea that the active-passive opposition pertains to the relationship between the subject and the action denoted by the verb is still applicable to English albeit the language has generalized the domain to include non-action verbs such as *love* and *dislike*.

Languages that place stricter restrictions on transitive-based passives than English appear to be concerned with the two components that contribute to the degree of semantic transitivity, namely the nature of the agent and the nature of the patient (Hopper and Thompson 1980).

German permits a passive sentence like (26b), where a non-volitional entity is functioning as an agent. But unlike English many non-volitional transitive verbs resist passive formation as shown in (27) (Moorcroft 1985:161,163).

- (26) a. *Bomben zerstörten die Stadt*
 Bombs destroyed the city
 ‘Bombs destroyed the city.’
 b. *Die Stadt wurde von Bomben zerstört.*
 The city became by bombs destroy.PP
 ‘The city was destroyed by bombs.’
- (27) a. **Das Paket wurde von ihm erhalten.*
 the package became by him receive.PP
 ‘The package was received by him.’
 b. **Das Schloss wurde von einem Graf besessen.*
 the castle became by a count own.PP
 ‘The castle was owned by a count.’
 c. ??*Die Theorie wurde verstanden.*
 the theory became understand.PP
 ‘The theory was understood.’

Moreover according to Moorcroft (1985:164) ‘[t]ransitive verbs of perception are normally non-volitional e.g. *sehen* ‘to see’, *hören* ‘to hear’, *riechen* ‘to smell’, and *fühlen* ‘to feel, sense,’ and their passives, even if not strictly ungrammatical, are usually felt to be very questionable and something a native speaker would go to great length to avoid.’

Pandharipande (1981:16–7, 163–4) points out that Nepali, Kashmiri, Hindi, Punjabi, and Marathi (all Indo-Aryan languages) as well as Kannada (Dravidian) all require verbs to express a volitional act if they were to be made passive. Thus, as shown in the following examples from Marathi, transitive verbs expressing a volitional act yield passive forms, but non-volitional verbs do not even if they are syntactically couched in the transitive frame in the active.

- (28) a. *to patra lihito*
 he.NOM letter.N write.M
 ‘He writes a letter.’

- b. *tyačya-kadun patra ihil gata.*
 he-by letter.N write goes.N
 'The letter was written by him.'
- (29) a. *mi saglya pišya haravlya*
 I.NOM all bags lost
 'I lost all the bags.'
- b. **majhya-kadun saglya pišya haravlya gelya*
 I-by all bags lost went
 'All the bags were lost by me.'
- (30) a. *Ram te pustak wisar-la*
 Ram the book.N forget-3SG.M.PAST
 'Ram forgot that book.'
- b. **Ram-kadun te pustak wisar-le ge-le*
 Ram-by the book.N forget go-3SG.N.PAST
 'The book was forgotten by Ram.'

(Prashant Pardeshi p.c.)

Since inanimate entities cannot be volitional agents, those transitive sentences containing an inanimate subject have no corresponding passives, showing the following contrast:

- (31) a. *Ram zada todto*
 Ram.NOM trees breaks.M
 'Ram breaks the trees.'
- b. *Ram-kadun zada todli zatat*
 Ram-by trees broke go
 'The trees are broken by Ram.'
- (32) a. *vara zada todto*
 wind trees breaks
 'The wind breaks trees.'
- b. **varya-kadun zada todli zatat*
 wind-by trees broke go
 'The trees were broken by the wind.'

(Pandharipande 1981:170)

It is noteworthy that in Marathi non-volitional events and states are often not encoded in the transitive frame in the first place, and in such situations semantics determines both syntactic transitivity and the passivization possibility in a consistent manner. Compare the following with the Marathi transitive structure as shown in (28a) and (31a).

- (33) a. *Ram-ca-hat-un paise harav-le.*
 Ram-of-hand-from money.N lose-3SG.N.PAST
 'Ram lost money'
- b. **Ram-kadun paise haravle ge-le*
 Ram-by money lose go-3SG.N.PAST
 Intended as 'Money was lost by Ram.'
- (34) a. *Ram-la ghar avad-le*
 Ram-DAT house.N like-3SG.N.PAST
 'Ram liked the house.'

b. **Ram-kadun ghar avadle ge-le.*

Ram-by house go-3SG.N.PAST

Intended as 'The house was liked by Ram.'

(Prashant Pardeshi p.c.)

Marathi thus appears to place a stricter semantic restriction on passivization than English and German, permitting only verbs expressing volitional actions (and hence with a human agent) to undergo passivization. In some other languages transitive verbs permitting passivization are more narrowly circumscribed, where the degree of affectedness of the object becomes a pertinent parameter.

Parengi (or Gorum) is a member of the Southern group of Munda languages and is spoken in the Koraput District of Orissa, India (see Aze 1973). In this language passive formation with the suffix *-nu?* (which has variants *-u?* and *-?*) is restricted in such a way that it applies to verbs expressing a situation in which an object undergoes a change in state or position, i.e. a situation in which a change in state or position is effected.

(35) a. *no?on muiri pe?n-u lu?ru*
he muiri blow-INF PRES CONTINUOUS

'He is blowing a muiri (reed instrument).'

b. *muiri pe?n-nu? lu?ru*
muiri blow-INF.PASS PRES CONTINUOUS

'A muiri is being blown.' (by someone the speaker cannot see)

(36) a. *no?n ar'i payt'i di?-ru*
he that work finish-PAST

'He finished that work.'

b. *ar'I payt'I di?-ru? ui?*
that work finish-PAST.PASS AUXILIARY(go).PASS

'That work was finished.'

(Aze 1973:286)

According to Aze (1973:288), 'the transitive verbs whose Object is an Undergoer which is affected but not effected' like the following cannot be passivized.

(37)	<i>solo?</i>	'hide'	<i>per</i>	'to burn' (of chilies)
	<i>bam</i>	'receive'	<i>sada?</i>	'sting'
	<i>ting</i>	'shoot'	<i>lom</i>	'bite'
	<i>san</i>	'chase'	<i>po?</i>	'stab'
	<i>ol</i>	'write'	<i>gulom</i>	'know, understand'
	<i>irsur</i>	'offer liquid	<i>gu?n</i>	'scratch' (an itch)
		drop by drop'	<i>la?</i>	'hit'

While it is not entirely clear how the verb *pe?n* 'to blow' in (35) can be an effecting action, while the verb *per* 'to burn (of chilies)' is only affecting without effecting a change of state. Aze (1973:288) thinks that his division of transitive clauses according to 'the extent to which the Undergoer is affected has worked well and almost water-tight' with respect to the passive derivation in Parengi.

A similar restriction is observed in Woleaian (a Trukic member of the Micronesian family). According to Sohn (1975:76), this language has only about forty passive verbs showing the voice alternation of the following type, where the form *ye* in (38a) indexes a (non-overt) third person agent of the transitive clause, while in (38b) it indexes the only nominal *filooras* *we* 'the flower' of the intransitive passive clause:

- (38) a. *Ye sa feshingi lag filooras we.*
 he PERF pick go flower the
 ‘He has picked the flower.’
 b. *Ye sa feshing-eg lag filooras we.*
 it PERF pick-PASS go flower the
 ‘The flower has been picked.’

Sohn (1975:122) tells us that ‘[o]nly certain transitive verb stems whose meanings can be “physically changeable” or at least “psychologically changeable” may appear with the [passive] suffix.’

The language that exhibits the most restricted range of the active-passive opposition is Sinhala, where the verb *kanawa* ‘to eat’ has been recruited as a passive auxiliary. There are only a handful of verbs that show the active-passive opposition in terms of this auxiliary. These are verbs expressing violent activities such as killing and hitting as shown below:

(39) Sinhala

- a. *Ranjit Chitra-Ta gaha-nawa.*
 -ACC/DAT hitIND
 ‘Ranjit hits Chitra.’
 b. *Chitra Ranjit-gen guTi ka-nawa.*
 -ABL hit eat-IND
 ‘Chitra is hit by Ranjit.’

- (40) *pahara kanawa* ‘be attacked’ *baeTa kanawa* ‘get bashing’
 maerum kanawa ‘be killed’

The observation above indicates that different languages circumscribe passivizable verbs differently according to the notion of activity. While English includes in the group mental activities and even some mental states as well as the situations involving inanimate entities acting on another, German excludes non-volitional perception verbs. Though German permits action verbs whose subjects are inanimate, Indo-Aryan languages like Marathi and Hindi impose a strict volitionality requirement barring inanimate events from undergoing passivization. While these restrictions are concerned with the nature of the agent responsible for a transitive event, languages may impose a restriction in relation to the affectedness of the patient, thereby restricting the class of verbs undergoing passivization even further, as in Parengi and Woleaian, where the class of passivizable verbs includes only those expressing activities leading to a change of state. Thus, although the actual size of the verb class that permits the expression of the active-passive opposition varies from one language to another, it is clear that such a class invariably contains the verbs denoting actions or activities. Indeed, we would be very surprised if we found a language that permitted verbs like *forget*, *know*, and *resemble* to undergo passivization while disallowing verbs such as *kill*, *break*, and *open*. In other words, the class of verbs permitting the active-passive alternation is prototypically defined with those denoting volitional actions leading to a change of state in the object as its central members. The actual size of this class of verbs in different languages reflects different degrees of extension from the core members permitted by the language, English instantiating one of the highly liberal languages, and Woleaian and Sinhala very restrictive ones.

Having examined the very basic parameters circumscribing the voice domains for both transitive and intransitive verbs, we now turn to other parameters.

4. DISTRIBUTION AND THE FORM OF PASSIVES

Because the past studies tended to treat what we call impersonal passives differently from (personal) passives, it is not easy to ascertain the extent to which impersonal passives are found in the world's languages. However, recent interests in this construction-type have brought its fairly widespread nature to our attention. For example, all the branches of the Indo-European family have impersonal passives. Yet, impersonal passives do not seem to be nearly as prevalent as personal passives. Langacker's (1976) survey of the Uto-Aztecan family indicates that of the eighteen languages studied closely, twelve have both personal and impersonal passives, six have only personal passives, while none has only impersonal passives. Dayley's (1983) survey of voice systems of Mayan languages shows no trace of impersonal passives despite the fact that most of these languages have rich voice systems, each language exhibiting two or more passive constructions in addition to antipassives.

The prevalence of personal passives does not preclude the possibility for a situation in which only impersonal passives are found. Thus, Ute (Givón 1988) and Central Pomo (Mithun 1988) have constructions identifiable as impersonal passives in the absence of personal passives, but these situations seem to be much rarer than the opposite situation of having personal passives in the absence of impersonals. Impersonal passives are closely, but by no means exclusively, associated with intransitive verbs, whereas personal passives are closely associated with transitive verbs, whose objects correspond to their subjects. Occasionally, however, we find impersonal constructions with transitive verbs, where the direct object retains its grammatical object function. And there is a great deal of controversy whether such constructions should be analyzed as passive. The following examples, involving the Norwegian periphrastic passive and the morphological passive in Seri (Hokan family), illustrate the impersonal constructions under discussion and their similarities to personal passives.

(41) Norwegian (Åfarli 1992:25)

- a. *Det vart slått eit esel.* (impersonal passive)
it became beaten a donkey
'There was beaten a donkey.'
- b. *Eit esel vart slått.* (personal passive)
a donkey became beaten
'A donkey was beaten.'

(42) Seri (Marlett 1984:229)

- a. *?iši-y-a:ʔ-kašxa* (impersonal passive)
1PL.OBJ-MOOD-PASS-bite.SG.MULT
'Someone/something bit us.'
- b. *iʔp-y-a:ʔ-kašni* (personal passive)
1SG.SU-MOOD-PASS-bite.SG
'I was bitten.'

Because of the retained object in these transitive-based impersonals, many consider them to be active rather than passive, but such a view is motivated only if passives are understood narrowly as those having a referential subject, i.e. personal passives. The impersonals under consideration share both morphological and semantic properties with personal passives, and as

such they should be treated as passives. (After all, a passive clause may contain an object, as in *Mary was given a book*.) Morphological identity between impersonals and passives is clear in the examples in (41) and (42), and both constructions share the grammatical meaning that the action emanates in an entity apart from the subject (see section 2 above). This grammatical meaning trivially obtains in impersonals as these constructions, by definition, do not have a referential subject nominal.

The above discussion of the form of passives lays a foundation for the survey of the distribution of impersonal passives across languages, which is summarized in the following table:

(43) *Distribution of impersonal passives*

	Intransitive	Transitive
English, Mayan languages	No	No
Kannada, Marathi	No	Yes
German, Turkish, Cl. Greek	Yes	No
Norwegian, Spanish, Hindi, Ute	Yes	Yes

The question why English lacks impersonal passives has received some attention. Keenan (1975) proposes the "Subject Presence Condition," which in effect requires a language like English to have subject noun phrases in surface main clauses. This requirement does not permit "non-promotional" passives in English, as they do not create a surface subject. This, account, however, fails to explain why English does not permit impersonals with pleonastic pronouns such as *it* and *there*; e.g. **It was danced here* or **There was beaten a goat*. Different questions, other than the question of surface subject, must be asked in order to characterize the lack of impersonal constructions in languages like English. As it turns out, the English-type of language falls out of the two parameters accounting for the distributional pattern of impersonals in other languages. The relevant parameters are the following:

(44) *Patient parameters:*

- (a) A patient must be involved in passive formation?
 Yes: Kannada, Marathi (no intransitive-based impersonals permitted)
 No: Others that permit intransitive-based impersonal;
 e.g. German, Norwegian
- (b) A patient, if present, must be aligned with subject position in passive?
 Yes: German, Turkish (those that do not allow transitive-based impersonals)
 No: Others that permit non-promotional transitive-based impersonals;
 e.g. Norwegian, Spanish, Ute.

The combination of "(a) yes" and "(b) yes" yields the English-type, in which no impersonal passive is permitted; answering "yes" to (a) prevents the language from having intransitive-based passives, while answering "yes" to (b) allows only personal passives of transitive verbs.

(45) *Patient parameters*

(a)	(b)	
Yes	Yes	English, Mayan languages
Yes	No	Kannada, Marathi
No	Yes	German, Turkish
No	No	Norwegian, Spanish, Hindi, Ute

There seems to be order of preference in the language types examined here. The order of English-type > German-type > Norwegian-type > Kannada-type is motivated by the Principle of Maximization of Contrast (6). The English-type, in which only personal passives occur,

permits only those passives (with patient subjects) that show a maximal meaning contrast vis-à-vis actives (with agentive subjects)—see earlier discussion in section 2. The German-type, which permits intransitive-based impersonals but no transitive-based impersonals, maximizes the contrast when possible, i.e. when the transitive object is available for personal passives. The Norwegian-type, which permits impersonals of both transitive and intransitive verbs, is less favored because it does not maximize the contrast even when the chance is given (with the transitive object). Finally, the least popular Kannada-type, which allows transitive-based impersonals while barring intransitive-based impersonals, is an oddball, as it strives toward maximization of contrast by barring intransitive-based impersonals, but it fails to maximize the contrast when the chance exists with the transitive object.

When we turn to the parameters relating to the agent of passives, we recognize an interesting parameter that has an important diachronic implication.

(46) *Agent parameters:*

(a) Overt occurrence of an agent in passive?

Personal passives:

No–Nahuatl (Sullivan 1988), Quechua

May–English, German, Turkish

Must–none?

Impersonal passives:

No–Nahuatl, Turkish, Ute, Kannada

May–German, Irish, Lithuanian

Must–none?

(b) Nature of an overt “agent”

Reverse Empathy Hierarchy

natural force > instrument > institution > generic human > specific human
> 3rd person > SAPs

The first agent parameter (46a) is a familiar one, which has received focused attention in the past. The English-type, in which an agentive phrase of a personal passive is optional, is most commonly found. Siewierska (1984:35) states that an agent always occurs in passive clauses of Indonesian, Palauan, and the Dravidian language Kota. Among these, Indonesian clearly permits omission of an agent in its passive clauses. The status of the Palauan passive is controversial (see De Wolf 1988). Kota shows an agreement between the instrumental nominal and the verb in what looks like a passive clause. However, other than the occurrence of the agent in the instrumental form, the clause in question shows no passive morphology in the verb or elsewhere.

Impersonals limit the expression of an agent more severely than personal passives. Turkish, for example, permits an agent in personal passives (rather grudgingly) but prohibits its appearance in impersonal passives.

Less recognized in the general discussion regarding the agentive phrase in passives is the second agent parameter (46b), which has a very important bearing on the diachronic development of passive constructions. There are, however, language-specific studies of passives that include relevant discussions. For example, Maldonado (1992) recognizes the difference in acceptability of Mexican Spanish reflexive passives depending on the nature of an agent (and the tense), illustrating his point with the examples below:

(47) Spanish (Maldonado 1992:251, 255)

a. *La puerta se cerró con/por viento / ??/*por Juan.*

‘The door was closed with/by the wind/ by John.’

- b. *La taza se rompió con/por la pelota / ??/*por Juan.*
'The cup was broken with/by the ball/ by John.'
- c. *Esos problemas se resuelven por autoridades competentes.*
'Those problems are solved by competent authorities.'
- d. *??Esos problemas se resolvieron por autoridades competentes.*
'Those problems were solved by competent authorities.'
- e. **Esos problemas se resovieron por Juan.*
'Those problems were solved by John.'

The Arizona Tewa suffixal passive, which is said to prohibit an overt expression of an agent, permits an instrumental or non-human "agent," as seen below:

(48) Arizona Tewa suffixal passive (Kroskrity 1985: 310, 317)

- a. **hēi sen-di hēi tú na-c'á:la-t:í.*
that man-OBL that meat 3SG.STA-cut-PASS
'The meat was cut by that man.'
- b. *na:bí ciyó-d hēi tú na-c'á:la-tí.*
I-GEN knife-OBL that meat 3SG.STA-cut-PASS
'The meat was/has been cut with my knife.'
- c. *nan-di phé-mele na-khá:be-n.*
sand-OBL stick-vessel 3SG.ST-break.PASS
'The crate was crushed by sand.'

A similar observation can be made with the reflexive-passives in Modern Greek (Warburton 1970: 70), Russian, and Italian, in which the agent is easier to express overtly in the order of the reverse empathy hierarchy given in (46b). Southern Tiwa, as described by Allen and Franz (1983), allows in its passive clauses only a third person agent to the exclusion of the speech act participants, as is the case with certain passive forms in Mayan languages (see Dayley 1983 and England 1988). For example, whereas (49a) is possible, (49b,c) are ungrammatical.

(49) Southern Tiwa (Allen and Franz 1983:305)

- a. *seuanide-ba te-mu-che-ban.*
man-INST 1SG-see-PASS-PAST
'I was seen by the man.'
- b. **te-muche-ban 'i-ba.*
1SG-see-PASS-PAST 2-INSTR
'I was seen by you.'
- c. **a-mu-che-ban na-ba.*
2SG-see-PASS-PAST 1-INSTR
'You were seen by me.'

The agent parameter in (46b), in conjunction with the general development pattern of passives, makes an interesting prediction concerning the maturity of passive constructions. But this topic requires a brief discussion of the development of passives.

One major source of passives is the middle voice forms, which in turn may arise from reflexive expressions as in Romance and Slavic languages (see Geniušienė 1987). It appears that the middle voice category is instable with a tendency to develop (further) into the passive category, as in a number of Mayan languages, where the passive morphology is related to a middle formant that is no longer productive (see Dayley 1983). This diachronic tendency is

again an expression of the Principle of Maximization of Contrast. The contrast between active and middle is not as maximal as that between active and passive, as discussed in section 2, and as the term "middle" suggests itself.

The development of a passive from a middle form, as in many other historical changes, appears to be gradual not only in the replacement of the function, but also in the development of the passive meaning. The particular middle form that gives rise to a passive form expresses a spontaneous event (as in Spanish *La taza se rompió* 'The cup broke'), and thus the first passive meaning that emerges is the one more compatible with this kind of spontaneous meaning, i.e. where the external force is construable as something that naturally brings about a change; hence the preference for natural forces, general or collective agency, and for routinized activities in the generic tense. That the passive form from other sources may also follow the predicted pattern is shown by the English *get*-passive, which does not easily combine with a specific human agent.

These considerations make the following prediction. If a language contains two or more passive constructions, the one allowing an overt agent high in the Empathy Hierarchy (or low in the Reverse Empathy Hierarchy in (46b)) is a more mature or older construction. This predication is borne out in Romance and Slavic languages, where the *be*-passives, which permit all kinds of agent, are older than the reflexive passive, which permit only a restricted range of agent, as seen in (47). Between the English *be*-passive and the *get*-passive, the former is the older form and permits an expression of an agent more liberally than the latter.

In addition to the diachronic reason for the late development of the passive agents low in the Reverse Empathy Hierarchy, there is another force at work that discourages these to occur in the peripheral adjunct position. That is, the speech act participants (SAP's) and those high on the Empathy Hierarchy are most likely to be placed in the syntactically most prominent position, namely subject position, because the speaker tends to empathize with them and to treat them as central entities in the described event. This centrality principle, together with the diachronic pressure for guaranteeing a gradual change, has a blocking effect on the Principle of Maximization of Contrast in such a way that, while the latter pressures the language to include an explicitly stated agent high on the Empathy Hierarchy, the former leads to a tendency to avoid such a structure. The universal tendency for a passive structure not to have an overt agent seems to indicate that such a structure is the best compromise meeting these two opposing forces.

NOTE

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