

## Structure is not syntax: passive functions in *Tukang Besi*

Models of passives all involve the empirical observation that the subject of the active clause is demoted in a passive. The subject (/external argument) is recoded as an adjunct (or, in some languages, omitted altogether; rarely, it is an oblique), and the object (/internal argument) typically assumes the ‘status’ of the external argument. (Different frameworks have different mechanisms for achieving this result; Baker et al 1989, Jaeggli 1986, Kratzer 1996, Bresnan 2001 present different views.)

In the *Tukang Besi* passive the agentive external argument is removed from the clause (though still implied), and the patient-like internal argument does ‘advance’ to an external position in the clause, as can be demonstrated through case marking, positional possibilities with respect to adjuncts, and (optionally) verbal agreement. It does not, however, change in terms of its syntactic behaviour. The properties that are exclusively associated with external arguments are not shared with the patient in a passive clause, most notably none of the properties that allows for textual cohesion. In many ways, then, this passive resembles what has been described as a ‘demoting’ passive, in which while the agent changes status, the patient does not.

This absence of a subject-like nominal can be seen as posing a challenge for Burzio’s generalisation, as has been best demonstrated by Dubinsky and Nzwanga (1994) and documented also for Polish, Ukrainian, Icelandic, Hindi, and (in passing) Nanai and Ute, with varying analyses and solutions. The twist brought to the debate by the *Tukang Besi* data is that while there is no argument that behaves as a subject syntactically, there is one that has all the morphological *and structural* trappings of an external argument. In other words, the patient in the passive in *Tukang Besi* is morphosyntactically singled out in a way that no other argument may be, but is not syntactically privileged. Unlike other descriptions of ‘subjectless’ passive clauses, in which the only argument present is an object, the *Tukang Besi* passive has an argument that appears to be a subject, when examined from a morphological and structural perspective, but shows none of the syntactic properties of such an argument. At the same time it is clearly an argument: the morphological characteristics, and positional variability, of obliques and adjuncts are not found with the passive theme, and other tests, such as relativisation, show it to be a term. It is, then, an internal argument with the structural and morphological trappings of being external, in a clause that has no true external argument, a serious challenge to both Burzio’s generalisation and to the notion of structurally-determined grammatical properties. Dubinsky and Nzwanga have discussed similar data from Lingala, and the discussion of impersonal passives in the literature in general (Polish and Ukrainian are well-cited, as well as Icelandic, Ute and Nanai) has raised the issue of ‘demoting’, as opposed to promoting, passives. The *Tukang Besi* data differs from these in that the morphosyntactic coding of the passive theme, in terms of both structural position, case marking, and agreement matches very closely that of a ‘true’ subject.

The talk shall present the morphosyntactic tests that are relevant for establishing external argument status (as a constituency arrangement) and grammatical subjecthood, and then demonstrate that while the constituency tests clearly indicate an external position for the passive patient, the syntactic tests do not show the status of subject. Observing that the passive is used to end discussion of topics in discourse, we consider a semantic analysis of the data, positing the passive as involving a closure operator. This analysis has the advantage of accounting for a number of other morphosyntactic structures that would otherwise have been dealt with independently.

## Illustrative data

### Non-passive clauses

Position of a subject/external argument shown to be VP-external through position following adjunct constituents, such as *di ito* 'up there', which cannot appear VP-internally.

- (1) [<sub>VP</sub> *No-tinti* ] *di* *ito* *na* *kalambe*.  
3<sub>R</sub>-run OBL:PST there(up) NOM girl  
'The girls ran up there.'
- (2) [<sub>VP</sub> *no-'ita te 'obu* ] *di* *ito* *na* *kalambe*.  
3<sub>R</sub>-see CORE dog OBL:PST there(up) NOM girl  
'The girls saw the dogs up there.'
- (3) \* [<sub>VP</sub> *no-'ita di ito te 'obu* ] *na* *kalambe*.  
3<sub>R</sub>-see OBL:PST there(up) CORE dog NOM girl

Case marking also indicates the VP-external status; further arguments can be found in Donohue (1999, 2004).

Privileged syntactic status of the external argument shown by testing the scope of floating quantifiers:

- (4) *Saba'ane no-tinti na kalambe*.  
all 3<sub>R</sub>-run NOM girl  
'All of the girls ran.'
- (5) *Saba'ane no-'ita te 'obu na kalambe*.  
all 3<sub>R</sub>-see CORE dog NOM girl  
'All of the girls saw the dogs.'  
\* 'The girls saw all of the boys.'

External position of the theme in a passive clause demonstrated by the possibility of it appearing following a locative adjunct.

- (6) [<sub>VP</sub> *No-to-'ita* ] *di* *ito* *na* *'obu*.  
3<sub>R</sub>-PASS-see OBL:PST there(up) NOM dog  
'The dogs were seen up there.'

Lack of syntactic privileges of the external argument in a passive clause shown by the inability to control floating quantifiers.

- (7) \* *saba'ane no-to-'ita na 'obu*  
all 3<sub>R</sub>-PASS-see NOM dog  
For: 'All of the dogs were seen.'

### References

- BAKER, MARK, KYLE JOHNSON AND IAN ROBERTS. 1989. Passive arguments raised. *Linguistic Inquiry* 20: 219-251.
- BRESNAN, JOAN. 2001. *Lexical functional syntax*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- BERMAN, JUDITH. 1999. Does German Satisfy the Subject Condition? In Miriam Butt and Tracy Holloway King, eds., *Proceedings of the LFG99 Conference*. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
2003. *Topics in the clausal syntax of German*. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- BURZIO, LUIGI. 1986. *Italian Syntax*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- DONOHUE, MARK. 1999. *A grammar of Tukang Besi*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
2004. Voice oppositions without voice morphology. Paper presented to the 11th Annual Meeting of the Austronesian Formal Linguistics Association. Zentrum für Allgemeine

Sprachwissenschaft, Typologie und Universalienforschung (ZAS), Berlin, Germany,  
23-25 April 2004.

- DUBINSKY, STANLEY, AND S RON CHIMANGO. 1996. Passive and stative in Chichewa: Evidence for modular distinctions in grammar. *Language* 72: 749-781
- DUBINSKY, STANLEY, AND MAZMBA NZWANGA. 1994. A challenge to Burzio's generalization: Impersonal transitives in western Bantu. *Linguistics* 32: 47-64.
- JAEGGLI, OSVALDO. 1986. Passive. *Linguistic Inquiry* 17: 587-633.
- KEENAN, EDWARD L. 1985. Passive in the world's languages. In Timothy Shopen, ed, *Language Typology and syntactic description: Volume I, clause structure*, 243-281. Cambridge University Press
- KIBORT, ANNA. 2001. The Polish passive and impersonal in Lexical Mapping Theory. In Miriam Butt and Tracy Holloway King, eds., *Proceedings of the LFG01 conference*: 163-183. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- KRATZER, ANGELIKA. 1996. Severing the external argument from its verb. In Johan Rooryck and Laurie Zaring, eds., *Phrase structure and the lexicon*: 109-138. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- MALING, JOAN. 2004. A New Passive in Icelandic. Talk, University of California at San Diego. Wednesday, March 6.
- MOHANAN, TARA. 1995. The notion logical object in Hindi. MS, National University of Singapore.