

Voice

“... the role of the subject in the action expressed by the verb” (Schachter) e.g., active, passive.

Japanese, (from Jordan, *Japanese: The Spoken Language*)

- (1) a. Sensei ga tomodati o
teacher SUBJ friend OBJ
yobi-masi-ta. **active**
call-FORMAL-PAST
The teacher called (my) friend.
- b. Tomodati wa sensei ni
friend TOP teacher DAT
yob-are-masi-ta. **passive**
call-PASS-FORMAL-PAST
(My) friend was called by the teacher.

Passive Across Languages

Nitinaht, (Wakashan, British Columbia). From Perlmutter and Postal.

ch'ixwatsa?p ?a ox bowach
frighten aux case deer

?aq ?oyoq Ralph.
the case Ralph

‘‘The deer frightened Ralph.’’

ch'ixwatsa?ab't ?a ox Ralph
frighten-pass aux case Ralph

?oxwit bowach ?aq.
case-pass deer the

‘‘Ralph was frightened by the deer.’’

Mandarin. From O'Grady et al.

Zhu laoshi piye le wode kaoshi.
Zhu professor marked my test
''Professor Zhu marked my test.''

Wode kaoshi bei Zhu laoshi piye le.
my test prep. Zhu professor marked
''My test was marked by Professor Zhu''

Malagasy. Austronesian, Madagascar. From Perlmutter and Postal.

Nividy ny vary ho an'ny ankizy
bought the rice for the children

ny vehivavy.
the woman

‘‘The woman bought the rice
for the children.’’

Novidin' ny vehivavy
bought-pass the woman

no an'ny ankizy ny vary.
for the children the rice

‘‘The rice was bought
for the children by the woman.’’

Latin. From Perlmutter and Postal.

Magister puero:s laudat.
teacher-nom boys-acc praise
‘‘The teacher praises the boys.’’

Pueri: a: magistro: laudantur.
boys-nom prep. teacher-abl praise-pass
‘‘The boys are praised by the teacher.’’

a: magistro: pueri: laudantur.
prep. teacher-abl boys-nom praise-pass
‘‘The boys are praised by the teacher.’’

Tzotzil, Mayan, Mexico. From O’Grady et al.

La’ sna’kan ti vi~nike ti xpe’tule.
seated the man the Peter
‘‘Peter seated the man.’’

Ina’kanat ti vi~nike yu?un ti xpe’tule.
seat-pass the man prep. the Peter
‘‘The man was seated by Peter.’’

West Greenlandic Eskimo. From Perlmutter and Postal.

Gimmi-p miiraq kiivaa.
dog-erg child-abs bite
‘‘The dog bit the child.’’

Miiraq gimmi-mik kiitsippuq.
child-abs dog-instr bite-pass
‘‘A child has been bitten by a/the dog.’’

Icelandic, a Germanic language. From Zaenen and Maling.

Logreglan tok Siggu fasta.
police-nom took Sigga-acc fast-acc
‘‘The police arrested Sigga.’’

Sigga var tekin fost af logreglunni.
Sigga-nom was taken fast-nom p. police-the-dat
‘‘Sigga was arrested by the police.’’

Cross Linguistic Generalization

If all of the constructions illustrated above are so different, why do we call them all passives? In other words, what do all of the passives have in common? Is it possible to explain what they have in common in terms of verb morphology, word order or case marking?

Uses of Passive

- Focus on a participant other than the agent.
- Make the sentence impersonal (doesn't matter who the agent is). (Some languages have passives of intransitive verbs.)
- Other uses, e.g., adversitive in Japanese.