

Comparing the passive-causative ambiguity in Sakha and Korean

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1. Sakha

A causative sentence can also be interpreted as passive. As noted in Yeon (2000:256), “the use of the causative suffix to express passive is a wide-spread phenomenon in all the Turkic languages (though they have, like Korean, a special passive marker)” (ibid. for references). Funnily enough for us, he uses the Sakha data (drawn from Xaritonov 1963:64) which we can further recite here: “... causative verbs, expressing actions performed independently of the grammatical subject’s will, can acquire a meaning close to that of passive verbs:

(1) Kini yk-ka ytyr-tar-byt.

He dog-dat bite-caus-past

‘He was bitten by the dog.’

(‘Due to his own fault, he let the dog bite him’).

As noted by Yeon 2000 on the basis of Korean, what allows such causative constructions to be interpreted passively is the fact that they share some crucial properties with passives, both semantically and morpho-syntactically. On the semantic side, the relevant features are: 1) the subject does not exert greatest control over the action and 2) the subject is affected by the action, in other words, it makes others do something that affects the subject himself. On the morpho-syntactic side, causative and passive share some homonymous suffixes and, in addition, the causee in the causative sentence is marked by the same postposition as the agent in passive.

The semantic arguments can be carried over to Sakha. Compare causative passive (1) with its active counterpart (2). Although the verb is marked with a causative suffix in (1), the action is not caused by the nominative subject. The thematic specification of active (2) seems to be preserved in (1) above. In both the action takes place independently of *kinini* 'he', the subject in (1) and the object in (2), and in both the dog seems to have the same 'causal' properties. As we can see, no new arguments are introduced. Compare this to a regular causative in (3) which introduces a causer.

(2) Yt kinini ytyr-da.

dog he-acc bite-past

'The dog bit him.'

(3) Misha kinini ykka ytyr-tar-da.

Misha he-acc dog-dat bite-caus-past

'Misha made the dog bite him.'

Even in cases where three noun phrases are present, no new argument seems to have been introduced. In (4) the direct object is possessed by the

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subject and the non-causative version of (4) is (5) with two noun phrases, the second one a possessive DP. Hence, it looks like the possessive DP ‘Aisen’s leg’ has been split in two and possessor raising took place.

(4) Aisen ynaxxa ataqyn ükte-t-te.
Aisen cow-dat foot-3-acc step.on-caus-past
‘Aisen had a cow step on his leg.’

(5) Ynax [_{DP} Aisen ataqyn] üktee-te.
cow [_{DP} Aisen leg-3-acc] step.on-past
‘A cow stepped on Aisen’s leg.’

Causative passives are only possible with transitive predicates. The dative argument (cause/agent) can be omitted which is expected given its similarity with a by-phrase (witness the English translations). The external argument can be affected both adversely and beneficially. The examples above involved malefactive passives. A benefactive passive is given below.

(6) Kesha ubajygar iit-ter-er.
Kesha elder.brother-3-dat provide.for-caus-past
‘Kesha is provided for by his elder brother.’

Another difference between real causatives and causative passives concerns case marking. Unlike proper causatives which allow the causee to have three different case endings, in passives only a dative causee is allowed: e.g. ‘elder brother’ in the preceding example cannot be instrumental or accusative.

Not all causative passives have corresponding causatives (7).

- (7) a. Kasparov Karpovy kyaj-da.
Kasparov Karpov-acc defeat-past
'Kasparov defeated Karpov.'
b. Karpov Kasparovka kyaj-tar-da.
Karpov Kasparov-dat defeat-caus-past
'Karpov was defeated by Kasparov.'
c. *Trenner Kasparovka Karpovy kyaj-tar-da.
trainer Kasparov-dat Karpov-acc defeat-caus-past
'The trainer made Kasparov defeat Karpov.'

Sometimes a verb can have a regular causative, a transparent causative passive and a non-transparent causative passive, sometimes - a regular causative and a non-transparent causative passive but no transparent one. The first case is exemplified by *tap* 'hit': it has a regular causative *taptar* 'make hit', a transparent passive *taptar* 'be hit' and also a nontransparent passive *taptar* 'be caught/entrapped in'. The second case can be exemplified by *xaajtar* derived from *xaaj* 'corral, lock in': causative 'make corral, lock in', lexicalized passive 'be delayed, held back' but no transparent passive 'be locked in'.

The nominative argument in causative passives must be animate. The same requirement holds of causatives derived from transitive verbs (remember that causative passives can only be derived from transitives). This in contrast to causative alternates of intransitive predicates which allow inanimate causers.

- (8) a. Lena/*kuul Michilge kötöx-tör-dö.
Lena/sack Michil-dat lift-caus-past
'{Lena/*A sack} was lifted by Michil.'
b. Lena/*Kir Aanaqa muostany suuj-tar-da.
Lena/dirt Aana-dat floor-acc wash-caus-past

‘{Lena/*The dirt} made Aana wash the floor.’

c. Lena/Kyhalqa kinini ülele-t-te.

Lena/hardship he-acc work-caus

‘{Lena/Hunger} made him work.’

2. Korean

Korean passive suffixes are identical to some of the causative suffixes thus resulting in ambiguity although ambiguity which arises at the word level does not always project to the sentence level (Yeon 2000; *ibid.* for references). According to Yeon 2000, causative and passive sentences involve different derivations, only the results turn out to be identical. The ambiguity is resolved in the context and it is also considerably dependent on the speaker

Causatives:

i) the causative version of active transitive (9) involves introducing the possessor ‘grandmother’ as a causer, as in (10)

ii) this results in a causative-reflexive sentence, i.e. the direct object is part of the causer, hence the latter is affected

(9) Sonca-ka halmeni-uy heli-lul palp-ess-ta
grandson-nom grandmother-poss waist-acc step.on-past-dec
‘The grandson walked on grandmother’s back.’

(10) Halmeni-ka sonca-eykey (caki-uy) heli-lul palp-hi-ess-ta
Grandma-nom grandson-dat (self-poss) waist-acc step.on-caus-past-dec
‘Grandmother made her grandson walk on her back.’

Passives:

- i) the possessor ‘grandmother’ of (9) is promoted to the status of direct object marked with accusative case (possessor-raising)
- ii) the result (11) is a so-called possessor-ascension construction
- iii) the next step is to passivize this double-accusative sentence in (11) which results in a retained-object passive construction (12)

(11) Sonca-ka halmeni-lul heli-lul palp-ess-ta
grandson-nom grandmother-acc waist-acc step.on-past-dec
‘The grandson walked on grandmother’s back.’

(12) Halmeni-ka sonca-eykey heli-lul palp-hi-ess-ta
Grandma-nom grandson-dat waist-acc step.on-pass-past-dec
‘Grandmother got her back stepped on by her grandson (accidentally, when she was playing with him on the floor.’

Passive reading of a causative sentence is possible if the verb retains an object from a corresponding double-accusative sentence and the retained object is physically contiguous to the subject. Therefore the input (possessor ascension constructions) are subject to the same constraint of contiguity (between the possessor and the possessed).

3. Sakha: a preliminary attempt at an analysis

Passives and unaccusatives both involve the same mediated chain of events, at the head of which we find the real cause and at the foot - the event which is brought about. However, they describe different links: a passive presents the whole chain (the causer can always be expressed as a by-phrase), an unaccusative concentrates on the last link only - on the final

state into which something is brought (see the discussion in Reinhart (2000:38)). This is the case in English which has two different derivations for passives (13) and unaccusatives (14).

(13) The door was opened.

(14) The door opened.

In Sakha, however, the similarity between passives and unaccusatives seems to be reinforced more vigorously: both passive and unaccusative seem to put most emphasis on the final stage of the causal chain leading to the event in question. This finds its reflection in the fact that with passives an agent is seldom expressed. In (a) it doesn't matter who built the house: if it mattered, (29b) would be chosen

(15) Djie (?*mass uuhunan) tut-ulun-na.
house (carpenter-instr) build-pass-past
'The house was built (?*by the/a carpenter).'

(16) Djieni mas uuha tut-ta.
house-acc carpenter build-past
'The/A carpenter built the house.'

Usually a verb which allows its causative to be interpreted as passive also allows a regular passive. (17-19) all describe the same situation. The impossibility of an instrumental agent in (19) is due to the similarity of passives and unaccusatives: although (17-19) involve similar causal chains, the real passive tends to describe only the last link of the chain. If we want to describe the last link and at the same time keep the initial link (representing the causer) in picture as is done in English passives, we can choose

an active sentence or a causative passive. However, an active sentence abstracts away from the last link which is not the desired result. A causative passive, on the contrary, stresses the last link as desired while the initiating link is implicitly present and can be expressed overtly

(17) Lena Aiseny möx-tö. Active

Lena Aisen-acc scold-past

‘Lena scolded Aisen.’

(18) Aisen (Lenaqa) möx-tör-dö. Causative passive

Aisen (Lena-dat) scold-caus-past

‘Aisen was scolded (by Lena).’

(19) Aisen (*Lenanan) möq-ülün-ne. Regular passive

Aisen (*Lena-instr) scold-pass-past

‘Aisen was scolded (*by Lena).’

4. Transitive subject experiencers

Some representatives of this class are: *abaahy kör* ‘hate’, *ahyn* ‘feel sorry for’, *taptaa* ‘love’, *söbülee* ‘like’, *suoxtaa* ‘miss’, *senee* ‘despise’. Transitive subject experiencers cannot be causativized (21), nor can they be put in the regular passive (marked with -n-/-lyn-) as in (22) and (23). Instead, causative passive is used: see the examples in (24) and (25).

(20) Sardaana Michili abaahy kördö.

Sardaana Michil-acc hate-past

‘Sardaana hated Michil.’

(21)*Aisen Sardaanaqa Michili abaahy kör-dör-dö.

Aisen Sardaana-dat Michil-acc hate-caus-caus

Intended: 'Aisen made Sardaana hate Michil.'

(22)*Sardaana söbüle-n-ne.

Sardaana like-n-past

Intended: 'Sardaana was liked.'

(23)*Sardaana abaahy kör-ülün-ne.

Sardaana hate-pass-past

Intended: 'Sardaana was hated.'

(24)Sardaana söbüle-t-te.

Sardaana like-caus-past

'Sardaana was liked.'

(25)Sardaana abaahy kör-dör-dö.

Sardaana hate-caus-past

'Sardaana was hated.'

This explains the difference between Sakha and Korean: while Sakha allows both benefactive and adversative causative passives, in Korean only the latter are allowed.

References

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ABSTRACT

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This paper examines the passive-causative ambiguity in Sakha and compares it to Korean. In Sakha and Korean a causative verb can be interpreted as passive if certain conditions are met. The underlying structure in both languages is Causer-Nom Causee-Dat Object-Acc V-Caus. The conditions which must be met for this construction to be interpreted passively are mostly semantic in nature in both languages: the event is unwillingly permitted by the subject; the subject is not the NP with greatest control over the action; the subject is affected by the action, i.e., it makes others do something that affects the subject itself. Korean passive suffixes are identical to some of the causative suffixes which may partially be responsible for the ambiguity. However, as noted previously, the ambiguity which arises at the word level does not always project to the sentence level (e.g. Yeon 2000). In Sakha there is no morphological ambiguity between causative and passive suffixes. Another difference concerns the interpretation of the external argument. In Korean the event must be unwillingly permitted by the subject as a result of which the latter is adversely affected. This results in the adversely-affected passive reading, or adversative passive. In Sakha the external argument can be affected both adversely and beneficially. Thus passive meaning is possible with causatives of verbs 'to love' and 'to praise'. It will be argued that the analysis offered for Korean

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cannot be applied to Sakha and a different approach in terms of argument structure operations will be entertained.