

The third point to be made is that it has been observed that the English passive often does not correspond to the *bèi* construction in Mandarin. In other words, what is normally best translated into an English passive sentence is often not a *bèi* sentence in Mandarin, and, conversely, an English passive sentence often does not translate into a *bèi* sentence in Mandarin. Here are some examples in which a Mandarin nonpassive sentence corresponds to an English passive sentence:

- (26) a. nèi — bēn shū yǐjīng chūbān le  
that — CL book already publish CRS

That book has already been published.

- b. \*nèi — bēn shū yǐjīng bèi chūbān le  
that — CL book already BEI publish CRS

- (27) a. nǐ — de bāoguǒ shōu — dào le  
you — GEN package receive — arrive CRS

Your package has been received.

- b. \*nǐ — de bāoguǒ bèi shōu — dào le  
you — GEN package BEI receive — arrive CRS

- (28) a. zhèi — ge yǎnjiǎng dēi jìlù — xià  
this — CL lecture must record — descend

This lecture should be recorded.

- b. \*zhèi — ge yǎnjiǎng dēi bèi jìlù —  
this — CL lecture must BEI record —

xià — lái  
descend — come

- (29) a. tā shuō de huà rén — rén dōu dōng  
3sg say NOM speech person — person all understand

What s/he said was understood by everyone.

- b. \*tā shuō de huà bèi rén — rén  
3sg say NOM speech BEI person — person  
dōu dōng  
all understand

As shown by the above examples, the *b* sentences in (26)–(29), which are the *bèi* sentences, are unacceptable because they do not convey a message of adversity. The *a* sentences in (26)–(29), which are normally considered the equivalents of the English passive sentence in translation either from English to Mandarin or vice versa, are topic-comment constructions in which the direct object of the verb is serving as the topic. In other words, when one wishes to say something about the direct object of the verb in Mandarin, one simply makes the direct object into a topic. Thus, the topic prominence of Mandarin together with the restriction of the *bèi* construction to adverse messages combine to reduce the usage of the passive in the language. Any student of Chinese who is also familiar with an Indo-European language will notice that the passive construction is much more rare in Mandarin speech and writing than in the speech and writing of the Indo-European languages.

Another situation in which English uses a passive and Mandarin does not is when the focus is on the agent of the transitive action verb. For example, if one is discussing a novel and wishes to make it clear that his/her mother is the author, one may choose a passive construction in English to convey the message, as in (30):

- (30) This novel was written by my mother.

The Mandarin counterpart of (30) will be (31) *a*, a *shì* . . . *de* construction (see section 20.3 of chapter 20 on the *shì* . . . *de* construction), but not (31) *b*, a *bèi* passive construction. Sentence (31) *b* is unacceptable because 'writing a novel', in general, does not have any pejorative implication, though, as was pointed out above, such sentences as (25) can be found in 'translate':

- (31) a. zhèi — běn xiǎoshuō shì wǒ mǔqīn  
this — CL novel be I mother  
xiě de  
write NOM

This novel was written by my mother.