DITRANSITIVE ACTIVE-PASSIVES IN MALAYALAM: A BRIEF NOTE

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Previous literature recognizes that some South Asian Languages (henceforth SALs) including Malayalam have active-passives with transitive predicates (Mahajan 1994; Chandra and Sahoo 2013). These active-passives do not demote their external arguments, a property that defines English (canonical) passives. Rather, these DPs, though they appear as agentive *by*-phrases, are actually the surface subjects. However, there are not enough studies with ditransitive predicates to suggest if they too yield similar active-passive structures. Additionally, there is no literature on whether cross-linguistic typological generalizations like that given by Woolford (1993) are also found in SALs. This paper tries to remove these lacunae by presenting novel data with Malayalam ditransitive predicates to show (i) that they too have active-passives and (ii) when the external arguments are not present, they have symmetric short passives, where either the direct or the indirect object occupies the subject position.

The paper is organized as follows. Section one briefly introduces the reader to some recent studies on long passives/active-passives with transitive predicates in SALs, especially Malayalam. We then present our main questions regarding ditransitive long passives that we wish to address here. Section two details on the nature of Malayalam ditransitive long passives, suggesting that they are active-passives, and not canonical passives. Section three puts forth a cross-linguistic typological distinction with ditransitive short passives, as has been discussed by Woolford (1993). In this section, we also try fitting Malayalam short passives into Woolford's typological schema. Section four concludes the paper.

1. Passives/Active-passives in SALs

Long passives with overt agentive *by*-phrases in some of the SALs are different from long passives in English. The former, unlike the latter, show neither subject demotion nor object promotion. One such SAL is Hindi-Urdu. Mahajan (1994) was the first to observe that in Hindi-Urdu, the agentive *by*-phrases retain some of the prototypical subject properties, though they appear as adjuncts on the surface. Consider a typical passive construction in Hindi-Urdu (1):

(1) raam yuddh me maaraa gayaa
Ram battle in kill-pfv go-pfv
'Ram was killed in the battle by Mili.'

In the above given construction, the internal argument or the logical object *raam* seems to occupy the subject position of the sentence. The external argument, on the other hand, fails to realize itself overtly. However, when it does get manifested, it must be marked by the instrumental marker *dwaaraa* (2).

(2) (mili dwaaraa) raam yuddh me maaraa gayaa
(Mili by) Ram battle in kill-pfv go-pfv
'Ram was killed in the battle by Mili.'

Mahajan contends that these constructions, despite their surface similarities with English passives, are only passive-like, but not true passives. He instead terms them as 'active-passives'. The properties of active-passives as opposed to those of regular passives are: (a) the underlying object actually does not become the surface subject and, (b) the underlying subject retains its subject-hood properties.

Like Hindi-Urdu, Malayalam also has active-passives whose surface morphology suggests that the logical object is the derived subject, and the logical subject with an instrumental marker is an adjunct.Compare a passive construction (3) with its active counterpart (4):

(3) (jo:N-in-aal) raaman aDikka-ppeTT-u
(John-instr) Ram beat-pass-pfv
'Ram was beaten (by John).'

(4) jo:N raaman-e aDicc-u
John-nom Ram-acc beat-pfv
'John beat Ram.'

Notice that the agent in Malayalam passives as in (3) is marked with an instrumental marker *–aal* and it appears as an adjunct on the surface. However, an in-depth analysis of such constructions suggests that surface morphology alone cannot be the deciding factor of the subject and object properties of arguments in Malayalam passives. By applying diagnostics like anaphor binding and control, it has been claimed that passives in Malayalam are active-passives as the underlying objects in these constructions remain the object and the underlying subjects retain its subject-hood properties (Chandra and Sahoo 2013).

With this information on regular passives/active-passives in SALs, more particularly in Malayalam, we move to the next section that details on the nature of Malayalam ditransitive passives. We illustrate through novel data that the ditransitive long passives are also active-passives.

2. Malayalam ditransitive long active-passives

In this section, we present novel data of ditransitive long active-passives from Malayalam. The language passivizes its ditransitive verbs and generates structures where the external argument occupies the subject position.

An instance of a Malayalam ditransitive is given below:

(5) jo:N kuTTi-e mili-kka koDutt-u
John-nom child-acc Mili-dat give-pfv
'John gave the child to Mili.

In (5), the subject *jo:N* carries the unmarked nominative case, while the direct object is marked with accusative *-e* and the indirect object is marked with dative *kka*. Ditransitive long passives in Malayalam are formed with predicates like *koDutt-u*, *cedi-kk-a* etc. However, for the present work, we restrict to three different predicates *nalki* ('offer'), *kaNichu* ('show') and *ayyacu* ('send').

We observe that the agentive *by*-phrases of all the three predicates, when passivized, display subject-hood properties like reflexive binding and control. This indicates that Malayalam also has ditransitive active-passives. Consider (6)-(8):

6(a) $\underline{\text{mili}_i \text{ tanne-tanne}_i \text{ simhatt-inu nalk-i}}$
Mili$_i$ self$_i$-acc lion-dat offer-pfv
'Mili offered herself to the lion.'

(b) $\underline{\text{mili}_i\text{-yaal tanne-tanne}_i \text{ simhatt-inu nalka-ppeTT-u}}$
Mili$_i$ by self$_i$-acc lion-dat offer-pass-pfv
'Mili offered herself to the lion.'

7(a) $\underline{\text{mili}_i \text{ tanne-tanne}_i \text{ mini-kka kaNNaaDi-yil kaNic-u koDutt-u}}$
Mili$_i$ self$_i$-acc Mini-dat mirror-in show-pfv give-pfv
'Mili showed herself to Mini in the mirror.'

(b) $\underline{\text{?mili}_i\text{-yaal mini-kka tanne-tanne}_i \text{ kaNNaaDi-yil kaNicu-koDukka-ppeTT-u}}$
Mili$_i$ by Mini-dat self$_i$-acc mirror-in show-give-pass-pfv
'Mili showed herself to Mini in the mirror.'

8(a) $\underline{\text{mili}_i \text{ swapnat-il tanne-tanne}_i \text{ joN-inte aDutt-ekku ayacc-u}}$
Mili$_i$ dream-in self$_i$-acc John-gen near-dat send-pfv
'Mili sent herself to John in her dream.'

(b) $\underline{\text{mili}_i\text{-yaal swapnat-il tanne-tanne}_i \text{ joN-inte aDutt-ekku ayakka-ppeTT-u}}$
Mili$_i$ by dream-in self$_i$-acc John-gen near-dat send- pass-pfv
'Mili sent herself to John in her dream.'

All these examples have their external arguments A-bind the reflexive nominals. This indicates that just like in active sentences, external arguments of the ditransitive passives are the sentential subjects. Another instance of A-binding by the agentive by-phrase is given in (9); note that in this case, the anaphor is the indirect object.

(9) $\underline{\text{mili}_i\text{-yaal tannik-tanne}_i \text{ oru pustakam nalka-ppeTT-u}}$
Mili$_i$ by self$_i$-dat one book offer-pass-pfv
'Mili offered a book to herself.'

Additional evidence for the subject-hood status of external arguments in ditransitive active-passives comes from their property to control into a complement clause. Consider:

10(a) $\underline{\text{jo:N}_i \text{ mary}_j\text{-oDu [PRO}_{i/*j} \text{ kattu engane eZutaNam ennu] co:dicc-u}}$
John$_i$ Mary$_j$-soc [PRO$_{i/*j}$ letter how write-deb comp] ask-pfv
'John asked Mary how to write the letter.'

(b) $\underline{\text{?(jo:N}_i\text{-in-aal) mary-oDu [PRO}_{i/*j} \text{ kattu engane eZutaNam ennu] co:dikka-ppeTT-u}}$
John$_i$ by Mary$_j$-soc [PRO$_{i/*j}$ letter how write comp ask-pass-pfv
'Mary was asked by John how to write the letter.'

In (10a) the active subject *jo:N* and in (10b) the agentive *by*-phrase *jo:N-in-aal* both control into the complement clause.

To summarize, our claim is that Malayalam has active-passives with ditransitive predicates. The external arguments in these constructions do not appear as adjuncts through a process of detransitivization. Rather, they are realized overtly by moving to the subject position of the sentences.

3. Woolford's schema

Woolford (1993) puts forward an analysis for the symmetric-asymmetric variation among ditransitive passives in the world's languages. She explains the syntactic mechanisms that allow some languages to have either of the two internal arguments to move to the subject position, while prohibiting some others from targeting only one of them as the subject.

For Woolford, it is the attachment site of the passive morpheme that decides whether the DO or the IO moves to the subject position. Along with this, she proposes two different mechanisms to derive the constructions. The first is 'The Case Absorption Principle' (as in Baker 1988 and Baker, Johnson and Roberts 1989), which states that the passive morpheme is an argument that absorbs the accusative case of the predicate. The second is the mechanism of Accusative Case Blocking (ACB), which states that no verb root can assign structural accusative case to the highest unmarked argument in its argument structure.

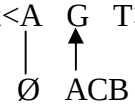
In more precise terms, ACB is a mechanism, which targets the argument that occupies the highest position in the thematic hierarchy. Following the thematic hierarchy, the Agent is higher than the Goal, which is higher than the Theme. When the ACB applies, it blocks structural accusative case assignment to the Agent, if it is the highest argument. If the agent is suppressed, it targets the next highest argument (i.e. the Goal) in the hierarchy, suppressing its case. Below we discuss in detail how Woolford applies these two mechanisms to derive different types of ditransitive passives. Take the steps leading to symmetric passives first (11):

11(a) Vroot<A G T>
↑
ACB
(b) [Vroot] [passive morpheme]
(c) <G Vpass T> / <T Vpass G>

In (11a), the verb has three arguments. ACB applies and blocks the assignment of structural accusative case to the thematically highest argument, i.e. the Agent. Next, in (11b), the passive morpheme attaches to the verb and absorbs the case of one of the internal arguments. As a consequence, any one of the object NPs moves to the subject position, giving rise to symmetric passives (11c). In English-type asymmetric passives, on the other hand, the mechanism works in a different way (12).

12(a) [Vroot + passive morpheme]

(b) Vroot<A G T>



Ø ACB

(c) <G Vpass T>

In this variant of asymmetric passive, as shown in (12a), the passive morpheme attaches at the root level of the verb suppressing the agent. The goal qualifies as the next highest argument and is denied an accusative case by ACB (12b). As a result, the goal remains case deprived and is forced to move to the subject position during passivization. However, the theme remains in situ (12c).

Chichewa-type asymmetric passives come to encode a major difference when compared to the English-type, though in both types, only one internal argument - the applicative argument - may move to the subject position. The derivation is shown below (13):

13(a) [Vroot + applicative + passive morpheme]

(b) Vroot<A B (appl) T>

Ø

(c) <B (appl) Vpass T>

Woolford's explanation for the Chichewa-type is that the ACB does not play any role in the derivation of these passives. As shown in the derivation, both applicative and passive morphemes are attached at the root level (13a). As a result, the Agent is suppressed and the accusative case of the applicative argument is taken away by the passive morpheme (13b). The applicative argument is forced to move to the subject position for case (13c). The proximity of the applicative argument to the passive morpheme restricts the other internal argument from becoming the derived subject.

To conclude this section, we have observed that ditransitive passives are assumed to derive from three place predicates through a detransitivization process. As a result, the external argument gets demoted. Further, the IO or the DO or both get promoted to the subject position. This IO/DO promotion decides whether the ditransitive passive is symmetric or asymmetric.

In the next sub-section, we try fitting Malayalam short passives into Woolford's typological schema.

3.1. Malayalam short ditransitive passives

Malayalam also has short ditransitive active-passives without an agentive *by*-phrase. Consider (14):

(14) meri-kka oru pustakam koDukka-ppeTT-u
Mary-dat one book give-pass-pfv
'Mary was given a book.'

In (14), *meri-kka* is the IO and *oru pustakam* is the DO. However, the agentive *by*-phrase is absent. The task for us is to find out if the IOs behave in a similar way in Malayalam short ditransitive active passives as they do in the long ones. I apply some of the usual subject-hood diagnostics once again. Let us first use reflexive binding first with all the three predicates that we have considered earlier. Reflect on the relevant examples (15-17).

(15) mili$_i$-ye tannik-tanne$_i$ kaNiccu koDukka-ppeTT-u
Mili$_i$-acc self$_i$-dat show-pfv give-pass-pfv
'Mili was shown to herself in the mirror.'

(16) mili$_i$-ye tannik-tanne$_i$ nalka-ppeTT-illa
Mili$_i$-acc self$_i$ –dat offer-pass-pfv-neg
'Mary was not offered to herself.'

(17) mili$_i$-ye tannik-tanne ayacc-u koDukka-ppeTT-illa
Mili$_i$-acc self$_i$ -dat send-pfv give-pass-pfv-neg
'Mili was not sent to herself.'

In all these sentences, the dative IO *tannik-tanne* is A-bound by the accusative DO *mili-ye*, suggesting that the DO is in the subject position.

There are also some instances where the IO c-commands the DO reflexive, signaling that the IO has raised to the subject position. Consider (18):

(18) fraank$_i$-(in)-u tanne$_i$ ka:N-icc-u koDukka-ppeTT-u[1]
Frank$_i$-dat self$_i$-acc show-pfv give-pass-pfv
'Frank was shown to himself.'

Another interesting thing to notice here is that the direct object is never marked oblique or dative in such constructions. In (19), the 2nd person direct object is not marked by a dative marker; it retains its accusative case value. Therefore, even though Malayalam allows both IO and DO to raise to spec, TP, they differ in their case and agreement relations.

(19) (jon-in-aal) enn-e/*eni-kka meri-kka kaaNiccu koDukka-ppeTT-u
(John by) I-acc /*I-dat Mary-dat show give-pass-pfv
'By John, I was shown to Mary.'

To summarize, we have demonstrated that in Malayalam short passives without the agentive *by*-phrases, either the DO or the IO may move up to occupy the subject position. This suggests that Malayalam passives with ditransitives fit into the category of asymmetric passives.

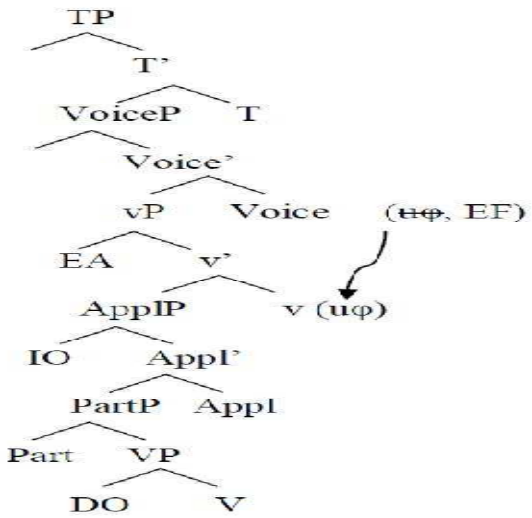
Now we will propose an analysis for Malayalam ditransitive active-passives and short symmetric passives borrowing insights from Roberts' (2008) feature inheritance account.

[1]Some dialectal variations are noted in Malayalam as some speakers find the IO binding the reflexive DO (*tanne-tanne*) odd.

Roberts' analysis for canonical passives assumes feature inheritance between Voice and *v* head. He maintains that Voice possesses uφ and EF features. When passives are formed, the features are preserved in Voice. As a consequence, vP is left devoid of uφ and hence cannot license case to IA, which in turn is base-generated as the complement of the VP. The external argument is, on the other hand, base generated as the specifier of vP. The PartP moves to the spec, VoiceP carrying IA along with it through 'smuggling'. Consequently, the IA ends up in a position higher than the EA, and this enables it to be the closest DP to T. Therefore IA is able to establish an Agree relation with T, and is marked as nominative. Finally, the EA gets an oblique case from VoiceP and appears with the preposition 'by'.

We extend the following structure for ditransitive active-passives in Malayalam; see (20)[2].

(20)

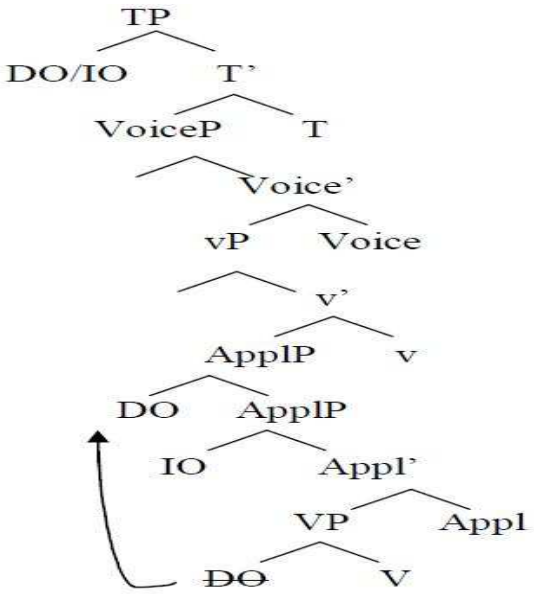


In (20), voice has uφ and EF features. Voice passes on its uφ feature to *v*, while retaining EF. *v* probes down, Agrees with and case-values the DO. The IO located in the specifier of ApplP is already case-marked by Appl head and will not intervene in the Agree relation between *v* and DO. The external argument, on the other hand, moves to the edge of VoiceP (triggered by EF) and gets case-valued by it. It is also the closest to the T head and hence, moves up to the Spec of TP for EPP reasons.

[2]Ditransitives have received lots of attention in the literature- Larson 1988; Marantz 1993; Kidwai 2000; Pylkänen 2000; McGinnis 2001; Bhattacharya and Simpson 2011; Malhotra 2014). We do not make a high/low applicative distinction for ditransitives in the three languages since there are no noticeable syntactic distinctions between them. 2000; McGinnis 2001; Bhattacharya and Simpson 2011; Malhotra 2014).

For symmetric short passives in Malayalam, we suggest that since the Appl head is capable of assigning case to an argument, it must be phi-complete. It also has an additional EF that allows a lower argument (DO in this case) to move to its edge. See a schematic representation in (21):

(21)



Once DO moves to the outer specifier of ApplP, both IO and DO are equi-distant from T. Therefore, either of these two arguments can move to the Spec of TP and become the subject of the sentence, without violating locality restrictions. Thus Malayalam derives symmetric passives in this way.

4. Conclusion

To wrap up the discussion, in this paper, we have shown that the ditransitive passives in Malayalam are active-passives with the external argument retaining its subject-hood properties. We have also shown that, in this language, the ditransitive short passives are symmetric passives, where either the DO or the IO can raise to the specifier position of TP. Crucially, the inheritance of uφ features by *v* from Voice enables the external argument to be realized in Malayalam ditransitive active-passives. On the other hand, in the case of Malayalam ditransitive symmetric passives, the phi-complete Appl head has an extra EF that triggers the movement of the DO, thereby permitting both the IO and the DO to be equidistant[3] from the T head. Eventually, either of them can target the Spec, TP position, which gives way to the formation of symmetric ditransitive passives in Malayalam.

[3] If α, β are in the same minimal domain, they are equidistant from γ. (Chomsky 1995)

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