

Valency-reduction in event-oriented languages

Søren Wichmann

Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

Address:

Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

Deutscher Platz 6

D-04103 Leipzig

Germany

E-mail: soerenw@hum.ku.dk

Abstract: It has been argued by Klimov (1974:18, 1977:316) that there is a bundle of features that characterize active language, among them the lack of a passive. I will try to establish whether the lack of a passive is, indeed, typical of active languages and, expanding upon the work of Klaiman (1991:128, 148-149), I will then go on to describe some characteristics of voice-like phenomena in selected active languages. I will argue that the notion of role- vs. reference-domination (Foley and Van Valin 1985) may explain the absence of promotional passives in stative-active languages, but that it fails to explain the voice-related phenomena that are actually present. Instead I will suggest a typological dichotomy of event- vs. participant-orientation. In participant-oriented languages, the construal of the relationships among participant takes precedence over the construal of the event and licenses the grammatical roles subject and object, which do not map directly onto the semantic roles agent and patient. In event-oriented languages it is not possible to simply turn any transitive event into an intransitive one by a process of verbal derivation. Sometimes, however, the lexicon makes available an intransitive predicate which is related semantically to the transitive one, notably when the two events form a causative-resultative pair.

0. Introduction

Although the interest in so-called 'active' (or 'active-stative', 'stative-active', 'agentive', 'fluid-S'/'split-S') languages was sparked in the 1970's and early 1980's (Klimov 1974, 1977, Perlmutter 1978, Dixon 1979, Munro and Gordon 1982, Payne 1984, Merlan 1985) general discussions of the phenomenon are still sporadic, as are full descriptions of active languages which would be of use for a developing a deeper knowledge of the behavior of active languages. The only monograph to date on the subject is still Klimov (1977).

Although the scope of the present study is a broad, typological one aiming at arriving at a better understanding of active languages, it focuses modestly on only one aspect, namely the equivalent of voice in such languages. Klimov (1977) has discussed a range of typological features that he claims to be correlated with the active type of language. Most of these are not off-hand expected to correlate with a certain type of alignment of grammatical roles since they pertain to other areas of grammar. In fact, Nichols (1990) was able to show that three of the traits claimed by Klimov to be diagnostic of active languages, namely inalienable possession, inclusive/exclusive pronouns and grammatical gender, are either not or not straightforwardly predicted by the active alignment type. Thus, she finds that alienable/inalienable possession is correlated with head-marking and only indirectly with active alignment; that the inclusive/inclusive distinction is not predicted by the alignment type; and that gender only correlates with alignment type in so far as the accusative type disfavors gender.

Nichols' results are not surprising since the features she chose to test on a larger typological sample were not really expected to be predicted by the alignment type in the first place. In the present

work I shall test another feature said by Klimov (1974:18, 1977:316) to correlate with the active type, namely the lack of a passive.

In the next section I review statements in the descriptive literature in order to test the proposed correlation between the lack of a passive and the active typology. I shall then go on to describe the types of constructions that active languages typically exhibit in lieu of voice systems. Following this, I discuss some possible exceptions to the generalization regarding the absence of passives in active languages. Finally I shall briefly suggest an alternative way of explaining the observed correlation.

1. Do active languages lack a passive?

It is impossible to discuss the presence of absence of passives without defining what one understands the term ‘passive’ to mean. I do not believe that any single definition is universally applicable, that is, applicable for any purpose. For most typological purposes focusing on describing the passive itself a prototype definition is warranted (Shibatani 1985, Comrie 1988). For the present purposes, however, it will turn out to be necessary to define a cut-off point separating certain types of passives from others, since otherwise no typological correlation with passives and their absence will be observed. For the present purposes, then, I shall define a canonical passive on syntactic grounds as a verbal derivation which involves the promotion of a patient to subject and the reduction from *n*-place to *n-1*-place of the valency of the predication. The latter part of the definition entails that if a ‘passive’ derivation also applies to intransitives and thus does not necessarily involve a valency-

reduction, then the derivation fails to meet this second criterion for a canonical passive. When I use the term ‘passive’ without further modification I shall be referring specifically to a canonical passive in the sense just defined. A small hedge has to be mentioned: for some of the authors cited it is not always possible to know exactly what kind of a passive they are referring to when they state that a ‘passive’ is absent for a given language. Nevertheless, it may probably be assumed that most authors will be referring to a canonical passive of the kind just defined.

In order to test the proposed correlation between presence of active case marking and the absence of passive I have, to the extent that my access to literature allowed me, looked at all descriptions of active languages in Eurasia and the Americas, and, to some extent, in the Pacific as well. Moreover, I have looked at the presence/absence of passives for other alignment systems as well, in order to see whether or not the absence of passives might imply the presence of active marking as opposed to other types of alignment systems. For this latter investigation I limited myself exclusively to the languages of Eurasia and North & Middle America (defined for the present purposes as being bounded to its south by the Mayan languages). These are the descriptively best covered areas among those where active languages have been attested, so for these areas the available descriptions allow for a good impression of the ratios of the four theoretically possible combinations of the four feature values +/-active alignment, +/-passive construction. For the other areas where active alignment is found, i.e., South America and the Pacific, it is more difficult to get a good impression because the descriptive sources cover a much smaller fragment of the languages spoken in these areas.

The results show that, as regards cases where the information available is adequate, languages with active alignment generally do not have passives. Thus the active languages listed in (1) are

either explicitly said to lack passives (in which case I give a page reference) or may be inferred to lack such a construction since a reasonably full description is available that does not mention such a construction (in which case I only give a citation by author and year).

(1) Active languages lacking passive constructions

- Haida [Na-Dene] (Levine 1977; Enrico 2003:1232-1277)
- Wichita [Caddoan] (Rood 1976:117-119)
- Choctaw and Creek [Muskogean] (Davies 1986:38, n. 9 and Martin 2000)
- Tonkawa [Tonkawa] (Hoijer 1933)
- Tunica [Gulf] (Hass n.d.; Van Valin 1977:111-112)
- Euchee [Yuchian] (Linn 2001)
- Tlapanec [Otomanguean] (present author)

For active languages that are said to have passive constructions it will be necessary to review the data in some detail, not only to determine whether a label ‘passive’ is warranted, but also to determine whether the languages have appropriately been characterized as having ‘active alignment’ in the literature. I shall return to these cases in the next section.

With respect to languages of other alignment types lacking passives in the areas sampled to check this combination, the cases listed in (2) may be cited.

(2) Accusative or ergative languages lacking passives (in Eurasia, North America and Middle

America).

- Hittite (accusative) [Indo-European] (Luraghi 1997:32-33; Watkins 2004:564)
- Gilyak (accusative) [Gilyak] (Gruzdeva 1998:32)
- Yukaghir (accusative) [Yukaghir] (Maslova 2003)
- Washo (accusative) [Washo] (Jacobsen 2000[1964])
- Maricopa and Jamul Tiipay (accusative) [Yuman] (Gordon 1986 and Miller 2001)
- various West-Caucasian languages (ergative) (Hewitt ed. 1989:106-7, 334-335, 387)
- various Nakh-Daghestanian languages (ergative) (Smeets ed. 1994:55-6, 122, 197, 498; Kibrik 2001:1417)
- Coast Tsimshian (ergative) [Tsimshian] (Mulder 1994:143-45)

The list in (2) shows that there are several languages, both accusative and ergative, that lack passives. More languages could probably be added to the list, since there are additional sources which, by not mentioning the presence of a passive, indirectly indicate its absence. I have, however, limited myself to citing such indirectly documented cases only when the grammatical description in question is of the highest quality.

The list in (2) seems to indicate that the absence of passives is quite widespread also among languages that do not have active alignment. Nevertheless, it is clear that for accusative and ergative languages it is much more frequent to have a passive. Thus, while the absence of passives in such languages occurs in 8 genetic units (cf. the list in 2), the presence occurs all of the following: Ainu, Basque, Burushaski, Finno-Ugric, most Indo-European, Japanese, Kartvelian, Korean, Mongolian,

Samoyedic, Semitic, Sumerian, Turkic, Tungusic, Algonquian, Coos, Eskimo-Aleut, Eyak-Athabaskan, Karok, Keresan, Kiowa-Tanoan, Mayan, Miwok-Costanoan, Mixe-Zoquean, Ritwan, Sahaptian, Salishan, Takelma, Uto-Aztecan, Wakasan, Wintun, Yokuts, Yuki-Wappo. Since we are not focusing on these cases in this paper and just want to make the point that the presence of passives is the norm, there is no need to cite a full list of individual languages and sources. The number of genetic units just mentioned (33) may be compared to the number (8) of genetic units mentioned in (2). The counts suggest that among genetic units in the North and Middle America that do not exhibit active alignment around 80% have passives and around 20% do not. It is an interesting question whether among the latter group of languages there are some that have historical relations to active typology, either having descended from the active type or having moved towards it for one or the other reason. I shall not dwell on the possible significance of the skewed distribution, however, since this would involve too much speculation. Instead I will simply stress the observed empirical fact that languages need not have active alignment to lack a passive. While such languages are perhaps a minority, they are found in many areas (Anatolia, Caucasus, Siberia, different parts of North America) and are thus solidly attested.

2. Languages said to be active and to have a passive

In this section I shall be reviewing some possible instances of the typological combination signaled in the title of this section case by case. The set of cases was mainly drawn from the intersection of active languages in the data of Siewierska (2005a) and languages with passives in Siewierska (2005b).

2.1. *Ket*

The existence of a passive construction in *Ket* is much debated. For instance, Werner (1997) maintains that there is a passive, whereas Nedjalkov (2001:937) says explicitly that there is no passive but rather a resultative. The most recent extensive source on the language, Vajda (2004:28), argues, similarly to Nedjalkov, that “[a]lthough there is no regular passive transformation in *Ket*, INSTR occasionally marks animate agents in conjunction with resultative verbs” and cites the following example:

- (3) *súùl* *óv-às* *bímbàve* [*bin-b-a-bet*]
snow.sled father-INSTR it.is.made self-3N.SJ-R-make

“The sled is one my father made.”¹

Not only is the presence of a passive construction contested, the traditional characterization of the language as belonging to the active type is also controversial. Vajda (2004:50) states that the ‘split-S’ or ‘active/agentive’ pattern is limited to one of the conjugation classes, the so-called ‘Active Conjugation’, and argues that “the existence of other productive patterns, notably Absolute Conjugation, where semantic roles have no independent effect on actant marking, vitiates the claim that *Ket* possesses active alignment as an overall typological trait.” In personal communication, Vajda has informed me that there is evidence to suggest that the Active Conjugation belongs to a historically older stratum, such that *Ket* may be seen as moving away from the active type. In sum, *Ket* cannot be said to have a passive, and its status as an active language, if at all, only applies to

hypothetical earlier stages of the language.

2.2. *Koasati*

Whereas for the Muskogean languages Creek and Choctaw there are explicit statements to the effect that a passive is lacking, another Muskogean language, Koasati, is said to have one. Like Creek and Choctaw, Koasati has active alignment, cf. Kimball (1991:249-261). The Koasati passive is promotional, the semantic patient being marked as subject by means of a nominative case suffix *-k*. To judge from the examples given by Kimball (1991:138), the agent cannot be expressed overtly. The passive derivation is marked by means of a verbal prefix that takes the shape *ho-* before a consonant and *oh-* before a vowel, and is glossed ‘distributive’. According to Kimball (1991:136) the main function of the distributive is to indicate that “a subject or object is multiple or scattered over a space.” It may be used to indicate that the actor is indefinite or as a way of concealing the identity of the actor. The indefinite actor usage is illustrated in (4):¹

- (4) *alickí mók ho-hí:ca-tik sánko-n. . .*
doctor also DIST-look.for-but be-able-3NEG-SW

‘They also looked for a doctor, but were unable to [find one]. . .’ (Kimball 1991:137)

An example of the passive is given in (5).

¹ Non-evident abbreviations used in this and other linguistic examples given throughout the paper are: CONN ‘connective suffix’, PHR.TERM ‘phrase terminal marker’, SW ‘different subject switch-reference marker’

- (5) *thátha-k* *ho-banna-tíkko-laho-ŷ* *ká:ha-t*
white.person-SUBJ DISTR-need-3NEG-IRR-PHR.TERM say-CONN
‘‘White people will not be needed,’ he said.’ (Kimball 1991:138)

The passive is clearly an extension of the indefinite actor construction, the only difference apparently being the presence of the nominative suffix *-k* in the ‘passive’ and its absence in the ‘indefinite actor’ construction. Kimball (1991) does not discuss the different motivations for the two constructions in detail, but it seems likely that the addition of *-k* serves to topicalize the patient. Another active language that has developed a passive out of a third person impersonal construction is Lakhota (Pustet and Rood 2005). It is probably more common for active languages to have third person impersonal construction for which there is no evidence for a promotion of the patient. Tlapanec provides an example of this, cf. 3.1 below.

2.3. *Central Pomo*

Mithun (1988) is a paper entirely devoted to discussing a passive-like construction in the active language Central Pomo. I shall briefly summarize some of her observations. The construction in question, which involves a verbal suffix *-(y)a*, appears mainly to serve the purpose of defocalizing the agent. It is important to note that the patient does not get promoted, but remains encoded as a patient, compare example (6), where *-(y)a* is absent, with example (7), which carries *-(y)a*.

- (6) *Miul yal qó?diw.*

he us-PAT bring-ASP

‘He brought us.’ (Mithun 1988:40)

(7) . . . yal *mii* *dáaʔč’aw* *ʔ^hin* *ʔin*.

us-PAT there want-PL.IPFV-X-ASP not is-IPFV

‘. . . we are not wanted there.’ (Mithun 1988:43)

In addition to its lack of promotion of the patient, the Central Pomo construction also differs from a canonical passive in that the *-(y)a* suffix may be added to intransitive verbs, as in (8).

(8) *Mii* *baʔii-ya-ʔle*

there PL.lie-X-COND

‘There they would sleep.’ (Mithun 1988:40)

Mithun compares examples of the type in (8) with the German impersonal construction of the type *es wurde geschlafen* (roughly: ‘there was sleeping’).

In sum, the Pomo construction has two features—the lack of promotion of patient to subject and the use with intransitives—which sets it apart from a canonical passive. Mithun (1988) does not discuss possible origins of the construction. It would seem worthwhile investigating whether the *-(y)a* suffix might have its origin in a third person plural marker, but until such an investigation has been carried out we can only speculate that this is how it might have originated.

2.4. *Taba*

Taba is an Austronesian language (South Halmahera-West New Guinea group) spoken off as well as on the coast of the Halmahera island west of New Guinea. In Siewierska (2005a,b) it features as an active language having a passive construction. Thus, a review of the relevant data on this language is called for. John Bowden characterizes the language as having “a mixed split-S and accusative system of pronominal cross-referencing for intransitive verbs (. . .) Actors are obligatorily cross-referenced for intransitive verbs by a proclitic which indicates the Person and Number of the Actor argument; Undergoers are not obligatorily cross-referenced (. . .) *Taba* recognizes no subject or object grammatical relations, but only Actors and Undergoers” (Bowden 2001:2). The derivation in question is one involving a verbal prefix *-ta*. Bowden himself does not treat this as a passive, but explicitly labels it a ‘resultative’. He characterizes what appears to be the major function of the derivation as follows:

When applied to a transitive verb, the resulting derived form is generally an Undergoer intransitive verb which has as its sole argument the underived Undergoer. In this kind of derivation *ta-* can be labelled a ‘resultative’ prefix, because the effect of its use is to focus semantically on the resulting state of the patient after a process of some kind has reached its end. (Bowden 2001:218)

Examples are shown here:

- (9) *Male tcakal* *boa*
male t=sakal boa
must 1PL.INCL=smash door

‘We had to smash down the door.’ (Bowden 2001:219)

- (10) *Boa tasakal*
boa ta-sakal
door DETR-smash

‘The door was smashed down.’ (Bowden 2001:219)

The derivation involving *ta-* has other functions as well, including the following. When applied to an Actor intransitive root, the Actor becomes an Undergoer, and a reduced volitionality and agency is signalled. When applied to the second verb in a motion serial verb construction, *ta-* signals that the action has not been and might never be achieved. Thus, the Taba construction is quite different from a prototypical passive, and the language confirms rather than goes against the generalization proposed in this paper.

2.5. *Amuesha and Asheninca*

These Arawakan languages belong to the PreAndine group and are spoken in central Peru. Amuesha is another language that has been characterized by Siewierska (2005a,b) as an active language with a passive construction. The evidence for this, however, seems to be lacking. The two page references in Siewierska (2005b) to Wise (1986) concerning the existence of a passive in Amuesha either only

provide an example of a passive participle (Wise 1986:571) or fail to make any mention of Amuesha (Wise 1986:611). Although Siewierska does not draw upon data from the closely related language Asheninca, also discussed by Wise (1986), this deserves to be mentioned here. In the following pair of sentences (11) is an active construction, and (12) is what Wise (1986:589) calls an ‘absolutive’ construction.

(11) *i-N-č^hik-i-na*

3M-FUT-cut-FUT-1

‘He will cut me.’ (Wise 1986:571)

(12) *č^hik-ak-e-na*

cut-PFV-NONFUT-1

‘I was cut.’ (Wise 1986:589)

According to Wise (1986:589) The ‘absolutive’ verbs “can be translated as passive *when the stem is transitive*” (my emphasis). This statement entails that the derivation also implies to intransitives, which qualifies the derivation as a non-canonical type of passive. More importantly, the person marking pattern revealed by comparing (11) and (12) shows that the participant in the ‘absolutive’ construction is encoded in the same way as the patient of a transitive. Thus, there is no promotion of the patient to subject status in Asheninca.

2.6. *Apurinã*

The Maipuran language Apurinã, spoken in the northwestern Amazon region of Brazil, is yet another language said by Siewierska (2005a,b) to be active and to have a passive. By browsing all the sentence examples in Facundes (2000) it appears that Apurinã basically has an accusative organization but with a split among intransitive expressions such that stative expressions and nominal predicates carry (suffixed) patient (or object) markers, whereas all other intransitives, including semantically patientive predicates such as ‘to fall’, ‘to die’, etc., carry (prefixed) agent (or subject) markers. The construction which for Siewierska qualifies as a passive is illustrated in (13).

(13) *Ø-oka-pẽ-ka*

3M-kill-PFV-PASS

‘He was killed.’ (Facundes 2000:521)

This does, indeed, look like a passive where the agent is demoted and where the patient has been promoted to subject. Facundes (2000:405), however, states that such examples are rare in actual speech. Moreover, the “passive” marker is not restricted to transitives, but may also occur with intransitives, as in (14), as well as in sentences that do not show signs of agent demotion, as in (15).

(14) *uwã u-su-pẽ-ka*

there 3M-go-PFV-PASS

‘He/it has gone (somewhere).’ (Facundes 2000:406)

(15) *sotu ãkiti akatsa-pẽ-ka*

deer jaguar bite-PFV-PASS

‘The jaguar has already bitten the deer.’ (Facundes 2000:406)

For these reasons Facundes hesitates to describe the derivation in question as a true passive, and instead tentatively suggests that its function may be “to highlight the particular type of (im)perfectivity of the verb” (Facundes 2000:406). Thus, Apurinã is far from a clear-cut case of an active language possessing a passive construction.

2.7. *Arawak*

The final language in the list of Siewierska’s (2005a,b) intersection of active languages with a passive is the Arawakan language Arawak (or Lokono Dian) spoken in Suriname, Guyana, and French Guiana. The major source on this language is Pet (1987). The language makes a morphological distinction between agentive (or active) and patientive (or stative) verbs, where members of the latter class, which includes verbs such as ‘to be sleepy’, ‘to be sad’, ‘to be hungry’, etc. carry patient markers (Pet 1987:71-73). The passive is derived by means of a stem-formative *-oa* ~ *-noa*. The construction does look like a true passive in so far as the derivation only applies to transitive verbs and the patient of the transitive is indexed on the verb by means of the agentive prefixes. The only peculiarity is that for many verbs the derivation in *-oa* ~ *-noa* is ambiguous between a passive and reflexive reading, as shown in (16).

(16) *ly-farynoa-bo*

he-kill-CONT

‘He is being killed / he is killing himself’ (Pet 1987:51)

(17) *tho-bokonoa-bo*

she/it-boil-CONT

‘It is being cooked / it is boiling’ (Pet 1987:51)

2.8. *Summary*

To sum up, the clearest case of an active language having a passive seems to be Arawak. Given instances like this we cannot discard the possibility that the two typological features may combine. Koasati is another case. Here, however, it is easy to discern the origin of the passive construction, which is supposedly somewhat recent. We might expect yet other active languages to turn up that have passives. Still, we can definitely talk about a very strong tendency for such constructions to be absent from active languages. The tendency cannot be explained as areal since, as shown above, passives are widespread in the areas where active languages are found. So there does seem to be a correlation with the alignment type and the absence of passives which calls out for an explanation.

Now that we have seen that active languages indeed do tend to lack passives, as suggested by Klimov, we may wonder what the valence-related features are that might characterize them positively. In other words, we now know what they don’t have with regard to valency-reducing mechanisms, so what is it that they do have? The literature on active languages is still frustratingly scanty, so it has only been possible to make some first, small steps towards answering this question.

3. Typical patterns of valency reduction in some stative-active languages

A common type of construction is one which is called an ‘objective resultative’ by Nedjalkov and Jaxontov (1988:6). They define ‘resultative’ as “those verb forms that express a state implying a previous event” and say that “. . . the resultative expresses both a state and the previous action it resulted from.” Objective resultatives are specifically defined as cases where the underlying subject of the state is co-referential with the underlying object of the preceding action (Nedjalkov and Jaxontov 1988:9). With respect to active languages, which lack grammatical relations—including objects—it seems better to use the term ‘patientive resultatives’, but this is just a small amendment to the very useful distinctions proposed by Nedjalkov and Jaxontov. Here follow some examples of patientive resultatives in various stative-active languages.

3.1. *Tlapanec*

Tlapanec is a language of the Otomanguan family, some other members of which have also been identified as active languages, i.e. Chocho (Mock 1982) and Amuzgo (Smith-Stark and Tapia García 2002). In an earlier publication (Wichmann 1996) I have described the verbal prefixes in (Azoyú) Tlapanec which are involved in the agentive-patientive distinction. Briefly, agentive intransitive verbs are treated like transitive verbs in that a special set of markers show up as prefixes to the verbal root. The distinction is consistent across all verbs, although it only shows up in the second person singular and the third person plural, and in the latter case (for morphophonemic reasons) only in the imperfective and future. The agentive markers are portmanteau, redundantly marking second person singular or plural third person in addition to ‘agentive’. In its formal expression the system is rather

unusual, but with respect to the semantics of the distribution of agentive vs. patientive verbs Tlapanec falls neatly into the Siouan type as defined in Mithun (1991).

It has been argued by Suárez (1983a), in his description of the Malinaltepec variety of Tlapanec and also in his book on Mesoamerican languages (Suárez 1983b:124), that Tlapanec does have a passive. As it turns out, however, the derivation which he describes only applies to a limited set of verbs—at least in the Azoyú variety, which I expect to be similar to the Malinaltepec variety in this regard. I have investigated a relatively large sample of both transitive verbs taking animate and inanimate arguments. The so-called passive is attested with the verbs given in (18), ordered there such that different morphological classes stand out (all verbs are cited in the third person perfective). It is readily seen that the prefix *wi-*, which expresses both perfective as well as a reduction of the valence is limited to verbal root having an initial glottal stop and that the more general process is a shift in tone patterns. Often the result is an overall falling contour, although there are exceptions. The absence of a completely clear pattern is typical of the capricious nature of Tlapanec morphology.

(18) Tlapanec verbs that take resultative derivation (author field notes)

<i>ni</i> ² - <i>ʔdi</i> ¹ 's/he sowed it'	<i>wi</i> ³ - <i>ʔdu</i> ² 'it got sown'
<i>ni</i> ² - <i>ʔndi</i> ¹ 's/he dug it it'	<i>wi</i> ² - <i>ʔndi</i> ²³ 'it was dug out'
<i>ni</i> ² - <i>ʔni</i> ¹ 's/he grinded it'	<i>wi</i> ² - <i>ʔnu</i> ³ 'it was ground'
<i>ni</i> ² - <i>ʔnu</i> ¹ 's/he sharpened it'	<i>wi</i> ² - <i>ʔni</i> ²³ 'it got sharpened'
<i>ne</i> ³ - <i>ʔspe</i> ¹ 's/he cut it down'	<i>wi</i> ³ - <i>ʔspa</i> ² 'it got cut down'

<i>ni</i> ² - <i>mbo</i> ¹ 's/he finished it'	<i>wa</i> - ³ <i>mba</i> ² 'it was finished'
<i>ni-mbro</i> ¹ <i>ʔo</i> ¹ 's/he wrapped it'	<i>ni-mbro</i> <i>ʔo</i> ²³ 'it got entangled'
<i>ni-še</i> <i>ʔɥga</i> ¹ 's/he removed it'	<i>ni-še</i> <i>ʔɥgo</i> ²³ 'it got removed'
<i>ni-hpri</i> <i>ʔyu</i> ¹ 's/he peeled it'	<i>ni-hpri</i> <i>ʔyu</i> ²³ 'it got peeled'
<i>ni-hndre</i> ² <i>ge</i> ¹ 's/he threw it'	<i>ni-hndri</i> ² <i>ga</i> ³ 'it got thrown'
<i>ni-hndra</i> <i>ʔe</i> ¹ 's/he scattered them'	<i>ni-ndra</i> <i>ʔa</i> ³ 'they got scattered'
<i>ni-ma</i> <i>ʔto</i> ¹ 's/he opened it'	<i>ni-ma</i> <i>ʔto</i> ²³ 'it opened'
<i>ni-ro</i> ² <i>wen</i> <i>ʔ</i> 's/he perforated it'	<i>ni-ru</i> ³ <i>wan</i> <i>ʔ</i> 'it got perforated'
<i>ni-mhe</i> ³ <i>de</i> ¹ 's/he tore it open'	<i>ni-hmi</i> ³ <i>da</i> ² 'it burst upon'
<i>ni-hta</i> ² <i>ɥga</i> ¹ 's/he turned it over'	<i>ni-hta</i> ² <i>ɥga</i> ¹² 'it got turned over'
<i>ni-ko</i> ² <i>go</i> ¹ 's/he covered it'	<i>ni-ko</i> ² <i>ga</i> <i>ʔ</i> 'it got covered'
<i>ni-ku</i> ³ <i>ši</i> ¹ 's/he raised it'	<i>ni-ku</i> ³ <i>ši</i> ² 'it got raised'
<i>ni-ma</i> ¹ <i>hen</i> ³² 's/he made it wet'	<i>ni-ma</i> ² <i>han</i> <i>ʔ</i> ² 'it got wet'
<i>ni-no</i> ² <i>hɥgo</i> ¹ 's/he put it across'	<i>ni-no</i> ¹ <i>hɥgo</i> ²³ 'it got put across'
<i>ni</i> ² - <i>ʔni</i> ² <i>ʔse</i> <i>ʔ</i> 's/he fastened it'	<i>ni</i> ² - <i>ʔni</i> ² <i>ʔsa</i> <i>ʔ</i> 'it got fastened'

It does not appear possible, within one and the same sentence, to express an agent who might be responsible for the actions. In rare cases, however, a second sentence stating that X did or caused the action occurs.

Important for the issue at hand are the cases where a valence-reducing process does not apply.

(19) Some Tlapanec verbs that do not take resultative derivation

nimbo²mo¹ 's/he forgot it'

ničē³hpe¹ 's/he squeezed it out'

ne²deʔ¹ 's/he threw it'

nindaʔ²e¹ 's/he asked for it'

ne²ndo¹ 's/he wanted it'

niguri³gwi¹ 's/he received it'

ni²hmuʔ¹ 's/he used it (up)'

nihti³gwi¹ 's/he pushed it down'

nihya³winʔ¹ 's/he scratched it'

niʔ²jun¹ 's/he heard it'

nikaʔ²wi¹ 's/he hid it'

niraʔ²wi²¹ 's/he chose it'

etc., etc.

Out of a sample of 163 verbs only 33, or 20%, take the derivational process described by Suárez as a passive. That in itself should be enough to caution us that we are not really dealing with a passive at least in the canonical sense of an operation that mainly serves the syntactico-pragmatic purpose of demoting the agent or promoting the agent or both, however one might want to characterize passives

functionally. A look at the semantics of the verbs in (18) suggest that the Tlapanec derivation applies to verbs that describe an action whose end result is a state with some degree of permanence. For this reason I would describe the derivation as a resultative rather than a passive.

There are only very few verbs taking animate arguments which appear in the resultative. They include *we²daʔ¹* ‘s/he got thrown down’, *wiʔtsi¹* ‘it was bought’, *wiʔtan²¹* ‘s/he was told (something)’. Although it seems difficult to argue for these verbs that they are resultative it actually does seem to be the case that their function is to stress the permanence of the result rather than to defocus the agent. When asking a consultant to imagine a conversational exchange where *wiʔtsi¹* would be used, he came up with the following:

- (20) A: *na¹* *di¹hku³* *ni-nda²tsi¹* *bu³rr-y-a¹²ʔ*
 Q just.now PFV-buy.2.ERG>3 burro-POSS.CLAS-2.DAT
 ‘Have you just now bought your burro?’
- B: *a²¹* *di¹hku³* *wi-ʔtsi¹* *o¹*
 yes just.now RES-buy.1ERG>3 EMPH
 ‘Yes, it got bought just now.’

The English translation sounds rather odd. One would not use a sentence similar *it got bought* in an equivalent English conversation. But the Tlapanec construction makes sense because it stresses both that the end result, the buying of the burro, is the result of a prior action, namely the negotiation and buying, and also the permanence of the result, i.e. that the burro now belongs to a new owner.

The following is an example from a description of a ritual from a tape-recorded monologue.

Although the most adequate translation is one using the English passive I would argue that the primary function is to focus on the resultant state and that the agent defocusing is a secondary effect of this.

(21) *wa*⁻³*mba*² *wi*²-*ʔsu*²³ *di*ʔ*i*³, *ʂu*ʔ*ki*³. . .

PFV.RES-finish.3.INANPFV.RES-insert.3.INAN flower then. . .

'When the flowers have been inserted, then . . .' (from a description of a ritual)

As in a number of other languages which lack a passive, a possible strategy for agent defocusing is to use generic, third person plural agent marking. For instance, the verb 'to kill' has no corresponding resultative. For agent defocusing purposes the third person plural actor form is used, for instance *niʂi*³*ya*² 'they killed him/her'.

3.2. Haida

Enrico (2003:1232-1277) devotes a chapter to what is the nearest equivalent in the stative-active language Haida of a passive, namely what he calls the 'middle'. He presents several arguments against viewing the middle as a passive. One of the characteristics of the Haida middle is that it has a stative lexical aspect. In (22) the stativity of the middle form is demonstrated by the possibility of referring to the corresponding event by using the stative proform *riid*.

(22) *ʔu-gw*@ *0 q'idaa?* *ʔaanga,* *0* *gangaang* *0* *riid-a*
 3-Q 3p be.carved yes 3p like 3p be-PRS

'Is it carved? Yes, it is.' (Enrico 2003:1246)

In (23) it is demonstrated that the perfective suffix *-gii* acquires the meaning 'before and continuing to now'. This only happens when the lexical aspect is stative.

(23) *'l ja daangaa-gii-gan*

3 be.divorced-PFV-PST

'He was divorced before (and still is).' (Enrico 2003:1246)

The middles fall into several semantic categories, of which I shall just mention the most and the next-most common, namely the resultatives and the facilitatives. Examples (22-23) illustrated resultatives, while example (24) illustrates a facilitative meaning.

(24) *randl-ee-t'alj ra kaadajaa-gang*

stream-DEF-over jumpable-PR

'The stream is jumpable.' (Enrico 2003:1235)

3.3. *Creek and Choctaw*

The Muskogean language Creek similarly has active-stative alignment and lacks a passive. The language, however, has a middle which to some extent overlaps in function with passives in other

languages. Martin (2000) describes the function of the Creek middle affix *-k-* as that of “framing the clause from the endpoint” (Martin 2000:386) and summarizes its functions as follows:

(25) Effects of the Creek middle (Martin 2000:386)

	<i>Base form</i>		<i>Derived form</i>
<i>External orientation</i>	cause (actor)	→	effect (undergoer)
<i>Cause avoidance</i>	explicit external cause	→	self-contained event
<i>Aspect</i>	activity	→	resulting state/inchoative
<i>Subject affectedness</i>	usually not affected	→	often affected
<i>Valency</i>	<i>n</i> -place predicate	→	<i>n</i> -1-place predicate

The language also makes use of an impersonal plural, which is the translation equivalent of passives, although it differs from passives in that objects continue to be coded as objects (Martin 2000:388).

Martin (2000:400-401) argues that valence-related processes in Creek are best seen as operations that serve to change the view of the event. Thus, the middle shifts the attention from causes to effects (i.e., states or inchoatives), whereas the causative shifts the attention in the opposite direction, from effects to causes.

A somewhat similar characterization of the Choctaw construction nowadays described as a mediopassive was made in an early grammatical description of the language:

The passive verb is made by an internal change of the transitive, but this rarely takes place

except in verbs where the transitive effects a visible change in the object acted upon. . . The passive is formed so variously that rules are not attempted. (Byington 1870:345)

3.4. Summary of the data on Tlapanec, Haida, and Creek

We have now briefly looked at what might be considered the closest equivalents of passives in three stative-active languages. I suspect, although the scarcity of good descriptions of active languages makes it impossible to confirm this, that the type of data that we have witnessed are representative. In all three cases the languages have a construction which resembles a passive in so far as it generally shows a reduced valency over against the corresponding transitive verb and in so far as the agent of the action is left unexpressed. But in all three cases we also see the addition of a patientive resultative lexical aspect, and the derivation is generally limited to apply to base forms whose semantics implies that the undergoer enters a state. There are exceptions or marginal cases, such as the Tlapanec verb meaning ‘to become told something’, the Haida facilitatives or the Creek motion verbs, but they stand out as lexical peculiarities due to the special behavior of a particular class of verbs. These peculiarities are part and parcel of the lexical nature of the derivations. In sum, what on the surface looks like valency-reducing mechanisms are lexical in nature and in this regard different from fully productive passives that operate at the morphosyntactic level.

4. Explaining the absence of passives and the presence of patientive resultatives

It would be desirable to have a framework which could equally well explain the absence of passives in stative-active languages and the presence instead, in languages such as Tlapanec, Haida, and Creek, of patientive resultatives with limited productivity. Ever since works such as Van Valin’s

(1977) on Lakhota and Durie's (1987) on Acehnese the absence of passives has, by many functionally oriented grammarians, been interpreted as a consequence of the absence of grammatical relations (or 'grammatical roles' in some frameworks) (e.g., Foley and Van Valin 1985, Dik 1997:259). I agree that this is part of the explanation, but it is not a sufficient explanation, in my view. First, it is not clear why active languages more than other types of languages should be prone to lacking grammatical relations. Secondly, it is not clear why the kinds of patientive resultative derivations that we have witnessed should be limited in productivity to predicates that imply a resultant state.

What we need in order to explain these facts is a general typological characterization which is not just negative in nature. Instead of the notion of role- vs. reference-domination I shall suggest a typological distinction of event- vs. participant-orientation. In participant-oriented languages the construal of the relationships among participant takes precedence over the construal of the event and licenses grammatical roles such as subject and object which may be aligned in different ways with semantic roles such as agent and patient. In event-oriented languages the event takes precedence, and there is only one possible way of construing the relationship among participants, namely by way of the semantic roles associated with the verbal semantics. It is not possible to simply turn a transitive event into an intransitive one by a generally applicable type of derivation. Instead, the event must be re-construed as a fundamentally different type of event. This is only possible when the lexicon makes available an intransitive predicate which is related semantically to the transitive one. This notably happens when the two events form a causative-resultative pair. In these cases it is possible linguistically to construe the transitive event as a related kind of self-contained, intransitive event.

Active languages are event-oriented languages par excellence. The difference between event- and

participant-oriented languages does not emerge in transitive clauses, which will universally tend to involve an agent and a patient. But with respect to an intransitive event, the animate may be either agentive or patientive, depending on the nature of the event. In event-oriented languages the portrayal of the event takes precedence, and this portrayal of the participant or participants is dictated by the nature of the event. In this way split-intransitive patterns arise. In participant-oriented languages (whether ergative or accusative), on the other hand, it does not matter which kind of intransitive event we are dealing with—the single participant is always coded in the same way. Thus, there is an intimate relation between event-orientation and active alignment.

In event-oriented languages the relationships among participants are signalled by means of semantic roles that are inherent in the case frame of predicates and are thus tied up intimately with the semantics of the predicate. In participant-oriented languages the event type also determines the semantic roles. This is fundamental to all languages. But the semantics of the event does not reign supreme. As we know, grammatical relations may override the natural portrayal of the event. In a metaphor, one might say that the grammatical roles intervene into the semantic structure of the event. In an event-oriented language a highly transitive event may be portrayed as if noone were responsible for it. In an event-oriented language this is not possible.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have proposed a distinction between event- and participant-orientation in order to explain the behavior of valency-reduction in active languages. I do not mean to introduce a sharp distinction by which all languages may be divided into two groups. Rather, the distinction expresses two opposite poles towards which languages may gravitate to different degrees. I have discussed two

features that have a bearing on the overall parameter, namely alignment type and the presence/absence of passives. Given that the encoding of verbal arguments in active languages is sensitive to verbal semantics (broadly speaking, i.e. including either associated semantic roles or verbal aspect) such languages may be said to be event-oriented with respect to their alignment type. With regard to valency-reduction, languages may also be event-oriented in the sense that passive-like derivations are normally restricted to types of events that may be construed as being agent-less. As it turns out, there is a very strong tendency for languages that are event-oriented with respect to alignment to also be event-oriented with respect to valency-reduction. Nevertheless, the opposite implication only holds as a weak tendency: as we have seen, languages may be event-oriented with respect to valency-reduction without being event-oriented with respect to alignment type. I am currently identifying other grammatical features that are sensitive to the overall parameter. It seems that the opposition aspect vs. tense and the presence of ‘verby’ adjectives as opposed to ‘nouny’ ones both line up with the opposition of event- vs. participant-orientation. This additional evidence for the relevance of the overall parameter will, however, be deferred to another paper (cf. Wichmann 2005).

References

- Bowden, J. 2001. *Taba: description of a South Halmahera Language*. Pacific Linguistics. Canberra: The Australian National University, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.
- Byington, C. 1870. Grammar of the Choctaw Language. *Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc.* 11:317-367.
- Comrie, B. 1988. Passive and voice. In: Shibatani, M. (ed.), *Passive and Voice*, pp. 9-23. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Davies, W. D. 1986. *Choctaw Verb Agreement and Universal Grammar*. Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory, 2. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Dik, S. C. *The Theory of Functional Grammar*. Part 1: The Structure of the Clause, 2nd, revised ed. (edited by K. Hengeveld). Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Dixon, R. M. W. 1979. Ergativity. *Language* 55: 59-138.
- Durie, M. 1987. Grammatical relations in Acehnese. *Studies in Language* 11.2: 365-399.
- Facundes, S. da Silva. 2000. *The Language of the Apurinã People of Brazil*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of New York at Buffalo.
- Foley, W. A. and Van Valin, R. D. 1985. *Functional Syntax and Universal Grammar*. Cambridge studies in linguistics, 38. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gordon, L. 1986. *Maricopa Morphology and Syntax*. University of California Publications in Linguistics, 108. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Gruzdeva, E. 1998. *Nivkh*. LINCOM Languages of the World : Materials, 111. München: Lincom Europa.
- Haspelmath, M., M. S. Dryer, D. Gil, and B. Comrie (eds.). 2005. *The World Atlas of Linguistic Structures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hewitt, B. G. 1989. *The North West Caucasian Languages*. The Indigenous languages of the Caucasus, 2. Delmar, NY: Caravan Books
- Hojjer, H. 1933. *Tonkawa. An Indian Language of Texas*. Extract from Handbook of American Indian Languages, Vol III. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Jacobsen, W. H. 2000. *A Grammar of the Washo Language*. Berkeley, Univ., Diss., 1964. Repr. ed. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI.
- Kibrik, A. E. 2001. Subject-oriented vs. subject-less languages. In: M. Haspelmath (ed.), *Language Typology and Universals. An International Handbook*, vol. 2, tome 2, pp. 1413-1423. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Kimball, G. D. 1991. *Koasati Grammar*. Studies in the Anthropology of North American Indians. London: Univ. of Nebraska Press
- Klaiman, M. H. 1991. *Grammatical Voice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Klimov, G. A. 1974. On the character of languages of active typology. *Linguistics* 131.11-25.
- Klimov, G. A. 1977. *Tipologija jazykov aktivnogo stroja*. Moscow: Nauka.
- Levine, R. D. 1977. *The Skidegate dialect of Haida*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI.
- Linn, M. S.. 2001. *A Grammar of Euchee (Yuchi)*. Lawrence, Univ., Diss., 2000. Ann Arbor: UMI.
- Luraghi, S. 1997. *Hittite*. München: Lincom Europa.
- Martin, J. B. 2000. Creek voice: beyond valency. In Dixon, R. M. W. and A. Y. Aikhenvald (eds.), *Changing valency. Case Studies in Transitivity*, pp. 374-403. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maslova, E. 2003. *A Grammar of Kolyma Yukaghir*. Mouton Grammar Library, 26. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

- Merlan, F. 1985. Split intransitivity: Functional oppositions in intransitive inflection. In: Nichols, J. and A. C. Woodbury (eds.), *Grammar Inside and Outside the Clause*, pp. 324-62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Miller, A. 2001. *A Grammar of Jamul Tiipay*. Mouton Grammar Library, 23. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Mithun, M. 1988. The 'passive' in an active language. In: Redden, J. E. (Ed.), *Papers from the 1987 Hokan-Penutian Languages Workshop and Friends of Uto-Aztecan Workshop*, pp. 9-45. Occasional Papers on Linguistics, No. 14. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, Department of Linguistics.
- Mithun, M. 1991. Active/agentive case marking and its motivation. *Language* 67.3: 510-546.
- Mock, C. 1982. Los casos morfosintácticos del chocho. *Anales de Antropología* 19.2: 345-378.
- Mulder, J. G. 1994. *Ergativity in Coast Tsimshian (Sm'algyax)*. University of California Publications in Linguistics, 124. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Munro, P., and L. Gordon. 1982. Syntactic relations in Western Muskogean: a typological perspective. *Language* 58: 81-115.
- Nedjalkov, V. P. 2001. Resultative construction. In: Haspelmath, M. (ed.), *Language Typology and Universals. An International Handbook*, Vol. 2, pp. 928-940. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Nedjalkov, V. P. and S. J. Jaxontov. 1988. The typology of resultative constructions. In Nedjalkov, V. P. (ed.), *Typology of resultative constructions* (edited by B. Comrie), pp. 3-62. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Nichols, J. 1990. Some preconditions and typical traits of the stative-active language type. In:

- Lehmann, W. P. (Ed.), *Language Typology 1987. Systematic Balance in Language. Papers from the Linguistic Typology Symposium, Berkeley, 1-3 December 1987*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Payne, T. E. 1984. Split S-marking and fluid S-marking revisited. In: Testen, D. et al. (eds.), *Papers from the Parasession on Lexical Semantics*, pp. 222-232. Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Perlmutter, D. 1978. Impersonal passives and the unaccusative hypothesis. *Berkeley Linguistics Society* 4: 157-89.
- Pustet, R. and D. Rood. 2005. Argument suppression in Lakhota. Paper presented at Typology of Stative-Active Languages, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, May 20-22.
- Rood, D. S. 1976. *Wichita Grammar*. Garland Studies in American Indian Linguistics. New York: Garland.
- Shibatani, M. 1985. Passives and related constructions: a prototype analysis. *Language* 61.4:821-848.
- Siewierska, A. 2005a. Alignment of verbal person marking. In: Haspelmath, M. et al (eds.).
- Siewierska, A. 2005b. Passive constructions. In: Haspelmath, M. et al (eds.).
- Smeets, R. (ed.). 1994. *The North East Caucasian Languages, part 2, Presenting the three Nakh Languages and Six Minor Lezgian Languages*. The Indigenous Languages of the Caucasus, 4. Delmar, NY: Caravan Books.
- Smith-Stark, T. C. and F. Tapia García. 2002. El amuzgo como lengua activa. In: Levy, P. (ed.), *Delcora al maya yucateco. Estudios lingüísticos sobre algunas lenguas indígenas mexicanas*, pp. 81-130. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Suárez, J. 1983a. *La lengua tlapaneca de Malinaltepec*. México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional

Autónoma de México.

- Suárez, J. 1983b. *The Mesoamerican Indian Languages*. Cambridge Language Surveys. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vajda, E. J. 2004. *Ket*. Languages of the World: Materials, 204. München: Lincom.
- Van Valin, R. D. 1977. *Aspects of Lakhota Syntax*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.
- Van Valin, R. D. 1985. Case marking and the structure of the Lakhota clause. In Nichols, J. and A. C. Woodbury (eds.), *Grammar Inside and Outside the Clause. Some Approaches to Theory from the Field*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Watkins, C. Hittite. In: Woodard, R. D. (ed.), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages*, pp. 515-575. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Werner, H. 1997. *Die ketische Sprache*. Tunguso-Sibirica, 3. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Wichmann, S. 1996. The degrammaticalization of agentivity in Tlapanec. In: Engberg-Pedersen, E., M. Fortescue, P. Harder, L. Heltoft, and L. Falster Jakobsen (eds.), *Content, Expression and Structure: Studies in Danish Functional Grammar*. Studies in Languages Companion Series, pp. 343-360. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Wichmann, S. 2005. Event-orientation in grammar. Paper presented at The Typology of Stative-Active Languages, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig, May 20-22, 2005.
- Wise, M. R. 1986. Grammatical characteristics of PreAndine languages of Peru. In: Derbyshire, D. C. and G. K. Pullum (eds.), *Handbook of Amazonian Languages*, Vol. 1, pp. 567-642. Berlin/New York/Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter.