

# SUBMISSIVE VERBS AS ADVERSATIVES IN SOME ASIAN LANGUAGES<sup>1</sup>

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## 0. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to make an initial exploration into the relationship between a certain kind of verb and adversative connotations, in Japanese, Vietnamese, Thai and Lao, Mandarin Chinese, Cambodian, and English.

Branching tree structures represent underlying structures.

## 1. PASSIVE AND ADVERSATIVE

In the preceding paper, "Passive and Ergative in Vietnamese", I have defined passive sentences as sentences whose grammatical subject is in the object case, whose verb is in a marked form (when the language permits) or there is some marker for passive voice (such as a submissive morpheme), and whose agent when it occurs is a marked noun phrase. I will elaborate on this definition to say that the grammatical (or surface) subject is a logical (or deep) Object or Dative case rather than Agent case. (Capitalisation of initial letters will indicate deep case, lower case letters will indicate surface case.) Object and Dative can be thought of in the traditional sense roughly as the direct object and indirect object of the verb, respectively. The grammatical subject can be considered to be in the logical Object/Dative case when the corresponding noun phrase (NP) is in the object/dative surface case when in a non-subject relation to the same verb.

Stanley Starosta, in class discussion, has further suggested that passive sentences are marked sentence types in accusative languages. I will assume that languages are either accusative or ergative, and that

ergative languages can be defined as those which mark the Agent in transitive sentences; i.e. they have Object subjects in unmarked sentence types - the single NP of intransitive sentences and the object NP of transitive sentences are marked the same. (Cf. Fillmore, Hohepa, Lyons, etc.)

This rather broad definition can account for a greater range of sentence types than what are considered passive sentences in English, which require the presence of the copula to carry tense and aspect.

Most languages seem to make use of passivity when they wish to emphasise the adverse effect on the NP of a verb action. Compare the emphasis in English 'he saw me' with 'I was seen (by him)' and 'I got seen (by him)'. Some languages employ particular syntactic constructions to express such adversity. The subjects of such constructions are usually - if not always - animate, and I consider them to be Dative case. All languages cited here are accusative languages and transitivity is an essential feature of adversative sentences, though the corresponding non-adversative sentence may be intransitive. This aspect will be clarified by presentation of examples.

It has been found in Japanese, Vietnamese, Thai, Lao, Cambodian, and Mandarin Chinese that adverse concepts are conveyed by the use of special verbs - sometimes called submissive verbs because of the relation of passivity between the Dative subject and the verb. These verbs require sentential complements (embedded sentences in the object slot).

## 2. THE SITUATION IN VARIOUS LANGUAGES

### 2.1. JAPANESE

Japanese has what Howard calls "pure" passive, which is an innovation in Japanese based on translation from Western languages (Howard, Sugita), which has an Object subject and the "passive" derivational affix *rare* on the verb, and which has corresponding active sentences. Japanese also has what is often called the *inflictive passive*, an indigenous sentence type using *rare* but with a construction quite different from English passive sentences: Howard, Sugita, and others analyse *rare* as a deep-structure verb which requires a sentential complement, and the construction is marked [+adversative]. (Further, *rare* is a special verb in that it doesn't require the infinitive marker *te* which customarily occurs when there is more than one verb in a sentence.) Thus, the "active" sentence (1) with intransitive verb is embedded in the higher sentence of (2).

- (1) gaadoman ga            ne-    -ta  
 watchman Nominative sleep Past  
 'The night-watchman slept.'

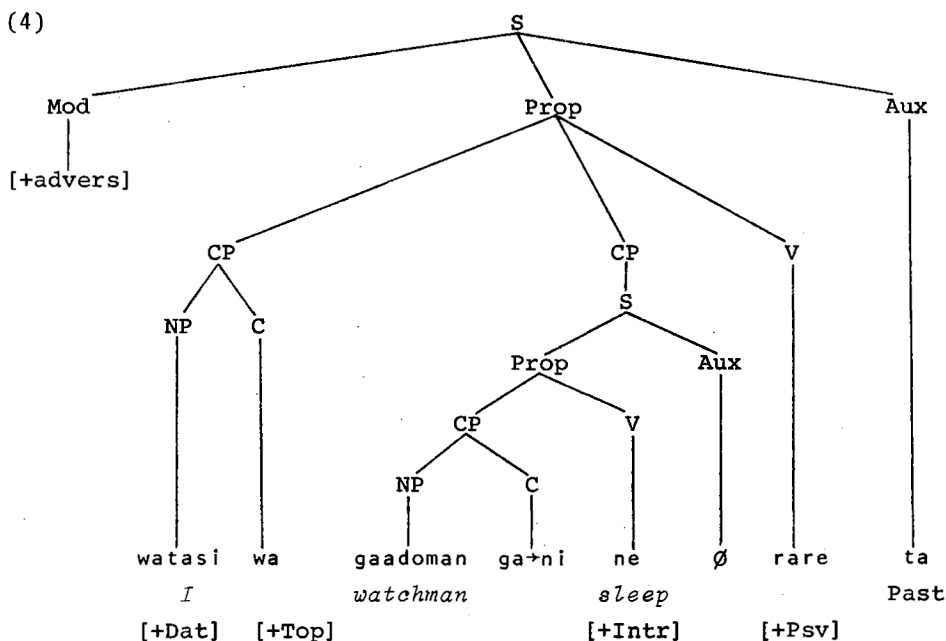
- (2) (watasi wa) gaadoman ni ne-rare-ta  
 I (humble) Topic Agt  
 'I underwent adversely: the night-watchman slept.'

Given the rewrite rules in (3) for all cited languages, (2) would have the underlying structure diagrammed in (4).

- (3) S → (Mod) (Aux) Prop  
 Prop → V<sup>^</sup>CP (CP) (CP)  
 CP → { (C) NP }  
           { S }

S = Sentence  
 Mod = Modality  
 Aux = Auxiliary  
 Prop = Proposition  
 V = Verb  
 CP = Case Phrase  
 C = Case Marker  
 NP = Noun Phrase

Aux and C are obligatory in Japanese, and there is a rule that states that in a sentence dominated by CP, Aux is realised as  $\emptyset$ .



The embedded sentence in (5) has a transitive verb with two NPs.

