SUBMISSIVE VERBS AS ADVERSATIVES IN SOME ASIAN LANGUAGES[1]

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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 sentences 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.'

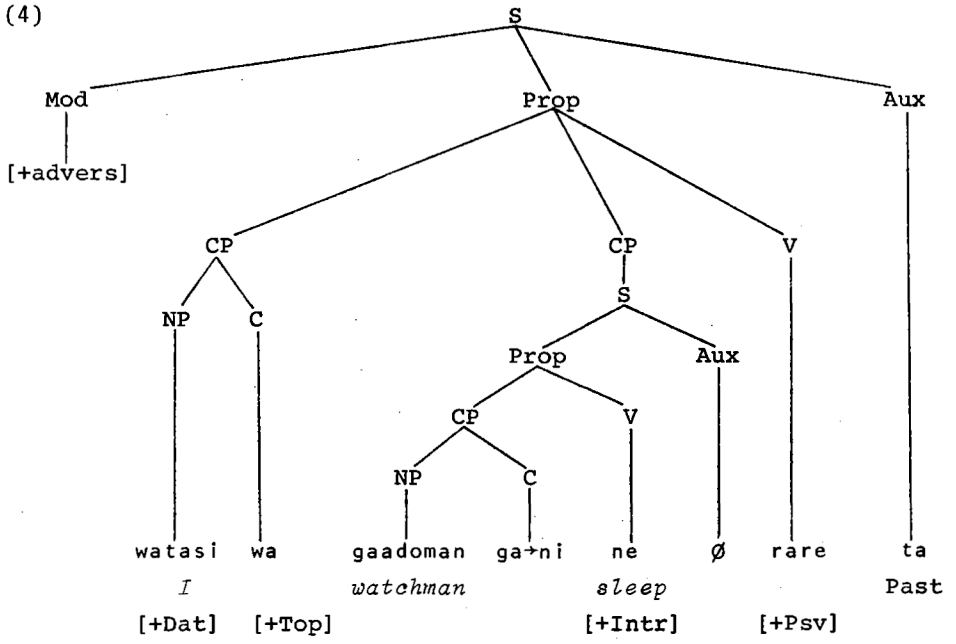
Given the rewrite rules in (3) for all cited languages, (2) would have the underlying structure diagrammed in (4).

(3) S → (Mod) (Aux) Prop
Prop → V^CP (CP) (CP)
$CP \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{matrix} (C)\ NP \\ S \end{matrix} \right\}$

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

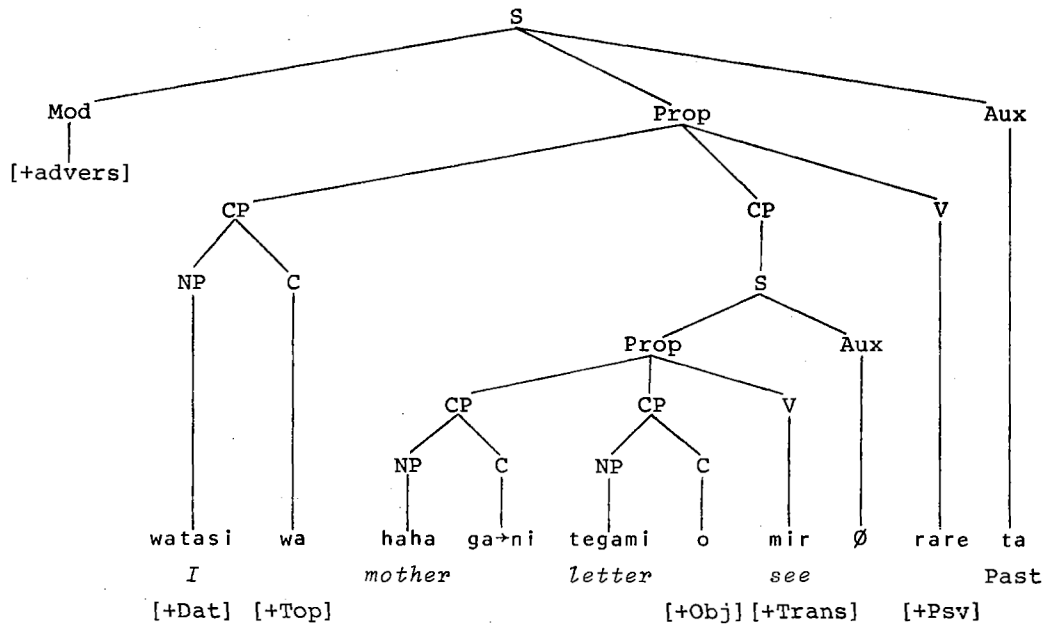
Aux and C are obligatory in Japanese, and there is a rule that states that in a sentence dominated by CP, Aux is realised as Ø.

(4)



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

(5) watasi wa haha ni tegami o mir-are-ta
'I underwent adversely: mother saw the letter.'
(from Sugita, pp.3-4)

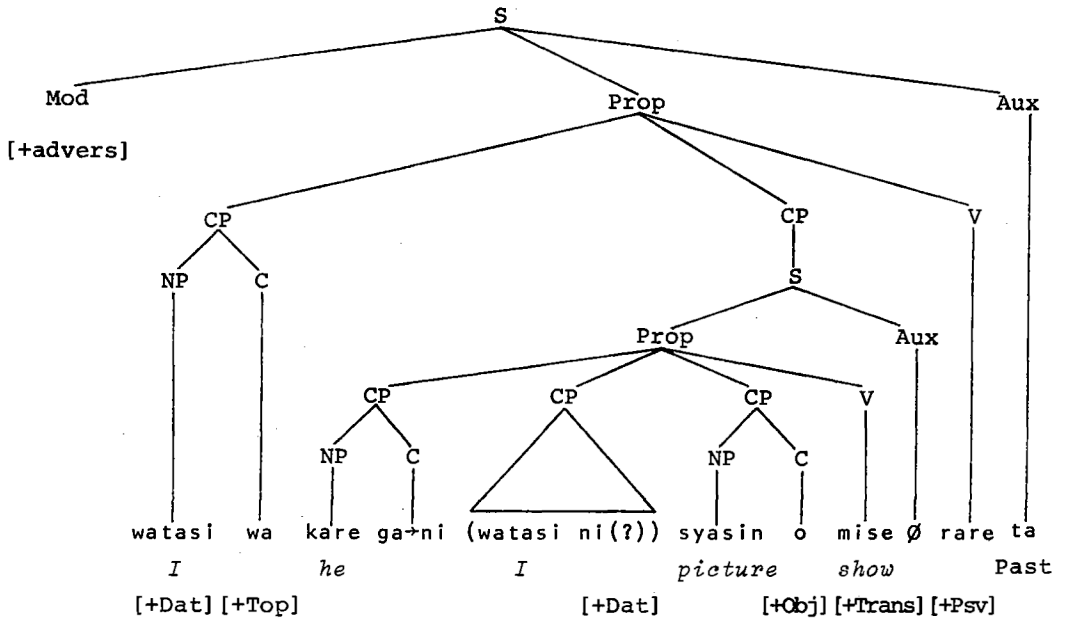


The most striking feature about the Japanese adversative is the fact that the Dative subject NP of rare is not equivalent to any NP in the embedded sentence, i.e. it does not stand in direct relationship to the embedded verb. For this reason, it is sometimes called the indirect passive (Sugita, p. 2; cf. Howard, 1968, p. 2). (What Howard and Sugita call the embedded verb has been traditionally analysed as the main verb with a passive suffix -rare, such that "the grammatical subject is indirectly, rather than directly, affected by the action of the verb". (Howard, 1968, p. 2).) The subject of rare is animate. If it refers to the speaker or to someone situationally understood, it is optionally selected. The subject of the embedded verb cannot be topicalised. It is always marked with the Agent marker ni on the surface. Howard adds, "The subject of the constituent sentence, moreover, must be dynamic, that is, an animate object, a natural phenomenon, or a machine, and it may not be identical with the subject of -rare." (1968, p. 4).

The construction more easily recognised by English speakers as passive (and translated as such) is one in which the higher NP is identical with the Object or Dative NP in the embedded sentence. This is called the "direct passive" by Sugita (pp. 1, 8f) and the "pure passive" by Howard (1968, pp. 1, 5f), and may or may not be adversative. Howard

(1968, p. 5, 1969, p. 42) states that this passive, "as in English", is transformationally derived from an active counterpart, but I would agree with Sugita that these sentences have the same structure as the adversative, as shown in (6).

(6) watasi wa kare ni syasin o mise-rare-ta (Sugita, p. 9)
I he picture show
'I underwent: he showed me a picture.'
('I was shown a picture by him.')



( ) = delete under identity with higher NP.

The Dative CP watasi ni in the embedded sentence is deleted out of identity of the NP watasi with the matrix NP (cf. Sec. 3, (31)). The matrix NP can also be identical with the Object in the embedded sentence, as in (7).

(7) watasi wa haha ni home-rare-ta
I mother praise past
'I was praised by my mother.' (Sugita, p. 8)

The embedded sentence of (7) is (8):

(8) haha ga watasi o home-ta
mother Nom *I* Obj *praise*-Past
'Mother praised me.'

There is some controversy whether, if the rare form (7) is used

instead of the more usual active form (8), an adverse connotation of some kind is implied. There is no such ambiguity in the indirect passive (9). (See Section 4 regarding cultural factors and ambiguity in Japanese.)

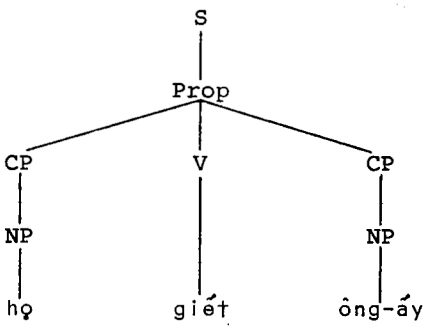
(9) watasi wa haha ni kare o home-rare-ta
I mother he praise
'I was adversely affected by mother praising him.'

As stated before, rare is a special verb: it requires a Dative subject and a sentential complement and carries the meaning *'undergo'*, i.e. its Dative subject undergoes something (the sentential complement). I will call this kind of verb "Submissive" (following Liem, 1969, p. 103). In the case of Japanese, in both the adversative or indirect passive and in the direct passive, rare is clearly Submissive. Adversatives are marked [+adversative] and direct passives are marked [±adversative].

2.2. *VIETNAMESE*

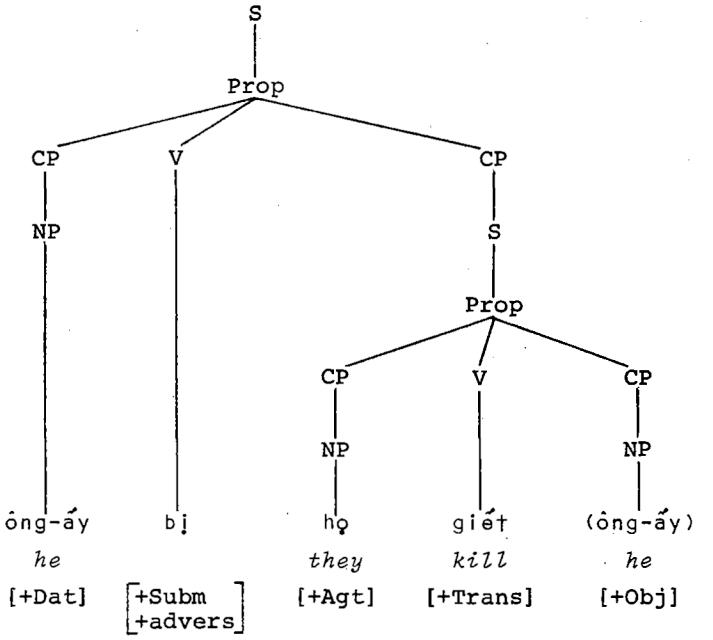
Vietnamese appears to have a set of Submissive verbs. For a list of these and their meanings (from Liem 1969), see the preceding paper in this volume, "Passive and ergative in Vietnamese", Sec. 2.1. However, all except bị *'undergo an unhappy experience'* occur in other uses and have not been sufficiently analysed to merit attention here. On the other hand, bị is clearly Submissive and clearly adversative, and has a construction similar to Japanese rare. Like rare, bị requires a Dative subject and a sentential complement. Unlike rare, bị has a lexical semantic feature of adversative and therefore all bị sentences are marked [+adversative]. Furthermore, the matrix NP must be identical with one of the NPs in the embedded sentence, though bị has a broader range of choice than rare in this respect since the matrix NP can be identical to the embedded Object, Agent subject (of transitive or intransitive verb), or Dative object or subject. Compare the following sentences.

(10) họ giết ông ấy
they kill man that
he
'They killed him.'



(11) ông-ấy bị (họ) giết

'He underwent adversely: they kill him.' ('He was killed.')

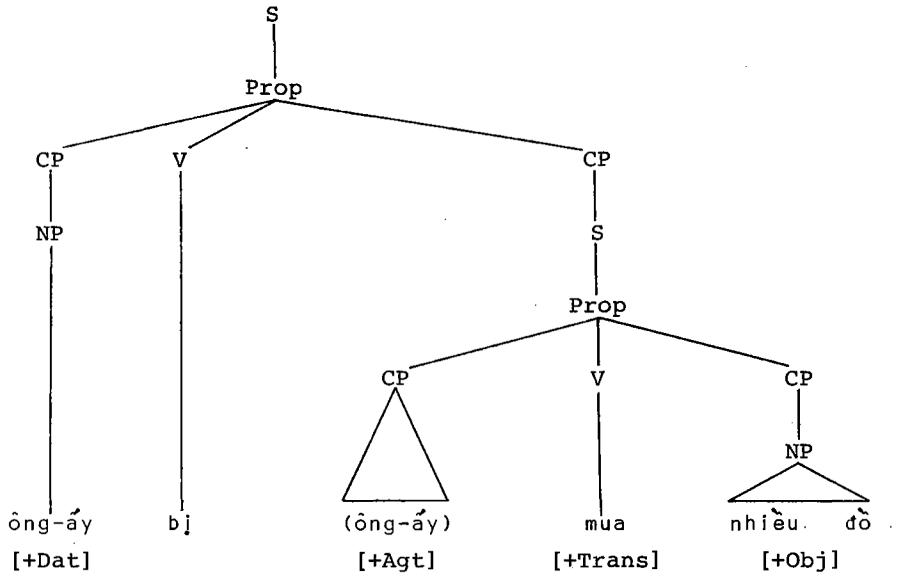


(12) ông-ấy bị mua nhiều đồ

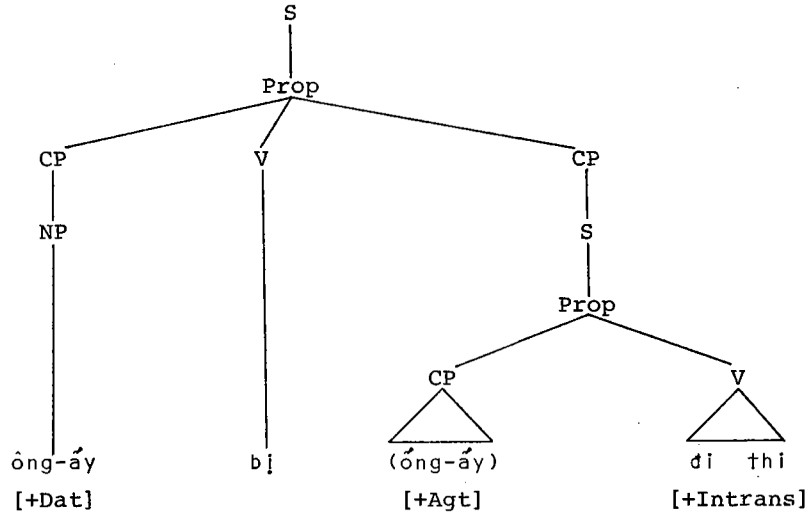
he buy many thing

'He underwent adversely: he bought many things.'

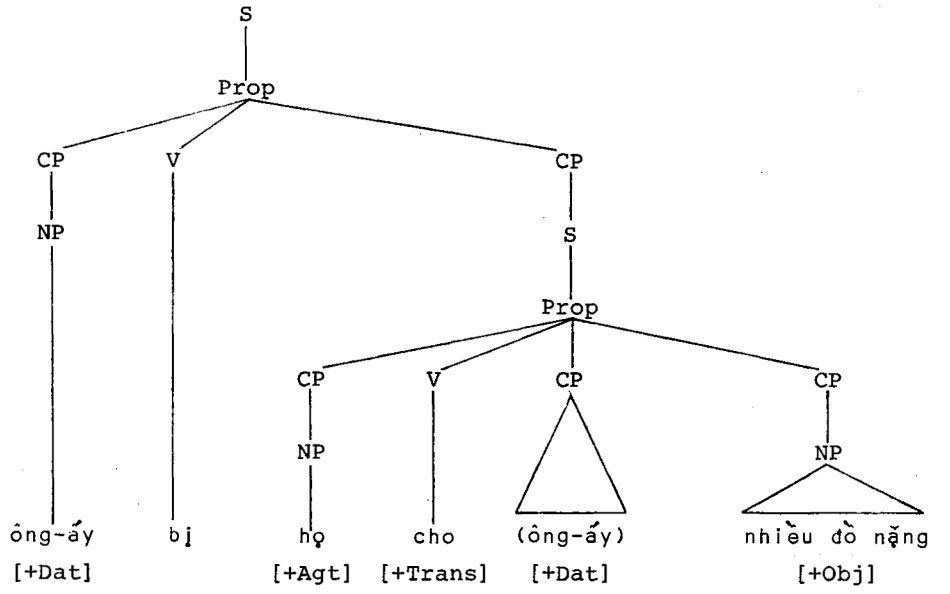
('He had to buy many things.')



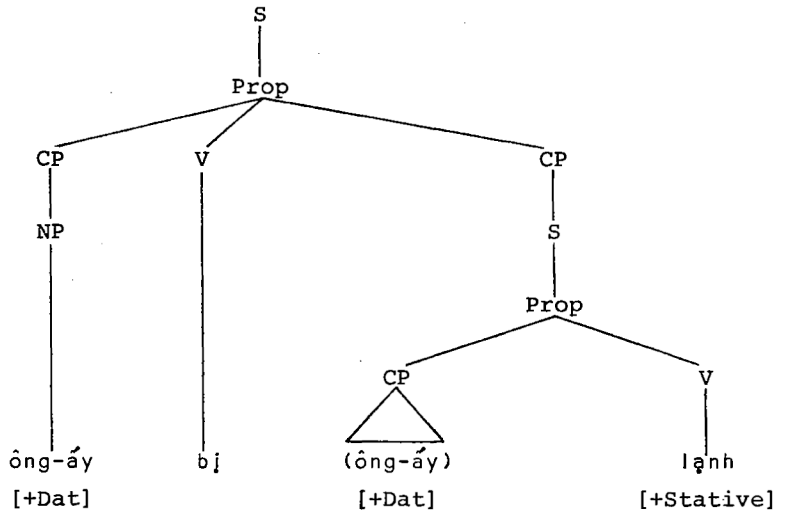
(13) ông-ấy bị đi thi
he go take exam
'He underwent adversely: he took exam.'
('He unfortunately had to take an exam.')



(14) ông-ấy bị (họ) cho nhiều đồ nặng
they give many thing heavy
'He underwent adversely: they gave him many heavy things.'



(15) ông-ấy bị lạnh
cold
'He undergoes adversely: he's cold.'



In the case of inalienable possession, it is possible for the matrix NP not to be identical with an embedded NP. If we say that deletion of an embedded NP is dependent on coreferentiality rather than identity, then inalienable possession is a special case of coreferentiality. (16) below was accepted only with discomfort, but (17) is clearly

acceptable. However, Vietnamese does not have anything to correspond to the indirect passive of Japanese.

(16) ông-ấy bị họ giết vợ
they kill wife
'He underwent adversely: they killed his wife.'

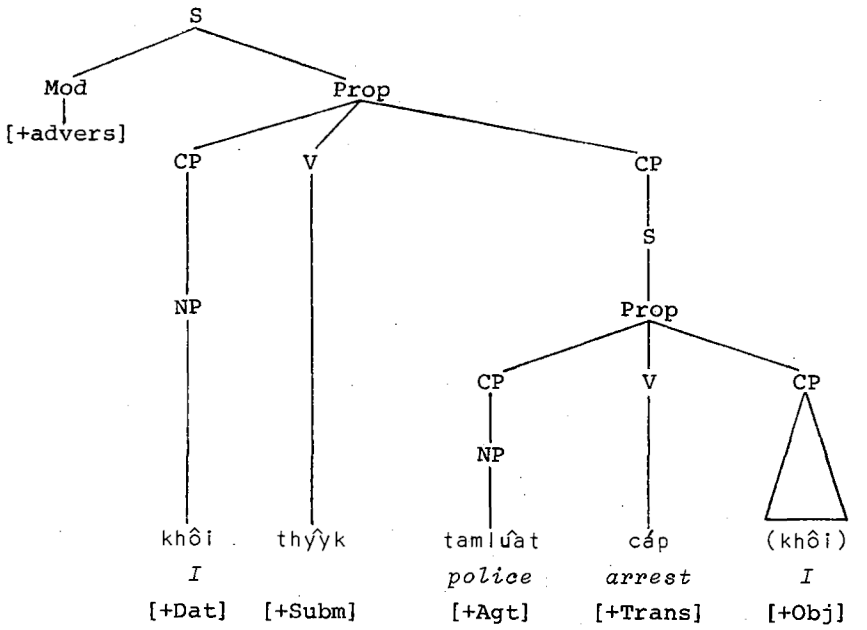
(17) ông-ấy bị (họ) cắt tay
they cut hand
'He underwent adversely: (they) cut his hand.'

Apart from sentences with Submissive verbs, Vietnamese seems not to have passive or ergative structures. (Cf. my paper "Passive and ergative in Vietnamese" in this volume.) At any rate, the Agent can occur only in the (unmarked) grammatical subject slot; Dative can be grammatical subject only as subject of Submissive verbs or of Stative verbs - which is not a marked sentence type. The Object can never be subject, though it can be topicalised.

2.3. *THAI AND LAO*

It is probable that Thai and Lao also do not have "passive" or ergative structures. They do have a Submissive verb - thuùk in Thai and thyŷk in Lao - which appears to have a structure like Vietnamese bị. (Thai thuùk sentences have been analysed as passive and are, of course, translated into English passive sentences. As in Japanese, urban Thai speakers exposed to English use thuùk for a translation passive.) It also appears that use of the Submissive verb in Thai and Lao generally connotes adversity, though the verb itself doesn't have the inherent feature [+adversative]. So far as I have been able to tell, the matrix NP must be equivalent to the embedded Object, therefore the embedded verb must be transitive. The following examples, taken from Lao, were given to me by Arthur Crisfield and Vilai Soulatha. All of them have the same underlying structure as that given for (18).

(18) khôi thyŷk (tamlûat) cáp
I police arrest
'I underwent adversely: the police arrested me.'



(19) mūu khôi thýýk khacàw khaà
friend I they kill
'My friend underwent: they killed him.'

(20) khôi thýýk sɛ́ən
invite
'I underwent: (someone) invited me.' ('I got invited.)

(21) khôi thýýk khacàw { thámlàaj *destroy* / ñɔɔng *praise* } khɔɔ́pkhua khôi
they *family* *I*
'I underwent: they destroyed/praised my family.'

Presumably, (21) is acceptable because the matrix NP, though not absolutely identical to the embedded Object, is included in the membership of the embedded Object (inalienable possession).

2.4. *MANDARIN CHINESE*

The complexities of Submissive and possibly Submissive verbs in Chinese would make a very sizeable project of itself and are far beyond the scope of this paper. The reader is referred to works of Annear, Y.R. Chao, A. Hashimoto, M. Hashimoto, H. Wang, and others for more extensive research in this area. What is presented here is a small corner,

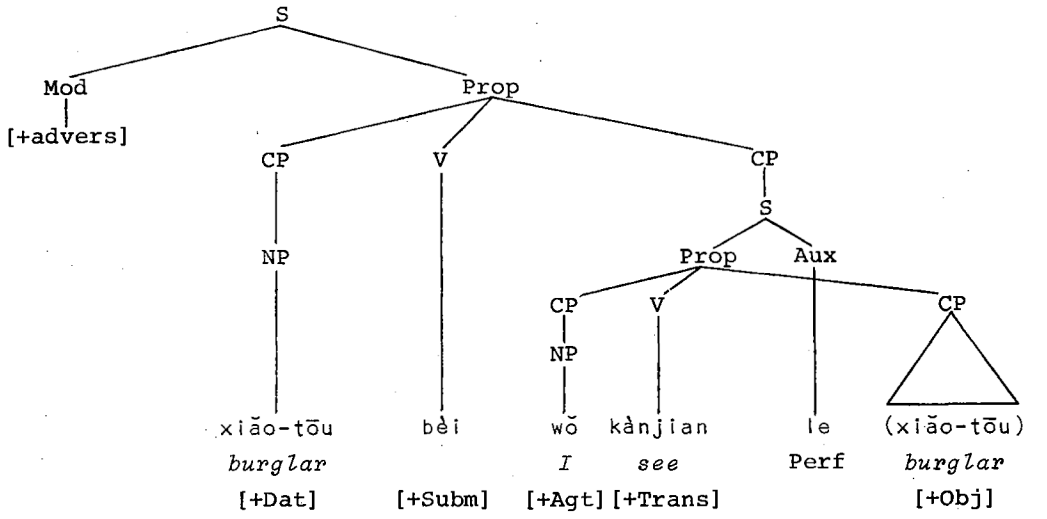
concerning the Mandarin Submissive verb bèi, whose structure is similar to the verbs previously discussed. Again, bèi sentences tend to be adversative, though bèi itself seems to be only [+Submissive]. In Chinese, the matrix NP must be identical with the embedded Object or Dative.

Teresa Cheng (who speaks Mandarin as a second language) would not accept bèi with an intransitive verb and non-identical NP, as in (22), a sentence taken from M. Hashimoto and about which Hashimoto says, "...the notion of inflictive construction...will be further strengthened, when an 'intransitive passive' can be found in modern Chinese (though not so numerous as in medieval Chinese)." (p. 64). It is not clear from this remark just how acceptable (22) is, but we are given a clue that earlier Chinese made broader and more specific use of bèi, perhaps more like Vietnamese bị or Japanese rare.

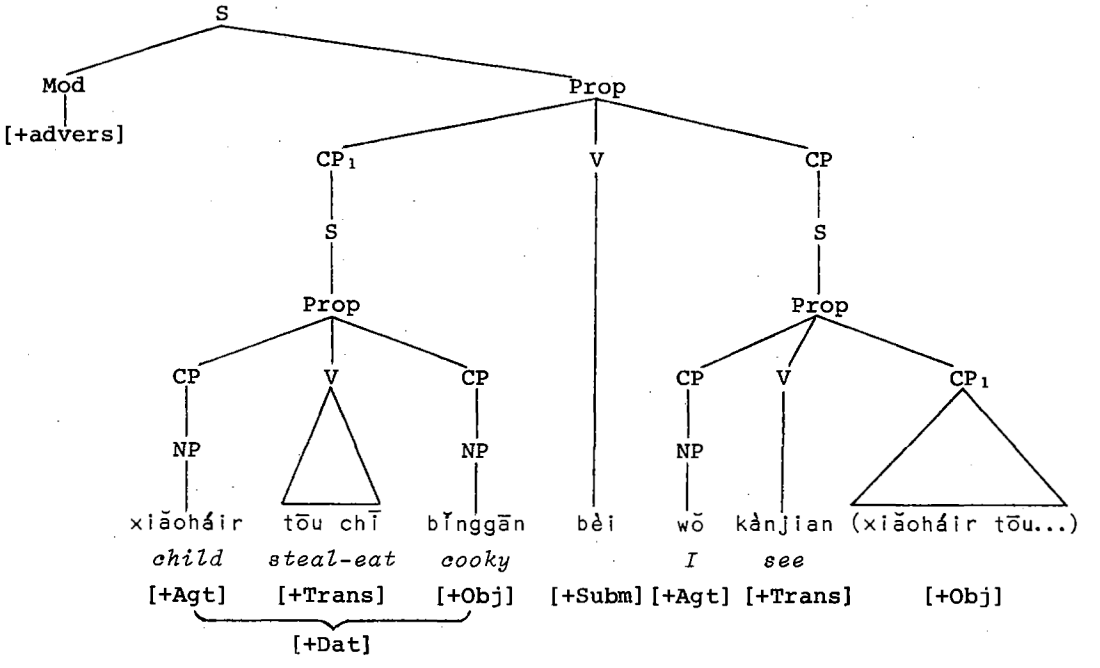
(22) kànshǒu bèi fànfen pǎo-le
guard criminal run-Perf
'The guard underwent adversely: the criminal ran away.'

Mrs Cheng was also hesitant about accepting a single noun for the matrix NP when the embedded verb is not clearly adversative in its lexical meaning, unless the noun itself explained some activity, as in (23). Much more acceptable with a non-adversative verb is (24), a sentence whose matrix NP is an embedded sentence.

(23) xiǎo-tōu bèi wǒ kànjian le
burglar I see Perf
'The burglar underwent adversely: I saw him.'



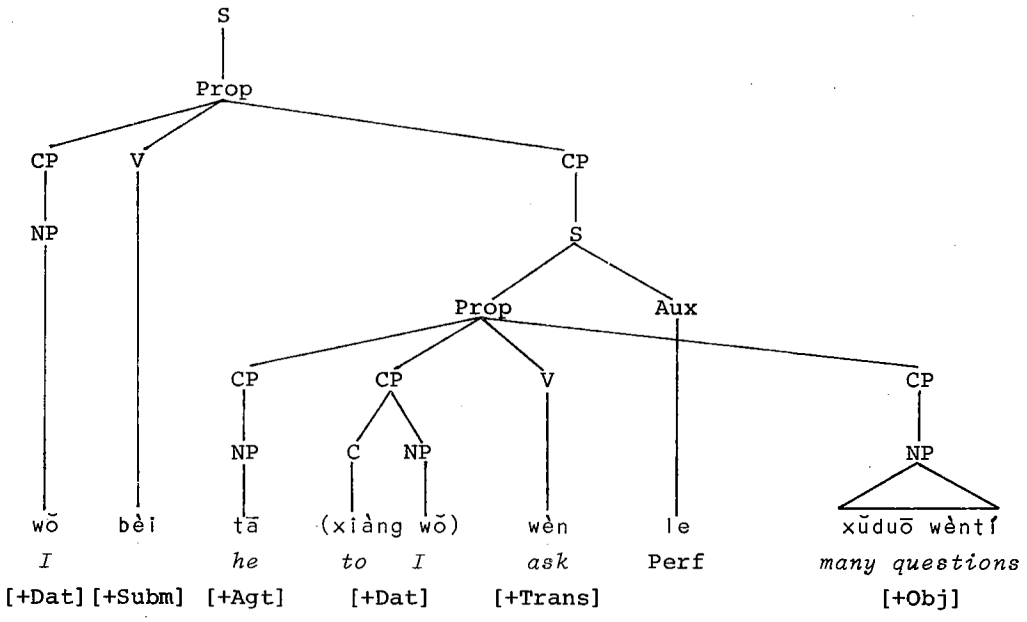
(24) xiǎo-háir tōu chī bǐnggān bèi wǒ kànjian
child steal eat cooky I see
'The child-taking-cookies underwent: I saw it (the incident).'



I suspect, however, that the restriction of adversative meaning in the embedded verb is situational, and that no such restriction exists grammatically.

The matrix NP may be identical to the embedded Dative, as in (25), which is perhaps more ambiguous regarding adversativity.

(25) wǒ bèi tā wèn-le xǔduō wèntí (Hashimoto, pp. 63-64)
I he ask-Perf *many question*
'I underwent (adversely): he asked me many questions.'



2.5. *CAMBODIAN*

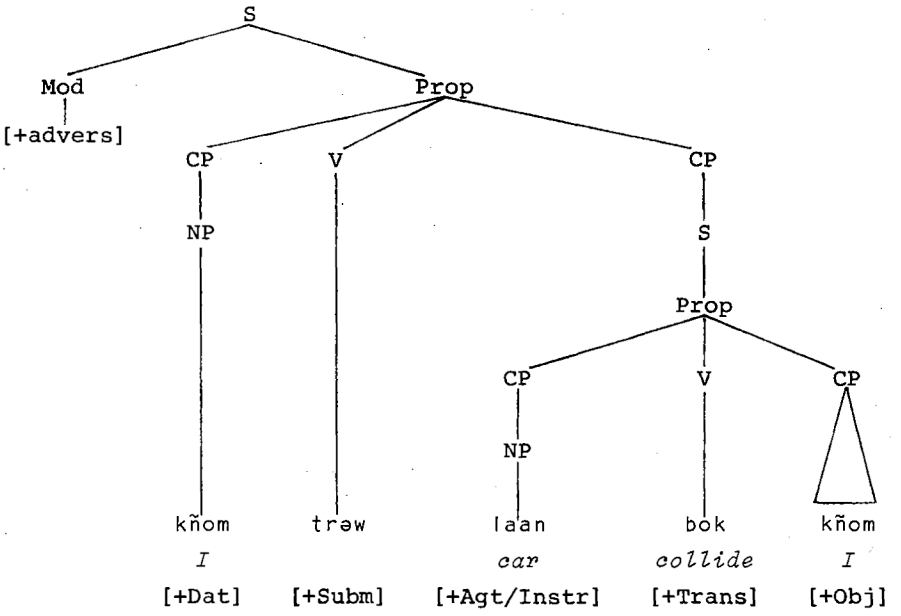
Huffman (1970, p. 426) gives the following functions and meanings for the Cambodian (Khmer) verb trəw (Jacob: troòv):

adjectival verb: *to be right, correct*
modal verb: *to have to, must*
transitive verb: *to hit, come in contact with; be subjected to, meet with*

He gives many examples of its use as a Submissive verb. As the modal verb *'must'*, it behaves much like the Vietnamese Submissive verb phải *'undergo obligation or necessity'*, where the matrix NP must be identical to the embedded subject NP. This is shown in the sentence, kñom trəw t+w psaa tŋay-nih *(I, undergo, go, market, day-this) 'I have to go to the market today.'* (Huffman, p. 302), where the subject of trəw is identical to the subject of t+w *'go'* in the embedded sentence.

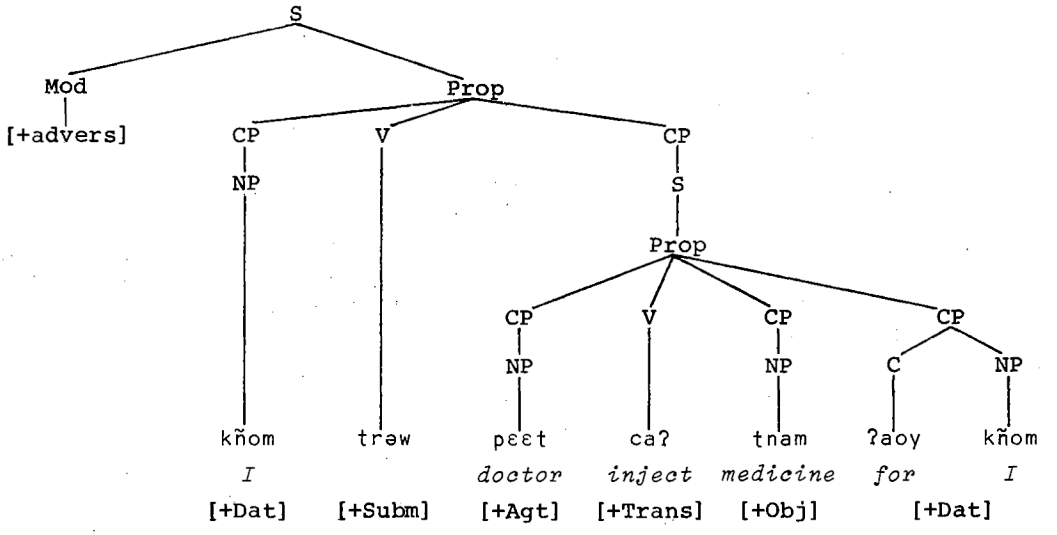
When the subject of trəw is identical with the embedded Object, as in (26), or the embedded Dative, as in (27), it appears to have an adversative meaning; at least, all such examples found indicate adverse situations. (26a), from Thach Sarun of Southern Illinois University, is an example of the embedded Object being inalienably possessed by the matrix NP.

(26) kñom trəw laan bok (kñom)
I undergo car collide with I
'I was hit by a car.' (Huffman, p. 302)



(26a) kñom trəw kee bɔm-baek kbaal (kñom)
I undergo they (cause-break) head I
break(trans)
'I underwent: they broke my head.' (because deserving of punishment)

(27) kñom trəw pɛɛt ca? tnam (?aoy kñom)
I undergo doctor inject medicine give for I
'I underwent: the doctor injected medicine in me.'
(Huffman, p. 302, and Thach Sarun)

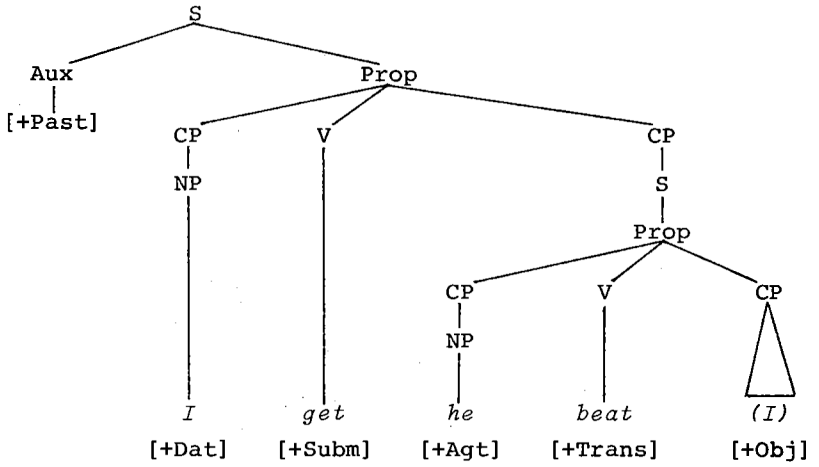


I have not attempted to analyse for this paper such sentences as miən mənuh mənɛ̆ə? trəw kruə̆h-tna? bok laan *(have, person, one person, undergo, accident, collide with, car) 'There was a man who met with an automobile accident.'* (Huffman, p. 302; cf. (26) above); or kñom trəw baek kbaal *(I, undergo, break, head) 'I have a fractured skull.'* (Huffman, p. 302), where baek is an intransitive verb and baek kbaal is perhaps an idiomatic expression (cf. (26a) above).

2.6. *ENGLISH*

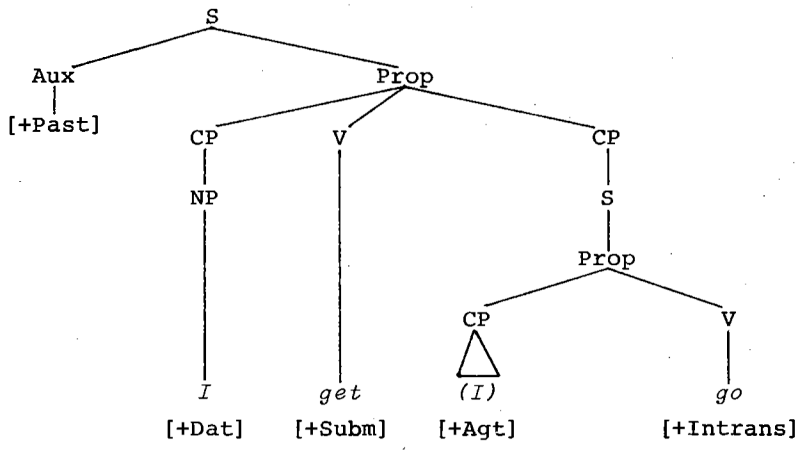
English *get*, in one of its uses, might be considered a Submissive verb. The sentence (28) could have the underlying structure indicated.

(28) *I got beaten (by him).*



Like Vietnamese bị, *get* can take an embedded intransitive verb, as in (29).

(29) *I got to go.*

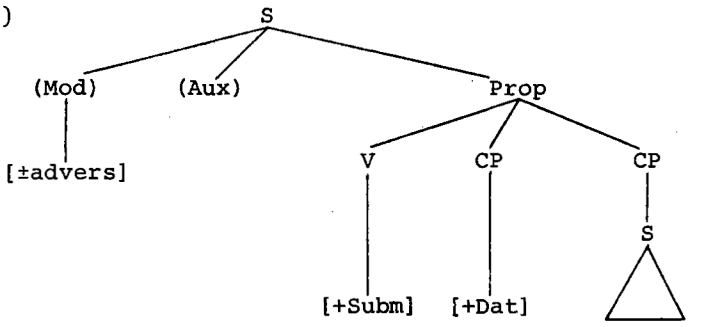


Although in this usage *get* is frequently an adversative, neither its lexical meaning nor the grammatical sentence structure it requires is in itself adversative.

3. A SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIVES

We can draw some general conclusions from the evidence given. The underlying structure of sentences with Submissive verbs is shown in (30).

(30)



There is a rule such that when a sentence has a Submissive verb and the NP of the matrix sentence is identical with the Object or Dative NP of the constituent sentence, the higher sentence meets the Structural Description for Equi-NP Deletion (Lakoff: ID-NP-DEL, pp. 35, 49ff.), and the entire CP dominating the identical constituent NP is deleted, according to (31), which has been formulated specifically to handle Submissive verb sentences.

(31) END-A

$$\text{SD: } \begin{bmatrix} Z\hat{}\begin{bmatrix}+V\\+Subm\end{bmatrix} \\ S \end{bmatrix} \hat{} \begin{bmatrix}+CP\\+NP_i\\+Dat\end{bmatrix} \hat{} \begin{bmatrix} X\hat{}\begin{bmatrix}+CP\\+NP_i\\+Obj/Dat\end{bmatrix}\hat{}Y \\ S \end{bmatrix}_S$$

Structural Change: 1 2 3 4 5 6 → 1,2,3,4,Ø,6

Japanese, Lao, and Mandarin use **END** as stated in (31). Vietnamese and Cambodian do not require the restriction on the constituent **NP** that it be either Object or Dative. Cambodian, furthermore, does not obligatorily undergo **END-A**. All five languages share Redundancy Rules *1* and *2*. Only Japanese has *RR.3*.

RR.1 [+Subm] → [+V; +__CP^S_c; +__[+Dat]; ±Dir Psv] S_c = $[_{CP}\ S\ ]_{CP}$

RR.2 [+Dir Psv] → [+SD:END-A; ±advers]

RR.3 [-Dir Psv] → [-SD:END-A; +advers]

In most cases, the Dative subject of Submissive verbs is animate, but there are some exceptions which won't be discussed in this paper.

If the Vietnamese Submissive verbs other than bị (cf. Sec. 2.2.) - especially được *'undergo a happy experience'* - truly occur as Submissive verbs, it cannot be said that it is the structure of these Vietnamese sentences which is adversative; whereas, for Mandarin, Thai, Lao, Cambodian, and especially Japanese, it is the particular structure, utilising a Submissive verb, which may mark the sentences [+adversative].

4. A COUPLE OF SUBMISSIVE QUESTIONS

Three questions are raised in my mind regarding the ways languages handle adversatives, particularly the Submissive verbs. The first question is, what is the status of the occurrence of Submissive verbs in relation to the accusative-ergative distinction? Are Submissive verbs the only kind of passive sentences in accusative languages that don't have ergative sentences? (I don't think Japanese has ergative sentences.) Can ergative languages have such structures?

The second question is, to what extent are such special features as Submissive verbs areal? Except for English, all my examples are from languages spoken in East and Southeast Asia. And, except for Thai and Lao, none of the languages analysed here - Japanese (Altaic?), Chinese (Sino-Tibetan), Thai-Lao (Thai-Kadai?: Sino-Tibetan?), Vietnamese (Austroasiatic), Cambodian (Mon-Khmer: Austroasiatic) - are genetically related unless distantly. Is such a phenomenon really special? What other languages of the world exhibit it? If Submissive verbs are not typologically associated and if they are special to Southeast Asia, then it would seem clear that this is an areal phenomenon. There is strong evidence, linguistic and otherwise, of extensive movement and contact in this area. Is this feature the sort of feature that would be

readily shared? If so, what kind of bilingual situation would contribute to this particular sharing?

That brings us to the third question: How closely related to culture is the particular choice of means of passive expression? How closely related to culture is the presence of productive adversatives? Howard (1969, p. 44) has this to say about the Japanese adversative:

> "...most likely these sentences are the result of sociolinguistic factors, a kind of formalized modesty which prohibits one from bragging about oneself or one's family. By expressing a positive event as if it were unfavorable, one is expressing humility and minimizing the disparity between oneself and others. Since this is a formalized usage, however, the adversative meaning may be filtered out and the positive content, the intended meaning of the message, is communicated. Perhaps this understood difference between what one is saying and what one means gives the neutral feeling to these passive sentences [with positive (-adversative) embedded verbs]."

There are many speculations regarding the influence of culture on language and the influence of language on thought. Modern psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and anthropological linguistics delve into these matters. I mention them here simply as questions to be considered.

NOTE

1. This paper is a revision of portions of "How adversative are passives?", a term paper written for a seminar in Case and Copula under Stanley Starosta at the University of Hawaii, May 1971. For data and ideas besides those culled from papers in the bibliography, I am indebted to my teachers (especially Mr Starosta) and fellow students, who have been generous of their time and very helpful, but should not be held responsible for conclusions drawn or questions raised.

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