

Preliminaries to the Re-analysis of the Sinhala Passive

Hemamali Gunasinghe and Joseph F. Kess

University of Victoria

This paper attempts to survey the preliminaries to a re-analysis of the passive in Sinhala. The passive voice is typically a matter of some controversy in traditional grammar and in modern linguistic theory, both of which share the assumption that passive structures are less basic, optional alternants to possible active structures. The passive transformation was one of the earliest to be stated in transformational generative theory, but its status continues to remain uncertain. Indeed, the status of the passive in linguistic theory has been the subject of considerable investigation of late.

According to some, linguistic theory has added little to understanding the underlying psycholinguistic nature of the passive construction. For example, Stanley (1975:25) notes that "historically, the passive voice has been one of the most controversial and problematic constructions in the discussion of English structure, and modern linguistics has added little to our understanding of the meaning and function of the passive." After all, its structure is stated simply enough, but the really interesting questions lie in its possible

semantic or cognitive origins and the stylistic uses to which it may be put. Like R. Lakoff (1971:168), one may ask "why is it so widespread, when it is apparently so useless?" Or even answering a less difficult, though no less important question like "where is it used rather than the active?" is a sufficiently informative task to set. Is it really as Green (1966:4) suggests, simply "an optional stylistic embellishment" or "a linguistic luxury"?

Some do see the passive as simply a stylistic variant, quite unimportant from a production or processing point of view. For example. on the one extreme one finds opinions like those of Evans and Evans (1957) who regard the passive as a sophisticated device that simply marks one as educated. Sledd (1959) also calls attention to its stylistic intent as opposed to its possible processing status when he notes that the choice of the passive is a stylistic determination made for the sake of effective prose. The passive voice has even been viewed as a stylistic device that lends itself to evasive uses, making covert appeals to authority and universal consensus. Jespersen (1924) once gave reasons for the use of the passive voice. While the first two are quite remarkable, the third is most intriguing and the fourth has often been stated by grammarians relying on their own processing intuitions.

- (i) The active subject is unknown or cannot be easily stated.
- (ii) The logical subject is evident (retrievable) from the context.
- (iii) There are special reasons (delicacy, tact) for not mentioning the active subject.

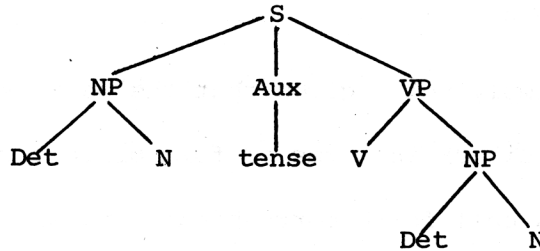
- (iv) Passive rather than the active subject attracts greater interest (or focus).

When one looks at the statistical frequency of the passive in actual speech, one is taken by its relative infrequency as opposed to its expected ubiquity. For example, Goldman-Eisler and Cohen (1970) found that the passive voice occurred only 7 to 10 percent of the time, compared to over 80 percent for the active. Interestingly, they also found that the frequency of the passive increased with educational level and formality of contextual situation.

If one views the passive as a variant form of the active declarative structure, the most obvious syntactic characteristic of the passive voice is the structural change it entails. Essentially, the subject/object exchange is a constant in languages like English, and grammarians differ little on this account. For example, Jespersen's statements are no different than later generativist formulations which number the noun phrases as NP_1 and NP_2 and have them transposed by the appropriate rule. What is different, of course, is the way in which sentence relationships are dealt with in modern linguistic theory. The form or structural essence of the passive, however, remains unchanged; the function or processual nature of the forms remains unclear.

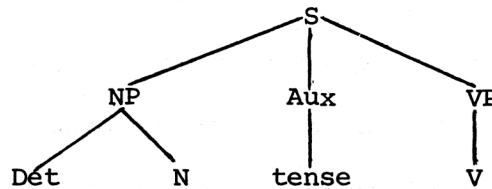
In generative theory, the passive transformation was stated as a reordering rule affecting linearly ordered "P markers". The base was conceived of in transitive terms, with P-markers for sentences like "Charlie opened the door" and "The door opened" looking like (1) and (2) below.

(1)



"Charlie opened the door"

(2)



"The door opened"

Thus, the passive transformation for a sentence pair like (3) and (4) is stated by a simple rule providing the structural description (S.D.) of the active declarative starting point sentence, and transforming it to the structural change (S.C.) which is the passive counterpart to the active sentence. This rule may be stated formulaically as in (5). In other words, to get from (3) to (4) one has, in effect, gone through the steps presented in

The formulaic statement deriving (6) from (5).

- (3) Charlie opened the door.
- (4) The door was opened by Charlie.

(5) S.D. $S[[NP_1]_{VP}[[V] [NP_2]]_{VP}]_S \implies$

(6) S.C. $S[[NP_2]_{VP}[V_{+be+en}] [PP[[P] [NP_1]]]_{VP}]_S$

It is simply not a given that the passive is directly related to the active, either in terms of form or in terms of function. Not all actives call forth corresponding passives in all languages, nor in the cases where it is a direct formal transformation do the two structures operate as equal semantic or processual paraphrases of one another. As Langacker and Munro (1975:791) note, "a passive sentence does not derive from the same abstract representation that underlies the corresponding active sentence (if there is a corresponding active) but rather from one with special semantic and syntactic properties There is no single rule that can be felicitously referred to as the passive transformation."

Generative theory claimed that the base captured the inherent structural distinction between the two basic structure types in language, namely, the transitive and intransitive structures. The passive transformation was to capture the syntactic equivalence (see Chomsky 1965) of the active-passive pair, which according to Katz and Postal (1964) formed a "paraphrase set".

It was to do this by deriving both from a similar deep structure or underlying representation.

In many languages (e.g., French, Italian, Uto-Aztecan), structures involving an "event" or semantic happening are regarded as reflexive or even passive. One may ask, as Taylor (1976:26) does, what classes these structures together in so many languages of the world? An answer to this question would appear to be part of the answer to understanding the nature of the passive voice in universal terms.

Linguistic evidence seems to argue for two kinds of passives. The first is a structural passive that is a stylistic variant of transitive active structures (semantically DO-CAUSE). The second is a semantic passive (HAPPEN) which is intransitive and which, depending upon the language, may be formally dissimilar to the structural passive, thus requiring a more basic representation.

Indeed, in some languages the passive construction is even seen as more frequent, if not more basic. Austronesian seems to be an excellent case in point. For example, Keenan (1976a, b) notes that in topic-prominent Austronesian languages the passive construction is more basic in usage. Segalowitz and Galang (1978) found, in a developmental experiment, that young Tagalog speakers acquire the passive voice very early in their acquisition schedule (but see also Kess, 1979).

It may be that the semantic passive should be considered more basic than linguistic theory has so far allowed; at the very least, some provision should be made that would allow for greater descriptive adequacy in terms of universal applicability. The psycholinguistic evidence suggests such a view. Experiments that sought to empirically confirm claims made in linguistic theory provide some evidence relevant to the active/passive relationship.

First, passive sentences are not typically more difficult to process than active sentences. For example, non-reversible sentences with pragmatic or semantic expectations taking higher priority, as well as sentences where the perceptual event is encoded as an event or happening demonstrate this (see Johnson-Laird 1968, Slobin 1966, and Wright 1972). In such cases, comprehension was direct and did not require the retrieval of deep structure. That is, conceptual focus and contextual appropriateness were sufficiently significant variables in processing, so that passives were in effect treated just like actives.

Some linguists have questioned the adequacy of a transitive description to capture significant information. The description in terms of transitivity is seen as missing the significant information available to a native speaker, namely, that the noun phrase 'the door' is patient in both sentences, (3) and (4).

This identity of role is captured in ergative languages through surface case relations and this fact has led some linguists to suggest an ergative type base as more suitable, even for accusative languages like English. The interest in applying the notion of ergativity to Indic languages is evidenced by the number of papers including this approach at the recent Roundtable on South Asian languages (held at S.U.N.Y., Stoneybrook, New York, 1980). What will come of viewing Indic languages as possible ergative languages is difficult to say at this point, but it is interesting to note that this novel theoretical approach to this subset of Indo-European is even being considered.

When one views the psycholinguistic evidence to date on the subject of passives, one immediately notes that subjects' performance on experimental tasks do not suggest that the active and passive are mere syntactic paraphrases of one another with the meaning entirely the same. Psycholinguistic evidence suggests that passive structures not only are unequal to their active counterparts in meaning, but also that some do not even entail a possible active counterpart involving an agent. For example, consider sentences like 7 through 9 in contrast to sentences 10 through 12.

- (7) The explorers were trapped in the quagmire.
- (8) I was caught in the turmoil.
- (9) Tom was buried under the rubble for four days.

- (10) The local team was beaten in today's game.
- (11) I was pushed and jostled in the crowded street.
- (12) The division was attacked from behind.

In sentences (10) through (12) an underlying agent, though superficially deleted, is perceived as causing or doing the action. Such sentences may have active counterparts of the form seen in sentences (13) through (15).

- (13) The visitors beat the local team in today's game.
- (14) People pushed and jostled me in the crowded street.
- (15) The enemy attacked the division from behind.

It seems clear, however, that no external cause or agent [NP₁] is involved in sentences (7) through (9). Even postulating a dummy NP of [SOMEONE] does not really resolve this exception to transformational potential of the passive. One can always adopt the system of marking all such verbs as having either or both kinds of passive, but to make separate classes would not be useful because of the overlap of items involved. Sentences like (7) through (9) cannot be taken to entail, logically or semantically, such counterparts as (10) through (12). They are not stylistic variants of possible active structures, for purposes of emphasis, focus or variety. They are basic, and cognitively distinct structures in that they refer to "events" perceived as not involving an agent, and therefore do not have active paraphrases.

This fact gives rise to a systematic ambiguity in the language, since certain truncated passive sentences are now ambiguous as to agency. For example, consider sentences (16) through (18).

- (16) The explorers were trapped.
- (17) I was caught.
- (18) Tom was buried.

The ambiguity is the result of the choice between the semantic [DO] (Agentive) or [HAPPEN] (Non-Agentive) criterion. Do the structures refer to "events" or "actions"? That is, "did someone do it?" or "did it happen?" The truncated forms in (19) through (21) entail no such ambiguity, for the actions referred to entail agency.

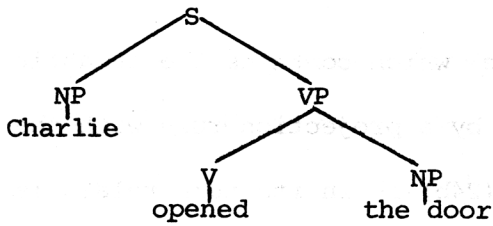
- (19) The team was beaten.
- (20) I was pushed and jostled.
- (21) The division was attacked.

Linguistic theory is, of course, constantly subject to revision, and some of these revisions have also attempted to be more responsive to the passive problem. Several new approaches have been tried to resolve what Chomsky (1965) called "residual problems", relating to semantically significant nomino-verbal relationships. Chomsky (1965:163) himself noted that beyond the notion of surface structure (such as 'grammatical subject') and deep

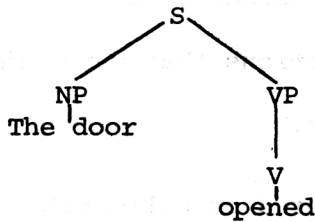
structure (such as 'logical subject'), there is still some more abstract notion of 'semantic function' still unexplained. Such new approaches take several directions, accounting for the meaning relation in terms of (1) lexical features, (2) deep structure case relations, (3) more grammatical relations in deep structure, or (4) more semantically-based deep structures. Of these, (1) and (3) may be viewed as extensions of the standard transformational theory while (2) and (4) deviate from it in more basic and significant ways. It may be worth reviewing several of these briefly to see what they bring to resolving the analysis of the passive.

The Lexicalist Hypothesis (Chomsky 1968) and the Extended Lexicalist Hypothesis (Gruber 1968, Jackendoff 1972) are attempts to account for meaning relations through additional lexical features. They do, however, retain a transitive type base in deep structure to capture syntactic generalities. In Jackendoff (1972) the 'functional structure', an innovation from the Aspects model, in the semantic representation is designed to handle semantic relations of a thematic nature. Thematic relations are related to grammatical functions through a system of projection rules, relating arguments in deep structure to semantic representation. Lexical insertion is free in the Jackendoffean model and his deep structures look like (22) and (23) after lexical insertion.

(22)



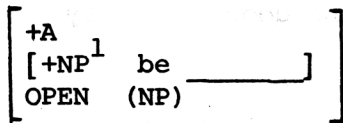
(23)



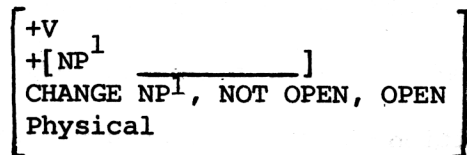
The semantic component derives thematic relations from the above thematic relations from the above syntactic structures.

Such thematic relations are determined by the semantic specific-ations of the verb, and a sample Jackendoff lexical entry (for "open") look like (24).

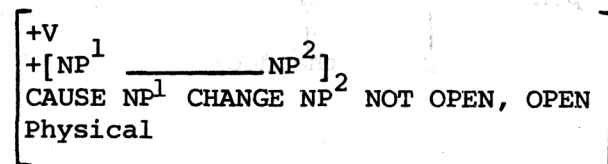
(24) a. open



b. open

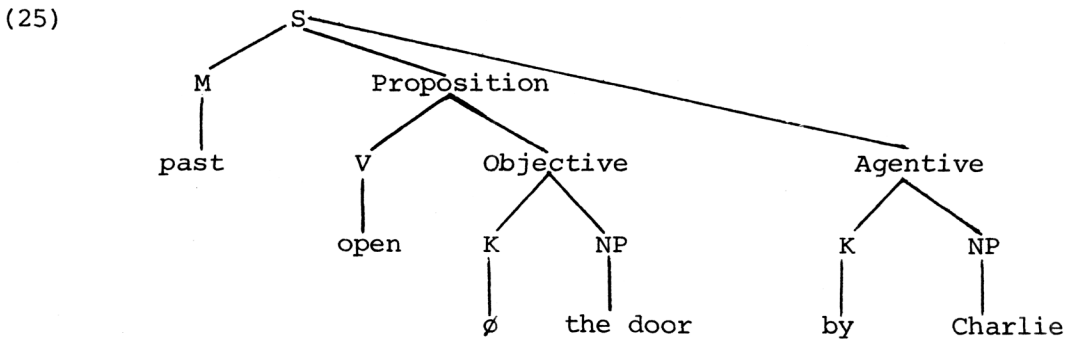


c. open

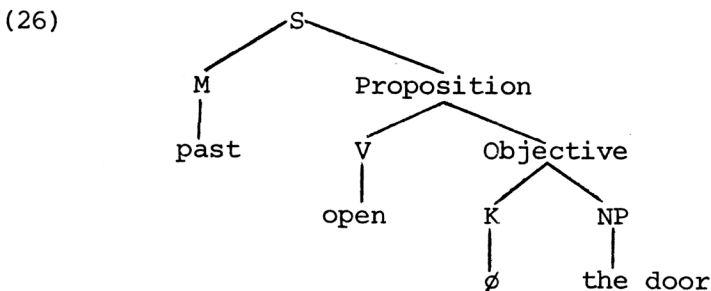


Clearly it is entry (24c) which contains the semantic properties that can be related by a projection rule with the deep structure in (22); entry (24b) is in its turn relatable to (23). In this description the passive rule would apply to an underlying representation like (22), but thematic relations would make the necessary semantic distinctions that were missed in the standard transformational analysis.

An alternative explanation is offered by Fillmore's Case Grammar, and his deep structure for the sentence "Charlie opened the door" would be as in (25).



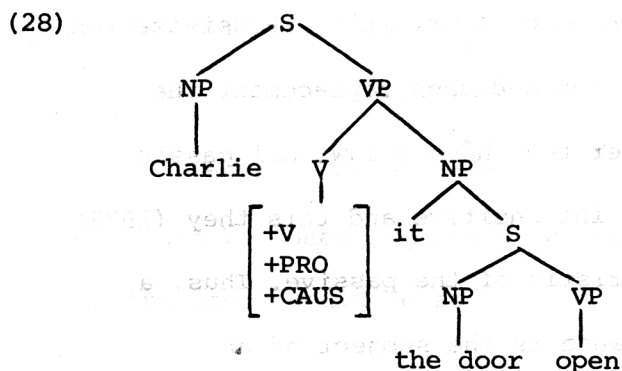
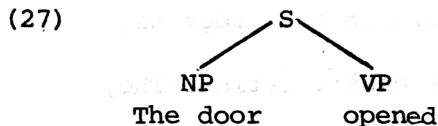
The sentence "The door opened" is instead derived from a structure without the agentive phrase, as is (26).



A third alternative is offered by Postal and Perlmutter's (1972, 1976, 1977, 1978) Relational Grammar, which retains transitivity in the base, postulating hierarchical order as better than linear ordering for universal passivization. They recognize a richer class of underlying grammatical relations and do not regard constituency to be a primitive. Passivization involves subject-object inversion and upon replacement the subject becomes a chômeur under the chômage law. All passive structures can be regarded as intransitive and this they (1977) claim is a universal characteristic of the passive. Thus, a direct object of an active clause is the subject of an intransitive clause in the corresponding passive, and the subject of an active clause is neither the (superficial) subject nor the (superficial) direct object of the corresponding passive. Thus, in the absence of another rule permitting some further nominal to be direct object, a passive clause is superficially an intransitive clause. However, relational grammar still views an active-type underlying structure for passives. That is, an NP¹ becomes a chômeur and is deleted without a trace.

A fourth alternative is offered by generative semanticists who reject the concept of syntactic deep structure. They do, however, retain syntactic-type P-markers and attach abstract semantic predicates to these, as in the Lakoff-type (1968)

examples in (27) and (28) below.



This approach is quite abstract in breaking off parts of the semantic reading and expresses these as higher pro-verbs which are later deleted. A causative (or inchoative BECOME, accounting for pairs like thick/thicken) transformation would raise the VP in the embedded S to the position of the pro-verb. "It" and various other empty nodes are deleted and the nominal surface structure emerges. The hypothetical nature of the Pro-verbs and the deletion rule these obligatorily require have attracted criticism (see Katz 1970, Chomsky 1970, Jackendoff 1972).

Finally, a pertinent alternative is offered by Chafe (1972) who objects to phrase markers and linear ordering in generative semantics. In his semantic structure, the verb is central and determines the nomino-verbal relationships. He claims that the

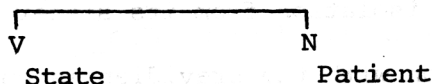
well-formedness of a sentence is determined in the semantic structure and that an adequate theory of language must really be an adequate theory of semantic structure.

The backbone of Chafe's semantic structure is a set of noun-verb relations, which take the verb to be central and the noun to be peripheral, exactly the converse of Chomsky's Aspects (1965). Underlying semantic structures are not derived as generalized P-markers through recursive base rules, but instead selectional units like State, Process, Action, Action-Process classify verbs and determine their relationships as in (29).

- (29) a. $V_{\text{State}} \rightarrow \text{open, break, dry} \dots$
 b. $V_{\text{Process}} \rightarrow \text{open, break, dry} \dots$
 c. $V_{\text{Process-Action}} \rightarrow \text{open, break, dry} \dots$
 d. $V_{\text{Action}} \rightarrow \text{sing, dance, go} \dots$

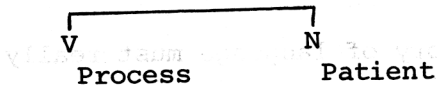
Nouns are also classified under selectional headings like count, potent, animate, human, and so forth, while noun-verb relations that play a fundamental role are Agent and Patient, as in (30) through (33).

(30)



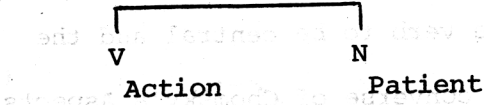
The wood is dry.

(31)



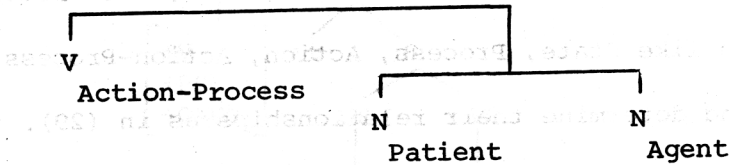
"The wood dried."

(32)



"Harriet sang."

(33)



"Michael dried the wood."

While each of the foregoing five approaches are distinguishable in their generative or interpretive conception of semantics, all incorporate the semantic distinction between DO and HAPPEN, either in terms of lexical features or in terms of deep semantic predicates. Looking ahead to the analysis of the passive in Sinhala, this may account for the configuration of syntactic structures Sinhala does have in this area of its syntactic inventory.

Although Sinhala belongs to the Indic branch of Indo-European, two thousand years of isolation from its sister languages and a close association with the Dravidian language Tamil for almost the same length of time have given it certain

unique characteristics. Among these are its treatment of the passive. Contemporary Sinhala exhibits a functional diglossia, with pronounced syntactic distinctions between the colloquial and literary levels of language use. Notable is the presence of a "syntactic passive" in literary Sinhala, while the spoken language is marked by its absence. For example, literary Sinhala has sentence pairs like (34) and (35) while colloquial Sinhala only has the active sentence (36). For example,

- (34) Ča:li-ø dorə-ø æəriye:yə
 Charlie-nom. door-acc. open-past-3sg.-masc.
 "Charlie opened the door."
- (35) Ča:li wi sin dorə-ø arinə ladi:
 Charlie-obl. by door-noun open-pcpl. get-past-3sg.
 "The door was opened by Charlie." PASSIVE
- (36) Ča:li dorə æəriya
 Charlie door open-past
 "Charlie opened the door."

Colloquial Sinhala has no device which accomplishes passivizing as in (34) and (35). Moreover, active structures are obligatorily used if the sentence refers to an action performed by an agent. There is, however, an "involitive" structure in both literary and colloquial Sinhala which uses the particle atin "by hand", and a participial form involving stem alternation. This has even been regarded by some linguists (Gair 1970; Kumaranatunga 1963) as a passive derived from an

underlying active structure. Such descriptions view both forms as having a similar structural description, thus deriving from the same structural origins. This derivation may be stated as follows, with the structural description (S.D.) undergoing two structural changes (SC₁) and (SC₂), as in the following formulaic representation.

SD S[[NP₁]_{VP}[[NP₂] V]_{VP}]_S \Longrightarrow

SC₁ S[_{PP}[NP₁ wisin]_{PP} NP^[NP₂]_{NP} VP[[V_{pcpl.} +get+(tense-person+number)]_{VP}]_S

SC₂ S[_{PP}[NP₁ atin]_{PP} NP^[NP₂]_{NP} VP[V_{pcpl.} +Involitive (tense-person+number)]_{VP}]_S

Examples of (SC₁) and (SC₂) are offered in sentences (37) and (38).

(37) Ča:li wisin dorə arinə ladi
 Charlie by door open get-pt.-3p sg.
 "The door was opened by Charlie."

(38) Ča:li atin dorə æruni (literary)/æruna (colloquial)
 Charlie hand-instr. door open-pt. Invol.
 "The door was involitively opened by Charlie."

This analysis, however, must be regarded as untenable since such involitive structures are semantically non-agentive and the atin noun phrase refers to an unintentional cause or instrument

of a process. Both the passive role of the participant and the spontaneous nature of the event is captured in the verb form, which is historically a medial form, typically referred to as an involitive verb in traditional Sinhala grammars. For example, note sentences (39) and (40).

- (39) ča:li a:tin dore əruni (literary)
 Charlie hand-instr. door open-invol.-past-3sg.
 "The door was opened (accidentally) by Charlie."

- (40) ča:li a:tin dore əruna (colloquial)
 Charlie hand-instr. door open-invol.-past
 "The door was opened (accidentally) by Charlie."

Colloquial Sinhala exemplifies a situation where the only possible expression of causality or volitive participation is a canonical active, as in sentence (41).

- (41) ča:li dore əriya
 Charlie door open-past
 "Charlie opened the door."

There is, however, also an agentless active which is semantically equivalent to an agent deleted passive. This is, in fact, an active from which the agent has been deleted, as in sentences (42) through (44).

- (42) dæg pahale watte pol wawənəwa
 now below property-loc. coconut-pl. grow-act. finite
 "Nowadays coconut is grown in the property below."
 "Nowadays (they) grow coconut in the property below."

- (43) kaḍukəre: iḍan la:beṭə wikunənəwəlu
 hill country-loc. property cheap-dat. sell-active
 "(It is said that) in the hill country property is sold cheap."
- (44) hariyəṭə paḥaṭə se:rəmə kanto:ru wahanəwa
 exact-dat. five-dat. all office-pl. close-active-reported
 "All offices are closed/close exactly at five o'clock."

The active verb form presupposes some unspecified agent to be the source of the action. In contrast, there are also structures which involve an involitive verb form, intending to suggest an event without a specific agent source. For example, contrast the preceding sentences with sentences (45) through (47).

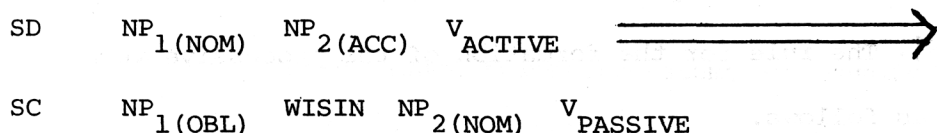
- (45) dæg paḥalə wətte pol (hondəṭə) wəwenəwa
 nowadays below property-loc. coconut-pl. grow-invol.-fin.
 "Nowadays coconuts grow in the property below."
- (46) kaḍukəre: iḍan la:beṭə wikinenəwa
 hill country-loc. property cheap-dat. sell-invol.
 "Properties in the hill country get sold/sell easily."
- (47) hariyəṭə paḥaṭə se:rəmə kanto:ru wəhenəwa
 exact-dat. five-dat. all office-pl. close-invol.
 "Exactly at five all offices will close (automatically)",
 is acceptable in a situation where offices are automated
 to close at five o'clock sharp.

The true structural passives are thus limited to the literary level of the language for what are essentially stylistic purposes. They involve no NP re-ordering, yet can be related to an underlying active structure from which it may be taken to be derived. Yet no change in the direction of focus or emphasis can be attributed to the choice of the passive (in contradistinction to

the active) since it emphasizes the agent. While word order is relatively free in Sinhala, the passivized structure seems to obligatorily require the agent phrase to remain in initial position. For example, contrast the possible active sentence orderings in (48) and (49) with the obligatory passive structure order in (50).

- (48) Vædda muwan mæruwe:yə
Vedda-sg. deer-pl. acc. kill-pt. 3 masc. sg. fin.
"The Vedda (aborigine) killed the deer."
- (49) muwan mæruwe:yə Vædda
deer-pl. acc. kill-pt. 3 masc. sg. Vedda-sg.
"The Vedda killed the deer."
- (50) Vædda wisin muwo marənu ləbu:hə
Vedda by deer-pl. nom. kill-pcpl. get-pt. 3pl. fin.
"The deer were killed by Vedda."

The passive rule in Sinhala may be stated as follows:



The morphological rule for the active and passive verb formation may also be stated as follows:

V_{Active} — Participle + Tense (Person + Number) + Finite Affix
+Active

V_{Passive} — Participle + Get + Tense (Person + Number) + Finite Affix
+Active

For example, note forms like (51) and (52)

(51) Active - mære + ti
kill-pres. + ³pl

(52) Passive - mærenu - labæ + ti
kill-pcpl. get-npt + ³pl

Lastly, some mention should be made of the active participle forms. The active participle form may be semantically classified as [DO/CAUSE]. However, since the derived passive forms also contain active participle forms, Kumaranatunga (1956) does not regard them as true passives. He instead regards the involitive structures as passives, and in this he is to some degree correct, for these are semantic passives. But his analysis errs in attempting to derive them from the active structures rather than treating them as a different class of structures and thus basic in themselves. The involitive structures have been called "processive" by Gunasinghe (1978, 1981) elsewhere and may be semantically classified as [HAPPEN/BECOME]. The rule for the formation of the processive verbs may be stated as follows.

V
Processive ——— Participle + Tense + (Person + Number) + Finish Affix
+Processive

Thus, one has forms like (53) below.

(53)	ACTIVE		PROCESSIVE
	mæra	—	mære
	kill	—	die

(54) ACTIVE PROCESSIVE

kapa	—	kæpe
cut	—	be cut

The class called processive verbs here have been rather weakly handled in traditional grammar as well. Morphologically, they are similar in that the stem is an unlauted form of the active participle as shown above. But these have been viewed under a threefold classification system as follows:

(A) Reflexive - (self agent/self patient)

gaḷe	perəle
stone-sg.	roll-npt.
"The stone rolls."	

(B) Involitive

taru	bəbəle
star-pl.	shine-npt.
"The stars shine."	

(C) Passive (when transitive stems are involved)

(dəriyə	wisin)	baḍuna	biḍe
(girl-sg.	by)	vessel	break-npt.
"The vessel is broken by the girl."			

(In spite of attempts by prescriptive grammarians to revive the full form of this passive structure, it remains unproductive and counter-intuitive in current usage. The truncated passive is widely used in the agentless/involitive sense.)

All three classes share the single semantic feature of a "happening" or an even — i.e., these are non-agentive. This paper takes a demonstrably more adequate and productive approach to the meaning and structure of Sinhala verbal morphology which

subsumes the unlauted forms under the class of process-verbs.

The processive structures also convey the semantic expression of experience, perception and events. In some instances the verb morphology shows the [DO/HAPPEN] dichotomy overtly. For example, contrast the verbal forms a and b in (55) and (56) below.

(55) a. matak kəɾəɳəwa
memory + do/cause
"to remind"

b. matak wəɳəwa
memory + happen
"to remember"

(56) a. pa:tə kəɾəɳəwa
colour + do/cause
"to colour" (transitive)

b. pa:tə wəɳəwa
colour + happen
"to colour" (intransitive)

This process is also extremely productive in bringing lexical borrowings into the Sinhala verbal morphology. Items in pairs, like those number (57)/(58) and (59)/(60), may serve to further illustrate this productive sub-class in Sinhala verbal morphology.

(57) "to bake" be:k kəɾəɳəwa
bake do
"to bake" (transitive)
NP₁ bakes NP₂

- | | | | |
|------|------------|---------------------------|----------|
| (58) | | be:k | wənəwa |
| | | bake | happen |
| | | "to bake" (intransitive) | |
| | | NP ₁ bakes | |
| (59) | "to start" | s̥t̥a:t̥ | kərənəwa |
| | as a car | start | do |
| | | "to start" (transitive) | |
| (60) | | s̥t̥a:t̥ | wənəwa |
| | | start | happen |
| | | "to start" (intransitive) | |

According to Gair (1970:81), "the semantic distinction between volitive, active, participative, and involitive passive participation is a deep-seated one in Sinhala, receiving formal expression in many ways, the most fundamental being the overall distinction between active and involitive clauses." This same dichotomy between what may be semantically seen as a [DO] versus a [HAPPEN] mode has also been employed in the description of noun/verb relationships elsewhere, and it seems likely that the [DO/HAPPEN] dichotomy will also prove helpful in the analysis of Sinhala verbal structures.

In conclusion, this paper would suggest that a fruitful area of research may be the semantic origins of passive structures and the stylistic uses to which they are put. We are sufficiently aware of what the formal syntactic status of the passive structure in a number of languages happens to be. What we need to question now is why they appear at all. The more pressing research question

for linguistic theory, if it is to move beyond a purely form-bound rationalism, is to discover the uses to which these syntactic structures are put in those languages which exhibit them, and ultimately, the psycholinguistic reasons why they appear at all. In dealing with the Sinhala Passive, then, its uses suggest certain characteristics which must be charted, both as a language specific preliminary necessary to understanding the Sinhala Passive, and more significantly, as a preliminary to answering the question pertinent to language in general, that is the psycholinguistic motivation for passive use. Thus, from the preliminaries to the analysis of Sinhala passive, one can move to the analysis of the Sinhala Passive as a preliminary to the understanding of passive voice in general.

ABBREVIATIONS

acc	-	accusative	nom	-	nominative
act	-	active	npt	-	non past tense
dat	-	dative	obl	-	oblique
fin	-	finite	pcpl	-	participle
instr	-	instrumental	pl	-	plural
Invol	-	involitive	pt	-	past tense
loc	-	locative	sg	-	singular
masc	-	masculine	3sg	-	3rd person singular

REFERENCES

- Chafe, Wallace L. 1972. *The Meaning and Structure of Language*. University of Chicago Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1965. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. MIT Press.
- _____. 1970. "Remarks on Nominalizations" in R. Jacobs and P. Rosenbaum (eds) *English Transformational Grammar*. Blaisdell Publishing Company, Massachusetts.
- _____. *Studies on Semantics in Generative Grammar. Janua Linguarum Series Minor*. Mouton.
- Evens, Bergen and Cornelia Evans. 1957. *A Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage*. Random House, New York.
- Fillmore, Charles J. 1968. A Case for Case. *Universals in Linguistic Theory*. Bach, E. and Harms, Robert T. (eds). Holt Rinehart, N.Y.
- Gair, James W. 1970. *Colloquial Sinhalese Clause Structure*. Mouton.
- Goldman-Eisler, Freda and Michele Cohen. 1970. "Is N, P, and PN difficulty a valid criterion of transformational operations?" *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 9:167-70.
- Green, Alexander. 1966. "Dative of Agency." *Germanic Studies* 17. Columbia University AMS Press Inc., N.Y.
- Gruber, Jeffrey S. 1968. *Studies in Lexical Relations*. MIT.
- Gunasinghe, Hemamali. 1978. "Do and Happen: The Ergative in Colloquial Sinhala." Unpublished M.A. thesis. University of Victoria.
- Gunasinghe, Hemamali. 1981. "Passive use in Modern Sinhala." *Working Papers of the Linguistics Circle of the University of Victoria* Vol. 1, No. 1:18-31.
- Jackendoff, Ray S. 1972. *Semantic Interpretation in Generative Grammar*. MIT Press.

- Jespersen, O. 1924. *The Philosophy of Language*. Allen and Unwin. London.
- Johnson-Laird, P. N. 1968. "The Choice of the Passive Voice in a Communicative Task." *British Journal of Psychology* #59, 1:7-15.
- Katz, J. J. 1972. *Semantic Theory*. Harper and Row. New York.
- Katz, J. J. and P. M. Postal. 1964. *An Integrated Theory of Linguistic Description*. MIT Press.
- Keenan, E. 1976a. "Towards a Universal Definition of Subject." *Subject and Topic*. Academic Press, New York.
- _____. 1976b. "Remarkable Subjects in Malagasy." *Subject and Topic*, Academic Press, New York.
- Kess, Joseph. 1979. "Review of *Text and Context: Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse* by T.A. Van Dijk", in *IRAL* xvii/3.
- Kumaranatunga, Munidasa. 1963. *Vyakarana Vivaranaya*. M. D. Gunasena. Colombo.
- Lakoff, George. 1970. *Irregularity in Syntax*. Holt, New York.
- _____. 1972. "Instrumental Adverbs and the Concept of Deep Structure." *Foundations of Language* 4:4-29.
- Lakoff, Robin. 1971. "Passive Resistance." *Papers from the 7th Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*: 141-161.
- Langacker, R. and P. Munro. 1975. "Passives and their Meanings." *Language* 51:789-830.
- Perlmutter, David. 1971. *Deep and Surface Structure Constraints in Syntax*. Holt Rinehart and Winston.

- Perlmutter, David and Paul M. Postal. 1977. "Towards a Universal Characterization of Passivization." *Proceedings of the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Berkley Linguistics Society*.
- _____. 1978. "Impersonal Passives and Some Relational Laws" in Perlmutter and Postal (eds) *Relational Grammar II*.
- Postal, Paul M. 1971. *Cross-over Phenomena*. Holt Rinehart and Winston.
- Segalowitz, Norman and Rosita G. Galang. 1978. "Agent Patient Word Order Reference in the Acquisition of Tagalog." *Journal of Child Language* 5:1.
- Slobin, Dan I. 1966. "Grammatical Transformations and Sentence Comprehension in Childhood and Adulthood." *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* #5:219-227.
- Stanley, Julia P. 1975. "Passive Motivation." *Foundations of Language* 13:25-39.
- Taylor, Alan. 1976. "Ergative based or Transitive based." *Foundations of Language* 14:1-17.
- Wright, Patricia. 1972. "Some Observations on how People Answer About Sentences." *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 11:188-195.