

〈特集「受動表現」〉

Passive constructions in Setswana (S31)

ツァナ語 (S31) の受動表現

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要旨：本稿は、語研論集 14 号(2009)所収の調査票にもとづいて収集したツァナ語(バントゥ系；南アフリカ共和国)の受動表現に関する記述的資料を提供するものである。

Abstract: This article presents descriptive data on various passive constructions in Setswana, a southern Bantu language spoken in South Africa. The data was collected through the questionnaire “Passive expressions” designed in *Journal of the Institute of Language Research* 14, 2009.

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1. Introduction: The Sintu/Setho languages and Setswana

The goal of this paper is to describe passive constructions in Setswana, a Southern Bantu language spoken in the Northwest Province in South Africa. Statistics from Census 2022 (Statistics South Africa, 2022) show that nearly five million people in South Africa speak Setswana as their first language (L1), accounting for approximately 8,3% of the total population. The passive morpheme is -iw-/w-, which attaches to the verb stem. In this section, an overview of the language is presented.

The Sotho-Tswana or Sotho group (S30) consists of Setswana (sometimes called Western Sotho) (S31), Northern Sotho (Sepedi) (S32) and Southern Sotho (Sesotho) (S33) (Gowlett, 2003:609-638). Although the three languages are officially recognised as separate languages, they are closely related in terms of grammar and vocabulary and are therefore considered sister languages, each having characteristics of its own (Krüger, 2006:3). In the Guthrie classification, Tswana is designated as S31. Its regional variations or dialects are categorised as follows: S31a for Central (including Rolong and Hurutshe), S31b for Eastern (including Kgatla and Kgafela), S31c for Ngwato and Tawana, S31d for Kgalagadi and S31e for Tlhaping and Tlharo) (Maho, 2003:649; see also Cole, 1975:xv-xix).

Four main linguistic features of Sintu/Setho languages are as follows. First, Setswana has a system of nominal classification. The system of nominal classification forms the basis of the system of agreement found in words and morphemes. Second, Setswana shows complex morphology pertaining to verbs. This has sparked a lot of interest among Southern African linguists where the focus has primarily been on word structure (Kosch 2006:x). In a



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broader context, but still focusing on the morphosyntax of the Suntu languages from the theoretical model of Lexical Functional Grammar perspective, Bodomo and Che (2023:1212) highlight a body of work by Bresnan and Mchombo (1995), Mchombo (1997, 1980, 2002, 2003, 2004), Moshi (1995), Morimoto (2002) and Matambirofa and Mabugu (2014). Third, Setswana shows a highly agglutinative manner in which verb stems are derived. Kosch (2006:134) explains that in the context of language, “agglutination refers to a process whereby various affixes are “glued” on, or simply “stuck” onto other morphemes in sequence”. The agglutinating features of the Suntu languages can be summarised as in (1).

- (1) The agglutinating features of the Suntu languages (Kosch 2006:138)
 - a. Words are typically polymorphemic (morphologically complex).
 - b. Morphemes generally remain unchanged and hence the boundaries between their morphs are clear.
 - c. Individual grammatical categories or semantic content can be easily assigned to morphs, which follow one another serially.
 - d. In Suntu languages, verbal stems include prefixes that denote tense, aspect, mood and polarity (TAMP), as well as agreement morphemes that mark the subject and object. Various suffixes, sometimes referred to as extensions, as well as endings or terminatives, may follow the root.

The structure of the main verbs in the Bantu languages is highly similar. Nurse (2007:240) states that: “Nearly all Niger-Congo branches and languages share the *nucleus root - extension - final vowel*, which corresponds generally to Meeussen’s *radical - suffix - pre-final - final*. We can assume this structure goes back to Proto-Niger-Congo and was part of the Proto-Bantu verb structure”.

Creissels (2019:6) explains that: “A Bantu verb form typically consists of a *root* (an irreducible lexical element) together with an obligatory suffix (the *final vowel*, or simply *final*) and a variable number of other affixes whose presence depends on a variety of factors, each affix having its position in the string. The root may be immediately followed by derivational suffixes that modify its meaning. The part of the main verb form constituted by the root and such derivational suffixes can be referred to as the *extended root*.” The productive suffixes that follow these semi-productive suffixes are often referred to in the so-called CARP template referring to the causative, applicative, reciprocal, perfect and passive which also indicates their order. Note thus that when a verb includes more than one suffix the passive is always the last suffix followed only by the terminative/final vowel. Cole (1975:195-196) indicates that “Passive verbs are used much more commonly in Tswana than in English and that the impersonal or indefinite construction with the subject concord *go-* of class 9 is common” (see (2)); Note that this subject concord is of the infinitive class.

- (2) a. *Go iwa kae?* ‘There is being gone where? – Where are you/they going?’
 Go y-iw-a kae
 SMINDEF-go-PASS-FV INTER
- b. *Go tla jewa leng?* ‘There will be eaten when? – When do we eat?’
 Go-tla-j-iw-a leng
 SMINDEF-FUT-eat-PASS-FV INTER

Cole (1975:195-196) also indicates that “passives of applied forms are often used where English would have a non-passive construction.” This pattern is shown in (3).

- (3) a. *Go latlhegelwa ke thipa.* ‘To be lost for by a knife. – To lose one’s knife.’
 Go-latlh-eg-el-w-a ke thipa
 SMINDEF-throw away-NEUT-APPL-PASS-FV by 9-knife
- b. *Go timelelwa ke dikgomo.* ‘To be strayed for by cattle. – To lose one’s cattle.’
 Go-timel-el-w-a ke dikgomo
 SMINDEF-get lost-APPL-PASS-FV by 10-cow

The valency of the verb results from the meaning of the verb root and the extensions following it. The causative, applicative, reciprocal, and passive suffixes influence the valency of the verb by increasing or decreasing it but it may also alter arguments (Cole, 1975; Bresnan and Moshi, 1990: 147–185; Mchombo, 2007: 203–204; Khumalo, 2007: 13; Pretorius et al., 2012: 203; Khumalo, 2014: 145; Chavula, 2016: 16; Berg, 2018: 67–92; Berg et al., 2020). The causative suffix is valency increasing, allowing intransitive verbs to take a direct object while transitive verbs with the causative suffix can take an indirect and a direct object or both a direct object and an oblique (Berg 2018, 67–70). The applicative suffix is also valency increasing, allowing the inclusion of a direct object, both an indirect and direct object, an oblique or both a direct object and an oblique (Berg 2018, 71–75). The reciprocal and the passive on the other hand are valency reducing (Berg 2018, 75–89).

2. Basic data

This section shows the passive data¹ in Setswana based on the questionnaire “Passive expressions” which appeared in the Journal of the Institute of Language Research 14 (2009). Each example has a passive and the active counterpart. The orthographic representation of sentences is in italics. Morpheme-by-morpheme lines with gloss appear below the sentence. In all examples, the passive morpheme is *-iw-*.

An example of the simple passive is shown in (4), in which the agent is introduced by the preposition *ke* 'by'. The subject of the passive can be an inalienable object (5) or an alienable object (6). The idiomatic applied form could also be used in (6c) and would have the meaning of being *stolen from* and not *stolen for*.

- (4) Simple passive [Item 1-1]
- a. Passive
- Kabelo o iteilwe ke Itumeleng.* ‘Kabelo was hit by Itumeleng.’
- Kabelo o-itay-il-**iw**-e ke Itumeleng
- Kabelo SM1-hit-PERF-PASS-FV by Itumeleng
- b. Active
- Itumeleng o iteile Kabelo.* ‘Itumeleng hit Kabelo.’

¹ Subject markers in Setswana are written separate from the host verb in the orthography. In Bantu linguistics, these subject markers are morphologically identified as a prefix attached to the stem. Following the orthographic rendition, however, this paper does not connect the subject marker and the verbal stem with a hyphen in the italicized line.

(5) Inalienable subject [Item 1-2]

a. Passive

Lenao la ga Kabelo le gatilwe ke Itumeleng. ‘Kabelo’s foot was stepped on by Itumeleng’

Le-nao la ga Kabelo le-gat-il-iw-e ke Itumeleng.
5-foot POSS5 POSS17 Kabelo SM5-step-PERF-PASS-FV by Itumeleng

b. Active

Itumeleng o gatile leoto la ga Kabelo. ‘Itumeleng stepped on Kabelo’s foot.’

(6) Alienable subject [Item 1-3]

a. Passive

Sepatche sa ga Kabelo se utswitswe ke Itumeleng. ‘Kabelo’s wallet was stolen by Itumeleng’

Se-patche sa ga Kabelo se utsw-il-iw-e ke Itumeleng
7-purse POSS7 POSS17 Kabelo SM7 steal-PERF-PASS-FV by Itumeleng

b. Active

Itumeleng o utswitse sepache sa ga Kabelo. ‘Itumeleng stole Kabelo’s wallet’

c. *Kabelo o utswetswe sepache ke Itumeleng.* ‘Kabelo had his wallet stolen from (him) by Itumeleng’

Kabelo o utsw-el-il-y-e se-pache ke Itumeleng
Kabelo SM1-steal-APPL-PERF-PASS-FV 7-purse by Itumeleng

Some intransitive verbs such as *lla* ‘to cry’ may be passivized as shown in (7a). The active counterpart of the sentence is shown in (7b).

(7) Passive of an intransitive verb [Item 1-4]

a. Passive

Maabane bosigo, ke lletswe ke lesea. Ka moo, ga ke a kgona go robala sepe / gotlhe gotlhe.

‘Last night, I was cried (to/upon) by the baby (intended. the baby cried). So, I couldn’t sleep at all.’

maabane bo-sigo, ke-ll-el-il-iw-e ke le-sea
ADV 14-night 1SG-cry-APPL-PERF-PASS-FV by 5-baby
ka moo, ga ke a kgona go robal-a sepe / gotlhe gotlhe.
CONJ NEG 1SG-NEG-NEGPRES-can-FV SM15-sleep-FV SEPQPRO / INCQPRO INCQPRO

b. Active

Maabane bosigo, lesea le ne la lla. Ka moo, ga ke a kgona go robala sepe / gotlhe gotlhe.

‘Last night, the baby cried. So, I couldn’t sleep at all.’

maabane bo-sigo le-sea le-ne la-ll-a.
ADV 14-night 5-baby SM5-AUX SM5-cry-FV
ka moo ga-ke-a-kgon-a go-rob-al-a sepe / gotlhe gotlhe
CONJ NEG 1SG-NEG-can-FV SM15-sleep-FV SEPQPRO / INCQPRO INCQPRO

In the example in (8), the agent of the passive sentence is optional. In (9) the agent of the verbal action is not stated, however, Cole (1975:192) states that “The agent of the verbal action is always implied, even if it is not stated.”

- (8) Optional agent phrase [Item 1-5]
Kago e ntsha e agilwe (ke Itumeleng). ‘A new building was built (by Itumeleng).’
 kago e ntsha e-ag-il-iw-e ke Itumeleng
 9.building QUALPART9 new SM9-build-PERF-PASS-FV by Itumeleng
- (9) Agent is a generic phrase [Item 1-6]
- a. Passive
Go buiwa Sefora kwa Canada. ‘There is being spoken French in Canada’
 go-bu-iw-a sefora kwa Canada
 SMINDEF-speak-PASS-FV 7.French LOC Canada
- b. Active – (Passive)
Sefora se buiwa kwa Canada. ‘French is being spoken in Canada.’
 go-bu-iw-a sefora kwa Canada
 SMINDEF-speak-PASS-FV 7.French LOC Canada

Both examples in (10) are passive. The indefinite form in (10a) does not include a subject as it starts with the indefinite subject agreement morpheme which is translated as “there”. It may be viewed as ambivalent as it may be anaphorically linked to the absolute pronoun *gone* “there” of class 17. In (10b), the locative phrase is also omitted.

- (10) More examples with a generic agent phrase
- a. *Go buiwa Sefora gone.* ‘There is being spoken French there – French is spoken there.’
 go-bu-iw-a sefora gone
 SMINDEF-speak-PASS-FV 7.French ABSPRON17
- b. *Go buiwa Sefora.* ‘There is being spoken French – French is spoken.’
 go-bu-iw-a sefora
 SMINDEF-speak-PASS-FV 7.French

Passive sentences may imply the person who is affected by the verbal action as in (11). Passive in Setswana can also describe the outcome of an action as in (12); in this case the event of picture hanging. The describing copulative verb *se* in (12b) is transcribed with the verb *kaletsa* ‘hang up’ which is inflected with the perfect and passive suffixes.

- (11) Passive implies an affected person [Item 1-7]
- a. Passive
Sepache se utswitswe ke Kabelo. ‘The wallet was stolen by Kabelo.’
 se-pache se-utsw-il-iw-e ke Kabelo
 7-purse SM7-steal-PERF-PASS-FV by Kabelo
- b. Active
Kabelo o utswitse sepache. ‘Kabelo stole the wallet’

(12) Passive describes an outcome of an action [Item 1-8]

a. Passive

Setshwantsho se kaleditswe mo leboteng. ‘A picture is hung on the wall.’

se-tshwantsho se-kalets-il-iw-e mo le-bota-ing
7-picture SM7-hang-PERF-PASS-FV LOC 5-wall-LOC

b. Active

Setshwantsho se mo leboteng. ‘A picture is on the wall’

se-tshwantsho se mo le-bot-ing
7-picture DESCOPV7 LOC 5-wall-LOC

In Setswana, emotion verbs (13) or message verbs (14) can be passivized as well. The representation of direct speech is presented in three variations in (14a). The first one sounding foreign to speakers while the second and third seem more correct. Note that the agentive phrase is moved to before the verb in the last example.

(13) Emotion verb [Item 1-9]

a. Passive

Kabelo o ratiwa ke Itumeleng. ‘Kabelo is loved by Itumeleng.’

Kabelo o-rat-iw-a ke Itumeleng
Kabelo SM1-love-PASS-FV by Itumeleng

b. Active

Itumeleng o rata Kabelo. ‘Itumeleng loves Kabelo’

(14) Message verb [Item 1-10]

a. Passive

Itumeleng o boleletswe ke Kabelo gore a ithute thata.

‘Itumeleng was told by Kabelo that he had to study hard.’

Itumeleng o-bolel-el-il-iw-e ke Kabelo gore a-rut-a thata
Itumeleng SM1-tell-APPL-PERF-PASS-FV by Kabelo CONJ OC1-learn-FV hard

Itumeleng o boleletswe ke Kabelo go ithuta thata. ‘Itumeleng was told by Kabelo to study hard.’

Itumeleng o-bolel-el-il-iw-e ke Kabelo go-rut-a thata
Itumeleng SM1-tell-APPL-PERF-PASS-FV by Kabelo SC15-learn-FV hard

Itumeleng o boleletswe go ithuta thata ke Kabelo. ‘Itumeleng was told to study hard by Kabelo.’

Itumeleng o-bolel-el-il-iw-e go-rut-a thata ke Kabelo
Itumeleng SM1-tell-APPL-PERF-PASS-FV SC15-learn-FV hard by Kabelo

b. Active

Itumeleng o ne a re : “ - - - ” go Kabelo ‘Itumeleng said “...” to Kabelo.’

Itumeleng o-ne a-r-e go Itumeleng
Itumeleng SM1-AUX SM1-say-FV LOC Itumeleng

In (15), the subject of the passive can be identical to the subject of the following clause. The object of an active sentence, however, cannot serve as the subject of the following clause; an overt subject of the following clause is required as in (16).

- (15) Subject of passive = subject of the following clause [Item 1-10a]
Kabelo o ne a bidiwa ke Itumeleng, mme o mo phaposing ya ga Itumeleng jaanong.
 ‘Kabelo was called by Itumeleng, and is in Itumeleng’s room now.’
 Kabelo o ne a-bits-**iw**-a ke Itumeleng,
 Kabelo SM1-AUX SM1-call-PASS-FV by Itumeleng
 mme o mo phaposi-ing ya ga Itumeleng jaanong.
 CONJ SM1 LOC 9.room-LOC POSS9 POSS17 Itumeleng now
- (16) Object of active ≠ subject of the following clause [Item 1-10b]
Itumeleng o ne a bitsa Kabelo, mme Kabelo o mo phaposing ya ga Itumeleng jaanong.
 ‘Itumeleng called Kabelo, and Kabelo is in Itumeleng’s room now.’
 Itumeleng o ne a bits-a Kabelo
 Itumeleng SM1-AUX SM1-call-FV Kabelo
 mme Kabelo o mo phaposi-ing ya ga Kabelo jaanong
 CONJ Kabelo SM1 LOC 9.room-LOC POSS9 POSS17 Kabelo now

3. Additional passive sentences

This section presents passive sentences with different types of subjects. In (17), the subject of the passive is a plural noun. Temporal descriptives such as *gompieno* in (17) can be moved to sentence initial position in passive and active sentences for focus.

- (17) Plural subject
- a. Passive
Batshameki ba tlhophiwa ke mokatisi gompieno. ‘The players are selected by the coach today.’
 ba-tshameki ba-tlhoph-**iw**-a ke mo-katisi gompieno.
 2-coach SM2-choose-PASS-FV AGENT 1-coach today
- b. Active
Mokatisi o tlhophi batshameki gompieno. ‘The coach selects the players today.’

A locative phrase can be placed before or after the agent. In (18), the locative follows the agent phrase, and in (19-20), the agent phrase is following the locative phrase.

- (18) Passive with a locative following the agent
- a. Passive
Molwetsi o alaf-iw-a ke ngaka mo sepetleleng. ‘The patient is healed by the doctor in the hospital.’
 mo-lwetsi o alaf-**iw**-a ke ngaka mo se-petlele-ing
 1-patient SM1-heal-PASS-FV by 9.doctor LOC 7-hospital-LOC

b. Active

Ngaka e alafa molwetsi mo sepetleleng. ‘The doctor heals the patient in the hospital.’

(19) Passive with a locative preceding the agent

a. Passive

Nama e tsenngwa mo ontong ke mosadi. ‘The meat is put in the oven by the woman.’

nama e-tsen-is-**iw**-a mo onto-ing ke mo-sadi
9.meat SM9-put-CAUS-PASS-FV LOC 9.oven-LOC by 1-woman

b. Active

Mosadi o tsenya nama mo ontong. ‘The woman puts the meat in the oven.’

(20) Passive with a locative preceding the agent

a. Passive

Nama e ntshiwa mo ontong ke mosadi. ‘The meat is taken out of the oven by the woman.’

nama e-ntsh-**iw**-a mo onto-ing ke mo-sadi.
9.meat SM9-take.out-PASS-FV LOC 9.oven-LOC by 1-woman

b. Active

Mosadi o ntsha nama mo ontong. ‘The woman takes the meat out of the oven.’

4. Conclusion

This paper has shown a variety of passive sentences in Setswana. Passive verbs in Tswana are invariably formed with the suffixal morpheme -w-/-**iw**-. The indefinite form of the passive and the idiomatic form which includes the applicative is prevalent in various examples. This confirms Cole’s statement regarding the productivity of these forms in Setswana. Locative phrases as in example 8 may seem to have an anaphoric link to the absolute pronoun of the locative classes. Locative phrases are shown to precede the agent in (19-20) and to follow the agent in (18). The agentative phrase with the particle *ke* as introductory member and its complement is sometimes not present but always implied. The agentative phrase precedes the verb in the passive of sentences which include direct speech as in example 12 where the direct speech is in the subjunctive or infinitive mood. The valency change induced by the passive suffix is not altered in the different examples.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3, ...: Noun class numbers

1SG, 2PL, ...: Person and Number

AUG: Augment (initial vowel prefixed to a noun class prefix)

CJ: Conjoint (a verbal form obligatorily followed by a post-verbal constituent)

COMP: Complementiser

DJ: Disjoint (a verbal form usually not followed by a post-verbal constituent)

FV: Final Vowel (default inflectional suffix of the finite verb)

INF: Infinitive

LOC: Locative

NEG: Negative marker

OM: Object Marker

PASS: Passive

PERF: Perfect

POSS: Possessive pronoun

SM: Subject Marker

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