PASSIVE IN SOUTHERN NILOTIC

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ABSTRACT

Languages that have the passive have different ways of expressing it, either by relegating the subject to the peripheral position, or by omitting it all together syntactically. Some studies have also shown that the passive originates from the reanalysis of third person impersonal constructions. Nilotic languages are some of those that are thought to have no passive at all. This paper sought to examine the passive in the Southern Nilotic languages with a view to finding out if they had passive constructions or not and, in case they did, to establishing whether their passive structure had any relationship with the third person plural impersonal constructions and the first person plural construction and whether the subject in such a passive structure underwent any reanalysis from the direct object status to subject status or not. The data was taken from the Tugen, Keiyo, Kipsigis and Nandi dialects of Kalenjin, one of the Southern Nilotic languages.

KEYWORDS: Passive, Third Person Impersonal, Promotional Passive, Subject, Object, Tone, Antipassive

ABBREVIATIONS: ASP-Aspect; ANT-Antipassive; BEN-Benefactive; COM-Comitative; DUR-Durative; IMP- Impersonal; O-Object; PST-Past, PASS-Passive, PER- Perfective, SG- Singular, PL-Plural; S- Subject.

INTRODUCTION

The passive is one of the ways in which languages convey information that is patient prominent. In this case the object of the construction is moved to a core position while relegating information about the agent to a non core position or omitting it altogether.

There are two kinds of passive; the basic and the canonical (promotional passive). According to Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000:4) the canonical passive has the following properties:

- It applies to an underlying transitive and derives an intransitive

- The underlying O becomes S

- The underlying A goes into a peripheral function being marked by a non core case, adposition etc; the argument can be omitted but there is always an option of including it

- There is some general formal explicit marking either by a verbal affix or a periphrastic verbal construction.

According to Keenan & Dryer (2007:3-4) passives should not be thought of syntactically as demotion from active clauses, the derivation of the verb phrase should be the criterion for a passive construction. According to them the 'basic' passive has the following characteristics:

- No agent phrase (by John) is present

- The main verb in its non passive form is transitive

- The main verb expresses an action, taking agent subjects and patient objects.

For them the justification for calling such passives 'basic' is because they are the most widespread across the world's languages.

Not all languages have the passive. According to (Rottland 1982), amongst the languages that are said to lack the passive are the Southern Nilotic. And specifically regarding Nandi, a southern Nilotic language, they argue that Nandi does not have a passive construction in which the logical object becomes a grammatical subject and the logical subject appears as an oblique noun phrase and that, instead, Nandi uses a process in which the subject disappears and the logical object remains as a surface grammatical object.

Languages that do not have the kind of passive that we traditionally know of have other ways of expressing the notion of the passive. One such way is through the use of a form of the verb which indicates an indefinite or unspecified subject. This form of the verb is active and intransitive (Keenan & Dryer 2007:5). This way is used in Southern Nilotic. In English, an active sentence derives a canonical passive sentence as exemplified below:

- The man is cutting the tree.

- The tree is being cut (by the man)

However, in Southern Nilotic an active sentence cannot derive a canonical sentence by the same means. Instead it uses a form of a verb that does not specify the agent involved as seen below:

- Til-ei chito keetit (active)

  Cut-ASP person tree

  The person is cutting the tree

- Ki-til-ei keetit.

  PASS-cut-ASP tree

  The tree is being cut.

From the example 2(a) it can be seen that it bears an imperfective aspectual affix thus showing that the action is ongoing and hence the verb is active. This is also similar with the English example in but in the Southern Nilotic example the construction does given any room for the identification of the agent as seen in 2(b). A construction like this is what is also called the 3rd person plural impersonal in Siewierska (3pl IMP) (2010)[1]. This paper discusses the passive in Southern Nilotic as 3rd person impersonal plural construction by examining the characteristics of the passive, the passive affix as well as other constructions and affixes that similar to the passive affix.

In investigating the passive in Southern Nilotic, this study begins by describing the inflectional affixes that have a bearing on the passive. Secondly it examines the relationship between the 3pl IMP and the passive in Southern Nilotic. Thirdly it examines the relationship between the passive, the first person plural affix (1pl) and derivational affixes. Fourthly it examines the question of the reanalysis of the 3pl IMP into passive in Southern Nilotic by looking at the properties of the passive subject.

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[1] This construction is called the 3pl because the Ki-affix for the passive is only used for the third person and it doesn't apply for the first and second person. Neither does it apply for the third person singular. It is also impersonal in the sense that it doesn't refer to any specific entity. Also called the 'impersonal' third plural subject in Creissels, D. (2008: 329).

INFLECTIONAL AFFIXES

The affixes to be considered in this paper and which are essential for the description of the passive are those indicating person, tense and aspect.

Affixes Marking Tense

Tense in Southern Nilotic is distinguished between past and non past. The past is represented, depending on how far or near it is from the reference time. Ki-[2] is used for distant past, ko- for the near past and ka- for the immediate past. The past prefix precedes the other prefixes.

Affixes Marking Person

Person is marked differently for subject and object: subject marking is done by prefixing while object marking is done by suffixing.

Subject Marking

The subject prefixes usually come after those indicating tense and perfective aspect. The respective subject prefixes are:

	Singular	**Plural**
•	-a-	ki-
•	-i-	-o-
•	-ø-	-ø-

These subject prefixes are exemplified in the examples below:

- Ki-a-baibai   miising

  PST-1SG-happy very

  I was very happy

- Ko-ki-bend-i   Kapsabet
  PST-1PL go-ASP Kapsabet

  We were going to Kapsabet

- Ka-i-kwany-e Kimnyet[3]

  PST-2SG-cook-ASP ugali

  You were cooking ugali

- Ka-o-chut-e[4]   koot

  PST-2PL-enter-ASP house

  You were entering the house

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[2] The vowels in the affixes are long in Tugen and Nandi.
[3] In Kipsigis, Nandi and Keiyo the tense and person affixes coalesce into -e- to form Ke.
[4] In Kipsigis the past vowel in the prefix coalesces with the person prefix to be Ko-.

- Ki-am-e laakwet baandyat

  PST-ø-eat-ASP child maize

  The child was eating maize.

- Ki-ka-ø-am   laagook baandek

  PST-PER-3PL-eat children maize

  The children had eaten maize.

From the examples 4(a) and 4(b) it can be seen that there is a close resemblance between the distant past prefix and the 1st person plural prefix[5]. Example 6(b) shows that the distant past prefix appears before the perfective affix. Another similarity is that the immediate past affix is similar with the perfective affix as shown in 5(a) and 6(b).

Object Marking

The object is marked by suffixation through the use of the following affixes

Singular	Plural
on	-ech
in	-ok
ø-	-ø-

- Ki-ø- goon-on   kaanetindet   tamtam

  PST-3PS-give-1SG teacher sweet

  The teacher gave me a sweet

- Ko-ø-gon-ech kaanetindet eng'[6] sugul

  PST-3PS-welcome-1PL teacher at school

  The teacher welcomed us at school.

- Ka-i-gat-in   chorweng'ung[7]
  PST-3PS-greet-2SG friend

  Your friend was greeting you

- Ko-ø-koon-ok   laakwet cheego
  PST-3PS-give-2PL child milk
  The child gave you milk.

- Ka-ø-cham lakwee   ngory
  PST-3PS-like child dress

  The child liked the dress

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[5] The difference is only that in Tugen and Nandi the distant past prefix has a longer vowel and different vowel from the 1PL, which has a relatively higher tone.

[6] In Kipsigis it is en.

[7] Kekatin for Kipsigis, Nandi and Keiyo.

- Kii-ø-gas biik ngalek

  PST-3SG-hear people news

  The people heard the news

Aspect

  In Southern Nilotic, aspect is marked by prefixation and suffixation. The perfective aspect is marked prefixally by –ka- and –kako-.The former is used for the distant past while the former for the immediate past. The imperfective is marked suffixally by the affixes –i-, -e-,-ei, or –ni. The affixes are phonologically conditioned. See the examples below:

- Ki-ka-ø- wo gaa

  PST-PER-3SG-go home

  He had gone home

- Ko-kako-ø-koon-ech beek

  PST-PER-3SG-give-1PL water

  She had given us water.

- Ka-i-soom-e   beek

  PST-2SG-ask-ASP water

  You were asking for water

- Ki-ø-som-e kaanetindet kalaamit

  PST-3SG borrow-ASP teacher pen

  She was borrowing a pen from the teacher

- A-cham-e[8] laakwee-nyu

  1PS love-ASP child-my

  I love my child.

- Ii-bat-ii mbaret

  2SG dig-ASP farm

  You are digging the farm

- I-bat-i   mbaret

  3-dig-ASP farm

  He/they are digging the farm

- Ø-Nyoo-nii[9] raini

  3SG-come-ASP today

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[8] Toweett(1979) takes this suffix to be the third person objective affix. We differ with his position.
[9] Nyoonei in Nandi.

She is coming today.

THE PASSIVE IN SOUTHERN NILOTIC

In Southern Nilotic, passive constructions have no agent phrases syntactically. This means there are not overt though semantically some agent is implied. Unlike in English, the passive sentence does not have a direct relationship with the active sentence. Specifically, there is no symmetry between the active and passive constructions in terms of number, person and nominal specifications.

- Kii-am teeta paandeek (active)

  PST-eat cow maize

  The cow ate the maize

- Kii-ki-am   paandeek (passive)

  PST-PASS-eat   maize

  The maize was eaten

Passive and Transitivity

The passive constructions are intransitive in nature though even the intransitive sentences can be passivized and in this sense they become argumentless. Ditransitive verbs can also be passive in Southern Nilotic. This can be seen from the examples below

- Pirir-itu biik

  Red-DUR people

  People will become red

- Ki-pirir-itu

  PASS-red-DUR

  Being red happens (People become red)

- Pol-dos   piik

  Quarrel-COM- people

  People are quarrelling

- Ki-pold-os

  PASS-quarrel-COM

  Quarrelling is taking place (People are quarrelling)

- Am-ei cheepto kimnyet

  Eat-ASP girl food

  The girl is eating food

- Ki-am-e kimnyet

PASS-eat-ASP   food

Food is being eaten

- I-goo-chi-ni   Jane   Kipkoech   kitabu

3SG-give-BEN-ASP Jane Kipkoech book

Jane is giving Kipkoech a book

- Ki-goo-chi-ni[10]   Kipkoech   kitabu

PASS-give-BEN-ASP Kipkoech book

Kipkoech is being given a book

Examples 13(b) and 14(b) are argumentless, 15(c) is transitive while 16(d) is ditransitive.

Passive and 3pl IMP

Siewierska (2010:3) says that the 3rd person plural impersonal construction falls under the functional, agent defocusing view of impersonality which associates the defocusing of an agent with the loss of its subject status and or lack of full referentiality. The non –referential subject of the 3rd person plural impersonal is typically interpreted as involving some human collective e.g. people in general or some other loosely specified set of individuals though crucially excluding the speaker and the addressee. She goes on to say that in languages which lack the passive the 3Pl impersonals are widely used as a translation of the passive of the European languages.

Siewierska (ibid) says that the differences between the 3rd person pronominal subject and the 3pl IMPs are the following: a) 3pl IMPs lack an overt antecedent in the preceding discourse while the 3rd pronominal subjects are normally anaphoric; b) the form of the 3rd plural is typically a phonologically or morphophonologically reduced form as opposed to the full form. The use of the non reduced form instead of or in addition to a generally reduced one leads to the disappearance of the impersonal reading and the emergence of a straight forward anaphoric interpretation (p.4).

This is the case in English where the 3rd personal pronominal (he) is a reduced form and has antecedent (John) in the preceding discourse and thereby anaphoric in (17) below unlike the 3pls IMPs of the Southern Nilotic in (18) which does not have an anaphoric interpretation.

- John bought a book
- He is reading it.
- Ki-pir-ei

They are beating it/her/ him (people are beating it/her/ him)

The Southern Nilotic passive seems to fall in the category of the 3pl IMPs in that the referent of the passive prefix does not refer to a specific individual subject but rather to some agent that is unspecified for person and number. In Southern Nilotic the passive prefix –ki- blocks the use of a specific agent. This is exemplified below:

- Ki- ki- lee-n-chi biik che ka-ba   naasing ko-yaach

PST-PASS-say-ASP-BEN people that PST-go nursing be-bad

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[10] Kigoochin in Nandi, Kipsigis

They were told that people who went for nursing were bad.

- Ki-tooben-ok   kityo

  PASS-look-2PL only

  People were just looking at you.

- Ki-ki-chob-e   agobo   lelesta

  PST-PASS-make-ASP because   beauty

  They were being made for beauty (people made them for beauty)

- Ki-ki-kuur-en   wer-i[11] Lelaan

  PST-PASS-call-INS boy-this Lelan

  This boy was called Lelaan (people called him Lelaan).

In 19(a) the passive affix –ki- comes after the tense affix ki- The indirect object is marked by the benefactive affix –chi. The passive does not express the subject of the main clause though the implication is that the subject is somebody (indefinite). In 19(b) the subject of the construction can be referred to as 'people' or 'they' in general. The object of the construction is expressed by the 2pl suffix. The use of the passive prefix in 19(c) is similar to that in 19(a) though the implication of the subject here is that of third person impersonal. 19(d) shows how a subject is introduced in a narrative by the use of passive. Here the subject implied is that of people in general.

Passive and 1pl Affix

The passive affix ki- is similar morphologically to the 1pl affix. The differences in usage manifest themselves by the use of tone and aspect.

- Ki-ki-meny-e   Sulai

  PST-1PL-live-ASP- Sulai

  We were living in Sulai.

- Ki-am-e banyeek che   chaang

  1pl-eat-ASP meat a lot

  We are eating a lot of meat.

- Ki-ki-ya-chi   ng'al   eng'   weloo[12]

  PST-PASS-do-BEN things some place

  Things were done to her somewhere (People did things to her somewhere)

- Ki-ki-ya-chi   ng'al   eng'   weloo

  PST-1pl-do-BEN things some place

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[11] Ng'etai in Kipsigis.
[12] Olon/Oloto in Kipsigis, Nandi.

We did things to her somewhere

- Ki-kuur-en   Kirarit   Chepng'ootie

   PASS-call-INS Kirarit Cheepngotie

   He is called John (People call him John)

- Ki-kuur-en   Kirarit   Cheepng'ootie

   1pl-call-INS Kirarit Cheepngotie

   We call him John (people call him John)

From the examples, the use of aspectual affix helps to disambiguate the two in some verbs. For example in 20(a) and 20(b) the 1pl affix has the imperfective affix –e. In the examples that do not involve the aspectual affix such as 20(c) and 20(d) passive affix is disambiguated from the 1pl affix by tone. In Tugen the 1pl has a higher tone than the passive affix.

Passive and Derivational Affixes

One of the criterion for the passive construction is that it involves a derivational process of the verb phrase. In most languages the passive is a derivational affix. However in Southern Nilotic, there is a difference in the positioning of the passive affix .In 20(c-d)) the benefactive is a derivational suffix. In 20 (e) the passive affix is used together with the instrumental derivational affix. This is also the case with 20(f). From this we can deduce that generally in southern Nilotic derivational affixes like the instrumental, benefactive and locative are suffixes. But in Southern Nilotic the passive appears in a position specifically designated for inflectional affixes like, tense, person, aspect, and negation. Even its counterpart the antipassive, which is a derivational affix appears as a suffix in Southern Nilotic.

Passive In Relation To Antipassive

The antipassive is a construction typical for ergative languages and occurs along with ergative constructions or as morphological alternative for the same transitive proposition. In the antipassive the object undergoes ellipsis and so the construction becomes intransitive. In Southern Nilotic the antipassive is marked by the suffix -isy/is/s-. This is seen in the examples below:

- Pir-e   Cheerono   laakwet

   Beat-IMP Cheerono child

   Cheerono is beating the child

- Pir-isy-e Cheerono

   Beat-ANT-ASP cheerono

   Cheerono is beating.

From the examples above, the antipassive focuses more on the action and the subject while defocusing on the object. Where the subject can be derived from context the sentence can be grammatical without it.

In Southern Nilotic the passive can co occur with the antipassive. The subjectless passive in this sense also co occurs with an objectless construction. In this sense the object can be derived from context or is obvious. This can be seen in the following examples:

- Ki-ki-am-isy-e

  PST-PASS-eat-ANT-ASP

  Eating was taking place (People were eating)

- Ki-ki-tek-s-e

  PST-PASS-construct-ANT-ASP

  Construction was going on (People were constructing)

- Kii-ki-tek-se-ii

  PST-1PL-construct-ANT-ASP

  We were constructing

In 22(a) the object is demoted owing to the presence of the antipassive . In this case it is obvious that people eat food. In 22(b) the object is also not represented. In this case it is not clear what is being constructed but it can be deduced general to be something that can be constructed. In most cases the context helps to disambiguate the referent of the antipassive. In 22(c) the antipassive is used together with the 1pl passive affix. Here we can see the difference between the use of the passive affix and the 1pl affix in the use of the antipassive, and aspect as seen in 22(b) and 22(c). The antipassive affix in 22(c) is –se- while the aspectual affix is –ii. In 22(b) the antipassive affix is –s- while the aspectual affix is –e or –ei.

PASSIVE SUBJECT

In the canonical passive, the object is promoted to the subject position as a passive subject while the subject is relegated to an oblique position. In discussing the reanalysis of the 3pl impersonal to passive status, Siewierska (2010) says that the 3pl may be impersonal/ non promotional passive whereby the patient is not promoted to the subject status but continues to display object properties. As to whether this is the case in Southern Nilotic it is imperative to examine the role that tone plays because tone is used in marking case. Data from Tugen[13] will be used to exemplify this.

- ám-ón   kééléék[14]

  eat-1PS teeth

  My teeth are aching (Literally, my teeth are eating me)

- ám-éí   kééléék làwkwéé

  Eat-ASP teeth child

  The child's teeth are aching (Literally the teeth are eating the child)

- Kí-yóót-éí   kèèléék

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[13] There are tonal differences in the languages under study therefore only one is used.
[14] Keleek in Kipsigis

PASS-remove-ASP teeth

The teeth are being removed (People are removing teeth)

- Kí-yóót-éí   lààkwéé

PASS-remove ASP child

The child is having his teeth removed (People are removing the child's teeth)

In 23(a) and 23(b) the sentences are in their active state. In 23(a), the subject is which performs the agentive role represented lexically while the object which is the patient is represented pronominally as a suffix. The subject bears H (igh) tones. In 23(b) the patient is represented lexically and bears L(ow)H tones. In 23(c) and 23(d) the sentences are in their passive state. In 23(c) the passive subject bears LH and different from the subject in the active state. In 23(d) the object also bears LH tones just like the patient in the active state. In the analysis the S and O are marked differently in the active state with S taking agent role and the O taking the patient role. In the passive sentence which is intransitive the S takes the patient role and is marked similarly as the O in the active state. This is what is termed as ergative case marking strategy. Creissels (2006:5). In Southern Nilotic the objects are not marked for case in that they bear the same tones just like when they are used in citation. Creissels (ibid) terms it the absolutive case. In isolation the nouns chììtó, chééptó, chèègó bear LH tones while kòòt bears L tones. This is seen below:

- Kii[15]-kat-i   chììtós

  PASS-greet-ASP person

  The person is being greeted (People are greeting the person)

- Ki-tuch-een   chèèptó
  PASS-cover-INS girl

  It is used to cover the girl (They use it to cover the girl)

- Ki-lu-chi-ni   chèègó

  PASS-drink-BEN-ASP milk

  Milk is being drank for him (They are drinking milk for him)

- Ki-pir-een   kòòt

  PASS-eat-LOC house

  He/She/They are being beaten in the house (People are beating him/her/them in the house)

From the above examples, the passive does not affect the tonal patterns of the passive subjects. The absolutive case marking still remains. In southern Nilotic, the 3pl IMP appears to be a non promotional passive because the passive subject bears absolutive case tones just like the object in the active state.
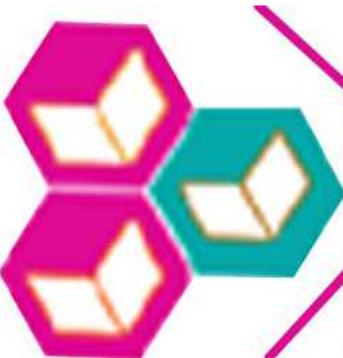
CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis above, we can conclude that the passive affix is similar morphologically with the 1pl affix but it

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[15] Toweett (1979:236) says that both Ki- and Kii- are used for the passive. In my opinion there are some few verbs that bear the 3rd person affix –i- e.g in kat and pwat and the combination of this affix makes the –i- of the passive longer.

is different from it semantically. The passive affix and the 1pl affix are both prefixes. The passive affix does not seem in any way to be morphologically related to a 3pl affix, whether singular or plural, in Southern Nilotic. The passive affix is similar in meaning to the use of the impersonal constructions where this refers to some human collective or people in general who may or may not be specific in terms of person or number. Thus, the Ki- passive affix can generally be referred to as the third person plural impersonal. In this case the third person plural impersonal acts as the passive. This passive affix is not a promotional one because the patient remains in its accusative state just like in active constructions. The prefix Ki(i) has three forms of the same segments but with different meanings. In this analysis it appears as a tense affix, a person affix and a passive affix. Concerning the source of the passive affix we can only conclude that it has no relationship semantically with the 1pl affix and so we can conclude that it is a genuine passive affix.

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