On the So-Called "Passive Voice" in Ainu

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1 INTRODUCTION

Masayoshi Shibatani, Katsunobu Izutsu, and others have made the claim that Ainu has a passive voice (Shibatani 1990, Shibatani 1995, Izutsu 2006). This claim has been uncritically accepted by the majority of linguists who work with Ainu.

I argue that this idea is incorrect: it relies on a particular definition of passives and a piece of structural evidence that might point towards the existence of passive constructions, but when viewed in light of other definitions of passives, and the completely overlooked issue of Ainu's morphosyntactic alignment, there is little case for the existence of the passive voice in Ainu.

2 THE DEFINITION OF THE PASSIVE VOICE

When the issue of a passive voice is brought up in modern linguistic studies of Ainu, theoretical baggage comes with it–namely Shibatani's prototype analysis of passive and passive-like constructions (Izutsu 2006, 42-43). An example of a passive sentence in Ainu, according to Izutsu is (2006, 42):

(2.1)   e- kor   hanpe   eper or wa an- rayke
        2SG- have grandfather bear PLC ABL PASS- kill
        'Your grandfather was killed by a bear.'

Shibatani claims that the primary function of passive constructions is agent defocusing, which he believes sufficiently explains such things as adversative and honorific passives in Japanese, and reflexive constructions (the middle or medio-passive voice) in many other languages (Shibatani 1995, 837-838).

This kind of definition is one, I think, that is in the same vein as the search for linguistic universals–especially typological universals. This is a very scientific approach to language: make a hypothesis about a feature in language (e.g. "all languages have adjectives") and test it against as large of a diversity of languages as you can to see if it is falsified. If so, refine your approach. If

not, you have a candidate for a typological universal.

Thus far, basically every proposed typological universal has at least a contentious falsification (Evans and Levinson 2009, 429-430). The above example–"all languages have adjectives"–can quite easily be falsified by many languages. Ainu, to not stray far off topic, does not have adjectives. Things that would be adjectives in English or other languages that do have real adjectives are either nominals or verbs in Ainu. The English word *good* is clearly in a separate word class from nouns and verbs–it can modify nouns without needing to be placed into a relative clause. Compare:

(2.2) the red book
       DEF red book

(2.3) the book that I   buy
       DEF book REL   1SG.SUBJ buy.PRS

(2.4) *the buy book
        DEF buy book

Ainu, on the other hand, has no class of words like adjectives that are distinct from verbs in how they are used to modify nouns, nor a class of words like adjectives that differ any of the other features that all verbs share in Ainu, including incorporation. Note, in the following example from Nakagawa and Nakamoto, the lack of distinction between what is a verb and a predicative adjective in the English translation (2004, 38):

(2.5) Numan   to epitta apto as   korka, tanto sir   pirka   siri!
       yesterday day during rain fall but   today weather be_good EV
       'It rained during the day yesterday, but today the weather is good!'

To use *pirka* as an attributive adjective, like English *good,* is ungrammatical. Ainu has no "adjectives" that can be used like attributive adjectives, though some relativized forms might at first appear that way. Thus, the claim that all languages have adjectives has been falsified.

It is in this spirit that Shibatani proceeds with his definition. While it is interesting to

approach this topic from the search of universals, and certainly worthwhile to compare phenomenon cross-linguistically, the whole foundation of the argument that Ainu has passive voice seems to rest on Shibatani's definition of passives. It is in the spirit not of universality, but rather anti-universality that I proceed. By anti-universality, I refer to "the view that linguistic categories, relations, and constructions differ, at least in the details, from language to language" (O'Grady, personal communication).

There are, however, other ways to look at passives which take into consideration this idea of anti-universality. Comrie gives one potential definition as:

> "A process whereby the original subject is deleted or demoted to an agentive phrase while the original object is advanced to subject position; beyond this core, individual languages would vary, for instance, as to whether or how they mark the voice change on the verb or the noun phrases." (Comrie 1989, 16)

Comrie's definition, like Shibatani's, does not rule out Ainu from having a passive voice, such as the expression in example 2.1.

Another prototype definition, by Dixon and Aikhenvald, has four properties fundamental to passives. First, passives form a derived intransitive clause from a transitive clause (Dixon and Aikhenvald 2000, 7). Second, the former object is promoted to a subject (Dixon and Aikhenvald 2000, 7). Third, the underlying agent is demoted to some form of a peripheral argument, up to an including optional deletion (Dixon and Aikhenvald 2000, 7). Finally, passives have explicit formal marking (Dixon and Aikhenvald 2000, 7). Dixon and Aikhenvald mention that this does not have to be a morphological element; it could be a periphrastic verbal construction (as in English, to an extent), or even a different pronominal suffix for passive forms, citing Yup'ik (Dixon and Aikhenvald 2000, 7). In terms of this definition of passive, Ainu cannot have passives. To look again at example 2.1, it violates basically all of these conditions.

In my experience, Aikhenvald and Dixon's definition–and other, similar ones–are by far the most commonly used definitions of passives in descriptive syntax. Of course, common usage doesn't mean "correct," but in this instance, I think, a more strict definition, and a recognition that there are other, passive-like constructions, is very important, and simply labeling something passive by changing the definition of what passive is to include otherwise excluded instances is hasty at best.

3 *Or Wa* Constructions

Izutsu points out that *or wa* constructions appear to form a curious parallel to the use of a dative case marker or other similar oblique-based constructions in languages that do have passive voice (Izutsu 2006, 42-43). If one had to translate it in other contexts, *or wa* would mean 'because of; due to'.

All examples that Izutsu gives have the forms marked by *or wa* in the position of what he would call the direct object, definite structural evidence for passive, if the oblique here is the same kind of thing as the oblique in other language's passive constructions (Izutsu 2006, 42-45). There is, however, an issue here. *Or wa* constructions do not only occur in the direct object "slot;" they can also occur in the indirect object "slot," as seen in the following example from Nakagawa and Nakamoto's textbook (2004, 58):

(3.1) Kamuy orwa   aynu a-   rayke oruspe ku-   nu   amkir.
       bear   because_of Ainu 1PLI.TR.SUBJ- kill   legend 1SG.SUBJ- hear have_experience_of
       'I've heard stories where people are killed because of bears.'

This means, that while Izutsu would call *a-* here a passive marker, there is still a direct object on a transitive verb. This is not a problem for Shibatani's definition of passive, as it can disregard all the structural correlations of passives. If we accept a more standard definition of passive, like Dixon and Aikhenvald's, however, the reduction of the valency of a verb by one would mean that

rayke–a monovalent transitive verb–should no longer have a direct object, which it clearly still does.

While these *or wa* constructions are not in all of Izutsu's examples, what they may be doing is providing a work-around for making passive-like constructions. If Ainu does not have passives, while there is no need to actually make them (all modern Celtic languages, American Sign Language, and others do not have them), this could be a strategy to express a similar meaning.

In a sense, then, Shibatani's definition would be correct; semantically, the meaning expressed is akin to that of a passive, but not in any morphological or syntactic way. Compare this *or wa* structure to the (idiomatic) Irish example in 3.2, which may be exactly the same thing as what Ainu is doing:

(3.2)   Cas-adh   cailín   orm.
        twist-INDF   girl   on.1SG
        'I met a girl.' (Literally, 'One twisted the girl on me.')

Irish has no passive. To express a passive-like meaning, however, one uses, typically, the indefinite person by itself. In this example, an oblique, *orm* ('on I; on me') is added as well. Though the meaning in English is translated as passive, there is no passive in the Ainu.

4 MORPHOSYNTACTIC ALIGNMENT

The morphosyntactic alignment of Ainu, as far as I am aware, is not a settled matter. All treatments but one thus far seem to ignore it, with the exception of this repeated claim that Ainu has a passive voice (Izutsu 2006, 42-47; Shibatani 1990, 57-58). Anna Bugaeva is the only linguist that I have seen so far to make a claim about the morphosyntactic alignment. She claims that it has a tripartite system (Bugaeva 2006, 185). This tripartite system distinguishes the subject of a transitive verb, the subject of an intransitive verb, and the object (Bugaeva 2006, 185).

Her main evidence comes from the first person plural agreement markers, and how they interact with transitive and intransitive verbs (Bugaeva 2006, 185). There is a distinction in both the first person plural inclusive and exclusive marking for the subject of a transitive verb, the prefixes *ci-* and *an-* (or *a-* in several dialects); the marking for the subject of an intransitive verb, the suffixes *-as* and *-an;* and the marking for the object, the prefixes *un-* or *i-* (Bugaeva 2006, 185).

She goes on to note that the other agreement markers show elements of a neutral system and a nominative-accusative system (Bugaeva 2006, 186). Evidence for a neutral system comes from the second person agreement markers, *e-* and *eci-,* which do not distinguish between the subject of a transitive verb, the subject of an intransitive verb, and the object (Bugaeva 2006, 186). Evidence for a nominative-accusative system comes from the first person singular agreement markers; the subject agreement marker *k(u)-* is distinct from the object agreement marker *en-* (Bugaeva 2006, 186).

This, however, is unsatisfying. The morphosyntactic alignment of a language cannot be determined solely from verbal agreement markers, as it is a syntactic phenomenon, not just a morphological phenomenon. To go beyond this, however, leads us to a complication: Ainu does not mark case in a way that is useful for determining morphosyntactic alignment. While case marking is not a requirement of any language–nominative, tripartite, or otherwise–it often makes the morphosyntactic alignment explicit.

There is, however, a handful of information that we can gleam which Bugaeva seems to have missed. One such example–of an ergative system–is in the closed class of verbs that take singular-plural agreement markers. Consider the following examples (Nakagawa and Nakamoto 2004, 42, 54):

(4.1)   ...cep e- huray -pa wa e- tuy -pa   yak   pirka.
           fish   2SG- wash -PL GER 2SG-cut -PL   COND   be_good
           '...You should cut and wash the fishes.'

(4.2) Sipe   ku-   koyki wa   ku-   supa   kusu   e.
       salmon 1SG.SUBJ- catch GER   1SG.SUBJ- boil.PL because eat
       'Because I caught and boiled [some] salmon, eat'

The plurality agreement of the verbs in all three cases agrees with the object, not with the subject.

We might expect the plurality markers to line up with the number and person agreement markers.

This is not the case. Other verbs, however, do behave "normally" in their plurality agreement. For

example (Nakagawa and Nakamoto 2004, 32):

(4.3) Hunak -un   eci- paye?
       where -DIR   2PL- go.PL
       'Where are you [two] going?'

The difference here is in transitivity: *huray-* ('to wash'), *tuy-* ('to cut'), and *suw-* ('to boil') all are

transitive verbs and agree with their objects, while the verb *paye* ('to go'; suppletive plural form)

is intransitive and agrees with its subject. *Hopun-* ('to fly; to jump') is intransitive, but seems to

agree with its object when an applicative promotes an oblique to an object, providing further

evidence (Izutsu and Tezuka 2006, 82):

(4.4) ...tupesan kotan   unisuk   wa   i-   ko-   hopun -i...
       eight   village gather   GER   1PL.OBJ- APPL- jump -SG
       '...eight villages joined forces and [were going to] jump me...'

So what does plurality agreement tell us about the morphosyntactic alignment of Ainu?

Since it applies to the subjects of intransitive verbs and the objects of transitive verbs, it is quite

clearly an ergative pattern. But even more so than the person agreement markers, this is one very

restricted domain, and is not good evidence for what the whole system might be.

There is no one feature that points towards an active-stative language; rather, it is a cluster

of features that, when take together, distinguish an active language from other types of languages.

The first–and most salient–of these, is a division between active and stative verbs (Klimov 1974,

14). Active verbs express a volitional action undertaken by an agent, while stative verbs express a

non-volitional state experienced by the subject (Klimov 1974, 14-15). Additionally, some languages

may have a third type of verb, affective verbs, which are actions experienced by the agent, but are not unambiguously active or stative (Klimov 1974, 15). Further, there may be pairs of active and stative verbs which otherwise have essentially the same meaning (Klimov 1974, 15). While there are clearly verbs that are active as opposed to verbs that are stative, I have found no evidence for verbs that are affective verbs in Ainu. *Nukar* ('to see'), for example, does not behave in a significantly different way than other verbs.

The second–active-stative verb pairs–is more of an issue. Klimov states that active languages simply do not have transitive-intransitive distinctions; they instead have an active-stative distinction (Klimov 1974, 18). In this light, it may be appropriate to reanalyze the accepted distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs in Ainu to one of active and inactive verbs. The distinction is so small, in some respects, that this is almost a non-issue. However, most of these verb pairs in Ainu seem to be formed with the causative. For example, the active *ahu-,* 'to enter' (which takes either a singular marker *-n* or a plural marker *-p*), versus the stative *ahunke/ahupte,* 'to be entered', or, more literally, 'to make enter' (again, singular versus plural). It perhaps comes down to whether or not one wants to treat Ainu as active at its most basic level or not.

Another feature which often clusters with active languages is a distinction between inclusive and exclusive first person plural forms (Klimov 1974, 15). This is by no means limited only to active languages, but its presence in Ainu, when taken together with other features, only helps our case typologically. Further, it may invalidate Bugaeva's earlier claim to a tripartite system. As the tripartite distinction is only found in the verbal agreement system, I think this is probably the case.

Active languages are most usually SOV ordered (Klimov 1974, 16-17). This is not at all a distinctive feature of active languages, as there is nothing inherently tied between word order and

morphosyntactic alignment; Irish is VSO, English is SVO, and Japanese is SOV, and all are nominative-accusative languages. But like the inclusive-exclusive distinction, this is only more correlating evidence. Further, indirect objects generally precede direct objects (Klimov 1974, 16).

As yet another piece of correlating evidence, verbs and nominals in Ainu are highly differentiated, as they are in most active languages (Klimov 1974, 17). Further, just as in other active languages, verbs in Ainu have a large amount of morphology, while nouns are morphologically "simple" (Klimov 1974, 17). The most morphologically complex nominal would perhaps be a noun that can be alienably possessed and take one of the oblique case markers, for a grand total of perhaps two or three affixal morphemes. As Ainu is incorporating, verbs can theoretically take an unlimited number of affixes.

Next, Klimov gives us a straight answer to the issue of passive voice in Ainu. Simply, if a language is active, it does not have passive voice (Klimov 1974, 18). Thus, if Ainu is indeed an active language, it will not have passives.

The lack of number and case, as well as the presence of locative and directional cases on nouns is yet another piece of correlating evidence that Ainu is active (Klimov 1974, 21). Again, these are not features exclusive to active languages, but further our case.

Possession in Ainu is also prototypically active. There is a distinction between alienable and inalienable possession (Klimov 1974, 22). Further, inalienable possession in Ainu is formed in the same as verbal person agreement makers (Klimov 1974, 22) Alienable possession is formed in a special construction, the verb *kor,* 'to have', plus the normal verbal person agreement markers (Klimov 1974, 22-23).

Taken as a whole, it is then quite likely that Ainu is basically an active language, with bits and pieces of ergativity. As ergative and active languages overlap quite a bit, this is not something too surprising (Klimov 1974, 24).

Applicatives are, as Bugaeva points out, perhaps an overemphasized feature of Ainu in some typological depictions of the language (Bugaeva 2006, 192). However, they form a very important portion of Ainu's derivational morphology–perhaps 7% of its entire lexicon is formed with applicatives (Bugaeva 2006, 188). There are three applicatives in Ainu, *ko-, o-,* and *e-* (Bugaeva 2006, 185; Izutsu 2006, 35-37).

Prototypically, applicatives increase the valency of a verb by one (Bugaeva 2006, 186). Second, they provide an alternate realization of an oblique; that is, they promote an oblique argument, and further, there must be a "basic" way to express the same meaning with an oblique and no applicative (Bugaeva 2006, 186). Third, they cannot apply to agent, theme, and patient participants, as they are not non-peripheral participants (Bugaeva 2006, 186). Addition of an agent would simply be causativization, while addition of a theme or a patient would be non-causative transitivization (Bugaeva 2006, 186).

In Ainu, there are of course prototypical applicative constructions, but many are not at all prototypical (Bugaeva 2006, 187). Further, the meaning of applicatives is highly dependent on the base verb (Bugaeva 2006, 185). Bugaeva give a prototypical applicative construction in Ainu as 5.1 and 5.2, obtained from her informant, Ito Oda (2006, 187):

(5.1) [Asinuma] casi   upsor ta   ahun -an   ruwe   ne.
       LOG   house inside to   enter -LOG.S INFR.EV COP
       'I entered the house.'

(5.2) [Asinuma] casi   upsor a-   ∅-   o-   ahun ruwe   ne.
       LOG   house inside LOG.S- 3.O- to.APPL- enter INFR.EV COP
       'I entered the house.'

Note that I have not modified her glossing to match my own. By LOG, she means "logophoric." Clearly, the sentences have essentially the same meaning (of course, since there is a different way to say it, they have obvious subtle semantic differences), and the major difference structurally is

the applicative construction in 5.2.

That being said, there are many non-prototypical–even obligatorily–applicative constructions in Ainu. One kind of this non-prototypicality is an applicative construction that is also a non-causative transitivization (Bugaeva 2006, 191-192). Bugaeva gives an example from another informant, Seino Araida (2006, 192):

(6.3)   [Menoko cironnup] menoko ru   or   wa   a-   Ø- hekote
        woman   fox   woman toilet place from LOG.S- 3.O- live.together.with

        nispa   Ø- Ø- e-   ikka wa   Ø- arpa ki wa...
        rich.man   3.S- 3.O- APPL- steal and   3.S- go   do and
        '[The fox ladies] stole my husband from the lady's room and...'

These, however, are typical in their atypicality, corresponding to "oddities" in various other languages, such as Yidini, an Australian Aboriginal language, or Yukagir (Bugaeva 1974, 192).

In her article, Bugaeva also points out the various other valency-affecting constructions in Ainu: the reciprocal *u-*, reflexives *yay-* and *si-*, antipassive *i-*, noun incorporation, and causatives *-re/-e/-te*, *-ke*, and *-ka* (Bugaeva 2006, 188). My point in this section is that of course there are other features in Ainu that affect valency, and that there are other voice-like constructions, but these are all morphologically marked. Why, then, would the passive construction behave so differently in a polysynthetic language? It seems very odd–though not by any means impossible–that Ainu would treat passive, if it had it, in such a different way. And in light of Dixon and Aikhenvald's claim that passive *must* be explicitly marked in some way, it looks very suspicious that Ainu would have passives at all.

Further, *an-* and *ci-* and their variants seem to be semantically "overloaded" in Izutsu and Shibatani's analyses. While there is no reason one cannot have a semantically complex morpheme, or even multiple non-prototypical usages for even a semantically simple morpheme, to me, these analyses seem to push beyond a point of reasonability.

One of the most salient examples of this is how these morphemes, *an-* and *ci-,* are supposed to be in some instances marking passive, and in others marking the indefinite person (Izutsu 2006, 29). Indefinite person is one of the ways in which languages without passive voice "get around" not having passive, as can be seen in the following example from Welsh (and the similar example 3.2 from Irish), which has no passive but has indefinite person, which can be used to express a very similar kind of meaning as passive (Comrie 1989, 14):

(6.4) Lladdodd y ddraig y dyn.
       kill.PST   the dragon the man
       'The dragon killed the man.'

(6.5) Lladdwyd y dyn gan y ddraig.
       kill.PST.INDF the man by the dragon
       'The man was killed by the dragon.'

Izutsu also makes no mention of how we are to distinguish indefinite person marking in deverbal-nominal constructions (e.g. *cep* 'fish' < *ci-e-p* 'the thing that one eats') from this usage, just that it is not the same thing (Izutsu 2006, 42). It seems, however, that deverbal-nominals are only formed with *ci-.*

Again, if we are dealing with a polysynthetic language, where basically everything else that acts in a similar way to voice has some form of morphological and syntactic encoding, why does the supposed passive voice not? Why are they exactly the same morpheme as each other? How do we differentiate them, on one hand, from each other, and from the indefinite person on the other? To me, the only workable explanation of this comes from using Shibatani's definition of passive from section 2, but if we have decided to throw that out, we are left with a string of problems.

6 Conclusions

As Ainu is most likely an active language, it cannot, then, have a passive voice. There are,

however, several interesting voice-like constructions in Ainu, most notably the causative and applicatives. *Or wa* constructions, it seems, form a sort of work around for Ainu's lack of passive.

Much ado is made of cross-linguistic evidence in various works, most notably in Shibatani's, but the idea of activity seems to have been completely passed over, despite such "exotic" linguistic structures as applicatives or noun incorporation being well known in Ainu. It is troubling to me, then, that almost no one seems to have really bothered analyzing Ainu's morphosyntactic alignment.

Issues still remain, however. Ainu appears to still have transitivity, which, if it is an active language, it should not (Klimov 1974, 18). Ainu, then, is probably not a purely active-stative language, but some sort of split active language, with a few ergative features, and perhaps some features of a tripartite system.

Serious work remains for linguistic scholarship in Ainu.

Abbreviations are explained in the Leipzig Glossing Rules, available online at: http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php. Inclusive-exclusive distinctions in first person plural forms have been reduced to either I or E from INCL and EXCL to save space. PLC is used with *or*, which typically indicates place of existence as opposed to place of habitat. All other exceptions are found in quotations and are explained in the source of the quotation.

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