

## Chapter 8

### Passive

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It is sometimes argued that ergative case marking and passive are incompatible (Laka 1993, Levin and Massam 1986). This argument is partly based on fact and partly based on a theoretical assumption. Many ergative languages do not have passive constructions; instead, they have antipassive constructions, in which A and O of the corresponding transitive verb appear as S and some oblique argument, respectively. In addition to such empirical data, the standard definition of passive predicts that passive cannot exist in languages with an ergative case marking. It is generally assumed that passive involves case-absorption/assignment by the passive morpheme (Jaeggli 1986a, Roberts 1987). Put in our view of case assignment, passive involves either inactivating Agro or feature-checking of some element different from the internal argument by Agro. Either way, the internal argument of a passive verb cannot have its case feature checked, and consequently, the derivation crashes.

However, some ergative languages are said to have passive constructions. In order to accommodate such data, the definition of passive needs to be reconsidered. With regard to Tongan, there have been a few studies on Tongan passive, which generally argue that Tongan does not have a passive construction (Chung 1978, Tchekhoff

1973a).<sup>1</sup> However, all of these studies assume the standard definition of passive. Thus, in §8.1, we will put forth an alternative definition of passive. We will propose that there are two kinds of passive: syntactic and lexical. We will argue that although syntactic passive and ergative case system are mutually exclusive, lexical passive can exist in an ergative language. In §8.2, we will show that our hypothesis is borne out by reviewing various studies on passive constructions in ergative languages. In §8.3, we will consider five constructions in Tongan that are often interpreted as passive when translated into English. It will be shown that none of them involve syntactic passivisation. Instead, we will argue that Tongan uses other means, including the lexical passive, to reflect semantic/pragmatic factors that would be expressed by syntactic passivisation in a language that has a syntactic passive construction. Our conclusion is that syntactic passive and ergative case marking are mutually exclusive. However, ergative languages have other means to reflect semantic/pragmatic factors that are usually dealt with by means of syntactic passivisation.

## **8.1 Definition of passive**

### 8.1.1 GB approach

The passive construction in accusative languages has the following characteristics: a) the verb is affixed by a passive morpheme; b) the internal argument appears in the subject position, bearing NOM instead of usual ACC; and c) the external argument may appear as an oblique argument, usually as a prepositional phrase (e.g., English

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<sup>1</sup> Also see Lynch (1972), who argues that passive exists in Tongan.

*by*-phrase). In the GB framework, characteristics of passive are considered a result of absorption of the external theta-role by the passive suffix. Following the proposal by Jaeggli (1986a) that case/theta-role absorption should be understood as case/theta-role assignment to the passive suffix, Roberts (1987) proposes that the passive morpheme such as English *-en* is an argument that is base-generated as an external argument. Accordingly, the passive morpheme is assigned an external theta-role and (ACC) case by the verb. In the GB approach, it is assumed that case is assigned under government by a case assigner: NOM by tense and ACC by the verb. Baker et al. (1989) propose that *-en* is a clitic that attaches to the verb. In this view, the agentive *by*-phrase is understood as an instance of clitic doubling. In the feature checking theory, this analysis can be interpreted as follows. The passive morpheme *-en* is base-generated in [Spec, VP] and assigned an external theta-role by the verb. It then cliticises onto V, which subsequently adjoins to Agro. Let us assume that *-en* checks its case feature by virtue of adjoining to Agro. Once the case feature of Agro has been checked off, it is no longer available. Consequently, the internal argument moves up to [Spec, Agrs] to check its case feature and receive NOM. According to this analysis, the sole argument of a passive construction is expected to appear in ERG in an ergative language because it checks its case feature in [Spec, Agrs]. However, such a construction, i.e., [V+pass NP-ERG] does not exist. On the other hand, the internal argument could not appear in ABS because Agro is not available. Thus, [V+pass NP-ABS] could not be derived. In short, this analysis predicts that passive could not exist in ergative languages.

Others regard passive as a type of unaccusative. In this view, the passive suffix

absorbs the external theta-role, which thereby renders the verb intransitive. Consequently, the internal argument will necessarily receive NOM rather than normal ACC, due to Burzio's generalisation. Thus, Laka (1993: 168) argues that passive does not exist in ergative languages because Burzio's generalisation does not hold of ergative languages. Since the active Agr is Agro in ergative languages, the sole argument of an intransitive construction, whether internal or external, receives ABS. In other words, absorption of the external theta-role does not entail case absorption as far as ergative languages are concerned because the internal argument consistently appears in ABS regardless of the voice of the construction.

Laka's argument that passive is incompatible with ergative case marking, however, is not valid unless we assume that case absorption is a necessary condition for passive. Besides, it has been shown that some ergative languages do have passive constructions (cf. Cooreman 1988 for Chamorro, England 1988 for Mam, Morin and Tiffou 1988 for Burushaski, and Rude 1988 for Nez Perce). In studying passives in Niuean, Levin and Massam (1986) also argue that the essential nature of passive is case absorption. As they take the GB approach, it naturally follows from this definition that passives cannot exist in ergative languages: if the verb lost its ability to assign (ABS) case, S of the passive verb cannot receive case, violating the Case Filter. Facing this problem, Levin and Massam (1986) propose that in ergative languages such as Niuean, the loss of case assigning ability is explained not as case absorption but as case transmission to VP, whereby VP will be able to assign ABS to a NP that has moved to the external

argument position.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in Niuean the subject of a passive clause is marked in ABS despite the loss of case assigning ability of the verb.<sup>3</sup> However, this approach involves two highly unusual operations, case transmission to VP and the subsequent case assignment by VP.

In brief, a major obstacle for the approaches outlined above is that the sole argument of a passive verb somehow manages to receive case in ergative languages. This problem, however, can be resolved if we take the active Agr approach. As discussed in Chapter 7, the active Agr hypothesis explains case assignment in the unaccusative construction without assuming that an unaccusative verb is deprived of its case assigning ability. Note that we assume that the case feature of an argument is checked by Agr, and not by the verb itself. It follows that even if the verb loses its case assigning ability, the internal argument is still able to have its case feature checked in the active Agr. Thus, in an ergative system S, whether generated as the external or internal argument, checks its case feature in the active Agr. However, it should be noted also that this advantage of the active Agr hypothesis is valid only if we assume that passivisation derives an intransitive verb from a transitive verb.

At this point, it is necessary to distinguish the two phenomena that have been referred to as passive. There are two types of passive: one involving theta-role assignment and the other involving theta-role absorption. In the former, the verb remains transitive. In

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<sup>2</sup> Note that their hypothesis, case transmitted to VP (i.e., maximum projection of the head V) does not fit in the GB case theory. Generally, it is assumed that T assigns case to a NP in the subject position. Levin and Massam (1986) assume that VP may assign ABS to the NP in [Spec, VP].

<sup>3</sup> What they call passive in Niuean is a construction similar to the subject-less transitive in Tongan, which is discussed below (§8.3.2). However, whether this construction is passive or not is a question.

contrast, theta-role absorption renders the verb intransitive: there is only one argument that need to check its case feature. This process derives an intransitive verb similar to the so-called English middle verbs such as *sell* as in “This book sells well”. We assume that theta-absorption takes place in lexicon and not in syntax. In studying passive constructions in ergative languages, it is important to distinguish the two passives. Let us call passives involving theta-role assignment *syntactic* passives and those involving theta-role absorption *lexical* passives. The current approach predicts that ergative languages may have lexical passives, but not syntactic passives. In both cases, what characterises passive is elimination of the external theta-role.

### 8.1.2 Relational Grammar (RG) approach

In fact, Perlmutter and Postal (1983) cite the following examples to show that case is not a crucial factor that characterises passive. For example, West Greenlandic Eskimo, an ergative language, shows a passive construction, in which the (underlying) O appears in ABS, the same case it bears in the corresponding active construction.

(8.1) West Greenlandic Eskimo (Perlmutter and Postal 1983: 7)

- a. Gimmi-p miiraq kii-va-a.  
dog-ERG child-ABS bite-3.s.-3.s.  
“The dog bit the child.”
- b. Miiraq gimmi-mik kii-tsip-puq.  
child-ABS dog-INSTR bite-pass-3.s.  
“The child was bitten by the dog.”

Furthermore, consider the following example from Basque, another ergative language. In (8.2b), not only the (underlying) object, but also the (underlying) subject appears in the same case as they do in the corresponding active sentence.

(8.2) Basque (Lafitte 1962 cited by Perlmutter and Postal 1983: 8)

- a. Piarresek egin du ethea.  
Peter-ERG make has house-ABS  
“Peter built the house.”
- b. Piarresek egina da ethea.  
Peter-ERG made is house-ABS  
“The house was built by Peter.”

In (8.2b), the verb is arguably intransitive because *da* is used with intransitive verbs as opposed to *du*, which is used with transitive verbs. These examples show that case is irrelevant to voice.

Moreover, Perlmutter and Postal argue that the passive morpheme, at least a visible one, is not a necessary condition for passive, either. See (8.3) below.

(8.3) Mandarin Chinese (Cummins 1976 cited by Perlmutter and Postal 1983: 8)

- a. Zhù lāoshī píyè-le wō-de kǎoshí.  
Zhu professor mark-ASP my test  
“Prof. Zhu marked my test.”
- b. wō-de kǎoshí bèi Zhù lāoshī píyè-le.  
my test by Zhu professor mark-ASP  
“My test was marked by Prof. Zhu.”

Note that the verb appears in the same form in both active and passive sentences.

Similar phenomenon is observed in Achenese (Lawler 1977).

Thus, Perlmutter and Postal (1983: 9) formulate the following two universals of passivisation: a) a direct object of an active clause is the (superficial) subject of the corresponding passive; and b) the subject of an active clause is neither the

(superficial) subject nor the (superficial) direct object of the corresponding passive.<sup>4</sup> The two conditions predict that a passive clause is an intransitive construction. Their observation that neither case nor verbal morphology can be regarded as a necessary condition for passive is insightful. However, the universals they postulate raise a question as to how the terms, subject and direct object are defined. In RG, these grammatical relations are assigned rather arbitrarily, as long as subjecthood or direct objecthood of a NP can be proved by some syntactic rules that apply exclusively to subject or direct object. On the other hand, in the GB approach, subject and direct object are generally distinguished in terms of structural position in the surface structure. Grammatical relations are understood in terms of external/internal theta-roles in the GB approach. However, the RG terms, subject and direct object do not necessarily correspond to the GB terms, external argument and internal argument, respectively: an internal argument may appear in the subject position of the surface structure in the case of unaccusative construction. Subjects of unaccusative and passive are derived subjects that end up in the subject position as a result of movement, motivated by the Case Filter. In other words, the GB theory considers that an argument appears in the subject position of a passive construction as a result of passivisation, while RG considers passivisation as the result of revaluing grammatical relations. Considering that the thematic relation between the verb and the internal argument remains intact, we take the former view. In other words, we do not consider that the internal argument becomes the external argument. Passivisation involves

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<sup>4</sup> Babby (1994: 632) also argues that “the only absolute universal property of passivisation is internalisation of the verb’s external theta-role; everything else, including the presence of passive morphology, the verb’s transitivity, movement of the direct object, case absorption, and agreement are language-specific phenomenon.”

elimination of the external theta-role. The fact that the internal argument appears in the subject position is an outcome of the elimination of the external theta-role.

### 8.1.3 Definition of passive

It should be noted that the RG approach outlined above does not distinguish lexical passive from syntactic passive. On the other hand, in the GB approach lexical passives are not regarded as passive at all. As mentioned above, in studying passive constructions in ergative languages, it is particularly important to distinguish the two types of passive. Let us assume that both syntactic and lexical passives involve the affixation of the passive morpheme (including the zero-morpheme). In the case of a lexical passive, the affixation takes place in the lexicon and causes the theta-role absorption, while in the case of a syntactic passive the affixation takes place in the syntax and involves the theta-role assignment. Specifically, we assume, following Baker et al. (1989), that the passive morpheme is base-generated in [Spec, VP] and receives an external theta-role from the verb. Note that in this view the passive construction is considered a transitive construction, containing two Agr phrases. The passive morpheme, which is virtually the external argument of the verb, checks its case feature by adjoining to Agro when the verb to which it cliticises adjoins to Agro. Consequently, the overt argument in [V, NP] moves to [Spec, Agrs] via [Spec, TP] to check its case feature. This process takes place at the level of syntax. In contrast, a lexical passive involves a similar operation, but all is done in the lexicon and not in the syntax. A (passive) morpheme affixes to a transitive verb and absorbs the external theta-role. Therefore, a derived verb is syntactically intransitive: it has only one theta-role to assign. At the level of syntax, lexical passive constructions behave like any

other intransitive constructions. Thus, S will check its case feature in the active Agr. As a result, it appears in ABS in an ergative language. Note that with this definition the underlying O of a syntactic passive would appear in ERG in an ergative language because feature checking takes place in [Spec, Agrs].

Given that the above definition of passive is an arbitrary one and that the following discussion largely relies on this particular definition of passive, it is necessary to mention that some other definitions of passive will lead to a different conclusion. Let us consider two other definitions of passive below before proceeding with our discussion. First, consider the following definition: the syntactic affixation of the passive morpheme absorbs the external argument of the verb and therefore renders the verb unaccusative. In this view, the passive construction is intransitive. Accordingly, the underlying O receives case in the active Agr. Thus, in the English passive, the underlying O appears in NOM. This definition predicts that the underlying O would appear in ABS in the passive construction in ergative languages. However, this is always the case: in transitive constructions, O consistently appears in ABS. This definition cannot distinguish passive constructions from active constructions. With this definition, all verbs can be regarded as passive in ergative languages.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, following the RG approach, one may assume that the crucial condition of passive is the demotion of the agent argument. In this view, due to the demotion of the agent argument, the underlying O is promoted to the subject, because the EPP would be violated otherwise. Thus, the underlying O in a passive construction acquires the

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<sup>5</sup> For example, the claim that in ergative languages the patient arguments are generated as the subject in [Spec, VP] (Marantz 1984 and Levin 1987) seems to suggest that the ergative transitive constructions are like passives.

subject properties and behaves like a subject. In an ergative language, the underlying O would receive ABS because that is the case which the intransitive subject receives. In both approaches, the underlying O is expected to appear in ABS, and consequently, the passive construction does not differ from the intransitive construction.

The major difference between our definition and the alternative definitions mentioned above is that the former considers that the (syntactic) passivisation does not affect the transitivity of the underlying construction.<sup>6</sup> This assumption is crucial in the following two respects. First, assuming that the (syntactic) passive can exist in ergative languages, we would like to avoid obscuring the syntactic differences between the passive and the active. In other words, we would like to have a definition that can exclude the active constructions. Second, it also plays an essential role in our attempt to capture the facts in terms of structural positions: specifically, which position the underlying O of the passive construction ends up. This is important because, as argued in Chapter 5, some of the syntactic rules in Tongan are sensitive to the structural case position. Thus, our definition of passive is as follows.

#### (8.4) Syntactic passive

- a) affixation of a passive morpheme to a transitive verb in the syntax;
- b) the external theta-role is assigned to the passive morpheme;
- c) the overt argument checks its case feature in [Spec, Agrs].

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<sup>6</sup> Note that although these alternative definitions seem to argue for the existence of passive in ergative languages, the following discussion on the Tongan data shows that the passive-like constructions, in which the underlying O appears in ABS, cannot qualify as syntactic passive. As will be shown shortly, the ABS-marked argument in the passive-like constructions does not have the subject properties: a) it cannot be realised as a clitic; b) it cannot be part of the *mo*-construction, and c) it cannot serve as PRO.

(8.5) Lexical passive

- a) affixation of a passive morpheme in the lexicon;
- b) the derived verb is intransitive;
- c) the overt argument checks its case feature in the active Agr.

We also assume that the passive morpheme can be a zero morpheme. Note also that the fact that a sentence could have a passive interpretation does not qualify it as a syntactically passive construction.

## 8.2 Passive in ergative languages

The preceding discussion led us to conclude that an ergative language can have a lexical passive, but not a syntactic passive. As illustrated by (8.1) and (8.3) above, West Greenlandic Eskimo and Basque, both ergative languages, do possess passive. In addition to these two, passive is found in the following ergative languages: Chamorro (Cooreman 1988), Mam (England 1988), Burushaski (Morin and Tiffou 1988), and Nez Perce (Rude 1988). A careful review of the relevant data reveals that all of these passive constructions belong to the class of lexical passive as defined in (8.5) above. This observation supports our hypothesis. On the other hand, in Polynesian, it is generally agreed that ergative case marking and passive construction are in complementary distribution. This argument is based on the distribution of the so-called Polynesian passive morpheme, *-Cia*. We will discuss these issues below.

### 8.2.1 Burushaski

Burushaski has a construction that is called agentless passive (Morin and Tiffou

1988). Informally, this construction is derived from a transitive construction by deleting the underlying A. The verb appears in the same form. However, the auxiliary *be* agrees with the sole argument, the underlying O. The latter indicates that O in the agentless passive has somehow acquired the status of subject, for the auxiliary agrees only with S or A in Burushaski. This property suggests that the agentless passive is in fact a lexical passive. Affixation of a passive morpheme (in this case, a zero morpheme) and absorption of the external theta-role take place in lexicon, deriving an intransitive verb that takes an underlying O as its sole argument. The agent argument cannot appear with the resulting verb, for its theta-role has been eliminated.

### 8.2.2 Nez Perce

Similarly, Rude (1988) observes that passive constructions in Nez Perce are always agentless. They are also morphologically intransitive in that the sole argument induces the subject agreement on the copula. These properties suggest that the Nez Perce passive is also lexical. In fact, Rude (1988) argues that the morpheme affixed to these passive verbs is a stative morpheme. Therefore, we may conclude that affixation takes place in the lexicon to derive an intransitive stative verb.

### 8.2.3 Chamorro

A similar phenomenon of the agentless passive is found in Chamorro (Cooreman 1988). The prefix *ma-* attaches to a verbal stem to derive a passive verb. The sole argument of the derived construction appears in ABS and the agent argument cannot appear in any form, including obliques. *Ma* passive in Chamorro also seems to be an

instance of lexical passive.<sup>7</sup>

#### 8.2.4 Mam

According to England (1988), there are four passive morphemes in Mam: *-eet*, *-njtz*, *-j*, and *-b'aj*. Affixation of *-njtz* and *-j* is only semiproductive. Verbs affixed by *-njtz* and *-j* imply that the agent has lost or fails to have control over the patient. In other words, events described by these verbs are interpreted as accidental. The fact that affixation of these suffixes gives rise to a semantic difference suggests that this process takes place in the lexicon rather than syntax. In contrast, *-eet* is productive: it can attach to almost all transitive verbs. The agent appears in oblique case. However, there are two facts that suggest that *-eet* also involves lexical passivisation. First, some verbs do not permit oblique agents. Second, several verbs such as *kan-* (“to meet/find”) are always used in the passive form. In these instances, affixation of *-eet* takes place in the lexicon. Finally, *-b'aj* behaves differently from the other three. Affixation of *-b'aj* implies that the action described by the verb happens because someone goes to do it. England (1988) regards *-b'aj* as one of the directional suffixes. With *-b'aj*, the agent is restricted to third person. Since affixation of *-b'aj* also results in some semantic difference, we may consider the process lexical rather than syntactic. Overall, passives in Mam can be regarded as instances of lexical passive. At least, none of them qualify as syntactic passive as defined in (8.4) above.

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<sup>7</sup> According to Cooreman (1988), there is another construction that can be analysed as passive. When the infix *-in-* attached to a verbal stem, the derived verb has a passive meaning and the sole argument appears in ABS. However, crucially, the presence of the oblique agent is mandatory in *in* passive constructions. As Cooreman (1988) mentions, *in* passive in Chamorro is a reminiscence of the *in* focus construction found in Philippine languages. Thus, we assume that the Chamorro *in* construction technically is not passive.

### 8.2.5 Inuktitut and Inuit

A unique case is found in Inuit, a Canadian Eskimo language. What is called passive participle *-jaq-* appears not only in passive constructions but also in active constructions (Johns 1992). It can also attach to intransitive (unaccusative) verbs. Johns (1992) proposes that affixation of the Inuktitut passive participle is a category-changing operation. It derives a noun phrase from a verb by linking the internal argument to a referential index: e.g., *kapi* (“to stab”) + passive → “the stabbed one”. Since it is a category-changing operation, Johns argues, following Levin and Rappaport (1995), that affixation of *-jaq-* takes place in lexicon. This observation is in accordance with our hypothesis that passive in ergative languages is necessarily lexical. Bittner and Hale (1996b) propose that the Inuit passive morpheme is a nominal head, which selects a small clause complement. To summarise, we have shown that what has been called passive in ergative languages are all instances of lexical passive.

### 8.2.6 Passive in Polynesian

Polynesian languages are divided into three subgroups based on their morphological characteristics: Tongic (TON), Samoic-Outlier (SAM), and Eastern Polynesian (EP) (Pawley 1966). As far as case assignment is concerned, both accusative and ergative systems exist in Polynesian languages. Those belonging to the TON and SAM subgroups are said to have an ergative case system. In contrast, the EP languages show an accusative pattern of case marking.<sup>8</sup> The EP languages have a passive rule,

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<sup>8</sup> However, Gibson and Starosta (1990) argue that Maori, an EP language is in fact ergative for the following empirical reasons: a) Pattern II is the basic transitive pattern in Maori if we consider text frequency, neutrality, and productivity as criteria of transitivity; and b) comparing Pattern II with

which is triggered by a passive suffix of variable form, conventionally represented as *-Cia*.<sup>9</sup> Affixation of *-Cia* places the underlying O in the unmarked case, and the underlying A appears as an obliquely marked agent. Consider the Maori example in (8.6) below. In Maori, a NP in NOM is unmarked and the one in ACC is preceded by a preposition *i* as illustrated by (8.6a). In (8.6b), where the passive suffix, *-mia* has been added to the verb, the underlying O, *te wai* is unmarked. The underlying A is preceded by the agent marker, *e*.

(8.6) Maori (Clark 1976: 68)

- a. Ka inu te tangata i te wai.  
Tns drink def man ACC the water  
“The man drank the water.”
- b. Ka inu-mia te wai e te tangata.  
Tns drink-Cia def water Agt the man  
“The water was drunk by the man.”

In contrast, TON and SAM languages show ergative case marking with A marked by ‘*e* and O unmarked<sup>10</sup>, as exemplified by (8.7) below. It should also be mentioned that in TON and SAM, transitive verbs fall into two major classes: a) middle verbs, i.e., verbs of perception, emotion, and communication, and b) canonical transitive (CT) verbs, i.e., verbs denoting action by an agent directly affecting the object. Middle verbs have a different construction from that of CT verbs. Compare the CT construction with the middle, illustrated by (8.7) and (8.8) respectively.<sup>11</sup>

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intransitive clauses, S matches O in terms of case marking and accessibility to reference-related grammatical rules (e.g., relativisation).

<sup>9</sup> *-Cia* is the label generally used to represent variable forms of the so-called Polynesian passive suffix. The Polynesian passive suffix consists of a consonant (represented by *C*) followed by *i* (which is often optional) and *a*.

<sup>10</sup> In Tongan, O, as well as S, is preceded by the absolutive case marker, ‘*a*. This absolutive case marker is optional, and in fact often omitted.

<sup>11</sup> Some linguists regard this middle marking as accusative, with NPs preceded by *i/ki* being in ACC. The

- (8.7) Na'e kai 'e he tangata 'a e mango.  
Pst eat ERG def man ABS def mango  
"The man ate the mango."
- (8.8) Na'e sio 'a e tangata ki he fefine.  
Pst see ABS def man to def woman  
"The man saw the woman."

Furthermore, the suffix *-Cia* is not as productive in the TON and SAM languages as in the EP languages nor does it necessarily change the underlying O into a derived subject. In other words, there is no suffix that systematically induces passivisation in the TON and SAM languages. For example, a Tongan suffix, *-i* is generally considered to be a variant of the Polynesian passive morpheme, *-Cia* (Chung 1978). However, this suffix does not function as a passive morpheme. As shown by (8.9) below, this suffix attaches to a middle verb and makes it a transitive verb. Note that the affixation does not change voice although it does affect the transitivity of the verb.

- (8.9) a. Na'e tokoni 'a e tamasi'i ki he fefine.  
Pst help ABS def boy to def woman  
"The boy helped the woman."  
Lit. "The boy helped to the woman."
- b. Na'e tokoni'i 'e he tamasi'i 'a e fefine.  
Pst help ERG def boy ABS def woman  
"The boy helped the woman."

Similarly, in Samoan, *-Cia* functions as a transitive suffix in a rather productive fashion (Chung 1978).

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idea is that these NP's are marked by the preposition. Besides, this preposition *i/ki* is the accusative case marker in EP subgroup. However, this paper holds a different view: *i/ki* in TON and SAM subgroups are locative prepositions (equivalent to English "in" and "to", respectively), independent from the EP accusative marker, *i*. Accordingly, the middle construction is considered canonically intransitive, with its object marked with oblique case (OBL). This view is motivated by the affectedness condition; namely, objects that are not directly affected by the action are less likely to be grammatically transitive (Hopper and Thompson 1980). Since middle verbs are typically those of perception, emotion, and communication, one may say that objects of these verbs are not directly affected.

There is a striking contrast between the EP languages on one hand and the TON and SAM languages on the other. Compare the four patterns schematised in (8.10) below.

NP1 refers to the Agent/Experiencer argument and NP2, the Patient/Theme.

(8.10) a. EP active:	V	NP1	<i>i</i>	NP2
b. EP passive:	V- <i>Cia</i>	NP2	<i>e</i>	NP1
c. Non-EP middle:	V	( <i>a</i> ) NP1	<i>i/ki</i>	NP2
d. Non-EP CT:	V	( <i>a</i> ) NP2	<i>e</i>	NP1

From the point of view of historical linguistics, it is natural to hypothesise that there is some close relationship, possibly an evolutionary one, between (8.10a) and (8.10c), and between (8.10b) and (8.10d). That is, Proto-Polynesian (PPN) had either an accusative system like Maori, or an ergative system like Tongan, and one of the two systems is derived from the other.<sup>12</sup> If we assume the former, an ergative case system is derived by reanalysis of the PPN passive construction as transitive (i.e., ergative) construction: the agent marker *e* has been reanalysed as the ergative marker and the passive suffix *-Cia* has lost its function in TON and SAM languages (Hohepa 1969<sup>13</sup>; Hale 1970; Chung 1977, 1978<sup>14</sup> among others)<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> On a different note, this kind of historical view offers an interesting way of explaining the phenomena of split ergativity. Split can be explained in this view that the change, either from ergative to accusative or from accusative to ergative, is still in process: the accusative case marking observed in an ergative language is either the residue of the old system or a hint of the new system. In short, split is attributed to neither syntactic nor semantic reasons; it is simply a by-product of a diachronic change. Split ergativity in Indic and Iranian languages (e.g., Hindi) is also often attributed to a historical change (Anderson 1977).

<sup>13</sup> Hohepa (1969) proposes that there was a “drift” toward increasing use of the passive in PPN. Increasing use of the passive is attested by EP languages: e.g., in Maori, passive clauses have extraordinarily high text frequency (Chung 1978). The drift made the passive rule obligatory in TON and SAM. Consequently, the suffix *-Cia*, having lost the function of distinguishing the passive from the active, became optional in these languages, giving rise to a new structure schematised in (i).

(i) V *e* NP1 (A) NP2 (O)

The pattern (i) was then reanalysed as the ergative, with the *e*-marked NP being ERG and the unmarked NP, ABS. Hohepa (1969) concludes that this process is still continuing in TON and SAM languages, in which both ergative and accusative case marking exist. Note that in this view, the middle construction is considered accusative.

<sup>14</sup> Chung (1978) rejects the possibility of the drift to ergativity, by pointing out that the postulated obligatory-passive stage preceding reanalysis is not attested in any modern language. Instead, Chung postulates a condition that requires passive to be applied to clauses containing an affected direct object.

On the other hand, we could also hypothesise that PPN had an ergative case system (Clark 1976, Gibson and Starosta 1990). In this view, it is assumed that PPN had the ergative system and that the consistent accusative system of EP languages was an innovation that took place at the Proto-EP stage.<sup>16</sup> The function of the suffix *-Cia* is considered transitive rather than passive; *-Cia* is typically affixed to an intransitive verb, reversing its transitivity. Thus, PPN is assumed to have the following three constructions.

(8.11)	Pattern I	V	NP1 (A)	<i>i/ki</i>	NP2 (O)
	Pattern II	V <i>-Cia</i>	<i>e</i> NP1 (A)		NP2 (O)
	Pattern III	V	<i>e</i> NP1 (A)		NP2 (O)

TON and SAM exhibit all of these three patterns: CT verbs appear in Patterns II and III, and middle verbs in Pattern I. In EP languages, pattern III does not exist.<sup>17</sup> Clark (1976) claims that Pattern III was lost at the Proto-EP stage. Pattern II was then reanalysed as passive, giving rise to an accusative system.<sup>18</sup>

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Chung argues that a) as a result of this frequent application, the rule was highly opaque, and that b) subsequent changes occurred as an attempt to reduce this opacity. Specifically, EP languages dropped the condition and reduced the frequency of application of the passive rule; on the other hand, SAM and TON languages reanalysed passive clauses as active transitive (i.e., ergative), and lost the passive rule. In other words, the shift from PPN is taken to be a bifurcated track, rather than a trend towards one direction. As evidence for the passive-to-ergative reanalysis, Chung (1977, 1978) presents data from Pukapukan, a SAM language, in which all verbs may occur in three different patterns, i.e., accusative, ergative, and passive.

<sup>15</sup> Estival and Myhill (1988) support the passive-to-ergative reanalysis, arguing that passive construction in general is structurally similar to ergative construction in the following sense: a) (underlying) O appears in the same case as S, and b) (underlying) A appears in an oblique case.

<sup>16</sup> Note that Gibson and Starosta (1990) propose a slightly different account, arguing that the change took place later, specifically in the Central EP languages (e.g., Hawaiian and Tahitian), and not at the Proto-EP stage. This is due to their assumption that Maori is an ergative language contrary to the traditional consensus.

<sup>17</sup> However, Rapanui, an EP language spoken in Easter Island also exhibits Pattern III although Pattern I is the most common construction for transitive verbs. Clark (1976) suggests that this is a trace of the old ergative system.

<sup>18</sup> With regard to Tongan, Tchekhoff (1979) proposes that Tongan is going through the ergative-to-accusative reanalysis. Tchekhoff regards *-i* as a perfective morpheme. She argues that this perfective aspect marker functions as a passive morpheme with certain verbs such as *tamate* (“to kill”) and that this usage will eventually extend to all verbs, making *-i* a passive morpheme.

The theories outlined above argue that passive does not exist in languages of the TON and SAM subgroups because *-Cia* does not function as a passive suffix. However, this could be a hasty conclusion. Although *-Cia* is the Polynesian passive suffix, nothing prevents us from assuming that its use is limited within the EP subgroup and that the TON and SAM languages have some other convention for passivisation. Considering some ergative languages outside Polynesian exhibit passive construction, it is not so absurd a suggestion. The question is, then, is there such an alternative for the TON and SAM languages? We will attempt to answer this question by studying the Tongan data.

### 8.3. Passive-like constructions in Tongan

Some linguists point out that some passive-like constructions are found in Tongan (Churchward 1953, Tchekhoff 1973a, Lynch 1972). These passive-like constructions include (a) lexical passive, (b) the subject-less transitive, (c) VOS word order<sup>19</sup>, (d) verbs with *-Cia* suffix, and (e) verbs with *ma-* prefix. Lexical passive refers to a certain class of intransitive verbs that have passive meanings and do not have any corresponding transitive verb. These constructions typically have a passive interpretation. Churchward (1953) argues that it is simply a matter of interpretation and that Tongan does not have a syntactic equivalent of the passive typically found in the accusative languages. Tchekhoff (1973a) proposes a similar view with regard to *-i*

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<sup>19</sup> Note that the word order is systematically VSO in Tongan when both the subject and the object are full nouns. However, VOS order also freely occurs and considered perfectly grammatical.

suffix, arguing that there is no active-passive transformation in Tongan.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, Lynch (1972) argues that subject-less transitive construction and VOS construction are passive constructions, yielded from affixation of a zero-morpheme. In this section, we will consider some Tongan data of each of the passive-like constructions mentioned above. It will be shown that Tongan possesses lexical passives, but not syntactic passives. The former involves passivisation at the lexical level and does not involve any syntactic operation.

### 8.3.1 Lexical Passive

Some verbs in Tongan are typical examples of lexical passive defined above in (8.5). These verbs are intransitive verbs with passive meanings: e.g., *lavea* (“to be injured”), ‘*osi* (“to be finished”), and *mole* (“to be lost”). These verbs are intransitive, taking only one argument, which is marked by the ABS-case marker, ‘*a*. See (8.12) below.

- (8.12) a. Na’e lavea ‘a e siana.  
Pst be-injured ABS def man  
“The man was injured.”
- b. Na’e ‘osi ‘a e me’akai.  
Pst. be-finished ABS def food  
“The food was finished (all gone).”
- c. Na’e mole ‘a e kii.  
Pst be-lost ABS def key  
“The key was lost.”

As mentioned earlier, an understood argument is often omitted in Tongan, particularly when it is third person singular. Therefore, one may suspect that the sentences in (8.12) are instances of such a case, where the subject is *pro*. If it were the case, adding an

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<sup>20</sup> In fact, the function of -‘*i* is more like a transitive morpheme. However, there are some other -*Cia* suffixes are found in Tongan, e.g., -*mia*, -*ngia*, -*sia*. Verbs with such a suffix are typically interpreted as passive. We will return to this point shortly.

overt subject would not affect the grammaticality of these sentences. However, as illustrated by (8.13) below, the sentences in (8.12) cannot have an overt subject. The sentences are considered ungrammatical if an ERG-marked NP is present. Therefore, we conclude that the sentences in (8.12) are actually intransitive.

- (8.13) a. \*Na'e lavea 'e Sione 'a e siana.  
 Pst injure ERG Sione ABS def man  
 "Sione injured the man."  
 b. \*Na'e 'osi 'e he tamaiki 'a e me'akai.  
 Pst finish ERG def children ABS def food  
 "The children finished the food."

What we need to consider now is whether these intransitive verbs with a passive meaning are the outcome of syntactic passivisation. Recall our definition of syntactic passive given above as (8.4): a passive construction has a corresponding active transitive construction. Sentences in (8.13) show that there are no corresponding active transitive verbs. This denies the possibility that a zero passive morpheme is attached to the verb in the sentences in (8.12). What is more, the agent argument cannot appear in the relevant sentences. In fact, in order for the agent argument to be present, the verb has to be transitivised by adding a causative prefix *-faka*. Compare (8.14) below with (8.13).

- (8.14) a. Na'e fakalavea'i 'e Sione 'a e siana.  
 Pst cause-injure ERG Sione ABS def man  
 "Sione injured the man."  
 b. Na'e faka'osi 'e he tamaiki 'a e me'akai.  
 Pst cause-be-finished ERG def children ABS def food  
 "The children finished the food."

In other words, the active transitive counterpart is derived from the original passive intransitive verb. Thus, verbs like *lavea* are purely intransitive, and not derived. They form a particular class of intransitive verbs that originally have the passive meaning.

## 8.3.2 Subject-less transitive

As mentioned above, we frequently encounter Tongan transitive sentences with only one argument. What is curious is that such a sentence is sometimes interpreted as passive. See (8.15) below. The verb, *'ave* is a transitive verb and usually takes two arguments, as illustrated by (8.15a). In (8.15b), however, only one argument is present, which is marked for ABS.

(8.15) a. 'Osi 'ave 'e Sione 'a e tamasi'i ki he falemahaki.  
 Perf take ERG Sione ABS def child to def hospital  
 "Sione has taken the boy to the hospital."

b. 'Osi 'ave 'a e tamasi'i ki he falemahaki.  
 Perf take ABS def boy to def hospital  
 "(Someone) has taken the boy to the hospital."  
 "The boy was taken to the hospital."

Note that the sole argument is appear in ABS, not in ERG, in (8.15b). This suggests that this construction cannot be a syntactic passive according to our definition (8.4). Could it be a lexical passive? In an ergative case system, an ABS-marked NP is either S or O. Thus, theoretically, *tamasi'i* in (8.15b) could be analysed as either of the two. If the NP in question is S, (8.15b) is an intransitive construction. Then, there is a possibility that *'ave* in (8.15b) is a lexical passive verb. On the other hand, if it is O, then (8.15b) is a transitive verb with a *pro* subject.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, there is a way to test whether a verb is transitive or intransitive in Tongan. When an alienable possessive pronoun precedes a verb, it refers to the subject of the verb (either A or S). In contrast, an inalienable possessive pronoun preceding a verb refers to O. Thus, inalienable possessive pronouns cannot be used with an intransitive verb. See (8.16) below.

- (8.16) a. ‘ene foki  
alienable.poss.3.s. return  
“his returning”
- b. \*hono foki  
inalienable.poss.3.s. return
- c. ‘ene tamate’i  
alienable.poss.3.s. kill  
“his killing (something)”
- d. hono tamate’i  
inalienable.poss.3.s. kill  
“his being killed (by somebody/something)”

As illustrated by (8.16a) and (8.16b), S must be represented by an alienable possessive pronoun. (8.16c) shows that when used with a transitive verb, an alienable possessive pronoun refers to A. In contrast, (8.16d) shows that an inalienable possessive pronoun must refer to O when used with a transitive verb.

Using this property of the Tongan possessive pronouns, we may find out whether a verb is intransitive by simply adding an alienable possessive pronoun to the verb. If the verb, *‘ave* in (8.15b) is intransitive, it should be able to co-occur with an alienable possessive pronoun. (8.17) below, however, testifies against this hypothesis.

- (8.17) a. \*’ene ‘ave ki he falemahaki  
alienable.poss.3.1. take-pass to def hospital  
“his being taken to the hospital”
- b. ‘ene ‘ave ki he falemahaki  
alienable.poss.3.1. take to def hospital  
“his taking (someone) to the hospital”
- c. hono ‘ave ki he falemahaki  
inalienable.poss.3.s. take to def hospital  
“his being taken to the hospital”

As (8.17a) shows, *‘ave* cannot occur with an alienable possessive pronoun and have a

passive meaning. Note that the phrase itself is grammatical, as long as the passive interpretation is not intended, as illustrated by (8.17b). Furthermore, (8.17c) confirms that the sole argument, *e tamasi'i* in (8.15b) is O, and not S. It should be also mentioned that the lexical passive verbs consistently occur with the alienable possessive pronouns. As illustrated by (8.18) below, an inalienable possessive pronoun cannot be used with a verb of this class. This confirms that lexical passive verbs are indeed intransitive.

- (8.18) a. 'ene lavea  
 alienable.poss.3.s. be-injured  
 "his being injured"
- b. \*hono lavea<sup>21</sup>  
 inalienable.poss.3.s. injure  
 "his being injured"

The contrast between (8.17) and (8.18) suggests that the sole argument of subject-less sentences is syntactically O and not S.<sup>22</sup>

There is yet another way to test the transitivity of verbs, namely, the distribution of PRO. It is attested that universally, PRO can occur as A or S, but never as O. For example, consider the following English sentences.

- (8.19) a. John wants [PRO to be praised].  
 b. \*John wants [someone to praise PRO].

(8.19a) is grammatical because PRO is S of the embedded clause, whereas (8.19b) with PRO occurring as O is ruled out, as it violates the above-mentioned universal

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<sup>21</sup> It should be mentioned that *hono lavea* is a legitimate phrase in Tongan if it is intended to mean "his injury", with *lavea* being a noun, not a verb.

<sup>22</sup> One may argue that this result in fact suggests that the subject-less sentences derive from syntactic passivisation. However, we reject this possibility because the sole argument is marked for ABS, and not ERG, whereby these constructions do not match the definition (8.4).

restriction on Control. If the Tongan subject-less transitive can occur in a Control construction, then, the sole argument of such a construction is S, thus it is a passive construction. If it cannot, the argument in question is O, indicating that the sentence is a transitive construction. Consider (8.20) below. The fact that (8.20b) is ungrammatical suggests that *Sione* in (8.20a) is O, not S.<sup>23</sup>

- (8.20) a. Na'e fakalangilangi'i 'a Sione.  
 Pst. praise ABS Sione  
 "Sione was praised."  
 b. \*'Oku loto 'a Sione [ke PRO fakalangilangi'i]  
 Prs want ABS Sione praise  
 "Sione wants to be praised."

To conclude, both tests have shown that the subject-less transitive is not intransitive, thus it cannot be derived by passivisation.

Having proved that the subject-less transitive is not a passive construction, we now have to account for the fact that these subject-less sentences nevertheless have a passive interpretation. We propose that the subject-less transitive is actually interpreted as active; the passive meaning arises only when such sentences are translated into English. We analyse the subject-less transitive as a transitive construction with a *pro* subject, as illustrated by (8.21) below.

- (8.21) 'Osi 'ave *pro* 'a e tamasi'i ki he falemahaki.  
 Perf take ABS def boy to def hospital  
 "(Someone) has taken the boy to the hospital."

<sup>23</sup> However, note that 'Oku loto 'a Sione ke fakalangilangi'i itself is a grammatical sequence if the passive interpretation is not intended. Consider (i) below. The embedded clause contains PRO subject controlled by the matrix subject *Sione*, and a null object *pro*, which is not coreferential with *Sione*. See Chapter 10 for discussion.

(i) 'Oku loto 'a Sione [ke PRO fakalangilangi'i *pro*].  
 "Sione wants to praise (him)."

When uttering or hearing sentences like (8.21), both the speaker and the hearer understand that there is someone that took the boy to the hospital. It is likely that the subject-less transitive is a way to indicate the emphasis on O in Tongan.<sup>24</sup> In (8.21), the focus of the sentence is the boy and not the one who took the boy to the hospital. In a language in which passive exists, passive is used when the emphasis is on O rather than A. Therefore, when translated into English, the subject-less sentences are translated as passive sentences. However, the fact that they are translated into passive sentences does not necessarily mean that the original sentences have the passive meaning in Tongan. What is crucial here is that a transitive sentence without a subject always implies that there exists the agent of the event. In fact, if a native speaker hears sentences like (8.21) in isolation, a natural response is “*e hai?*” (“Who did?”). This suggests that native speakers interpret the subject-less transitive as transitive, not as intransitive.

In contrast, the lexical passive does not imply the existence of the agent. Compare the pair of sentences below. (8.22a) is a subject-less transitive construction and (8.22b), intransitive.

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<sup>24</sup> Subject-less transitive is also found in Mam (England 1988) and Burushaski (Morin and Tiffou 1988), both of which are ergative languages. In these two languages, however, the subject-less transitive seems to be syntactically intransitive because the verb agrees with O. England (1988) notes that the subject-less transitive in Mam is used due to discourse considerations rather than for syntactic ones.

- (8.22) a. Na'e fakalavea'i *pro* 'a e siana  
 Pst injure ABS def man  
 Lit. "(Someone) injured the man."  
 "The man was injured."
- b. Na'e lavea 'a e siana.  
 Pst be-injured ABS def man  
 "The man was injured."

Although both (8.22a) and (8.22b) can be translated as "The man was injured", only (8.22a) implies that the man was injured by someone/something. (8.22b) has no such implication. (8.22a) is not qualified as passive because it necessarily implies the existence of a specific agent. To conclude, the subject-less transitive is not passive.

### 8.3.3 VOS word order

Another construction that frequently occurs in Tongan and has a passive meaning is the VOS construction. Although the unmarked word order is VSO, Tongan freely allows the sentences with VOS order. It has been argued that VOS sentences are typically interpreted as passive (Churchward 1953). Consider (8.23) below.

- (8.23) a. Na'e 'ave 'a Sione 'e he faiako.  
 Pst take ABS Sione ERG def teacher  
 "Sione was brought by the teacher."
- b. Na'e 'ave 'e he faiako 'a Sione.  
 Pst take ERG def teacher ABS Sione  
 "The teacher brought Sione."

(8.23a) is just as grammatical as (8.23b), the corresponding VSO sentence. VOS sentences are often translated as passive sentences. However, this does not necessarily mean that (8.23a) is a syntactically passive construction in Tongan. Churchward (1953) points out that there is a slight difference in meaning between (19a) and (19b): in (19a), it is the object *Sione* that is emphasised while in (19b), it is the subject *he*

*faiako*. Churchward notes that in English passive will be used in the former case, but Tongan does not have an equivalent means. Rather, the difference lies in emphasis on a particular constituent. What Churchward suggests is, then, VOS order is a means of indicating that the emphasis is on O.

On the other hand, Lynch (1972) proposes that VOS construction is syntactically passive. Note that Lynch considers that case marking in Tongan is accusative: ‘*a* is NOM-case marker and ‘*i/ki* ACC-case marker. Thus, the NP marked by ‘*a* is the (derived) subject and the NP marked by ‘*e* is an OBL-marked agent argument in (8.23a). According to this approach, (8.23a) is analysed as (8.24) below.

- (8.24) Na’e ‘ave-Ø ‘a Sione ‘e he faiako.  
 Pst take-pass NOM Sione Agt def teacher  
 “Sione was brought by the teacher.”

However, ‘*ave* never occurs in what Lynch calls accusative construction, as illustrated by (8.25) below.

- (8.25) \* Na’e ‘ave ‘a e faiako kia Sione.  
 Pst take NOM def teacher ACC Sione  
 “The teacher brought Sione.”

Lynch thus proposes that some verbs in Tongan may only occur in intransitive passive but not in active transitive. This argument is problematic in the following respects: a) empirical evidence shows that Tongan is an ergative language; b) there are far too many verbs that belong to this class; and c) VSO is the unmarked order, occurring much more frequently than VOS. Thus, Lynch’s original proposal should be rejected. Alternatively, one may conjecture the following derivation, still assuming that VOS is a passive construction.

- (8.26) a. Na'e 'ave 'e he faiako 'a Sione. (original active sentence)  
 b. Na'e 'ave-Ø 'a Sione. (passivisation)  
 c. Na'e 'ave-Ø 'a Sione 'e he faiako. (addition of the agent phrase)

A crucial assumption here is that the subject-less transitive in Tongan is a syntactic passive construction. However, we have refuted this possibility in §8.2.2 above. First, the fact that the overt argument is ABS-marked contradicts the definition (8.4) above. In addition, the subject-less transitive is not a lexical passive either. Both the possessive pronoun test and the control test show that the sole argument of the subject-less transitive is not S. The control test shows that ABS-marked argument of VOS construction does not qualify as S: it cannot occur as PRO. See (8.27) below.

- (8.27) \*'Oku loto 'a Sione [ke 'ofa'i PRO 'e Mele]  
 Prs want ABS Sione to love Agt Mele  
 "Sione wants to be loved by Mele"

In summary, empirical evidence shows that (8.23a) is not intransitive, and thus the passive analysis does not hold. It is more likely that VOS order results from scrambling. We may argue that scrambling in Tongan is a means to indicate the emphasis on a certain argument. In fact, there is no other semantic difference such as affectedness between VSO and VOS sentences. As Churchward (1953) suggests, passive is used for the same semantic purpose in many languages that have passive constructions. Similar observations are often found in the literature. For example, Estival and Myhill (1988) notes that syntactic passive in English is more common with A which represents new information. In other words, VOS construction is not a syntactic passive, but because the emphasis is on O, VOS sentences in Tongan are interpreted as passive by non-native speakers.

## 8.3.4 Passive morphemes?

Thus far, we have argued that neither the subject-less transitive nor VOS construction satisfies the criteria of syntactic passive defined in (8.4) above. We have also seen that intransitive verbs that have a passive meaning, such as *lavea*, are originally intransitive, and not derived. We have concluded in the preceding discussion that the lexical passive is not formed syntactically. The basis for our conclusion is that those lexical passive verbs do not have corresponding transitive verbs. In effect, we rejected the possibility of a zero-morpheme functioning as a passive morpheme. It should be noted, however, that there are a couple of morphemes in Tongan that typically appear on the intransitive verbs that have a passive meaning. These are *ma-* and variants of *-Cia*. In this subsection, we will study these two morphemes to see whether either of them qualifies as a syntactic passive morpheme.

8.3.4.1 *Ma*-prefix

Compare (a) sentences with (b) sentences in (8.28) and (8.29) below. The (a) sentences are the subject-less transitive while (b) sentences are intransitive with a passive interpretation.

- (8.28) a. Na'e hua'i 'a e vai.  
           Pst throw-out ABS def water  
           “(Somebody) threw out the water.”
- b. Na'e mahua 'a e vai.  
           Pst spill ABS def water  
           “The water spilt.” or “The water was spilt.”

- (8.29) a. Na'e foa'i 'a e ipu.  
 Pst broken ABS def cup  
 “(Somebody) broke the cup.”
- b. Na'e mafoa 'a e ipu.  
 Pst be-broken ABS def cup  
 “The cup broke.” or “The cup was broken.”

As mentioned above, *-i* is a transitive morpheme that affixes to an intransitive verb (including the middle verbs) to derive a transitive verb. As for *ma-*, Churchward (1953: 259) observes that *ma-* forms “an intransitive verb, meaning to be in a state resulting from the action specified”. He also argues that *ma-* verbs are on a par with the lexical passive verbs; their passive meaning is not a consequence of syntactic passivisation. Note also that the sole argument bears ABS. This also suggests that *ma-* does not cause a syntactic passivisation.

The *Tongan Dictionary* (Churchward, 1959) includes 142 pairs consisting of a *ma-* verb and the corresponding transitive verb. The composition of the 142 pairs is summarised in (8.30) below.

(8.30) *ma-* verbs

ma +vt	vi (passive)	29 (23)
ma +vt	avi (passive)	53 (53)
ma + vi	vi (passive)	12 (5)
ma + vi	avi (passive)	12 (7)
ma + avi	vi (passive)	3 (1)
ma + avi	avi (passive)	2 (1)
ma + n	vi (passive)	2 (1)
ma + n	avi (passive)	4 (2)
ma + root	vi (passive)	14 (11)
ma + root	avi (passive)	11 (9)
		142 (113)

Note that in all cases, the result of the *ma-* affixation is either an intransitive verb or an

adjective (*avi*).<sup>25</sup> Of the 142 verbs, 113 (80%) have a passive meaning. A relevant pattern is the one in which an intransitive verb with passive meaning is derived from a transitive verb; 16% (23 entries) of the total belong to this class. Including the instances in which the outcome is an adjective, there are 76 instances of *ma-* affixation to a transitive verb deriving an intransitive verb/adjective, which makes up to 54% of the total. In other words, *ma-* could be considered a passive morpheme, deriving an intransitive verb from a transitive verb, in more than half of the total occurrence of *ma-*verbs. However, it should be noted that 42% of these *ma-* verbs/adjectives derive not from a transitive verb, but from a noun, adjective (*avi*), intransitive verb, or root morpheme. This fact prevents us from simply concluding that *ma-* functions as a syntactic passive morpheme. Moreover, we find some cases where *ma-* is attached to an intransitive verb to produce another intransitive verb that crucially does not have a passive meaning: e.g., *puhi* (“to blow, spout”) vs. *mapuhi* (“to spout or squirt with force”) and *puna* (“to fly, leap”) vs. *mapuna* (“to spout or squirt upwards”). We should also note the fact that 20% of the derived *ma-* verbs do not have a passive meaning. In his study of passives in Tongan, Lynch (1972: 15) argues that *ma-*verbs are passive verbs; they obligatorily take the passive zero-morpheme. However, more importantly, Lynch notices that *ma-* affixation is not productive in Tongan. This observation is significant because if *ma-* is a syntactic passive morpheme, *ma-* affixation should be a productive process. Thus, it is unlikely that *ma-*verbs are derived by a syntactic operation of passivisation. Rather, their passive meaning, when they have passive

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<sup>25</sup> *Avi* is a term that Churchward (1953) used to indicate a lexical item that is usually used as a modifier of a noun but is also used as a predicate. Churchward distinguishes *avi* from the “pure” adjectives that can only be used as a modifier. When used as a predicate, the structure is identical with that of an intransitive verb. Hence the name *a(djectival)vi*.

meaning at all, is specified in the lexicon.

The prefix *ma-* also exists in Niuean with similar properties: a) most of them derived from a syntactically transitive verb; b) *ma*-verbs denote a physical change of state on the patient; c) *ma*-affixation does not apply exclusively to transitive verbs, making them intransitive<sup>26</sup>; and d) the process is not productive (Levin and Massam 1986: 240). Levin and Massam (1986) also notes that *ma*-verbs are different from the corresponding transitive verbs in that they imply completion of the action and lack of agency. Tongan *ma*-verbs demonstrate a similar semantic property, when they do have a passive meaning. Compare, for example, two sentences in (8.31) below.

- (8.31) a. Na'e mahua 'a e vai.  
           Pst be-spilt ABS def water  
           "The water was spilt."  
       b. Na'e hua'i 'a e vai.  
           Pst spill ABS def water  
           "The water was spilt (by somebody)."

While *hua'i* in (8.31b) necessarily implies that someone spilt the water (intentionally), *mahua* in (8.31a) usually does not imply the existence of agent; in fact, *mahua* implies that the water was spilt by accident. Thus, unless you know who spilt the water, you would not utter (8.31b) upon finding a puddle of water on the floor.

This property in turn suggests that *ma*-verbs are more like adjectives, referring to the resulted state of the subject. As the chart (8.30) shows, 58% of the derived *ma*- words are adjectives. Considering that the intransitive verbs with a passive meaning differ

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<sup>26</sup> Levin and Massam (1986) define passivisation as changing a case-assigning verb into a non-case assigner.

from adjectives only in that they cannot be used as a modifier of a noun,<sup>27</sup> we may regard such intransitive verbs as semi-adjectives, forming a particular subgroup of *ma*-words together with the derived adjectives. This class includes 123 members, which is 87% of the total. This figure leads us to hypothesise that the major function of *ma*- is to derive a stative verb/adjective. The major function of *ma*- is to derive an adjectival predicate and often with a transitive verb, the derived adjective refers to the resultative state caused by the action indicated by the verb: e.g., *hua* (“to throw out (water)”) + *ma*- = *mahua* (“to be in the state after the throwing-out has taken place” i.e., “to be spilt”). Due to this property, many of the *ma*- predicates have a passive meaning. Passive interpretation of *ma*- predicates is only semantic. In other words, it is an instance of lexical passive. The fact that some of the *ma*- predicates are derived from a root morpheme and not a full lexical item also supports this view.

#### 8.3.4.2 -*Cia* verbs

According to Churchward’s (1953) classification, the class of “intransitive verbs that may appear to be passive” also includes verbs ending in *-a*, *-fia*, *-hia*, *-kina*, *-mia*, *-ngia*, *-sia*, or *-ia*. These suffixes are all variants of *-Cia*, the so-called Polynesian passive morpheme. Churchward (1953: 242) notes that *-Cia* verbs in Tongan divide into three subclasses according to their meaning: a) durative, b) passive, and c) courtesy speech. These verbs are typically intransitive and the root may be a transitive verb, adjective, or noun. When occurring with one argument, this argument appears in

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<sup>27</sup> For example, one cannot say (i) below.

(i) Ko e ipu mafoa eni.  
 Pred def cup be-broken this  
 “This is a broken cup.”

ABS. This suggests that *-Cia* affixation is not a syntactic passive. Moreover, as noted by Chung (1978), *-Cia* affixation to transitive verbs is not a productive process. Thus, empirical evidence argue against the hypothesis that *-Cia* is a syntactic passive morpheme in Tongan. What is relevant is the second use of *-Cia* verbs, which are derived from transitive verbs. Could it be a lexical passive? In the *Tongan Dictionary* (Churchward 1959), we find 94 *-Cia* verbs as headings. Consider (8.32) below.<sup>28</sup> As (8.32) shows, 71% of them have passive meaning<sup>29</sup>. However, to our surprise and disappointment, intransitive verbs that have a passive meaning and are derived from a transitive verb makes up only 3% of the total. What is more, we find some instances in which the derived word is a transitive verb. In other words, *-Cia* does not necessarily de-transitivise a verb. On the contrary, in some cases, it actually transitivises an intransitive verb. This fact obviously testifies against the possibility of *-Cia* being a lexical passive morpheme.

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<sup>28</sup> Included in the chart are “passive transitive verbs”. This label might sound rather contradictory if “passive” strictly refers to the syntactic passive. The label indicates that *-Cia* verbs of this type are interpreted passively, yet the agent may be present. However, as noted by Churchward (1953:242), transitive *-Cia* verbs are often used without a subject. Chung (1978: 274) notes that when transitive, a *Cia*-verb requires a non-human or inanimate subject. However, as a transitive *-Cia* verb also allows generic human subject as illustrated by (i) below.

(i) ‘Oku manakoa ‘a e hiva ko eni ‘e he kakai Tonga.  
 Prs to-be-liked ABS def sond pred this ERG def people Tonga  
 “This song is popular among the Tongan people.”  
 Lit. “This song is liked by the Tongan people.”

<sup>29</sup> Note, however, that some of the verbs originally have a passive meaning: e.g., *malu* (“to be sheltered”) vs. *malungia* (“to be shaded, overshadowed”).

(8.32) *-Cia* verbs

avi + <i>-Cia</i>	vi (passive)	14 (13)
vt + <i>-Cia</i>	vi (passive)	7(3)
vi + <i>-Cia</i>	vi (passive)	11 (6)
vi + <i>-Cia</i>	vt (passive)	9 (4)
avi + <i>-Cia</i>	vi (passive)	13 (9)
avi + <i>-Cia</i>	avi (passive)	4 (3)
n + <i>-Cia</i>	vi (passive)	9 (5)
n + <i>-Cia</i>	avi (passive)	5 (4)
root + <i>-Cia</i>	vi (passive)	17 (16)
root + <i>-Cia</i>	avi (passive)	1 (1)
root + <i>-Cia</i>	vt (passive)	4 (3)
		94 (67)

In summary, *-Cia* induces neither syntactic passivisation nor lexical passivisation.

If *-Cia* is not a passive morpheme, then, why is it that so many of the *-Cia* verbs have passive meaning? It seems that the Tongan *-Cia* morpheme bears a feature [+affected].

In fact, 87% of the *-Cia* verbs included in the dictionary differ from their stem in terms of the feature [+affected]. Compare, for example, the pairs of words in (8.33) below.

- (8.33) a. *maluuluu* (avi) moist, soft – *maluuluungia* (avi) moistened, softened  
 b. *'ataa'ataa* (avi) to be free, not busy – *'ataa'ataaina* (vi) to be freed, cleared  
 c. *'uha* (vi) to rain – *'uheina* (vi) to be caught in the rain  
 d. *'anuhi* (vi) to spit – *'anuhia* (vt) to mess up by spitting on

The affected entity is the subject if it is an intransitive verb or adjective, and the object if it is a transitive verb. Thus, it seems that Tongan *-Cia* is a morpheme that indicates a semantic feature [+affected] of its argument, rather than a syntactic feature [+passive]. Since affectedness is necessarily associated with the passive voice, *-Cia* verbs are interpreted as passive when translated into another language. However, this passive meaning arises due to the semantic property [+affected] and not because of syntactic passivisation.

To summarise the discussion in this section, we have confirmed that neither the prefix *-ma* nor the suffix *-Cia* in Tongan is qualified as a syntactic passive morpheme as defined by (8.4) above. First, the sole argument of these verbs bears ABS. Second, affixation of *ma-/-Cia* is neither productive nor limited to transitive verbs. In addition, although affixation of *ma-* could be considered a lexical passive in some cases, that of *-Cia* never involves theta-absorption.

#### 8.4 Summary

The preceding discussion has shown that a syntactic passive does not exist in Tongan. We defined syntactic passive as follows: a) affixation of a passive morpheme to a transitive verb in the syntax; b) the external theta-role is assigned to the passive morpheme; and c) the overt argument checks its case feature in [Spec, Agrs]. In Tongan, there are five constructions that are often interpreted as passive when translated in English: a) lexical passive, b) subject-less transitive, c) VOS construction, d) *ma-* verbs and e) *-Cia* verbs. The latter two are particularly of interest, for they involve an affix that could possibly be a passive morpheme.

First, it has been shown that intransitive verbs with passive meaning do not involve a syntactic operation of passivisation: such verbs do not have a corresponding transitive verb. Thus, the passive meaning of these intransitive verbs is specified in the lexicon, and is not a consequence of syntactic passivisation. Secondly, the possessive pronoun test and control test demonstrate that the subject-less transitive as well as the VOS

construction are syntactically transitive. We argue that sentences of these types are often regarded as passive in the literature largely due to the fact that these constructions are used when the focus is on O rather than A. A relevant phenomenon is that passive voice is often used to indicate the emphasis on O in languages in which a passive construction is available. Lacking syntactic passive constructions, Tongan uses other means, namely, the subject-less transitive and VOS order, to express the emphasis on O. We propose that this function of the subject-less transitive and VOS construction in Tongan gives rise to the passive interpretation of these two constructions. In other words, the passive interpretation of these two constructions is due to pragmatic rather than syntactic reasons.

As to the affixes *-Cia* and *ma-*, empirical data suggest that neither of them is a syntactic passive morpheme. The main reason for this conclusion is that neither *-Cia* nor *ma-* affixation is productive. In particular, affixation to a transitive verb, deriving an intransitive verb with passive meaning is extremely limited. This fact in combination with other factors led us to conclude that these are not to be regarded as syntactic passive morphemes. The passive meaning that some *-Cia* and *ma-* verbs have is also determined in the lexicon, not by virtue of syntax. The prefix *ma-* in most cases derives an intransitive stative verb that denotes that the subject is in a state as a result of some event. For example, *ma + hua* (“to spill”) means, “be in a state as a result of spilling”, hence “spilt”. It should be noted that *ma-*verbs cannot imply agency: the state it denotes is generally considered a consequence of an accidental, rather than intentional, event. This property argues for the analysis of *ma-*verbs as an instance of lexical passive as defined above. As for *-Cia*, we propose that it carries the

feature [+affected]. While *ma-* affixation more or less consistently results in an intransitive stative verb, *-Cia* affixation does not systematically produce a certain type of lexical item; it may be an intransitive verb, an adjective, or even a transitive verb. Obviously, the major function of *-Cia* affixation is not to change one type of a predicate into another. This fact prevents us from classifying *-Cia* as a lexical passive morpheme. Furthermore, affixation to a transitive verb to derive an intransitive verb is far from productive. However, a great majority of *-Cia* predicates have passive meaning. We propose that it is due to the fact that passive voice is often necessarily associated with the feature [+affected]. Consequently, we conclude that Tongan *-Cia* is not a passive morpheme but a morpheme bearing the feature [+affected]. In short, affixation of both *ma-* and *-Cia* is a lexical operation.

To conclude, our discussion has confirmed that Tongan does not have a syntactic passive. Instead, Tongan makes use of other means in cases where other languages use a syntactic passive: to indicate the emphasis on O, to indicate affectedness of the patient argument. The subject-less transitive and the VOS construction are used for the former, whereas for the latter, lexical passives are used. While the syntactic passivisation alters the grammatical relation of arguments of a transitive verb, putting the internal argument in the derived subject position, Tongan deals with the situation by using two independent sets of lexical items, one transitive and the other, intransitive. Since Tongan has alternative constructions whose function is equivalent of that of the syntactic passive, a passive construction is not necessary and therefore does not exist. Our conclusion supports the claim that a syntactic passive cannot coexist with an ergative case system, but a lexical passive can.