Passivization, speech act participants, and third-person probes in Jarawara

Puzzle: The language Jarawara (Arawá, spoken in Brazil) exhibits passive-like properties in what is referred to as the 'O-Construction', in contrast to the active 'A-Construction' (Dixon 2004, henceforth D2004; AUTHORS to appear): as can be seen in the transitive examples in (1) (from D2004:418-419), the two differ in several ways, including word order preference; which argument verbal agreement indexes; and prefixation of *hi-* to the verb. Strikingly, however, O-Constructions exhibit varied behavior across different person combinations of its arguments in (among other dimensions): i) the presence of the *hi-* prefix, ii) the choice of controller for T and C agreement, iii) whether there is accusative marking on the internal argument, and iv) whether T and C must be expressed overtly.

(1) a. (Mioto) Watati awa-ka
name(M) name(F) see-$\boxed{\text{DEC.M}}$
'Mioto saw Watati.' A-Construction

b. (Watati) Mioto hi-wa hi-ke
name(F) name(M) hi-see hi-$\boxed{\text{DEC.F}}$
'Mioto saw Watati.' O-Construction

Proposal: We propose that O-Constructions in Jarawara are uniformly 'non-canonical' passives, in that they promote the internal argument of a transitive but still project an external argument (cf. Legate 2021), and that their person-based variation in agreement and overtness stems from the following: i) the T probe in the O-Construction searches specifically for third-person arguments (cf. Grishin 2023 for Algonquian) and causes a derivational crash if it cannot find one (Chomsky 2000, 2001), and ii) speech act participants (henceforth SAPs) in the language need to be licensed via relations with heads in the clausal spine (Kalin 2018 on DOM in Senaya; cf. licensing accounts of PCC effects such as Béjar and Rezac 2003). Our analysis is supported by cross-linguistic evidence within the Arawá family, and our findings support both the view that a subset of marked nominals can require special grammatical licensing and that 'third person' is not the absence of person features altogether.

Data: In Jarawara, T and C agreement shows a two-way alternation: when agreeing with a third-person singular nominal, T and C agreement reflects the gender value of this nominal (either masculine or feminine) but when agreeing with an SAP nominal, agreement is syncretic with the feminine, as illustrated for C (declarative) agreement with intransitives in (2) (from D2004:80) (see Adamson 2024 for an impoverishment-based analysis of this pattern).

(2) a. Wafa tafa-ka
woolly.monkey(M) eat-$\boxed{\text{DEC.M}}$
'The woolly monkey is eating.'

b. {Kerewe / otaa / mee} tafa-ke
sloth(F) / 1PL(EXC) / 3PL eat-$\boxed{\text{DEC.F}}$
'The sloth is eating, we/they are eating.'

A-Constructions have the typical properties of active clauses: both T and C agreement index the external argument (EA), internal argument (IA) proclitics can appear with ACC case, and there are no restrictions on person combinations or on the overtness of T and C (see D2004:436). O-Constructions resemble passives, where agreement with T (bolded in the glosses) and C (boxed in the glosses) indexes the internal argument for combinations of both 3>3 (shown for C agreement in (1-b)) as well as SAP>3 (shown for C and T agreement in (3)). In O-Constructions with 3>3 only, the prefix *hi-* appears (as in (1-b)) and accusative marking on an IA is impossible (see D2004:437).

(3) (kanero$_O$) otaa$_A$ kabe-hiri-ka
mutton(M) 1PL.EXCL eat-**RPe.M**-$\boxed{\text{DEC.M}}$
'We ate some mutton, a fair time ago.' (D2004:439)

While O-Constructions are possible for 3>SAP, they exhibit unusual behavior in that: i) C and T are split in their agreement behavior, with C agreeing with the (SAP) IA while T agrees with the (third-person) EA; ii) unlike in 3>3, the IA bears ACC; and iii) they require both C and T to be overt (see D2004:437). A grammatical example for a 3>SAP O-Construction is shown in (4) (note that the target of C agreement is also realized as a proclitic/prefix on C). O-Constructions with SAP>SAP are ungrammatical altogether (Dixon 2004:436).

(4) inohowe$_A$ o-wa fito ka-ne-hina ama o-ke
alligator(M) 1SG-ACC grab APPLIC-AUX-**IRR.M** BE.AUX 1SG-$\boxed{\text{DEC.F}}$
'The alligator might have grabbed me (if it had been alive).' (D2004:441)

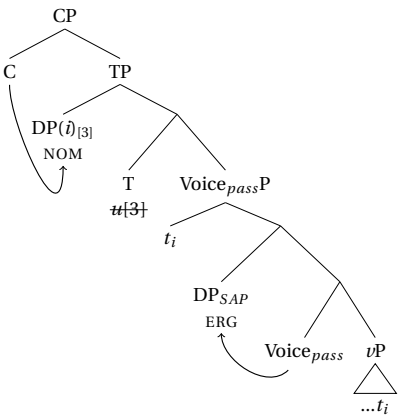
Analysis: Our analysis has three central components. First, we propose that all A-Constructions in Jarawara employ active voice, whereas O-Constructions employ a specific type of 'passive' voice, whose Voice$_{pass}$ head projects an EA, assigns ergative (ERG) case to it, and raises the IA (cf. Oxford

2023 on Algonquian; Aldridge 2012; Legate 2021 on Austronesian). While ERG and NOM case are both realized with null exponence in Jarawara, evidence in line with the ERG analysis comes from the related Arawá language Paumarí, whose O-Constructions mark EAs with a special prefix *a-* (D2004:443).

Second, we propose that T and C both bear ϕ-probes that target the highest argument in the clause (and that lexical DPs are moved by C). However, in O-Constructions, the only T head compatible with Voice$_{pass}$ is one that probes specifically for third-person arguments (cf. Grishin 2023), and if third-person fails to be valued on the probe, the result is a crash (following Kalin's 2018 approach to DOM). This correctly rules out the combination of SAP>SAP with O-Constructions altogether. Cross-linguistic evidence in line with the third-person-specific probe comes from the related Arawá language Kulina, which appears to exhibit omnivorous agreement targeting third-person arguments even in active voice constructions (cf. the description in D2004:444;Dienst 2014:77-78), with verbal agreement for example, being with third person IAs for SAP>3.

Lastly, we propose that SAPs in the language require licensing, which we formulate by adapting Kalin's (2018) case-licensing analysis of DOM. For Jarawara, we propose that SAPs bear an uninterpretable case feature that can only be deleted via agreement with T (nominative), Voice$_{pass}$ (ergative), or v_{acc} – with the accusative variant of v only being merged for convergence (as a 'secondary licensor' in Kalin's terminology). We further propose that SAPs with a topic feature also require licensing via agreement with finite C, a requirement which can capture that 3>SAPs require both T and C to be overt. (We note that overtness of T also correlates with other properties, e.g. whether argument markers on C can be prefixal or proclitic).

The analysis can thus capture the subject-like behavior of EAs in A-Constructions and IAs in O-Constructions with respect to word order and the 'core' verbal agreement pattern for T and C. It can also capture the realization of *hi-* only in 3>3 contexts, if we assume that the T probe is insatiable (in Deal's 2024 sense) and agrees with both third-person arguments; it first agrees with the (raised) IA resulting in gender agreement on T and then with the EA in the inner Spec,VoiceP, resulting in the *hi-* prefix (which is associated with 3rd person marking elsewhere in the language; see AUTHORS). See a simplified schematic and partial derivation of a SAP>3 O-Construction like (3) in the tree.



Our analysis also correctly derives the split agreement pattern for 3>SAP: the IA is assigned accusative and raises; T ignores this SAP IA because it is specified to search for a third-person argument and instead agrees with the EA; C, however, agrees with the highest argument, namely the SAP IA. If instead, the accusative v was not merged, the derivation would crash because T in the passive can only agree with third-person arguments, so the SAP would be unlicensed. The licensing analysis also captures the fact that 3>SAP requires overt T and C as the SAP IA needs to be topic-licensed via finite C.

Finally, the analysis also captures case assignment patterns to third-person plural IAs in A-Constructions vs. O-Constructions. Assuming a subset of 3PL arguments require case-licensing, this is accomplished via: NOM through T if they are EAs in active A-Constructions; ACC through v_{acc} if they are IAs in A-Constructions; ERG through Voice$_{pass}$ if they are EAs in O-Constructions, and NOM T if they are the IAs of O-Constructions (the secondary v_{acc} licensor cannot be merged because of the availability of NOM, deriving the ban on accusative marking for third-person IAs).

Conclusion: In addition to capturing many properties of A- and O-Constructions in Jarawara, our licensing account may also be extended to account for valency restrictions in causative and applicative environments in the language. If on the right track, our results support the view that third-person is not the total absence of person features (e.g. Nevins 2011; Grishin 2023) and can even be specified on probes, and that a lack of agreement with nominals of a certain type can cause derivational crashes.

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