

From a Functional Node to the Passive Construction¹

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Abstract

By investigating the passive structures in Persian using a qualitative method in terms of the theory of Dynamic Anti-symmetry (hence, DAS) (Moro, 2000), we intended to examine the factors which trigger passive sentences; the study was done in a unified and different way. A passive sentence is a kind of unaccusative sentence which has an explicit/implicit external theta role as an agent; it's the most eminent distinction between unaccusative and passive structure. Having studied the literatures, we understood that none of those previous studies, except Karimi & Osmani (2016), had explored the external theta role; they have considered an essential role for the verb /ʃodæn/ (to become) in passive structures, though. These facts persuaded the researcher to scrutinize the passive structure and provide an explanation for the presence of the agent and study the role of verb /ʃodæn/ (to become) in passive sentences. Meanwhile, according to DAS, we took movement as a symmetry

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breaking process, but not a process through which uninterpretable features can be checked.

We indicated that active and passive structures are alike. In other words, in both types of sentences we observed that in line with UTAH and Collins (2005), a DP, but not a by-phrase, merges (as an external argument) with a *v* in Spec-*v*P and construct a *v*P and another DP merges as the complement of this *v*P. The first DP carries the agent theta role and the second one carries a theme theta role. This fact justifies the presence of an agent in passive sentences. In passive structure, this *v*P then merges with a by-phrase, then this by-phrase merges with a Voice Phrase (hence, VoP) which is the result of the hierarchy of projection; this VoP is assumed to bear the passive feature and values the [u-infl.] feature of the light verb as passive. This light verb cannot value its complement as accusative; therefore, the [u-case] feature of the complement of the light verb is valued as nominative through the agreement with tensed passive (Voice) node and then, the complement can move to Spec-TP according to the principles of DAS. This *v*P will be spelled out as the past participle unless the VoP is not filled by verbs such as "/ʃodæn/, /gæʃtæn/, /amædæn/ and /ræftæn/".

Although previous studies have considered the verb /ʃodæn/ (to become) as a trigger for passive, we showed that according to Bateni (1969), Dabirmoghadam (1985) and Mansouri (2010) this verb is not the only verb which can appear in passive sentences and since there is no trace of such a verb in passive structures in Old and Middle Persian, this is crystal clear that /ʃodæn/ (to become) by no means triggers passive sentences, rather this verb is considered as a phonological representation of a Voice node bearing the passive feature. Therefore, this verb can be assumed neither a light verb nor an auxiliary one but something completely different (Bateni, 1969). According to the results of this study we argued that there is no such

a structure as passive, but it is the emergent property of a functional node called Voice node.

Keywords: passive, voice node, functional node, dynamic antisymmetry, hierarchy of projection, by-phrase, verb /ʃodæn/, UTAH