Towards a Null Theory of the Passive

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Institut für Linguistik
Gereon Müller
gereon.mueller@uni-leipzig.de
http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~muellerg

(1) Questions:
   a. What verbs may passivize? (none, transitives only, transitives and some intransitives, all verbs)
   b. Are there subjectless (impersonal) passives? (none, intransitives only, all verbs)
   c. Can there be an agent phrase? (none, transitives only, transitives and some intransitives, all verbs with at least one θ-role)
   d. Is lexical case preserved under passivization? (yes, no)
   e. In ditransitives, which object passivizes? (highest, lower)
   f. Do passives stack (yes, no)

(2) Generalizations:
   a. If a language has impersonal passives of transitives, it has (impersonal) passives of intransitives.
   b. If a language has passives of intransitives, it has passives of transitives.
   c. If a language has impersonal actives, its passives can be impersonal, but not conversely.
   d. If verbs with sentential objects can be passivized, then verbs with lexical NP objects can be passivized.
   e. If a language’s passives can have oblique subjects, so can its actives, and conversely.
   f. If a language’s passives can have expletive subjects, so can its actives, and conversely.
   g. If a language’s passives can passivize, so can its intransitives.
   h. If a language has monoclausal passives, they are morphologically marked.
   i. If a language has passives with agent phrases, these are optional.
   j. If a particular type of agent phrase can occur with at least some kinds of nominals, then it can occur with at least some kinds of passives, and conversely.

(3) Optimality-Theoretic Constraints:
   a. Parse:
The input must be realized. (: Avoid empty outputs/null parses.)
   b. Stay:
The subject bears the most prominent θ-role.

   c. EPP:
   A sentence must have a thematic subject.
   d. Subj/Nom:
   A subject must have nominative case.
   e. *Expl:
   Expletives are prohibited. (a DEP faithfulness constraint)
   f. MaxCase:
   Lexical case must be realized.

(4) Core constructions
   a. Yesterday was danced (by John).
   b. John was kissed (by Mary).
   c. It was kissed John (by Mary).
   d. Ø

(5) Lexical Case constructions
   a. Mary thanked John_{lex}.
      (i) John_{lex} was thanked.
      (ii) John was thanked.
   b. Mary_{lex} saw John.
      (i) John was thanked.
      (ii) John_{lex} was thanked.

(6) Simple rankings:
   a. Parse ≫ EPP ≫ STAY:
   Passive of transitive V with object promotion; passive of intransitive V
   (Latin, German, Sanskrit, Lithuanian)
   b. Parse ≫ STAY ≫ EPP:
   Passive of transitive V without object promotion; passive of intransitive V
   (Uto, Hindi, Finnish)
   c. STAY ≫ Parse ≫ EPP:
   same as (6-b)
   d. EPP ≫ Parse ≫ STAY:
   Passive of transitive V with object promotion; no passive of intransitive V
   (Russian, Modern Greek)
   e. EPP ≫ STAY ≫ Parse:
   no passive
   f. STAY ≫ EPP ≫ Parse:
   no passive