Passive as Object Promotion: Relational Grammar

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1. Background

Observation:

- In all the approaches discussed so far in the course (lexical as well as syntactic), subject demotion has been identified as the core property of passive (either because there is a lexical or syntactic (cf. Bruening’s analysis) rule of external argument reduction, or because the external argument cannot be realized as a proper, canonical syntactic DP argument (it shows up as an inflectional head, or as an empty category, or, in Collins’ case, as a DP governed by P).

- In contrast, the Relational Grammar approaches identifies object promotion (advancement) as the core property of passive.

2. Passive in Relational Grammar (Perlmutter & Postal (1983))

Claims:

1. Passive cannot be characterized in terms of word order.
2. Passive cannot be characterized in terms of case.
3. Passive cannot be characterized in terms of verbal morphology.
4. Passive can and should be characterized in terms of grammatical relation changing; "subject" and "direct object", "indirect object" are primitive notions of grammar.

(1) Two universals:

a. A direct object of an active clause is the (superficial) subject of the ‘corresponding’ passive.

b. The subject of an active clause is neither the (superficial) subject nor the (superficial) direct object of the ‘corresponding’ passive.

(2) Relational Grammar, Concepts and Terminology:

a. Relational Network (RN): structure of clauses (and sentences); consists of

(i) Node: linguistic element (of all sorts)
(ii) Relational Sign: encoding of grammatical relations: 1 (subject relation), 2 (direct object), 3 (indirect object)
(iii) Coordinate: encoding of levels where relations hold

b. Arc: ordered pair of nodes (<dependent,governor>); 1 relational sign; nonnull sequence of coordinates. E.g.:

[2 <45,589> (c1, c2]]

Node 45 bears the direct object relation to the clause node 589 at the c1 and c2 levels.

c. Stratum level that arcs belong to (identified by coordinates)

Note:
(i) P - predicate relation
(ii) Cho - chômeur relation, see below.

(3) Passive by object promotion:

Passive is a rule that sanctions the existence of a 1-arc for a nominal Na in stratum ck+1 of a clause node C, where Na heads a 2-arc in stratum Ck of C, and where there is some nominal Np which heads a 1-arc in stratum Ck.

(4) Interacting constraints:

a. Stratal Uniqueness Law:

Let n be a variable ranging over the set of relational signs for term relations, let c be a single arbitrary coordinate, let c, c0, etc. be variables over sequences of coordinates (which may be null), and let a, b, d be variables over nodes.

Then, if n <a,b> (c,c0,c0) and n <d,b> (c0,c,c) are both arcs in some RN, a − d.

b. Chômeur Condition:

If an RN, Q, contains the distinct arcs n <a,b> (c,c0,c0); n <d,b> (c0,c,c) where d ≠ a, then Q contains the arc [ Cho <a,b> (c+c,c)]

c. Motivated Chômeur Law:

Only the Chômeur Condition can sanction the chômeur relation.

Open problems:

- Impersonal passives: (Something needs to advance from 2 to 1 here but it is unclear what. Expletives, which may potentially also be empty, are an option.)

- Passives with 3-to-1 advancements (Sue was given a watch.)
• Pseudopassives. (That bed had been slept in.)

Outlook:
The 1 Advancement Exclusiveness Law (Perlmutter & Postal (1984)) ensures that unaccusatives (which, by assumption, already involve 2-to-1 advancement) cannot undergo passivization.

(5) 1 Advancement Exclusiveness Law:
There can at most be one advancement to 1 per clause.

3. Passive in GPSG (Gazdar et al (1985))

Note:
Like the Relational Grammar account (and unlike virtually all the other accounts we have encountered in class so far), the analysis developed by Gazdar, Klein, Pullum & Sag (1985) in Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar (GPSG) identifies object promotion as the core property of passive, not subject deletion.

(6) ID Rules:
a. VP $\rightarrow$ H[2], NP
b. VP $\rightarrow$ H[3], NP, PP[lo]

(7) LP Statements:
a. [SUBCAT] $\prec$ ~ [SUBCAT]
b. [+N] $\prec$ P2 $\prec$ V2

(8) Passive Metarule:
VP $\rightarrow$ W, NP

\[ \downarrow \]

VP[PAS] $\rightarrow$ W, (PP[lb])

(9) Passive Auxiliary:
VP[+AUX] $\rightarrow$ H[7], XP[+PRD]

(10) Feature Co-Occurrence Restriction:
([+PRD & [VFORM]]) $\supset$ ([PAS] $\lor$ [PRP])

(11) Plus: Lexical Rule for Passive Form Interpretation (p. 219)
