

On the functions of the passive suffix **-we* in Vogul and Finnish*

0. In the Finno-Ugrian proto-language there was a derivational suffix **-we* or **-w*. There is some reason to assume that it was only deverbal, so it was suffixed to verbs, not nouns, and had a passive meaning. It has representatives in several modern Finno-Ugrian languages: In Vogul it has become a real passive suffix of the verbal paradigm. For example the same kind of passive constructions as in the well known Indo-European languages e.g. the passive voice in Latin or English can be formed with it. In other Finno-Ugrian languages the **-we*-suffix of the proto-language has become a derivational element. This has happened in Hungarian, where the suffix is not left as an independent element, but is combined with other derivational suffixes, and in Mordvin, Lappish and Baltic-Finnic languages.¹

Among the representatives of the **-we*-suffix of the proto-language I have studied semantically more precisely and systematically two of these: the Vogul passive system and the Finnish - to some extent Baltic-Finnic - derivational element *U*. I have used case grammar in the semantic analysis, in which the nominal phrases of the sentence each have their own semantic roles. These are for example Agentive, a conscious initiator of an action, Goal, that is affected by the Agentive, Neutral that is the subject of a sentence lacking Agentive, Recipient, Benefactive and Locative.²

The two systems - the Vogul passive and the Finnish derivations in *U* - seem to have a common purely passive meaning, that is, the main function of the suffix is to emphasize the non-agentivity of the subject of the sentence. From this basic meaning both languages - Vogul on the one hand and Finnish on the other - have developed further meanings, each in its own direction.

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1. In Vogul the passive suffix is left in the form *-we-*. The Vogul passive voice can be divided semantically - to some extent also syntactically - into two main types, the old and the new type. The old type can be further divided into subtypes.

1.1. The old type, type 1) of the Vogul passive voice is a personal passive. In this type the passive suffix functions as a derivational element and the verb has personal endings. So the verb agrees in person and number with the subject of the sentence. In the sentence there is both a subject and a predicate, and the passive suffix in the predicate expresses the non-agentivity of the subject.

Type 1) can be divided into two subtypes: the agentive type and the non-agentive type. This division, too, is partly semantic, partly syntactic. In the Vogul passive sentence the Agentive, the initiator of the action, can be referred to with the agent of the surface structure. The agent can also be demoted from the surface structure. The division into the agentive type and non-agentive type is not made on the basis of the surface structure but the deep structure. Some of the situations that are expressed by the passive voice in Vogul truly have an Agentive both in the deep and surface structure or at least the deep structure of the sentence. But many situations do not have an Agentive at all.

1.1.1. Many kinds of situations can be expressed with the agentive-type of the Vogul passive voice type 1), more than for example with the English passive voice. This is possible because the Vogul passive voice - as is well known - can be formed not only with transitive but also with intransitive verbs. This does not mean, though, that this type of passive can be formed with any verb; the most usual intransitive verbs in the Vogul passive sentences are *ji-*, *ju-* and *joχt-* 'come' and some other verbs expressing motion in some direction. This is the case at least in the folklore-texts of Artturi Kannisto, which I have examined in most detail. When these verbs are used to form passive sentences, the semantic role of the subject is Locative, e.g.

taw χōntən joχtawes

'he was attacked by a herd'

The most usual case is that in which the subject of a passive sentence has the semantic role of Goal. A subject can be seen as Goal only when there is an Agentive, either in the surface structure as an agent or in the

deep structure as a demoted agent. The Agentive is necessary because in my classification it is not possible for there to be a Goal, if there is no Agentive, whose action is aimed at it. The Goal is typically the object of the corresponding active sentence, so this type is very similar to, for example, the English passive voice.

As in English, the Recipient can also occur as the subject of a passive sentence in Vogul, when the verb is ditransitive, i.e. a verb which has both a so-called direct and indirect object. In this case the subject of a passive sentence can be either of these two. This is based on the fact that a ditransitive active sentence can be expressed in two ways: either the Goal or the Recipient as the object. For example from the active sentence

piy tawēn kniga miste or piy tawe knigal miste
 (adv) (obj) (obj) (adv)

'the boy gave the book to him/the boy gave him the book'

The passive sentence can be formed respectively to

kniga (Goal) tawēn piyən majwes or Taw (Rec) piyən knigal
 majwes

'the book was given to him/he was given the book by the
 boy'

Also verbs that have a Benefactive or Locative as their "indirect object" can be used ditransitively in Vogul. So there can be a constituent in the sentence that gets some kind of benefit from the action, and this constituent can occur as the subject of a passive sentence like

am χāpəl wārwes^Um

'they (he, somebody) made a boat for me'

Also the place in which something is thrown, pushed etc. can occur as a Locative-subject of a passive sentence, e.g.

am ēlīpāl^Um tujtəl rawtawe

they throw snow (to the place) in front of me

1.1.2. The second subtype of the type 1) of the Vogul passive voice is the non-agentive type. I call this type automative.³ The automative is a semantic category, which can be expressed both in the active and passive voice. The automative sentences express situations in which the Agentive is

lacking from both the deep and surface structure, that is, something is happening "automatically", without a controlling initiator.

The automative type of passive also seems to be an old type in Vogul. These passive sentences are usually agentless, but sometimes there can be an agent in the surface structure, which has the semantic role of Force, e.g.

χōtale tuln laptotylawe

'the sun is hidden by a cloud'

The semantic role of the subject is Neutral; without an Agentive it cannot be a Goal.

There is a group, a subgroup of automative expressions, in which only the passive voice can be used. These are semantically automative verbs, which cannot be inflected without the passive suffix. The most typical verbs of this kind are different descriptive and onomatopoeic verbs and especially some verbs denoting uncontrolled situations like e.g. *ojawe-* 'to sleep, to fall asleep'.

1.2. The second, newer type of the Vogul passive voice is a unipersonal passive, which semantically is, in fact, no passive at all. This is the same kind of passive as the Finnish so-called passive with the suffix *-TA-* and the same type as the Estonian passive in *-kse*. It differs semantically from the type 1)-passive by expressing the indefiniteness of the Agentive, while in the type 1) the non-agentivity of the subject is strongly emphasized. In Vogul this type is sometimes used in the modern literary language; in the old texts of Kannisto it is almost unknown. The thing that makes this type syntactically different from the old type is the fact that the subject and the predicate do not agree in number (or person). This can be seen in such sentences in which the subject has the plural ending *-t* and the predicate is in the 3rd person singular form. So the "subject" of the sentence is not the subject but the object as also in the Finnish *TA*-passive sentences.

In the old texts the only representatives of this type are such sentences in which there is only the predicate with its optional constituents, e.g.

toχ potərtawes

'so they spoke' or

ās χosit minawe

'(you) go on the river Ob'

The sentences have no subject, and the verb has the personal ending of 3rd person singular, that is, a zero suffix. The same situation obtains in the modern language example

pes porat ekwat elmholasiy at lovintaves

'they didn't count women as human beings'⁴

where the personal ending is that of the 3rd person singular and the *ekwat* 'women' has the plural suffix *-t*, so it is not the subject but the object and the sentence does not have a grammatical subject at all. This unipersonal passive can easily develop from the personal passive, even though they are semantically quite different. In the Vogul literary language the subject and the object do not differ in form. That makes it possible to understand the original subject as the object - which it would be in the corresponding active sentence - and similarly the passive suffix takes the function of expressing the indefiniteness of the Agentive instead of the non-agentivity of the original subject.

2. The Finnish verbal derivatives in *-U-* have not created a personal passive voice system like the *-we-* in Vogul. There are far more restrictions to the use of the derivational element *-U-* in Finnish than for the passive voice in Vogul, where almost every verb can be inflected at least in the unipersonal passive. The *U* element is in Finnish, however, common, because it has combined with other derivational elements to build complex suffixes. I have studied the simple *U* suffix in Finnish, its semantics and combinational restrictions. Even though the verbal derivations with *-U-* often look very much like personal passive expressions, there are two main points, which do not support this kind of interpretation: The first is that the suffix cannot be joined to all transitive verbs and the second that an agent of the surface structure is not possible.

2.1. There are two semantic types of the Finnish derivations in *U*, of which the first may be called the old and the second the new type. Type 1), which can be called the automative-passive type, is somewhat similar to the Vogul passive type 1), only it is syntactically more restricted. These types of verbs have a Neutral or Goal as their subject. The distinction between automative and passive sentences is parallel with the distinction of Neutral and Goal subject. The subject has the semantic role of Neutral in the auto-

mative sentences that denote situations in which something happens without an Agentive, a controller. There is some reason to assume that the automative was the basic function of the Finnish derivations in *U*, at least at some period. Even in the modern language the *U* suffix gives the verb a meaning, which refers to the lack of the Agentive, that is, we use derivations in *U* when we want to express situations where something happens "automatically". The basic automative function of the suffix *U* can also be seen from the fact that the suffix is not easily joined to verbs, which need an Agentive as their subject in the active sentence, i.e. without the derivational element. In fact, there are around 10 verbs which need both an Agentive and allow the passive derivation with *-U-*. But there are several dozen agentive verbs which do not allow this derivation.⁵ The *U* suffix is mainly connected with verbs that have an uncontrolled, non-agentive Force as their subject.

The automative meaning is very close to the passive, where the subject has the semantic role of Goal. In the case of derivations in *U* with a passive meaning, the verb usually allows the Agentive as its subject, and it can be concluded from the context that there is an Agentive in the deep structure of the sentence, even though an overt agent is not possible. It can, however, be heard in the modern spoken language in expressions like

se hoituu minulta

'it will be taken care of by me'

but normally an agent in the surface structure does not belong to the system of derivations in *U*.

Type 1) as a whole - both the automative and the passive function - has the central meaning of expressing the non-agentivity of the subject, as was the case with type 1) of the Vogul passive voice.

2.2. Type 2), the new type of the Finnish *U*-derivations is a reflexive type. In a reflexive sentence the subject of the sentence has the semantic role of Agentive both in the deep and surface structure, so it expresses a situation, in which the subject, the Agentive is doing something to himself.

The reflexive meaning with the derivations in *U* is quite rare, even though it has given its name to the whole group of derivations in *U*, which are usually called reflexive verbs. A reflexive meaning can easily develop

from the personal passive on syntactic grounds. Both the passive (or automative) and reflexive are typically expressed by intransitive verbs. So when the passive-automative suffix makes the transitive verb intransitive, i.e. unable to take an object, this syntactic feature common to the passive and reflexive can easily bring a reflexive meaning to a passive or automative verb.

3. The old types in Vogul and Finnish are semantically quite close to each other, the only distinction being the clear automative meaning of the Finnish derivations in *U*. The new types of both languages have their origin in this common type 1), but the semantic development has moved in different directions. In Vogul, type 1) without an overt agent has caused a move - first semantic, then also syntactic - to type 2), in which the central information is indefiniteness and lack of the Agentive.

In Finnish, type 1), in which intransitivity is strongly emphasized, has caused the suffix to be joined to agentive verbs, which in the old type was very uncommon, and here the suffix has got a reflexive meaning. This is because reflexivity is also highly intransitive.

Why then has the semantic development gone in these directions in these languages? Vogul has an independent reflexive suffix *-χat-*; there is less ground for the combination of passive and reflexive, because the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs in Vogul is not so clear as e.g. in Finnish, so the syntactic function of intransitivity is not so important. In Finnish for its part, the expression of the indefinite Agentive has developed from another passive construction, the *TA*-passive, which has its origin in the causative suffix *-t-*. The causative suffix, more than e.g. the passive-automative *-U-*, has emphasized the agentivity, work of the latent subject.

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NOTES

- 1 Toivo Lehtisalo: Über die primären ururalischen Ableitungssuffixe. MSFOu 72. Helsinki 1936.
Erkki Itkonen: Über die suffiksalen Labialvokale im Lappischen und Ostseefinnischen. Scandinavica et Fenno-ugrica. Studier tillägnade Björn Collinder den 22. juli 1954. Stockholm.
- 2 The cases are mainly from the case grammar of Charles Fillmore, see Bach & Harms (ed.): Universals in linguistic theory. New York 1968. The Neutral-case I have taken into this function myself, for further information see Virittäjä 1985: 3.
- 3 About the term "automotive" for further information see Virittäjä 1985: 3.
- 4 Tšernetsov: Lovintane mayas kniga. Moskva 1934 (side 76).
- 5 I have counted the simple derivations in *U* that are derived from bisyllabic stems, for further information see Virittäjä 1985: 3.