

Language and Mind
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Module - 07
Lecture - 33
Sentence
Passivization and NP Movement

We are looking at sentences, and we are looking at sentences to understand underlying patterns of language. Underlying patterns help us understand relationship between language and mind. And while looking at sentences, we have moved to a point where we are looking at certain operations taking place and certain operations that are part of underlying patterns of language; and they are taking place at a different level of representation. They are also called different levels of representation in mind. One of the things that we have seen of that type is displacement. Displacement was the phenomenon where one element from one position in a sentence moves to another. Such a thing happens in language with specific motivations and proper evidence. That we have seen so far.

We are looking at one more such phenomenon, one more evidence, in support of displacement of elements from one position to another, and at this time this is called passivization. That is, we are taking examples from passivization to understand displacement. Earlier, we have looked at displacement in terms of questions. Now to understand displacement with one more evidence, let us look at an example of passivization; that is, examples of... Let us first understand examples of passive sentences.

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Passives

- Sri Lanka beat India in the T20 World cup final.
- India were beaten in the T20 World Cup final (by Sri Lanka).

- Police caught the thief.
- Thief was caught.

Look at these sentences. Sri Lanka beat India in the T20 World cup final. The passive sentence is - India were beaten in the T20 World cup final. India were beaten in the T20 World cup final. Please look at the distinction between the two sentences. Sri Lanka beat India in the T20 World cup final. This is the active sentence. The passive one is - India were beaten in the T20 World cup final. Where I am trying to draw your attention is – ‘by Sri Lanka’ is not necessarily mentioned. And even if we do in a sentence that is considered as a PP, it comes with the help of a preposition.

‘Police caught the thief’ - in the second sentence, to look at underlying patterns, we are looking at one more evidence from passivization in support of displacement; particularly movement of one NP from one position in a sentence to another. We have looked at one such example of displacement in terms of question words. That is, when we question sentence, when we are questioning a certain... when we question a particular element in a sentence, we see that the element in the question drops and in place of that we have another element outside IP. So, that gives us the structural evidence in support of movement of one element in a sentence to another.

And today we are looking at passivization and an understanding of passive sentences will help us understand how an element moves from one position to the other as an evidence of displacement. And in such a case, in such a scenario, we will also examine motivation for this type of displacement in natural language and subsequently, we will try to

understand that how such a thing at another level of mental representation takes place underlyingly in a sentence for us to understand how displacement works and how human mind finds out underlying patterns in language.

Let us look at two examples of each: active sentences and passive sentences. ‘Sri Lanka beat India in T20 World cup final’ - this is an active sentence; where ‘Sri Lanka’ is the subject of the sentence, ‘beat’ is the verb and ‘India’ is the object of the sentence, and ‘T20 World cup final’ is another one. In the passive counterpart, we see – ‘India were beaten in T20 World cup final’. If we want to put an information, we can say – ‘by Sri Lanka’; however, that is not a required element; preceded by a post... preceded by a preposition that can be dropped or that gets the status of an adjunct in a sentence in passive. This has got consequences and we will look at it little later.

The second example - exactly the same thing, same process, repeating; ‘Police caught the thief’. The passive one – ‘Thief was caught’. So, we do not need to repeat ‘police’. In other words, what we see as the subject of the sentence in an active sentence, in the passive sentence, that whole element somehow becomes insignificant and sometimes it appears as an adjunct, and sometimes it is not even required. That is a significant point, significant differences at the level of observation that we can see between active and passive.

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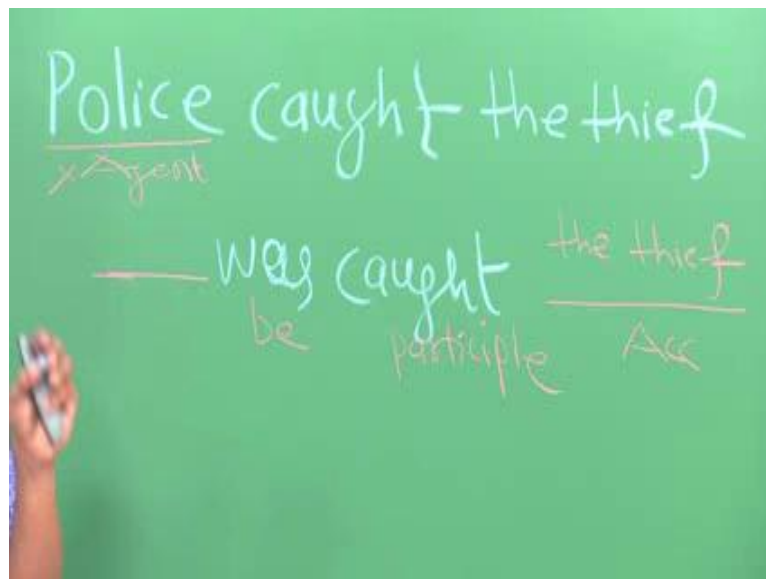
Passive Morphology

- In English passive verbs are - be + participle.
- They do not allow an NP with a theta role in subject position.
- They do not assign accusative case to their complements.

To understand how the morphology part of passive sentences operate, we take an example from English to see, where we see that the passive verbs are actually verb 'be' plus participle form of the verb; verb 'be' and the participle form of the verb. So, take the example of again, the part of 'beaten' and 'caught'. So, when we say 'beaten', look at the passive sentence. We are saying – 'India were beaten'; 'were' as part of 'be' and 'beaten' is participle form. 'The thief was caught' – 'was' as an example of verb 'be' and 'caught' as an example of past participle. So, this is the structure that is going to be available in English sentences all along, and that is an important part of passive morphology.

What happens because of this is we find that such a combination of verb, such a combination does not allow an NP with a theta role in the subject position. Therefore, we see the suppression of the subject elements like 'Sri Lanka' in the first sentence, and 'police' in the other one. The verb with 'be plus participle' also does not assign accusative case to their complements. So, it is a very interesting phenomenon.

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What happens is very simple. So, 'Police caught the thief'. What we are saying, in the passive what happens is, we get the verb like this – 'was caught', and what we see is, this is an example of verb 'be' and this is an example of participle. The feature of this verb is such that it does not allow a subject with... it does not allow a NP with the theta role. Please understand on the basis of our understanding of underlying patterns of sentences

so far that we have seen, this is an agent; an agent is the thematic role assigned to this NP. So in a passive sentence, this is not going to be allowed here. Therefore, this is dropped or becomes an adjunct at the end of the sentence. And what we see as a consequence... because this is the central thing of the passive sentence; so, what this does is this also does not have the capacity to assign accusative case to its complements. Now this is the motivation for displacement. What we find that... so, when we... What is the object of the verb here – ‘the thief’. Now this NP is not going to be allowed here, because this is not going to be case assigned by the passive verb.

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Features of Passives

- Let's look at the verb morphology. Passive verb morphology gets affected. It becomes as follows:
 - be + past participle
- The external theta role is suspended as passive verbs do not assign theta roles. Therefore, the agent NP can be dropped.
- The passive verb does not assign case (structurally) to the internal argument of the verb. For passive verbs the capacity to assign case is ceased.

So, what we see as features of passive as you see on the screen, that the passive verb morphology gets affected and compared to the active sentence, this is what we get as passive verb. This does not allow an external theta role or an element; this cannot assign it theta role; at the same time, it does not allow an NP that carries a theta role here. Similarly, it cannot assign, it cannot assign structural case or accusative case structurally to the complement. This creates a very strange situation for us.


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Consequences of Passivization

- Let's look at the S-structure and D-structure of a passive sentence.
- S-structure
 - [IP Sri Lanka beat India]
 - Sri Lanka = Agent, Subject (Spec, IP)
 - Beat = Verb + Transitive
 - India = Internal argument/object
 - Gets objective case structurally from the verb *beat*.

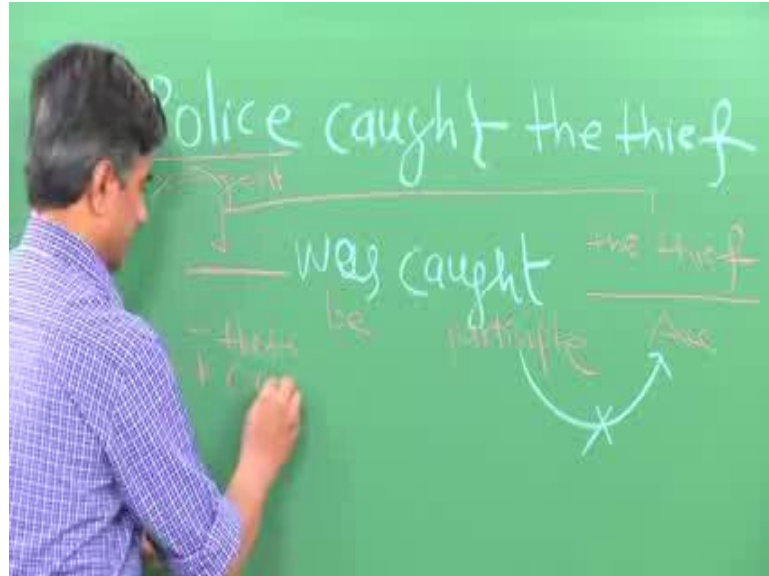
So, what we see... again, let us look at... look at the screen and try to understand this thing carefully with the sentence 'Sri Lanka beat India'. 'Sri Lanka' has the theta role agent, it is the subject of the sentence; 'beat' is the verb, it is a transitive verb; 'India' is an internal argument of the verb 'beat', is an object - direct object of the verb; gets objective case structurally from the verb 'beat'. Everything is in place. The subject 'Sri Lanka' gets nominative case from the finite IP and the object gets accusative case structurally from the verb 'beat'; that is, verb is 'beat' and the object is 'India'; everything is taken care of.

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- D-Structure
 - [Spec, IP ----- were beaten India (by Sri Lanka)]
 - Spec, IP (Sri Lanka) does not remain an agent, therefore, it can be dropped or can be retained in a sentence as an adjunct - 'by India'.
 - Spec, NP is therefore unoccupied/vacant.
 - The passive morphology on the verb [be+en (participle)] cannot assign accusative case to the internal argument, *India*.
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As a consequence of this what we find is, in the passive verb, we have the spec of IP position empty, and we find this thing not getting case, because it is not allowed.

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So, what we see that this is case less and this position is empty. This is the motivation of movement of an NP in the passives. So, what we find eventually is, this NP moves to this position and acquires case in this position because this position is minus theta position, but plus case position. So, the finiteness assigns case to the NP 'the thief' which did not have a case in the beginning, in a passive sentence.

And thus we see a very compelling reason for a movement, for a displacement, and this becomes an evidence for displacement in natural languages. Sentences are not allowed to have an NP without cases. We cannot have an NP without case in a sentence; therefore, a case less... because the case less NP is not permitted, it becomes the motivation; that becomes the motivation for an NP, for the displacement of an NP in a different position. And luckily in this situation, we find the spec of IP is available for such a movement. This movement is within IP, compelled by case filter and therefore, we get the structure preserved.

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Case Filter

- No NP in a sentence is allowed with a proper case.
- Following Case Filter, the D-structure of a passive results ungrammaticality.

So, following the case filter, the D-structure of passive results into ungrammaticality, because it cannot allow, at the deep structure it cannot allow an NP without a case here. I am repeating this thing again and again for you to see the motivation for displacement in natural languages, and this displacement happens at the deeper structure of the underlying patterns, and it is figured out by human mind as part of its normal acquisition of patterns.

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Solution ...

- The un-case-marked NP moves to the Spec, IP position.
- In this position, it receives case from Infl.
- Since it was already theta-marked in the internal argument position as an object, it does not require another theta role.
- Movement of an NP becomes a solution for preserving this structure.

And we get everything in place once the movement takes place, and therefore we say movement, displacement of elements from one position to the other in natural languages is a required phenomenon; and such a displacement happens at a deeper level of

representation; helps us understand a level further deep from where we understand patterns of languages, from where human mind internalizes patterns underlying language.

This is an example of movement. So we have seen evidence of displacement; at the same time, motivation for such a displacement; and then the examples of displacement; also how phrasal structure takes care of this displacement. Thus we reach to the conclusion that displacement is an internal part of structure preservation of natural languages.

Thank you.