

Basic of Language Science
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Lecture 34
Displacement of Noun Phrases in Passive Constructions

We are looking at movement these days, let us take a moment and backtrack and contextualize what we are looking at. We are looking at abstract principles of language, we are looking at the principles that became the foundation for this theoretical framework which is known as principles and parameters and it goes without saying the moment we start talking about, principles and parameters and abstract rules and underlying patterns stuffs like them are part of I language automatically.

So, let us keep these terms in mind. As a fresh reminder that we are looking at the I language, we are looking at deep structure, we are looking at abstract principles, we are looking at how these principles operate in human mind, we are also trying to look at possibly and these are the principles which operate, when we are learning language.

When we say we are acquiring language, these are the underlying principles which get triggered with the help of natural input from the immediate environment. So, these are the broader things that we need to keep in mind, while looking at principles of the kinds that we are looking at. Now, coming back to the idea of movement, what is it that we are looking at in the idea of movement?

There are two parts of that, first how do we, how do we believe that even for the matter of abstract representation even at the level of underlying representation, how do we believe that we are compelled to look at, what we call, what we can call displacement, what we can call movement. We have seen some examples of that, how is it that we must believe and believe probably is not the right word, we must see the reasons behind movement and then once the reasons are apparent, we have seen some examples of them.

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So far ...

- We have looked at the evidence and motivations for movement?
- Wh-movement?

Questions

- Passivization
- What is NP-movement?



So, when we see such examples, we are looking at evidence and motivations together. We have already looked at one particular kind of evidence, which is Wh-movement. Now, we are going to look at one more evidence of that type, which is called, which comes from that particular structure in natural language called passivization and this becomes an example of NP movement.

Now, keep in mind that Wh-movement is also an example of NP movement, what Wh-words eventually question in a question sentence in language like English is a noun phrase. So, when we are moving the Wh-phrase to the specifier position of a CP in a way that is also an example of NP movement.

But with the help of passivization, we are going to see some examples of actual NP movement that is movement of an element not in the form of Wh-questions, movement of an NP directly from one position to the other position, that is what we will look at and again, before we say or while we are seeing a particular noun phrase moves from one position to the other position, there must be a compelling reason for that.

So, we are going to look at both of them together. So, before that, let us look at this question of passivization or passives. Have you heard this word before passives? Everybody must have heard. Can someone give me an example of a passive sentence? Or for that matter both? Anytime we talk about passives what comes to our mind is active, does it. So, can you give an example of both an active sentence and a passive sentence?

Student: He drove the car, active sentence.

Professor: He drove the car, let us say Hariprasad drove the car is an example of an active sentence, hold on before you give the example of a passive sentence, what makes it active and why do we call it active in the sense that, hold on understand the question fully. What is the meaning of the word active in this sentence or in which sense do we understand the term active?

Student: The subject is doing the action, then it is active.

Professor: The subject is doing the action, hold on here, go ahead.

Student: Active the subject is not doing the action then it is passive.

Professor: Absolutely correct you understand this thing. So, the example of the passive sentence will be.

Student: The car was driven by him.

Professor: By him, by Hariprasad, understand this very, very nice example, very precise example. Hariprasad drove the car. Bring in your mind, the questions that we discussed, when we were talking about thematic relations, remember thematic relations. While discussing thematic relations, we talked about agents and patients and themes that we discussed before talking about cases.

Though there is no one to one relationship between thematic relations and cases. Still there are, let us not get there, let us not mix them together. What we said about thematic relations was it does not seem to be completely syntactic phenomena, which is to say it brings in certain semantic notions in it, that is a syntactic phenomenon is the subject and object.

Therefore, we call them syntactic relations. In a sentence, Hariprasad drove the car, the noun phrase Hariprasad and the noun phrase, the car, one is the subject and the other is the object. The noun phrase that is the subject, is the subject of the sentence and the car is the object, which is the object of the verb and we have

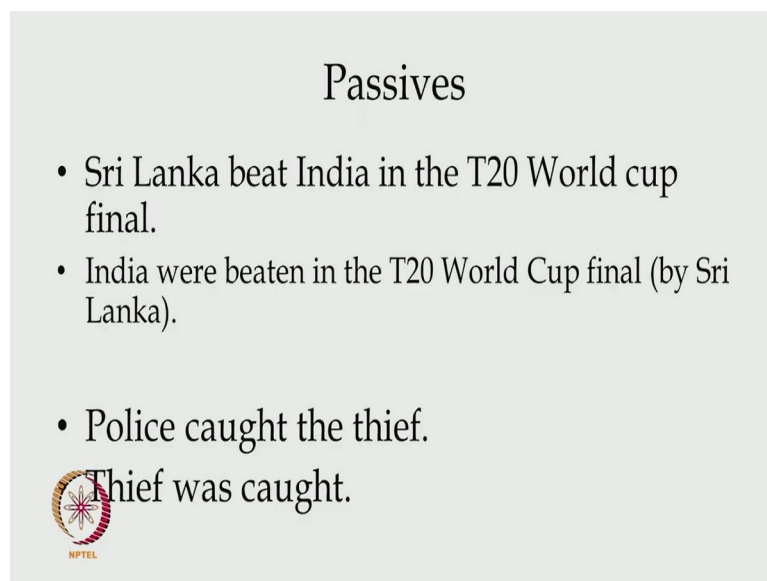
seen these things in great details, completely inside out with the help of x-bar representation, phrase structure, nature of verbs, all kinds of things where we can clearly see what we mean by subject of the sentence and object of the verb.

Then, that kind of a description, subject of a sentence, an object of the verb, becomes part of grammatical relations, description of grammatical relations. Whereas when we say agent, it has very little to do with grammaticality, the whole notion of agency is a semantic notion. In this sentence, the subject appears to be the agent of the verb is a semantic notion. Nonetheless, it is an important aspect for dealing with such kinds of phenomena. Get the point.

So, I am trying to now bring in or I am trying to put what I termed as semantic phenomena slowly into the syntactic realm. How it makes a difference in syntax.

Then, in that kind of a sentence, the subject appears to be the agent in the sentence, that is the agent of the verb, the action that is represented by the verb gets carried out by the agent and that is another relationship between the subject and the verb.


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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.



You have, you just saw that the passive sentence does not give such type of an, such type of a phenomena, what happens in a passive sentence, the example that Hariprasad gave you what happens in a passive sentence? If you just look at two examples, Hariprasad drove the car, the car was driven by Hariprasad. Let us not look at the verb now. At first just look at the agent, the question of agent, what is the, what is happening with the agent in the passive sentence?

I think you should be able to see that I have a different sentence here. You may not like these sentences, but these are the factual details. So, I thought I would not have to write these sentences, I had written it differently. But then last night, I had to change them. Now what is happening to the agent, let us talk about passives.

What is happening to the agent?

Student: (0)(12:55)

Professor: Let us not talk about subjective nouns. We will mix them, we come to that, but let us talk about agent in the active sentence, we just finished talking about that, the subject appears to be the agent of the action carried out in the sentence, in the passive sentence and through which, through this discussion, we are also trying to establish connection between the two sentences, what we say active and passive.

At one level, one can always argue that probably there is no relationship between the two sentences, they are two independent sentences. Remember, the object of a study for syntactic purposes is a sentence. The sentence is a minimal unit of the study of syntax. So, we can say look, these are different sentences, let us treat them differently.

That is all, that is also an argument, which I am not bringing in right now. Right now, what I am trying to do is with this discussion, I am also trying to establish a connection between the two sentences, that active and passive sentences are related. So, with that, when we establish agent and verb, agent of the action and then the passive sentence, then immediately when you look at the passive sentence, my question is what happens to that agent?

Do you see that agent in the passive sentence? Do you see that sentence, that agent in the passive sentence number one, the answer is yes? The second question is, do you see the same agent in the same place? No. So, if someone, so look at the logical development of this argument and this is where the answer lies and this is where we are going to build on.

The point is the whole idea of a passive sentence is to remove agent, that is, let me bring in one more point as a small detour, we have had a lot of discussions about subject, we started our discussions and we talked wherever necessary about the subject in terms of its function and its definition and understanding the whole notion of subject as a whole and we have looked at it from various perspectives, we have looked at it from the perspective of agreement, that is agreement between the subject noun phrase and the predicate, subject and verb.

We looked at the subject, the representation of the subject in x-bar theory, then we looked at subjects that do not necessarily have to be a noun phrase, it could be any big chunk or anything, we have looked at all kinds of things about the subject. We are going to add one more thing to the subject which is the, one of the functions of the subject and the reason why it becomes the specifier position, is because anything that you put in the subject position automatically becomes the focus position.

The focus position, why? What do we mean by focus position? It immediately attracts your attention. That is, when I was discussing the motivation for movement. I know I am digressing a little bit I am coming back to this in a moment, but it is important to relate these things, when we were discussing the motivation for movement, there was a question and I was trying to argue that probably the subject originates in the lexical layer, in the specifier position of the VP and then it moves again back to the specifier position of either IP or the agreement phrase, remember this argument.

There was a question which was a question before this argument. If a lexical item that is a word is not supposed to be in the functional domain, then why does it begin there? Remember, why does it begin there and then we gave this argument that probably it does not begin there, it originates somewhere else and then it goes back there.

Before people gave this argument, the logic was this, that it originates in the functional domain outside the predicate and lexical layer because it becomes a focus position. Therefore, some subjects are called focus (())(18:22). So, bringing back to passives one of the notions of passive before it got analysed under the notions of principles and parameters, one of the treatments of passive was to say, we remove focus in the passive.

Take any example and any time you find people not talking about, people trying to remove focus from the agent, they use the passive sentence, pay attention to people when we are, when we are, when people use such things in day-to-day language. Things like, look at this thief was caught, we do not want to say by

whom. People it is said, who says is the idea that has to be removed, when someone says it is said, the idea is we do not want to claim who said, the whole purpose of a passive sentence is to remove agent that was one of the descriptions, early description given to passive sentence.

Which is still remaining an important aspect of a passive sentence that the whole idea of agent is out, there is no agent in the passive sentence or if at all, you can raise the question what happens to agent then, then nothing happens to agent look at that. Look at the example that you have, nothing happens to the agent, what happens actually to agent is it becomes an adjunct, it becomes a PP and an adjunct, you can retain that, if you are generous, you can drop it, it does not matter to the grammaticality of a sentence.

I know I am spending a little bit of time here, but this is an important aspect. Remember, the significance of a subject in a sentence. Remember the significance of a subject in a sentence. It is such a significant element in a sentence that no language of the world allows a sentence without a subject. It is that kind of a robust principle that we cannot have a sentence without a subject.


Such an element, such a significant element becomes an adjunct and in a passive sentence, whether that adjunct is present in the sentence or not, does not make any difference to the grammaticality of a passive sentence. We cannot say the sentence, police caught the thief without the noun phrase police.

Can we say that sentence, can we say active sentence without the subject? We cannot. Can we say that Hariprasad drove the car? Can we say drove the car? The sentence is not good. But in a passive sentence that same important subject agent is out. That is the function of a passive sentence. Now, let us move ahead and see how this kind of notion is accommodated and explained under the theoretical framework of principles and parameters. So, these sentences are clear. We understand.

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Passive Morphology

- Past = bought (buy + past)
- Participle



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.

For that we need to look at passive morphology. Now, we focus on work. What happens to the verb? Wait a minute, Before that. We talked about agent and subject; we did not talk about the object. What happens is, if you talk to people in general, one of the very generic descriptions that people give you is that the object becomes the subject and subject becomes the object. We need a caution here, we need caution, that subject does not become an object.

Can you see here, can you see that in the sentence. Subject, what we mean by subject is agent, it becomes a completely insignificant thing. It is not an object, because we understand the technical distinction between object and an agent, object and an adjunct. So, if at all anything happens to that agent, it becomes an adjunct, an unnecessary thing. So, let us correct that part.

Now, the subject becomes an object. Object becomes subject. What do we see here? In the active sentence, the verb is beat. It is a transitive verb. It has an object which is India. In a sentence like yours, the verb is drive. It is a transitive sentence the object of the transitive sentence is the car. Get it, get this thing.

Now, in the third sentence catch is a transitive verb, the object of catch is the thief, the NP and that comes in the subject position. This is what people say, people mean when they say an object becomes the subject. If we take that statement for its truth value, can you now on the basis of whatever you know about the structure of language and the theoretical apparatus underlying it, do you see the danger of this kind of a statement, object becomes the subject, there is no situation in a sentence, where an object can possibly become a subject.

Understand my point that in a sentence, if you have a noun phrase, which is an object and then we say it becomes the subject. Basically, we are saying something like, I mean, I do not mean to give you a ridiculous example. But it becomes something like from tomorrow or all of a sudden somebody walks with, how do humans walk, with legs. We are saying in the evening, we work with our feet, we walk with our head. Is that possible?

It is something like that. If the object becomes the subject, then what happens to the object position? What happened to everything that we have been giving so much significance to? We said, we have a transitive verb, transitive verbs must have an object, what happened to those things and how come such a thing is allowed to become the subject? See the point. So, the objects are part of the, part of the verb and how would a transitive verb leave the object.

An object is an important part for the grammaticality of the sentence, particularly when we are talking about a transitive verb, while talking about the verb. Let me talk about one more thing here and then I will go to passive verbs. A language like English taking note of this thing, we would not have enough time to have a discussion on this thing.

A language like English does not allow passivization of intransitive verbs. If you have an intransitive verb in English, then you do not have a passive. Can you give me an example of an intransitive verb? Give me a sentence.

Student: She ran.

Professor: She ran, what will be the passive of that? Any idea? such a simple thing. I am not telling you anything new. You already know that, again bringing in the idea of the knowledge of language. I mean every day you can take 10 examples of knowledge of language and reinforce your understanding of the concept that we discussed in the beginning. I said something as a statement.

English does not allow passivization of intransitive verbs, you understand this sentence very well now, because in this sentence, we have discussed everything now, the term passivization, the transitive verb and everything else, we know what transitive verbs mean, which means no objects.

So, the sentence is very clear to you now. But the whole idea is not something new that I am telling you, you already knew that he ran cannot be made passive, run by him, can we, run we cannot say, I was sleeping last night when you called. Can I make a passive out of this sentence? No, I was going home at 5pm, can we make a passive of the sentence? No. So, two points, one information, the other the reinforcement of knowledge of language, you knew this because you have never made a passive of an intransitive verb.

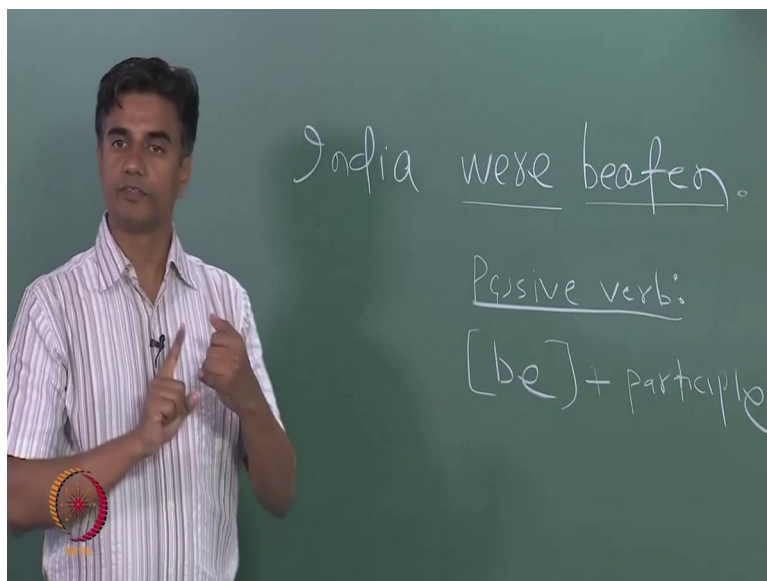
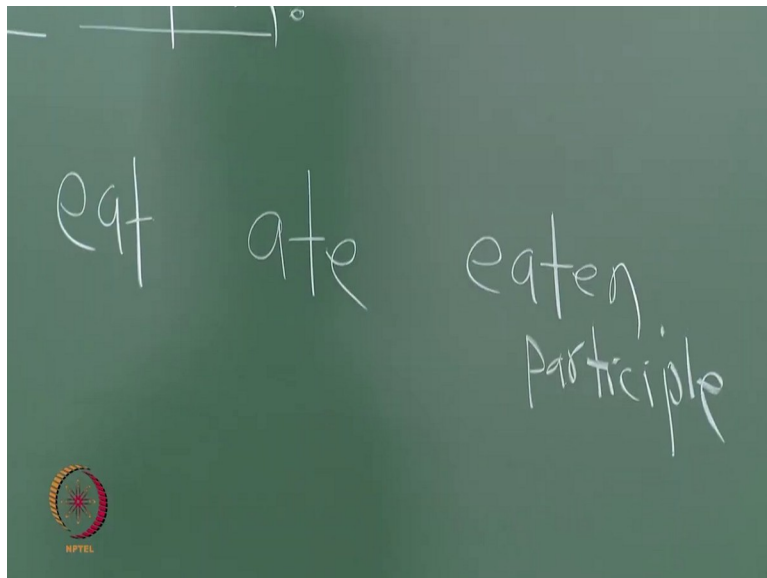
So, get the point. However, it is a parametric thing in the sense that other languages allow passivization of intransitive verbs. In English, it is not allowed. When I say other languages, our languages allow passivization of intransitive verbs and this is where I said we probably may not have enough time to discuss all or at least some examples from our languages. It is not that I do not want to give you an example of that.

To understand that example from our languages, we will need to understand passive morphology in our languages. So, I leave that question for you. I cannot even ask that question in the final exam without discussing the passive morphology of our languages, but I will leave that question for you to think about and if you have a question related to that, you can always ask me that question tomorrow or later or any time, I will be more than happy to discuss that, but let me first discuss what I am planned to discuss with you.

So, look at the passive verb now, what is happening in the passive sentence is not that only agent or subject is something is happening to agent and subject. It is not just that object is in a different position now. So, what we can say about the object, we are not saying object becomes the subject, we can only say objects are in a different position now, they still may be the or may not be the object, but they are in a different position.

So, look at the passive verb, what happens to English passive verb is this, see in, when we talk about past tense, we have just discussed that last week, in a verb like bought, what do we have we have buy and past tense. What do we have in a verb like when we say.

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When we have a sentence like India were beaten, what do we have here? You may have in the traditional grammar terms; you may have been told that there are three forms of the verb and what are those forms? Does anybody know those forms? First of all, do people know that there are three forms of the verb? Have you heard of this term? Some of you have heard. Do you remember what those three forms are? Give it a try.

Student: Simple Continuous.

Professor: Now, you know that you need to use these terms carefully. So, simple we can take it as simple. For example, we have a, if we want to, let us take eat as, we can see this is a simple form, then we have a form called ate and then we have the form eaten just for discussing this one.

So, we can say this is simple. So, some people say this is present, this one. So, there is nothing continuous about it as you can, as you can see and I do not mean to get stuck with that. So, this is the past. So, some people say this is present, because this is past, some people say this is simple and then this is past, what about this, past participle. I mean, I do not see anything past here. But let me not get into that. The point is, this is participle and I would not get into the term participle. If I ask you the meaning of this word participle it is a English word, you have been told, you remember it so nicely.

So, what is the, you see the example, you remember one word without its meaning. Look at the passive verb, all the passive verbs work this way. So, we cannot say things like something India beaten, we cannot say something like that, we have to say something like this, which is the form of be in appropriate, with appropriate tense and with appropriate agreement.

So, this is past and what is the agreement that you see? That is singular or plural? Plural. Why do we have a plural agreement here? I think that should be pretty simple for you to understand. Why do we say India were beaten? Why do not we say India was beaten?

Student: (())(34:58)

Professor: Absolutely correct. With this, we mean a plural entity, that is the whole bunch, so plural past. So, the point is, this is be, you add anything to this. So, this is a verb form be, you add present to this, it becomes something like is, then you keep adding agreement, if you add present and plural, then it becomes? Are, if you add present tense, singular this becomes? Is. If you add past and singular it becomes? Was. So, we know these things.

So, this is the verb be. Now, again, it is important to mention, but would not have time to get into the details of it, how this verb will be, acquires different forms like is, are, am, was, were, it is a development of, development of English language, from its ancient time to the modern time, there is a whole root to trace how this happened. But since we are not discussing the development of English, historical development of English language, let us just leave it there.

So, it is a verb be with its appropriate tense and agreement and then we have participle, then we have participle. This is how we get a passive sentence in, passive verb in English, we never use simple form or past form here. In any kind of passive, we never use this, let me delete this thing now. Just so that we have clarity.

So, this is our, this is our, this is why we call it, we can say either passive verbs, passive verb form or passive morphology on the verb. Sentence that Hariprasad person gave you, the car was what were the passive Hariprasad?

Student: (())(37:26)

Professor: The car was driven by Hariprasad. So, the important thing was that the car was driven, India were beaten, thieves were caught. People are bought during elections. Now see both things here. First, passive morphology, you will never see a different kind of word form coming here and see the function of that.

Anybody can say this sentence to blame someone, but they do not want to say who they want to blame. This is why we use passive form, I want to make a point.

But I do not want to blame you or I do not want to take responsibility that I am blaming you.

That is the function of the passive. So, let us separate the two things we have. I have already mentioned the function of passive, I am talking about the form of the passive. So, this is the verb, this is how the verb works. So, now, I have shown you the complete transformation from active to passive, agent does not remain agent, verb does not remain verb becomes something else, which is not exactly as India, Sri Lanka beat India. So, the verb is no more beat and the object is no more there.

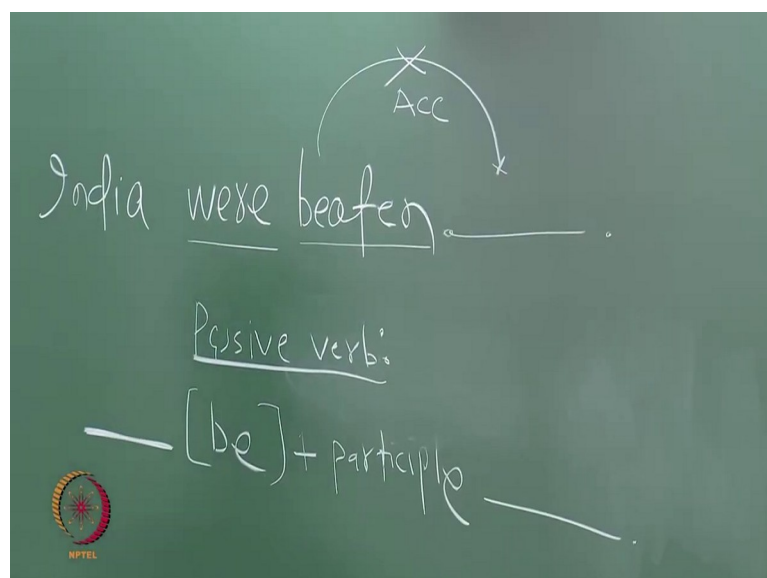

So, even though there is a semantic relationship between active and passive sentences syntactically, at the level of form, the whole passive sentence is a completely different one. Do you see my point, the whole passive sentence is a completely different one and the feature of that different sentence is the following.

Look at that.

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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.




India were beaten .

X
Acc

Passive verb:

[be] + participle




The features of a passive sentence or of a passive verb is completely different. The feature is, one of the features is, this kind of a verb, that is participle verb, cannot have a noun phrase which can have a thematic role, understand my point, it cannot allow a noun phrase which can have a thematic role that is a noun phrase, which had a thematic role of agent, will not be allowed in this, with this verb.

Therefore, the subject which was agent is out, please pay attention to this thing, I am talking about the form of the sentence. Now, the participle verb in English will not allow a noun phrase which has a thematic role, it can allow a noun phrase which does not have a thematic role or which basically that position, the beginning position does not remain theta sensitive.


Any NP that comes in is the subject position of an active verb probably gets an agent theta role. When we say John runs, is the John agent, it is an agent. So, most of the time the subject NP depending upon the nature of the verb, becomes the agent. The participle form of the word does not like NPs with a with theta roles, particularly with agent, one more thing, we have in two minutes we will stop, but one more thing, this verb were beaten.

This verb does not have the capacity to assign the accusative case. Remember, the sentence in active was India beats, Sri Lanka beat India, Harriprasas drives the car, the subject NP the object NP, agent theme and the object of the verb gets case, accusative case structurally and therefore, the sentence is fine.

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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*.




The active sentence, the passive sentence does not allow rather, the one of the features of the passive verb is such that, the verb is still transitive, but the verb does not have the capacity to assign the accusative case to it, see the problem with the passive verb, the passive verb does not allow a subject which has a theta role, it cannot have an object, because it cannot. It has an object, it has an object, but it cannot assign a passive, it cannot assign, assign accusative case.

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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*.



Understand the problem. The problem is, it does not have a subject, it does not have an object and this is coming out of the features of the passive verb and I am trying to show you that passive verb does not remain beat, passive always were beaten. See the problem, see the complexity. Hold on.

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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*.



So, the point is the spec of IP in the, look at the active sentence, the specifier position of the IP which was Sri Lanka does not remain an agent. Therefore, it can be dropped from this, either it can be dropped from the sentence or can be retained in the sentence, as an adjunct because this verb participle verb, passive verb will not have, will not allow an NP with an agent here, agent theta role out.

Remember, I am not, I am trying to show you the contradiction, but I am not trying to say that an active sentence will not have a subject, that is not what we are saying, here is the contradiction now. An active, passive verb will not allow an NP with a theta role, a passive verb will not allow an NP with the teacher role, but it must have the subject.

The other principal of the language says you cannot have a sentence without a subject, see the problem? Did you see the contradiction and the problems coming out of this contradiction, it says I have an NP but I will not allow you because you have a theta role with you, out. But the requirement is you must have an NP.

Now, look at the object, the verb is transitive. It must have an object, but it cannot remain there, because the verb does not have the capacity to assign the accusative case. See this thing, this problem contradiction becomes the motivating factor for the object NP to physically dislocate itself to the subject position, this becomes the motivation

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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.



See, there is another problem, which is called case filter, I have discussed that with you. It means very, it is very simple. Any NP, which does not have a case is not allowed in a sentence, the verb is transitive, it has an object, but this verb cannot assign accusative case. Therefore, this NP India cannot remain here in this position. If we leave this here, the sentence is now good. Can we have a sentence were beaten India by Sri Lanka. Can we say something like this? No, because of two reasons, we cannot say were beaten India by Sri Lanka, because it needs a sentence subject and this NP remains with no case.

Therefore, the solution is this physically dislocates to the initial position where it fulfils the subject position. This is what people mean when they say an object becomes a subject. So, it fulfils the subject position. Now, it is not violating the theta role thing, this verb does not like something, this verb does not allow anything theta here, this already has a theta role. So, that problem is out, it gets no new theta role all here. So, this is allowed there and then it becomes the subject.

What we mean by that is, it receives the nominative case through the infil, through the I, head I, it receives the nominative case. Therefore, it is called that the object becomes the subject and then this NP is allowed under case filter, that now it is no more without case, there is a head to assign case to it. Therefore, the sentence becomes India were beaten by Sri Lanka. I need to stop here. I want you to reflect on this problem. We continue with this NP movement and one more example of this type of NP movement tomorrow.