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Toward a Universal Semantics of Indirect Subject Constructions*

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In natural languages the indirect subject construction is widely observed but poorly understood. Formally (and, as we will see, semantically), indirect subject constructions may be contrasted with more typical direct or nominative subject constructions, in which sentential subjects take the unmarked or nominative case and trigger verbal agreement. 1 By contrast. under indirect subject formation (or Inversion, as some relational grammarians refer to it), the ostensible subject is marked with an indirect case. It is typical but not universal for this indirect case to be that of the indirect object, or dative case. (Exceptions, however, include Bengali--v. la below.) It is also typical though not universal for the indirect subject to fail to trigger verbal agreement.2

This paper is concerned with a universal semantics for indirect subject constructions. First, let us consider some examples of these constructions from a variety of natural languages. These are seen in 1-13.

l Bengali (ind) tomaake aamaar khub pachondo hay a. you-0 my-G very liking 'I like you lots'

(dir) aami tomaake khub pachondo kori

I-N you-O very liking do-lp 2 Old English Anoper drem dremede me yet. (N. McCawley 1976a:199) 3 Georgian m-civa mama-s u-qvar-s

me it-is-cold father-D/A 3p-love-pres 3p sg child-N
'I am cold' 'The father loves the child'

(Holisky 1978:140) (N. McCawley 1976a:201)

ich friere an den Füssen b. mir frieren die Füsse 4 German a. chill-lp at the feet-D me-D chill-pl the feet-N'I feel cold in the feet'

5 Hindi a. (dir) jan merii ko pasand kartaa hai 'John John-N Mary O liking do-es likes Mary'. (ind)

jon ko merii (*ko) acchii lagtii hai 'do' John O Mary-N O good seem-fem-s

6 Italian a. i bambini non mancano di energia the children neg lack-pl of energy (dir) i 'The children don't lack energy'

(ind) ai bambini non manca energia 'do' to-the children neg lacks energy

(Perlmutter 1979:278-79) 7 Japanese Kimura-san ni (wa) sono mondai ga wakaru Kimura-title D top that problem \tilde{N} understands

'Mr. Kimura understands that problem' (ibid. 310) 8 Latin piget mе tui mihi dolet (Golab 1975: disgusts me-A you-N me-D hurts 'I am disgusted with you' 'I suffer'

'I liked her' 9 Malayalam nanage avaļu ishta adaļu (Sridhar 1976:37) liking became she me-D

'I wish I could fly like a bird chara josto udu m∂y-le 10 Nepali (Abadie 1974:173) me-I/erg bird like fly-opt lp

'The woman is hurt' (Perlmutter warmi-ta nana-ju 11 Quechua 1979:316) woman-A hurt-prog

kurit' 'He wanted to Russian a. (dir) on xotel 12 smoke' he-N wanted-masc to-smoke (ind) emu xotelos' him-D wanted-ref neut to-smoke

gusta Juan 'I like John' me 13 Spanish me-O likes John

While indirect subjects may lack the morphological (coding) properties of direct subjects, they may share the syntactic (behavioral) properties of direct subjects. Thus indirect subjects may trigger reflexivization in languages wherein reflexives are governed by a subject antecedence condition; examples from Bengali and Japanese are seen respectively in 14a, b. A similar phenomenon is control of Equi, illustrated in 15a,b for Latin and Bengali respectively. 3

taar sudhu nijeke pachondo hay 'He only likes himself' his only self-0 liking becomes (Klaiman 1980a:28) (Shibatani 1977:

sensei ni (wa) zibun ga wakar-ana-i 800) teacher D top self N understand-neg-pres

'The teacher does not understand himself'

(Golab 1975:5) decet mihi irasci neg you-A me-D to-get-angry beseems 'It does not beseem you to get angry with me'

aamaar khete icchaa kare naa 'I don't feel like eating' does not to-eat wish

Some linguists have treated indirect subject constructions in the wider context of impersonal constructions, a few examples of which are seen in 16:

ima rokuzi vesperascit Japanes**e** 16 Latin now 6 o'clock is 'It grows dusky' 'It is 6 o'clock now' (Makino (Golab 1975:4) 1975-76:102)

As 16 suggests, impersonal constructions typically express activities whose agency can be attributed to no personal entity. The question is how such constructions can be semantically linked with indirect subject constructions, which tend to express highly personal activities or experiences (such as hunger, anger, desire, etc.). In view of their apparent semantic dissimilarity it is paradoxical that impersonal and indirect subject constructions bear such a close formal resemblance.
Writers interested in the semantics of indirect subject

constructions have observed that they tend to express certain kinds of activities to the exclusion of others; N.A. McCawley 1976a,b suggests that these activities fall into the six cate-

gories listed in 17:

- 17 a. Sensory and Mental Experiences
 - b. Emotional Experiences
 - c. Physical and Biological Experiences
- d. Need/Duty/Obligatione. Possession/Existence
- f. Happenstance

A few theories concerning indirect subject constructions and universal semantics have been proposed. It has, for instance, been suggested that indirect subjects are semantically recipients (N.A. McCawley 1976a, Lindholm 1975); this viewpoint may be called the Recipient Hypothesis. A second theory is that indirect subject constructions express subjective activities, i.e., activities that occur exclusively within the body or mind of the experiencer (Masica 1976:160). This viewpoint may be called the Subjective Hypothesis.

Both hypotheses have limitations. The Recipient Hypothesis fails to account for the minority of languages (e.g., Bengali) in which indirect subjects and indirect objects take different case markings. The Subjective Hypothesis is falsified by the occurrence in various languages of indirect subject predicates which do not express subjective activities (activities which occur within the body or mind of the experiencer); these predicates include geynan 'profit', mispowan 'go wrong' and geyfelian 'injure, become ill' in Old and Middle English (N. McCawley 1976a) as well as naak daak-'snore', laabh ha-'profit', asukh ha-'become unwell' and prasob ha-'give birth' in Bengali (Klaiman 1980a). Moreover neither the Recipient Hypothesis nor the Subjective Hypothesis can account for the peculiar formal similarity between impersonal and indirect subject constructions, above noted.

Another hypothesis has been proposed for a number of languages, including Japanese (Makino 1975-76:102), Serbo-Croatian (Golab 1975:26-27), Old and Middle English (N. McCawley 1976a: 197), Russian (Scholz 1973:168) and Bengali (Klaiman 1980b), though it has not to my knowledge been very aggressively supported as a semantic universal for indirect subject constructions. This viewpoint -- the Volitionality Hypothesis -- holds that indirect subject constructions universally tend to express activities viewed or spoken of as nonvolitional. This hypothesis has immediate advantages; not only does it account for the formal similarity between indirect subject and impersonal constructions, but it is also consistent with the semantic range of indirect subject predicates (v. 17). However, the strongest evidence for the hypothesis involves the relative distribution of direct and indirect subject constructions, particularly in languages in which direct and indirect subject predicates occur as formally related alternatives or counterparts.

The evidence below for the Volitionality Hypothesis is taken from four languages: $B_{\rm e}$ ngali, Georgian, Japanese, and Russian. The evidence involves the contrastive behavior of indirect and direct counterparts with respect to adverbs of volitionality, disculpations, verbs of aural and visual experience, commands, and passives. While no one type of evidence is conclusive in and of itself, all the evidence taken together contributes to what I believe is a highly convincing case for the Volitionality Hypothesis.

Exhibit A. In the context of an adverb of volitionality (e.g., 'deliberately'), indirect subject constructions tend to be excluded. This holds in Bengali (18), Russian (19), and Georgian (20):

18 a. (ind)*baabaar aapotti satteo aamaar tomaake icchaa kore father-G objection despite my-G you-O deliberately pachondo hoyeche 'I deliberately liked you despite my father's objections' (cf. la) liking has-become

b. (dir) baabaar aapotti satteo aami tomaake icchaa kore father-G objection despite I-N you-O deliberately 'do' (cf. lb) pachondo korechi

liking have-done-lp

kurit' nesmotrja 19 a. (ind)*emu nastojatel'no xotelos' him-D insistently wanted-ref neut to-smoke in-spite-'He insistently wanted to smoke na vozraženija otca of objections-A father-G despite his father's objections' (cf.

b. (dir) on nastojatel'no xotel kurit' nesmotrja he-N insistently wanted-masc to-smoke in-spite-'do' (cf. 12a)

na vozraženija otca of objections-A father-G

'I was deliberately cold' 20 a. (ind)*segnebulad m-cioda deliberately me-chilled (Holisky 1978:150)

b. (dir) cerili segnebulad da=vcere 'I deliberately wrote this letter' (ibid.) letter deliberately I-wrote

It may be particularly noted of Russian and Bengali -- in which languages predicates may have formally related direct and indirect counterparts -- that adverbs of volitionality are compatible with direct but not with indirect subject predicates. This suggests that the direct/indirect counterparts are differentiated by the semantic opposition volitional/nonvolitional.

Exhibit B. In disculpations -- contexts in which the subject is to be represented as the unwilling prisoner of his emotions, as a victim of circumstances, or as a justified sinner--the in-direct subject construction tends to be selected in preference to

its direct counterpart.

Thus in Japanese a hostess and guest may exchange the following dialog (v. 21) at a dinner party.

Hostess: dooshite motto meshi agara nai no desuka 21 more eat hon neg nominalizer is-it 'Why is it that you are not eating more?'

'As I am on a diet, Guest: daietto-chuu nanode.

diet amidst as/because

a. (ind) boku ni wa moo kore ijoo taberare masen 7 I-masc D top more any-longer eat-e-I can't eat any more at all'

wa moo kore ijoo tabe masen b. (dir)*boku I-masc-N top more any-longer eat neg I'm eating no more at all'

While an indirect subject construction (21a) is an acceptable reply to the hostess, a direct subject reply (21b) is distinctly

bizarre. The implication of such a reply ('Since I'm on a diet, I refuse to eat any more at all') is at best rude, if not ungrammatical. Similar possibilities exist in Bengali. Consider the dialog in 22:

22 A: deri kore esecho kaeno 'Nhy have you come late?' delay do-CP have-come-2p why

B: ki korbo, reastaay a. (ind) aamaar deri holo what will-do-lproad-L my-G delay became 'What could I do, I b. (dir)*aami deri korlaam was delayed on the road' I-N delay did-lp

In 22, (a) is acceptable and (b) is peculiar because a speaker would hardly like to portray himself as a volitional participant in this particular situation. Here the indirect subject construction (a) allows him to confess tardiness with a face-saving nuance of helplessness. The direct counterpart (b), however, is at best rude; it implies 'I'm late, what of it?' In Bengali as in Japanese, indirect subject constructions are preferred over direct counterparts in disculpations. This suggests that volitionality is the criterion by which speakers of various languages select between indirect and direct subject alternatives.

Exhibit C. Let us now consider predicates of hearing and seeing in Japanese and Pengali. The former has, as we have seen, a productive process for forming indirect subject predicates from their direct counterparts by the addition of the stem formant -e-. Thus the direct subject predicate taberu 'eat' in 21b is related to its indirect counterpart taberaru in 21a. Similarly the direct subject predicate kiku 'hear, listen' yields the indirect counterpart kikoeru 'be audible', while the direct predicate miru 'see, look at' yields the indirect predicate mieru 'be visible'.

In some contexts either the direct or indirect counterparts of 'hear' and 'see' are acceptable, as in 23 and 24. But they are not interchangeable. Only the direct counterpart is possible in a context of volitional hearing or seeing, while the indirect counterpart is excluded. This is seen in 25 and 26.

- 23 a. (dir) Hamlet wa sono toki sono henna oto o kiita
 Hamlet-N top that time that strange sound O hear-past
 'At that moment, Hamlet heard/listened to that
 strange sound'
 - b. (ind) Hamlet ni wa sono toki sono henna oto gakikoeta
 Hamlet D top that time that strange sound N hear-e-past
 'At that moment, Hamlet heard that strange sound/that
- strange sound was audible to Hamlet'
 24 a. (dir) Mimi wa sono henna otoko o mita
 Mimi-N top that strange man O see-past
 'Mimi saw/looked at that strange man'
 - b. (ind) Mimi ni wa sono henna otoko ga mieta

 Mimi D top that strange man N see-e-past
 'Mimi saw that strange man/that strange man was visible
 to Mimi'

- 25 a. (dir) Hamlet wa sono toki sono henna oto o chuui

 Hamlet-N top that time that strange sound O attention

 site kiita 'At that moment Hamlet listened attendo-ptcpl hear-past tively to that strange sound'
 - b. (ind)*Hamlet ni wa sono toki sono henna oto ga chuui

 Hamlet D top that time that strange sound N attention

 site kikoeta 'At that moment that strange sound was

 do-ptcpl hear-e-past attentively audible to Hamlet'
- 26 a. (dir) Mimi wa sono henna otoko o chuui site
 Mimi-N top that strange man O attention do-ptcpl
 mita 'Mimi gazed attentively at that strange man'
 - see-past
 b. (ind)*Mimi ni wa sono henna otoko ga chuui site
 Mimi D top that strange man N attention do-ptcpl
 mieta 'That strange man attentively appeared to
 see-e-past
 Mimi'

The same thing happens in Bengali. Consider the direct subject predicate daekh- 'see' and its indirect counterpart cokhe par- 'see, spot' (literally, 'fall into the eye'). Also consider the direct predicate son- 'hear' and its indirect counterpart kaane aa- 'hear' (literally, 'come into the ear'). These are respectively illustrated in (27a,b) and (28a,b). In such neutral contexts either the direct or indirect counterpart is possible. That they are not interchangeable, however, becomes clear in other contexts, as seen in (29) and (30):

- 27 a. (dir) se ekti sundor meyeke dekhlo 'He saw a pretty girl' he a pretty girl-0 saw
 - b. (ind) ekti sundor meye (ke) taar cokhe porlo 'He spotted a pretty girl O his eye-L fell pretty girl'
- 28 a. (dir) aami tomaar biruddhe naanaa kathaa suni I your against various matter hear-lp 'I hear various things against you'
 - b. (ind) tomaar biruddhe naanaa kathaa aamaar kaane aase 'do'
 your against various matter my ear-L comes
- 29 a. (dir) se ekti sundor meyeke taakiye dekhlo 'He stared at he a pretty girl-0 stare-CF saw a pretty girl'
 - b. (ind)*taakiye ekti sundor meye (ke) taar cokhe porlo 'do' stare-CP a pretty girl O his eye-L fell
- 30 a. (dir) se kaan khaaraa kore protibesider jhagraa sunchilo
 he ear erect do-CP neighbors-G quarrel was-hearing
 'He was listening to his neighbors' quarrel with his
 ears pricked up'
 - b. (ind)*kaan khaaraa kore protibesider jhagraa taar kaane ear erect do-CP neighbors-G quarrel his ear-L aaschilo 'do' was-coming

That is, in a context of expressly volitional seeing (e.g., staring) or expressly volitional hearing (e.g., listening with one's ears pricked up), the indirect subject alternatives cease to exist. This suggests that they refer to nonvolitional acts of seeing and hearing respectively.

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Exhibit D. Indirect subject constructions are by and large
excluded in commands; their direct counterparts are not excluded.
Evidence for this is seen in (31)-(32) for Russian, 33 for
Georgian, (34)-(35) for Japanese, and 36 for Bengali:
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31 a. (ind) mne veritsja trudom me-D believe-ref 3p sg with difficulty-I sg 'I have trouble believing that'

b. (dir) ja verju trudom I-N believe-lp sg with difficulty-I sg

32 a. (ind)*pust' vam veritsja mne 'Believe let/may you-D polite believe-ref 3p sg me-D b. (dir) pover'te

believe-perf impv polite me-D

33 a. (ind)*gakvetili icodi 'Know the lesson!' (Holisky 1978:152) lesson know

b. (dir) gakvetili iscavle 'Study the lesson!' (<u>ibid</u>.) lesson study

34 a. (ind)*kikoenasai 'Hear!' (cf. 23b) b. (dir) kikinasai 'do' hear-e-impv hear-impv (cf. 23.

35 a. (ind)*mienasai 'See!' (cf. 24b) b. (dir) minasai 'do' (cf. 24a see-<u>e</u>-impv see-impv

36 a. (ind)*tomaar onosoconaa hok! 'Repent!' your-G repentence become-impv 3p

b. (dir) (tumi) onosoconaa karo! 'do' you-N repentence do-impv 2p

To be sure, an indirect subject predicate can occur in the so called imperative form (simple or periphrastic) as an hortative; v. 37 (Russian) and 38 (Bengali):

37 a. ne grustite (dir) b. pust' vam neg be-sad-impv polite let/may you-D polite neg 'Don't be sad!' budet grustno (ind) be-fut 3p sg sad

'May you not be sad' (*'Don't be sad!') 38 aami caai, tomaar onusoconaa hok (cf. 36a) 'l want you want your-G repentence become-impv 3p to repent!

But such sentences as (37b) and 38 are not commands; they are wishes.

Commanding by its very nature presupposes the addressee's ability to choose to act or not to act on the speaker's request. This is why commands are normally addressed only to humans and to the more intelligent species of animals and not, say, to inanimate objects. In other words, a command presupposes the addressee's faculty of volition. The fact that an indirect subject cannot occur in the context of a command suggests that indirect subjects are semantically nonvolitional.

Exhibit E. Bengali offers some particularly impressive evidence that indirect subject constructions express nonvolitional activities. This evidence relates to passives.

Bengali has two passives: one whose characteristic is the finite verb jaa- 'go'; the other whose characteristic is the

finite verb ha- 'become'. Both passives entail that the affected clause undergoes sentence nominalization. This is followed by assignment of one of the matrix verbs just mentioned. Both passives are of the 'impersonal' type described by Comrie 1977; hence the underlying subject either deletes altogether, or--if it surfaces (under conditions which need not be explained here)--it takes the Genitive case. Both passives apply indifferently to transitives and intransitives. Examples of the Bengali jaa- and hapassives are seen in 39.

- 39 a. aektaa khabor praayi khaborer kaagoje daekhaa jaacche one news very-often news-G paper-L seeing is-going 'One piece of news is very frequently seen in the newspaper' (Jugantor newspaper, Calcutta, 10 April, 1979)
 - b. aamerikaay ifreji balaa hay 'In America, English America-L English speaking becomes is spoken'

In the following examples 40 through 43, the even numbered examples illustrate the <u>jaa</u>- passive and the odd numbered examples, the <u>ha</u>- passive. Passive applied to direct subject constructions is seen in the (a) examples, while passive applied (infelicitously) to indirect subject constructions is illustrated in the (b) examples.

- 40 a. alpo khete anek laabh karaa jaabe
 less labor-CP many profit doing will-go
 'A lot of profit can be made without working hard'
 b.*alpo khete anek laabh haoaa jaabe 'do'
 becoming will-go
- 41 a. alpo khete tomaar anek laabh karaa habe
 less labor-CP your many profit doing will-become
 'You'll make a lot of profit without working hard'
 b.*alpo khete tomaar anek laabh haoaa habe 'do
 becoming will-become
- 42 a. bhaarotborse alpo taakaay anek din caalaano jaay
 India-L less money-L many day causing-to-run goes
 'In India it is possible to manage a long time on little
 money'
 - b.*bhaarotborse alpo taakaay anek din calaa jaay 'do running goes
- 43 a. taader alpo taakaay anek din caalaano hoyeche
 their less money-L many day causing-to-run has-become
 'They've managed on little money for a long time'
 b.*taader alpo taakaay anek din calaa hoyeche 'do'
 running has-become

In general, passives in Bengali apply to direct but not to indirect subject constructions. One could try to account for this on formal grounds, for example, by writing an appropriate structural description (SD) into the rule for passive. However, such a solution would fail to account for other types of sentences the passives of which block in Bengali.

For instance, passives block for sentences whose subjects have nonhuman referents. Examples 44 and 45 illustrate.

44 a. tintey naa chaarle aamaar samoymoto pouchono 3 o'clock-L neg leave-cond my on-time arriving naa 'If I hadn't left at 3 o'clock, I would-become neg could not have arrived on time

b.*tintey naa chaarle gaaritaar samoymoto pouchono 3 o'clock-L neg leave-cond the-train-G on-time arriving hoto naa 'If it hadn't left at 3 o'clock, the would-become neg train could not have arrived on time'

45 a. aektaa laal saari oke khub maanaabe 'A red sari should a red sari her-O very will-suit suit her nicely' b.*aektaa laal saari oke khub maanaano jaabe 'do' suiting will-go

The (b) examples in 44 and 45 illustrate the unacceptability of passives whose underlying subjects have inanimate referents. It may be mentioned at this point that volitionality cannot be an attribute of inanimate entities. In this connection it is interesting to note that a passive blocks in Bengali--even if the subject is human -- when the predicate expresses a nonvolitional activity. Examples (46)-(48) illustrate.

46 a. omuker boi haariyeche b. *omuker boi haaraano so-and-so-G book has-gotten- so-and-so-G book losing lost hoyeche 'do' 'So-and-so has lost his book' has-become

47 a. maar maar khaaoaar par se tin din maatro baaclo beating eating-G after he 3 day only survived 'After taking the beating he only survived 3 days' maar khaaoaar par taar tin din maatro baacaa holo baating eating-G after his 3 day only surviving became

ei maatro maaraa giyeche 'So-and-so just died'

so-and-so just-now has-died b.*omuker

ei maatro maraa hoyeche 'do' so-and-so-G just-now dying has-become

It is interesting to contrast 48, which expresses an ordinary act of dying, with 49, which expresses a volitional act of dying (i.e., suicide):

aattohattaa karaar jonno aeksotaa ghumer osudh khelaam, doing-G for 100 sleep-G medicine ate-lp kintu aamaar maraa holo naa, kaaron, daaktaarraa aamaake dying became neg because the-doctors me-O baaciye tullo ''I took 100 sleeping pills in order to commit saved suicide; but I did not die, because the doctors saved me'

While passive blocks in 48, it does not block in 49. The contrast between these two examples provides especially clear evidence that passive in Bengali applies only to sentences in which volitional activity is expressed. Turning back to examples (40)-(43), it would now appear that the failure of Bengali indirect subject constructions to passivize supports the position argued throughout this paper that indirect and direct subject constructions in natural languages tend to express nonvolitional

and volitional activities, respectively.

To conclude, evidence has been presented in this paper for the hypothesis that indirect constructions in natural languages tend to express nonvolitional activities. While direct subject constructions may express either volitional or nonvolitional activities, languages may display a formal alternation between indirect and direct subject counterparts such that the former tend to express activities viewed or spoken of as nonvolitional; the latter tend to express basically the same activities viewed or spoken of as volitional.

While I have limited the data in this paper to four languages-Bengali, Georgian, Japanese, and Russian--it is my prediction that similar evidence occurs in other languages. Moreover, it has been pointed out that in addition to contrastive evidence of the type presented in Exhibits A through E, other evidence for the volitionality hypothesis arises from two facts: (a) that indirect subject predicates tend to conform cross-linguistically to a particular semantic range (v. 17); and (b) that indirect subject constructions and impersonal constructions, which tend to be similar formally, both express activities which are nonvolitional, i.e., which lack the willful or agential participation of some personal entity.

The question remains why languages tend to select the same or roughly the same formal means of expression—the indirect and impersonal subject constructions—for a particular semantic notion, that of nonvolitionality. This problem is left for future research.

Footnotes

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However, I alone am responsible for the contents. The following
abbreviations may be noted: A=accusative case, cond=conditional,
CP=conjunctive participle, D=dative case, dir=direct, erg=ergative,
fem=feminine, fut=future, G=genitive case, hon=honorific, I=instrumental case, impf=imperfective, impv=imperative, ind=indirect, L=
locative case, masc=masculine, N=nominative case, neg=negative
particle, neut=neuter, O=objective case, opt=optative, p=person,
perf=perfective, pl=plural, pres=present tense, prog=progressive,
ptcpl=participle, ref=reflexive, sg=singular, top=topic marker.

lThis behavior may be observed generally throughout the language, as in Bengali and Latin, or may be conditioned by grammatical factors like tense and aspect, as in Georgian and

Paindi.

Nepali (ex. 10) is a language in which indirect subjects can control verbal agreement. In other languages, the agreement trigger may default to the unmarked direct object—as it does in Hindi (v. 5b)—or to no NP at all—as in Bengali (v. 1) in the instance of most if not all of the language's indirect

subject predicates.

3The behavioral properties which indirect subjects share with direct subjects may be highly specific to individual languages. This holds of Subject Honorification in Japanese, described by Shibatani 1977. Shibatani shows that this grammatical process does not distinguish between direct and indirect subjects.

4The Recipient Hypothesis is based on an assumption that substantives which are treated alike formally (e.g., in terms of case marking) must have something in common semantically. It provides a seemingly natural way of accounting for the sameness of case marking, in many languages, of indirect subjects and indirect objects; it claims that both belong to a common semantic category of recipients. This in turn explains the fact that indirect subjects are widely referred to as 'dative subjects', dative being the case of the indirect object.

⁵The hypothesis does not entail that direct subject constructions in natural language never express nonvolitional activities. The hypothesis is only that indirect subject constructions in natural languages tend to be restricted to the expression of activities viewed or spoken of as nonvolitional.

V. fogtnote 6.

of the some languages speakers have a choice of expressing a given activity or experience by using a direct subject construction or by using a formally related indirect subject construction. Such alternative predicates may be referred to as direct and indirect subject counterparts. The productivity of such alternation varies from language to language. In Italian I am aware of only three such pairs of counterparts: manca-/man

7Note that the Japanese nominative marker ga deletes before the topic marker wa (v. 21b, etc.). (On the status of ga as a nominative or direct case marker rather than a subject marker, v. Shibatani 1977.) Also note that the stem formant -e- may be separated from vowels in preceding and following morphemes by a variety of phonetic/phonological devices; hence tabe+e=taberare and kik+e+inf=kikoeru. The form taberare in (21a) looks superficially passive, though not all Japanese indirect subject predicates are formally identical to passives (v. e.g. the forms kikoeru and mieru in Exhibit C). However, N. Akatsuka (personal communication) informs me that (21a) cannot possibly be taken as a passive. The reasons are complex, but apparently have to do with the fact that Japanese passives express the idea of a victim to which something is done. Thus, as in English it is strange to say 'What was done to the cake was to be eaten', so (i) below is strange to a Japanese (and hence 21a as well). only way a Japanese passive of 'eat' makes sense, according to

- Akatsuka, is in a context like (ii) below, where the underlying direct object is unmistakably a victim to which something is done: 'The cake was eaten
 - i. *okashi wa otoko ni taberareta by the man' cake-N top man by eat-passive-past ni taberareta senkyooshi wa hitokui

missionary-N top man-eating-race by eat-passive-past 'The missionary was eaten by the cannibals'

8For a more detailed treatment of Bengali passives, v. Klaiman 1980a,b. Examples of Bengali passives in the present work are from Klaiman 1980b.

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