Passives in Modern Tamil

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Abstract
Passivization is a very common phenomenon in most of the natural languages and Tamil is no exceptions. Passive sentences are derived from active kernel sentences by applying a set of passive transformation rules. These rules and their application are by and large similar in different languages. This paper mainly focuses on the development of passive constructions in modern Tamil. The process of passivation is found in a vast number of languages the manner in which it applies and its functions may differ widely. In transformational generative grammar passivation is treated as an equivalent to activization with reference to English. In Tamil passivation though found in old and middle Tamil periods, has been more commonly used in modern Tamil period. This has been used in very formal occasions and very rarely used in the spoken form of the language. The main purpose of this paper is to examine the types of passive constructions found in modern Tamil.
Keywords: Transitive, Intransitive, Explicit passive, Implicit passive.

Introduction

The derivation of passive construction in Tamil is distinct from that of the English counterpart. The active -passive relationship in Tamil is a transitive – intransitive relationship where there is a transitive verb in the active sentence, its intransitive counter part together with the passive morpheme 'paTu' occurs in the passive. Therefore, the formulation of the passive in the Tamil grammar has to take into account the facts that (i) the verb is crucial to passivization and (ii) the direct object of the verb in the active sentence is the subject of the corresponding passive construction. For instance,

1. Sasi   kumarai   konRa:n
    Sasi   kumar -acc.   Killed-he
    'Sasi killed kumar'
2. Kumar   sasia:l   kollappaTTa:n
    Kumar   sasi-by   kill-passive-he
    'Kumar was killed by Sasi"

The above said sentence are active and passive sentences respectively. Kumar which is the complement of the case -ai in the active construction corresponds to the subject in the passive, while sasi which is the active subject takes the case suffix -a:l and the passive marker -paTu in the passive sentence. paTu occupies the second position in the verb plus verb frame of the passive verb. The verb kol 'kill' is one that has a passive counterpart in kolla. The passive verb is an 'affective' verb that highlights the affected; viz., the patient on the experiencer. The agent's role is consequently de-emphasized. The passive construction may be termed as an instance of a 'promotional' phenomenon and the direct object of the active sentence is promoted to the subject position of the corresponding passive.

Types of Passive

The passive construction in Tamil can be broadly classified into two; viz., Explicit passives and Implicit / Inexplicit passives. Those constructions in which a specific morpheme is affixed to the infinitive participle of the verb are called as explicit passive. The passive morpheme paTu or peRu follows the verb (infinitive form) to derive the passive sentence, as shown in the following sentences.

3. Mutala:LikaLa:l   tolila:LikaL
   nacukkappaTTa:rkaL
   Capitalists -by   workers   crush-past-he
   'The workers were crushed by the capitalists'

4. Ma:Navan   a:ciriyara:l
   pa:ra:TTappeRRa:n
   Student   teacher-by   praise-past-he
   'The student was praised by the teacher'

Those constructions in which there is no specific morpheme, but which nevertheless convey the passive sense are termed as inexplicit passives. In this category the 'so called middle construction

which have been referred to as impersonal passives and the agentless passives are included.

5. paTaku   a:RRil   mulukiyatu
   boat   river-loc.   sink-past-it
   'The boat sank in the river'

6. na:Tu   celikkaTTum
   countryprosper-may
   'May the country prosper'

7. kamala:vukku oru   tangaccangili
   paNNiirukkiratu
   kamala-dat.   One   gold   chain made-it
   'A gold chain has been made for kamala'

The sentences (3) and (4) are impersonal passives and sentence (5) denotes agentless passive. It is interesting to note that some features of the impersonal and agentless passive overlap. Though the verb is in the third person singular term in all the cases, they can still be differentiated using other dues tabulated below.

Passive
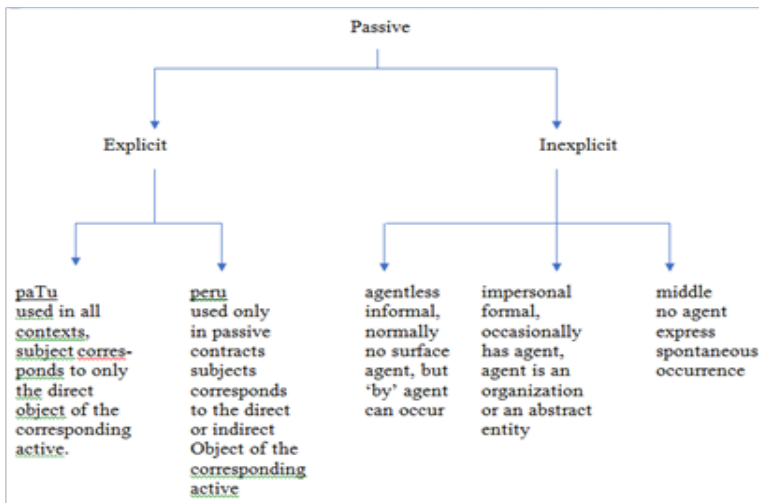
paTu constructions in Modern Tamil

The paTu constructions, it can be observed that in modern Tamil passives fall three types, viz., (i) with instrument NPs, (ii) with nominative NPs, and (iii) without overt NPs.

8. Kulantai   avaLai rompapaTuttiyatu
   Chid   she-acc.much   suffer-cause-it
   'The child troubled her very much'

9. uma: puttica:lienRu   enakku paTukiratu
   uma intelligent   comp. I-dat.   seem-it
   'It seems to me that Uma is an intelligent'

The passive sense of the verb plus paTu construction has been illustrated in the sentence (8). It may be relevant to point out that in many languages. The passive element is derived from a full verb meaning 'suffer'. This is clearly the case with the Tamil paTu.

'paTu' is also used to describe the progressive and capability meanings, besides the habitual. One could easily trace a relation between those meanings of the dialectal paTu and its passive sense. It has been already stated that the passive verb highlights the experience.

peRu Construction

Let us consider the other passive construction peRu. In this construction one can find that both the -ai object (direct object) and -kku (indirect object) of the corresponding active can occur as the subject of the construction. It is different from the paTu construction which has only -ai object of the active as its subjects. For instance,

10. makkal   maharaNiyai   na:TTin oli
    enRualaitta:rkaL
    people   maharani-acc. nation   light
    that called-they
    'People called Maharani as the light of the nation'

11. mahara:Ni   makkaLa:l
    na:TTinolienRualaikkapeRRa:r
    Maharani   people-by   nation of light
    that call-inf. passive
    'Maharani was called the light of the nation by the people'

12. mantirikaL   iLavarasarukku
    muTicu:TTina:rkaL
    ministers   prince-dat.   crowned-they
    'The ministers crowned the prince'

13. iLavarasar   mantirikaLa:l
    muTicu:TTappeRRa:r
    prince   ministers-inst.   rown-inf.-pass.
    'The prince was crowned by the ministers'

In the above sentences (10) and (12) are active and are in peRu construction where (10) has -ai object and (12) has -kku object in the subject position. The subject of the active sentence NP, corresponds to the complement of -a:l in the case phrase in passive, while the direct complement of -ai or the indirect complement of -kku which is NP2 in the active sentence corresponds to the subject of passive. It is to be noted that the peRu construction could be used only to describe positive occurrences or achievements. It cannot be used to describe anything having a negative implication. The example given below illustrate the same aspect of peRu.

14. amaiccar   avai   amaikkappeRRatu
    minister   council form-inf. -pass.
    'The council of ministers was formed'

15. amaiccar   avai   kalaikkappeRRatu
    minister   council   dissolve-int. -pass.
    'The council of members was dissolved'

The difference between (14) and (15) is in the two main verbs. In (14) the main verb amai has a positive meaning 'form'. In (15) the main verb kalai 'dissolve' has a negative meaning. From the two example, it looks as if the requirement of peRu construction is that the verb must have a positive meaning. This is however not correct. The aspect of the peRu passive is that the positive, occurrence it describes must have a basis of effort; i.e., the achiever must in some way deserve the achievement. For instance,

16. naTTUkkuceytace:vaikka:
    kaavankauravikkappeRRa:n
    country-dat. do-inf. service for he
    honour-   inf.-pass.
    'He was honoured for the service rendered for the country'

It is possible that in all the ungrammatical peRu sentences, paTu can be used to give grammatical results. paTu thus is the passive morpheme of more general use. peRu is also a passive morpheme whose use is highly restricted. As shown above, the grammaticality of a peRu construction depends, besides syntactic ones on the interplay of semantic and pragmatic factors. It could be suggested that the restricted use of peRu in passive constructions relates to its use as a full verb. The full verb peRu means 'receive' and the sentence using the verb must have a positive import and also suggest that the agent made an effort to receive what the deserved. Consider the following:

17. sahana   paricu   peRRa:L
    Sahana   prize   received-she
    'Sahana received a prize'

18. avaL oru   kulantaiyai   peRRa:L
    she one   child-acc.   gave birth-she
    'She gave birth to a child'

19. akatikaL   uNavu   peRRa:rkaL
    refugees   food   received-they
    'Refugees received food'

The sentences (17) and (18) indicate happy

events and both suggest that effort has been involved on the part of the beneficiary and thus they fulfil the requirements of the peRu construction. The sentence (19) is ungrammatical even though receiving food is a pleasant experience. Receiving food may be beneficial for the recipient, but it does not show him in a positive light. No effort is involved on the part of refugees receiving food. Consider the following sentences to which peRu is the main verb and kol is the operator:

20. akatikaL   uNavu   peRRukkoNTa:rkaL
    refugees   food   received – they
    'The refugees received food for themselves'

Here part of the sense or peRu gets suppressed and the sense of kol gets emphasized when both occur together. The benefit of receiving food is reverted to the agent akatikaL 'refugees'. The anaphora kol demands that the benefit of act described by the main verb in the sentence is to be reverted to the agent. Therefore the sentence (20) is a grammatical one.

Conclusion

Summing up the facts of the Tamil passive constructions, the paTu morpheme is frequently used for the purpose. The less frequently used peRu is highly restricted construction. It is employed only in positive contexts where the beneficiary effort is employed. There is no obvious and straightforward way of formally stating the notion 'positive'. The so called agentless passives and the impersonal passives also enjoy selective use; the former informal speech and the latter formal language use as that of the formal purpose.

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