

Li8 supervision assignment 1: Predicting the unpredictable?

Due: 23 October

Morphological marking of voice alternations

In languages with a grammatical contrast between active and passive voice, the contrast is usually (though not always) marked by a morphological alternation.

A simple alternation is exhibited by the forms in Table 1, from the Munda language Mundari. Since the difference between the active and passive forms is the same in each pair, we can describe all of these alternations by the single schema ‘X : Xo?’

Active	Passive	Gloss
ayum	ayumo?	‘hear’/‘be audible’
lel	lelo?	‘see’/‘be visible’
durum	durumo?	‘sleep’/‘feel like sleeping’

Table 1: Active and passive forms in Mundari

Task 1: Voice alternations in Tahitian

Passive forms in Polynesian languages exhibit a striking range of variation, reflecting different developments from an original Proto-Oceanic pattern. Tahitian occupies one extreme within this family, exhibiting the minimal variation shown in Table 2.

1. Specify schemas for each of the distinct active-passive alternations in Table 2.
2. If you specify more than one schema for the forms in Table 2 (i) identify which one you think is more basic, (ii) briefly justify your answer, and (iii) suggest reasons why the basic schema does not apply to all of the pairs in Table 2.

Active	Passive	Gloss
ʔamu	ʔamuhia	‘eat’/‘be eaten’
ʔia	ʔiahia	‘steal’/‘be stolen’
hahoni	hahonihia	‘bite’/‘be bitten’
hinaaro	hinaarohia	‘love’/‘be loved’
iriti	iritihia	‘open’/‘be opened’
rave	ravehia	‘take’/‘be taken’
taʔiri	taʔirihia	‘whip’/‘be whipped’
tupaʔi	tupaʔihia	‘hit’/‘be hit’
vavahi	vavahia	‘split’/‘be split’

Table 2: Active and passive forms in Tahitian

Task 2: Voice alternations in Maori

Maori occupies the other extreme, exhibiting a bewildering amount of variation. Consider the Maori forms in Table 3, and specify a schema for each distinct alternation.

Active	Passive	Gloss
maka	makaia	‘throw’/‘be thrown’
whiu	whiua	‘chase’/‘be chased’
awhi	awhitia	‘embrace’/‘be embraced’
hopu	hopukia	‘catch’/‘be caught’
inu	inumia	‘drink’/‘be drunk’
aroha	arohaina	‘love’/‘be loved’
tahu	tahuna	‘burn’/‘be burned’
tohu	tohungia	‘point out’/‘be pointed out’
kai	kainga	‘eat’/‘be eaten’
mau	mauria	‘carry’/‘be carried’
kimi	kimihia	‘seek’/‘be sought’
whao	whaowhia	‘put into’/‘be put into’

Table 3: Active and passive forms in Maori

Task 3: Nominalizations in Maori

On the face of it, the Maori verbal system would appear to be much more intricate than the Tahitian system and present a far more acute acquisition challenge. Yet there are other patterns within Maori that may assist the learner in mastering this system.

Consider the forms in Table 4 and suggest how, if at all, patterns of nominalization in Maori might facilitate the deduction and acquisition of passive forms.

Active	Passive	Nominalization	Gloss
mahi	mahia	mahinga	'work'
noho	nohoia	nohoanga	'sit on'
moto	motokia	motokanga	'punch'
tomo	tomokia	tomokanga	'pass in/out'
inu	inumia	inumanga	'drink'
tanu	tanumia	tanumanga	'bury'
mau	mauria	mauranga	'seize'
tau	tauria	tauranga	'come to rest'
tuu	turia	turanga	'stand'
mahue	mahuetia	mahuetanga	'be left behind'
puri	puritia	puritanga	'hold'
titiro	tirohia	tirohanga	'look'

Table 4: Actives, passives and nominalizations in Maori

Bonus Task 4: Predicting the unpredictable?

Is there any way of analyzing the voice systems of Tahitian and Maori on which the Maori patterns would be substantially less predictable for learners than the patterns in Tahitian? Explain whether and how the following quotations could be relevant.

The only other suffix, apart from the passive, used productively in modern Maori is of the general form *-Canga* and derives nouns.

The Passive Voice ... in the case of transitive verbs ... is more frequently required than the Active Voice.

It has long been recognised and remarked on that the passive is used much more frequently in Maori than in ... English, and even, in certain types of text, more frequently than the corresponding active.

Readings

HALE, KENNETH. 1968. Review of Hohepa (1967). *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 77.83–99.

McCARTHY, JOHN J. 1981. The role of the evaluation metric in the acquisition of phonology. *The logical problem of language acquisition*, ed. by Baker. C. L. and John J. McCarthy, 218–248. MIT Press.

SANDERS, GERALD. 1990. On the analysis and implications of Maori verb alternations. *Lingua* 80.149–149.