

Passive marker in North-western Kakabe dialects

Kakabe belongs to the Mokole group, the closest group to the Manding branch of the Mande family. It is spoken in a number of villages situated on the Futa-Jallon plateau in Guinea.

This paper deals with the following three issues: 1) interaction of morphological passive and different kinds of lability in North-eastern Kakabe dialects; 2) the impacts on the interpretation of passive markers of such factors as time, aspect and the lexical semantics of the verbs; 3) meaning and usage of the passive marker in general.

0. Passive alternation and lability have much in common since they both deal with argument structure of the verb and its modification. Passivization is followed by the deletion of the first participant at the syntactic level and thus it diminishes the number of overtly expressed core participants. As for lability, this term is used to denote such variation in the number of participants which is not marked on the verb – a labile verb can be used both transitively and intransitively.

The data on which my research is based were collected mainly during two fieldtrips to Guinea in January and February 2009 and 2010. I analyzed the usage of the passive marker in narratives (mainly fairy tales) and also on the basis of a database with two hundred verbal lexemes. This database, which was collected using the method of elicitation, contains information about the usage of each of the verb in a number of grammatical contexts and about its combination with different verbal affixes.

In Kakabe passive is marked by the verbal suffix *-ma*, for example:

- (1) *nìngèè bati kànkà-ma sù-è tɔ*
 cow.ART PRF steal-PASS night-ART in
 ‘The cow has been stolen at night’.

It is worth mentioning that the existence of morphological passive is a rather unexpected fact by itself in a Mande language. So far, no other language with morphological passive from this family is known. Moreover, only part of the Kakabe dialects are characterized by the presence of passive, namely, the Northwestern dialects. As for the other dialect group, which we will further call Southeastern dialects, no morphological passive marker is attested there. Instead of it, Southeastern dialects attest widely spread lability. Apart from decausative lability, i.e. such alternation by which the transitive and intransitive usages differ by the absence or presence of an agentive participant at the semantic level (cf. *dinbi* ‘shake – tr. / intr.’, *dúfen* ‘die / kill’), there is a more typologically unusual type of lability, namely, passive lability. In the latter case the same number of participants corresponds to the intransitive usage to at the semantic level as to the transitive usage, but the agentive participant is not expressed syntactically in the former case. Passive lability encompasses all transitive verbs in the South-eastern Kakabe dialects. For more details about the distinction between passive and decausative lability see [Cresseils 2009], [Letuchiy 2006] and in Kakabe [Vydrina 2009]. Thus, an intransitive construction, corresponding in meaning to that in the example (1) will simply have no passive marker and the verb *kànkà* will be used intransitively:

- (1) *nìngèè bati kànkà sù-è tɔ*
 cow.ART PRF steal night-ART in
 ‘The cow was stolen at night’.

Interestingly enough, from the typological point of view, the situation with the passive lability is just inverse in comparison with the morphological passive, which is common cross-linguistically by very unusual within Mande family. As for the passive lability, it is a very rare, almost a non-existent phenomenon outside the Mande family. On the contrary, within its bounds it is rather widespread – it is attested in Jallonke [Lüpke 2007], Bamana [Cresseils 2007 & 2009;

Vydrine 1997], Maninka [Grégoire 1985]; Koranko [Kastenholz 1987]; Tigemaxo [Blecke 1996] and some others.

The passive marker may have evolved in the Northeastern Kakabe dialects under the influence of Pular (< Atlantic languages) – a language which has very productive morphological passive. The Kakabe people have been living in the surrounding and under the great influence of Pular, for several centuries already, and all the Kakabe speakers can also speak Pular. In Pular passive is expressed together with TAM information if verbal inflection. The marker of passive in the so called “strong perfective” is *-amaa* (about passive in Pular see for example [Koval, 127-144]). This is the closest one to passive marker in Kakabe by its form and thus it is most probable as a source of borrowing for Kakabe.

The suffix *-ma* occupies the outermost position in a verb form, it stands after all other verb suffixes of the verb, for example, after the second part of the imperfective marker or after a participle marker:

(3) *sàndáà* *bi* *sáa-la-ma*
 fairy.tale.ART IPFV tell-IPFV-PASS

sú-è *tó le,* *tèlèè* *tó maa,*
 night-ART in FOC day.ART in NEG.COP
 ‘Fairy tales are told at night, and not in the day’.

(4) *nège* *min* *bi* *sáa-len-ma* *táa*
 iron wich be lie-PC.RES-PASS fire

tò, a *ti* *wùlen* *a* *ti* *máa* *i* *kó:* *táa*
 in 3SG PRF red 3SG PRF make 2SG say fire
 ‘The iron which is put into the fire is red like fire’.

Cross-linguistically the more usual position for a passive marker is immediately before or immediately after the verb. M. Haspelmath, in his paper, dedicated to the sources of passive markers in grammaticalization processes analyzes the data of thirty one languages with morphological passive. Only three languages from this sample have an extrinflectional affix as a marker of passive, and in twenty five languages the passive marker occupies a position contiguous to the verb stem [Haspelmath 1990: 28-29]. Thus, the means of expression used for passive in Kakabe is not a typical one, but can not be called unique either.

Agentive complement. In Kakabe passive construction the demoted agent participant can be expressed by a noun phrase with the postposition *bólo*:

(5) *nìngéè* *bati* *kiti* *Séeku* *bólo*
 cow.ART PRF tie Sekou to
 ‘The cow was tied by Sekou’.

Though the expression of the demoted agent is not prohibited in elicited examples, it occurs very rarely in natural discourse. In the texts which I collected, there is no passive construction with expressed agentive participant among those 35 that occurred in them.

The postposition *bólo* is also used after the noun phrases denoting the addressee or a locative participant. Thus, when a noun phrase with this postposition occurs after a verb with a passive marker, it can denote not only the agentive participant but also the localization or the addressee, as in the following example:

- (6) *áwà kòtéè mùrádo-è ba' dín-ma o bólo*
 so now speech-ART PRF give-PASS 2PL to
 ‘Now the word is given to you (resp.)’.

Passive marker and transitivity. There are no restriction on passivization concerning the degree of semantic transitivity of the original construction – the only requirement lies in that it should be syntactically transitive. This is evident from the fact, that passivization is possible even in those cases, when the direct object position in the original construction is occupied by a noun phrase with the meaning of the time during which the action lasted. In Kakabe in some cases it is possible to promote an adverbial modifier of time into the position of direct object, for example

- (7a) *Séeku bati lér kelen bòri.*
 Sekou PRF hour one run
 ‘Sekou has been running for an hour’.

The resulting construction is transitive syntactically but it is characterized by a very low degree of semantic transitivity, and nevertheless it can be passivized:

- (7b) *ler kelen bati bori-ma (*bori)*
 ‘They have been running for an hour’.

In other words, in order to be promoted to the position of the subject in a passive construction, the original direct object doesn’t have to denote a participant with any patientive properties.

Causative constructions are also subject to passivization, for example:

- (8a) *Séeku bati kinaà-nù la-hólli tàléè là*
 Sekou PRF old.man.ART-PL CAUS-tell fairy.tale.ART LOC
 ‘Sekou has made the old man¹ tell a story’.

- (8b) *tàléè bati la-hólli-ma kinaà-nù là*
 fairy.tale.ART PRF CAUS-tell-PASS old.man.ART-PL LOC
 ‘The old man has been made to tell a story’.

Passive and other verbal categories. Seemingly, the passive marker is able to combine with all TAM markers. Further it will be shown that there is a group of verbs, for which the combination with the passive marker in one type of contexts is obligatory and in other type of contexts it is optional. In other words, the semantics of TAM can influence the expression of passive. Still if we are talking not about particular verbal lexemes, but only about the combination of the passive marker itself with different TAM markers, there seem to be no restrictions.

It is also true of the marker of non-actual past – verbal suffix *-ta*, which by itself is not neutral with respect to transitivity, being used only in intransitive constructions. Most typically it is applied with intransitive verbs, for example:

- (9) *súlukè dòn-ta, a k' a sīgi*
 hyena.ART come.in-PST 3SG PRF 3SG sit.down
 ‘The hyena came in and sat down’.

As for transitive verbs, they can combine with the marker *-ta* only if there is also a passive marker, for example:

- (10) *a le a dáa-ta-ma sáaye min to*
 3SG FOC 3SG create-PST-PASS time which in

¹ Apart from plurality the suffix *-nu* is also used as a marker of respectfulness.

hári dùgu bele
 yet earth NEG.IPFV

‘When it [the bird] was created, there was no earth yet’.

As for the labile verbs, the question of its interaction with the marker *-ta* will be considered later.

The passive marker can also be added to a nominalized verb, for example:

- (11) *kín-na-ma t' a la-díi*
 bite-NMLZ-PASS PRF 3SG CAUS-cry
 ‘He cried because he was bitten’.

In case with the nominalization in Kakabe, as it usually is across languages, participants are expressed by an ergative model. In Kakabe this is manifested by the fact that in nominalized clauses only one participant can be expressed – either the only core participant of an intransitive verb or the patientive participant of a transitive verb, for example:

- (12) *n bòyi-la jee to* ‘my falling into water’;
 (13) *Séeku gbàsi-la* ‘Sekou’s beating’ (Sekou is the one who is beaten).

Thus the main function of the passive marker, i.e. the demotion of the syntactic status of the original subject, is irrelevant in this case. Indeed, the passive marker very rarely occurs together with nominalization markers.

In (11), for example, where we do see such a combination there are no overtly expressed participants at all. Supposedly, in this case the passive marker is not used as a category, demoting the subject, which anyway is not possible here, but as a marker, indicating that there is coreference between the patientive argument in the nominalized clause and the participant denoted by the direct object in the main clause. Below are given analogous examples with passive marker together with nominalization suffix – with the only difference that in (15) the patientive participant of the nominalized clause is coreferential with the participant, denoted not by the direct object as in (11), but by an indirect object in the main clause:

- (14) *fótin-na-ma bati n na-móné*
 pinch-NMLZ-PASS PRF 1SG CAUS-get.angry
 ‘I got angry because I was pinched’.
- (15) *kèle-la-ma maa díi nyè*
 quarrel-NMLZ-PASS NEG.PRF please for.me
 ‘I was not happy that they quarreled with me’.

In these contexts the passive marker can not be omitted. If there is an expressed participant in the nominalized clause but no coreference relation holds, there is no passive marker:

- (16) *Músa fàga-la bati n ñaldíné*
 Myca умереть-NMLZ PRF 1SG startle
 ‘I am startled by the fact that Musa has been killed’.

The combination of passive marker with verbs of different lexical classes. The passive marker can not be used with intransitive verbs, in other words, it behaves just as a passive marker is expected to, i.e. decreases the syntactic status of a transitive clause subject. Thus, it is not used with such verbs as *fáte* ‘boil (intr.)’, *dúfen* ‘go out (about fire)’, *jéle* ‘laugh’, *bòyi* ‘fall’ etc. The only way for a passive marker to combine with an intransitive verb is to be added after causativization, i.e. after the verb is made transitive, for example:

- (17) *jéè bati la-fáte-ma Fánta bólo*
 water-ART PRF CAUS-boil-PASS Fanta to
 ‘The water was boiled by Fanta’.

So, with respect to the behavior of the passive marker it is important to distinguish the following two classes: lexically intransitive verbs which don’t combine with the passive marker vs. lexically transitive verbs which do combine with the passive marker. But apart from it there is one more class of verbs – the labile verbs. These are verbs which can be used both transitively and intransitively without any formal change. To this class belong such verbs as *bila* ‘plunge’, *bintan* ‘burn’ *káti* ‘break’ and some others. Labile verbs allow the addition of the passive marker, so, a transitive construction with a labile verb can be formed in two ways – with a special marker or without it. These two types are usually opposed in meaning, cf.:

- (17) *lógɔ bólé bati káti (fɔ̀nè là)*
 tree hand.ART PRF break wind.ART LOC
 ‘The branch was broken (by the wind)’.

- (18) *lógɔ bólé bati káti-ma (Músa bólo)*
 tree hand.ART PRF break-PASS Myca to
 ‘The branch was broken (by Musa)’.

The most widespread type of lability is the decausative lability. Just like in the case with morphologically marked decausativization there is a semantic difference between the transitive and intransitive usage: there are two participants, namely, agentive and patientive in the transitive construction and only patientive participant in the intransitive construction, as in the example (17). The semantic properties of this type of lability are responsible for the fact that it can encompass only a limited number of verbal lexemes. A verb can be labile decausatively, only if there are no agent-oriented component in the lexical meaning of the verb which are essential to it, in other words, the verb has to allow the elimination of the agentive participant from the situation described by it.

But it turned out that the lability in North-eastern Kakbe dialects extends wider than the class of verbs that can be decausativized. For example, the passive marker is not required in intransitive constructions for the following verbs: *kára* ‘sew’, *kàran* ‘read’, *dàmu* ‘eat’, *jànfa* ‘deceive’, though all of them denote situations unimaginable without an agentive participant. The question is, what the meaning of the unmarked intransitive construction with such a verb can be.

One of the possible meanings is fullness and thoroughness of an action, for example:

- (19) *básè bati fɔ̀fi*
 drug.ART PRF grind
 ‘The drug is ground into powder – completely, thoroughly’.

This sentence differs from the corresponding sentence with the passive marker *básè bati fɔ̀fi-ma* only in that in the latter case there is no additional meaning ‘completely, thoroughly’. Let us look at some more examples with this meaning:

- (20) *sígaretè bati fiime*
 cigarette.ART PRF smoke
 ‘The room is filled with somke – many cigarettes have been smoked’.
- (21) *kinè bati dàmu*
 food-ART PRF eat
 ‘Every has eaten their plenty – a lot of food has been eaten’.

Below is the list of verbs from the above mentioned database which get the meaning of completeness and thoroughness in the unmarked intransitive construction (apart from those verbs that have already been mentioned):

gbàngban ‘mend’ – ‘be well mended’,
gbàsi ‘beat’ – ‘be strongly beaten’,
kàra ‘sew’ – ‘be well sewn’,
kàran ‘read’ – ‘be well, attentively read’,
dáa ‘make, manufacture’ – ‘be well manufactured’.

So, in case with all these verbs the intransitive unmarked construction differs in meaning from the construction with a passive marker. But there are such verbs, for which this difference is not evident, for example the verb *hólli* ‘tell’:

(22) *tàlèè* *bati* *hólli* / *hólli-ma*
 fairytales.ART PRF tell tell-PASS
 ‘The story was told’.

Below are given those verbs from the database, for which there is supposedly no difference between the intransitive unmarked form and the form with the passive marker:

bóso ‘skin an animal’, *fàsa* ‘kneak’, *fòyi* ‘sow’, *kòlo* ‘grow (children / animal)’, *hólli* ‘tell’, *hólлите* ‘declare’, *húruge* ‘fence in, enclose’, *húule* ‘aim at’, *jíbinε* ‘make worry’, *júgge* ‘prop up’, *killi* ‘tickle’, *kín* ‘bite’, *kíti* ‘tie’, *ébbi* ‘measure’, *fàamu* ‘understand’, *màbóó* ‘move away’, *jànfá* ‘deceive’, *jàabi* ‘answer’.

The latter two types of lability considered above, i.e. the lability with the meaning of completeness and thoroughness in the intransitive construction and the lability with no semantic difference between the transitive and intransitive construction, are very close to each other. The meaning component that I somewhat conventionally call “fullness of the action” and that distinguishes the unmarked intransitive form from the passive one is not always evident as to whether it is there or not. In some cases it is difficult to claim with certitude whether it is present in the semantics of the intransitive construction, or whether the meaning of the construction is equal to that of the passive one. Thus, the example (19) can probably simply be translated ‘the medicine is ground into powder’. Moreover, it will be shown below that these two types of lability share very important formal properties, distinguishing them from the decausative lability. For that reason further on I will refer to these two types together as “quasipassive lability”.

Unlike decausative lability, in case with quasipassive lability there seem to be no restrictions on the meaning of the verbal lexeme. Nevertheless it does not spread over all transitive verbs as it is the case with passive lability. As it has already been said above, in the Northwestern Kakabe dialects there is a big class of transitive verbs that can be used in intransitive construction only with the passive marker. The quasipassive lability of the Northwestern dialects differs in many ways from the passive lability which is attested in the Southeastern Kakabe dialects, in Bamana and in a number of other Mande languages. One important distinction has already been mentioned above: passive lability is not a lexical but rather a syntactic phenomenon, it is not concerned with the lexical meaning of the verb and any verb which is syntactically transitive is characterized by it. On the contrary, the quasipassive lability spreads only over a certain lexical group of verbs

Another distinction lies in that the quasipassive lability has restricted compatibility with TAM markers. The passive lability is possible both in perfective and in imperfective contexts:

(23) *dàga* *bati* *kòo*
 cauldron PRF wash
 ‘The cauldron has been washed’.

(24) *dàga* *bi* *kòo-la*
 cauldron IPFV wash-IPFV

‘The cauldron is being washed’.

As for the quasipassive lability, it is possible only in perfective contexts, and in imperfective contexts there is required a passive marker:

(25) *táabalè bati gbàngban*
table.ART PRF mend
‘The table has been (properly) mended’.

(26) *táabalè bi gbàngban-na-ma *gbàngban-na*
table-ART IPFV mend-IPFV-PASS
‘The table is being mended’.

Within the limits of Northwestern Kakabe dialects the quasipassive lability is opposed by the same distinctive feature to the decausative lability, which is possible both in perfective and in imperfective contexts – just like the passive lability of South-eastern dialects:

(27) *kùta bati fàra*
clothes PRF tear
‘The clothes have torn’.

(28) *kùta bi fàra-la*
clothes IPFV tear-IPFV
‘The clothes are being torn’.

We can draw a preliminary conclusion from that which has been said above about interaction between TAM semantics and the behavior of the verbs belonging to different lexical classes. In the perfective construction with the predicative marker *bati* the verbs with quasipassive lability behave the same way as the verbs with decausative lability. Contrary to that, in imperfective contexts with the bipartite predicative marker *bi ...-la* verbs with quasipassive lability behave differently from the verbs with decausative lability – just like transitive verbs they require the passive marker to be used in an intransitive construction.

My database systematically provides information about the usage of verbs in the following four TAM contexts:

- constructions with the predicative marker *bi ...-la* and imperfective meaning;
- constructions with resultative participle *-len* in predicative function;
- constructions with the verbal suffix *-ta* with the semantics of non-actual past;
- constructions with the predicative marker *bati* with the perfective semantics.

These four contexts split into two pairs according to the way they influence the behavior of verbs with quasipassive lability. In constructions with *bati* and *-len* such verbs are used intransitively without any special markers, i.e. they are labile, but in the intransitive constructions with *bi ...-la* and *-ta* they require a passive marker. The examples with *bati* and *bi ...-la* have already been given above (27) and (28), now let us illustrate the other two types of constructions:

-len constructions: verbs of quasipassive lability do not require passive marker to be used intransitively:

(29) *táabalè gbàngban-den*
table-ART mend-PC.RES
‘The table is (properly) mended’.

The same holds for decausative verbs: *waata bi fonti-len* ‘The mat is spread’.

-ta constructions: verbs of quasipassive lability require passive marker to be used intransitively:

- (30) *nìngéè kiti-ta-ma (*kiti-ta) lógè là*
 cow.ART tie-PST-PASS tie-PASS tree.ART LOC
 ‘The cow was tied to a tree’.

Decausative lability verbs can be used with the suffix *-ta* without the marker of passive, cf.: *kùta fàra-ta* ‘the clothes tore’. The addition of the passive marker is also possible, and such construction will have a passive interpretation *kùta fàra-ta-ma* ‘the clothes were torn (by somebody)’.

The similarity in behavior displayed by *bati* and *-len* is apparently due to the resemblance of their semantics – these both TAM markers have perfective meaning. As for the pair *bi .. -la* and *-ta* the nature of relation between them is less evident. Probably, their commonness lies in that they both lack the semantics of perfectivity and are both used to denote an action without any resulting state, which would be relevant for the moment of the speech. The *bi .. -la* construction denotes an action which is in process at the moment of speech (and thus, there is no resulting state yet), and the construction with *-ta* denotes an action which was done some time ago and its result is already cancelled or is no more relevant. The meaning of irrelevance of the action is present both in constructions with the passive marker and without it:

- (31) *káalisè fàtan-ta-ma (*fatan-ta)*
 money-ART divide-PST-PASS
 ‘The money was divided (since then it may have been already spent)’.

- (32) *jèè fàte-ta*
 ‘The water boiled (now it may already be cold)’.

- (33) *déndè fàlgite-ta-ma(*fàlgite-ta)*
 child.DIM.ART correct-PST-PASS
 ‘The child was corrected in his mistake (that does not imply that as a result he has learnt how to do right)’.

- (34) *bónè fìtan-ta-ma (*fìtan-ta)*
 hous.ART sweep-PST-PASS
 ‘The house was swept (now it may be dirty again)’.

The *-ta* form contrasts with the participle *-len*, which implies the presence of a relevant result: *bónè fìtan-den* ‘the house is swept (⇒ it is clean now)’ *jèè fàte-len* ‘the water is boiled (⇒ it is still hot)’. The semantics of the predicative marker *bati* also contains the aspect of relevance of the action for the present moment, though it is less conspicuous than in the case with the resultative participle. Thus, the contexts with *bati* and *-len* are opposed to the contexts with *bi .. -la* and *-ta* as constructions implying the semantics of perfectivity.

The above said allows us to describe quasipassive lability of the Northwestern Kakabe dialects as a certain variety of passive-stative lability. This is well in line with the fact that one of the subtypes of quasipassive lability, namely the one with the meaning of fullness of the completed action, is directly linked with the semantics of resultativeness.

In general, all the verbs of the Northwestern Kakabe dialect can be divided into four groups, corresponding to the way how they are used in intransitive constructions in different TAM contexts – in the original or in the derived form, i.e. with the passive marker. This division of the verbal lexicon is given below in the form of a table. Across the table are given the four TAM contexts from the database, and down the table are the four classes of verbs. The symbol Ø in the cells signifies that the verbs is used intransitively in the non-derived form, and the presence of *-ma* means that the verb is used intransitively with the marker of passive.

Usage of the passive marker *-ma* in intransitive constructions with verbs of different transitivity classes

	intransitive verbs	decausative lability verbs	quasipassive lability verbs	transitive verbs
<i>bati</i>	∅	∅ / -ma	∅ / -ma	-ma
<i>-len</i>	∅	∅ / -ma	∅ / -ma	-ma
<i>bi ... -la</i>	∅	∅ / -ma	-ma	-ma
<i>-ta</i>	∅	∅ / -ma	-ma	-ma

So, we see that the intransitive verbs can not combine with the passive marker in any context. The cells corresponding to labile verbs (of the both types of lability) are filled with the symbols ∅ / -ma, which stand for the fact that they can be used intransitively both with and without the passive marker – in the former case the intransitive construction is derived from the transitive one by the means of morphological passivization. Very importantly, there appears a difference between the two types of lability: for the decausative lability verbs these two possibilities (i.e. to be used intransitively with or without the passive marker) exist in all the four contexts, whereas in the case with the quasipassive lability verbs it holds only for two contexts out of four. Finally, transitive verbs need a passive marker to be used intransitively in all contexts.

Conclusions

North-western Kakabe dialects have morphological passive, marked by the suffix *-ma*. Passivization is very productive in Kakabe and all types of transitive constructions can be subject to it. The suffix *-ma* reveal a very curious interaction with lability, also present in the Northwestern Kakabe dialects. There is decausative lability, which allows certain verbs to be used intransitively both in the non-derived form or with the passive marker (these two types are different in meaning). But it turned out that the class of labile verbs is broader than the class of verbs whose lexical semantics allow them to undergo decausativization. There is a class of verbs characterized by quasipassive lability, whose unmarked intransitive form is very close in semantics to the passive form, but has an additional stative or resultative meaning. For this reason this type of lability is possible only in perfective contexts.

Abbreviations:

ART – referential article; CAUS – causative; IPFV – imperfective; LOC – locative; PL – plural; POSS – possessive linker; PC.RES – resultative participle; PST – past; PRF – perfective; REFL – reflexive; SG – singular.

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