108. Antipassive Constructions

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1.   Introduction

An antipassive construction is a derived detransitivized construction with a two-place predicate, related to a corresponding transitive construction whose predicate is the same lexical item. In the basic transitive construction, the patient-like argument is realized as a direct object; in the antipassive construction, that argument is either suppressed (left implicit) or realized as an oblique complement. The term *antipassive* (Silverstein 1972) was coined to indicate that the construction is a mirror image of the passive: in the passive, the suppressed or demoted argument is the agent-like argument, in the antipassive, the patient-like argument. An example of a transitive/antipassive alternation is given in (1a–b).

(1)   Chukchi (Kozinsky et al. 1988: 652)
   a. *ʔaaček-a   kimitʔ-ən   ne-nlʔetet-ən*
      youth-ERG   load-ABS   3PL.SUBJ-carry-AOR.3SG.OBJ
      'The young men carried away the/a load.' (transitive)
   b. *ʔaaček-ət   ine-nlʔetet-gʔe-t   kimitʔ-e*
      youth-ABS   ANTIP-carry-AOR.3SG.SUBJ-PL   load-INSTR
      'The young men carried away the/a load.' (antipassive)

In (1a), the transitive verb 'carry' agrees with the ergative subject and absolutive object. In (1b), the verb is marked with the antipassive prefix *ine-* and no longer agrees with the object; the object is now expressed by an oblique case (instrumental).

A verb in the antipassive is derived from the corresponding transitive verb, often with the help of overt morphology. For example, in (1b), the verb *nlʔetet-* bears the dedicated antipassive prefix *ine-*. Languages also make use of

antipassive markers that are syncretic with other categories, thus functioning simultaneously as (e.g.) detransitivizers or aspect/modality markers.

Some languages show syncretism between the morphology of the antipassive and the morphology of other detransitivizing operations, most commonly reflexivization (e.g., in Pama-Nyungan languages of Australia). The antipassive verb can take on other formal characteristics of intransitive verbs; one such common characteristic is the change in the agreement pattern, as illustrated by the Chukchi examples above. In some languages (for example, in Mayan: England 1983b; 1988), a change in verbal agreement may be the sole indication of the antipassive. Finally, there is a correlation between the antipassive and the imperfective/irrealis (see §4.3).

2. Definition of values

Given that our knowledge of variation in antipassive constructions is far from complete, it is possible that some languages which are identified on the map as having no antipassive will ultimately be reanalyzed as having an antipassive construction.

Among the languages which have the antipassive construction, the major division is between the type that requires the patient-like argument to be unexpressed (the **implicit argument type**) and the type where the patient-like argument can be expressed by an **oblique complement**. The following values are represented on the map:

@	1.	Antipassive with patient-like argument left implicit	18
@	2.	Antipassive with patient-like argument expressed as oblique complement	30
@	3.	No antipassive	146
		total	194

As shown on the main map, the antipassive is found across different language families and geographical areas; the antipassive with an oblique complement seems to be more widespread than the antipassive with an implicit argument.

3.   The antipassive construction and ergativity

One of the vexing questions concerning the distribution of the antipassive is its correlation with **ergativity** (see chapters 98–100 for ergative constructions). Some authors insist on the link between the antipassive and ergativity (Silverstein 1976; Dixon 1979; Spencer 1991: 24), while others propose that the antipassive is not limited to ergative languages (Heath 1976; Postal 1977; Davies 1984; Givón 1984; Lidz 1996). Table 1 lists all the languages of the sample with antipassives; it shows no principled correlation between ergativity and the antipassive. The transitive/antipassive alternation is more visible in an ergative language, where it typically involves a change in subject case marking from ergative to absolutive, as in (1a–b) above.

Table 1. The antipassive construction and case marking

ACCUSATIVE	ERGATIVE
Acoma, Cahuilla, Canela-Krahô, Chamorro, Choctaw, Comanche, Cree, Kiowa, Koyraboro Senni, Krongo, Lango, Lavukaleve, Nez Perce, Ojibwa, Paiwan, Sanuma, Thompson	Archi, Bezhta, Cakchiquel, Central Yup'ik, Chechen, Chukchi, Copainalá Zoque, Diyari, Djaru, Dyirbal, Embaloh, Godoberi, Gooniyandi, Halkomelem, Hunzib, Jakaltek, Kabardian, Kapampangan, Lai, Lak, Mam, Mangarrayi, Päri, Tsez, Tzutujil, Wardaman, Warrungu, West Greenlandic, Yidiny, Yukulta,

4.   Theoretical issues

4.1. Productivity of the antipassive construction.   Antipassives often apply only to a certain subset of transitive predicates (Gibson 1980; Chung 1998: 39). Productive antipassives show genealogical and areal clustering, as indicated on the inset map: they are found in some Mayan, Salishan, Nakh-Daghestanian, Austronesian, and Australian languages.

@	1.	Productive		24
@	2.	Partially productive		14
@	3.	Not productive		2
@	4.	No antipassive		146
			total	186

Values of Map 108A. Productivity of the Antipassive Construction

[Map 108A about here]

4.2. Morphological marking.   The variation observed with respect to the marking of antipassives has to do with whether or not the language has a **dedicated antipassive marker**. A dedicated marker can often be associated diachronically with other functions (e.g., middle, reflexive), so what matters is its nonsyncretic synchronic status. In our sample, languages with a dedicated antipassive marker include: Acoma, Chamorro, Chukchi, Comanche, Diyari, Dyirbal, Godoberi, Gooniyandi, West Greenlandic, Halkomelem, Hunzib, Jakaltek, Kiowa ("Type 2" antipassive, see Watkins 1984: 140–141, 149–150), Koyraboro Senni, Krongo, Lango, Mam, Eastern Ojibwa, Tzutujil, Warrungu, Copainalá Zoque.

        In languages that have several different antipassive markers, these markers can co-occur (or "stack"). Stacking is

found in Chukchi (the productive antipassive prefix *ine-* and the semi-productive antipassive suffix *-tko-*, Kozinsky et al. 1988: 661); and in Halkomelem (the middle antipassive suffix *-əm/ -eʔəm-* and the activity suffix *-els-*, Gerdts and Hukari in press). The semantic contrast between the stacked and the single antipassive is, however, unclear.

4.3. Semantic and discourse functions of the antipassive. The semantic import of the antipassive has to do with the **affectedness** and **individuation** of the patient.

The use of a prototypical transitive verb entails that the event denoted by that verb causes a change of state in the object participant (Tsunoda 1981; Hopper and Thompson 1980; Van Valin 1991; Dowty 1991, among many others). The semantic function of the antipassive is to cancel such an entailment; this correlates with the marking of the patient as an oblique complement. Comparable effects can be found in the English *conative alternation,* whereby the referent of a direct object is construed as affected while the referent of a prepositional complement is not (Levin 1993: 5-11):

(2) a. *The hunter shot the bear* (entailment: the bear died)
    b. *The hunter shot at the bear* (the bear may not be affected at all)

If there is no affected participant which allows one to measure out the effects of the event (the *incremental theme*, Dowty 1991), the event itself is interpreted as incomplete. This accounts for the high correlation between the use of the antipassive and the habitual, durative, iterative, and imperfective (Tchekhoff 1987; Cooreman 1994; Dixon 1994; Dowty 1991; van den Berg 2001: 60). A correlation between the use of antipassive and irrealis is found in Yukulta (Keen 1983).

Compared to the transitive construction, the patient participant in the antipassive construction is lower in

individuation (or identifiability). A lower degree of individuation may be manifested by a number of structural possibilities, summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Low individuation of the object in the antipassive

Antipassive preferred or required if the object is:	Attested in
Plural	Bezhta (Kibrik 1981)
Indefinite	West Greenlandic (Kalmár 1979; Seiler 1978; Bittner 1987)
Non-specific	Archi (Kibrik et al.1977)
Generic	Diyari (Austin 1981)
Implicit argument	Mayan languages (Smith-Stark 1978; England 1988)

A referent with low individuation is less likely to be maintained in discourse; this explains why the antipassive is often used to introduce episodic referents (Polinskaja and Nedjalkov 1987; Bittner 1987), whose identification is not crucial for communication.

However, there are languages (e.g., Yukulta) where the antipassive is required when the object is expressed by a first or second person pronoun, which are arguably the highest on the scale of individuation. Such a subtype contrasts with the subtype exemplified by Halkomelem, where the antipassive is impossible with a first or second person object (Gerdts 1988: 157). This variation supports the conclusion, made by several researchers, that the semantic and discourse functions of antipassives can and do differ across languages (Comrie 1978; Heath 1976; Cooreman 1988, 1994).

4.4. Structural functions of the antipassive. In a number of languages, only a particular grammatical function (subject, object, etc.) or case form can serve as the syntactic pivot for

extraction, reference tracking across clauses, and other grammatical processes. Antipassivization makes the sole argument of the detransitivized verb accessible to relevant grammatical processes; in many ergative languages, where the absolutive is the pivot for all or most grammatical processes, antipassivization allows the subject to occur in the absolutive case. To illustrate the syntactic function of antipassives, let us turn to more Chukchi examples. In Chukchi, relativization is possible only for absolutive arguments (Polinsky 1994); thus, the subject of intransitives and the direct object can relativize directly, as shown by (3) for the subject absolutive. In order to relativize the subject of a transitive (4), it first needs to be converted into an absolutive, via antipassivization (5a); the subject of the antipassive is then relativized, (5b).

(3) a. *ŋinqey   pəkir-gʔi*
         boy.ABS   arrive-AOR.3SG
         'The boy arrived.'
     b. [*pəkərə-lʔ-ən*]   *ŋinqey*
         arrive-PARTICIPLE-ABS   boy
         'the boy that arrived'

(4) a. *tumg-e   ŋinqey   rəyegtetew-nin*
         friend-ERG   boy.ABS   save-AOR.3SG.3SG
         'The friend saved the boy.'
     b. * [*ŋinqey   rəyagtala-lʔ-ən*]   *tumgətum*
         boy.ABS   save-PARTICIPLE-ABS   friend
         ('the friend that saved the boy')

(5) a. *tumgətum   ŋinqey-ək   ine-nyegtele-gʔi*
         friend.ABS   boy-LOC   ANTI-save-AOR.3SG
         'The friend saved the boy.'
     b. [*ŋinqey-ək ine-nyegtelewə-lʔ-ən*]   *tumgətum*
         boy-LOC   ANTI-save-PARTICIPLE-ABS friend
         'the friend that saved the boy'

The antipassive also establishes unambiguous subject-subject coreference across clauses; such use of the antipassive is observed in Australian languages (Tsunoda 1988; Cooreman 1994), Chukchi (Kozinsky et al. 1988: 689–697) and in Mayan (England 1983b).