Andrew Simpson and Hồ Hao Tám

6 Vietnamese and the typology of passive constructions*

Passive-type constructions formed with bị in Vietnamese are compared to the bèi passive of Mandarin Chinese and it is shown that there are both strong syntactic similarities between bị and bèi sentences and also significant differences. The existence of subject gap “passives” with bị in Vietnamese, in particular, is shown to impact attempts to arrive at a cross-linguistic definition of passive in terms of a set of minimal shared properties, and calls into question whether “the passive” indeed exists as a meaningful and definable linguistic construction. The chapter also considers how to account for the syntactic licensing of subject gap passive forms in Vietnamese but their exclusion from Chinese when it seems that appropriate pragmatic-semantic conditions for their occurrence are regularly met within both languages in bèi/bị forms.

Keywords: passive, adversity passive, Chinese, Control, null operator constructions

1 Introduction

This chapter examines passive-type constructions in Vietnamese in comparison with similar structures found in Mandarin Chinese and explores the significance of Vietnamese for a general typology of passive, both from formal and functional perspectives. Much interesting research has been carried out on the syntactic structure of Mandarin passive constructions in recent years, with significant results described in Ting (1998), Huang (1999), and Tang (2001). Huang (1999), in particular, places modern Mandarin bèi-constructions in a broad comparative perspective, incorporating insights from the diachronic development of bèi

An early version of this chapter was presented at the 20th North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics held in 2008 in Columbus, Ohio, and appears in the on-line proceedings of that conference. The contents of the chapter was subsequently developed further and presented at the UCLA Conference on Southeast Asian Languages in 2009, and the Conference on the Linguistics of Vietnamese held at the University of Stuttgart in 2009. Many thanks to the audiences at all three conferences for their suggestions and comments on aspects of the chapter as it has evolved over time.
passives, and the synchronic realization of passive in non-Mandarin varieties of Chinese (Cantonese and Southern Min) as well as other East Asian languages such as Japanese and Korean. Passive-type structures in Vietnamese show much obvious similarity to those in Mandarin, and seem to be closer to Chinese in surface structure than the passive in Japanese and Korean are. In order to position the passive-type structure found in Vietnamese in a broader, cross-linguistic perspective, and chart the properties of this construction present in Vietnamese, the chapter probes how passive-type constructions in Vietnamese are both similar and also different from its apparent ‘closest cousin’ – modern Mandarin běi constructions, and discusses how the existence of certain forms in Vietnamese requires a reassessment of the typology of passive structures presented in recent works focusing on East Asian languages. A consideration of the variety of passive-related structures in Vietnamese, in particular those involving subject-to-subject dependencies, raises questions concerning the limits of ‘passive’ as a definable construction.

The chapter is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews a number of important defining characteristics of the běi passive constructions in Mandarin Chinese. Section 3 then shows how bě structures in Vietnamese show many clear similarities to Mandarin běi passives, suggesting that the analysis of bě and běi passives should be fundamentally the same, despite a difference in the degree to which indirect passives appear to be available in the two languages. Section 4 focuses more squarely on ways in which Vietnamese and Chinese passive constructions show further surface differences and highlights both the use of different passive ‘auxiliary’ verbs and the occurrence of intransitive passives in Vietnamese. This leads on to a re-consideration of properties that may be taken to be universal to the passive in section 5, and how the patterns in Vietnamese impact on cross-linguistic characterizations of the passive. Section 5 also considers what syntactic factors may be responsible for the parametric variation between Chinese and Vietnamese, and why the range of forms found in Vietnamese are not all permitted to occur in Chinese. A summary of the chapter and its cross-linguistic consequences is provided in section 6.

2 Passive in Chinese

The Mandarin běi construction has been well described in a number of works in recent years, for example Shi (1997), Ting (1998), Huang (1999), and Tang (2001). Huang (1999) identifies a number of important syntactic properties of sentences such as (1) which support a bi-clausal analysis of Chinese passives, in which běi occurs as a predicate embedding a second clause.

1. Zāngsān běi [Lǐsī dà-le].
  Zāngsān běi Lǐsī hít-ASP
  ‘Zāngsān was hit by Lǐsī.’

First, it is noted that a subject-oriented adverb such as gāi ‘deliberately’ can occur preceding běi and be construed as referring to the action of the initial NP in the sentence (Zāngsān in (1)), identifying this NP as an Agent. This is taken to suggest that the initial NP may be base-generated as the Agent subject of a higher clause, rather than being raised to this position from a lower object position, where it would receive a Patient theta role. Movement between two independent theta positions is assumed to be unavailable due to restrictions imposed by the Theta Criterion.

2. Zāngsān sī gāi běi Lǐsī dà-de.
  Zāngsān BÈI deliberately běi Lǐsī hít-DE
  ‘Zāngsān deliberately got hit by Lǐsī.’

Second, it is observed that either the NP preceding bě or the NP following běi can bind the subject-oriented anaphor zǐ in sentences such as (3). The interpretations available in (3) therefore suggest that both the NPs Zāngsān and Lǐsī are in subject positions, and hence that (3) contains two clauses, each with its own subject, as schematized in (4).

3. Zāngsān běi Lǐsī guǎn zài zǐ in jī-ASP
  Zāngsān běi Lǐsī shut in self’s house-in
  ‘Zāngsān was locked up by Lǐsī in his/her own house.’

4. [clause-1 NP₁] BÈI [clause-2 NP₂] V_

This leads to an analysis in Huang (1999) in which the ‘gap’ position present in examples such as (1–3) results from movement of an empty operator base-generated in the object-of-verb position to a clause-initial position, where it converts the subordinate clause into a secondary predicate construed as referring to

---

1 For discussion of the subject-oriented nature of the Chinese anaphor zǐ, see Huang, Li and Li 2009: 337, fn. 8), and Cole, Hermon and Sung (1990), Pan (2001).
the subject of bèi, through co-indexation of this NP and the empty operator, as in (5):

(5) a. Zhăngsan bèi [Op₁ Lisi dă-le t₁]
     
     b. NP₁ BÉI [Op₁ NP₂ V t₁]

The operator-trace dependency posited in passive sentences such as (1–3) is argued to be potentially unbounded and able to span multiple clauses, as illustrated in (6). It is also constrained by syntactic islands, as shown in (7). Both of these observations support the view that passive sentences may involve A'-movement – for Huang (1999) the A'-movement of an empty operator (cf. Browning 1987; Chomsky 1977).

(6) Zhăngsan bèi Lisi pài jìngchá zhú-zǒu-le.
Zhangsan BÉI Lisi send police grab-away-ASP

‘Lisi sent the police to seize Zhangsan and take him away.’

(7) *Zhăngsan bèi wǒ tōngzhī Lisi bā [[xì zànměi _ de shū] dōu mǎi-zǒu-le.
Zhangsan BÉI I inform Lisi BA praise DE book all buy-off-ASP

‘I told Lisi to buy up all the books that praised Zhangsan.’

Such a conclusion receives further support from two other patterns. First, the particle suǒ, which otherwise only occurs in relative clauses (and hence is associated with A'-operator movement), may occur in bèi sentences of the form considered so far, where bèi is followed by an overt NP agent. This is illustrated in (8).

(8) Zhèxiē shìqíng bù néng bèi tā suǒ liǎoqǐ.
   these thing not can BÉI he SUǒ understand
   ‘These things cannot be understood by him.’

Second, it is possible for a resumptive pronoun to occur in the position of the object gap, when a frequency adverbial also appears, as shown in (9). The potential occurrence of resumptive pronouns is a property which is cross-linguistically associated with instances of A'-movement rather than A-movement (Hornstein 2001).

(9) Zhăngsan bèi Lisi dă-le tā yǐ-xià.
Zhangsan BÉI Lisi hit-ASP him one-time

‘Zhangsan was hit by Lisi once.’

The above-noted patterns all characterize bèi sentences in which an agent subject of the main descriptive verb is overtly present in the sentence. In addition to such forms, Mandarin also allows for there to be no overt realization of the agent of the main verb, as illustrated in (10):

(10) Zhăngsan bèi dă-le.
Zhangsan BÉI hit-ASP

‘Zhangsan was hit.’

Interestingly, such agentless passives, which Huang (1999) refers to as the ‘short passive’ form, have certain different syntactic properties from the ‘long passive’, where an agent is present. These differences, observed in Huang (1999), are summarized in (11), and are argued to call for a somewhat different analysis from that of the long passive:

(11) PROPERTIES OF THE MANDARIN SHORT PASSIVE (Huang 1999)
   a. No resumptive pronouns (even when frequency phrases appear).
   b. No particle suǒ possible.
   c. No unbounded dependencies possible.

Because subject-oriented agentive adverbs are possible in the short passive, as in the long passive, Huang concludes that the pre-bèi NP is base-generated as a subject in a higher clause and related to the gap position by an occurrence of A'-movement (hence no resumptive pronouns, suǒ, or unbounded dependencies). In the short passive, bèi is suggested to select for a VP construed as a secondary predicate of the pre-bèi NP through co-indexation of a PRO which undergoes movement from the object gap position to SpecVP, as indicated in (12a) and (12b) (from Huang, Li and Li 2009: 134).²

² The moved element is posited to be PRO rather than pro due to the obligatory control property that its reference can only be controlled by the subject of bèi.
(12) a. Zhāngsān, bèi [v PRO, dā-le tı]

b. 

Both long and short passive constructions are consequently analyzed as having bi-clausal structures, with a simple difference in the size of the constituent that occurs as the secondary predicate combined with bèi – either a full clause with an overt subject and the occurrence of A′-operator movement, or a VP with A-movement of a PRO.

3 Passive-type structures in Vietnamese

Turning now to consider Vietnamese, sentences with a passive meaning similar to the Chinese examples in section 2 are in many cases constructed with the morpheme bèi, which is likely to have been borrowed from Chinese bèi. As in Mandarin, there are both ‘long’ and ‘short’ passive patterns in Vietnamese, and the appearance of the agent NP associated with the main verb is quite optional:

(13) Nam bèi Nga dánh.
    Nam bèi Nga hit
    ‘Nam was hit by Nga.’

(14) Nam bèi dánh.
    Nam bèi hit
    ‘Nam was hit.’

Similar to Chinese (as pointed out for Mandarin by Huang 1999), the passive morpheme and the following agent NP cannot undergo any repositioning as a sequence (example 15), hence do not pattern like a PP constituent, unlike English passive ‘by-phrases’.

(15) *Bí Nga Nam đánh.
    Bí Nga Nam hit
    Int.: ‘Nam was hit by Nga.’

    Combined with the observation that the NP following bèi is able to bind an anaphor, as shown in (16), this would seem to favor a bi-clausal analysis of bèi-sentences in which bèi embeds a subordinate clause (at least in cases of overt-agent long passive structures). Anaphors such as mình are regularly only bound by subjects, as illustrated in (17). The post-bèi NP in passive sentences like (16) therefore patterns like a subject, similar to the post-bèi NP in Mandarin:

(16) Nam, bèi Nga, nhót trong phong ngụ của mình.
    Nam bèi Nga lock in room sleep of self
    ‘Nam was locked by Nga in his/her own room.’

(17) Nga, nhót Nam, trong phong ngụ của mình.
    Nga lock Nam in room sleep of self
    ‘Nga locked Nam in her own (Nga’s) room.’

Long passive sentences in Vietnamese are also characterized by restrictions on the embedding of a Patient gap position which are typical of A′-dependencies, as in Mandarin. Long-distance dependencies similar to those in the bèi-passive are possible, but only in long-passive structures (i.e. where the Agent is overt as in (18)), and never into island constituents (not illustrated here).

(18) Nam bèi *(Nga) báo cảnh sát đến bất.
    Nam bèi Nga call police come arrest
    ‘Nga called the police to come and arrest Nga.’

    With regard to a range of passive-like sentence forms, Vietnamese therefore shows patterns which clearly parallel those found in Chinese. This seems to suggest that the analysis of passive phenomena in Vietnamese and Chinese should be similar, and a bi-clausal treatment of both Vietnamese and Chinese appears to be warranted, at least in the instance of overt agent long passive structures.3

3 With regard to the possible occurrence of agentive, subject-oriented adverbs such as ‘deliberately’ in the higher clause of bèi sentences, Vietnamese seems to permit this as long as a modal element such as muốn also occurs. At this point it is not clear whether muốn should
Parallels between Vietnamese and Chinese also extend further, with the occurrence of 'indirect passive' sentences in both languages. The term 'indirect passive' is commonly used to refer to instances of passive in which the 'passivized' surface subject does not correspond to any direct argument NP of the main descriptive verb such as the direct object, or indirect object. In both Chinese (19–21) and Vietnamese (22–24), it is found that the subject of bèi/bị may co-refer with the possessor of the object of the main verb, when the action of the verb clearly affects the possessor through action being applied to the object, which is frequently a body-part or some item closely associated with the subject:

(19) Lão Zhang bèi dâ-diâo-le yâ-chíd.
    old Zhang bèi hit-lose-ASP teeth
    ‘Zhang had his teeth knocked out.’ (Shi 1997)

(20) Tâ bèi jìng-chá mòshào-le zhâ-zháo.
    he bèi police confiscate-ASP driving-license
    ‘He had his driving license confiscated by the police.’ (Shi 1997)

(21) Zhângsàn bèi tã-fêî dâ-stlé fúqín.
    Zhangsan bèi bandit hit-dead-ASP father
    ‘Zhangsan’s father was killed.’ (Huang 1999)

(22) Tôi bèi Nga làm gãy mot tâng tay.
    I bèi Nga make snap 1 finger
    ‘Nga broke one of my fingers.’

(23) Nga bèi Nam giãt tó-cí.
    Nga bèi Nam pull hair
    ‘Nga had her hair pulled by Nam.’

(24) Nam bèi cânh sât tích thu ra dô-cúa Nam.
    Nam bèi police confiscate radio of Nam
    ‘Nam had his radio confiscated by the police.’ (Le 1976)

The full distribution of indirect passives in Vietnamese is, however, rather more restricted than that in Mandarin (and Taiwanese; Huang 1999), in two distinct ways. First, where the object of the main verb is a kin term and refers to a relative of the subject (e.g., ‘son’, ‘father’ etc), an indirect passive structure is licensed in Chinese (ex. 21) but not in Vietnamese (even with a resumptive possessor):

(25) *Nga bèi một người gái xoê giét ba (của Nga).
    Nga bèi 1 CL gangster kill father (of Nga)
    Intended: ‘A gangster killed Nga’s father.’

(26) *Nga bèi Ông thấy gãy phét con trai (của Nga).
    Nga bèi Ong teacher criticize son (of Nga)
    Intended: ‘Ong’s son was criticized by teacher Ong.’

Second, Chinese permits the occurrence of certain ‘adversity passives’ in which the subject of bèi does not appear to correspond to any obvious argument or possessor gap position in the clause following bèi, as for example in:

(27) Líí yùu bèi Wângwú jïchâ-le yi-zhì quânlê-dí.
    Líí again bèi Wangwu hit-ASP 1-CL home-run
    ‘Líí again had Zhangsan hit a home run on him.’ (Huang 1999)

(28) Wô bèi tâ zhêmé yî-zoú, jù shînêm dôu kàn-bôujîn-le.
    I bèi he thus one hit then everything all can not see-ASP
    ‘As soon as he sat this way on me, I couldn’t see anything at all.’ (Huang 1999)

This kind of passive structure licensed purely by the adverse effect of the action on the subject does not seem to be possible in Vietnamese:

(29) *Cânh sât bèi tên sât nhân rôn thoát.
    police bèi murderer escape
    Int.: ‘The murdered escaped from the police (and this adversely affected the police).’

In section 5, we will return to consider how such differences might be accounted for in an extension of the analysis of indirect passives proposed in Huang (1999). First, though, we will present two other sets of differences...
between Vietnamese and Chinese passive forms, one which is primarily lexical and can be simply accommodated in existing treatments of East Asian passives, and another which is syntactic and has more serious consequences for characterizations of the passive as a cross-linguistic construction.

4 Lexical and syntactic variation in Chinese and Vietnamese passives

4.1 Negative and positive effect passives in Vietnamese

An interesting lexical difference between Vietnamese and Chinese is that Vietnamese regularly makes use of two different functional morphemes in its `passive' structures. In addition to the morpheme `bi', present in all of the Vietnamese examples thus far, a second verbal element `duốc' also frequently occurs in fully parallel sentence forms. The key semantic difference between `bi' and `duốc' is as follows:

(30) a. `bi' is used in sentences where the event depicted by the main verb is understood as affecting the subject in a generally negative way.

b. `duốc' occurs in parallel sentence forms where the event depicted by the main verb is understood to affect the subject in a generally positive way.

`Duốc' itself appears to be cognate with Chinese 拆 to get' (pronounced as dé in modern Mandarin, and as dak in Cantonese), and has a main verb use with the meaning `to get/receive', as well as a post-verbal use as a modal with the meaning `to be able to' (very similar to modern Cantonese dak, as described in Simpson 2001). Example (32) illustrates the use of `duốc' in a passive frame parallel to `bi'.

(31) Nam `bi' thây giáo phat.
    Nam `bi' teacher  punish
    'Nam was punished by the teacher.'

(32) Nam `duốc' thây giáo khen.
    Nam `duốc' teacher  praise
    'Nam was praised by the teacher.'

Structurally, `duốc' `passives' correspond fully to `bi' passives and allow for the same kinds of syntactic patterns. ` `Bi' and `duốc' therefore seem to simply be two (semantically different) values of the same functional verb type used to encode passive in Vietnamese. Example (33) shows how `duốc' can occur in an indirect passive-type use (with beneficial effect), similar to the use of `bi' in (24):

(33) Tôi `duốc' Nga đọc là thư của tôi.
    Tôi `duốc' Nga read letter of  I
    'I had Nga read my letter.'

In terms of meaning and patterns of use, `bi' most commonly occurs with verbs which encode an obviously unpleasant action on their objects, hence verbs such as `criticize', `hit' etc., rather than verbs indicating a positive effect on their objects, e.g. `praise', which naturally occur with `duốc'. However, verbs such as `praise' may in fact occur with `bi' if the effect of the action of the verb is contextually understood as being negative (e.g. creating embarrassment for the subject), and verbs such as `punish' may occur with `duốc' if the action of `punishing' is somehow contextually understood to be positive for the subject:

(34) Nam `bi' thây giáo khen.
    Nam `bi' teacher  praise
    'Nam was praised by the teacher.'

(35) Nam `duốc' thây giáo phat.
    Nam `duốc' teacher  punish
    'Nam was punished by the teacher.'

Consequently, interpretations of the subject being negatively or positively affected by the action of the verb in the Vietnamese passive are primarily a function of

---

4 In this way, Vietnamese appears to be different from another Southeast Asian language with similar patterns - Thai. In Thai, the corresponding `positive effect' passive verb combination day-rap (in which the day component shows clear signs of being related to Chinese dé/aik and Vietnamese `duốc' - Simpson 2001) does not permit a long passive form with an overt Agent, unlike the negative effect passive formed with thuuk (Wasaki and Ingkaphrom 2005):

(ii) phom day-rap (*khrus) chom
    PASS day-rap (*khrus) chom
    'I was praised (by the teacher).'
the choice of bī and đươc, and not principally dictated by the content of the main descriptive verb.

4.2 Passives of intransitive verbs

A second, particularly striking syntactic property of Vietnamese bī passives, which distinguishes them from Chinese bèi sentences and passives in most other languages, is the occurrence of intransitive verbs in the bī passive frame. This is a frequent property of intransitive verbs referring to unpleasant states or actions, as illustrated in examples (36) and (37) referring to sickness:

(37) Nga bī ốm/bệnh.
    Nga bī sick/ill
    ‘Nga got sick.’

(38) Nga bī bệnh ung thư.
    Nga bī ill cancer
    ‘Nga got cancer.’

Verbs of this type often occur with bī, but they also can occur without bī in non-passive clauses:

(39) Tôi nghe nói lìa Nam ốm/bệnh lâm.
    I hear say C Nam sick/ill much
    ‘I heard that Nam is very ill.’

(40) Nam đang ốm/bệnh (lâm).
    Nam prog ill/sick much
    ‘Nam is very sick.’

Examples (41–45) provide further illustration of intransitive passives referring to bodily conditions and actions which are viewed as negative. Both new, long-term states such as ‘blindness’ and ‘becoming crippled’ as well as short-term physical experiences such as ‘coughing’ and ‘vomiting’ occur naturally in these passive-of-intransitive verb structures, and terminal negative events such as ‘drowning’ may also be represented with a passive structure:

(41) Nam bī mù.
    Nam bī blind.
    ‘Nam is/became blind.’

(42) Nam bī tàn tật.
    Nam bī crippled
    ‘Nam is/became crippled.’

(43) Nam bī ho.
    Nam bī cough
    ‘Nam coughed.’

(44) Nam bī ói.
    Nam bī vomit
    ‘Nam vomited.’

(45) Nam bī chết đuối.
    Nam bī drown
    ‘Nam drowned.’

This kind of passive structure embedding intransitive verbs is not at all possible in Chinese, as illustrated in (46) and (47), and represents a very clear difference between Chinese and Vietnamese:

(46) *Tà bèi bìng-le.
    he bèi sick-ASP

(47) *Tà bèi kèsòu-le
    he bèi cough-ASP

Presently, it will be seen that the occurrence of apparent intransitive passive forms in Vietnamese also has significant consequences for any characterization of ‘passive’ in terms of universal, cross-linguistic properties.

5 Significance of the patterns for functional and theoretical approaches to passive

The Vietnamese patterns presented above, and particularly those in section 4.2, are significant for both formal and functional analyses of the passive as a construction having clearly definable, cross-linguistically stable properties. Func-
tional descriptions of the passive frequently claim that passive constructions exist to fulfill either one or both of the following manipulations of perspective/viewpoint (Givón 1984; Shibatani 1985, 1988):

**Agent demotion** – removal of the Agent from prominent subject position and demotion to a less salient role in the syntactic structure (or full elimination of the Agent from the sentence)

**Patient promotion** – promotion of the Patient from object to subject position

In the Vietnamese passive of intransitive verbs, however, there is neither any agent demotion, nor any patient promotion, and the prominence of the single argument of the verb is not changed by the use of a passive structure. The function of the use of passive morpheme bẹ in such sentences is to signal and emphasize the negative impact of the event on the subject of the verb. The extension of passive bẹ to such intransitive verbs thus poses a clear challenge to current, heavily restrictive classifications of passive morphology and syntactic structure in terms of their functional use.

With regard to the formal, generative modeling of the passive within Government and Binding Theory and various of its 'Principles and Parameters' successors, the surface syntactic properties of passive sentences in European languages such as Italian, English and German have been suggested to be due to two common underlying features of passive (Burzio 1986; Haegeman 1991):

(48) a. Passivization eliminates the accusative case assigning potential of the verb

b. Passivization eliminates the external theta role of the verb

The interaction of (48a) and (48b) is suggested to cause the Patient/Object argument of a passivized verb to undergo movement to the subject position of a finite clause to be assigned/check case. As pointed out by Huang (1999), however, the patterning of passive constructions in Chinese and other East Asian languages necessitates a reassessment of (48a/b) when considered as putative cross-linguistic properties of the passive. In Chinese-type passives, there is no evidence that any accusative case assigning potential of the verb is lost, and overt NP objects may still occur in canonical post-verbal positions in passive sentences. This is illustrated in the 'retained object' indirect passive examples (19–21). In Chinese long passives, the Agent argument of the verb is also not eliminated, and may surface overtly, as in examples (1–3, 6, 8, 9). Neither of the core properties of passive identified on the basis of Romance and Germanic languages seem to be relevant for languages such as Chinese. While East Asian languages therefore clearly question the validity of (48a/b) as potentially definitive, cross-linguistic properties of passive structures, Huang (1999: 67) suggests that it may still be possible to identify certain basic shared features of passive constructions across typologically diverse languages:

(49) ‘… there is nevertheless a universal notion of passivization that can be maintained, namely that all passives involve intransitivization and a dependency relation between the surface subject and underlying object position …’

Such a revised perspective on the passive requires a little further explanation before we consider the relevance of the patterns found in Vietnamese. Specifically, with regard to indirect passives, where the direct object of the verb is overtly present and not directly linked to the surface subject position (examples 19–21), Huang (1999) suggests that the surface subject is actually linked to an 'outer object' position in the embedded clause. It is proposed that an empty operator originates in a higher object position within VP, raises to a clause-adjacency position as in other instances of long passive, and binds a pro in the possessor position of the direct object/Patient NP, as illustrated in (50):

(50) **Zhangsan bẹi [Op, tũf'hui [vp ti, dã-sī-le [pro, fūqīn]].

Zhangsan becomes [of, thief [vp, kill [agent-professor]]

**The possible occurrence of such structures is suggested to be due to an ability of Chinese to case-license the outer object base position of the empty operator. This availability of case for outer objects in Chinese is itself argued to be manifested in a second significant pattern and occur in the 'bà construction', where overt NPs are introduced and licensed by the element bạ in outer object positions:**

---

5 See also Simpson (1990) for similar conclusions based on Thai.

6 Similar suggestions that the occurrence of indirect passives in Chinese may in some way be related to the bà-construction are given in Shi (1997), who points to clear parallelisms between many 'retained object' indirect passives and bà-forms:

(i) *Hua bà dã jīō-le shuǐ.*

flower Bạ I add-ASP water

(ii) *Wō bạ huá jīō-le shuǐ.*

I BA flower add-ASP water

'The flowers were watered by me.'

'I watered the flowers.'
(51) Tūfēi bā Zhāngsān dā-sī-le fāqin.
bandit BA Zhangsan hit-die-ASP father
'The bandits killed Zhangsan’s father.'

Considering relevant patterns found in other languages, Huang notes that in
Korean similar outer objects are clearly case-marked (with Accusative case), and
only possible where the outer object is affected by the action of the verb, as in
Chinese:

Mary-NOM John-ACC leg-ACC kick-PAST-DEC/SEE-PAST-DEC
'Mary kicked/*saw John in the leg.'

Concerning the Chinese forms referred to as adversity passives (examples 27
and 28), Huang (1999) suggests that these are similarly derived by the movement
of an empty operator from a higher outer object position. NPs base-generated in
such a position are suggested to receive a theta role with the meaning of ‘entity
adversely affected by the action of the verb’.

Such an analysis of indirect and adversity passives has two immediate con-
sequences, both of which seem to be positive. First, Huang is able to maintain
that passive sentences in Chinese uniformly incorporate a dependency between
the surface subject position and some underlying object position — either the
direct object position, or one of the two outer object positions. This subsequently
allows for the statement of (49) as a putatively general property of passive both
in Chinese and other languages. Second, the case-theoretic approach to indirect
passives allows for a principled way to describe and possibly even predict cross-
linguistic variation in the occurrence of such structures. Earlier it was noted that
‘non-gap’ adversity passives do not occur in Vietnamese, unlike Chinese. This
difference between Chinese and Vietnamese may be attributed to differences in
the availability of abstract case in the two languages. The objective case which is
suggested to license higher outer objects in adversity passives in Chinese may be

(53) Na kuài dì běi tāmén zhòng-le gùa.
that CL land BEI they plant-ASP melon
'They planted melons in that bit of land.'

(54) Tā bā nà kuài dì zhòng-le gùa.
he BA that CL land plant-ASP melon
'They planted melons in that bit of land.'

7 Due to this theta-related restriction on interpretation, indirect passives with no clear meaning of adversity implied by the predicate are not acceptable:

(i) *Zhāngsān bēi Lísì pǎo hù jī jū qù le.
Zhangsan BEI Lisi run return home go ASP
Intended: ‘Zhangsan suffered from Lisi running back home.’

suggested to be unavailable in Vietnamese, accounting for the unacceptability of
forms such as (27) and (28) in Vietnamese.

Having clarified the status of indirect ‘retained object’ passives, we are
now in a position to reflect on how Vietnamese and certain of its passive
structures may impact on (49). This redefined, cross-linguistic characterization of
passive as minimally and necessarily involving a dependency between a sur-
face subject and an underlying object position, inspired by differences between
languages such as Chinese and English, Italian etc., would seem to require
further reconsideration as a result of the Vietnamese data presented in section
4.2. Whereas much of what is found in Vietnamese can be satisfactorily modeled
with the basic analysis of passive in Chinese presented in Huang (1999) (also
Ting 1998; Tang 2001), there are certain patterns which cannot be straight-
forwardly accounted for in the analysis as it stands, and Vietnamese significantly
seems to extend the use of passive structures from the canonical linking of a
subject with an underlying object position to other dependencies which connect
a surface subject and a second underlying subject position. This highly distinc-
tive use of the passive was illustrated in section 4.2, where it was shown that the
subjects of intransitive verbs may participate inbj constructions in a way parallel
to the objects of transitive verbs. The occurrence of such patterns therefore calls
into question whether a restriction can be placed on characterizations of the
passive limiting it to cases where the surface subject of a passive structure is
connected (by movement or operator-mediated secondary predication) only to
underlying object positions. Rather, it would seem that the possible boundaries
of what is commonly referred to as passive may need to be recognized as less
narrowly defined, and may in theory also connect a surface subject to other
syntactic/argument positions located in the same clause or alternatively an
embedded clause in various East Asian languages.

8 The fact that Vietnamese permits indirect passives with retained objects that are possessed body-parts but not kin terms, unlike Chinese, may however call for a finer understanding of the hypothesized case-licensing of outer objects. It may be that ‘kin term’ retained object passives are licensed in the same way as adversity passives, both as higher outer objects, hence the availability of the former may be linked to that of the latter: both licensed in Chinese, neither possible for speakers of Vietnamese.

9 A reviewer points out that the approach to passive developed in Keenan (1980, 1985)
and Keenan and Timberlake (1985) may allow for the occurrence of a wider array of passive structures than the more classical GB view (and its extensions) described here. According to
Keenan, passivization is an operation that existentially binds the highest argument of a
predicate that it applies to. In many languages this may be limited to being an external
argument, but in some languages it is not, giving rise to the occurrence of impersonal passives of
unaccusatives. However, the reviewer suggests that such a broader conceptualization of
passive may still not capture the Vietnamese patterns, as there may be no existential closure of
an argument in such structures.
The 'subject passive' patterns found with bì and intransitive verbs denoting an unwelcome outcome/experience for their subjects can additionally be noted to extend further in Vietnamese, in two directions. First, there are instances where the surface subject of a bì sentence can form a dependency with the subject gap position of a transitive verb, when the latter describes an action that is obviously unpleasant and which may involve suffering on the part of the subject, as illustrated in (53) and (54):

(53) Nam bì xem mồi phim kinh dị.
    Nam bì watch one film horror
    'Nam watched a horror film (and this was unpleasant for Nam).'

(54) Sập bì lọt vào miệng con quái vật thì ...
    ASP bì fall enter mouth animal odd creature then
    'He was about to fall into the monster’s mouth when ...' (Daley 1998: 92)

Second, the ‘positive experience passive’ verb counterpart to bì in Vietnamese – duỗi – also regularly occurs with its subject linked to a lower subject position:

(55) Nam duỗi đi Pari.
    Nam DUOS go Paris
    'Nam went/got to go to Paris'.

Therefore with both bì and duỗi both subject-to-object and subject-to-subject dependencies are possible in structures which are built with these ‘negative/positive passive’ morphemes. This is schematized in (56), where square brackets around an NP in the embedded clause indicate the gap position linked to the subject of the sentence.

(56) **subject-to-object dependencies**

\[
\text{NP}_1 \text{ bì/duỗi [NP}_2 \text{ verb [NP}_3 \text{]]}}
\]

‘transitive passive’

**subject-to-subject dependencies**

\[
\text{NP}_1 \text{ bì/duỗi [NP}_2 \text{ verb [NP}_3 \text{]} \text{]}}
\]

‘intransitive passive’

\[
\text{NP}_1 \text{ bì/duỗi [NP}_2 \text{ verb [NP}_3 \text{]} \text{]}}
\]

‘transitive passive’

---

10 The set of intransitive verbs which occur with bì are non-agentive undergoes of an unpleasant state. In this sense, they correspond to verbs of the unaccusative grouping, which are often non-agentive cross-linguistically. Clear, independent, syntactic tests for distinguishing unaccusativity and distinguishing unaccusative from inergative verbs in Vietnamese have thus far not been identified.

11 With regard to the passive/Control similarities referred to briefly here, it is interesting to note that recent analyses of Control structures have argued for a movement approach and against earlier ideas that ‘Control’ sentences are formed with a base-generated PRO element in...
Faced with such issues, a number of theoretical positions might be considered. One initial reaction to the Vietnamese and Chinese patterns presented here and in Huang (1999) might be to suggest that the term ‘passive’ should in fact simply be discarded, being too broad in what it appears to include across languages to allow for a distinct and exclusive set of properties to be defined for such a construction. Such a position would concede that there would be no real theoretical value in the continued use of the label passive as a term with intended universal, cross-linguistic application. A second kind of stance that might perhaps be adopted would be to suggest that the term ‘passive’ still be maintained, but in a narrow, more restrictive way, to identify just those archetypal passive forms found in languages such as English, Italian etc, with common case and theta-theoretic properties, and that ‘passive’ not be applied as a term to refer to constructions with similar meanings (and a partially-overlapping syntax) in East and Southeast Asian languages (e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Hmong, Thai etc). Such a position would potentially allow for the term ‘passive’ to be maintained with a clearly-defined theoretical identity, but might also seem to be imposing boundary conditions on membership in the passive in a rather proscriptive and even arbitrary way (for example, if loss of accusative case is presented as a necessary property of passive verbs, this will exclude unergative passives in languages such as German which otherwise look very much as if they should be referred to as passives). It is not clear that setting highly strict entry definitions of what may be considered a form of the passive is a step that actually makes any real progress in understanding cross-linguistic correspondences and the ways that structures may occur in different languages. A third reaction, similar in direction to the position just outlined, might be to propose that subject-to-subject dependencies in bi and dūc sentences simply be ignored as potential instances of ‘passive’, so as to maintain a broad (but not too broad) notion of passive still inclusive of Chinese-type (object-gap) passives. However, such a move would seem to be prescriptive and potentially imposed merely to safeguard established ideas about the passive as a construction. It would seem to disregard the fact that canonical passive structures in Vietnamese clearly do spill over into the occurrence of subject gap ‘passive’ patterns without the presence of any obvious linguistic boundary that might justify their treatment as a different construction type. Given that the same morphemes bi and dūc occur in both ‘regular’ affected object passives and affected subject structures, and would seem to be readily recognized as the same morphemes by speakers of Vietnamese, there may be no non-arbitrary reasons to exclude the latter from consideration as non-prototypical members set of a larger passive paradigm with fewer necessarily shared syntactic properties.

Despite such arguments against the elimination of bi sentences from consideration as part of a more extended passive paradigm, a reviewer of the chapter in fact advocates adopting either of the latter two positions mentioned above as a way to avoid the conclusion that the boundaries of the passive construction may be less clear than previously imagined, suggesting: ‘Why shouldn’t we just declare that the Vietnamese construction (and probably the Chinese one as well) is not a passive, but is something else.’. The reviewer suggests that instead of being a passive morpheme, bi might be viewed as a general inchoative verb meaning ‘Subject comes to be in the state of Complement’ hence that examples such as (31) might be analyzed as ‘Nam comes to be in the state of being punished by the teacher’. The reviewer adds that such sentences would then not count as passive sentences (though it is perhaps not really evident why they would not count as passive, given the passive meaning embedded under the inchoative verb, as seen in the English gloss provided by the reviewer). The reviewer continues that even if one were to consider examples like (31) with embedded transitive verbs as being passive, one might still think that bi sentences with intransitive verbs are not passive forms, and it might be possible that there are two (or more) bi elements in Vietnamese, one a passive morpheme, the other(s) not (the latter occurring with intransitive verbs). However, the possibility of some accidental polysemy in Vietnamese resulting in the chance occurrence of two (or more) independent morphemes with the same form bi can be fairly swiftly discounted, given the common distinctive meaning associated with bi in its regular occurrences with both transitive and intransitive verbs. As noted earlier, bi is not just some general inchoative verb with the meaning ‘BECOME’, but consistently functions to signal that the subject of the sentence is affected in a negative, adversative way by the event depicted in the predicate/clause following bi. This highly specialized semantic function of bi occurs not only when bi combines with transitive verbs but also with intransitives (and with subject gap passives such as (53) and (54) too). It is therefore clear that bi is the same morpheme in all its occurrences and a uniform analysis is consequently desirable. As a single uniform analysis for all bi forms furthermore can be assumed (see below), developing and supplementing Huang’s analysis of passive forms in Chinese, by Occam’s Razor it seems unwarranted to attempt to forcibly declare that the combination of bi with transitive and intransitive verbs be categorized as constructions of different types with different labels.
Quite generally, then, the occurrence of bij (and duọc) subject gap dependencies can be shown to lead to challenging general questions about the way that linguistic terms are used and correspond to clearly definable constructs in natural language. Similar issues have previously been raised with regard to the use of the linguistic label ‘subject’; and whether this term picks out a unitary cross-linguistic phenomenon which is definable by a set of universal properties, or whether ‘subjects’ are best viewed as NPs sharing a sub-set of prototypical properties (Keenan 1976).

However such terminological disputes may ultimately be settled (or continue to cause disagreement)\(^{12}\), empirically there still remains the puzzle of a set of forms that interestingly occur in one language – the bij (and duọc) subject gap dependencies in Vietnamese – but unexpectedly do not get repeated in other languages, even though appropriate conditions for their occurrence might seem to be present. In other words, it remains to be explained why forms such as (37–38), (41–45) and (53–54) are syntactically well-formed in Vietnamese but not in Chinese and other languages with similar bi-clausal passive structures formed with morphemes entailing negative effects (i.e. Mandarin běi, Thai thuuk etc.).

In trying to identify what makes Vietnamese ‘special’ in allowing for these kinds of subject-gap dependencies built with the ‘passive’ morpheme, one might wonder whether this could be related to another way in which Vietnamese bij seems to be different from Chinese běi – its selection of a range of different complement types. Although less frequent in occurrence than the combination of bij with a clause/verbal predicate, ‘passive’ bij may actually be combined with a variety of non-verbal constituents, such as nouns/NPs, adverbs, and adjectives.\(^{13}\)

This is illustrated in (59–62) below:

\[(59)\]  
\[bij + adverb\]  
\[bj Đàm ‘be delayed’ Đàm ‘slowly (adv.)’ (đi Đàm ‘go slowly’)\]

\[(60)\]  
\[bij + noun\]  
\[bij Hoàng tưởng ‘be paranoid’ Hoàng tưởng ‘delirium (N)’\]  
\[bij virus ‘get a virus’ virus (N)\]  
\[bij nạn lụt ‘be flooded’ nạn lụt ‘flood disaster (N)’\]

\(^{12}\) Croft (2001), for example, takes the extreme position in his Radical Construction Grammar that grammatical categories may actually be language-specific or even construction-specific, and so cannot be compared cross-linguistically.

\(^{13}\) Though it might perhaps be argued that there is strictly no separate category of adjectives in Vietnamese, only ‘stative verbs’, and that adjectival elements are also verbal in nature. Thanks to a reviewer for bringing up this point.

(61) a. Computer của anh ấy bij virus.  
\[\text{compute of he bij virus}\]  
\[\text{‘His computer got a virus.’}\]

b. Mỹ bij nản lụt.  
\[\text{USA bij flood}\]  
\[\text{‘The US was flooded.’}\]

(62) bij + adjective  
\[bij nghèo dit ‘be impoverished’ nghèo ‘poor (Adj)’\]  
\[bij hư ‘be damaged’ hư ‘damaged (Adj)’\]

While this ability of bij to combine with a range of complement types further distinguishes it from Mandarin běi, it is actually not clear that it could be responsible for the Vietnamese-Mandarin difference with regard to subject-gap dependencies with bij/běi. What seems to be minimally necessary for such a dependency to occur is the presence of a constituent that can contain a subject NP, hence a vP/VP or a TP, and it has been argued in Huang (1999) that Mandarin běi can actually select either vP or TP as its complement (for short and long passives). Consequently, Mandarin would not seem to be lacking in any relevant complement type that Vietnamese permits in a special way for the occurrence of subject gap ‘passives’.

The more one considers the Vietnamese-Chinese difference in subject gap ‘passives’, the more it may seem that it is actually Chinese which is in need of some special explanation rather than Vietnamese, and the question should more naturally be: ‘Why aren’t more languages like Vietnamese in allowing for subject gaps in clauses embedded by morphemes such as bij/běi etc.?` The meaning contribution of bij and běi (and also Thai thuuk) is essentially the same in the sentences they introduce, and communicates that some unwelcome mental/physical experience occurs for the subject of the sentence, and this referent is negatively affected as a consequence.\(^{15}\) Frequently, this will result in the bij/běi

---

\(^{14}\) Concerning (61a), it can be noted that the word ‘virus’ can be modified by a quantifier and by adjectives or PPs, which confirms its nominal status:

i) Computer của anh ấy bij nhiều/mởi logi virus nghiêm lâm/tử dục Đức.  
\[\text{computer of he bij many/several type virus serious very from Germany}\]  
\[\text{‘His computer got many/several types of very serious virus from Germany.’}\]

\(^{15}\) This is indeed the most common interpretation in běi/bij passives, and the regular situation with NP subjects which are animate. However, both Mandarin and Vietnamese have extended the use of passive structures to allow for inanimate NPs to occur as subjects, in certain situations and registers. In various instances, this does not cause an interpretation in which any discourse referent is negatively affected, and may be the result of the influence from passive structures in languages such as English, where no negative impact interpretation is necessary with animate subjects and inanimate subjects are common in the passive.
subject corresponding to the patient argument of the embedded clause, hence an object gap, but there is also a natural expectation that it could alternatively be interpreted as the subject of the embedded clause, if this NP is understood to suffer an unwelcome state/event, as with the subjects of negative impact predicates such as verbs of sickness, psychological fear etc. Consequently, the ungrammaticality of examples such as (46) and (47) would not seem to be attributable to any reasons of semantic ill-formedness, and might well be expected to occur in Mandarin, Thai, and other languages with similar passive structures. The fact that they do not occur, despite the presence of appropriate semantic licensing conditions, would seem to clearly suggest that they are disallowed for syntactic reasons.\textsuperscript{16}

The generalization that needs to be accounted for is that, in the analysis of operator-movement assumed for Chinese bēi passives (and Vietnamese bj sentences), extraction and operator movement can occur from object positions, but (in Chinese) not from subject positions. This suggests that what may be syntactically relevant in accounting for the difference between Vietnamese and Chinese is a principle regulating the extraction of subject NPs, operating successively in Vietnamese bj sentences, but failing to license subject extraction in Mandarin. Cross-linguistically, there are actually many instances of constructions in which subject/object asymmetries in extraction are found, where bans on the extraction of subjects exist and may (sometimes) be overcome only with the use of some additional licensing mechanism. For example, tough constructions in English permit the extraction of an empty operator from object position, but not from subject positions:

(63) John is easy [Op k PRO to please t\textsubscript{s}].
(64) *John is easy [Op k t\textsubscript{s} to be happy].
(65) *John is easy [Op k t\textsubscript{s} to please Mary].

\textsuperscript{17} The 'that trace effect' refers to the observation that extraction of a subject from a position immediately following the complementizer that is regularly judged to be deviant and unacceptable, as in (i) (Haegeman 1991: 362):

(i) Who, do you think that t\textsubscript{l} is left?

In qui/que alternations (Rizzi 1990: 56), the regular complementizer que occurs in a special form qui when there is subject extraction from a position immediately following the complementizer, as in the relativization of a null operator in cases such as (ii). Where there is relativization of a null operator from other, non-subject positions, as in (iii), the regular form of the complementizer que occurs:

(ii) la personne [O, qui t\textsubscript{l} est venue]  
the person C is come  
'the person who came'

(iii) la personne [O, que j'ai vue t\textsubscript{l}]  
the person C I have seen  
'the person I saw'

\textsuperscript{16} It also seem implausible to suggest that the difference between Vietnamese and Mandarin with regard to subject gap 'passives' can be dismissed as an issue of simple pragmatics, claiming that Vietnamese is just more permissive than Chinese, therefore allowing for subject-gaps in bj sentences. Elsewhere it has been seen that Vietnamese is actually less permissive than Mandarin in its bj passives, and does not allow for pure adversity-type passives or indirect passives involving possessed kinship terms in the object of verb position (examples 25, 26, 29). This latter difference was given a syntactic explanation in terms of case availability for outer objects. An explanation of subject gap passives in terms of some parameterized syntactic principle would therefore seem to be desirable, licensing such passive forms in Vietnamese but not in Chinese.

\textsuperscript{17} The 'that trace effect' refers to the observation that extraction of a subject from a position immediately following the complementizer that is regularly judged to be deviant and unacceptable, as in (i) (Haegeman 1991: 362):
subject (and object) position is characterized as requiring a formal licensing by some adjacent c-commanding head, and may not be possible if an appropriate head is either lexically not available or contextually not supplied.

Such a line of analysis seems to be much more promising as a precedent and parallel for attempting to explain the Vietnamese/Chinese differences with regard to subject gaps in *bj* and *bêi* sentences. Adopting the approach in Rizzi (1990), it can be suggested that what underlies the difference between Vietnamese and Chinese in *bj/bêi* constructions is the nature of the head which potentially licenses extraction from SpecTP in the embedded clause of *bj* and *bêi* sentences. In the analysis of Huang (1999), the clause embedded in long passive sentences is actually argued to be IP/TP rather than CP (with the empty operator moving to adjoin to IP/TP). Consequently, the head position immediately c-commanding SpecTP in the embedded clause, and hence the extraction-site of the subject, will in fact be the higher clause predicate position instantiated by *bêi*. It can therefore be suggested that the difference between Vietnamese and Mandarin lies directly in the lexical difference between *bêi* and *bj* and their role in licensing the extraction of a following subject. *Bêi*, like English complementizer that, can be suggested to lack the ability to license extraction of an operator from SpecTP, with the result that subject gap passive forms cannot be created in Mandarin. *Bj*, on the other hand, can be suggested to pattern like other lexical elements such as verbs and retain the ability to license extraction from an appropriate, adjacent, c-commanded position— in the instance under discussion, the SpecTP position of the clause embedded by *bj*. Subject-to-subject dependencies in *bj* sentences formed by extraction of an operator from SpecTP are therefore licensed to occur and syntactically made available (in principle) in *bj* sentences unlike in Mandarin *bêi* constructions. Such a relatively simple, lexically-parametrized difference between *bj* and *bêi* will effectively suffice to account for the robust non-occurrence of subject gap passives in Mandarin (and also Thai), which otherwise remain unaccounted for, though are (arguably) predicted to occur given the similar semantic content of *bj* and *bêi* (and Thai *thuuk*).

Quite possibly, the syntactic difference assumed to exist between *bj* and *bêi* might also be hypothesized to be part of a broader difference in diachronic development exhibited by the two elements. Specifically, if the general process of grammaticalization, where lexical elements become more functional over time, involves an incremental loss of properties typically associated with lexical elements (Roberts and Roussou 2003), it may be speculated that the inability of *bêi* to license subject gaps may be a manifestation of a more advanced process of grammaticalization having occurred with *bêi* than with *bj*, the latter element retaining more of its source properties as a verb, which cross-linguistically are more commonly licensors of movement and extraction. Finally, such a hypothetically less grammaticalized status of *bj* might also link up naturally with the observation that, unlike *bêi*, *bj* allows for a range of lexical complements in addition to clauses (examples 59–62), hence patterns more globally in a less purely auxiliary-type way than Mandarin *bêi*. A general, principled view of the intriguing differences between *bj* and *bêi* sentences is thus possible, and can be grounded in a plausible, well-established analysis of cross-linguistic restrictions on subject extraction. With this as our present conjecture about *bj* and *bêi* and the syntax of bi-clausal ‘passive’ constructions, we will close the chapter now and summarize a number of the key properties of this challenging and revealing area of Vietnamese syntax.

### 6 Summary of similarities and differences in Chinese and Vietnamese passives

As noted in the introduction, the primary concern of this chapter has been how passive-type constructions in Vietnamese compare with similar structures found in other languages, in particular Mandarin Chinese, and how patterns found in Vietnamese have a significance for the establishment and defense of a general cross-linguistic typology of passive, within both formal and functional approaches to linguistics.

In terms of relevant similarities between Vietnamese and Chinese, it was shown that both languages present evidence for a bi-clausal structure in passives, and the existence of a formally distinct long and short passive with different syntactic and structural properties. In long passive structures in Vietnamese and Chinese, the evidence available suggests the occurrence of A’-movement in the lower clause creating a gap position linked in its interpretation to the NP in main clause subject position, preceding *bj* and *bêi*. Vietnamese and Chinese were also seen to both exhibit retained object ‘possessor-passives’ in addition to simple object-gap passives, where the main clause subject is interpreted as

---

18 The full range of occurrence of subject gap ‘passives’ in *bj* sentences may, of course, turn out to be further constrained by certain other (as yet unidentified) pragmatic, semantic or even syntactic factors.

19 Vietnamese *bj*, like Mandarin *bêi*, shows certain patterns which distinguish it from simple lexical verbs, however, for example the ability to occur as a short answer form in yes/no questions. This patterning is described and commented on in Appendix 2.
co-referential with the implicit possessor of the object of the embedded clause, when this is a body-part or certain other kinds of entity. Such clear similarities between Vietnamese and Chinese were taken to indicate that the analysis of bı and bể sentences in the two languages should essentially be parallel, at least in primary, fundamental aspects of their underlying syntax, and an extension of Huang’s (1999) analysis was shown to be able to account for much core data in Vietnamese.

Vietnamese and Mandarin bı and bể sentences were then shown to be interestingly different in various ways. First it was noted that Chinese permits pure ‘adversity passives’ with no gap corresponding to either the object of the verb or the possessor of the object, whereas Vietnamese does not appear to allow for such structures with bı. Second, the chapter highlighted the fact that Vietnamese makes productive use of two different morphemes in passive type structures, one for events with negative impacts/outcomes (bể), the other for positive impact events (duộc), while Mandarin lacks an equivalent for the latter duoc-based forms. Third, it was seen that Vietnamese bı can combine with a range of complement types with a similar passive-like meaning of being negatively affected, again showing a difference to Mandarin bể. Finally, the chapter discussed the occurrence of subject-gap ‘passive’ structures, both with intransitive verbs and transitive verbs, which are present in Vietnamese, but not in Mandarin. It is these differences between bı and bể sentences which turn out to be the most intriguing aspect of a comparison of Vietnamese and Mandarin, giving rise to interesting questions and challenges for the typology of passive, and the general question of whether passive indeed exists as a meaningful and definable linguistic construction. Last of all, and independently of how the broader theoretical issues are ultimately resolved, the presence of ‘subject gap’ forms such as (37-38), (41-45) and (53-55) in Vietnamese but not Mandarin poses the interesting challenge of how to account for the exclusion of such forms in one language but their presence in the other when it seems that appropriate pragmatic-semantic conditions for their occurrence are regularly met within both languages in bể/bı forms.

References
