Functions of the Nootka (Nuu-chah-nulth) 'Passive' Suffix[*]

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1. Introduction

In this paper I will examine the function of the suffix -'at in Nootka[1] that has been characterized as a 'passive' or 'inverse' in previous studies. Sapir and Swadesh (Sapir 1924; Sapir & Swadesh 1939; Swadesh 1933) were the first to use the term 'passive' for this suffix, but they provide neither a detailed description of its use nor a justification for calling it a 'passive'. In their fairly detailed discussions of uses of the same suffix, Rose 1981 and Rose & Carlson 1984 basically accept the characterization as 'passive', but they note deviation of the -'at construction from the prototypical syntactic passive. Whistler 1985 proposes an alternative analysis of the suffix as an inverse marker similar to that found in Algonquian languages. Emanatian 1988 makes a counter-proposal that the -'at construction is in fact a prototypical syntactic passive.

The aims of this paper are to show that neither 'passive' nor 'inverse' is an appropriate characterization of the function of the suffix, and to provide an alternative to the previous characterizations. We first examine the passive analysis, looking at the facts on which the analysis is based and then the facts that are problematic for the analysis. We then proceed to examine the inverse analysis.

A word about terminology is in order. In this paper I will use the terms ACTOR and UNDERGOER to characterize the two participants that are **semantically** involved in the transitive predication. ACTOR and

[1] It should be noted that the name *Nootka* is disliked by many bands grouped under that name. The preferred name is *Nuu-chah-nulth*. This name, however, presents a problem as a linguistic designation by including a close but separate language Ditidaht (formerly Nitinaht) as well as the Nootka language. In this paper I will use *Nootka* only to make the linguistic reference less confusing.

UNDERGOER are semantic macroroles and are not the equivalents of 'agent' and 'patient' in the narrow senses of these terms. As pointed out by Foley & Van Valin 1984 and Van Valin 1993, not all semantic roles are distinguished in every part of grammar. Rather, a group of roles are treated alike for a certain purposes in the grammar. In transitive predications semantic roles are grouped into those that are typically expressed as subjects of simple transitive (neither causativized nor passivized) predicates, ACTOR, and those that are typically expressed as objects, UNDERGOER. Although the concepts ACTOR and UNDERGOER are grammatically delineated, they are nonetheless semantically motivated categories and I use these terms to refer to semantic characteristics of participants.

2. Passive Analysis

2.1 Motivations behind the passive analysis

Before we enter the discussion on the passive analysis, we need to be clear about the notion of 'passive'. Crosslinguistically, the application of the term 'passive' has not been strictly constrained, and the term 'passive' has often been used for a diverse range of structural arrangements and functions. Even in the typological literature some scholars (e.g. Keenan 1985; Shibatani 1985) take a more liberal view of passive than others (e.g. Givón 1981). Thus, we first need to clarify what we mean by 'passive' before we can evaluate the appropriateness of the application of the term. The defining characteristics of the 'prototypical passive' that have been assumed in the discussion surrounding the Nootka suffix -'at (most clearly presented in Emanatian 1988) can be summarized as (1).

(1) *Definition of the Prototypical Passive:*
   a. the passive clause structurally alternates with the 'active' clause
   b. the active object assumes the syntactic privileges of the subject
      — i.e. promotion' of the active object to the subject status
   c. the active subject loses the syntactic privileges of the subject
      — i.e. 'demotion' of the active subject — expressed as an oblique (syntactically peripheral nominal element) or left unexpressed
   d. the valency of the passivized predicate is reduced compared to that of the non-passivized 'active' predicate

In short, the 'prototypical passive' is a structural alternation that affects the organization of the clause through change in the syntactic status of the clausal arguments.

The characterization of the Nootka passive as a prototypical syntactic passive is argued for in Emanatian 1988. There are two facts that suggest that the Nootka -'at construction is a 'passive': (i) an apparent transitive-intransitive alternation that is reminiscent of the syntactic alternation of active-passive, and (ii) a change in the grammatical treatment of the ACTOR and UNDERGOER.

The apparent transitive-intransitive alternation is illustrated in (2), (3) and (4).

(2) | qaḥsa:p | Bill | muwič |
qaḥ-sa·p	Bill	muwič
die -MOM.CAUS	NAME	deer
kill	Bill	deer
PREDICATE	ACTOR	UNDERGOER

'Bill killed the deer.' [KYU: Rose & Carson 1984:3f]

(3) | qaḥsa:p't | | muwič |
qaḥ-sa·p	-'at	muwič
die -MOM.CAUS -'AT		deer
is.killed		deer
PREDICATE-'at		UNDERGOER

'The deer was killed.' [KYU: ibid.]

(4) | qaḥsa:p̓t | muwič | ʔuḥʔat | Bill. |
qaḥ-sa·p	-'at	muwič	ʔuḥ -'at	Bill
die -MOM.CAUS -'AT	deer	being.he -'AT	NAME
is.killed	deer	being.by.him	Bill
PREDICATE	UNDERGOER		(ACTOR)

'The deer was killed by Bill.' [KYU: Rose 1981 p.78: #185]

In (3) the ACTOR is left unexpressed and in (4) the ACTOR is expressed as an object of a combined predicate ʔuḥʔat. In either case the ACTOR appears to be purged from the core argument structure leaving only the UNDERGOER as an argument.

The changes in grammatical status of the ACTOR and UNDERGOER are illustrated in (5) and (6). In a typical two-participant transitive clause, the pronominal index is correferential with the ACTOR as in (5), but in a clause with the suffix -'at the index is correferential with the UNDERGOER as in (6). In terms of the morphological marking on the predicate, the UNDERGOER in the -'at clause is given a special grammatical status that it does not otherwise have, and the ACTOR in the -'at clause lacks the special status that it otherwise has.

(5) **1 PLURAL (ACTOR) → 2 PLURAL (UNDERGOER)**
ha:ʕanʔaqniš   si:ḥaḷ.
ha:ʕan -ʔaq -niš   si:ḥaḷ
invite -FUT - 1pl   you.all
we.will.invite   you.all
'We will invite you all.' [elicited (7.24.91-77)]

(6) **3 SINGULAR (ACTOR) → 1 SINGULAR (UNDERGOER)**
ha:ʕanʔanits.
ha:ʕan -'at-it -s
invite -'AT -PAST- 1sg
he.invited.me
'I was invited; He invited me' [elicited (7.24.91-81)]

The passive analysis equates these changes in morphological status with changes in syntactic status observed in the prototypical syntactic passive: i.e., syntactic promotion of the UNDERGOER to and demotion of the ACTOR from the subject.

2.2 Problematic facts

Although the above observations appear to invite identification of the -'at construction as a syntactic passive, a closer examination of the construction raises questions about such analysis.

First, the Nootka -'at clause is not fundamentally a construction derived from a transitive clause. It can be formed on an intransitive predicate.

(7) | miƛyu:ʔtinti:s |
| miƛ -yu· -'at-int -(y)i: -s |
| rain -..ed -'AT -PAST -INDEF -1sg |
| I.got.rained.on |

'I got rained on' [KYU: Rose & Carson 1984: 17a]

(8) | hu:ʔaƙat | ʔacšiʔat, |
hu:ʔak -'at	ʔac -ši(ƛ) -'at
early -'AT	go.fishing -MOM -'AT
being.early	go.out.fishing

'Go out fishing early.' [Canoe 92]

The predicates in (7) and (8), miƛ-yu· 'rained' and hu:ʔak 'being early', are one-participant predicates and there is no corresponding 'active' clause for (7) and (8)[2]. Therefore, it is not reasonable to characterize the above 'intransitive' -'at clauses as a syntactic configuration derived from corresponding transitive (= two-place) configuration through the application of a regular syntactic process.

Thus, the regular correspondence between the -'at clauses and their transitive counterparts is not a defining characteristic of the -'at construction. If we are to treat the -'at clause based on a two-place (transitive) predicate and that based on a one-place (intransitive) predicate as a single construction type, which seems to be a reasonable assumption, the -'at clause must be considered a syntactically independent, not derived, construction. This is in fact suggested by Rose 1981 and Rose & Carlson 1984 in their generative characterization of the construction as 'base-generated' (as opposed to transformationally generated). The intransitive -'at clause and its implications for the passive analysis are not discussed in Emanatian 1988.

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[2] Notice that (7) and (8) in fact represent two different types of intransitive -'at clauses, i.e. what we can call the UNDERGOER-focusing type and the ACTOR-defocusing type. In the UNDERGOER-focusing -'at clause (illustrated by (7)), the UNDERGOER that is not subcategorized for the main predicate is introduced as the grammatically central argument. This construction is reminiscent of the 'adversative passive' in Asian languages such as Japanese. On the other hand, in the ACTOR-defocusing -'at clause (illustrated by (8)) the ACTOR that is subcategorized for the main predicate is removed, leaving the clause as an impersonal construction.

The second aspect where Nootka -'at construction deviates from the prototypical syntactic passive is the nature of structural rearrangement involved. As we noted above the argument for the passive analysis is based on the assumption that the change in the morphological marking pattern coincides with a syntactic reorganization of clausal arguments. As it turns out, however, the syntactic patterning in Nootka does not align itself with the morphological marking in the same way as in European languages and the structural rearrangement involved in the -'at construction cannot be characterized as syntactic.

In the -'at construction the way the UNDERGOER interacts with the pronominal indexing differs from that in the non-'at construction: the UNDERGOER controls the pronominal index in the -'at construction, although it does not otherwise. This change cannot be characterized as a syntactic promotion. There is no discernible difference between the UNDERGOER argument in the -'at construction and that in the non-'at construction in terms of syntactic privileges. The argument that controls the pronominal index in Nootka does not necessarily play a major role in the organization of the syntactic structure of a clause that the 'subject' in European languages does. As Whistler 1985 (247) points out, there is no evidence suggesting that the morphologically identified 'subject' in Nootka has a syntactically privileged status.

In fact, it is doubtful whether the category of 'subject' even has reality in the syntax of Nootka. In the traditional literature on Nootka grammar, the pronominal index on the main predicate has been characterized as a subject pronominal suffix and the argument that is correferential with the index as a subject. This characterization is understandable given the fact that the discourse characteristics of the participant that is indexed on the predicate are very similar to those of the 'subject' in European languages, i.e. given and identifiable in Chafe's (1987; 1994) terms. However, there is no syntactic operation or constraint in Nootka that refers to 'subject' as a category.

Emanatian 1988 argues for 'subject' as a syntactic category, citing the fact that when there is a constraint on correferentiality between a complement-taking predicate and its complement, the constraint refers to the 'subject' of the complement clause regardless of its semantic role. (9) and (10) are among the examples Emanatian uses to illustrates her point (273: data cited from Rose 1981).

(9) [KYU: Rose 1981 p.87: 231]

a. *ńamałšλinti:s*   *ʔuʔa:λ*   *Joe*
   ńamał -ši(λ)-int -(y)i: -s   *ʔu -'i(λ) -'aλ*   *Joe*
   try   -MOM -PAST -INDEF-1sg   it -invite..-TEL   NAME
   I.tried   invited   Joe

   'I tried to invite Joe.'

b.* *ńamałšλinti:s*   *ʔuʔa:ʔt*   *Joe*
   ńamał -ši(λ)-int -(y)i: -s   *ʔu -'i(λ) -'at*   *Joe*
   try   -MOM -PAST -INDEF-1sg   it -invite..-'AT   NAME
   I.tried   being.invited.by   Joe

   (intended as: 'I tried for Joe to get invited.')

(10) [KYU: Rose 1981 p.87: 232]

a. *ńamałšλinti:s*   *ʔuʔa:ʔt*
   ńamał -ši(λ)-int -(y)i: -s   *ʔu -'i(λ) -'at*
   try   -MOM -PAST -INDEF-1sg   it -invite..-'AT
   I.tried   being.invited.by

   'I tried to get invited.'

b.* *ńamałšλinti:s*   *ʔuʔa:λ*   *si:čił*
   ńamał -ši(λ)-int -(y)i: -s   *ʔu -'i(λ) -'aλ*   *si: -(č)ił*
   try   -MOM -PAST -INDEF-1sg   it -invite..-TEL   I -do.to...
   I.tried   invited   me

   (intended as: 'I tried for someone to invite me.')

However, this phenomenon alone is not enough to establish the syntactic category of 'subject'. This correferentiality constraint may very well be viewed as a pragmatic constraint on perspective consistency between the matrix and complement clauses. Without other independent evidence, it is difficult to justify the validity of 'subject' as a syntactic category.

Thus, the fact that the UNDERGOER gains control over the pronominal indexing does not have a discernible implication for the syntactic privileges of the UNDERGOER within the clause, and therefore it is not reasonable to characterize the grammatical change concerning the UNDERGOER as a 'syntactic promotion'.

The grammatical realignment of clausal arguments in Nootka -'at clauses deviates from the syntactic reorganization associated with the prototypical passive not only with respect to the syntactic status of UNDERGOER but also to that of the ACTOR. Syntactic demotion of the ACTOR has been claimed in Nootka based on two observations (Rose 1981; Rose & Carlson 1984; Emanatian 1988): the ACTOR (i) loses control over the pronominal index and (ii) is expressed as an 'oblique' argument. But unfortunately, these observations do not serve as conclusive evidence.

As already discussed above, control over the pronominal index does not coincide with a syntactically privileged status of the argument. Thus, the loss of that control itself cannot be taken as an indication of a change in syntactic status.

The observation concerning the 'oblique' status of the ACTOR argument is also open to question. When the ACTOR is expressed as an overt argument in the -'at construction, it can be expressed either as a direct argument, i.e., without any syntactic mediation, or as an object of a combined predicate *ʔuhʔat* 'being done by ...; ... being the one who did ...'. In the latter case the -'at sentence shows a surface resemblance to the English passive construction.

(11) *qaḥsa:ṗt*   *muwič*   *ʔuhʔat*   *Bill.*
   qaḥ-sa·p   -'at   *muwič*   *ʔuh*   -'at   *Bill*
   die -MOM.CAUS -'AT   deer   being.he -'AT   NAME
   is.killed   deer   it.was.by.him   Bill

   'The deer was killed by Bill.' [KYU: Rose 1981 p.78: #185]

In (11) the ACTOR *Bill* is apparently demoted to a non-direct argument status which is marked by a preposition-like predicate *ʔuḥʔat*. Tempting as this account may be, it is not an appropriate description of the structure. *ʔuḥʔat* is neither a grammatical marker of an oblique ACTOR argument nor an integral part of the *-'at* construction. The ACTOR can be expressed without *ʔuḥʔat* as a direct argument in the *-'at* construction (see example (12) below). Expression of the ACTOR as an object of *ʔuḥʔat* is an independent structural option[3], not a part of the obligatory structural pattern of 'passive'-formation in Nootka. Thus, a construction like (11) does not prove the demoted status of the ACTOR argument.

(12) *čičiƛčpʔa:qƛti:s*   *Linda.*
     či -ši(ƛ)-či·p -ʔa:qƛ-'at -(y)i: -s   *Linda*
     cut -MOM -for -FUT   -'AT -INDEF-1sg   NAME
     will.cut.for.me   Linda
     'It's for me Linda will cut it up.' [KYU: Rose 1981 p.79: #193]

Rose (1981) claims that the direct ACTOR argument *Linda* in (12) in fact has a syntactically peripheral 'oblique' status. Her claim is based on the observation that the ACTOR argument in the *-'at* construction, unlike that in the non-*'at* construction, has limited word order flexibility: it cannot precede the predicate with which it associates and does not normally precede the core arguments with which it associates (57). However, word order flexibility alone does not provide strong evidence for a syntactic category, especially in a language where word order is flexible and is very responsive to pragmatic demands. In fact this constraint can very well be explained pragmatically. As can be independently shown, in Nootka discourse the important information is most likely to be placed in initial position before the predicate. When the *-'at* construction is used in discourse,

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[3] What appears to be an oblique ACTOR phrase, *ʔuḥʔat* + ACTOR, is a clausal construction used to put a contrastive focus on the agent of an action. When combined with another clause as in (11) the *ʔuḥʔat* clause loses some properties of a full-fledged clause, such as the independent mood and person marking. But it has not yet been grammaticized to the extent that it can be considered an ACTOR phrase within a clause. This is evidenced in the fact that the clause headed by *ʔuḥʔat* often occurs as a main clause.

(13) *ʔuḥʔaƛat*   *Mike Lewis,*
     ʔuḥ   -'aƛ -'at
     being.he -TEL -'AT
     it.was.by.him

     ʔaʔa:tu:ʔat   *Harold*   *qʷa:yi:,*
     ʔaʔa:tu: -'at   *qʷa: -(y)i:*
     ask   -'AT   thus -INDEF.3
     being.asked·   how.it.would.be
     'It was by Mike Lewis that Harold was asked how it would be ...' [Caroline 239]

(14) *ʔuḥʔat*   *ʔu:ʔałukʷat*   *ʔumʔi:qsakitqu:.*
     ʔuḥ   -'at   *ʔu -'ałuk   -'at*   *ʔumʔi·qsu -ʔa·k -it   -qu:*
     being.she -'AT   he -looking.after -'AT   mother   -POSS -PAST -IRR
     it.was.by.her   being.looked.after   his.late.mother
     'It was by his late mother that he was looked after.' [Qawiqaalth 5]

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an ACTOR such as *Linda* in (12) generally occupies a relatively unimportant place within the immediate context. Therefore, it does not make sense to put it into the pragmatically highlighted position, i.e. sentence-initially (= before the predicate). This pragmatic explanation is consistent with the general characterization of Nootka as a 'pragmatic word order language' (Thompson 1978), and it seems better to view the word order flexibility as a factor independent of the syntactic status of an argument.

Given the lack of definitive evidence for its syntactic peripherality, it seems most reasonable to conclude that the ACTOR argument in the *-'at* construction is syntactically no less central within the clause than that in the non-*'at* construction.

The fact that there is no clear syntactic demotion of the ACTOR has a major implication for the characterization of the *-'at* construction with respect to valency reduction. The prototypical passive as defined above involves reduction of the valence of the predicate through removal of the ACTOR from the core argument structure. However, as we have already seen, the Nootka *-'at* clause can retain the ACTOR as a direct argument. Although this ACTOR argument does not control the pronominal index on the predicate, it is indistinguishable from the ACTOR in non-*'at* clauses in terms of syntactic privileges.

Thus, the *-'at* predicate is just as 'transitive' as the non-*'at* form of the predicate. More accurately, the criterion based on valency change cannot be applied to Nootka in a meaningful way. Nootka grammar is not sensitive to the transitivity of the clause, that is, there is no grammatical marker in Nootka that indicates the transitivity of the clause. Therefore, any application of the notion of syntactic transitivity to Nootka clausal structure is bound to be arbitrary, e.g. based on the number of overtly expressed direct arguments.

2.3 Summary

The apparent alternation in syntactic transitivity and also the alternation in the pronominal indexing pattern seem to have led earlier researchers to the passive analysis. However, the Nootka *-'at* construction deviates from the prototypical syntactic passive in the following important ways:

   i) the *-'at* construction can be formed on an intransitive predicate
      — it does not necessarily have an 'active' counterpart

   ii) grammatical promotion/demotion of the arguments does not have identifiable effects on their syntactic privileges

   iii) the valency of the predicate is not reduced compared with that of non-*'at* clause

3. Inverse Analysis

3.1 Motivations behind the inverse analysis

Whistler 1985 questions the traditional characterization of the *-'at* construction as a passive and argues that it is closer to an inverse. Whistler's proposal is motivated by the animacy hierarchy constraints on the use of the *-'at* construction in Nootkan languages (Whistler 1985 on Nootka; Klokeid 1978 on Nitinaht; Jacobsen

1973 on Makah) that find parallelism in the constraints governing the inverse person marking system, e.g. in Algonquian. The hierarchy is laid out in (13), and the pattern of use of -'*at* is summarized in Table 1.

(13) *Animacy hierarchy governing the Nootka -'at construction:*

1, 2 > topical 3 > nontopical 3

Participant Configuration		Use of 'Passive'
ACTOR ›	UNDERGOER	
1,2 →	3	Prohibited
3 →	**1,2**	Obligatory
1,2 →	1,2	Prohibited
3 →	3'	Prohibited
3' →	**3**	Obligatory

Table 1: Pattern of use of -'at
underlined: Participant that is higher in animacy

Basically, what (13) suggests is that the -'*at* construction is required whenever a lower participant is acting on a higher participant. That is, the -'*at* construction is not allowed when a first- or second-person participant (Speech Act Participant, SAP) is acting on either a third person or another SAP. On the other hand, when a third person is acting on a SAP, the sentence has to be put into the -'*at* construction. When the sentence does not involve a SAP, the use of the -'*at* construction is governed by the relative discourse topicality between the ACTOR and UNDERGOER: the -'*at* construction is not allowed when the topical third person is acting on the nontopical, while it is required when the nontopical is acting on the topical.

The following excerpt from a text illustrates the use of the -'*at* construction triggered by relative discourse topicality between third-person participants. In this excerpt the protagonist, a mink called Kwaaxtii, who killed the wolf chief, is being pursued by packs of wolves that are eager to take revenge. Notice that the -'*at* construction is used in (c) and (d), when peripheral characters, i.e. wolves, are acting on the protagonist Kwaaxtii.

(14) [Mink 166-172]
  a. PROTAGONIST > PERIPHERAL
    na?a:ƛ   k̓ʷa:xti:,
    na?a: -'aƛ   k̓ʷa:xti:,
    hear -TEL   Kwaaxtii
    heard   Kwaaxtii
  'Kwaaxtii heard it [= the howling of the wolves].'

  .....

9

b. PROTAGONIST > PERIPHERAL
  wikaƛ   ha?uk̓ʷiƛ.
  wik -'aƛ   ha?u   -k̓ʷi(ƛ)
  not -TEL   exchange -MOM
  didn't   answer.to
  'He didn't answer it (= the howling).'

→ c. PERIPHERAL > PROTAGONIST
  ?u:ktis?aƛat?iš   k̓ʷa:xti:,
  ?u -ktis   -'aƛ -'at -?i·š   k̓ʷa:xti:,
  it -acting.by.ref.to -TEL -'AT -IND.3   Kwaaxtii
  they.are.following.it   Kwaaxtii
  'They [= the wolves] were following Kwaaxtii.'

  .....

→ d. PERIPHERAL > PROTAGONIST
  mišpu:qsyihat   ?in   wawik
  miš -pu·qs   -yi·ha   -'at   ?in   wax   -'ik
  smell -smelling.of-feeling.too.much-'AT   COMP   break.wind-one.who.always.does
  they.could.smell.him.so.clearly   because   one.who.always.breaks.wind
  'They could smell the odor (of Kwaaxtii) so clearly since he kept breaking wind.'

  .....

e. PROTAGONIST > PERIPHERAL
  ?ayisaqsiławiłas?aƛ   ča:stimcmit.
  ?ayisaq -siła   -wiłas -'aƛ   ča:stimc-mi·t
  deceive -act.like -about.to-TEL   mink   -son.of
  is.going.to.trick   Son.of.Mink
  'The Son of Mink (= Kwaaxtii) was going to trick them.'

3.2 Problematic facts

The Nootka -'*at* clauses deviate from the prototypical inverse in one important respect, namely that the pattern of the pronominal indexing in -'*at* clauses is different from that in non-'*at* clauses. As we have seen, the pronominal indexing is controlled by the UNDERGOER in the -'*at* clause and by the ACTOR otherwise.

(15)
  a. Non-'*at* clause: controller = ACTOR /
    "..."   *Phillip   wa:?aƛs*
          Phillip   wa: -'aƛ -s
          NAME   say   -TEL -1sg
          Phillip   I.said.to.him

    '"...", I said to Phillip.' [GL Life 116]

  b. -'*at* clause: controller = UNDERGOER /
    "*čukʷa:*"   *wa:?aƛats   yaqukʷiti:s   nani:qsu.*
    čukʷa: wa: -'aƛ -'at -s   yaq -ukʷ -it -(y)i: -s   nani·qsu
    come.here   say -TEL -'AT -1sg   who -POSS-PAST -INDEF -1sg   grandparent
    come.here   it.was.said.to.me   who.was.my   grandmother

  '"Come here", my grandmother told me.' [Caroline 103]

10

In prototypical inverse languages, on the other hand, such a shift in grammatical status is not associated with the direct-inverse alternation.

The negative implication of this deviation for the inverse analysis could be discounted considering that grammatical promotion/demotion of the arguments does not have identifiable effects on their syntactic privileges. However, the inverse analysis faces a further, critical difficulty with cases where the -'at occurs with intransitive predicates.

The inverse view characterizes the function of -'at as marking a violation of animacy hierarchy constraints on participant configuration, i.e. who is acting on whom. That is, -'at marks the pragmatically unnatural ACTOR-UNDERGOER relationship (i.e. the UNDERGOER is higher in animacy than the ACTOR). This characterization implies that -'at occurs only with predicates which involve some kind of interaction between participants, i.e. transitive predicates. But, as we discussed above, -'at also occurs with intransitive predicates.

(16) miƛyu:ʔtinti:s
      miƛ -yu· -'at-int -(y)i: -s
      rain -..ed -'AT -PAST -INDEF-1sg
      I.got.rained.on

      'I got rained on' [KYU: Rose & Carson 1984: 17a]

(17) hu:ʔakmaḥsat   ʔaqišti:k,
      hu:ʔak -maḥsa   -'at ʔaqi -ʔišt -(y)i: -k
      early   -desiring.to -'AT what -?? - INDF -2sg
      wanting.to.be.early   what.you.might.call

      waƚyaqpiʔat.
      waƚ -yaq -pi(ƛ)   -'at
      go.home -having..ed-in.the.house - 'AT
      go.home

      'You want to be home early.' [Canoe 93]

In (16) and (17), neither miƛ-yu: 'rained' nor hu:ʔak-maḥsa 'wanting to be early' involves any kind of participant interaction. Thus, use of -'at cannot be ascribed to the configuration of relationships between two participants.

3.3 Summary

The treatment of the Nootka -'at clause as an inverse construction is motivated by the observation that the use of -'at is sensitive to the animacy configuration of two participants. The -'at construction deviates slightly from the prototypical inverse construction in that the grammatical status (although not the syntactic status) of the arguments in an inverse clause differs from that in a non-inverse clause. Although the inverse analysis provides a non-ad-hoc characterization of certain constraints on the use of -'at, it leaves unexplained a large set of data involving intransitive-based -'at clauses.

4. Data left unaccounted for in previous studies

Previous studies on the -'at construction are limited in that they only take into account uses of -'at that affect the UNDERGOER (UNDERGOER-focusing function). However, -'at can be used for a function different from UNDERGOER-focusing, i.e. to de-particularize an action or event by eliminating the ACTOR. In this section I provide a basic description of this undocumented DE-PARTICULARIZING use of -'at.

The DE-PARTICULARIZING -'at basically occurs with predicates without an UNDERGOER. It can occur with predicates with an UNDERGOER, but in such a case the UNDERGOER is invariably inanimate.

Grammatically the predicate in a DE-PARTICULARIZING -'at clause takes the third person form regardless of the person of the UNDERGOER. It seems most natural to consider that the pronominal index is correferential with the ACTOR, which is invariably non-referential or impersonal. Since there is neither semantic-discourse or grammatical focusing of the UNDERGOER in DE-PARTICULARIZING -'at clauses, it is inappropriate, and sometimes impossible, to translate these DE-PARTICULARIZING -'at clauses into English passive clauses.

We can distinguish three types of contexts where the DE-PARTICULARIZING -'at clauses are commonly used, i.e. generic statements, non-specific actions, and instructive expressions.

Generalizing use

The DE-PARTICULARIZING -'at clauses can express generic statements. The prototypical cases involve relatively atemporal predicates, especially states. Here DE-PARTICULARIZATION of the action is realized as atemporality and elimination of a particular agent. In (18) the speaker is describing canoe travel in former times from Vancouver Island to the Olympic Peninsula. Notice that the predicates with -'at, ʔaniyat 'only time', čačimḥat 'properly' and ku:čukʔičat 'in a short time', do not involve the UNDERGOER.

(18) ʔaniyat   čačimḥat
      ʔana-iya   -'at čačim -ḥi· -'at
      only -at.time.of -'AT proper -DUR -'AT
      only.time.it.is.done   properly

      ku:čukʔičat
      ku: -čuk -ʔic -'at
      short.distance -?? -DIM -'AT
      in.a.short.time

      hačti:ʔaƛqu:.   q°a:.
      hačti:(ƛ)   -'aƛ -qu: q°a:.
      westerly.wind.blowing -TEL -IRR thus
      when.westerly.wind.is.blowing   thus

      'The only time you could do it (reach the place) smoothly and quickly was when the westerly wind was blowing.' [Kingfisher 71]

Example (19) was produced in a traditional narrative as background generic information to explain the protagonist's action. In the immediately preceding part the protagonist dove into a river and picked up a rock in his hands.

(19) ƛaẏixʔatʔiš   m̓uksẏi   ʔuqƛn̓ukʷat.
ƛaẏix-'at-ʔi·š   m̓uksẏi   ʔuqƛ -n̓uk   -'at
swift -'AT -IND.3   rock   hold? -at.hand -'AT
one.is.fast   rock   have.in.hands

'You can move fast [under water] when you are holding rocks in your hands [as ballast].'   [Kingfisher 141]

Impersonalizing use

The use of -'at for IMPERSONAL expressions is most clearly observed with highly momentaneous, temporally unstable actions.

(20) ʔun̓a:ḥšiʔaƛatqu: ḥu: c̓aʔak.
ʔu -n̓a·ḥ   -ši(ƛ)-'aƛ -'at -qu: ḥu: c̓aʔak
it -seeking -MOM -TEL -'AT -IRR   yonder   water
one.would.go.for   yonder   water

ʔucačiʔat   c̓aʔakm̓inḥʔi.
ʔu -ca   -či(ƛ)-'at   c̓aʔak -m̓inḥ -ʔi·
it -go.to -MOM -'AT   river -PL   -DEF
goes.to.it   the.rivers

'Then we would go looking for fresh water, way over to the river.'   [Caroline 74]

(21) ʔuʔuʔi:ḥʔaƛat   ʔaḥʔa: kʷačšiʔatqu: huḥis.
DUP -ʔu -'i:ḥ   -'aƛ -'at   ʔaḥʔa: kʷač   -ši(ƛ) -'at -qu: huḥis
DUP -it -trying.to.get -TEL -'AT   then   hit.the.right.spot -MOM -'AT -IRR   mound
try.to.get.it   then   would.hit   mound

'And then they would try to hit the mound [to score].'   [Caroline 198]

The meaning and distribution of the IMPERSONAL -'at overlap with those of the INSTRUCTIVE use discussed below, but the IMPERSONAL -'at is found in wider contexts. The IMPERSONAL use, but not the INSTRUCTIVE use, can be found in irrealis, conditional sentences like (22) and (23).

(22) n̓iƛa:k̓aƛatqu:.
n̓iƛa:k -'aƛ -'at -qu:
fighting -TEL -'AT -IRR
when.you.quarrel

'when you quarrel...'   [Caroline 181]

(23) over quarter mile matakʔiš   kačiʔatqu:.
matak -ʔi·š   ka   -či(ƛ)-'at -qu:
probably -IND.3   measure -MOM -'AT -IRR
it.is.probably   if.you.measure

'It was probably over a quarter mile if you measure it.'   [Kingfisher 146]

The IMPERSONAL use also differs from the INSTRUCTIVE use in that it can be found to describe non-controllable events.

(24) ƚa:kƚa:k̓ʷat,
REDUP -ƚa:kʷ   -'at
?? -please.do -'AT
please.do

wik̓piʕatqu:,
wik -p̓iq -'at -qu:
not -?? -'AT -IRR
so.nothing.would.happen

wik̓atqu: ʔu:suqtat,
wik -'at -qu: ʔu:suqta -'at
not -'AT -IRR   hurt   -'AT
may.nothing.happen   one.gets.hurt

wik̓atqu: ʕac̓u:ʔat.
wik -'at -qu: ʕac̓u: -'at
not -'AT -IRR   be.wounded -'AT
may.nothing.happen   one.gets.wounded

'May there not be an accident. May there be no wounds.'   [Canoe 7]

Instructive use

DE-PARTICULARIZING -'at clauses can also be used to express advice or instruction. In these uses the DE-PARTICULARIZATION is associated with the generality or nonindividuality of social expectations and obligations shared by all community members. Thus, advice or instruction expressed with -'at clauses is based on social expectation, as in 'in our society things are done in this way' or 'people do ... this way' rather than on the individual authority, as in 'I think you should do so' or 'I order you to do so'. Distributionally the INSTRUCTIVE -'at uses are found with momentaneous actions, more specifically, highly controllable, executable actions. They do not occur with predicates that are in irrealis modes such as the conditional (when, if...) and predicates that denote uncontrollable actions (cf. examples in IMPERSONAL use section). The INSTRUCTIVE use significantly overlaps with the IMPERSONAL use in terms of both distribution and meaning, and may well be considered a specialized case the IMPERSONAL use.

The most common context where the INSTRUCTIVE -'at clause is found is when the speaker shows the hearer how to perform a certain task. In (25) the speaker is explaining how one would/should examine a tree for its suitability for a canoe. This example could be interpreted either as the INSTRUCTIVE use or the IMPERSONAL use.

(25) hi:stiʔat   ħaħa:ħičat,
    hista-ʼi(ƛ)   -ʼat   ħaħa:ħič -ʼat
    LOC -start.from -ʼAT look   -ʼAT
    one.starts.from.there one.looks.at

    ʔustʔas   takqi:nuʔat,
    ʔust -ʼas   tak   -qi:nu(ƛ) -ʼat
    LOC -on.the.ground facing -on.top.MOM -ʼAT
    on.the.ground one.faces.toward.the.top

    qʷi:ca:piʔitq,
    qʷi   -c   -a·pi -ʔi·tq
    that.which -facing -??   -REL. 3
    the.way.it.is.facing

'You look over from the ground to the top; [noticing] the way it is facing.' [Canoe 5]

The INSTRUCTIVE is appropriate when the utterance is negative or refers to an immediate action that is about to be performed by the addressee. In (26) the speaker is explaining how to fillet fish.

(26) ƛu:ɬħapat.
    ƛu:ɬ -(q)ħ -ʼap   -ʼat
    gentle -SIM -MOM.CAUS -ʼAT
    do.it.slowly

    wiƙat   wi:škpičħat
    wik -ʼat wišk -pičħ   -ʼat
    not -ʼAT scold -doing.while -ʼAT
    don't   doing.without.care

'Do it slowly. Don't just do it without care.' [Caroline 115]

5. Toward a general characterization of Nootka -ʼat

We are now ready to seek a general characterization of the -ʼat construction that is appropriate in the light of the structural uniqueness of Nootka. First we summarize the relevant facts about the use of -ʼat and discuss their implications for a general account of the function of -ʼat.

Types of effect of -ʼat on participant structure

Use of the Nootka -ʼat construction affects participant structure in certain ways. Morphologically it affects the pronominal indexing pattern on the main predicate, causing the ACTOR to lose and/or the UNDERGOER to gain control of the indexing. A change in the morphological marking may be linked to syntactic reorganization of clause structure in some languages, but in Nootka there is not enough evidence to prove a structural alignment between morphological marking and syntactic structure. Use of -ʼat does not affect the argument structure in any syntactically relevant way: there is no discernible change in the syntactic privileges of the arguments between the -ʼat and non-ʼat constructions. The -ʼat construction also affects pragmatic argument structure, i.e. the pragmatic configuration of participant structure surrounding the predicate, in such a way that the ACTOR is defocused and/or the UNDERGOER is focused. There is a clear parallelism between the

15

morphological and the pragmatic changes in the argument structure configuration in the -ʼat construction. The different types of change are illustrated below:

TYPE 1: UNDERGOER-focusing + ACTOR-defocusing

(27) m̓ačiʔats   ma:ckʷin
    m̓a -či(ƛ)-ʼat -s   ma:ckʷin
    bite -MOM -ʼAT -1sg mosquito
    it.bit.me   mosquito

'I was bitten by a mosquito; A mosquito bit me.' [elicited (7.17.91-44)]

(28) humwičaƛatqun   ʔu:qħti   quʔišinm̓it.
    humwiča -ʼaƛ -ʼat-qun ʔu -qħti   quʔišin -m̓i·t
    telling.myth -TEL -ʼAT -IRR.1pl it -tell.about raven -son.of
    they.would.tell.us.stories telling.about Son.of.Raven

'We used to be told stories about the Son of Raven; They used to tell us stories about the Son of Raven.' [Caroline 175]

TYPE 2: UNDERGOER-focusing only

(29) m̓iƛyu:ʔtinti:s
    m̓iƛ -yu· -ʼat-int -(y)i: -s
    rain -..ed -ʼAT -PAST -INDEF-1sg
    I.got.rained.on

'I got rained on' [KYU: Rose & Carson 1984: 17a]

(30) čišhi:qħʔati:s   ƛi:ču
    čiš -h -i· -(q)ħ -ʼat-(y)i: -s   ƛi:ču
    bad -really -ABS -SIM -ʼAT -INDEF-1sg potlatch
    it.disgusts.me   potlatch

'I dislike to give parties.' [KYU: Rose & Carson 1984: 19a]

TYPE 3: ACTOR-defocusing only

(31) wiƙat   ʔa:šxʔa:šxat.
    wik -ʼat   REDUP -ʔašx -a -ʼat
    not -ʼAT   ITER   -filth -REP-ʼAT
    don't   doing.rough.work

'Do not do rough (sloppy) work.' [Canoe 71]

(32) ʔu:ħči:w̓iɬasʔaƛatqu: ɬuħčiti
    ʔu -ħči·   -w̓iɬas -ʼaƛ -ʼat-qu: ɬuħčiti
    it -holding.over.fire -about.to-TEL -ʼAT -IRR head
    when.you.are.going.to.cook   head

'When you cook the fish heads...' [Caroline 145]

It is notable that all of the types of -ʼat construction affect the participant structure either through focusing the UNDERGOER or defocusing the ACTOR. This fact seems to be relevant to the general function of -ʼat, but it does not necessarily mean that UNDERGOER-focusing and/or ACTOR-defocusing are the 'function' of -ʼat.

16

Both the passive analysis and the inverse analysis take the view that a combination of UNDERGOER-focusing and ACTOR-defocusing constitutes the function of -'at, thus, that the function of -'at is to manipulate the overall configuration of the ACTOR-UNDERGOER relationship. But this view turns out to be problematic, leaving unexplained the uses of -'at that involve only one participant (cf. type 2 and 3). In fact, any attempt to define the function of -'at solely in terms of its effects on the participant structure, i.e. UNDERGOER-focusing or ACTOR-defocusing, faces the similar difficulty of not being able to explain all the types of -'at construction. Instead, it seems better to consider the changes of the participant structure as side effects of the use of -'at. In other words, UNDERGOER-focusing or ACTOR-defocusing should be considered epiphenomena of the function of -'at, not the function itself.

Constraints on participant structure in the -'at construction

The range of participant structures that occur in the -'at construction is constrained in a systematic way. The constraint has been characterized in terms of the animacy hierarchy (see the section on the inverse analysis) : the -'at construction almost always shows a participant structure where the participant with the lower animacy rank is acting on the participant with the higher animacy rank. To look at this constraint from another viewpoint, -'at can be used only when the UNDERGOER is higher in animacy than the ACTOR. This constraint is relevant only to the -'at construction involving two participants, but it is, nevertheless, systematic enough to warrant a treatment as an integral part of the function of -'at.

Structural environment surrounding the -'at construction

Another factor that should be taken into account in determining the general characteristics of the -'at construction is its structural environment, i.e. the network of structural alternation the construction is in. In the previous studies the -'at construction has generally been put in opposition to the corresponding non-'at construction based on the same main predicate with the same set of participants. This treatment suggests that there is a regular structural alternation between the -'at and non-'at constructions and that the function of -'at is to mark or trigger the structural alternation. However, as evident from type 2 and type 3 constructions, the apparent structural alternation is not completely regular: there are -'at constructions where the set of participants involved is not identical to the non-'at constructions based on the same predicate. The -'at construction is structurally independent: that is, it cannot be derived from other constructions through a regular structural operation. This observation leads to a new expectation about the function of -'at. The function of -'at cannot be structural rearrangement of a given participant structure. The participant structure in the -'at construction does not result from rearrangement of that in other construction, as in the passive or inverse, but is built anew based on the -'at predicate. Thus, the function of -'at is more lexical-semantic than structural. This characterization of the function of -'at is consistent with the fact that the -'at construction can introduce a participant that is not subcategorized for the non-'at form of the predicate (see the UNDERGOER in type 2).

Toward a general characterization of use of -'at

Let me recapitulate the key observations of -'at that have emerged in the above discussion:

a) The function of -'at is more lexical-semantic: the participant structure in the -'at construction is built anew based on the -'at predicate

b) Use of -'at affects both the UNDERGOER and ACTOR in such a way that the ACTOR is defocused or the UNDERGOER is focused

c) The participant structure in the -'at construction with two participants is constrained by the animacy hierarchy constraint

Based on the above observations, I propose that the function of the suffix -'at is to affect the semantics of the predicate in such a way that the whole predication is projected from the UNDERGOER's perspective (= adds affectedness) or that the predication is de-particularized through elimination of a particular agent. Although this characterization has a disjunctive appearance, it is not an arbitrary collection of unrelated phenomena: these semantic changes often coincide in the same form across different languages (e.g. so-called 'passive' in Japanese or Nepali) and are likely to be functionally related. Also in Nootka, the distribution of the two types of semantic effects is hardly random. Use of -'at adds affectedness if the predicate expresses a transitive action with both an animate ACTOR and an animate UNDERGOER. This change is reflected in the participant structure as UNDERGOER-focusing.

The suffix -'at also adds affectedness when the predicate is an argument-less event predicate such as those expressing meteorological events. In this case the change in the discourse participant structure involves introduction of the UNDERGOER participant external to the participant structure associated the non-'at form of the predicate, i.e. zero participant.

When -'at is used on the predicate without an animate UNDERGOER, it de-particularizes the predication. In terms of the discourse participant structure, the ACTOR is removed from the structure.

The use of -'at is observed to interact with the 'animacy hierarchy': -'at can be used only when the UNDERGOER is higher in 'animacy' than the ACTOR. Although the concept of 'animacy' can be elusive, in Nootka it is best to be understood in discourse-pragmatic terms as how easily the speaker can empathize with or set his perspective at the participant in question. By characterizing 'animacy' this way, we can understand the 'animacy constraint' as an integral part of the function of -'at, rather than an external constraint on the use of -'at. Thus, the speaker can use -'at to take the UNDERGOER's perspective only when the UNDERGOER is easier to empathize with than the ACTOR.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have examined the uses of the suffix -'at in Nootka, which has been characterized either a 'passive' or 'inverse' suffix in the previous literature. The suffix -'at is used for two semantic functions, i.e. to affect the meaning of the predicate so that the whole predication is projected from the UNDERGOER's perspective and to de-particularize the predication. Apparently these functions are related, since it is common crosslinguistically for a passive-like construction to be used for de-particularization such as impersonal or

generic expressions. Nevertheless, the question of whether or how we should characterize these functions of -'at in terms of the single general function is not a trivial one. Here, for the lack of a general characterization that does justice for the two distinct functions, it seems most reasonable to characterize the suffix -'at as polysemous.

The Nootka -'at construction shows some resemblance to the passive and the inverse constructions, but it deviates in important respects from both the prototypical syntactic passive and the prototypical inverse:

The Nootka -'at construction **conforms** to the **prototypical syntactic passive** in that:
  • the UNDERGOER is grammatically promoted to gain control of the pronominal index
  • the ACTOR is grammatically demoted to lose control of the pronominal index

The Nootka -'at construction **deviates** from the **prototypical syntactic passive** in that:
  • the -'at construction can be formed on an intransitive predicate
  — it does not necessarily have an 'active' counterpart
  • grammatical promotion/demotion of the arguments do not have identifiable effects on their syntactic privileges
  • the valency of the predicate is not reduced compared with that of the non-'at clause

The Nootka -'at construction **conforms** to the **prototypical inverse** in that:
  • the use of -'at is sensitive to the animacy hierarchy
  • grammatical promotion/demotion of the arguments do not have identifiable effects on their syntactic privileges
  • the valency of the predicate is not reduced compared with that of the non-'at clause

The Nootka -'at construction **deviates** from the **prototypical inverse** in that:
  • the -'at construction can be formed on an intransitive predicate
  — it does not necessarily have a 'direct' counterpart
  • the grammatical status of the arguments (controller of the pronominal index) differs from that in non-'at clauses

The deviation from the prototypical cases itself does not necessarily preclude our applying these terms to the -'at construction. In fact, the term 'passive', especially, is applied crosslinguistically to constructions of such a diverse range of characteristics that many deviations from the prototypical passive could be tolerated. Moreover, the advantage of indicating comparability between the -'at construction and the passive or the inverse in other languages may provide an argument for adopting these terms for the Nootka construction. However, in this case, the difference is substantial enough that extending the labels 'passive' or 'inverse' to the -'at construction is descriptively misleading. A label is more than a simple designator for what a form does. It also carries important implications about the structural environment in which the form occurs. Although what it 'does' might bear surface resemblance to what the passive or the inverse 'do', the -'at construction occurs in a structural environment significantly different from that of the passive and inverse: most notably, the -'at construction is not in regular structural opposition to a non-'at construction unlike the passive (vs. active) or the inverse (vs. direct). Thus, since calling the Nootka -'at construction 'passive' or 'inverse' can give misleading impressions about the systematic characteristics of the language, I have suggested a more language-specific, and I think more realistic, account of its grammar and pragmatics.

19

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20