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Andrew Simpson and Hồ Hảo Tâm

## 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*

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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 *bèi* 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 *bèi* passive constructions in Mandarin Chinese. Section 3 then shows how *bị* structures in Vietnamese show many clear similarities to Mandarin *bèi* passives, suggesting that the analysis of *bị* and *bèi* 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 *bèi* 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 *bèi* occurs as a predicate embedding a second clause.

- (1) *Zhāngsān bèi [Lǐsì dǎ-le].*  
 Zhangsan BEI Lisi hit-ASP  
 ‘Zhangsan was hit by Lisi.’

First, it is noted that a subject-oriented adverb such as *gùyì* ‘deliberately’ can occur preceding *bèi* and be construed as referring to the action of the initial NP in the sentence (*Zhāngsān* 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) *Zhāngsān shì gùyì bèi Lǐsì dǎ-de.*  
 Zhangsan BE deliberately BEI Lisi hit-DE  
 ‘Zhangsan deliberately got hit by Lisi.’

Second, it is observed that either the NP preceding *bèi* or the NP following *bèi* can bind the subject-oriented anaphor *zìjǐ* in sentences such as (3).<sup>1</sup> The interpretations available in (3) therefore suggest that both the NPs *Zhāngsān* and *Lǐsì* are in subject positions, and hence that (3) contains two clauses, each with its own subject, as schematized in (4)

- (3) *Zhāngsān<sub>i</sub> bèi Lǐsì<sub>k</sub> guān zài zìjǐ<sub>i/k</sub>-de jiā-lǐ.*  
 Zhangsan BEI Lisi shut in self’s house-in  
 ‘Zhangsan was locked up by Lisi in his/her own house.’

- (4)
- ```

      subjects
      /      \
[clause-1 NP1 BEI [clause-2 NP2 V _ ]
  
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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

<sup>1</sup> For discussion of the subject-oriented nature of the Chinese anaphor *zìjǐ*, 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. *Zhāngsān<sub>i</sub> bèi [Op<sub>i</sub> Lǐsì dǎ-le t<sub>i</sub>]*

- b. NP<sub>1</sub> BEI [Op<sub>i</sub> NP<sub>2</sub> V t<sub>i</sub>]

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) *Zhāngsān bèi Lǐsì pài jǐngchá zhuā-zǒu-le.*  
 Zhangsan BEI Lisi send police grab-away-ASP  
 'Lisi sent the police to seize Zhangsan and take him away.'

- (7) \**Zhāngsān bèi wǒ tóngzhì Lǐsì bǎ [[<sub>RC</sub> zànměi \_ de] shū] dōu mǎi-zǒu-le.*  
 Zhangsan BEI 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 shìqìng bù néng bèi tā suǒ liǎojiě.*  
 these thing not can BEI he SUO 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) *Zhāngsān bèi Lǐsì dǎ-le tā yí-xià.*  
 Zhangsan BEI 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) *Zhāngsān bèi dǎ-le.*  
 Zhangsan BEI hit-ASP  
 'Zhangsan was hit.'

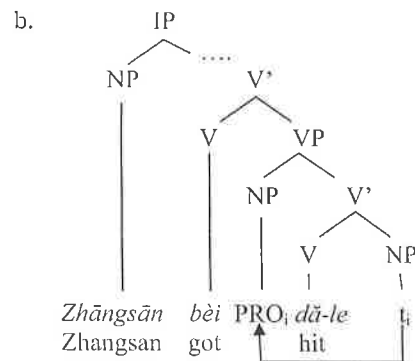
Interestingly, such agentless passives, which Huang (1999) refers to as the 'short passive' form, have certain different syntactic properties from the 'long passive', where an agent is present. These differences, observed in Huang (1999), are summarized in (11), and are argued to call for a somewhat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

- (11) PROPERTIES OF THE MANDARIN SHORT PASSIVE (Huang 1999)
- No resumptive pronouns (even when frequency phrases appear).
  - No particle *suǒ* possible.
  - 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):<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> 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<sub>i</sub> bèi<sub>VP</sub> PRO<sub>i</sub> dǎ-le t<sub>i</sub>*



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 *bị*, 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 bị Nga đánh.*  
 Nam BI Nga hit  
 'Nam was hit by Nga.'
- (14) *Nam bị đánh.*  
 Nam BI 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) \**Bị Nga Nam đánh.*  
 BI Nga Nam hit  
 Int.: 'Nam was hit by Nga.'

Combined with the observation that the NP following *bị* is able to bind an anaphor, as shown in (16), this would seem to favor a bi-clausal analysis of *bị*-sentences in which *bị* 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-*bị* NP in passive sentences like (16) therefore patterns like a subject, similar to the post-*bèi* NP in Mandarin:

- (16) *Nam<sub>i</sub> bị Nga<sub>k</sub> nhốt trong phòng ngủ của mình<sub>i/k</sub>.*  
 Nam BI Nga lock in room sleep of self  
 'Nam was locked by Nga in his/her own room.'
- (17) *Nga<sub>k</sub> nhốt Nam<sub>i</sub> trong phòng ngủ của mình<sub>k/\*i</sub>.*  
 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 bị \*(Nga) báo cảnh sát đến bắt.*  
 Nam BI 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.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> With regard to the possible occurrence of agentive, subject-oriented adverbs such as 'deliberately' in the higher clause of *bị* 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 Zhāng bèi dǎ-diào-le yáochǐ.*  
old Zhang BEI hit-lose-ASP teeth  
'Zhang had his teeth knocked out.' (Shi 1997)

- (20) *Tā bèi jǐngchá mòshōu-le zhǐ-zhào.*  
he BEI police confiscate-ASP driving-license  
'He had his driving license confiscated by the police.' (Shi 1997)

- (21) *Zhāngsān bèi tǔfēi dǎ-sǐ-le fùqīn.*  
Zhangsan BEI bandit hit-dead-ASP father  
'Zhangsan's father was killed.' (Huang 1999)

- (22) *Tôi bị Nga làm gãy một ngón tay.*  
I BEI Nga make snap 1 finger  
'Nga broke one of my fingers.'

- (23) *Nga bị Nam giật tóc.*  
Nga BEI Nam pull hair  
'Nga had her hair pulled by Nam.'

- (24) *Nam bị cảnh sát tịch thu ra-đô của Nam.*  
Nam BEI police confiscate radio of Nam  
'Nam had his radio confiscated by the police.' (Le 1976)

be analyzed as a raising modal auxiliary or as a control verb, a difference which may affect the way that the patterning here can be interpreted.

- (i) *Nam cố ý muốn bị cảnh sát bắt.*  
Nam deliberately want BEI police arrest  
'Nam deliberately wanted to be arrested by the police.'

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 bị một người găng xtọ giết ba (của Nga).*  
Nga BEI 1 CL gangster kill father (of Nga)  
Intended: 'A gangster killed Nga's father.'

- (26) *\*Nga bị Ông thầy giáo phạt con trai (của Nga).*  
Nga BEI Ong teacher criticize son (of Nga)  
Intended: 'Nga'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) *Lǐsì yòu bèi Wángwǔ jìchū-le yì-zhī quánlěidǎ.*  
Lisi again BEI Wangwu hit-ASP 1-CL home-run  
'Lisi again had Zhangsan hit a home run on him.' (Huang 1999)

- (28) *Wǒ bèi tā zhème yí zuò, jiù shénme dōu kànbujiàn-le.*  
I BEI he thus one sit 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) *\*Cảnh sát bị tên sát nhân trốn thoát.*  
police BEI 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 *bị*, present in all of the Vietnamese examples thus far, a second verbal element *được* also frequently occurs in fully parallel sentence forms. The key semantic difference between *bị* and *được* is as follows:

- (30) a. *bị* is used in sentences where the event depicted by the main verb is understood as affecting the subject in a generally negative way.  
 b. *được* occurs in parallel sentence forms where the event depicted by the main verb is understood to affect the subject in a generally positive way.

*Được* itself appears to be cognate with Chinese 得 '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 *được* in a passive frame parallel to *bị*.

- (31) *Nam bị thầy giáo phạt.*  
 Nam BI teacher punish  
 'Nam was punished by the teacher.'
- (32) *Nam được thầy giáo khen.*  
 Nam DUOC teacher praise  
 'Nam was praised by the teacher.'

Structurally, *được* 'passives' correspond fully to *bị* passives and allow for the same kinds of syntactic patterns.<sup>4</sup> *Bị* and *được* 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 *được* can occur in an indirect passive-type use (with beneficial effect), similar to the use of *bị* in (24):

- (33) *Tôi được Nga đọc lá thư của tôi.*  
 I DUOC Nga read letter of I  
 'I had Nga read my letter.'

In terms of meaning and patterns of use, *bị* 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 *được*. However, verbs such as 'praise' may in fact occur with *bị* 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 *được* if the action of 'punishing' is somehow contextually understood to be positive for the subject:

- (34) *Nam bị thầy giáo khen.*  
 Nam BI teacher praise  
 'Nam was praised by the teacher.'
- (35) *Nam được thầy giáo phạt.*  
 Nam DUOC 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

<sup>4</sup> 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/dak* and Vietnamese *được* – Simpson 2001) does not permit a long passive form with an overt Agent, unlike the negative effect passive formed with *thuuk* (Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom 2005):

(ii) *phom day-rap (\*khruu) chom*  
 I PASS teacher praise  
 'I was praised (by the teacher).'

the choice of *bị* and *được*, 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 *bị* passives, which distinguishes them from Chinese *bèi* sentences and passives in most other languages, is the occurrence of *intransitive verbs* in the *bị* 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 bị ốm/bệnh.*  
 Nga BI sick/ill  
 'Nga got sick.'
- (38) *Nga bị bệnh ung thư.*  
 Nga BI ill cancer  
 'Nga got cancer.'

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

- (39) *Tôi nghe nói là Nam ốm/bệnh lắm.*  
 I hear say C Nam sick/ill much  
 'I heard that Nam is very ill.'
- (40) *Nam đang ốm/bệnh (lắm).*  
 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 bị mù.*  
 Nam BI blind.  
 'Nam is/became blind.'
- (42) *Nam bị tàn tật.*  
 Nam BI crippled  
 'Nam is/became crippled.'
- (43) *Nam bị ho.*  
 Nam BI cough  
 'Nam coughed.'
- (44) *Nam bị ói.*  
 Nam BI vomit  
 'Nam vomited.'
- (45) *Nam bị chết đuối.*  
 Nam BI 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) \**Tā bèi bìng-le.*  
 he BEI sick-ASP
- (47) \**Ta bèi késou-le*  
 he BEI 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 *bị* in such sentences is to signal and emphasize the negative impact of the event on the subject of the verb. The extension of passive *bị* 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

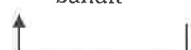
The interaction of (48a) and (48b) is suggested to cause the Patient/Object argument of a passivized verb to undergo movement to the subject position of a finite clause to be assigned/check case. As pointed out by Huang (1999), however, the patterning of passive constructions in Chinese and other East Asian languages necessitates a re-assessment of (48a/b) when considered as putative cross-linguistic properties of the passive.<sup>5</sup> 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

<sup>5</sup> See also Simpson (1990) for similar conclusions based on Thai.

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-periphery 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) *Zhāngsān bèi [Op<sub>i</sub> t<sub>i</sub> dǎ-sǐ-le [pro<sub>i</sub> fùqīn]].*  
Zhangsan BEI bandit hit-die-ASP father
- 

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 'ba construction', where overt NPs are introduced and licensed by the element *ba* in outer object positions:<sup>6</sup>

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

- (i) *Huā bèi wǒ jiāo-le shuǐ.* (ii) *Wǒ bǎ huā jiāo-le shuǐ.*  
flower BEI I add-ASP water I BA flower add-ASP water  
'The flowers were watered by me.' 'I watered the flowers.'



- (51) *Tǔfěi bǎ Zhāngsān dǎ-sǐ-le fùqin.*  
 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:

- (52) *Mary-ka John-ul tali-lul cha-ess-ta/\*po-ess-ta.*  
 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'.<sup>7</sup>

Such an analysis of indirect and adversity passives has two immediate consequences, 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

- (iii) *Nà kuài dì bèi tāmen zhòng-le guā.* (iv) *Tā bǎ nà kuài dì zhòng-le guā*  
 that CL land BEI they plant-ASP melon he BA that CL land plant-ASP melon  
 'They planted melons in that bit of land.' '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 bèi Lǐsì pǎo huí jiā 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.<sup>8</sup>

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 surface 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 straightforwardly 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 distinctive use of the passive was illustrated in section 4.2, where it was shown that the subjects of intransitive verbs may participate in *bị* 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.<sup>9</sup>

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 *bị* 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 *bị* 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 bị xem một phim kinh dị.*

Nam BI watch one film horror

'Nam watched a horror film (and this was unpleasant for Nam).'

- (54) *Sắp bị lọt vào miệng con quái vật thì ...*

ASP BI 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 *bị* in Vietnamese – *được* – also regularly occurs with its subject linked to a lower subject position:

- (55) *Nam được đi Paris.*

Nam DUOC go Paris

'Nam went/got to go to Paris'.

Therefore with both *bị* and *được* 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**

$NP_i$  *bị/được* [ $NP_k$  verb [ $NP_i$ ]] 'transitive passive'

**subject-to-subject dependencies**

$NP_i$  *bị/được* [[ $NP_i$ ] verb] 'intransitive passive'<sup>10</sup>

$NP_i$  *bị/được* [[ $NP_i$ ] verb  $NP_k$ ] 'transitive passive'

<sup>10</sup> The set of intransitive verbs which occur with *bị* are non-agentive undergoers 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 diagnosing unaccusativity and distinguishing unaccusative from unergative verbs in Vietnamese have thus far not been identified.

Vietnamese thus makes use of an extensive array of linking options in the projection of passive-related structures, challenging assumptions about the necessary limits of such forms and raising new questions for both the formal and functional modeling of the passive. Previously, initial cross-linguistic characterizations of the passive based on patterns in European languages were modified by the observation of non-prototypical (though robust) forms such as the passive of unergative intransitives in German, illustrated in (57), where agent demotion occurs but no patient promotion (the pronoun *es* 'it' in (57) is expletive):

- (57) *Es wurde getanzt.*

it became danced

Lit: 'It was danced.'

East Asian languages, such as Chinese (also Japanese, Korean, Thai) then forced a further re-consideration of universal properties of the passive, as noted above and discussed at length in Huang (1999). Vietnamese with its bi-clausal subject dependency passives now indicates an additional limit of variation which needs to be factored into and acknowledged in global descriptions of the 'passive'. Given what is observed in Vietnamese, a universal set of 'minimal required properties' of the passive may need to acknowledge that prototypical passive constructions may be stretched to incorporate (and be licensed by) dependencies between two subject positions, bringing the passive syntactically close, in this instance, to the constructions commonly referred to as 'Control structures', where the reference value of the covert subject of an embedded clause is provided ('controlled') by the subject of a higher clause, as in (58):

- (58) John<sub>i</sub> wanted [PRO<sub>i</sub> to leave].

The potential similarity of subject dependency passives such as (53–55) to Control structures raises interesting questions about the syntactic distinctions between passive and Control structures in particular, and, in general, whether the 'passive' as a syntactic construction can still be isolated from other constructions in a meaningful way through the identification of a distinct set of 'passive' properties. Increasingly it may seem that the boundaries between what can be labeled 'passive' and the properties of various other constructions are not so fully clear and significant.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> 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 *bị* and *được* 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 again seem to be proscriptive 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 *bị* and *được* occur in both 'regular' affected object passives and affected subject struc-

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the subject position of the embedded clause (e.g. Hornstein 1999). The hypothesis that Control structures are the result of movement from the embedded clause subject position brings such forms closer still to 'passive' sentences resulting from movement of the subject of the verb in the embedded clause.

tures, 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 *bị* 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, *bị* 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 *bị* sentences with *intransitive* verbs are not passive forms, and it might be possible that there are two (or more) *bị* 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 *bị* can be fairly swiftly discounted, given the common distinctive meaning associated with *bị* in its regular occurrences with both transitive and intransitive verbs. As noted earlier, *bị* 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 *bị*. This highly specialized semantic function of *bị* occurs not only when *bị* combines with transitive verbs but also with intransitives (and with subject gap transitives such as (53) and (54) too). It is therefore clear that *bị* is the same morpheme in all its occurrences and a uniform analysis is consequently desirable. As a single uniform analysis for all *bị* 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 *bị* with transitive and intransitive verbs be categorized as constructions of different types with different labels.

Quite generally, then, the occurrence of *bị* (and *được*) 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)<sup>12</sup>, empirically there still remains the puzzle of a set of forms that interestingly occur in one language – the *bị* (and *được*) 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 *bèi*, 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 *bị* seems to be different from Chinese *bèi* – its selection of a range of different complement types. Although less frequent in occurrence than the combination of *bị* with a clause/verbal predicate, 'passive' *bị* may actually be combined with a variety of non-verbal constituents, such as nouns/NPs, adverbs, and adjectives.<sup>13</sup> This is illustrated in (59–62) below:

- (59) *bị* + adverb  
*bị chậm* 'be delayed'    *chậm* 'slowly (adv.)' (*đi chậm* 'go slowly')

- (60) *bị* + noun  
*bị hoang tưởng* 'be paranoid'    *hoang tưởng* 'delirium (N)'  
*bị virus* 'get a virus'    *virus* (N)  
*bị nạn lụt* 'be flooded'    *nạn lụt* 'flood disaster (N)'

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> 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 bị virus.*    b. *Mỹ bị nạn lụt.*  
          compute of he    BI virus    USA BI flood  
          'His computer got a virus.'<sup>14</sup>    'The US was flooded.'

- (62) *bị* + adjective  
*bị nghèo đói* 'be impoverished'    *nghèo* 'poor (Adj)'  
*bị hư* 'be damaged'    *hư* 'damaged (Adj)'

While this ability of *bị* to combine with a range of complement types further distinguishes it from Mandarin *bèi*, it is actually not clear that it could be responsible for the Vietnamese-Mandarin difference with regard to subject-gap dependencies with *bị/bèi*. 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 *bèi* 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 *bị/bèi* etc?' The meaning contribution of *bị* and *bèi* (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.<sup>15</sup> Frequently, this will result in the *bị/bèi*

<sup>14</sup> 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 bị nhiều/mấy loại virus nặng lắm/từ nước Đức.*  
      computer of he    BI many/several type virus serious very from Germany  
      'His computer got many/several types of very serious virus from Germany.'

<sup>15</sup> This is indeed the most common interpretation in *bèi/bị* 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.<sup>16</sup>

The generalization that needs to be accounted for is that, in the analysis of operator-movement assumed for Chinese *bèi* passives (and Vietnamese *bị* 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 successfully in Vietnamese *bị* 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* [ $\text{Op}_k$  PRO to please  $t_k$ ].

(64) \**John is easy* [ $\text{Op}_k$   $t_k$  to be happy].

(65) \**John is easy* [ $\text{Op}_k$   $t_k$  to please Mary].

<sup>16</sup> It also seems 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 *bị* sentences. Elsewhere it has been seen that Vietnamese is actually less permissive than Mandarin in its *bị* 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 parametrized syntactic principle would therefore seem to be desirable, licensing such passive forms in Vietnamese but not in Chinese.

The factor often used to account for the extraction asymmetry in *tough* constructions is the presence/absence of case in the position of extraction. A'-operator movement is critically assumed to be possible only from case-marked positions, hence not from the SpecTP position of non-finite clauses.

Though a case-based account of operator-movement will correctly characterize instances of *tough*-movement, as in (63–65), it would not seem to allow for an explanation of the differences between Vietnamese and Chinese under consideration here. The simple reason for this is that case appears to be readily available in the subject position of clauses embedded by *bèi* in Mandarin, licensing overt subjects in instances of the long passive. This presence of case might consequently be expected to allow for subject operator movement if this were to be the relevant licensing factor, yet subject gap passives clearly do not occur in Chinese.

Looking elsewhere for useful clues, there are further instances of asymmetries in the extraction of subjects and objects in certain languages which are not attributable to case and which are therefore more informative for the analysis of the Chinese/Vietnamese difference. Two well-documented examples of this in the literature are the *that*-trace paradigm in English, and *qui/que* alternations in French relativization.<sup>17</sup> In both constructions, it has been argued in Rizzi (1990) that licensing of the extraction-site of empty operator movement is regularly achieved through (proper) government of the subject position by an appropriate C, significantly failing to occur when 'that' occupies the C position in English and when *qui* occurs in C in French. Quite generally, extraction from

<sup>17</sup> 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<sub>i</sub> do you think that  $t_i$  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* [ $\text{O}_i$  *qui*  $t_i$  *est venu*]  
the person C is come  
'the person who came'

(iii) *la personne* [ $\text{O}_i$  *que* *j'ai vue*  $t_i$ ]  
the person C I-have seen  
'the person I saw'

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 *bị* and *bèi* sentences. Adopting the approach in Rizzi (1990), it can be suggested that what underlies the difference between Vietnamese and Chinese in *bị/bèi* constructions is the nature of the head which potentially licenses extraction from SpecTP in the embedded clause of *bị* and *bèi* 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 *bèi*. It can therefore be suggested that the difference between Vietnamese and Mandarin lies directly in the lexical difference between *bèi* and *bị* and their role in licensing the extraction of a following subject. *Bèi*, 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. *Bị*, 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 *bị*. Subject-to-subject dependencies in *bị* sentences formed by extraction of an operator from SpecTP are therefore licensed to occur and syntactically made available (in principle) in *bị* sentences unlike in Mandarin *bèi* constructions.<sup>18</sup> Such a relatively simple, lexically-parametrized difference between *bị* and *bèi* 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 *bị* and *bèi* (and Thai *thuuk*).

Quite possibly, the syntactic difference assumed to exist between *bị* and *bèi* 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

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

elements (Roberts and Roussou 2003), it may be speculated that the inability of *bèi* to license subject gaps may be a manifestation of a more advanced process of grammaticalization having occurred with *bèi* than with *bị*, the latter element retaining more of its source properties as a verb, which cross-linguistically are more commonly licensors of movement and extraction.<sup>19</sup> Finally, such a hypothetically less grammaticalized status of *bị* might also link up naturally with the observation that, unlike *bèi*, *bị* 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 *bèi*. A general, principled view of the intriguing differences between *bị* and *bèi* 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 *bị* and *bèi* 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 *bị* and *bèi*. 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

<sup>19</sup> Vietnamese *bị*, like Mandarin *bèi*, 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 *bị* and *bèi* 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 *bị* and *bèi* 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 *bị*. 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 (*bị*), the other for positive impact events (*được*), while Mandarin lacks an equivalent for the latter *được*-based forms. Third, it was seen that Vietnamese *bị* can combine with a range of complement types with a similar passive-like meaning of being negatively affected, again showing a difference to Mandarin *bèi*. 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 *bị* and *bèi* 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 from 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 *bèi/bị* forms.

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