Passives
Discourse function of passives

Passives are “foregrounding” constructions. They topicalize (draw attention to) an argument that is not normally the topic in an active sentence.

Active
(1) Mary slapped John.

Passive
(2) John was slapped.
(3) John was slapped by Mary.
Passive classification

Sentences classified as passives have the following 4 characteristics (Keenan and Dryer 2007):

- it contrasts with another construction, the active
- the subject of the active corresponds to a non-obligatory oblique phrase of the passive or is not overtly expressed
- the subject of the passive, if there is one, corresponds to the direct object of the active
- the construction displays some special morphological marking of the verb.
Prototypical passive

Swahili (Ashton 1947: 224)

(11) Hamisi a-li-pik-a chakula.
    Hamisi 3sg-pst-cook-ind food
    ‘Hamisi cooked the/some food.’

(12) Chakula ki-li-pik-w-a (na Hamisi)
    food 3sg-pst-cook-pass-ind by Hamisi
    ‘The food was cooked (by Hamisi).’

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② the subject of the active corresponds to a non-obligatory oblique phrase of the passive or is not overtly expressed
③ the subject of the passive, if there is one, corresponds to the direct object of the active
④ the construction displays some special morphological marking of the verb
Lexical passives

- According to our characteristics of passives, these are not passives (but Payne includes them anyway).
- The verb is inherently passive.

**Maninka (Niger-Congo: Guinea)**

(11) Músó bàra kínin tíbi.
    woman aux rice cook.
    ‘The woman cooked rice.’

(12) kínin bàra tíbi (músó bòlo).
    rice aux cook woman by
    ‘The rice was cooked (by the woman).’

- Not a middle construction because, when the agent is omitted, it’s still understood that a clausal agent is involved in the event.
- The agent may be expressed as an oblique.
Morphological passives

- Adding morphology to the verb, often times a suffix.

Sre (Mon-Khmer):

(13) Cal paʔ mpon.
wind open door
‘The wind opened the door.’

(14) Mpon ge-paʔ mə cal.
door pass-open by wind
‘The door was opened by the wind.’

- Passive morphology can also be infixing (TAGALOG), internal vowel change (Hebrew, Arabic), reduplication (Hanis Coos).
Periphrastic/analytical passives

- Special verb morphology + an auxiliary verb
- These passives fall into natural classes according to the choice of auxiliary verb.

1. Verb of being or becoming

Persian

   Ali Ahmed-obj killed
   ‘Ali killed Ahmed.’

(20) Ahmed košte šod.
   Ahmed killed become
   ‘Ahmed was killed.’
Periphrastic/analytical passives

② Verb of reception (get, receive, eat)

Welsh
(21) Cafodd Wyn ei rybuddio gan Ifor.
get Wyn his warning by Ifor
‘Wyn was warned by Ifor.’

③ Verb of motion

Hindi
(22) Murgi mari gayee
chicken killed went
‘The chicken was killed.’
Periphrastic/analytical passives

④ Verb of experiencing (suffer, touch, etc.)

Vietnamese

(23) Quang bi (Bao) ghet.
   Quang suffer (Bao) detest
   ‘Quang is detested (by Bao).’