Voice without subjects, objects, or obliques

Manipulating argument structure in Agent/Patient systems (Mohawk)

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Grammatical voice was originally understood as a system of alternating clause structures that cast different participants as subject, but it is now well known that not all languages distinguish a subject category comparable to those of Greek or English. Here we examine argument structure in Mohawk, an Iroquoian language of the northeastern North America, which exhibits no evidence of subject, object, or even oblique categories. Despite the absence of such categories, the language displays robust middle, reflexive, reciprocal, causative, and applicative constructions. Because there is no subject category, indeed no single 'most grammatically prominent constituent', Mohawk voice alternations do not serve the syntactic functions seen in some languages, but these constructions do serve important semantic, lexical, and discourse functions.

A key category in discussions of voice has been that of subject. Fine surveys of the topic can be found in Shibatani (1985, 1988, and 1999). Grammatical voice was originally understood as a system of alternating clause structures that cast different participants as subject: active voice clauses cast semantic agents as subjects, while passive voice clauses cast semantic patients as subjects. But it is now well known that not all languages distinguish a subject category comparable to that of Greek or English. Their numbers raise the issue of whether the notion of voice should be explicitly formulated to exclude them or generalized to include them. Many languages that lack a subject category classify core arguments into ergative and absolutive categories. These languages can be accommodated if the key category is generalized from 'subject' to 'the most grammatically prominent constituent' (Mithun 1994; Shibatani 1999). Their 'most grammatically prominent constituent' is simply defined as the absol-
tive. But a number of languages do not isolate a single, 'most grammatically prominent constituent'. Many of these classify core arguments a third way: into grammatical agent and patient categories. We might wonder whether such languages can show voice at all, and if they can, how their voice systems might differ from those in languages with subjects or absolutes. Here it will be seen that such languages can indeed exhibit the kinds of phenomena included by Shibatani in the broader view of voice as alternations in argument structure, including not only actives, passives, and middles, but also reflexives, reciprocals, resultatives, causatives and applicatives. It will also be seen that the functions of these alternatives can be shaped by the nature of the grammatical argument categories in the language. Examples will be drawn from Mohawk, an Iroquoian language spoken primarily in northeastern North America in Quebec, Ontario, and New York State.

1. Mohawk basic argument structure

Core or direct arguments are easy to identify in Mohawk. All verbs contain pronominal prefixes referring to them, whether or not additional independent nominals are present.

(1) Mohawk core arguments: Watshenm:ne Sawyer, speaker p.c.

   ta-honwa-nsér-e' n=ónkwe
cisloc.fac-3.pl/m.sg-chase-prf the=person
   'The people chased him.'
   *Tahonwahsere*.
   'They chased him.'

b. *la'linkta'ne'*
   kí: raksà:':'a.
i-d'-ha-t-a'-ne'
   kí:ken ra-kà:='a
   triloc.fac-dv-m.sg.agt-stand-inch-prf this m.sg-child=dim
   'The boy stopped there.'
   *la'linkta'ne*.
   'He stopped there.'

There are three paradigms of pronominal prefixes in Mohawk: one for grammatical Agents, one for grammatical Patients, and one for transitive Agent/Patient combinations. Prototypical grammatical Agents actively instigate, perform, and control events or states. Examples of verbs with the mas-
culine singular Agent pronoun -ha- are in (2). (The basic form of the prefix is -hra- but it appears most often as ra- or -ha-.)

(2) Mohawk pronominal Agents
   wa-ha-‘niack:nec’ ‘he escaped’
   wa-ha-‘kwate’ ‘he dug’
   wa-ha-‘terontake’ ‘he stayed home’

Prototypical grammatical Patients are not in control but are affected by events or states. Examples of verbs with the masculine singular Patient pronoun -ho- are in (3). (The basic form of this prefix is -hro-, but it appears most often as ro- or -ho-.)

(3) Mohawk pronominal Patients
   wa-ho-‘nik6nhrhm’ ‘he forgot’
   wa’l-ha-henrehie’ ‘he yelled’
   wa-ha-‘tu’we’ ‘he slept’

Transitive pronominal prefixes represent combinations of grammatical Agents and Patients, like -honwe- ‘they/him’ in (1a) above. In many forms the Agent and Patient components have become fused.

The pattern is not simply one of ‘split subjects’. The Patient category includes not only many participants that would be cast as subjects in a language like English, as in (3) above, but also many that would be cast as direct or indirect objects. This is easiest to see in transitive forms with neuter Agents, which are zero in that context.

(4) Mohawk transitive Patients
   wa-h6-‘hsere’ ‘it chased him’
   wa-h6-‘rene’ ‘it cut him’
   wa-h6-‘sere’ ‘it dragged him’

The original semantic motivations behind the Agent and Patient categories are easy to see, but the distinction is now fully grammatical and categorical, established for each lexical item. Speakers do not weigh degrees of instigation, control, or affectedness as they speak. They simply learn the appropriate pronominal paradigm with each verb and select the two together. Over time, the original motivation behind particular pronominal choices can become obscure as the meanings of verb stems shift. The verb ‘throw’, for example, appears with Patient prefixes, though someone who throws something would certainly seem to be actively instigating and controlling an event. The original meaning of this stem was ‘lose’, a meaning it still retains as well. Losing something is
not usually intentional, instigated, or controlled, so the verb was established with Patient pronominal prefixes. The same prefixes were retained when the meaning was extended to throwing.

(5) **Mohawk less transparent pronominal choice**

\[ \text{\textit{ina}h\textit{d}i\textit{ron}i}} \] 'he threw it away'

When the stem is used for throwing, the verb usually contains a directional prefix, either a Translocative meaning 'away' like the \( i \)- in the verb above, or a Cislocative prefix meaning 'toward'.

Aspect also enters into the system. Mohawk verbs denoting events, like escape, dig, stay home, chase, cut, drag, throw, and stop, occur in three aspects: Perfective, Habitual, and Stative.

(6) **Mohawk aspects**

- **Perfective**: \( \text{wah\text{\textdagger}m\text{\textdagger}i\text{\textdagger}k\text{\textdagger}n\text{\textdagger}n\text{\textdagger}e} \) 'he escaped'
- **Habitual**: \( \text{ra\text{\textdagger}ni\text{\textdagger}k\text{\textdagger}n\text{\textdagger}en} \) 'he escapes'
- **Stative**: \( \text{ro\text{\textdagger}ni\text{\textdagger}k\text{\textdagger}n\text{\textdagger}en} \) 'he has escaped'

Perfective verbs denote events presented as wholes, complete with beginning and end, as in many other languages. Habitual verbs denote recurring events. Event verbs in the Stative aspect have meanings much like perfects in many languages. They denote a state resulting from a past event: 'he has escaped'.

The aspect has an effect on pronominal selection. Intransitive event verbs in the Stative aspect always appear with grammatical Patients. In (6) the Perfective and Habitual aspect verbs contain the masculine Agent prefix \( ra\text{-}\text{ha}-\), but the Stative aspect verb shows the Patient prefix \( ro\text{-}\). It is easy to imagine a motivation behind this pattern. The person involved in 'he has escaped' is not now actively instigating an action, simply experiencing the result of a previous event.

Ongoing activities are expressed for some verbs with the Habitual aspect, and for others with the Stative aspect, especially those with no obvious results.

(7) **Mohawk ongoing activities**

- **Habitual**: \( \text{ro\text{\textdagger}ni\text{\textdagger}k\text{\textdagger}n\text{\textdagger}en} \) 'he has drunk, he is drinking'
- **Stative**: \( \text{ro\text{\textdagger}ni\text{\textdagger}k\text{\textdagger}n\text{\textdagger}en} \) 'he has drunk, he is drinking'

Some verbs occur only in the Stative aspect. They have no Perfective or Habitual forms.
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(8) Mohawk Stative-only verbs
   ro-htot 'he is full'
   ro-ion 'he is old'
   ro-kwahtshe 'he is rich'

(It is often possible to derive event verbs from these Stative-only verb stems, but the derived forms are new lexical items, with their own aspectual properties.)

The Stative-only verbs in (8) contain the Patient pronoun ro- 'he'. Other Stative-only verbs appear with Agent pronouns. As with event verbs, the choice of pronominal paradigm is established for each lexical item and learned with it. But certain patterns can be seen to underlie the occurrences of each. Stative-only verbs with Patient pronouns tend to denote situations that are viewed as temporary, or the result of previous events, as in (8) above: 'he is full', 'he is old', 'he is rich'. Stative-only verbs with Agent pronouns generally denote states portrayed as inherent, as in (9).

(9) Mohawk Stative-only verbs with Agent ra-
   ra-kwahtsen 'he is big'
   ra-hmeri 'he is tall'
   ra-shatsa 'he is strong'

Neither the Agent nor the Patient category in Mohawk is equivalent to that of subject. In languages with subjects, the subject is indeed the 'most privileged grammatical constituent' in certain ways. It is the one argument that appears in every clause. It is often the only argument unmarked for case. It may play a key role in various clause-combining constructions, such as coordination, complementation, or relativization. Such constructions may, for example, be formed only when the combined clauses have coreferential subjects (or absolutes). In many languages subjects of dependent clauses are omitted if they are coreferential with a subject or other core argument of their matrix clause (He seems __ to like it.) In Mohawk, neither Agents nor Patients appear consistently in every clause; some clauses have one, some the other, and some both. Independent nominals carry no case marking. Neither Agents nor Patients play a role in clause combining; clauses may be combined in Mohawk if they are semantically or pragmatically relevant to each other, no matter what their argument structure. Pronominal prefixes are never omitted under coreference; every clause contains full pronominal specification of its core arguments.

For some time it has been recognized that subjects generally represent discourse topics. Stretches of discourse centered on a continuing topic will generally have a common point of departure, so sentences within such stretches tend
to have coreferential subjects. The subject category thus codifies a discourse role. A look at spontaneous speech in Mohawk shows that the participant consistently represented as a subject in English is not represented consistently by either Agent or Patient pronominal prefixes in Mohawk. What would be a subject in English is always a core argument, so it is always represented among the pronominal prefixes in Mohawk, but sometimes as a grammatical Agent, sometimes as a grammatical Patient. In (10) the boy is the grammatical Agent of the first clause and the grammatical Patient of the second.

(10) Mohawk Agents and Patients: Kaia'itahkhe' Jacobs, speaker p.c.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Sok ki' wahtatôhetstste'} & \quad \text{ne rakšà:'a} \\
\text{sok ki' wa-h-ohetst-e'} & \quad \text{ne ra-kšà:'a} \\
\text{so just & the boy} \\
\text{just he passed & the boy} \\
\text{So the boy just went on by,} \\
\text{tēkeni teiakahkwëntote'} & \quad \text{ro-hornwiše'ere'} \\
\text{tēkeni te-i-o-kahkwent-ot-e'} & \quad \text{ro-hornw-i-ser-e'} \\
\text{two Dv-N.PAT-wheel-stand-STAT} & \quad \text{M.SG.PAT-container-drag-STAT} \\
\text{two it wheel stands} & \quad \text{it is container dragging him} \\
\text{riding his bike.} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

There is no syntactic or discourse motivation for 'promoting' participants in Mohawk to a grammatical role that could be identified as the 'most grammatically prominent'. Neither Agents nor Patients condition the formation of complex sentences, and neither category encodes discourse topicality. (The absence of a subject category in Iroquoian languages is discussed in further detail in Mithun 1991.)

Discussions of voice often invoke the category of oblique as well. Passive constructions are often described not just as 'promoting' objects to subject status (The letter was written by Mary), but also as 'demoting' semantic agents to oblique status (The letter was written by Mary). Oblique categories are also typically invoked in descriptions of applicative constructions, included in broader conceptions of voice. They are characterized as 'promoting' oblique arguments to object status (Mary gave John the money). Mohawk differs from languages like English in lacking not only subject and object categories, but also obliques. Mohawk sentences may contain adjuncts referring to time or location.
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Nominals like *ate'enhrökkon* in (11) are not core arguments: they are not represented among the pronominal prefixes on the verb. They are also not case-marked. The ending -okon is a locative nominalizer 'place under' that simply derives a noun referring to a location. The same form of place nominals is used when they serve as core arguments, as in 'I saw that place', though this use is rarer for obvious reasons. The role of *ate'enhrökkon* in (11) is understood by inference: nominals referring to locations most often situate events or states in space or indicate the source or goal of motion.

The kinds of participants identified in oblique arguments in other languages, such as companions (*I went with my brother*), instruments (*I fixed it with tape*), and beneficiaries (*I bought it for my mother*) are not expressed as obliques or even adjuncts in Mohawk. Alternative constructions are used instead. These are discussed further in Section 7.

If Mohawk contains no identifiable subject, object, or oblique categories, we might wonder whether the language could have grammatical voice at all. If we understand voice in the broader sense, described in Shibatani (1999) and elsewhere, as encompassing all alternations in argument structure, we will see that subject, object, and oblique categories are not essential to the existence and functioning of voice alternations. Middles, reflexives, reciprocals, resultatives, causatives, and applicatives can play important roles in languages without those categories. Their functions, however, may be shaped in part by the grammars into which they are integrated.

2. Middles

Middles have long been included in the notion of voice, even narrowly defined, largely because of their inflectional expression in Greek. Greek verbs exhibit three conjugation patterns, traditionally referred to as active, middle, and passive. Semantically, middle voice verbs have been said to indicate that 'the action or state affects the subject of the verb or his interests' (Lyons 1969:373). Rich surveys of the functions of middles are in Kemmer (1993 and 1994). As Kemmer (1994:182–183) points out, middle-voice verbs are typically used
for grooming or body care (‘wash’, ‘get dressed’), non-translational motion (‘stretch’, ‘turn’), change in body posture (‘sit down’, ‘get up’), as well as translational motion (‘climb up’, ‘fly’), indirect effect (‘acquire’, ‘desire’), emotion (‘become frightened’, ‘be angry’), emotive speech (‘complain’, ‘lament’), cognition (‘think over’, ‘believe’), and spontaneous events (‘germinate’, ‘vanish’).

Mohawk contains a robust Middle category. A derivational prefix with the basic shape -at- (appearing as -at-, -ak- -ate-, -aten-, -an-, or -a-) can be seen in verb stems with exactly the kinds of meanings typical of middles in other languages. In some cases both the original stem and the derived middle stem persist in the language. In others, only the middle form remains.

(12) Some Mohawk middle stems

- at-konhs-ohar- 'wash one's face'
- ate-nawirohar- 'brush one's teeth'
- at-awen 'bathe, swim'
- at-sheronni 'dress oneself'
- at-ia'tawi't 'put on coat, shirt, dress'
- at-karhateni 'turn around'
- at-ketsko 'get up'
- at-ien 'sit down'
- at-it 'get in'
- ate- thorok 'cover oneself, climb under'
- ate-'ser 'crawl'
- at-karewaht 'get hurt'
- at-alist 'hide'
- at-o'kt 'run out of something'

The Middle prefix typically alters the argument structure of the verb stem. As Kemmer observes, middles evoke two participant roles, but a single argument fills both. Middles differ from reflexives in showing ‘minimal conceptual differentiation between initiating and endpoint entities’ (Kemmer 1994:208).

Many Mohawk verb stems have been formed from expressions with relatively concrete literal meanings that were then applied to more abstract contexts. The abstract senses are now their primary meanings, and in many cases speakers are no longer even aware of the literal meanings. The function of the Middle prefix can usually be better understood by considering the literal meaning of the derived middle verbs. One of the verb stems used for telephoning, for example, was formed from a compound -wenn-at'a 'voice-insert’. It appears with a Middle prefix because one is inserting one’s own voice. Verbs built on
this stem generally contain a directional prefix indicating the direction of the

call, toward the speaker or away.

(13) Mohawk metaphorical middles

\[
\text{ie-kate-wennatà's} \\
\text{ie-kate-wenn-at'a-hs}
\]
\[
\text{TRLoc-1.SG.AGT-MIDDLE-VOICE-INSERT-HAB}
\]

'I telephone', literally, 'I insert myself vocally thither'

In languages with subjects, the single argument of middle verbs is a subject. In

Mohawk, the grammatical role of the argument depends on the original mean-

ing and aspect of the particular lexical item, as it does with all verbs. Some

middles appear with Agent pronominal prefixes, others with Patients. The dif-

ference can be seen in (14) and (15). The middle verbs in (14) contain the

first person singular Agent pronominal prefix k-; those in (15) contain the first

person Patient prefix wak-.

(14) Some Mohawk middles with Agents

\[
k-\text{-at-konhs6hares} \quad \text{I wash my face'}
\]
\[
k-\text{-ate-nawiróhares} \quad \text{I brush my teeth'}
\]
\[
k-\text{-at-\text{-d}öwirhs} \quad \text{I bathe, swim'}
\]
\[
k-\text{-at-sheromniit'hu'a} \quad \text{I get dressed'}
\]
\[
k-\text{-t'ats} \quad \text{I lie down'}
\]
\[
k-\text{-at-könchenhs} \quad \text{I put my head down'}
\]
\[
k-\text{-at-é}sère's \quad \text{I crawl'}
\]
\[
k-\text{-at-l't's} \quad \text{I get in'}
\]
\[
k-\text{-at-\text{-k}öwahs} \quad \text{I run away, escape'}
\]
\[
k-\text{-ate-\text{-w}en'tonhs} \quad \text{I put it away, save it'}
\]
\[
k-\text{-at-orishen} \quad \text{I take a rest'}
\]
\[
k-\text{-at-öw'w} \quad \text{I breathe'}
\]

(15) Mohawk middles with Patients

\[
wak-\text{-ate-ríen'tare'} \quad \text{I know'}
\]
\[
wak-\text{-at-a'kariste'} \quad \text{I am healthy'}
\]
\[
wak-\text{-at-shemón:mi} \quad \text{I am happy'}
\]
\[
wak-\text{-at-shérion} \quad \text{I am shy'}
\]
\[
wak-\text{-at-t'shen} \quad \text{I am greedy'}
\]
\[
wak-\text{-at-hón'te'} \quad \text{I hear'}
\]
\[
wak-\text{-at-swieton} \quad \text{I am kidding'}
\]
\[
wak-\text{-at-o'k'te'} \quad \text{I am short of it, out of it'}
\]
\[
wak-\text{-at-wi:ra'we'} \quad \text{I am scarred'}
\]
\[
wak-\text{-at-kwahro'takwà:ronte'} \quad \text{I have boils'}
\]
The lexical function of the Middle prefix is clear. It derives verbs for situations that affect the participant or the participant’s interests. It can also serve discourse functions. As a detransitivizer, it can eliminate unimportant or indefinite participants from the set of arguments. This function can be seen in the alternation between the transitive stem -hsni- ‘heal’ and the middle stem -at-hsni- in the passage below.

(16) Mohawk discourse use of middles: Watshennine Sawyer, speaker p.c.

\[ \text{Omen} \quad \text{id'kwatiditho} \]

\[ \text{6:nen} \quad \text{i-a'-akwa-at-kahtho-'} \]

then \quad TRLOC-FAC-1.PL.EXCL-MIDDLE-SEE-PREF

then we saw (it) there

We saw

\[ \text{thiken} \quad \text{tsi n6ni: tetewathsinie,} \]

\[ \text{thiken} \quad \text{tsi n6ni:we te-te-w-at-hsni-e} \]

that at place \quad DV-CISLOC-N.AGT-MIDDLE-heal-STAT

that at place \quad \text{there it heals}

the Healing Center

\[ \text{te-t-hati-at-hsni-d} \]

\[ \text{DV-CISLOC-M.PL.AGT-MIDDLE-heal-STAT} \]

they heal there

where they do the healing

\[ \text{ne: onkwehon:we tehshakotsisni-e'} \]

\[ \text{ne'/e onkwe-honwe te-hshakoti-hsni-e'} \]

\[ \text{it is person=real DV-3.M.PL/3.PL-heal-STAT} \]

that is \quad \text{Indian} \quad \text{they heal them}

that is, they heal Indian people.'

As in many languages, the Middle prefix originated as a reflexive marker. As more and more verb stems were derived with this prefix, and their meanings shifted, the original reflexive function of the Reflexive -at- became less transparent. A new Reflexive prefix was then formed by reduplication: -atat-.
3. Reflexives

The modern Reflexive prefix is basically -atat-. Its shape is affected by context, so it appears as -atat-, -atak-, -atate-, -ataten-, -atan-, or -ata-.

(17) Mohawk Reflexives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wa'khrene'</td>
<td>'I cut it'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa'k-atat-hrene'</td>
<td>'I cut myself'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa'kenhót:ton'</td>
<td>'I closed it, locked it'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa'k-atatenhót:ton</td>
<td>'I locked myself in/out'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like the Middle, the Reflexive prefix affects argument structure by detransitivizing. In both constructions, a single participant functions as both semantic agent and semantic patient. But as observed by Kemmer (1993, 1994) and others, reflexives differ from middles in retaining a clearer conceptual distinction between the two semantic roles.

In languages with nominative/accusative systems, the single argument of reflexives is usually a subject. Reflexive actions are typically initiated by a semantic agent. The Mohawk reflexive verbs in (17) contain the first person Agent prefix k- 'I'. (The initial prefix wa'-/wa'- is the Factual.) But as we saw earlier, pronominal paradigm choice in Mohawk also depends on aspect. The verbs in (17) are all in the Perfective aspect. When the same verbs are in the Stative aspect, the pronominal prefixes are the Patient form wa&-. These Stative verbs focus not on an event, but rather on the state resulting from a prior event. If I have cut myself, I am now suffering from my wound.

(18) Mohawk Stative reflexives with grammatical Patients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Form</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wak-brénen</td>
<td>'I have cut it'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wak-atathré:nen</td>
<td>'I have cut myself'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wak-enhót:ton</td>
<td>'I have locked it'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wak-atatenhót:ton</td>
<td>'I have locked myself in/out'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of reflexive constructions in Mohawk is otherwise quite similar to the uses of reflexives in other languages. Reflexives have a syntactic effect, reducing the number of core arguments of clauses without reducing the number of participants, but they have relatively little discourse effect. They can, however, imply contrast with expectations, an effect in keeping with their diachronic origin in reduplication.
Mohawk reflexives and middles

Middle  wa'k- at-konhsöhare  'I washed my face'
Reflexive wa'k-atat-konhsöhare  'I washed my own face'

4. Reciprocals

As in many languages, there is a close relation in Mohawk between reflexives and reciprocals. Mohawk reciprocals are formed with the Reflexive prefix plus a Duplicative prefix (e)- before the pronominal prefix.

(20) Mohawk reflexives and reciprocals

a. wahontatìènawà'se'  
   wa-hon- atat-ienawa's-e'
   PAC-3-PLAGT-REFLEXIVE-help-PREF
   'they helped themselves'

b. wa'thontatìènawà'se'
   wa-t-hon-atat-ienawa's-e'
   PAC-DY-3-PLAGT-REFLEXIVE-help-PREF
   'they helped each other'

Like middles and reflexives, reciprocals are derived intransitives. Two distinct semantic roles are involved, those of agent and patient, but one set of participants fills both. Whether this set of participants is represented by a grammatical Agent or Patient prefix depends primarily on the aspect of the verb. Stative aspect reciprocals generally appear with Patient pronominal prefixes. Reciprocals serve no obvious discourse functions.

5. Resultatives

Mohawk contains an additional intransitive construction that does not change grammatical argument structure, but eliminates implication of certain arguments. As seen earlier, event verbs in the Stative aspect can have perfect meanings, denoting the state resulting from a prior event, such as ro'niukèn:en 'he has escaped'. If these verbs are intransitive, like 'he has escaped', or involve a neuter participant like 'he has seen it', Patient pronominal prefixes are used. Event verbs in the Stative aspect can also be combined with Agent prefixes to form resultative constructions. These eliminate the indirect reference to a prior
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event. They have meanings like 'the table is set'; 'the bread is cut', or 'they are locked up', instead of 'the table has been set', 'the bread has been cut', or 'they have been locked up'. Such verbs are often used syntactically as nominals to represent persons or objects in the condition described.

(21) Mohawk resultative constructions

a. kaksahrónnióon
   ka-ks-a-hr-onnióon
   N.AGT-dish-JR-set-DIST-STAT
   'the table is set'

b. kana'ataarakwétaron
   ka-na'atar-a-kwe'tar-on
   N.AGT-bread-JR-slice-STAT
   'the bread is sliced' = 'the sliced bread'

c. nati-nhét'óon
   nati-nho-t-on
   M.PL.AGT-door-cover-STAT
   'they are locked up' = 'prisoners'

This use of Agent pronominal prefixes echoes their use with Stative-only verbs seen earlier. Agent prefixes tend to be used with inherent states, while Patient prefixes are used with temporary states or those that are portrayed as the result of previous events or processes.

6. Causatives

Most languages contain grammatical devices that increase the number of core participants by adding a semantic agent, the causer. Mohawk contains several Causative suffixes, some of which can be seen in the passage below.

(22) Mohawk causatives: Ka'a'titíhkhe' Jacobs, speaker p.c.

Tonsahonwátsít's'ahste'
   t-onsa-honwa-t-sít's'te'
   DV.REP.PAC-3.PL/M.SG-stand-CAUS-PRF
   'They stood him back up'

tanón' sáhonwáit'okewánion'

tanón' Sá-honwa-ia't-okew-anion'
   and REP.PAC-3.PL/M.SG-body-wipe-DIST-PRF
   and they wiped him off
Since the effect of causatives is to add a semantic agent, it is not surprising that the causer is usually represented as a grammatical Agent in most Mohawk causative constructions. But as with other verbs, aspect can affect the choice of pronominal paradigm. As noted earlier, neuter participants are not overtly represented in pronominal prefixes if another participant is present. Intransitive prefixes are used instead. When causative verbs with intransitive prefixes appear in the Stative aspect, the causer is a grammatical Patient.

(23) Mohawk Stative aspect causative

\[
\text{rohsthton} \\
\text{ro-hse-hon-}\text{ont} \\
\text{M.SG.PAT-be-hiding-CAUS-STAT} \\
\text{he has hidden it}
\]

Resultative constructions can be formed from causative stems. The caused state is highlighted and the causing event eliminated from view. The causer is accordingly absent from the set of core arguments.

(24) Mohawk resultative causative

\[
\text{kariroti} \text{nohto}n \\
\text{kari-ro-te-ien-}\text{on} \\
\text{N.AGT-stove-lie-CAUS-STAT} \\
\text{‘it is set on the stove’ = ‘scone(s)’}
\]

Causatives are not exploited in Mohawk for additional syntactic or discourse purposes, as they are in some languages (Mithun 2000). Since there are no syntactic constructions that require coreferential Agents, there is no syntactic motivation for manipulating argument structure so that a participant is
accorded Agent status. Since grammatical Agents do not represent discourse topics, there is also no discourse motivation for moving topical participants into the grammatical Agent role through causativization.

7. Applicatives

A final set of constructions that affect argument structure are applicatives. Applicatives are often described as transitivizers that derive verb stems whose objects would otherwise be expressed as oblique arguments, such as semantic locations, directions, companions, instruments, recipients, or beneficiaries. While an English sentence like *I knit a sweater for my mother* is an active-voice construction with oblique beneficiary *for my mother*, the sentence *I knit my mother a sweater* is a benefactive applicative construction in which *my mother* has assumed the role of direct object. Applicatives are thus usually described in terms of the categories of direct object (or absolutive) and oblique.

An interesting feature of Mohawk clause structure is the lack not only of subjects and direct objects, but also obliques. As seen earlier, core arguments are specified by obligatory pronominal prefixes on every verb. Clauses may contain, in addition, independent nominals further identifying the core arguments, and adjuncts indicating time or location. But there are no oblique arguments or adjuncts identifying semantic companions, instruments, beneficiaries, or recipients.

Companions are included in core arguments. In (25), the dog is part of the Agent.


Erhar iattidrats.

erhar iaki-arat-s

dog LEXCL-DU-AGT-lie-HAB

dog we two habitually lie

'I sleep with the dog.'

Describing a film, English speakers described one scene with comments like 'A man passed by with a goat.' The goat was cast as a comitative oblique. Mohawk speakers described the scene by identifying the goat as part of the grammatical Agent 'they two'.
In (28) an instrument was introduced as the grammatical Patient of ‘hold’.

Instruments are often introduced as core arguments in clauses of their own. Describing early experiences in school, one speaker reported that a nun threatened to hit her with a stick if she spoke Mohawk. The stick was introduced in a separate clause.

(27) Mohawk introduction of instrument: Watshennine Sawyer, speaker p.c.
Kanakare’ kähere’
ka-nakar-é’ ka-her-e’
N-stick-NS N.AGT-be.or-STAT
‘There’s a stick there;
enshatéwienhs’
en-hs-ate-wien-hst-e’
FUT-2.SG.AGT-MIDDLE-learn-CAUS-PRF
you’ll learn
tōka iđh
or not
or else
enkonrio’
en-kon-rio’
FUT-1.SG/2.SG-hit-PRF
I’ll hit you.’

In (28) an instrument was introduced as the grammatical Patient of ‘hold’.

(26) Mohawk coordination: Kaia’itāhkhe’ Jacobs, speaker p.c.
Wahkanoheste’
wa-hi-at-ohetst-e’
FAC-M.DU.AGT-middle-pass-PRF
they two passed by
kīken rónkwe
kīken r-onkwe
this M-person
‘A man passed by with a goat.’
Instruments are often introduced as core arguments of a verb 'use'.

The absence of instrumental obliques in Mohawk would be easy to miss without a specific search for them, since the kinds of constructions by which instruments are actually introduced, like those in (27)–(29), are not unusual cross-linguistically.

But instruments can also be specified in clauses that are not dedicated to bringing them onstage with verbs like 'use', 'hold', or 'be there'. An Instrumental applicative suffix may be added to a verb stem to derive a new stem whose grammatical Patient is an instrument. The verb root -lthar-, for example, means 'talk', but -lthar-akhw-, with the Instrumental applicative suffix -(a)hw-, means 'talk about', that is, 'use a particular topic as a basis for discus-
The stem -na'ton- means 'point out', but with the Instrumental applicative -hkw- it means 'point out with' (a certain name), that is, 'call'. Both verbs can be seen in (30) in a remark from an unidentified speaker on a call-in radio talk show.

(30) Mohawk Instrumental applicative

O:ia ni’ tsı oriwa’ kiken
other myself that matter this

wa'kente' ne enkhatarhakwe'
wa’-k-ehr-e’ ne en-k-hthar-ahkw-e’

FAC-1.SG.AGT-think-PRF the PUT-1.SG.AGT-talk-INST.APPL-PRF
I thought the I will talk about it

Malone Highway

shëkon raitina’tonhkhwə'
shékɔn rati-na’ton-hkw-ha'
still M.PL.AGT-point.out-INST.APPL-HAB
still they point out with it
‘There’s another matter I thought I’d bring up, they call it the Malone Highway.’

Instrumental applicatives can ensure that important entities are carried along as core arguments through a discussion. Two other speakers were discussing an old building. The building, the topic of the conversation, was a core argument of each clause.

(31) Mohawk Instrumental applicative: Awenrathen Deer, speaker

Wahi’ thiken kanonhsədne
wahi’ thiken ka-nonhs-es=hne

TAG that N.AGT-building-be.long/place.at
you know that long building

thi raitina’tonhkhwakwe’ …
thi ken rati-na’ton-hkw-hah-kwe’
that M.PL.AGT-point.out-INST.APPL-hab-PAST
that they used to point it out with it

ienekeraientəhkwa’ …
ic-neker-a-int-ahkw-ha’

FL.AGT-hay-lRS-SET-INST.APPL-HAB
they used to keep their hay with it
Voices without subjects, objects, or obliques

Instrumental applicatives have a syntactic effect, altering the core argument structure of verbs to include a semantic instrument. But they are not exploited for syntactic purposes: there are no syntactic constructions that depend on the core argument status of arguments. They are, however, exploited for the manipulation of information flow at both the lexical and discourse levels. They allow speakers to package together ideas that are closely related as elements of a single concept. As derivational suffixes, they are used pervasively to create new words, particularly names for objects best identified by their function. The word *ienekerairadhkhwa* seen in (31), literally 'one stores hay with it' is the usual word for 'silo'. Instrumental applicatives also allow speakers to package elements of what is viewed as a single action or state together in a single clause instead of several. One can say 'they store their hay in it' instead of 'they use it, they store their hay'. As seen in (31), Instrumental applicatives can have another discourse function as well: they can allow speakers to carry a referent through a stretch of discourse as a core argument, with reference to it in every verb.

Like instruments, beneficiaries and recipients are never identified in grammatical obliques or adjuncts in Mohawk. As in many languages, they can appear as core arguments of a few verb roots like 'give'. With 'give' they are grammatical Patients.

(32) Mohawk recipients as grammatical Patients: Charlotte Bush, speaker, p.c.

Iah th'at'onta'hshakoi-ien'

'He wouldn't give it back to them.'

More often, however, recipients or beneficiaries are brought into clauses with Benefactive applicative constructions. When a Benefactive suffix is added to the verb root *-naton* - 'point out', for example, the result is a new stem meaning 'point.out.to' or 'show', as in (33). The grammatical Patient argument of the original root 'point out' remains in the clause, but since it is neuter, there is no overt reference to it in the pronominal prefix *-hshako* - 'he/them'.

\[
\text{ömen ne' th'iken rati' terontónkhwe's} \quad \text{në'e}
\]

\[
\text{ömen ne' th'iken rati' terontón- khw-e's} \quad \text{në'e}
\]

now it is that M.PL:AGT-live-INST.APL:STAT-DIST it.is

now it is that they live with it variously it is

'That longhouse you know, they used to call it that, they used to store their hay in it, and now people live in it.'
The participants added by Mohawk Benefactive applicatives may be affected in a variety of ways. They may be recipients, as in 'send to', they may be positively affected as in 'cook-for', they may be adversely affected, and more. The introduction of a prototypical beneficiary can be seen in (34). Holding council is expressed in Mohawk as kindling the council fire. The speaker was congratulating the newly elected representatives to the town council, who would serve two-year terms.

(34) Mohawk Benefactive applicative: Awenhraten Deer, speaker

It is two years so the matter is long they will kindle the fire

They will meet for two years,

They will meet on behalf of us all.'

The applicative verb 'say-about' is usually more malefactive, suggesting malicious gossip.

(35) Mohawk Benefactive applicative: Tiorhakwente' Dove, speaker, p.c.

'What are you going to say about me?'
These are the notes for the document: 

(36) Mohawk reflexive Benefactive applicative: Kaia'titâhkhe' Jacobs, speaker
   ″en-w-aton″  ″en-k-atat-hnek-a-hr-hahs-e″
   FUT-N-be possibile-PRF Q  FUT-1.SG.AGT-BP-liq-set-BEN.APL-PRF
   it will be possible I will set out liquid for myself
   ′May I get a cup of coffee?′

Like Instrumental applicatives, Benefactive applicatives allow speakers to package together elements viewed as parts of a single idea. They can serve both lexical and discourse functions. As derivational suffixes, they create new vocabulary, verb stems with specific meanings, like -na'lon-hahs- ′point out for′ = ′show′. They allow speakers to package elements of a single concept into a single word. They also provide a device for combining information about a single situation in a single clause, in this case mention of affected participants with the event or state. In (37), for example, rather than saying ′they would just stand up a bag of money and give it to him′, the speaker said the equivalent of ′they would just hand him a bag of money′.

(37) Mohawk Benefactive applicative: Awenhrâthen Deer, speaker
   ″i-rehe″  ″katiken″  ″oksa'k″  ″ken″
   FUT-CISLOC-M-PL/M.SG-bag-stand-BEN.APL-PRF  the N-money-NS
   they will stand up a bag for him there the money
   ′they'd just give him a bag of money right away?′

Expressing the beneficiary in a separate clause would not convey the situation as a single event.

Proto-Northern-Iroquoian, the ancestor of Mohawk, also contained a Directional applicative, which cast directions as core arguments of motion verbs, but only traces of it remain in Mohawk in a few lexical items (Mithun 2002).
8. Conclusion

Though grammatical voice has traditionally been described in terms of subjects, direct objects, and obliques, an examination of Mohawk speech shows that these categories are not essential to the existence of voice broadly understood. Mohawk contains no subject, object, or oblique categories, but it does exhibit a robust set of alternating clause structures, including middles, reflexives, reciprocals, causatives, and applicatives.

Because there is no subject category, indeed no single 'most grammatically prominent constituent', Mohawk voice alternations do not serve the syntactic functions they serve in some other languages. They can certainly have syntactic effects, altering the number of core arguments in the clause. But participants need not be cast in specific grammatical roles for the purpose of forming complex sentences, as in many other languages, so voice alternations are not exploited for purely syntactic purposes. They can serve important semantic, lexical, and discourse functions, however.

The detransitivizing middle, reflexive, and reciprocal constructions serve the same kinds of semantic functions they do in other languages. All indicate that the semantic agent and patient roles are filled by the same party. Middles indicate that the distinction between the two roles is less sharp and the effect of the situation on the participant less direct. Middles can also serve a discourse function, eliminating incidental or nonspecific participants from mention entirely, as in alternations between 'They cure Indian people' and 'They cure'. Subject and object categories are not essential to these functions.

The transitivizing applicatives are typically described as shifting participants from oblique to direct object status. Mohawk contains neither oblique nor object categories, yet Mohawk Instrumental and Benefactive applicatives serve important lexical and discourse functions. They allow speakers to package together, in a single word or clause, elements of information portrayed as components of a single concept. On the lexical level they serve to create new vocabulary, single words for single ideas. On the discourse level they allow speakers to present elements of information viewed as integral parts of a larger event or state in a single clause. The choice provided by Mohawk applicatives is not between oblique and object status of arguments, but between two clauses and one. Applicatives in Mohawk do add a participant to the set of core arguments, as in other languages. Core argument status is important in Mohawk, since core arguments are specified in every clause by pronominal affixes. For this reason, applicatives can serve an additional discourse function as well. They allow speakers to encode topical semantic instruments or bene-
Voice without subjects, objects, or obliques

.. include:: Abbreviations

Abbreviations

References


In honor of Masayoshi Shibatani

Voice and Grammatical Relations

In search of the formal studies in Language
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