Is there passive in Hong Kong Sign Language?
Felix Sze Yin Binh
Centre for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Email: felix_cslds@cuhk.edu.hk

1. Aim of this study
The paper investigates whether there are passive constructions in Hong Kong Sign Language (HKSL) and what are their syntactic and morphological properties.

2. Previous proposals on passive constructions in ASL


- A passive construction can be present in the presence of passing, an indirect locative verb.
- The passive voice is not necessarily associated with the signer and the sign is not necessarily a passive construction.
- The passive voice is not a transformational process, but a constructional one.

2.2. Janse et al. (2001)

- Passive in ASL patterns similarly to the non-passive passive in languages such as FSL.
- A passive construction involves the signer moving the shoulders or tense slightly toward the patient, but not any direct or indirect voice.
- The patient is always the subject of any agent movements.

3. Issues left unaddressed in previous proposals

- Most of the passive examples given by the two previous studies in ASL involve either patient and agent nominalized.
- What about transitive-passive, which generally doesn’t partake in rule-shift systems in sign language literature?

4. Current study

4.1. Spontaneous discourse data

- 1. Found 1 hour of spontaneous discourse data (semi-structured) by four native signers a.
- 2. A total of 98 signers.
- 3. 22 sessions of private conversations with no restrictions on topics by four native signers.
- 4. 35 sessions (structured).

Observations:

- No passive constructions similar to what Kegl (1995) and Janse et al. (2001) reported can be found in the HKSL spontaneous data. (Probably because of agent referents were specific definite - not the usual discourse condition for passivization.)

4.2. Elaborate data picture description task

- The pictures were designed on the basis of the following considerations:
  - The pictures are culturally constructed.
  - The pictures are made of human and animal figures.
  - The pictures are made of human and animal figures.
  - The pictures are made of human and animal figures.

- The pictures include both animate and inanimate objects.
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