言語研究（*Gengo Kenkyu*）**169**: 31–56（2025） doi: 10.11435/gengo.169.0_31

Exploring an Anticausative in Bengali: A Descriptive Study of the [Nominative Subject + Participle + FALL] Construction

Sakura Ishikawa
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Abstract: South Asia is a linguistic area, where morphological causativization is one of the prominent characteristics (Masica 1976). The anticausative is a rather less common phenomenon in South Asian languages. This study explores an analytic construction in Bengali, namely the [Nominative Subject + Participle + FALL] Construction (FALL Construction), discussing it as anticausative. This construction has not received much attention due to its idiomatic characteristics. It has been sporadically mentioned as one type of passive construction in descriptive studies of Bengali. However, this study considers this structure as a construction and describes it from morphosyntactic and semantic perspectives, especially in comparison with another commonly known passive construction employing the verb 'become' (the BECOME Passive Construction). This paper shows that the FALL Construction is morphosyntactically distinct from the BECOME Passive Construction regarding verbal indexing, the marking of a patient, and the existence of an agent, and that it serves as an independent construction. It is also a schematic construction with a slot in which a participle of a particular verb type can occur. Semantically, it deletes an agent from an event. Based on the present paper's description and typological study of anticausatives, I argue that the FALL Construction is anticausative. This study suggests that investigating idiomatic and analytic constructions can shed light on the variation of voice in South Asian languages. Focusing on such constructions can also lead to discussion on the prevalence and development of FALL Constructions in South Asian languages.*

Key words: anticausative voice, analytic constructions, idioms, New Indo-Aryan languages, South Asian languages

1. Introduction

South Asia is a linguistic area with several characteristics in common (Emeneau 1956, Masica 1976). One such feature of the South Asian languages (SAL) is

* I am profoundly grateful to Naonori Nagaya for meticulously reading my draft and offering invaluable insights. My sincere thanks also go to Mai Hayashi, Yuta Sakon, Yui Suzuki, Mizuki Tanigawa, Shigeki Yoshida, Duhai Zhou, and the anonymous reviewers of this paper for their careful reading and valuable comments. All remaining errors are, of course, my own. This research was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 24KJ0929.

causativization, through which the valency of a verb is increased by attaching a causative suffix to a verbal stem (e.g., compare the monovalent *gir* 'fall' and the bivalent *gir-a* 'drop' in Hindi). While such morphological causative pairs are frequently observed in SAL (Masica 1976: chap. 3, 1991: 317–320), anticausative pairs are only sporadically observed. For instance, the eastern group of the New Indo-Aryan languages (NIA), including Bengali, Assamese, and Oriya, is reported to lack anticausativization (Masica 1976: 101). This holds true not only when we consider a morphological strategy, as characterized by Masica (1976), but also when we expand our scope to a syntactic strategy.[1] For instance, in the case of Bengali,[2] also known as Bangla, an anticausative has not been mentioned in any of the reference grammars (Smith 1997, Thompson 2010, 2012, David 2015).

In this paper, I argue that Bengali has an analytic anticausative construction. More specifically, the present study explores the [Nominative Subject + Participle + FALL] Construction (the FALL Construction, in short). It involves a nominative subject and a predicate consisting of a participle of a verb and a finite form of the verb *pɔ̣ṛ*[3] 'fall,' and it has no agent, as exemplified in (1).

(1) tumi dhɔr-a poṛ-b-e
2SG.NOM catch-PTCP fall-FUT-2
'You will get caught.'
(Thompson 2010: 387, glosses modified by the present author[4])

[1] Masica (1976) takes only morphological strategy into consideration, and indeed, it is a prominent common feature of SAL. Nevertheless, syntactic strategies are another common feature of NIA languages (Zograph 1977, Bubenik 1997: 54). Thus, it is worth expanding our scope from morphological strategies to syntactic strategies for the study of valency-changing operations in SAL.

[2] Bengali belongs to the eastern group of the New Indo-Aryan languages, the Indo-European language family. It is primarily spoken in the eastern region of South Asia, encompassing Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal, by an estimated 272.7 million speakers (Eberhard, Simons & Fennig 2022).

[3] I follow David (2015: 35–39)'s transcription system for Bengali.

[4] I apply a glossing pattern that may deviate from the mainstream of Bengali linguistics. First, I gloss the verbal stem with the suffix *-a* as a participle. This is because it is desirable to apply a gloss that can incorporate the multiple functions of the form. Verbal stems with the suffix *-a* have two basic functions: verbal noun and verbal adjective. I consider the label "participle" to represent these two functions in one gloss. Second, I gloss the verbal stem with the suffix *-e* as a conjunctive participle. Although several researchers have called the form a perfect/perfective participle (Smith 1997: chap. 37, Thompson 2010: chap. 23, 2012: section 6.3.6.4, David 2015: section 9.5.1) or past participle (Milne 1913: 148, Radice 2010: 135–137), compared to a perfect/perfective participle in other NIA languages such as Hindi, this Bengali form cannot independently express the perfect/perfective state of an event. Rather, its main function lies in forming subordination and linking a sequence of clauses (Klaiman 1983: 138, 146). The label of conjunctive participle is also applied by several researchers in the field (e.g., Chatterji 1926: 1003, 1006–1012, Masica 1976: chap. 4, 1991: 397–399, Klaiman 1981b: chap. 4, 1983, Dasgupta 2003).

In example (1), the subject *tumi* 2SG.NOM is in the nominative case, and the predicate is formed by a participle[5] of the verb *dhɔr* 'catch' and the finite verb *poṛ-b-e* fall-FUT-2, formed from the verb *pɔṛ* 'fall.'[6] The subject *tumi* 2SG.NOM is indexed on the finite verb for person.

The FALL Construction has not received due attention in the literature. This construction has been sporadically mentioned in the context of its semantic similarity to the Bengali Passive Construction and has been analyzed as one strategy for passive voice (Milne 1913: 142, 203, Chatterji 1926: 925–926, Chattopadhyay 1942: 356–357, 359, Smith 1997: 143–144, Seely 2002: 114–117, Bhattacharya 2006: 3, Thompson 2010: 386–387, 2012: 173). As will be discussed in Section 2, Bengali has a passive construction employing the verb *hɔ* 'become' as a finite verb (henceforth the BECOME Passive Construction).[7] This raises the question of what similarities and differences lie between the FALL Construction and the BECOME Passive Construction. Despite its importance, however, the FALL Construction has not been made the target of a descriptive study due to its low productivity. As only a limited number of verbs can occur in the participle slot, the construction has been referred to as a mere "idiom" with a passive meaning (Chatterji 1926: 925, Bhattacharya 2006: 3). Thus, the morphosyntactic behavior and semantics of the construction have not yet been fully addressed.

Nevertheless, the FALL Construction possesses features worthy of investigation. First, the FALL Construction expresses an event with a focus on a patient rather than an agent. For instance, the FALL Construction in example (1) has a patient in the subject and takes on a passive-like meaning as a whole, as is evident in its translation into English using the *get* passive. Given that Bengali has the BECOME Passive Construction, it is essential to analyze the morphosyntactic and semantic properties of the FALL Construction in comparison to the passive construction.

Second, the idiomatic nature of the FALL Construction is an important factor for a descriptive study. Construction Grammar gives importance to all levels of grammatical analyses, including not only highly productive syntactic construc-

[5] The participle is formed from the verbal stem and the suffix *-a*. The suffix *-a* is derived from the Old Indo-Aryan past passive suffix *-ta*, *-ita* (Chatterji 1926: 660).

[6] In Bengali, vowel assimilation is an important process in the verbal system. This "process raises the mid vowels /e æ o ɔ/ one step, to /i e u o/ respectively, when the subsequent syllable contains a high vowel" (David 2015: 19). For example, the verbal stem *pɔṛ* 'fall' is raised to *poṛ* when the high vowel suffix *-i* follows it. This process is also related to a diachronic change (David 2015: 19–20), which is not overt in the form of today's Bengali. As a result of the diachronic change, monosyllabic closed/open verbal stems, including the verb *pɔṛ* 'fall,' go through the vowel heightening process in the stem in non-finite forms, except for the participle. In finite forms, the vowel is raised high except for the inflections of the second person present, third person present, the honorific present, and the present imperative.

[7] There are several passive constructions in Bengali, among which the BECOME Passive Construction is the most typical and frequently addressed by the literature (Klaiman 1981a, 1981b: chap. 3, Smith 1997: 143–144, Thompson 2010: 493, 2012: 224, David 2015: 265).

tions but also idioms (Goldberg 2006: 5). While the FALL Construction has been overlooked in descriptive studies due to its low productivity, treating the FALL Construction as a construction can provide new insights into Bengali grammar. Therefore, this study will investigate the morphosyntactic and semantic properties of the FALL Construction and discuss its role in Bengali grammar.

This study presents a descriptive study of the FALL Construction and argues that this construction is anticausative. First, I demonstrate that the FALL Construction is morphosyntactically distinguished from the BECOME Passive Construction (Section 2). Specifically, the morphosyntactic characteristics of the FALL Construction, such as verbal indexing, the marking of a patient, and the existence of an agent, are discussed in comparison to those of the BECOME Passive Construction. Second, I identify the verbs that appear in the participle slot of the FALL Construction and analyze their common characteristics (Section 3). More specifically, I find that only verbs with a simplex transitive stem can appear in the participle slot of the FALL Construction. The construction is schematic and is productive to a certain extent. Third, I argue that the FALL Construction is used to express an event without an agent (Section 4). While the FALL Construction and the BECOME Passive Construction may have similar meanings, they are different from one another in that the former deletes an agent from the argument structure, and the latter maintains an agent. Finally, based on this study's description of the FALL Construction, I argue that the FALL Construction is anticausative rather than passive (Section 5). The findings of the present study highlight the variation and similarities of SAL by expanding our scope to analytic constructions and idioms (Section 6). I conclude the paper in Section 7.

2. The FALL Construction is morphosyntactically distinguished from a passive construction

In this section, I analyze the morphosyntactic characteristics of the FALL Construction in comparison to the BECOME Passive Construction regarding verbal indexing, the marking of a patient, and the existence of an agent and its marking. These properties of the FALL Construction and the BECOME Passive Construction are first summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 The morphosyntactic properties in comparison

	FALL Construction	BECOME Passive Construction
Verbal indexing	The nominative subject	The third person
Marking of a patient	Pronoun: Nominative Others: No	Pronoun: Dative-accusative Others: Dative-accusative / No
The existence of an agent and its marking	No	Optional (Postposition *dara* / Genitive)

2.1. Verbal indexing

The FALL Construction and the BECOME Passive Construction vary in terms

of verbal indexing. In Bengali, verbs typically index the subject in intransitive and transitive constructions, in which the subject takes the nominative case or carries no marking.

In the FALL Construction, the finite verb *pɔ̣* 'fall' indexes the subject. See examples (2) and (3).

(2) majhkhan theke **amra**=o mar-a **poṛ-b-o** to-r
middle from 1PL.NOM=also kill-PTCP fall-FUT-1 2.OBL-GEN
jonne=i
for=EMPH
'We will also die because of you in the middle.' (Chakraborty 1999: 175)[8]

(3) **śubhaś.śiŋho** badha di-te gi-e=i mar-a
Subhas.Sinha obstacle give-INF go-CONJ=EMPH kill-PTCP
poṛ-ech-en
fall-PRF-HON
'Subhas Sinha died because he went to interfere.' (Siraj 2009: 38)

In example (2), the finite verb *pɔ̣* 'fall' takes the first person form, indexing the subject of the first person plural pronoun *amra* 1PL.NOM. In example (3), the finite verb *pɔ̣* 'fall' exhibits an honorific marking that corresponds to the proper name *śubhaś śiŋho* 'Subhas Sinha.' Thus, the finite verb *pɔ̣* 'fall' of the FALL Construction indexes the subject.

In the case of the BECOME Passive Construction, the finite verb always takes the third person form. Compare the examples in (4)–(6).

(4) tai ta-r mukh bɔndho kor-te **ta-ke** mar-a
thus 3.OBL-GEN mouth stop do-INF 3.OBL-DAT kill-PTCP
ho-ech-e
become-PRF-3
'Thus, he was killed to keep his mouth shut.' (Siraj 2007: 250)

(5) gɔla ṭip-e dɔm bɔndho kor-e **tā-ke** mar-a
neck press-CONJ breath stop do-CONJ 3.HON.OBL-DAT kill-PTCP
ho-ech-e
become-PRF-3
'He was strangled to death.' (Bandyopadhyay 1995: 223)

(6) śutoraŋ **ama-ke** mar-a **ho-ech-e**
therefore 1.OBL-DAT hit-PTCP become-PRF-3
'Therefore, I have been beaten.' (Nasrin 2012: 38)

In examples (4) and (5), the patient is in the dative of the third person singular pronoun, with a difference in the honorificity, and the finite verb takes the third person form in each case. In example (6), too, the finite verb takes the third person form when the patient is in the dative of the first person singular pronoun. Despite

[8] The glosses are provided by the present author when the sentences are taken from the literature, internet news, or elicitation.

the difference in the type of patient, the verb takes the third person form. Based on this characteristic of the verbal form, the BECOME Passive Construction is often analyzed as an "impersonal passive" (Thompson 2010: 493, 2012: 224–225, Klaiman & Lahiri: 2018: 441).

2.2. Marking of a patient

The FALL Construction and the BECOME Passive Construction also show a difference in the patient marking. This is evident especially when the patient is a pronoun, as pronouns mandatorily carry marking.

In the FALL Construction, when the patient of the verb in the participle slot is a pronoun, it takes the nominative (Chatterji 1926: 925–926, Chattopadhyay 1942: 359, Seely 2002: 116). See example (2) above, which consists of a patient expressed as the nominative first person plural pronoun, *amra*.

In contrast, in the BECOME Passive Construction, when a patient is a pronoun, it receives dative flagging. See the examples of the BECOME Passive Construction in (4)–(6) above. In these examples, the patients take the dative flagging *-ke*. Note that the suffix *-ke* is employed for both dative and accusative marking in Bengali.

When it comes to common nouns and proper names, a different marking pattern is applied to the patients of the FALL Construction versus the BECOME Passive Construction. In Bengali, when common nouns and proper names occur in the subject position of intransitive or transitive constructions, they do not receive any flagging, but appear on their own.

In the FALL Construction, a patient that is a common noun or proper name takes no flagging. For instance, in example (3), the proper name *śubhaś śiɳho* 'Subhas Sinha' takes no flagging.

In contrast, in the BECOME Passive Construction, the patient receives dative flagging when it is high in animacy and specificity; otherwise, it takes no flagging (Thompson 2010: section 30.3.2, 2012: section 8.1.3.2, Bhattacharya & Simpson 2011: 1071, Subbarao 2016: 462). For instance, a specific, animate patient receives dative flagging, as illustrated in example (7).[9]

(7)	**æk-jɔn**	**chatro-ke**	khõj-a	ho-ech-e
	one-CLF	student-DAT	search-PTCP	become-PRF-3
	'A student was searched (I know the student).'			

In example (7), the patient *æk-jɔn chatro* 'one student' would be indefinite, as it accompanies the numeral *æk-jɔn* one-CLF, which expresses indefiniteness (Thompson 2010: 97). But with the dative flagging *-ke*, this means that the speaker knows the specific student.

In the BECOME Passive Construction, patients with low animacy or low

[9] When no information on the data source is included with an example, the sentence was created by the present author and checked by two language consultants, who are from West Bengal, India, born in 1975 and 1984.

specificity tend to take no flagging. Example (8) exemplifies a non-specific, human patient.

(8) **æk-jɔn chatro** khõj-a ho-ech-e
one-CLF student search-PTCP become-PRF-3
'A student was searched.'

In example (8), the patient *æk-jɔn chatro* 'one student' is interpreted as non-specific, in the absence of the flag *-ke*.

2.3. The existence of an agent and its marking

There are three ways of expressing an agent in Bengali: the nominative, the genitive, and a *dara*-phrase.[10] Among the three types of agent marking, nominative-marked agents are the most typical, being used in most active voice transitive constructions.

The FALL Construction and the BECOME Passive Construction differ as to whether an agent can be overtly expressed or not. In the latter, an agentive phrase can appear in the form of the genitive or a *dara*-phrase (Klaiman 1981a: 116, Bhattacharya 2006: 3). This is illustrated in examples (9) and (10).

(9) **ama-r** kɔfi ken-a ho-l-o
1.OBL-GEN coffee buy-PTCP become-PST-3
'Coffee was bought by me.'
(Bhattacharya 2006: 4, glosses modified by the present author)

(10) **ama-r** **dara** bagh mar-a hɔ-b-e [sic]
1.OBL-GEN by tiger kill-PTCP become-FUT-3
'The tiger will be killed by me.'
(Bhattacharya 2006: 4, glosses modified by the present author)

In example (9), the agent is expressed using the genitive. In example (10), the agent is expressed in an adjunct, which consists of the postposition *dara*. It is possible to express an agent using these two methods in the BECOME Passive Construction, although an agent is not always expressed.

In contrast, in the FALL Construction, expressing an agentive phrase is unnatural. Neither the genitive nor the postposition *dara* can be used, as illustrated in examples (11) and (12).

(11) **ama-r** bagh mar-a poṛ-l-o
1.OBL-GEN tiger kill-PTCP fall-PST-3
OK: 'My tiger died.'
Not Okay: 'The tiger was killed by me.'

(12) (*__ama-r__ __dara__) bagh mar-a poṛ-l-o
1.OBL-GEN by tiger kill-PTCP fall-PST-3

[10] The agentive phrase using the postposition *dara* is not used in colloquial Bengali. Sarkar (2012: 369) points out that this expression is not natural, and the coding using the genitive is more natural.

Intended: 'The tiger was killed (by me).'

In example (11), an agent cannot be expressed by the genitive. Example (11) is grammatical only when the genitive is interpreted as a possessor of the noun *bagh* 'tiger,' meaning 'My tiger died.' In example (12), too, an agent cannot be expressed by an adjunct employing the postposition *dara*.[11]

2.4. Summary

In summary, the FALL Construction has three formal characteristics, namely the verbal indexing of the nominative subject, the patient being marked by the nominative, and the non-existence of an agent, all of which are distinct from the BECOME Passive Construction. This supports the argument that the FALL Construction is a separate construction on its own.

3. The FALL Construction is a construction with slots

Given that the FALL Construction is a separate construction on its own, as shown in Section 2, the schematic characteristics of the FALL Construction will be analyzed in this section. Specifically, I identify the verbs that can appear in the participle slot and determine what properties they have in common.

3.1. Several verbs can occur in the participle slot of the FALL Construction

The FALL Construction has been regarded as not so productive and as a mere fixed expression (Milne 1913: 154, Chatterji 1926: 925, Bhattacharya 2006: 3). However, at least 11 verbs are confirmed to occur in the participle slot. Table 2 shows the verbal stems that appear in the participle slot and the meanings of the FALL Construction with the respective verbal stem.

Table 2 The verbal stems that appear in FALL Construction

No.	Verbal stem	Meaning of the verbal stem	Meaning of the FALL Construction when the verbal stem is used in the participle slot
1	*kaṭ*	to cut	be run over, be cut down
2	*cap*	to press	be suppressed, get squashed, get hidden
3	*ḍhak*	to cover	be covered, be hidden
4	*dhɔr*	to catch	get caught, be detected, be noticed
5	*mar*	to kill, to hit	die an accidental death
6	*ăk*	to draw	be drawn

[11] A quantitative survey has also confirmed that agents are not overtly coded in the FALL Construction. In the Wikipedia corpus (ben_wikipedia_2021_100K) of the Leipzig Corpora Collection (Goldhahn, Eckart & Quasthoff 2012), no FALL Constructions cooccur with the *dara* agentive phrase, while 228 examples of the BECOME Passive Construction cooccur with the *dara* agentive phrase. It is evident that an agent is not expressed in the former, but can be expressed in the latter.

7	*gāṭ*	to string (a garland)	be strung (e.g., a garland)
8	*chāk*	to filtrate	be filtrated
9	*chāṭ*	to cut, to trim	be cut, be trimmed
10	*bādh*	to bind, to tie	get tied up
11	*lekh*	to write	be written

Note that the list of combinations in Table 2 is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, it includes additional data that have not been previously reported in existing studies (Smith 1997: 143, Thompson 2010: 387, 2012: 173). The present study has identified the combinations from numbers 6–11 in Table 2, while those from 1–5 were reported by Thompson (2010: 387, 2012: 173). I demonstrate the examples of combinations that have been additionally observed by the present study as follows.

(13) alo.chaya-r alpona **āk-a** **poṛ-ech-e** dhulo-r rasta-e
light.shadow-GEN painting draw-PTCP fall-PRF-3 dust-GEN road-LOC
'The light and shadow like an Alpona painting are cast on the dusty roads.'
(Basu 1975: 173)

(14) tā-r kɔrmo.dhara kolkata-r śɔŋge
3.HON.OBL-GEN procedure Kolkata-GEN together
æk śutr-e **gāṭh-a** **pɔṛ-e**
one string-LOC string-PTCP fall-3
'Her way of work meets the same flow of Kolkata.' (Dutta 2021)

(15) kintu choṭo~choṭo jal-e cunopũṭi śɔmosto=i **chāk-a**
but small~RED net-LOC small.fish all=EMPH filtrate-PTCP
pɔṛ-e
fall-3
'But even small fish are caught in the fine nets.' (Tagore 1947)

(16) kintu raiṭ.uiŋar-er uiŋ **chāṭ-a** **poṛ-ech-e**
but right.winger-GEN wing cut-PTCP fall-PRF-3
'But the skill of the right winger is faded away.' (Maity 2022)

(17) ami **bādh-a** **poṛ-ech-i** sthai ṭhikana-e
1SG.NOM tie-PTCP fall-PRF-1 permanent address-LOC
'I am stuck in the permanent address.' (Mukhopadhyay 1965: 44)

(18) kon.khan-e ama-r nam kon ɔkkhor-e **lekh-a**
which.place-LOC 1.OBL-GEN name which letter-LOC write-PTCP
poṛ-ech-e
fall-PRF-3
'Where and in what letters my name has been written.' (Tagore 1965)

3.2. Verbs that occur in the participle slot have characteristics in common

The verbs that occur in the participle slot have several characteristics in common. First, the verbs that appear in the participle slot are limited to transitive verbs.

Intransitive verbs are not allowed in the slot. Examples (19) and (20) show that only verbs with a transitive meaning can appear in the participle slot.

(19) ɔnek lok beghor-e poṛ-e bon-er moddh-e
many people senseless-LOC fall-CONJ forest-GEN middle-LOC
mar-a pɔṛ-e
kill-PTCP fall-3
'Many people become disorientated and die in the forest.'
(Thompson 2010: 387, glosses modified by the present author)

(20) *ɔnek lok beghor-e poṛ-e bon-er moddh-e **mɔr-a**
many people senseless-LOC fall-CONJ forest-GEN middle-LOC die-PTCP
pɔṛ-e
fall-3

While the transitive verb *mar* 'kill' is grammatical, as in example (19), the intransitive verb *mɔr* 'die' is not allowed, as seen in example (20). This indicates that only transitive verbs can occur in the participle slot of the FALL Construction.

The second shared characteristic is that the verbs that appear in the participle slot are simplex verbs. Example (21) exemplifies the FALL Construction with the simplex verb *dhɔr* 'catch.'

(21) tumi **dhɔr-a** poṛ-b-e = (1)
2SG.NOM catch-PTCP fall-FUT-2
'You will get caught.'
(Thompson 2010: 387, glosses modified by the present author)

In example (21), *dhɔr-a* appears in the participle slot. This is a participle of the simplex verb *dhɔr* 'catch.'

In Bengali, the simplex verbs are monosyllabic. Thus, from the phonological point of view, the verbs that appear in the FALL Construction are monosyllabic.

In contrast, verbs that are morphologically or syntactically complex cannot occur in the participle slot of the FALL Construction. See examples (22)–(25) of the FALL Construction with such verbs.

(22) *tumi **pakṛ-a-no** poṛ-b-e
2SG.NOM catch-CAUS-PTCP fall-FUT-2
Intended: 'You will get caught.'

(23) *tumi **dhɔr-a-no** poṛ-b-e
2SG.NOM catch-CAUS-PTCP fall-FUT-2
Intended: 'You will be caught (by someone).' / 'You will be made to catch (someone).'

(24) *ɔnek lok bon-er moddh-e **lathi** **mar-a** pɔṛ-e
many people forest-GEN middle-LOC kick kill-PTCP fall-3
Intended: 'Many people are kicked in the forest.'

(25) *ɔnek lok bon-er moddh-e **mer-e** **fæl-a** pɔṛ-e
many people forest-GEN middle-LOC kill-CONJ throw-PTCP fall-3

Intended: 'Many people are killed in the forest.'

Examples (22) and (23) exemplify morphologically complex verbs, each consisting of an additional suffix *-a* to a root.[12] Example (24) shows the FALL Construction with a complex predicate where the combination of the noun *lathi* 'kick' and the verb *mar* 'kill' is used to express the event 'kick.' Example (25) illustrates a complex predicate consisting of two verbs. Even though the simplex verb *mar* 'kill' alone can appear in the participle slot, as shown in (2) and (3), it cannot appear when it is part of a complex predicate, as shown in (24) and (25). Hence, verbs that are morphologically or syntactically complex cannot be used in the participle slot of the FALL Construction.

However, one exception to this generalization is observed. Compounds consisting of a noun and a verb can occur in the participle slot. See the following examples using the verb *cap* 'press.'

(26) kɔto lok hɔeto ama-der jonne **gaṛi.cap-a**
how.many people probably 1.OBL-PL.GEN for car.press-PTCP
poṛ-te~poṛ-te bẽc-e gi-ech-e …
fall-INF~RED survive-CONJ go-PRF-3
'Who knows how many people were about to be hit by cars because of us?'
(Tagore 1939)

(27) …śekhan-e kɔto śomriddho jɔnopɔd aj
there-LOC how.many rich country today
bali.cap-a poṛ-e hari-e g-ech-e
sand.press-PTCP fall-CONJ be.lost-CONJ go-PRF-3
'So many prosperous countries have been lost covered by sand there.'
(Tagore 1995)

In example (26), the noun *gaṛi* 'car' and the verb *cap* 'press' form a compound and appear in the participle slot. In example (27), the noun *bali* 'sand' and the verb *cap* 'press' form a compound. The common feature of these two compounds lies in the grammatical relation between the two elements of the compound. The noun element is an instrument of an event expressed by the verb element, as *gaṛi.cap-a* means 'getting run over by a car' and *bali.cap-a* means 'being covered by sand.'

3.3. Summary

In summary, only simplex transitive verbs can appear in the participle slot of the FALL Construction, with the exception of a few compounds. In other words, the FALL Construction involves a variable in which verbs with certain simplex transitive stems can occur. From the point of view of Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006), the construction is therefore schematic. Given that constructions are learned pairings of form and meaning, it follows that it is necessary to investigate the schematic meaning of the FALL Construction; I will do so in the next section.

[12] The verbal suffix *-a* has two functions: denominalizer (22) and causativizer (23).

4. The FALL Construction is an agent-deleting construction

In this section, I examine the meaning of the FALL Construction, specifically by analyzing three different instantiations of the FALL Construction with the following representative verbs: *mar* 'kill,' *dhɔr* 'catch,' and *ḍhak* 'cover.' I consider the FALL Construction with these three verbs to represent the semantic features of the construction, as these verbs occur at higher frequencies in my data. They have also been mentioned in previous studies (Smith 1997: 143, Thompson 2010: 387, 2012: 173).

In addition to semantically analyzing the FALL Construction, I compare the meanings of the FALL Construction with those of the BECOME Passive Construction when the same verb appears in the participle slot of each construction. Based on this study, I argue that the FALL Construction is used to express events without an agent. I propose that the FALL Construction is an agent-deleting construction, while the BECOME Passive Construction is an agent-defocusing construction.

First, I demonstrate that the FALL Construction with the verb *mar* 'kill' expresses an event without an agent. Compare examples (28) and (29).

(28) nije-ke rokkha kor-te=i hiŋsro bagh-ke mar-e
oneself-DAT protection do-INF=EMPH violent tiger-DAT kill-3
manuś
human
'Men kill the violent tiger to protect themselves.' (Prothom Alo 2016)

(29) bagh-ṭa mar-a poṛ-l-o
tiger-CLF kill-PTCP fall-PST-3
'The tiger died.'

Example (28) illustrates the base event of the verb *mar* 'kill,' with the agent *manuś* 'man' and the patient *hiŋsro bagh* 'violent tiger.' Example (29) illustrates an event where the patient of the base event, namely the *hiŋsro bagh* 'violent tiger,' died rather than being killed by an agent. As already analyzed in Section 2.3, an agent cannot be expressed in the FALL Construction.

The non-existence of an agent is clearly shown in the ungrammaticality of example (30), in which the conjunctive of a verb expresses the action taken by an agent in order to kill.

(30) *gɔla ṭip-e dɔm bɔndho kor-e tini mar-a
neck press-CONJ breath stop do-CONJ 3SG.HON.NOM kill-PTCP
poṛ-ech-en
fall-PRF-HON
Intended: 'He was strangled to death.'

Example (30) involves two conjunctives of verbal phrases: *gɔla ṭip* 'press the neck' and *dɔm bɔndho kɔr* 'stop the breath,' expressing the presence of an agent of the killing. These transitive conjunctives cannot occur with the FALL Construction, as this construction cannot express an event with an agent's interference. From this

observation, one can conclude that the FALL Construction with the verb *mar* 'kill' expresses an event without an agent.

Next, I demonstrate that the FALL Construction with the verb *dhɔr* 'catch' is also an agent-deleting construction. Compare examples (31) and (32).

(31) puliś cor-ke dhor-ech-e
police thief-DAT catch-PRF-3
'The police caught the thief.'

(32) cor puliś-er kach-e dhɔr-a poṛ-l-o
thief police-GEN near-LOC catch-PTCP fall-PST-3
'The thief got caught by the police.'

Example (31) illustrates the base event of the verb *dhɔr* 'catch,' with the agent *puliś* 'police' and the patient *cor* 'thief.' The FALL Construction in example (32) illustrates an event where the patient of the base event, namely the *cor* 'thief,' got caught. In this sentence, the agent of the base event, *puliś* 'police,' appears in the postpositional phrase with *kach-e* 'near.'

Although the postposition *kach-e* 'near' looks like an agentive marker at a glance, this postpositional phrase with *kach-e* 'near' is actually used to encode the endpoint of a motion. Such a usage of the postpositional phrase with *kach-e* 'near' is also found in example (33).

(33) **mejorani-r** **pa-er** **kach-e** poṛ-e tã-r
elder.sister.in.law-GEN foot-GEN near-LOC fall-CONJ 3.HON.OBL-GEN
pa-er dhulo ni-l-um
foot-GEN dust take-PST-1
'… and making a low obeisance I took the dust of my elder sister-in-law's feet.'[13] (Tagore 1941)

In example (33), the postpositional phrase with *kach-e* 'near' expresses the endpoint of the physical motion of falling. This observation suggests that the postpositional phrase with *kach-e* 'near' does not indicate an agent in example (32). Rather, it merely indicates an endpoint of the action.

As discussed in Section 2.3, an agent also cannot be expressed in a postpositional phrase with *dara.* See example (34).[14]

[13] The English translation is taken from *The Home and the World*, translated by Surendranath Tagore, available on Project Gutenberg (https://www.gutenberg.org).

[14] Note that Chattopadhyay (1942: 357) includes an example of an old written form of Bengali (called sadhu bhasha); the example is a grammatical sentence that is similar to (34):

(a) paharawala-r dara cor dhɔr-a poṛ-iach-e
watchman-GEN by thief catch-PTCP fall-PRF-3
'The thief was caught by the watchman.'
(Chattopadhyay 1942: 357, glosses provided by the present author)

However, my language consultants judged (34) as unnatural. This implies that the FALL Construction might be in the process of undergoing language change.

(34) cor (***puliś-er*** **dara**) dhɔr-a poṛ-l-o
thief police-GEN by catch-PTCP fall-PST-3
'The thief got caught by the police.'

This observation supports the analysis that the agent is deleted from the FALL Construction with the verb *dhɔr* 'catch.'

Lastly, the FALL Construction with the verb *ḍhak* 'cover' also expresses an event without an agent. Compare examples (35) and (36).

(35) debota megh-e tara ḍhek-ech-e
god cloud-LOC star cover-PRF-3
'The god covered the stars with clouds.'
(36) tara megh-e ḍhak-a poṛ-l-o
star cloud-LOC cover-PTCP fall-PST-3
'The stars got covered with clouds.'

Example (35) illustrates the base event, with the agent *debota* 'god' and the patient *tara* 'star.' In the FALL Construction (36), the stars getting covered with clouds is described as a natural phenomenon.

Example (36) with the verb *ḍhak* 'cover' is different from other examples of the FALL Construction in that it has a locative phrase. This locative phrase can express an inanimate causer rather than an animate agent, as evident in example (37).

(37) *tara debota-e ḍhak-a poṛ-l-o
star god-LOC cover-PTCP fall-PST-3
Intended: 'The stars got covered by the god.'

While the inanimate causer, namely *megh* 'cloud,' can be flagged by the locative, as shown in example (36), the animate agent of the base event of the verb *ḍhak*, namely *debota* 'god,' cannot be flagged by the locative, as shown in example (37). The treatment of such an inanimate causer will be discussed further in Section 5.

The fact that the FALL Construction is employed to express the non-involvement of an agent in an event becomes clear when the FALL Construction is compared with the BECOME Passive Construction. Although the FALL Construction is often analyzed as one strategy for passive voice (Chatterji 1926: 925–926, Chattopadhyay 1942: 356–357, 359, Seely 2002: 114–117, Bhattacharya 2006: 3), the meanings expressed by the two constructions differ.

In contrast to the FALL Construction, the BECOME Passive Construction implies the existence of an agent in an event. First, let us consider an event expressed by the verb *mar* 'kill.' See example (38).

(38) gɔla ṭip-e dɔm bɔndho kor-e tã-ke mar-a
neck press-CONJ breath stop do-CONJ 3.HON.OBL-DAT kill-PTCP
ho-ech-e = (5)
become-PRF-3
'He was strangled to death.' (Bandyopadhyay 1995: 223)

In example (38), the verb *mar* 'kill' is employed in the participle slot of the BECOME Passive Construction. It illustrates a homicide where the patient was strangled to death, as the conjunctive *gɔla ṭip-e dɔm bɔndho kor-e* 'pressing neck and stopping the breath' illustrates. The agent is included in the event expressed by the BECOME Passive Construction.

Next, let us consider an event with the verb *dhɔr* 'catch.' See example (39).

(39) cor puliś-er dara dhɔr-a ho-l-o
thief police-GEN by catch-PTCP become-PST-3
'The thief got caught by the police.'

When the verb *dhɔr* 'catch' is used in the BECOME Passive Construction, the agentive phrase with the postposition *dara* can express the agent, namely the *puliś* 'police.' Hence, the event includes an agent.

Lastly, the BECOME Passive Construction with the verb *ḍhak* 'cover' also describes an event with an agent. See example (40).

(40) tara megh-e ḍhak-a ho-l-o
star cloud-LOC cover-PTCP become-PST-3
'The stars got covered with clouds (by someone controlling clouds).'

Example (40) is interpreted as an event where an agent covered the stars by controlling the clouds. Thus, this sentence is not likely to be used for a description of the weather forecast on a news channel to explain a natural phenomenon. Again, in this example, the BECOME Passive Construction implies the existence of an agent.

In this section, I have analyzed the semantic characteristics of the FALL Construction employing three different verbs. The FALL Construction is used to express events where the interference of an agent is not implied. It has a schematic meaning to delete an agent from an event. This is distinctly observed when the FALL Construction is compared with the BECOME Passive Construction. Indeed, both constructions share a semantic characteristic in that they both do not give a focus to an agent. However, they are crucially different: the FALL Construction is an agent-deleting construction, and the BECOME Passive Construction is an agent-defocusing construction.

5. The FALL Construction is an anticausative

In this section, I argue that the FALL Construction is best analyzed as anticausative, contrary to previous analyses of the construction as passive. To support this claim, I will begin by presenting the definition of an anticausative as provided by Zúñiga and Kittilä (2019) in Section 5.1. Subsequently, in Section 5.2, I will examine the FALL Construction according to this definition.

5.1. Definition and preliminaries

Zúñiga and Kittilä (2019) offer a definition of anticausatives that is grounded in cross-linguistic data, as given in (41).

(41) Characteristics of the anticausative (Zúñiga and Kittilä 2019: 41)
   a. Its semantic and syntactic valency is one less than that of the base
   b. The A is removed from argument structure, both semantically and syntactically
   c. Its subject corresponds to the P of the non-anticausative voice
   d. Anticausativization is formally coded on the predicate complex

Examples (42) and (43) from Turkish illustrate the difference between transitive and anticausative events, with example (43) clearly showing the characteristics of an anticausative.

(42) Annem kapı-yı aç-tı
mother.1sg.psr[nom] door-acc open-pst
'My mother opened the door.'
(Haspelmath 1987: 2, glosses provided by Zúñiga and Kittilä 2019: 42)

(43) Kapı aç-ıl-dı
door[nom] open-antic-pst
'The door opened.'
(Haspelmath 1987: 2, glosses provided by Zúñiga and Kittilä 2019: 42)

In the transitive construction in (42), the agent subject is zero-marked, and the patient object is accusative-flagged. The verb has no special marker for specifying the voice. In contrast, in the anticausative construction in (43), the agent is deleted semantically and syntactically (characteristic (41b)), and the patient takes no marking and becomes the subject (characteristic (41c)). This makes the valency one less than that of the base event of (42) (characteristic (41a)). The verb also takes an additional marker, forming a morphologically complex predicate (characteristic (41d)).

Anticausatives and passives have several similarities. The characteristics of passives are provided by Zúñiga and Kittilä (2019: 83) as follows.

(44) Characteristics of the passive (Zúñiga and Kittilä 2019: 83)
   a. Syntactic valency is one less than in the active diathesis (e.g., the verb is monovalent when its active counterpart is bivalent)
   b. Its subject corresponds to the nonsubject P of the active voice
   c. Its peripheral, and optional, argument (typically marked by a non-core case or adposition) corresponds to the subject A of the active voice
   d. Passivization is formally coded on the predicate complex

Both anticausatives and passives result in a reduction of valency, giving more focus to a patient rather than an agent. They are also both formally coded on the predicate complex. In fact, there are several languages where anticausative and passive constructions are coded using the same marker. In Turkish, the suffix *-il* is used to express both the anticausative and passive. Consider example (45).

(45) Televizyon şu anda tamir ed-il-iyor
TV at.the.moment repair aux-pass-impf

'The television set is being repaired at the moment.'
(Göksel and Kerslake 2005: 149)

In example (45), the finite verb *ed* carries the suffix *-il* to express the passive, which is also used in the Turkish anticausative construction, as shown in example (43).

Although anticausatives and passives share similarities, there are crucial differences. From the semantic perspective, in passives, the agent remains in the argument structure, while in anticausatives, the agent is removed. In other words, as noted by Comrie (1985: 326), "passive and anticausative differ in that, even where the former has no agentive phrase, the existence of some person or thing bringing about the situation is implied, whereas the anticausative is consistent with the situation coming about spontaneously." From the syntactic perspective, anticausatives do not allow an agent to appear in an adjunct, whereas passives allow it in many languages.

However, as Kulikov (2011: 232) mentions, this semantic aspect of the definition of anticausatives oversimplifies the real picture: "The use of the anticausative morphology implies conceptualizing the corresponding event as spontaneous, even in cases where the presence of an external agent is possible, and even quite probable." Kulikov (2011: 232) goes on to add that in English, for instance, *The door is being opened* strongly implies the existence of someone opening the door, while *The door is opening* expresses that the event is coming about spontaneously, even though in the majority of cases, an agent would be involved. That is, an agent, even if possible, is considered much more irrelevant in anticausatives than in passives, including in agentless passives (Kulikov 2011: 232).

When an agent is considered irrelevant in an event, certain languages can express the existence of an inanimate causer using a construction similar to the anticausative construction. Zúñiga and Kittilä (2019) refer to this specific type of anticausative construction as the "inanimate causer construction," which falls under the category of non-prototypical anticausative constructions in their view. In an inanimate causer construction, an inanimate causer can be expressed by an adjunct. Example (46) illustrates the inanimate causer construction of Sinhala.

(46) kaɖuə-ʈə atə kæpe-nəwa
sword-DAT hand.NOM cut.ANTIC-IND
'The sword is cutting his hand.'
(Chandralal 2010: 105, glosses provided by Zúñiga & Kittilä 2019: 47)

In example (46), the inanimate causer *kaɖuə* 'sword' is dative-flagged. Other than that, the construction follows the same pattern as the anticausative construction in this language.

To sum up, the anticausative construction is characterized by four characteristics, namely valency reduction, agent deletion, a subject corresponding to the patient of a base event, and complex coding on the predicate. In the next section, I will discuss the function of the FALL Construction based on this typological characterization of the anticausative construction.

5.2. The FALL Construction as anticausative

In this section, I argue that the FALL Construction is anticausative, following the definition by Zúñiga and Kittilä (2019: 41). As discussed in Section 5.1, the anticausative construction has four characteristics.

First, in an anticausative construction, the semantic and syntactic valency is one less than that of the base. Recall examples (28) and (29) in Section 4, replicated as (47) and (48) below.

(47) nije-ke rokkha kor-te=i hiŋsro bagh-ke mar-e
oneself-DAT protection do-INF=EMPH violent tiger-DAT kill-3
manuś = (28)
human
'Men kill the violent tiger to protect themselves.' (Prothom Alo 2016)

(48) bagh-ṭa mar-a poṛ-l-o = (29)
tiger-CLF kill-PTCP fall-PST-3
'The tiger died.'

In example (47), the subject, namely the noun *manuś* 'man,' is the agent, and the object, the *hiŋsro bagh* 'violent tiger,' is the patient of the event of the verb *mar* 'kill.' In the FALL Construction, as shown in example (48), only the subject, that is, *bagh-ṭa* 'the tiger,' which corresponds to the object in example (47), is present, and the agent *manuś* 'man' is absent. The semantic and syntactic valency in the FALL Construction, as shown in (48), is one less than that of the base in the transitive construction in (47).

Second, the agent is removed from the argument structure both semantically and syntactically in an anticausative construction. The FALL Construction semantically expresses an event without an agent, as discussed in Section 4. From a syntactic perspective as well, the FALL Construction does not express an agent, as discussed in Section 2.3. On the other hand, an inanimate causer can be expressed by a locative phrase, as shown in example (36). This finding aligns with the characteristics of the inanimate causer construction, which is considered one of the non-prototypical anticausative constructions, as defined by Zúñiga and Kittilä (2019).

Third, in an anticausative construction, the subject corresponds to the patient of the non-anticausative voice. In the FALL Construction, a patient of a transitive base event carries nominative case or no marking, and the finite verb *poṛ* 'fall' exhibits indexing of the subject, as analyzed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2. This is a typical feature of the subject in Bengali. See examples (49) and (50).

(49) śe **ama-der-ke**=o mer-e fel-b-e
3SG.NOM 1.OBL-PL.GEN-DAT=also kill-CONJ throw-FUT-3
'He will also kill us.'

(50) majhkhan theke **amra**=o mar-a poṛ-b-o to-r
middle from 1PL.NOM=also kill-PTCP fall-FUT-1 2.OBL-GEN
jonne=i = (2)
for=EMPH

'We will also die because of you in the middle.' (Chakraborty 1999: 175)

Example (49) illustrates the transitive base event of the verb *mar* 'kill,' with the agent *śe*, the nominative third person singular pronoun, and the patient *amaderke*, the dative-flagged first person plural pronoun. In the FALL Construction in (50), the patient of the base event, namely the first person plural pronoun, bears the nominative and becomes the subject.

Lastly, anticausativization is formally coded on the predicate complex. The FALL Construction is formed by a complex predicate consisting of the participle of a verb and the finite verb *pɔṛ* 'fall.' Thus, the FALL Construction also exhibits the fourth characteristic of the anticausative.

In summary, based on the four characteristics of valency reduction, agent deletion, a subject corresponding to the patient of a base event, and complex coding on the predicate, I propose that the FALL Construction is an anticausative construction, i.e., it could be referred to as the FALL Anticausative Construction. This analysis of the FALL Construction has two important implications. First, the Bengali FALL Construction uses an analytic strategy consisting of multiple words, which may be typologically rare. Cross-linguistically, a morphological strategy is often employed for anticausatives (Zúñiga and Kittilä 2019: 49), as shown in the Turkish example (43). Only a few analytic anticausative constructions have been identified so far. Zúñiga and Kittilä (2019: 49) note that analytic anticausative constructions are rare, although they do exist (e.g., in Swedish and Finnish). The FALL Construction offers another instance of an analytic anticausative construction.

Second, my analysis of the FALL Construction stands in contrast to the existing analyses. Based on this morphosyntactic and semantic analysis of the FALL Construction, I conclude that the FALL Construction is anticausative rather than passive. Previous studies have regarded the FALL Construction as one strategy for expressing the passive in Bengali (Chatterji 1926: 925–926, Chattopadhyay 1942: 356–357, 359, Seely 2002: 114–117, Bhattacharya 2006: 3). However, the FALL Construction does not exhibit the characteristics of a passive. As discussed in Section 5.1, the involvement of an agent is a crucial difference between the passive and anticausative. In passive constructions, an agent remains in the event, while in anticausative constructions, it is deleted from the event. In the FALL Construction, an agent is deleted from the event. Therefore, from the perspective of the involvement of an agent, the FALL Construction is distinguished from a passive construction. While the anticausative is often expressed in a form identical to the passive in the languages of the world (Haspelmath 1990), Bengali has an anticausative construction independent of the passive construction.

6. Implications for the study of South Asian languages

This paper has presented a descriptive study of the FALL Construction and argued that this construction is an anticausative, contrary to its previous description as a passive. It is a distinct construction from the BECOME Passive Construction in

terms of both morphosyntactic and semantic properties (Sections 2 and 4). Given that the participle slot of the FALL Construction is open for verbs with specific characteristics, the construction is schematic with productivity to a certain extent (Section 3). It possesses an agent-deleting, namely the anticausative, function (Section 5).

6.1. Importance of investigating analytic and idiomatic constructions in New Indo-Aryan languages

The findings of this study are insightful for the study of the NIA languages. Investigating analytic and idiomatic constructions sheds light on the variation in grammatical voice phenomena in these languages.

Masica (1976) characterizes South Asia as a linguistic area, identifying the presence of morphological causative verbs as one of the shared features among the languages of South Asia. For example, in Hindi, when the suffix *-a* is applied to the monovalent verbal root *gir* 'fall,' it creates a bivalent verbal stem *gir-a* 'drop.'

However, SAL exhibit variation in valency-decreasing operations. Among SAL, the NIA languages have passive constructions. Analytic strategies are employed to express the passive in some languages, such as with the Bengali BECOME Passive Construction, while morphological strategies are employed in other languages (e.g., Nepali and Sindhi).

The present study's exploration of the analytic anticausative construction highlights more variation of the grammatical voice phenomenon in NIA languages. While the descriptive studies of many NIA languages mention their passive constructions as valency-decreasing operations (e.g., Kachru 2006, Agnihotri 2007, and Koul 2008 for Hindi; Pandharipande 1997 for Marathi; and Smith 1997, Thompson 2010, 2012, and David 2015 for Bengali), they hardly mention the anticausative. The present study has argued that an anticausative construction exists in Bengali as one strategy for a valency-decreasing operation, apart from the passive construction. This finding highlights the variation in the grammatical voice phenomenon in Bengali. Moreover, as NIA languages share many characteristics in common, anticausative constructions may also be identified in other NIA languages.

The anticausative constructions in other NIA languages may become identifiable through focusing on two characteristics of the construction, following the findings of the present study. First, it is important to pay attention to not only the morphological strategy but also the analytic strategy. The majority of NIA languages employ analytic strategies for the verbal category, such as tense systems (Zograph 1977: 426). Voice is also such a category. As shown in this paper, Bengali employs an analytic strategy for the passive (i.e., the BECOME Passive Construction) as well as the anticausative (i.e., the FALL Anticausative Construction). Thus, analytic constructions play important roles in the grammar of NIA languages.

Second, the idiomatic feature is also worthy of investigation. The FALL Construction has been overlooked in the literature due to its low productivity and

idiomatic nature. Nevertheless, the present paper explored the grammatical function of the FALL Construction as an anticausative by regarding it as a construction. Other languages may have anticausative constructions that have also been thus far regarded as "idioms" in the way that the Bengali FALL Construction has previously been considered. Taking idiomatic expressions into consideration can offer new insight for descriptive studies (Fillmore, Kay & O'Connor 1988, Goldberg 2006).

6.2. FALL Constructions prevail in South Asian languages and show different stages of development

Focusing on analytic constructions with an idiomatic nature can, indeed, lead to an interesting discussion on the prevalence and development of FALL Constructions as a valency-decreasing operation in SAL. Constructions morphosyntactically and functionally similar to the Bengali FALL Construction are, in fact, observed in some languages in the region. A few neighboring languages of Bengali also exhibit a valency-decreasing construction using the verb 'fall.' See the following examples from Assamese (51) and Oriya (52).

(51) si mar-ā **par-il**
he kill-PTCP fall-PST.3
'He is lost (ruined)'
(Kakati 1941: 324, glosses provided by the present author)

(52) e khɔbɔrɔ mo dwara sɔmɔstɔ-nku jɔṇ-a-**poṛ**-il-a
this news 1.OBL by all-OBL:DAT know-PASS-fall-PST-3SG
'This news was made known by me to everyone.'
(Neukom & Patnaik 2003: 292, glosses modified by the present author)

In the Assamese example, (51), it seems that the combination of a participle and the verb *par* 'fall' expresses the anticausative meaning, as suggested by the English translation given by Kakati (1941: 324). Kakati (1941: 324) mentions that "the passive sense is often more idiomatically expressed by means of verbal compounds." This interpretation of the Assamese example parallels the Bengali FALL Construction as illustrated by previous studies. Similarly, in the Oriya example, (52), the verb *poṛ* 'fall' is used to express a passive meaning. Interestingly, the Oriya FALL Construction differs from that of Bengali in that it includes an agent in the event. This is evidently expressed by the agentive phrase *mo dwara* 'by me.'

The difference in the existence of agentive phrases in the FALL Constructions of NIA languages suggests the diachronic development of the FALL Construction. Cross-linguistically, anticausative constructions are often related to passive constructions. Haspelmath (1990), on the one hand, discusses the diachronic path from anticausative constructions to passive constructions. On the other hand, Kulikov (2011) proposes the reverse shift, that is, the development from passive constructions to anticausative constructions, in Indo-European languages.

The FALL Constructions in NIA languages illustrated above exhibit interesting data for considering the development of the anticausative and passive

constructions. The Oriya and Bengali FALL Constructions seem to represent different stages of development. Following the proposal of Kulikov (2011), the FALL Construction might be on a path from a passive construction to an anticausative construction, with the Oriya FALL Construction possessing the prior function as a passive construction and the Bengali FALL Construction advancing to the next stage as an anticausative construction.

Interestingly, valency-decreasing constructions that employ a morpheme similar to *pɔṛ* are observed in not only NIA but also Dravidian languages. For example, in Malayalam, a morpheme, *peṭ*, is appended to a verb to express the passive (Asher & Kumari 1997: 315); and this morpheme is *paṭu* in Tamil (Asher 1985: 151) and *paDu* in Telugu (Krishnamurti & Gwynn 1985: 225).

The relationship between the FALL Constructions of the NIA languages and these Dravidian passive constructions is not clear. Chatterji (1926: 925) did observe this similarity but regarded it as a mere coincidence. The FALL Construction was not part of Sjoberg's study (1992) of the impact of Dravidian on Indo-Aryan languages either. Nevertheless, further explorations on the FALL Constructions in NIA languages and passive constructions in Dravidian languages might provide the key to understanding another linguistic characteristic of SAL.[15]

7. Conclusion

In this paper, I analyzed the morphosyntactic and semantic properties of the FALL Construction in Bengali. Specifically, I described the FALL Construction in terms of verbal indexing, the marking of a patient, and the existence of an agent and its marking. The construction is morphosyntactically distinct from the BECOME Passive Construction of Bengali and is considered a distinct construction on its own. The FALL Construction has an idiomatic nature in that the verbs that appear in the participle slot have simplex transitive stems. Thus, it is a schematic construction with a slot. Semantically, the FALL Construction is employed to delete an agent from an argument structure. Based on the present description and analysis, this paper established that the FALL Construction should be regarded as anticausative rather than passive. This study has not only explored the anticausative construction in Bengali but has also shed light on the variation and similarity within SAL by expanding its scope to analytic and idiomatic constructions that have been overlooked.

Abbreviations

1: first person	EMPH: emphasis	OBL: oblique
2: second person	FUT: future	PASS: passive

[15] The discussion on the development of the FALL Constructions of SAL also provides insight into studies on grammaticalization. Cross-linguistically, the lexeme 'fall' has often grammaticalized into passive markers (Haspelmath 1990: 38, Heine & Kuteva 2002: 133) and/or anticausative markers (Inglese 2022: 138–139). The present study offers one more such instance by presenting the Bengali FALL Anticausative Construction.

3: third person
ACC: accusative
ANTIC: anticausative
AUX: auxiliary
CAUS: causative
CLF: classifier
CONJ: conjunctive
DAT: dative
GEN: genitive
HON: honorific
IMPF: imperfective
IND: present indicative
INF: infinitive
LOC: locative
NOM: nominative
PL: plural
PRF: perfect
PSR: possessor
PST: past
PTCP: participle
RED: reduplication
SG: singular

References

Agnihotri, Rama Kant (2007) *Hindi: An essential grammar*. London: Routledge.
Asher, Ronald E. (1985) *Tamil*. London: Croom Helm.
Asher, Ronald E. and T. C. Kumari (1997) *Malayalam*. London: Routledge.
Bhattacharya, Tanmoy (2006) Butterpillar or caterfly? The Bangla passive in a minimalist parser. *Proceedings of the 1st national symposium on modeling and shallow parsing of Indian languages*, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, 1–13.
Bhattacharya, Tanmoy and Andrew Simpson (2011) Diagnosing double object constructions in Bangla/Bengali. *Lingua* 121(6): 1067–1082.
Bubenik, Vit (1997) The verbal system of Vedic and Classical Sanskrit. In: John Hewson and Vit Bubenik. *Tense and aspect in Indo-European languages: Theory, typology, diachrony*, 46–66. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
Chandralal, Dileep (2010) *Sinhala*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
Chatterji, Suniti Kumar (1926) *The origin and development of the Bengali language: Part 2*. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press.
Chattopadhyay, Suniti Kumar (1942) *Bhāshā-prakāśa: Bāṅgālā byākaraṇa* [*A grammar of the Bengali language*]. Second edition. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press.
Comrie, Bernard (1985) Causative verb formation and other verb-deriving morphology. In: Timothy Shopen (ed.) *Language typology and syntactic description*, *vol. 3: Grammatical categories and the lexicon*, 309–348. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Dasgupta, Probal (2003) Bangla. In: George Cardona and Danesh Jain (eds.) *The Indo-Aryan languages*, 386–428. London: Routledge.
David, Anne Boyle (2015) *Descriptive grammar of Bangla*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons and Charles D. Fennig (eds.) (2022) Ethnologue: Languages of the world, twenty-fifth edition, online version. http://www.ethnologue.com [accessed February 2024].
Emeneau, M. B. (1956) India as a linguistic area. *Language* 32(1): 3–16.
Fillmore, Charles J., Paul Kay and Mary Catherine O'Connor (1988) Regularity and idiomaticity in grammatical constructions: The case of *let alone*. *Language* 64(3): 501–538.
Göksel, Aslı and Celia Kerslake (2005) *Turkish: A comprehensive grammar*. London: Routledge.
Goldberg, Adele E. (1995) *Constructions: A construction grammar approach to argument structure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Goldberg, Adele E. (2006) *Constructions at work: The nature of generalization in language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Goldhahn, Dirk, Thomas Eckart and Uwe Quasthoff (2012) Building large monolingual dictionaries at the Leipzig Corpora Collection: From 100 to 200 languages. *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC'12)*:

759–765.
Haspelmath, Martin (1987) *Transitivity alternations of the anticausative type*. Köln: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität zu Köln.
Haspelmath, Martin (1990) The grammaticization of passive morphology. *Studies in Language* 14(1) 25–72.
Heine, Bernd and Tania Kuteva (2002) *World lexicon of grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Inglese, Guglielmo (2022) Cross-linguistic sources of anticausative markers. *Linguistic Typology at the Crossroads* 2(2) 127–186.
Kachru, Yamuna (2006) *Hindi*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
Kakati, Banikanta (1941) *Assamese: Its formation and development*. Gauhati: The Government of Assam in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Narayani Handiqui Historical Institute.
Klaiman, Miriam H. (1981a) Bengali passives: Semantics above the word level. *Papers from the Regional Meetings, Chicago Linguistic Society* 17: 116–124.
Klaiman, Miriam H. (1981b) *Volitionality and subject in Bengali: A study of semantic parameters in grammatical processes*. Bloomington: Indiana University Linguistics Club.
Klaiman, Miriam H. (1983) Bengali conjunctive participle constructions. *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*: 138–147.
Klaiman, Miriam H. and Aditi Lahiri (2018) Bengali. In: Bernard Comrie (ed.) *The world's major languages*. Third edition. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
Koul, Omkar N. (2008) *Modern Hindi grammar*. Springfield, VA: Dunwoody Press.
Krishnamurti, Bh. and J. P. L. Gwynn (1985) *A grammar of modern Telugu*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
Kulikov, Leonid (2011) Passive to anticausative through impersonalization: The case of Vedic and Indo-European. In: Andrej Malchukov and Anna Siewierska (eds.) *Impersonal constructions: A cross-linguistic perspective*, 229–254. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
Masica, Colin P. (1976) *Defining a linguistic area: South Asia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Masica, Colin P. (1991) *The Indo-Aryan languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Milne, W. S. (1913) *A practical Bengali grammar*. Calcutta: The author.
Neukom, Lukas and Manideepa Patnaik (2003) *A grammar of Oriya*. Zürich: Universität Zürich.
Pandharipande, Rajeshwari (1997) *Marathi*. London: Routledge.
Radice, William (2010) *Complete Bengali*. London: Teach Yourself.
Sarkar, Pabitra (2012) Bācya. In: Rafiqul Islam and Pabitra Sarkar (eds.) *Bāṃlā ekāḍemi: Pramita bāṃlā bhāshāra byākaraṇa, prathama khaṇḍa* [*A grammar of standard Bangla language, part 1*]. Second edition, 369–374. Dhaka: Bangla Academy.
Seely, Clinton B. (2002) *Intermediate Bangla*. Muenchen: LINCOM Europa.
Sjoberg, Andrée Frances (1992) The impact of Dravidian on Indo-Aryan: An overview. In: Edgar Charles Polomé and Werner Winter (eds.) *Reconstructing languages and cultures*, 507–529. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
Smith, William L. (1997) *Bengali reference grammar*. Stockholm: Association of Oriental Studies.
Subbarao, K. V. (2016) Object marking. In: Hans Henrich Hock and Elena L. Bashir (eds.) *The languages and linguistics of South Asia: A comprehensive guide*, 459–465. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
Thompson, Hanne-Ruth (2010) *Bengali: A comprehensive grammar*. London: Routledge.

Thompson, Hanne-Ruth (2012) *Bengali*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
Zograph, G. A. (1977) The "new" verbal inflexion in Indo-Aryan. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 58/59: 425–431.
Zúñiga, Fernando and Seppo Kittilä (2019) *Grammatical voice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sources of Bengali Examples

Bandyopadhyay, Sharadindu (1995) Byomakeśa o baradā. In: Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay. *Byomakeśa samagra*, 215–246. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers.
Basu, Dakshinaranjan (1975) *Cheṛe āsā grāma*. Kolkata: Jijñāsa.
Chakraborty, Shibram (1999) Patale bachara păñceka. In: Shibram Chakraborty. *Śibrāma racanābalī.* vol. 1, 166–177. Kolkata: Punascha.
Dutta, Sumitra (2021) *Nārī saṃkaṭe sampade sammāne*, e-book on Google Books, https://www.google.co.jp/books/edition/নারী_সম্পদে_সং/6ABTEAAAQBAJ?hl=ja&gbpv=0&kptab=overview [accessed March 2025].
Maity, Mrittika (2022) *Natuna pālaka: A collection of stories by Mrittika Maity*, e-book on Google Books, https://www.google.co.jp/books/edition/নতুন_পালক/cTAZEQAAQBAJ?hl=ja&gbpv=0 [accessed March 2025].
Mukhopadhyay, Shirshendu (1965) Priẏa madhubana, In: Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay. *Serā svanirbācita galpa*, 43–52. Kolkata: Pushpo.
Nasrin, Taslima (2012) *Nirbāsana*. Dhaka: Agamee Prakashan.
Prothom Alo (2016) Sundarabane kena bāgha hatyā? https://www.prothomalo.com/world/সুন্দরবনে-কেন বাঘ-হত্যা [accessed March 2025].
Siraj, Syed Mustafa (2007) Karnelera jārnāla theke 1. In: Syed Mustafa Siraj. *Kiśora karnela samagra.* vol. 2, 243–251. Kolkata: Dey's Publishing.
Siraj, Syed Mustafa (2009) Blyāka pyānthāra rahasya. In: Syed Mustafa Siraj. *Kiśora karnela samagra.* vol. 1. Second edition, 36–42. Kolkata: Dey's Publishing.
Tagore, Rabindranath (1939) *Ẏuropa-prabāsīra patra.* In: Rabindranath Tagore. *Rabīndra racanābalī.* vol. 1, online version. Bichitra: Online Tagore variorum. http://bichitra.jdvu.ac.in/index.php [accessed April 2022].
Tagore, Rabindranath (1941) *Ghare baire.* In: Rabindranath Tagore. *Rabīndra racanābalī.* vol. 8, online version. Bichitra: Online Tagore variorum. http://bichitra.jdvu.ac.in/index.php [accessed April 2022].
Tagore, Rabindranath (1947) *Rāẏatera kathā.* In: Rabindranath Tagore. *Kālāntara-saṃyojana, rabīndra racanābalī.* vol. 24, online version. Bichitra: Online Tagore variorum. http://bichitra.jdvu.ac.in/index.php [accessed April 2022].
Tagore, Rabindranath (1965) *Sāhitye citrabibhāga.* In: Rabindranath Tagore. *Sāhityera svarūpa, rabīndra racanābalī.* vol. 27, online version. Bichitra: Online Tagore variorum. http://bichitra.jdvu.ac.in/index.php [accessed April 2022].
Tagore, Rabindranath (1995) *Śikśāra bikiraṇa.* In: Rabindranath Tagore. *Śikśa-saṃyojana, rabīndra racanābalī.* vol. 28, online version. Bichitra: Online Tagore variorum. http://bichitra.jdvu.ac.in/index.php [accessed April 2022].

Author's contact information:
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies
e-mail: sakura.ishikawa@tufs.ac.jp

[Received 25 February 2024;
Accepted 27 June 2025]

【要　旨】

ベンガル語の逆使役
――［主格主語＋分詞＋FALL］構文の記述――

石　川　さくら
東京外国語大学

南アジアは形態論的な使役化が特徴の一つとされる言語地域である。一方で逆使役は一部の言語にのみ観察される。本稿はベンガル語の分析的な［主格主語＋分詞＋ FALL］構文（FALL 構文）を記述し，これが逆使役であると論じる。当該構文はイディオム的特徴から記述の対象にされず，言及されても受身を表すとされてきた。しかし，本稿は当該の構造を構文と認め，ベンガル語の受身構文と対照しながら形態統語論的および意味論的記述を行う。形態統語論的に FALL 構文は受身構文とは異なる特徴を持ち，特定の特徴を持つ動詞が分詞スロットに生起する。意味論的には，FALL 構文では動作主が事象から削除される。これらの記述から FALL 構文は逆使役であることを議論する。このようにイディオム的または分析的な構文に着目することで，南アジア言語におけるヴォイスの多様性や結合価減少操作に関する新たな共通点が明らかになる。