

Passive constructions in Mandarin Chinese and European Portuguese a contrastive descriptive perspective

Construções passivas no chinês mandarim e no português europeu uma perspetiva descritiva contrastiva

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Resumo. A presente investigação centra-se nas propriedades estruturais, semânticas e aspectuais da passiva em Chinês Mandarim (CM) e Português Europeu (PE), revelando divergências sistemáticas entre os dois sistemas linguísticos. As passivas do CM podem ser marcadas por *bei* ou permanecer não marcadas, dependendo da tendência semântica e do papel semântico entre paciente e agente. Enquanto a omissão do agente preserva a construção passiva com *bei*, a eliminação simultânea do agente e de *bei* resulta numa passiva não marcada com propriedades distintas. A omissão do agente em PE alterna apenas entre formas longas e curtas de uma estrutura unificada. Aspectualmente, as passivas do CM exibem propriedades implícitas que requerem interpretação inferencial, demonstrando flexibilidade na combinação com partículas aspectuais: padrão ausente no PE. Este contraste reflete uma assimetria profunda: as passivas do CM são governadas a nível lexical, enquanto as do PE dependem da flexão morfológica. Estas divergências atribuem-se a diferenças tipológicas: a proeminência de tópico e minimalidade morfológica do CM versus a proeminência de sujeito e morfologia flexional rica do PE. Ao examinar como estas propriedades tipológicas restringem as construções passivas, o estudo contribui para compreender a interação entre sistemas morfológicos, mecanismos lexicais e realização da passiva em línguas tipologicamente distintas.

Palavras-chave: Voz passiva. Chinês mandarim. Português europeu.

Abstract. This investigation focuses on the structural, semantic and aspectual properties of passive in Mandarin Chinese (MC) and European Portuguese (EP) from a descriptive perspective. The findings reveal systematic divergences between the two systems. MC passives can be overtly marked by *bei* or remain unmarked, relying on the semantic tendency and semantic role between patient and agent. While agent omission alone preserves the *bei*-passive construction, the simultaneous deletion of both the agent and the *bei* marker yields an unmarked passive with fundamentally different structural and semantic properties. In contrast, EP agent omission merely alternates between long and short forms of a unified structure. Aspectually, MC passives exhibit covert properties requiring inferential interpretation, demonstrating flexibility in combining with aspectual particles—a pattern absent in EP's morphologically-marked system. This contrast reflects a deeper asymmetry: MC passives are primarily lexically governed, while EP passives rely predominantly on morphological inflection. These divergent realization mechanisms can be traced to underlying typological differences—MC's topic-prominence and morphological minimality versus EP's subject-prominence and rich inflectional morphology. By examining how these typological properties specifically constrain passive constructions, this study contributes to

understanding the interaction between morphological systems, lexical mechanisms, and passive realization across typologically distinct languages.

Keywords: Passive voice. Mandarin Chinese. European Portuguese.

1. Introduction

Passive constructions in Mandarin Chinese (MC) and European Portuguese (EP) exhibit complex linguistic mechanisms, with diverse interactions between structure, aspectual-semantics and morphology. These distinctive linguistic systems present both scholarly interest and challenging metalinguistic patterns for language learners. Despite this, comparative analyses of passives in these two linguistic systems remain notably scarce.

In MC, while traditional descriptive grammar discussions have persisted for decades, the internal structure of marked and unmarked passives remains contentious. This stems from uncertainties surrounding the grammatical status of the passive marker *bei*, absence of inflection, and MC's semantic inference nature. The emergence of Chinese generative syntax has added further complexity to this debate.

Conversely, EP passive constructions benefit from well-established, consensual descriptive analyses. However, recent studies indicate that classical descriptive analyses increasingly diverge from contemporary native speaker usage, suggesting that linguistic evolution demands reconsideration of EP passive generalisations.

This study aims to provide a descriptive analysis comparing these complex passive constructions, enhancing comparative understanding while establishing a theoretical foundation for applied linguistic research.

The methodology encompasses literature review, contrastive analysis and exemplar analysis. Following an introductory first section, Section 2 examines MC, focusing on the passive marker's grammatical status and its unique aspectual-semantic properties. Section 3 analyses EP passives through an aspectual tripartite typology, examining structural and semantic-aspectual properties of verbal and adjectival passives. Section 4 presents a contrastive analysis of the respective grammatical properties, while Section 5 concludes the investigation and considers future research directions.

2. Passive in Mandarin Chinese

This section examines two principal types of passive constructions in MC: the marked passive (Section 2.1) and the unmarked passive (Section 2.2). Each type is analysed with respect to its structural properties, its semantic and aspectual characteristics.

2.1. Marked Passive

Section 2.1 examines the marked passive from three perspectives: general patterns (2.1.1), the grammatical status of *bei* (2.1.2), and semantic and aspectual characteristics (2.1.3).

2.1.1. General description

The *bei* '被' construction represents the most typical passive structure in MC and is categorised as one of the grammatically marked passives from a descriptive perspective.

According to Jin (1996), the basic structure of the *bei* construction in Modern Chinese comprises two primary forms:

A. NP¹ [Patient] + *bei* + NP [Agent] + VP²

- (1) 张三 被 李四打了。
 Zhangsan bei Lisi dale.
 Zhangsan PSV³ Lisi beat-ASP
 'Zhangsan was beaten by Lisi.'
 (Huang et al., 2009, p. 112)

B. NP [Patient] + *bei* + VP

- (2) 张三 被 打了。
 Zhangsan bei da-le.
 Zhangsan PSV beat-ASP
 'Zhangsan was beaten.'

In addition to these basic forms, the *bei* construction encompasses two special variants, although their usage in Modern Chinese is relatively limited compared to the modernised constructions illustrated in (1) and (2) (Song, 1991):

C. NP [Patient] + *bei* / *wei* '为' + NP [Agent] + *suo* '所' + VP

- (3) 璇玑 为 情 所 困。
 Xuanji wei qing suo kun
 Xuanji PSV love PRT trap
 'Xuanji was trapped in love.'

D. NP [Patient] + *bei* / *jiao* '叫' / *rang* '让' + NP [Agent] + *gei* '给' + VP

- (4) 他被 人 给 骗了。
 Ta bei ren gei pianle.
 He PSV person PRT cheat-ASP
 'He was cheated by somebody.'

¹ Noun Phrase.

² Verbal Phrase.

³ The terminology for the grammatical glosses of the MC items used in this work is cited from Xiao et al. (2006). ASP stands for 'aspect marker', CL for 'classifier', GEN for 'genitive', INT for 'intensifier', PSV for 'syntactic passive marker', PRT for 'particle', and RVC for 'resultative verb complement'.

In type C constructions, when the passive marker *wei* is employed, the use of *suo* following the agent is obligatory. Conversely, in type D constructions, where *gei* appears after the agent, its presence is optional. Both *suo* and *gei* serve as emotional markers that intensify the passive effect of these sentences. However, as previously noted, the usage of *wei...suo...* in (3) has become increasingly uncommon in modern Chinese daily discourse. It is worth noting that three additional markers—*jiao*, *rang*, and *gei*—also introduce marked passive sentences (as shown in (5), (6) and (7)), which are likewise classified under *bei* constructions. Unlike the fully grammaticalised *bei*, these forms are more prevalent in dialectal variations and retain their lexical verbal meanings: 'call; order' (*jiao*), 'allow; concede' (*rang*), and 'give' (*gei*). Additionally, *gei* functions as a dative marker introducing the recipient or beneficiary of an action, see (8) (Xiao et al., 2006).

- (5) 张三 叫 李四 打了。

Zhangsan jiao Lisi da-le.

Zhangsan PSV Lisi beat-ASP

'Zhangsan was beaten by Lisi.'

- (6) 门 给 风 吹开了。

Men gei feng chui-kai-le.

Door PSV wind blow-open-ASP

'The door was blown open by the wind.'

- (7) 门 让 风 吹开了。

Men rang feng chui-kai-le.

Door PSV wind blow-open-ASP

'The door was blown open by the wind.'

- (8) a. 我 让 他 偷了 两块 钱。

wo rang ta tou-le liang-kuai qian.

I PSV/ask/allow he steal-ASP two-dollar money

'I had two dollars stolen by him/I asked (allowed) him to steal two dollars.'

- b. 我 叫 他 偷了 两块 钱。

wo jiao ta tou-le liang-kuai qian.

I PSV/order he steal-ASP two-dollar money

'I had two dollars stolen by him/I told him to steal two dollars.'

- c. 我 给 他 偷了 两块 钱。

wo gei ta tou-le liang-kuai qian.

I PSV/for he steal-ASP two-dollar money

'I had two dollars stolen by him/I stole two dollars for him.' (Xiao et al., 2006, p. 12)

The *bei* construction in Mandarin Chinese exhibits a distinctive grammatical property: it allows a logical object to appear postverbally while licensing an NP in the subject position that bears a semantic relationship with this postverbal object. Characteristically, the preverbal subject NP maintains a generalized possessive relationship with the postverbal object NP, encompassing whole-part and kinship relations. (Pan & Han, 2008). Building on this characteristic, four subtypes of *bei*

constructions can be identified following Huang's (1999) classificatory framework, as shown in (9):

(9) a. Direct long passive:

张三 被 土匪 杀了。
 Zhangsan bei tufei shale.
 Zhangsan PSV bandit kill-ASP
 'Zhangsan was killed by bandits.'

b. Indirect long passive:

张三 被 土匪 杀了 父亲。
 Zhangsan bei tufei shale fuqin
 Zhangsan PSV bandit kill-ASP father
 'Zhangsan's father was killed by bandits.'

c. Direct short passive:

张三 被 杀了。
 Zhangsan bei shale
 Zhangsan PSV kill-ASP
 'Zhangsan was killed.'

d. Indirect short passive:

张三 被 杀了 父亲。
 Zhangsan bei shale fuqin
 Zhangsan PSV kill-ASP father
 'Zhangsan's father was killed.'

(Teng, 2004, p. 291).

The distinction between long and short passives hinges on the overt realization of the agent: it is present in long passives, see (9)a and (9)b, but absent in short passives, as shown in (9)c and (9)d. A further distinction can be drawn based on the presence of a postverbal object. When a logical object, or object [Patient], is retained postverbally after *bei*, the construction is classified as an indirect passive, as illustrated in (9)b and (9)d; when no such object appears, it is a direct passive, as in (9)a and (9)c (Pan & Hu, 2021; Teng, 2004).

In summary, considering all variants of *bei* construction, its general structure in Modern Chinese can be formalised as follows:

(10) NP [Patient] + *bei* + (NP [Agent]) + VP

2.1.2. Grammatical status of passive marker *bei*

Unlike passive markers in English, the grammatical status of *bei* is less clearly defined. In this generalised structure, *bei* functions as a preposition that may introduce an NP [Agent]. It combines with the NP [Agent] and VP to form the predicate, with the NP [Patient] serving as the subject. In cases where the NP [Agent] is not introduced, *bei* operates as a particle marking the passive voice (Xing, 1996). In descriptive linguistics literature, Xing's perspective of separated analysis has garnered extensive support among

researchers (You, 2016). Within the generative framework, some scholars propose a dual-status analysis of *bei*. For instance, Shi (1999) and Shi & Hu (2005) propose that Mandarin Chinese passive sentences contain two distinct *bei* elements: a verbal *bei* functioning as a passivization morpheme and a prepositional *bei*. The single surface form *bei* results from the phonological unification of these two elements through haplology. The verbal *bei*, analogous to English *-en*, suppresses the external theta-role and absorbs the accusative Case of the verb. Despite positing two underlying *bei* elements, this analysis provides a unified account of MC passives, as both are assumed to be present in every passive construction.

However, some scholars advocate a unified analysis of *bei*. This analytical approach typically encompasses three positions. Jin (1996), Zhu (1982) and Liu et al. (2001) contend that *bei* functions as a Preposition, maintaining consistent syntactic and semantic features in both short and long passives. They argue that in short passives, the agent is simply omitted - analogous to English short passives - attributing the formalisation of passive structures to NP-movement.

Bei is also analysed as a verb by numerous scholars within the generative framework. For example, Hashimoto (1987) and Wei (1994) treat *bei* as a transitive verb that selects both the following agent and VP as its objects. Huang (1999) and Huang et al. (2009) analyse *bei* as a verb and draw parallels between the passive structure in MC and the *tough* construction in English.

Pan & Han (2008), Han & Pan (2016), Pan & Hu (2021) expanded upon the theoretical framework proposed by Pan (1998), Shi (2003) and Shi & Hu (2005). They analyse *bei* as a morpheme in both short and long passives, employing the Dangling Topic framework for passive formalisation and generating the NP [Patient] in the topic position. In the unified morphemic analysis of *bei*, the derivation of passives is characterized as unaccusativization. Under this approach, the passivized VP selected by the passive morpheme *bei* is analyzed as unaccusative, with the subject NP base-generated in topic position. It is worth noting that this analysis seeks to capture the parallel between unaccusative constructions with postverbal retained objects and indirect passives in Mandarin Chinese, both of which license a subject NP bearing a generalized possessive relationship with the postverbal retained object.

In summary, the structural analysis of the *bei* construction in MC remains contentious across both descriptive and generative approaches. The perspectives regarding its status can be broadly categorised into two main types, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Summary of Analysis of Passive Marker *bei* in MC

Summary of Analysis of Passive Marker <i>bei</i> in MC	
Non-unified Analysis	Unified Analysis
Preposition+Particle Analysis	Preposition Analysis
	Verb Analysis
	Preposition+morpheme Analysis
	Morpheme Analysis

2.1.3. Semantic and aspectual characteristics

The *bei* construction, as the most typical passive construction in MC, exhibits markedly different semantic properties compared to passive constructions in English and other Romance languages. This distinction can be attributed to the historical development of *bei*'s grammatical features and semantic content. As Keenan & Dryer (2007) observe, some passives in Asian languages commonly derive from experiential verbs denoting meanings such as “suffer” or “touch”. The *bei* construction similarly originates from this type of construction.

Lü (1982) examines the distinctive properties of *bei* from an etymological perspective, noting that *bei* originated as a verb denoting “suffering” in classical Chinese. This etymological origin accounts for the phenomenon whereby sentences marked by *bei* typically carry negative pragmatic implications, conveying meanings of suffering, coercion, unwillingness, and other adverse experiences (Wang, 1980).

Such semantic characteristics are not unique to *bei*: in Modern Chinese, constructions with verbs denoting suffering or experiencing, such as *shou/za* constructions (see (11)), can still be observed functioning as passive markers, though they have not undergone grammaticalisation to the same extent as the *bei* construction. However, the passive status of these constructions remains contentious, as they exhibit superficially active structures with clear verbal properties in introducing the NP [Agent]. Moreover, their verbal nature is further evidenced by their ability to take aspectual particles (Jin, 2016). Due to this theoretical complexity, these constructions fall beyond the scope of the present study.

- (11) a. 他的意见 受到 大多数人的反对。
 Tade yijian shoudao daduoshuren de fandui
 His idea experience most people DE reject
 ‘His idea was rejected by most people.’
- b. 他的意见 遭到 大多数人的反对。
 Tade yijian zaodao daduoshuren de fandui
 His idea suffer most people DE reject
 ‘His idea was rejected by most people.’

Due to the negative connotations associated with marked passives, Chinese speakers tend to favour unmarked passive structures that carry neutral semantic value when expressing passive meaning (Li, 2001). This preference is empirically evidenced in You's (2016) study, which found 71 unmarked passive sentences compared to only 37 marked passive sentences in the first 50 pages of the renowned Chinese novel *Muslim's Funeral*.

While extensive research has focused on the structural properties of the *bei* construction, its aspectual characteristics have received relatively less scholarly attention, with existing analyses remaining largely general in scope in descriptive literature in Chinese language. Wang (2006) observes that *bei* constructions characteristically

emphasise the dynamic process and unexpected changes that a patient undergoes through external force. Such aspectual processes reflect the construction's core function of highlighting the impact of external forces on the patient, rather than merely expressing passive voice. Similarly, Li & Thompson (1989) note that *bei* sentences inherently convey a disposal meaning.

As known, MC doesn't use verbal inflection to express the aspect. According to a series of corpus-based studies by Xiao, McEnery and their colleagues (see Xiao et al., 2006; Xiao & McEnery, 2004), the aspectual characteristics of *bei* constructions have been analysed more comprehensively and systematically. Their findings reveal that *bei* constructions in MC "always denote delimited situations with the implication of the successful achievement of a result" (Xiao & McEnery, 2004, p. 78), and "syntactic passives⁴ in Chinese convey an aspectual meaning of result that cannot be cancelled when they interact with perfective aspects" (Xiao et al., 2006, p. 17).

In fact, *bei* passives can in fact combine with various particles to express different aspectual interpretations. When *bei* constructions carry resultative aspectual meaning, they can accommodate not only the perfective markers *-le* (see **Erro! A origem da referência não foi encontrada.** **Erro! A origem da referência não foi encontrada.** etc.) and *-guo* (as presented in (12) **Erro! A origem da referência não foi encontrada.**), but also the imperfective marker *-zhe* (see (13) **Erro! A origem da referência não foi encontrada.**) as well as two resultative structures (RVC⁵, see (14) **Erro! A origem da referência não foi encontrada.**; *de*-result, see (15) **Erro! A origem da referência não foi encontrada.**). However, it is important to note that these aspectual markers combine with the VP (see (10)) rather than with the passive marker *bei* itself (cf. Xiao et al., 2006; Xiao & McEnery, 2004)⁶.

- (12) 他 被 很多 同学 追求过。

Ta bei henduo tongxue zhuiqiu-guo
She PSV many classmates court-ASP (perfective)
'She was courted by many of her classmates.'

- (13) 他 被 很多 同学 追求着。

Ta bei henduo tongxue zhuiqiu-zhe
She PSV many classmates court-ASP (imperfective)
'She is being courted by many of her classmates.'

- (14) 杯子被 打破了。

beizi bei da-po-le
Cup PSV break-RVC-ASP
'The cup was broke.'

- (15) 他被 她 迷 得 七荤八素。

⁴ It means *bei* constructions here.

⁵ Resultative verb complement.

⁶ The items **Erro! A origem da referência não foi encontrada.**–(16) were produced by the author of this work, not cited from Xiao et al. (2006); Xiao & McEnery (2004).

Ta bei ta mi de qihunbasu
 He PSV she fascinate DE out of his wits
 ‘He was fascinated by her.’

However, the aspectual properties of *bei* passives have been subject to various analyses, rendering it a topic lacking systematic consensus. Ting (2006) presents a distinctly different aspectual analysis of *bei* sentences in a presyntactic study, proposing that *bei* passives manifest either eventive properties (as in (16)) or stative properties (as in (17)):

- (16) a. 下午 三点钟 整 书 终于 被 卖掉了。
 xiawu sandianzhong zheng shu zhongyu bei mai-diao-le
 afternoon three:o'clock sharp book finally BEI sell-fall-ASP
 ‘All the books were sold out by three in the afternoon.’
- b. 书 将 在 明天 下午 三点钟 整 被 卖掉。
 shu jiang zai mingtian xiawu sandianzhong zheng bei mai-diao
 book will at tomorrow afternoon three:o'clock sharp BEI sell-fall
 ‘The books will be sold out by three p.m. tomorrow.’
- c. 张三 的 车 正在 自己的 店 里 被 修理。
 Zhangsan de che zhengzai ziji de dian li bei xiuli
 Zhangsan DE car presently self DE store inside BEI fix
 ‘Zhangsan’s car is being fixed in his own garage.’

(Ting, 2006, p. 106)

- (17) a. 城市 已经 被 炸毁了。
 chengshi yijing bei zha-hui-le
 city already BEI explode-destroy-ASP
 ‘The city was destroyed by bombs.’
- b. 车子 已经 被 修好了。
 chezi yijing bei xiu-hao-le
 car already BEI fix-good-ASP
 ‘The car is (was) already fixed.’

(Ting, 2006, p. 106)

However, this argument lacks the persuasive force found in the corpus-based analyses of Xiao et al. (2006) and Xiao & McEnery (2004), as Ting’s intuition regarding the aspectual properties of *bei* sentences is neither sufficiently evidenced nor adequately explained. Firstly, several examples provided by Ting (2006), such as those in (16), lack naturalness and acceptability according to native speaker judgements. Secondly, the classification of examples (16) and (17) as eventive and stative, respectively, rests upon ambiguous logical grounds, as both constructions can arguably describe resultative situations, a point substantiated by Xiao et al. (2006) and Xiao & McEnery (2004). Based

on these considerations, this study adopts the aspectual analysis of *bei* constructions proposed by Xiao et al. (2006) and Xiao & McEnery (2004). Their corpus-based investigation provides compelling evidence for the inherent resultative nature of *bei* sentences and demonstrates how these constructions interact with various aspectual particles in MC.

In summary, *bei* constructions carry a negative connotation that derives from *bei*'s original grammatical status as a verb denoting 'experience' or 'suffer'. This semantic feature has constrained the usage of *bei* constructions in Modern Chinese, with speakers typically preferring unmarked passives with neutral value when negative implications are undesired. However, this pattern began to shift during the New Culture Movement in early twentieth-century China, when *bei* constructions initially experienced overuse in written Chinese due to the influence of Western languages and the promotion of vernacular Chinese (Xiao et al., 2006; Wang, 1984). Subsequently, the usage of *bei* has gradually evolved, becoming acceptable in certain contexts where it can convey neutral meanings (Hashimoto, 1987), for instance, as shown in (18) **Erro! A origem da referência não foi encontrada.:**

- (18) 他被 授予 博士 学位。
 Ta bei shouyu boshi xuewei
 He PSV award doctoral degree
 'He was awarded a doctoral degree.'

Regarding the aspectual characteristics of *bei* constructions, they characteristically depict a dynamic process in which the patient undergoes the effect of an external force. Based on comprehensive corpus-based studies, Xiao et al. (2006) and Xiao & McEnery (2004) demonstrate a crucial feature: *bei* constructions inherently carry resultative meaning. What distinguishes these constructions from their counterparts in English and Romance languages is their remarkable aspectual flexibility—they can combine with both perfective and imperfective particles, suggesting aspectual properties that extend beyond mere perfectivity without morphological inflection. This contrasts sharply with Romance languages like Portuguese, where aspectual distinctions in passive constructions are primarily encoded through auxiliary verb selection. Different auxiliaries convey distinct aspectual meanings: *ser* marks eventive aspect, *ficar* encodes resultativity, and *estar* indicates stativity, with each auxiliary selecting an aspect-conditioned past participle to yield the corresponding interpretation. This topic receives further exploration in the subsequent chapter.

2.2. Unmarked Passive

The following subsections in section 2.2 introduce the general characteristics of the unmarked passive (Section 2.2.1), review the scholarly debate surrounding its structural status classification (Section 2.2.2), and discuss its semantic and aspectual properties (Section 2.2.3).

2.2.1. General description

As demonstrated in the literature, passive meaning in MC is not solely conveyed through syntactic and lexical passive structures; certain sentences that are structurally active can likewise express passive semantics. The unmarked passive in MC, which native speakers frequently employ to convey neutral passive meaning, has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate regarding its passive status for several decades.

From a broader theoretical perspective, both marked and unmarked passive constructions are characterised by Patient-Subject sentences (Gong, 1980). The crux of the debate lies in the precise definition of passive constructions. According to You (2016), the central point of contention concerns whether the so-called “unmarked passive” genuinely carries passive value and belongs to the passive voice category. Scholars who affirm the passive status of unmarked passives classify structurally active sentences with implicit passive value as passive constructions (Lü, 1987; Wang, 1985; Gong, 1980). In contrast, those who reject this analysis argue that such categorisation represents an over-extension of the passive definition, citing the absence of a consensus regarding the requisite passive structure (Liu, 1987; Hong, 1956).

In this investigation, the term “unmarked passive” is employed to establish a readily distinguishable contrast with marked passives. The structural features of unmarked passives will be initially introduced through Gong’s (1980) classification system for Patient-subject sentences:

- A. N [Patient] + V
- B. N [Patient] + *shou* / *zao* + V
- C. N [Patient] + *bei* + V
- D. N [Patient] + *bei* / *jiao* / *rang* + N [Agent] + V (including N [Patient] + *wei* / *bei* + N [Agent] + *suo* + V)
- E. N [Patient] + *you* '由' / *gui* '归' + N [Agent] + V
- F. N [Patient] + N [Agent] + V

Type A and Type F constructions represent typical instances of unmarked passives.

2.2.2. Discussion about the structural status of unmarked passives

Among the major arguments against treating Type A and F constructions as passive structures is their transformational behaviour. Specifically, those who oppose the passive analysis point out that, although these sentences may convey passive meaning, not all of them can be transformed into structurally and semantically equivalent *bei* constructions:

- (19) a. 盘子摔碎了。
 Panzi shuaisui le.
 Plate break-ASP
 ‘The plate is broken.’

(You, 2016, p. 19)

- b. 盘子被摔碎了。
 Panzi bei shuaisui le.
 Plate PSV break-ASP
 ‘The plate was broken.’

(You, 2016, p. 19)

- c. 盘子是碎的。
 Panzi shi sui de⁷.
 Plate be broken PRT
 ‘The plate is broken.’

- (20) a. 衣服洗干净了。
 Yifu xi ganjing le.
 Clothes wash clean ASP
 ‘The clothes are washed.’

(You, 2016, p. 19)

- b. (?)衣服被洗干净了。
 (?)Yifu bei xi ganjing le.
 Clothes PSV wash clean ASP
 ‘The clothes were washed.’

(You, 2016, p. 19)

- c. 衣服是干净的。
 Yifu shi ganjing de
 Clothes be clean PRT
 ‘The clothes are clean.’

Sentences of the type illustrated in (19) a inherently carry negative semantic connotations; hence, the addition of the passive marker *bei* is semantically natural and does not alter the original meaning. However, when *bei* is applied to sentences like (20)a, which initially carry neutral semantic value, the addition transforms them into passive sentences with negative connotations, despite remaining syntactically well-formed. This semantic transformation serves as a key argument for scholars who reject the classification of these constructions as unmarked passives.

However, this theoretical premise does not constitute valid evidence for rejecting the classification of unmarked passives as passive constructions. As previously discussed, MC native speakers tend to employ *bei* passives to express negative meanings—a deeply fixed linguistic pattern that often goes unrecognised, stemming from the inherent negative connotations of the most prototypical passive structure in MC. In contrast, for native speakers of English and Portuguese, passive voice does not inherently convey adversity. As Li (2004) observes, neutral passive usage predominates across languages (p. 11);

⁷ The items (18)c (19)c are made by the author of the present work.

consequently, the definition of passive constructions should not be contingent upon the presence of adverse meaning.

A separate line of argument in this debate emerges from scholars such as Chao (1968) and Ting (2006), who classify unmarked passive sentences in MC as analogous to English middle voice constructions. The middle voice represents an interface between active and passive voice, where the grammatical subject is semantically the patient/theme of the action, yet the construction maintains active morphology, as illustrated in the following English middle constructions:

- (21) a. The baggage transfers efficiently.
 b. Harlequin Romances, worldwide, sell six copies a second.
 (Ting, 2006, p. 89)

Chao (1968) and Ting (2006) equate unmarked passives in MC with English middle constructions, such as those illustrated in (21). This middle voice analysis, at least of Chao (1968), fails to face the challenges posed by Li & Thompson (1994)'s approach, which posits the absence of middle voice constructions in MC. However, Ting's analysis, since it takes a presyntactic perspective, has its own arguments and will be referred in later discussion.

Li & Thompson (1994) present three key arguments supporting their position on the absence of middle constructions in MC:

- a) The putative middle constructions lack distinct morphological markers;
- b) These constructions show no discernible syntactic differences from active sentences;
- c) All transitive verbs in MC permit both one-argument and two-argument structures.

The first argument is evidenced in examples (19)a and (20)a, which demonstrate the absence of specific morphological marking. The second argument can be observed through the comparison between (19)a, (20)a and their active counterparts (19)c, (20)c. Regarding the third argument, Li & Thompson (1994) begin by examining Chao (1968)'s classification of verbs in MC into transitive, intransitive, and "middle voice" categories. In Chao's analysis, "middle voice" verbs are those that can function both transitively and intransitively, as exemplified by the verb *kai* ('open'):

- (22) a. 贼 开 了 门 了。
 zei kai le men le
 thief open PERF door CRS
 'Thieves opened the door.' (direction of action "outward")
- b. 门 已经 开 了。
 men yijing kai le
 door already open PERF/CRS
 'The door has already opened.' (direction of action "inward")

(Li & Thompson, 1994, pp. 234–235)

Meanwhile, the behaviour of the verb “open” differs significantly between English and MC. In English, the sentence “The door has already opened” permits three distinct structural interpretations:

- (23) a. The door opened. (Intransitive)
 b. The door was opened. (Passive)
 c. The door, someone opened it. (Transitive with fronted object)

(Li & Thompson, 1994, as cited from Chao, 1968, p. 235)

However, its MC counterpart (as in (22)b) yields only two interpretations: agentive (as in (24)a) and non-agentive (as in (24)b). This limitation stems from MC’s status as a zero-anaphora language. Crucially, Li & Thompson (1994) note that these two interpretations show no structural differentiation in Mandarin:

- (24) a. ‘The door has already opened.’ (non-agentive interpretation, it means that the door has opened automatically)
 b. ‘The door, (0) already opened it.’ (agentive interpretation)

(Li & Thompson, 1994, as cited from Chao, 1968, p. 235)

In contrast, a prototypical transitive verb in MC, such as *chi* (‘eat’), permits only an agentive interpretation, even with an unexpressed subject:

- (25) a. 我 吃了 饭。
 Wo chi-le fan
 I eat-ASP food
 ‘I ate food.’
 b. 饭 吃了。
 Fan chi-le
 Food eat-ASP
 Interpretation: ‘Food, 0 ate it.’
 Not possible: *‘the food ate.’

This distinction served as Chao’s (1968) basis for differentiating between transitive and “middle voice” verbs. However, Li & Thompson (1994) argue that this represents an unnecessary expansion of the transitive verb definition in MC. They contend that the only distinction between so-called “middle voice” verbs and transitive verbs lies in their semantic properties: when agents are unexpressed, transitive verbs permit only agentive interpretations, while “middle voice” verbs allow both interpretations. However, both types of verbs lack morphological markers to distinguish them and can appear in identical contexts (as shown in (26)):

- (26) a. NP + Verb + NP

b. NP + Verb

(Li & Thompson, 1994, p. 239)

This absence of both morphological and structural distinctions constitutes Li & Thompson's (1994) primary argument against classifying these verbs as a separate middle voice category. To account for the observed semantic differences between these verbs, they instead adopt the term "labile verb", as introduced by Haspelmath (1987), which refers to verbs that can occur in both transitive and intransitive constructions without morphological marking. This categorization allows them to subsume these putative "middle voice" verbs within the broader category of transitive verbs.

From a descriptive perspective, Li & Thompson's (1994) rejection of middle voice in MC appears more convincing. However, their analysis fails to address potential internal syntactic differences between normal transitive verbs and so-called "middle voice" verbs in the structures illustrated in (26)b. Furthermore, following similar reasoning, these purported "middle voice" verbs could alternatively be classified as a type of unaccusative verb—specifically, alternate unaccusatives—which similarly permit both transitive and intransitive usage (see Levin & Hovav, 1995). Thus, the attempt to position such verbs within a broader transitive verb continuum remains subject to further debate. Ting (2006) observes that Li & Thompson's analysis adheres to a more traditional Topic-based framework, treating the subject of unmarked passives as the sentence topic derived through topicalization to an A'-position external to the Inflectional Phrase (IP). This theoretical orientation provides crucial context for understanding their categorical rejection of middle voice constructions in MC.

From a presyntactic perspective, Ting (2006) proposes an alternative analysis: the NP [Patient] in MC unmarked passives (as exemplified in (19)a and (20)a) is base-generated in the subject position (supported also by Han, 2000; Huang, 1994, 1995), rather than being moved there through A-movement (as in Portuguese passive constructions) or A'-movement (as in the Topic-based Approach). This analysis elevates the debate to a syntactic and structural level—a theoretical controversy that remains unresolved and extends beyond the scope of this descriptive study.

Consequently, this study maintains the classification of these constructions as unmarked passives, despite the ongoing debate about their structural status. While their syntactic analysis remains inconclusive, their implicit passive semantics are undeniable. These constructions exhibit properties absent in English middle constructions, notably the possibility of an explicitly expressed agent and distinct verbal properties characteristic of labile verbs in MC. Moreover, although the potential convergence between unmarked passives and the middle voice remains an open question, it is worth emphasising that the distinction between them is still lexically governed.

2.2.3. *Semantic and aspectual properties*

As previously discussed, unmarked passives in MC exhibit linearly active forms while conveying neutral passive meanings, semantically similar to typical passive constructions in most other languages. Although Li & Thompson (1989) do not classify

unmarked passives as passive constructions, their observations about semantic correspondence are noteworthy: English passives do not consistently correspond to *bei* constructions in MC due to the inherent adverse semantics of the latter. Instead, English passives are frequently rendered in MC through topic-comment constructions (unmarked passives), where the verb's direct object functions as the topic. This correspondence substantiates the neutral semantic value of unmarked passives.

Regarding the aspectual properties of unmarked passives in MC, while there appears to be a consensus in prescriptive literature about their stative aspect, the complete picture may be more nuanced. Scholars such as Li (1994), Hong (1956) and Wang (2006) maintain that unmarked passives serve a dual function: they both describe and evaluate general truths while emphasising the patient's resultant state. However, Ting (2006) presents a broader perspective, arguing that unmarked passives are not limited to stative interpretations (as demonstrated in (28)) but can also accommodate eventive readings in certain contexts (as illustrated in (27)).

- (27) a. 下午 三点钟 整 书 终于 卖掉了。
 xiawu sandianzhong zheng shu zhongyu mai-diao-le.
 afternoon three:o'clock sharp book finally sell-fall-ASP
 'The books were all sold out by three o'clock in the afternoon.'
- b. 书 将 在 明天 下午 三点钟 整 卖掉。
 shu jiang zai mingtian xiawu sandianzhong zheng mai-diao.
 book will at tomorrow afternoon three:o'clock sharp sell-fall
 'By three o'clock in the afternoon tomorrow, the books will be sold out.'
- c. 张三 的 车 正在 自己的 店 里 修理。
 Zhangsan de che zhengzai ziji de dian li xiuli.
 Zhangsan DE car presently self DE store inside fix
 'Zhangsan's car is being fixed in his own garage.'

(Ting, 2006, p. 106)

- (28) a. 城市 已经 炸毁了。
 chengshi yijing zha-hui-le.
 city already explode-destroy-ASP
 'The city was destroyed by bombs.'
- b. 车子 已经 修好了。
 chezi yijing xiu-hao-le.
 car already fix-good-ASP
 'The car is (was) already fixed.'

(Ting, 2006, pp. 106–107)

However, similar to the analysis of *bei* sentences' aspectual properties, the two examples provided by Ting (2006) offer insufficient evidence for his supplementary aspectual analysis of passives. Specifically, neither the eventive interpretation in (27) nor

the modification by different modifiers can override the implicit stative nature of the patient.

The distinction of aspectual interpretations in MC proves challenging for both marked and unmarked passives. While these constructions differ primarily in the presence or absence of passive markers, they share a lack of explicit morphological markers for aspectual interpretation. This absence of clear aspectual marking explains the scarcity of systematic and conclusive studies on this issue, leaving aspectual interpretations largely dependent on individual grammarians' intuitions.

In summary, the unmarked passive in MC represents a construction that conveys neutral passive meaning and serves as an alternative to the marked passive construction. Crucially, the distinction between these two passive types extends beyond the mere presence or absence of a passive marker: their semantic differences—with the marked passive denoting adversity and the unmarked passive remaining semantically neutral—and their aspectual properties are equally noteworthy. While the stative property of the latter is well-established in terms of aspectual meaning, some scholars, notably Ting (2006), have attempted to demonstrate the possibility of eventive interpretations for unmarked passives. Nevertheless, the evidence presented in support of this analysis remains rather tenuous, it seems that Ting did not consider in either construction the possibility of the convergence of the eventive and stative bodies, that is, the resultative.

3. Passive in European Portuguese

This section examines passive constructions in EP under two main categories: the eventive passive (Section 3.1), and the adjectival passive (Section 3.2), the latter encompassing both resultative and stative subtypes. Each category is analysed mainly with respect to its structural properties and semantic-aspectual characteristics.

3.1. Eventive passive

The analysis of the eventive passive in EP in Section 3.1 proceeds along three dimensions: general description (Section 3.1.1), syntactic restrictions on its formation (Section 3.1.2), and semantic restrictions on its formation (Section 3.1.3).

3.1.1. General description

The eventive passive in EP, also known as the verbal or periphrastic passive, involves the demotion of the internal argument to subject position and the external argument to an optional prepositional phrase (PP) complement introduced by the preposition *por* ('by'). This construction comprises the auxiliary verb *ser* ('be') and the past participle of the main verb, which maintain the same mood and tense as their corresponding active clause. Both the auxiliary verb *ser* and the past participle exhibit agreement in gender and number with the internal argument in subject position (Agostinho, 2020; Duarte, 2013), as shown in (29).

- (29) a. O menino aleijou o cão.

ART.M.SG boy injure.PST.3SG ART.M.SG dog
 ‘The boy hurt the dog.’

- b. O cão foi aleijado (pelo menino).

ART.M.SG dog be.PST.3SG injure.PTCP.M.SG (by.ART.M.SG boy)
 ‘The dog was hurt (by the boy).’

(Agostinho, 2020, p. 14)

In EP, many verbs possess two participial forms—one regular and one irregular. For the eventive passive in EP, when such dual forms exist, the irregular form occurs in the corresponding passive construction (see (30)). However, in cases where the irregular participial form has been recategorised as adjectival or has fallen into disuse, the regular participial form is employed (see (31)).

- (30) A encomenda foi entregue/*entregada pelo motorista.
 ART.F.SG package be.PST.3SG deliver.PTCP.IRR/*deliver.PTCP.F.SG by.ART.M.SG driver
 ‘The parcel was delivered by the driver.’

(Duarte, 2013, p. 437)

- (31) Os testes já foram corrigidos/*corretos pelo professor.
 ART.M.PL test.M.PL already be.PST.3PL correct.PTCP.M.PL/*correct.ADJ.M.PL by.ART.M.SG teacher
 ‘The tests were corrected by the professor.’

(Duarte, 2013, p. 437)

As previously mentioned, eventive passive can also be termed periphrastic passive or verbal passive. This construction consists of a complex verbal group comprising the auxiliary verb *ser* (‘be’) followed by the participle corresponding to the full verb in the active clause, hence the term “periphrastic passive” reflects its complex structure. The term “verbal passive” is typically employed to contrast with adjectival passives in EP, which are formed with the auxiliary verbs *ficar/estar* and adjectival participles. Traditionally, passives have been divided into verbal and adjectival types; however, such terminology has been questioned by several scholars on the grounds that it is insufficient to describe languages such as English or EP, in which adjectival passives take participial forms that are adjectival, yet whose aspectual properties are in fact not uniform. In light of this observation, a tripartite typology was proposed by Embick (2004) for English, which distinguishes eventive, resultative and stative participles. With regard to EP passives, what differs from English is that EP employs one auxiliary verb (*ser*) for verbal passives and two auxiliary verbs (*ficar* and *estar*) for adjectival passives, which serves as evidence for the adequacy of Embick’s tripartite proposal in EP. Duarte and Oliveira

(2010) argued that the choice of auxiliary in EP adjectival passives reflects the tripartite participle typology: *ser* typically combines with eventive participles to form verbal passives, *estar* with stative participles to form stative adjectival passives, and *ficar* with resultative participles to form resultative adjectival passives. This analysis has been adopted by Duarte (2013), Estrela (2014) and Agostinho (2020). As suggested by the term itself, the eventive passive inherently contains an eventive component and invariably describes dynamic situations in which one of the entities undergoes a change. Moreover, eventive passives distinctively maintain agentive components, a characteristic that sets them apart from the two types of adjectival passives that will be discussed subsequently. This agentive property manifests in a significant structural distinction unique to eventive passives in EP: they can be classified as either long or short passives based on the overt expression of the agent (as shown in (29)b). In short passives, while the agent is not phonetically realised, its implicit presence is evidenced by the grammaticality of agent-oriented adverbs (see (32)a) and purpose clauses (see (32)b) in such constructions (Duarte, 2013).

(32) a. As pontes foram *propositadamente* destruídas.

ART.F.PL bridge.F.PL be.PST.3PL deliberately destroy.PTCP.F.PL
‘The bridges were deliberately destroyed.’

(Duarte, 2013, p. 439, the sentence was simplified by the author of this study)

b. O nãoio foi inventado *para identificar*
frações mínimas em réguas graduadas.

ART.M.SG vernier be.PST.3SG invent.PTCP.M.SG for identify.INF
fraction.F.PL minimal.F.PL in ruler.F.PL graduated.F.PL
‘The nonius was invented to identify minimal fractions on graduated rulers.’

(Duarte, 2013, p. 439)

3.1.2. Syntactic restriction on eventive passive formation

In EP, the formation of eventive passives generally permits only transitive verbs, with a limited number of exceptions. These exceptions include *obedecer* ‘obey’, *pagar* ‘pay’ and *responder* ‘answer’, see (33) (Agostinho, 2020; Duarte, 2006; Estrela, 2014; Peres & Móia, 1995), and verbs that can alternate between transitive usage with a [+HUM] direct object and ditransitive usage selecting two objects, such as *perdoar* ‘forgive’ (Estrela, 2014; Gaatone, 1998). This constraint requires that verbs in eventive passives must select an internal argument as a direct complement.

(33) Os manifestantes obedeceram à ordem.
ART.M.PL protester.M.PL obey.PST.3PL to.ART.F.SG order
‘The protesters obeyed the order.’

(Agostinho, 2020, p. 23)

- (34) a. Os soldados obedeceram prontamente ao general.
 ART.M.PL soldier.M.PL obey.PST.3PL promptly to.ART.M.SG general
 ‘The soldiers promptly obeyed the general.’
- b. O general foi prontamente obedecido pelos soldados.
 ART.M.SG general be.PST.3SG promptly obey.PTCP.M.SG
 by.ART.M.PL soldier.M.PL
 ‘The general was promptly obeyed by the soldiers.’
 (Peres & Mória, 1995, p. 212)

Consequently, the following types of intransitive verbs are not permitted in eventive passive constructions in EP:

- a) inergative verbs (see (35)a)
 b) unaccusative verbs (see (35)b)
 c) verbs that select only prepositional internal arguments (see (35)c)
- (35) a. *O João foi trabalhado.
 ART.M.SG João be.PST.3SG work.PTCP.M.SG
 b. *O João foi desmaiado.
 ART.M.SG João be.PST.3SG faint.PTCP.M.SG
 c. *O trabalho foi interferido.
 ART.M.SG João be.PST.3SG interfere.PTCP.M.SG
 (Estrela, 2014, p. 17)

Furthermore, verbs that function similarly to *ser*, such as *constituir* (‘constitute’), *ficar* (‘become’), are also prohibited from occurring in eventive passives, as their object serves as the predicative complement of the subject, see (36) (Estrela, 2014). Additionally, light verbs which choose external argument with Goal theta-role as agent, like *dar* (‘give’), are not compatible with passivation, however, when the external argument has Agent theta-role, the passivation is possible, see the contrast in **Erro! A origem da referência não foi encontrada.** (Agostinho, 2020).

- (36) a. A ansiedade constitui um aspeto a ignorar.
 ART.F.SG anxiety constitute.PRS.3SG INDF.ART.M.SG aspect to ignore.INF
 ‘Anxiety is an aspect to ignore.’
- b. *Um aspeto a ignorar é constituído pela ansiedade.
 INDF.ART.M.SG aspect to ignore.INF be.PRS.3SG
 constitute.PTCP.M.SG by.ART.F.SG anxiety
 ‘One aspect to ignore is anxiety.’
 (Estrela, 2014, p. 17)

- (37) a. A sova foi dada [por três meliantes armados]_{AGENT}

ART.F.SG beating be.PST.3SG give.PTCP.F.SG by three thug.M.PL armed.M.PL
 ‘The beating was given by three armed delinquents.’

- b. *A sova foi apanhada
 [pelo refém que ousou protestar]_{GOAL}

ART.F.SG beating be.PST.3SG catch.PTCP.F.SG
 by.ART.M.SG hostage REL dare.PST.3SG protest.INF
 ‘The beating was got by the hostage that dared to protest.’

(Agostinho, 2020, p. 24; Duarte, 2006, p. 530)

In summary, the syntactic restrictions on eventive passive formation primarily concern two aspects: the transitivity requirement of the verbs and the constraint that the main verb’s syntactic function must not conflict with that of the auxiliary verb *ser*.

3.1.3. Semantic restriction on eventive passive formation

The semantic restrictions on eventive passive formation exhibit greater complexity than their syntactic counterparts, with the semantic properties of the main verb playing a decisive role in determining grammaticality.

According to Estrela (2014) and Agostinho (2020), several key constraints govern the semantic restrictions on eventive passive formation in EP.

Firstly, the aspectual nature—specifically, the imperfective tense in present and imperfect forms—is incompatible with telic verbs when they do not express habitual interpretation in EP eventive passives, as illustrated in (38).

- (38) a. A Janela foi aberta pelo gato Riscado.

ART.F.SG window be.PST.3SG open.PTCP.F.SG by.ART.M.SG cat Striped
 ‘The window was opened by the striped cat.’

- b. *A janela era aberta pelo gato Riscado.
 (*na interpretação não habitual)

ART.F.SG window be.IPFV.PST.3SG open.PTCP.F.SG by.ART.M.SG cat Striped
 ‘The window was being opened by the striped cat.’

(Estrela, 2014, p. 18)

Secondly, stative verbs of possession, such as *ter* (‘have’) and *conservar* (‘keep’), are prohibited in eventive passives when their subjects lack agentive properties, as shown in (38).

- (39) a. A Sara tem uns brincos novos.

ART.F.SG Sara have.PRS.3SG INDF.ART.M.PL earring.M.PL new.M.PL ‘Sara has some new earrings.’

b. *Os brincos novos são tidos pela Sara.

*ART.M.PL earring.M.PL new.M.PL be.PRS.3SG have.PTCP.M.PL by.ART.F.SG Sara
‘The new earrings are had by Sara.’

(Estrela, 2014, p. 18)

Thirdly, pseudo-transitive verbs that take theme subjects and express quantitative values of physical or abstract entities, such as *medir* (‘measure’) and *pesar* (‘weigh’), face restrictions in eventive passive constructions, as demonstrated in (40).

(40) a. O saco de fruta pesa 3 quilos.

ART.M.SG bag of fruit weigh.PRS.3SG 3 kilo.M.PL
‘The bag of fruit weighs 3 kilograms.’

b. *3 quilos são pesados pelo saco de fruta.

3 kilo.M.PL be.PRS.3PL weigh.PTCP.M.PL by.ART.M.SG bag of fruit ‘Three kilograms are weighed by the bag of fruit.’

(Estrela, 2014, p. 19)

Furthermore, capacity verbs whose direct objects designate the constituent elements of the entity represented by the subject, such as *conter* (‘contain’) and *comportar* (‘comprise’), typically feature a Locative subject in active sentences, while their direct object assumes the thematic role of Theme, as evidenced in (41).

(41) *Vários erros eram contidos pelo relatório.

several.M.PL error.M.PL be.IPFV.PST.3PL contain.PTCP.M.PL by.ART.M.SG report
‘Several errors were contained in/by the report.’

(Agostinho, 2020, p. 25)

Additionally, eventive passive formation is restricted in certain idiomatic expressions with [V+NP] and [V-NP-PP] structures due to their non-separable nature, as shown in (42).

(42) a. A Sara puxou os cordelinhos.

ART.F.SG Sara pull.PST.3SG ART.M.PL string.DIM.M.PL
‘Sara pulled the strings.’

(Idiomatic interpretation: She manipulated a situation or people from behind the scenes)

b. *Os cordelinhos foram puxados pela Sara.

ART.M.PL string.DIM.M.PL be.PST.3PL pull.PTCP.M.PL by.ART.F.SG Sara
 ‘The strings were pulled by Sara.’

(Estrela, 2014, p. 19)

In conclusion, the semantic restrictions on eventive passive formation are not determined by multiple complex factors, but rather by the discrete and non-systematic semantic properties of the main verbs themselves.

3.2. Adjectival Passives

The analysis of adjectival passives in Section 3.2 proceeds along two dimensions: general description (Section 3.2.1) and their aspectual characteristics (Section 3.2.2).

3.2.1. General description

This section examines resultative and stative passives in EP together as adjectival passives due to their shared properties.

Unlike eventive passives, adjectival passives in EP contain participles that are adjectives formed through morphological conversion (Duarte, 2006; Mendes, 2004; Santos, 1999).

According to Duarte (2013), the resultative passive is a construction that describes a situation resulting from a change in state, location, or possession. Like eventive passives, resultative passives contain an eventive component. The stative passive, while sharing a similar structure to the resultative passive, differs in that it describes purely stative situations without any eventive component.

Although no longer prevalent in recent studies, the terminology proposed by Marques (1998) and Cunha and Cintra (2005) offers a clearer framework for understanding tripartite classifications of Duarte and Oliveira (2010) e Duarte (2013): event passive (with auxiliary *ser*), state passive (with auxiliary *estar*), and resultative state passive (with auxiliary *ficar*). Notably, the resultative passive exhibits a hybrid nature, combining the stative properties characteristic of state passives with the dynamic state changes typical of event passives.

Structurally, resultative passives comprise an auxiliary verb *ficar* and a resultative participle (see (43)), while stative passives consist of auxiliary verbs *ser/estar* and a stative participle (see (44)). Neither resultative nor stative passives possess agentive components, meaning that agents in these adjectival passives are not merely unrealised but are entirely absent from the semantic structure (see (45)). However, scholars such as Agostinho (2020) have noted that certain types of by-phrases, agent-oriented adverbs, purpose clauses, and instrumental PPs display a systematic and widespread tendency to occur in adjectival passives, as illustrated in example (46) from EP. Agostinho further observed that such patterns are attested in other languages, including Spanish (Bosque, 2014), German (Alexiadou et al., 2014), and English (Bruening, 2014).

- (43) O exemplo ficou corrigido.
 ART.M.SG example become.PST.3SG corrected.M.SG
 ‘The example was corrected.’
 (Duarte, 2013, p. 441)⁸

- (44) a. Este autor é/*está conhecido.
 DEM.M.SG author be.PRS.3SG/*be.LOC.PRS.3SG known.M.SG
 ‘This author is famous.’

- b. A jornalista *é/está irritada.
 ART.F.SG journalist *be.PRS.3SG/be.LOC.PRS.3SG irritated.F.SG
 ‘This journalist is irritated.’
 (Duarte, 2013, p. 443)

- (45) a. *O almoço estava/ficou feito
 pela Maria.

ART.M.SG lunch be.LOC.PST.3SG/become.PST.3SG make.PTCP.M.SG
 by.ART.F.SG Maria
 ‘The lunch was made by Maria.’

- b. *O espelho estava/ficou
 partido propositadamente.

ART.M.SG mirror be.LOC.PST.3SG/become.PST.3SG
 break.PTCP.M.SG deliberately
 ‘The mirror was broken on purpose.’

- c. *O desenho estava/ficou
 emoldurado para dar de presente.

ART.M.SG drawing be.LOC.PST.3SG/become.PST.3SG
 frame.PTCP.M.SG for give.INF of gift
 ‘The drawing was framed to offer as a present.’

- d. *O jardim estava/ficou regado
 com uma mangueira.

ART.M.SG garden be.LOC.PST.3SG/become.PST.3SG water.PTCP.M.SG
 with INDF.ART.F.SG hose ‘The garden was watered with a hose.’

(Agostinho, 2020, pp. 32–33)

- (46) a. Os acessos estavam bloqueados pelos

⁸ This item was adapted by the author of this work.

grevistas.

ART.M.PL entrance.M.PL be.LOC.IPFV.PST.3PL block.PTCP.M.PL by.ART.M.PL
striker.M.PL

‘The entrances were blocked by the strikers.’

b. A casa estava cuidadosamente decorada

ART.F.SG house be.LOC.IPFV.PST.3SG carefully decorate.PTCP.F.SG

‘The house was carefully decorated.’

c. A porta ficou aberta para arejar a sala

ART.F.SG door become.PST.3SG open.F.SG for air.INF ART.F.SG room

‘The door was opened / became open to air the room.’

d. O exercício ficou corrigido com caneta azul

ART.M.SG exercise become.PST.3SG correct.PTCP.M.SG with pen blue.F.SG

‘The exercise was corrected / became corrected with blue pen.’

(Agostinho, 2020, p. 33)

Regarding the use of participles in EP adjectival passives, dual-participle verbs exhibit specific constraints. Firstly, stative passives permit only irregular participles, see (47)a. Secondly, the distribution of participles in resultative passives presents a more complex pattern. According to Estrela (2014), Duarte (2006) and Duarte (2013), while adjectival participles are optional in some contexts, their use is obligatory in others. As Duarte (2013) explains, verbs whose irregular participles completed their adjectivization in earlier synchronic stages require the recategorised adjectival participial form in resultative passives, as shown in (48). Conversely, for verbs still undergoing recategorisation, both regular and irregular resultative participles are permitted, see (47)b.

(47) a. O carro está *submergido/submerso
na torrente.

ART.M.SG car be.LOC.PRS.3SG *submerge.PTCP.M.SG/submerged.M.SG
in.ART.F.SG torrent

‘The car was submerged in the stream.’

b. O carro ficou submergido/submerso
na torrente.

ART.M.SG car become.PST.3SG submerge.PTCP.M.SG/submerged.M.SG
in.ART.F.SG torrent

‘The car was submerged in the stream.’

(Agostinho, 2020, p. 36)

(48) O fuzileiro ficou *cegado/cego em consequência
dos estilhaços da bomba.

ART.M.SG marine become.PST.3SG *blind.PTCP.M.SG/blind.M.SG in consequence
of.ART.M.PL fragment.M.PL of.ART.F.SG bomb

‘The marine became blind as a consequence of the bomb shrapnel.’
(Estrela, 2014, p. 32)

Although adjectival passives share similar structures, they exhibit distinct semantic properties. Resultative passives employ the auxiliary verb *ficar*, maintaining an eventive component and presenting a resultative state affected by changes in state, location, or possession. In contrast, stative passives, introduced by the copulative verbs *estar/ser*, describe purely stative situations. Neither type possesses an agentive component. Regarding dual-participle verbs, irregular participles are generally compatible with both resultative and stative passives. However, regular participles may also occur in resultative passives in cases where the main verb has not fully undergone recategorisation as an adjective.

3.2.2. Aspectual properties of adjectival passives

Resultative participles are primarily compatible with telic predication — specifically, culminations and culminated processes, as shown in (49) and (50). Process predicates, being atelic, rarely occur in resultative passive constructions. Stative participles are divided into two types based on their auxiliary verbs: *ser* and *estar*. The auxiliary verb *ser* is used with individual-level predicates, which express stable, permanent properties. Conversely, the auxiliary verb *estar* occurs with stage-level predicates, which denote temporary or episodic states, as presented in (51) and (52) (Duarte & Oliveira, 2010; Estrela, 2014).

- (49) O espelho ficou partido.
ART.M.SG mirror become.PST.3SG break.PTCP.M.SG
‘The mirror became broken.’
(Estrela, 2014, p. 34)

- (50) A cidade ficou destruída.

ART.F.SG city become.PST.3SG destroy.PTCP.F.SG
‘The city became destroyed.’
(Estrela, 2014, p. 34)

- (51) a. A Maria é amada.

ART.F.SG Maria be.PRS.3SG love.PTCP.F.SG
‘Maria is loved.’

b. *A Maria está amada.

ART.F.SG Maria be.LOC.PRS.3SG love.PTCP.F.SG
‘Maria is loved.’
(Duarte & Oliveira, 2010, p. 402)

- (52) a. O poste está caído.

ART.M.SG post be.LOC.PRS.3SG fallen.M.SG
 ‘The post is fallen.’

- b. *O poste é caído.

*ART.M.SG post be.PRS.3SG fallen.M.SG
 ‘The post is fallen.’

(Duarte & Oliveira, 2010, p. 402)

Furthermore, as referred in Agostinho (2020) e Embick (2004), atelic predicates like activities and states which involve physical contact without a target state and describe psychological states are also not compatible with not only resultative passives, but also stative passives (see (53) and (54)).

- (53) a. *A cadeira ficou empurrada.

ART.F.SG chair become.PST.3SG push.PTCP.F.SG
 ‘The chair was pushed.’

- b. *A sobremesa ficou apreciada por todos.

ART.F.SG dessert become.PST.3SG appreciate.PTCP.F.SG by all.M.PL
 ‘The dessert was appreciated by everyone.’

(Agostinho, 2020, p. 37)

- (54) a. *O cão está pontapeado.

ART.M.SG dog be.LOC.PRS.3SG kick.PTCP.M.SG
 ‘The dog is kicked.’

- b. *O autor está muito respeitado pelos seus pares.

ART.M.SG author be.LOC.PRS.3SG very respect.PTCP.M.SG by.ART.M.PL
 his.M.PL peer.M.PL ‘The author is very respected by his peers.’

(Agostinho, 2020, p. 37)

Moreover, even resultative participles are exclusively compatible with telic predicates, compared with eventive participles, they almost cannot combine with the progressive auxiliary verb *estar a* (*estar* + *a* + infinitive construction), see **Erro! A origem da referência não foi encontrada.** (Agostinho, 2020; Duarte, 2013).

- (55) Quando ouvi o noticiário, os museus
 de Bagdad estavam a ser/*ficar destruídos.

when hear.PST.1SG ART.M.SG news ART.M.PL museum.M.PL
 of Baghdad be.LOC.IPFV.PST.3PL to be.INF/*become.INF destroy.PTCP.M.PL
 ‘When I heard the news, the museums of Baghdad were being destroyed.’

(Agostinho, 2020, p. 38; Duarte, 2013, p. 441)

Additionally, the auxiliary verb *ficar* in resultative passives is incompatible with imperfective aspect, while the auxiliary verbs in stative passives are incompatible with perfective aspect. This incompatibility likely arises from the conflict between the inherent aspectual properties of these passive constructions and the grammatical aspect expressed through tense marking on their auxiliary verbs (Agostinho, 2020).

(56) a. *A casa já esteve construída em 1987.

ART.F.SG house already be.LOC.PST.PFV.3SG build.PTCP.F.SG in 1987
 ‘The house was already built in 1987.’

b. ?O trabalho ficava feito.

ART.M.SG work become.IPFV.PST.3SG do.PTCP.M.SG
 ‘The work was done.’

(Agostinho, 2020, pp. 38–39)

Finally, resultative passives permit only telic predicates, specifically culminations and culminated processes. In contrast, stative passives accommodate both permanent and episodic state predicates, distinguished by their respective auxiliary verbs (*ser* for permanent states and *estar* for episodic states). The constraints on adjectival passive formation typically arise from aspectual conflicts between the inherent aspect of the passive construction and any additional aspectual marking.

4. Contrastive analysis between passive constructions in MC and EP

As established in the preceding chapters, the basic passive properties in MC and EP can be schematized as follows (Table 2):

Table 2 Basic properties of passives in MC and EP

Language	MC		EP		
Type of passive	Marked passive (<i>bei</i> sentence)	Unmarked passive	Verbal passive	Adjectival passives	
			Eventive passive	Resultative passive	Stative passive
Basic structure	NP	NP [Patient] +(NP [Agent]) + VP	NP [Patient] + <i>ser</i> + Eventive participle + (<i>por</i> + NP [Agent])	NP [Patient] + <i>ficar</i> + Resultative Participle	NP [Patient] + <i>ser/estar</i> + Stative Participle
	[Patient] + <i>bei</i> (NP [Agent]) + VP				

Agent	Optional presence	Optional presence	Optional presence	Not exist (?)	Not exist (?)
Semantic tendency	Negative; adverse	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Aspect	Eventive (traditional view); Resultative (Xiao et al., 2006; Xiao & McEnery, 2004); Eventive and stative(?) (Ting, 2006)	Stative (traditional view); Eventive and stative(?) (Ting, 2006)	Eventive	Resultative	Stative
Realization form of passive	Lexical (passive marker)	Semantic relationship between the NP (should be patient) in the subject position and the main verb; the property of the main verb	Morphological: the presence of auxiliary verb <i>ser</i> and the respective eventive participle	Morphological: the presence of auxiliary verb <i>ficar</i> and the respective resultative participle	Morphological: the presence of auxiliary verbs <i>estar/ser</i> and the respective stative participle

The *bei* construction, as the prototypical eventive passive structure in MC, finds its closest parallel in the eventive passive of Portuguese. These constructions share two fundamental characteristics: they contain eventive components describing a dynamic process where the patient is affected by an external force, and they exhibit a similar structural pattern of NP [Patient]-VP-NP [Agent] from a descriptive perspective.

The relationship between agent phrases and passive constructions in MC differs markedly from that in EP. While agent deletion in Portuguese passives merely distinguishes between long and short forms while maintaining eventive properties, the elimination of the agent phrase in MC (*bei* + NP [Agent]) yields fundamentally different syntactic and semantic outcomes. Specifically, such elimination transforms the construction into an unmarked passive with distinct semantic characteristics, notably losing both its adverse meaning—a hallmark of eventive passives—and altering its aspectual properties.

To preserve the original semantic properties when converting between long and short passives in MC, the passive marker *bei* must be retained even when the agent is omitted. This retention requirement suggests that *bei* in MC possesses a grammatical status distinct from agent-introducing prepositions such as ‘by’ in English and ‘por’ in Portuguese.

Significantly, when *bei* is merely eliminated while retaining the agent, the construction becomes an unmarked passive sentence that maintains its passive value, although without the negative connotations typically associated with *bei* constructions. This demonstrates that while *bei* is not essential for expressing passive value in MC, its presence or absence carries important semantic implications. However, the possibility of *bei* elimination is constrained by specific conditions, particularly the animacy features of both the patient and agent arguments (Wang, 2006).

From a structural and aspectual perspective, marked passives in MC traditionally contain an eventive component, whereas unmarked passives do not. This characteristic renders marked passives in MC more comparable to eventive passives in EP, as both constructions permit agent expression and exhibit eventive properties—although it should be noted that the eventive passive in EP maintains a neutral stance. Conversely, unmarked passives in MC demonstrate greater similarity to stative passives in EP when examined from semantic and aspectual viewpoints, both are semantically neutral and aspectually stative.

While superficial structural similarities might suggest parallels between topic constructions in EP and unmarked passives in MC, such comparisons warrant careful consideration. The topic constructions in EP neither exhibit passive morphology nor convey passive meaning. Furthermore, these constructions are considerably less frequent in EP compared to the widespread use of unmarked passives in MC. It is noteworthy that EP may exhibit topicalised passives, as illustrated in (57). However, such constructions still present essential distinctions from unmarked passives, which are also regarded by some scholars as topic sentences. It should be noted that, whether in topicalisation constructions or in topicalised passives in EP, the topics remain internal arguments selected by the main verb. In contrast, numerous studies on Chinese unmarked passives, and indeed some studies on marked passives, argue that the preverbal topicalised NP [Patient] is in fact base-generated in the topic position. This means that the topicalised NP [Patient] is not selected by the verb as an internal argument and does not establish a syntactic relationship with the passivized verb. This disparity in usage patterns reflects a fundamental typological distinction: MC is characterised as a topic-prominent language, whereas EP is not.

- (57) Os meninos, foram levados pelos pais
 ao circo.
 DEF.M.PL boy.PL AUX.PST.3PL carry.PTCP.M.PL by.DEF.M.PL parent.PL
 to.DEF.M.SG circus
 'The boys were taken by their parents to the circus.'

The structural asymmetries between passives in EP and MC fundamentally stem from MC's morphological absence. As illustrated in Table 2, MC lacks morphological inflection in both active and passive constructions, including marked and unmarked passives. Consequently, the distinction between unmarked passive and active clauses cannot be determined through surface linear structure alone, but rather must be ascertained by examining the semantic relationship between the subject and the main

verb—specifically, whether the subject functions as agent or patient. This morphological absence fundamentally underlies the ongoing debates concerning the status of *bei* and other passive markers in MC passive analysis. Without morphological indicators, two critical issues emerge: firstly, the syntactic structure of *bei* sentences remains a subject of long-standing controversy; secondly, the aspectual distinction between marked and unmarked passives becomes difficult to delineate.

The aspectual properties of passive constructions in MC are characteristically covert, necessitating inferential interpretation due to the absence of overt morphological markers. This inherent opacity in aspectual marking presents significant analytical challenges, which may explain the notable scarcity of conclusive research establishing clear aspectual parameters in Chinese passive constructions. The implicit nature of these aspectual properties not only renders their precise classification particularly problematic for linguistic analysis but also creates substantial challenges for cross-linguistic comparison.

To sum up, this demonstrates that the realisation of semantics, aspect, and even voice in MC is lexically largely controlled. By contrast, with different auxiliary verbs and past participles exhibiting different aspects, it is not difficult to distinguish between active and passive voices, or indeed between their respective aspects, in EP. The existence of morphology made the recognition between distinct aspects and voice clearer.

5. Conclusion

This research presents a contrastive analysis of passive constructions in EP and MC, offering comparative insights to enhance understanding for speakers of both languages. Through detailed examination of structural, semantic and aspectual correlations and divergences between these linguistic systems, our work illuminates significant patterns across these distinct passive formations.

The analytical frameworks for these languages demonstrate stark contrasts. Mandarin Chinese marked and unmarked passive constructions exhibit syntactic, semantic, and aspectual properties that are primarily and fundamentally lexically determined, with the lexical dimension serving as the central mechanism for encoding these grammatical relations. In contrast, European Portuguese passives are realized through morphological forms that overtly encode these properties via systematic inflectional marking.

EP passives and their grammatical components are well-documented, supported by extensive comparative research across European languages, like Spanish, Italian, English etc. However, MC passive analysis remains contentious, with fundamental questions about the grammatical status of *bei*, the structural and aspectual nature of marked and unmarked passives still debated.

While fundamental questions about MC passives persist, EP passive research requires deeper investigation in specific domains. As Agostinho (2020) notes, traditional grammars' assertion of non-agentive adjectival passives appears increasingly flexible among native speakers, with agent expression becoming more common in these

constructions. Moreover, conventional generalisations regarding dual-participle verb distribution in verbal and adjectival passives inadequately capture actual usage patterns.

Taken together, both languages present research gaps that hinder deeper investigations: MC faces structural debates stemming from its lack of inflection, while EP requires thorough examination of its ongoing linguistic evolution.

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