Passive Arguments Raised
Baker, Johnson & Roberts (1989)

1 Claim

Central claim:
The passive morpheme -en is an argument.

2 The Theory

Properties of -en:

• an argument that affixes to the verb

• phonologically an affix but syntactically a clitic (an argument category realized as adjoined to a head, p. 223)

(1) D-Structure representation

```
S
  |NP  I'
  | e  I  VP
    | V  S
      | be  I  VP
        | -en  V  NP
```

Derivation:

• the passive morpheme -en is base-generated in I

• the auxiliary verb moves to I

• the main verb merges with the passive morpheme

• the object NP moves to the subject position

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1 The authors assume downgrading for independent reasons, but later they say that they do not know how to determine if the verb raises to join -en in the Inf- position or whether -en has lowered onto the verb (see footnote 21, p. 243).
How case absorption and NP-movement are explained:

- If -en is an argument, it must be in a θ-marked position at D-Structure (θ-Criterion, Chomsky (1981)).
- This requirement entails that Infl is a θ-marked position.
- Because the passive morpheme -en is generated in Infl, it always appears outside the VP at D-Structure. This structural position implies that it can only receive a external θ-role, namely the logical-subject θ-role, but not an internal one.
- According to the Visibility Condition (Chomsky (1981)) all arguments must be visible for θ-role assignment at LF, meaning that they must receive case.
- Assuming that -en downgrades for independent reasons, only the verb can assign case to -en, since it is the only case assigner that governs -en.
- Because the verb must assign case to -en (accusative), it is no longer able to case-mark NP.
- As a result, NP must move into the case-marked subject position.

3 Evidence for an external argument

Rationale Clauses:
In passives, but not in middles or unaccusatives, the understood subject of the rationale clause may be controlled.

(3) a. This bureaucrat was bribed [PRO to avoid the draft] (passive)
    b. *This bureaucrat bribes easily to avoid the draft (middle)

(4) a. The boat was sunk [PRO to collect the insurance].
    b. *The boat sank to collect the insurance. (Alexiadou and Schäfer (2013))

Subject-oriented adverbs:
In contrast to actives, in passives subject-oriented adverbs can appear.

(5) a. This bureaucrat was bribed deliberately.
    b. *This bureaucrat bribes deliberately.
Under the hypothesis that rationale clauses and subject-oriented adverbs require the syntactic presence of an argument, the contrasts in (3)-(5) are accounted for: only in the passive examples an argument, that satisfies these requirement, is present. This argument is -en.

4 Comparison with the lexical approach (Chomsky (1981))

Argument reduction:
- **Lexical approach:**
  The external $\theta$-role of the active verb form is absorbed by a lexical rule: $V(x, y) \rightarrow V(\cdot, y)$
- **Syntactic approach:**
  The external $\theta$-role is assigned to the passive morpheme -en.

Case absorption:
- **Lexical approach:**
  A passive verb, generated in the lexicon, which has no external $\theta$-role, cannot assign accusative case (Burzio’s Generalization)
- **Syntactic approach:**
  Accusative case is assigned to the passive morpheme -en.

References

