

## Passive Arguments Raised Baker, Johnson & Roberts (1989)

### 1 Claim

*Central claim:*

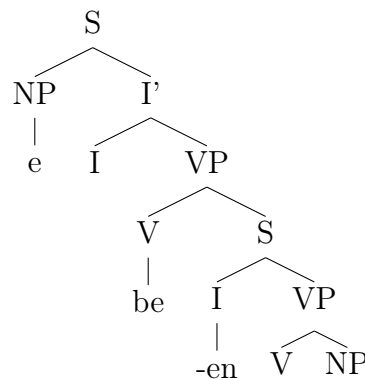
The passive morpheme *-en* is an argument.

### 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*



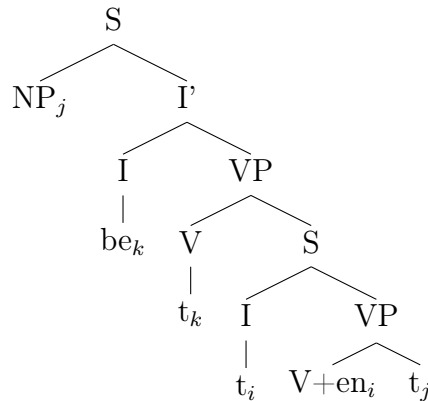
*Derivation:*

- the passive morpheme *-en* is base-generated in I
- the auxiliary verb moves to I
- the main verb merges with the passive morpheme<sup>1</sup>
- the object NP moves to the subject position

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<sup>1</sup>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 Infl-position or whether *-en* has lowered onto the verb (see footnote 21, p. 243).

(2) *S-Structure representation*



*How case absorption and NP-movement are explained:*

- If *-en* is an argument, it must be in a  $\theta$ -marked position at D-Structure ( $\theta$ -Criterion, Chomsky (1981)).
- This requirement entails that Infl is a  $\theta$ -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 an external  $\theta$ -role, namely the logical-subject  $\theta$ -role, but not an internal one.
- According to the *Visibility Condition* (Chomsky (1981)) all arguments must be visible for  $\theta$ -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:  $V(x, y) \rightarrow V(-, y)$
- *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

- Alexiadou, Artemis and Florian Schäfer (2013): Non-canonical passives. *In:* A. Alexiadou and F. Schäfer, eds, *Non-canonical passives*. John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 1–19.
- Baker, Mark, Kyle Johnson and Ian Roberts (1989): 'Passive arguments raised', *Linguistic Inquiry* **20**(2), 219–251.
- Chomsky, Noam (1981): *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Foris, Dordrecht.