BE SAID TO V AS AN EVIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

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1. Introduction

In this note, I examine the verbal cluster *be said to V* and suggest that it is unique not only syntactically, but also semantically: *be said to V* is a construction in terms of Goldberg (1995, 2006).¹ I will argue that the uniqueness of the configuration is particularly noticeable when compared with structurally or semantically similar expressions.

The definition of constructions by Goldberg (1995), which I adopt in this note, is as follows:²

(1) Definition of construction

C is a CONSTRUCTION iff_{def} C is a form-meaning pair $\langle F_i, S_i \rangle$ such that some aspect of F_i or some aspect of S_i is not strictly predictable from C's component parts or from previously established constructions. (Goldberg (1995: 4))

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¹ Abbreviations are used for data in languages other than English: 3 = third person, Acc = accusative, Eps = epistemic modal, Neg = negation, Nom = nominative, Pass = passive marker, Pst = past tense, Pst1 = past tense 1, Rep = reportative evidential, Top = topic.

² There are some researchers who claim that only highly schematized configurations, e.g. ALL- and WHAT-clefts, are viewed as constructions and that item-based idiomatic expressions like *red ball* should not be, since the latter type is not productive. However, according to the definition in (1), the latter type is a subtype of constructions. Throughout this note, I take *be said to V* as an instance of the latter type of construction.

I claim that *be said to V* functions like a reportative evidential in other languages, which indicates that someone other than the speaker has reported the proposition the speaker utters, and which shows some peculiar properties.

The rest of this note is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the syntactic peculiarity of *be said to V*, and how it differs from ordinary (derivational) and adjectival passives. Section 3 suggests that *be said to V* also has a constructional meaning, that is, it has come to acquire the semantic properties of a reportative evidential. Section 4 concludes with discussion of a type of grammaticalization that the construction may have undergone.

2. Syntactic Characteristics

In this section, I will show that *be said to V* has unpredictable syntactic properties. First, *be said to V* has no active alternant, as in (2):

- (2) a. He is said to be a doctor.
- b. *They say him to be a doctor.

Given that ordinary passive sentences have corresponding active forms, the lack of such an active form of *be said to V* is unpredictable.

It could be claimed that *be said to V* is an instance of an adjectival passive since if *said to V* is an adjectival phrase, it would be predictable that it could not be made active. Indeed, *be said to V* is incompatible with certain *by*-phrases, while other ECM (Exceptional Case Marking) verbs are not so bad (as in (3)); incompatibility with *by*-phrases is a characteristic of adjectival passives (as in (4)).

- (3) a. ?*He is said to be a great doctor by Mary.
- b. ?He is believed to be a great doctor by Mary.
- (4) a. ??I was surprised by your remarks.
- b. *This was unknown by the ancients.
- c. *I am very tired by these developments. (Wasow (1977: 350))

However, it is inadequate for two reasons to treat *be said to V* as akin to an adjectival passive. First, *be said to V* becomes compatible with *by*-phrases only when the agent in the *by*-phrase is collective or has some authority:³

³ Postal (1974) presents the following data:

(i) *It is said by Bill that John is tall. (Postal (1974: 311))

Given this and (3), the constraint on *by*-phrases is an idiosyncrasy of the passive use of *say*. I have no proper explanation for this constraint.

- (5) a. He is said to be a great doctor by everyone in this town.
 b. Universal Grammar is said to be primitive in human minds by Chomsky.

Second, according to Wasow (1977), adjectival passives tolerate (i) prenominal positions, (ii) use as complements of verbs like *act*, *look*, *seem* and *become*, (iii) prefixing of *un-*, and (iv) degree modification by *very* (without *much*). *Be said to V* passes none of the tests:

- (6) a. *said to be a doctor man (prenominal position)
 b. *John seems said to be a doctor. (complement of *seem/become*)
 c. *John is unsaid to be a doctor. (prefixing of *un-*)
 d. *John is very said to be a doctor. (modification by *very*)

Given these results, *be said to V* cannot be an instance of an adjectival passive. In addition, the fact that there are examples like *remain unsaid* suggests that the verb *say* itself can be used adjectively, which is not the case with *be said to V*.

In light of its compatibility with the *by*-phrase in (5a) and its behavioral differences from adjectival passives in (6), *be said to V* should not be analyzed as an adjectival passive. From the discussion in this section we can conclude that the syntactic form of *be said to V* is not predictable from its component parts.⁴

3. The Evidential Function

In this section, I argue that *be said to V* is also unpredictable semantically. In particular, I argue that *be said to V* has an evidential-like function as its constructional meaning; it functions similarly to reportative evidentials in other languages.

3.1. Reportative Evidential

Before discussing the evidentiality of *be said to V*, we must discuss the definitions of evidentials and reportative evidentials. Evidentials are generally defined as elements that encode the type of evidence on which the propositions embedded in them are based (Aikhenvald (2004) and de Haan

⁴ Note that I claim only that the syntactic peculiarities of *be said to V* lead to its constructional status, and I do not argue that such peculiarities are due to it being a construction. I have no explanation of why *be said to V* has the syntactic peculiarities (e.g., it has no active counterpart) shown in Section 2.

(1999)). Specifically, direct evidentials indicate that the embedded proposition is obtained by perceiving it directly. In a similar vein, the defining statement of reportative evidentials is as follows:

- (7) Reportative evidentials require that the embedded propositions be obtained from someone's report.

Be said to V fits this definition of a reportative evidential:

- (8) (John visited a town. John had no information about the town. Then John saw houses in the town burning, and said to himself ...)
 a. #Bombs are said to have been dropped.
 b. Bombs may/must have been dropped.
- (9) (In a library, John overheard a conversation between two strangers, discussing the bombing of a nearby town. After returning home, John told his wife ...)
 a. Bombs are said to have been dropped at a nearby town.
 b. #Bombs may/must have been dropped at a nearby town.

In (8), since no one tells John about the bombing event, the use of *be said to V* is not licensed, while the presence of a reporter of the bombing event in (9) is compatible with *be said to V*. Thus, *be said to V* has the defining feature of reportative evidentials. At this point, it might be suggested that since the verb *say* is inherently reportative, the contrast in (8) and (9) appears to be a matter of course and seems to add no significance to the claim that *be said to V* behaves like a reportative evidential. The definition in (7) is not helpful in distinguishing *be said to V* from other reporting expressions.

However, some elements dealt with as typical reportative evidentials in the literature (e.g. Cuzco Quechua *-si* and Japanese *-sooda*) have properties that are not shared by ordinary reporting verb configurations. The properties to be examined in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 are given below:

- (10) A. Wider scope than negation (McCready and Ogata (2007))
 B. Scope ambiguity with tense (Faller (2006))
 C. Co-occurrence with epistemic modals (Faller (2002))
 D. Co-occurrence with different kinds of adverb (Aikhenvald (2004))
 E. Wider scope than epistemic modals (de Haan (1999))

If *be said to V* has these properties while other reporting expressions do not, it can be concluded that only *be said to V* has acquired the function of a typical reportative evidential, and this conclusion will be sufficient to prove the claim that the configuration has acquired unpredictable (i.e. under-

ivable from the lexical meaning of *say*) semantic properties similar to those of typical reportative evidentials.

3.2. Evidence for the Evidentiality of *Be Said to V*

A. In the literature, it has been observed that evidentials in general take scope over negation, a feature attested in several languages: Dutch (de Haan (1999)), Cuzco Quechua (Faller (2002)), German (Faller (2006)), and Japanese (McCready and Ogata (2007)). The following examples are from Japanese:

- (11) a. *Satoshi-ga paatii-ni kuru rashii.*
 Satoshi-Nom party-to come Rep
 ‘(I have evidence that) Satoshi might come to the party.’
 b. **Satoshi-ga paatii-ni kuru rashi-kunai.*
 Satoshi-Nom party-to come Rep-Neg
 Intended: ‘(I don’t have evidence that) Satoshi might come to the party.’ (McCready and Ogata (2007: 169))

The same tendency is seen in *be said to V* at the level of interpretation (the [√] mark is attached to the appropriate interpretation of each (a) sentence):

- (12) a. He is not said to be a doctor.
 b. [√]It is said that he is not a doctor.
 c. It is not the case that it is said that he is a doctor.
 (13) a. He is not believed to be a doctor.
 b. It is believed that he is not a doctor.
 c. [√]It is not the case that it is believed that he is a doctor.
 (14) a. It is not said that he is a doctor.
 b. It is said that he is not a doctor.
 c. [√]It is not the case that it is said that he is a doctor.

These examples show that *be said to V* tends to be interpreted above the scope of negation, like evidentials, while the structurally similar configuration *be believed to V* and the semantically similar one *it is said that* do not.

Note that judgments about the scope relation between *be said to V* and other scope-sensitive operators are variable. What is important, however, is that the judgments made by my informants, though variable when treated one by one, show a general tendency when taken together. Some of the informants chose (12c) as the interpretation of (12a), but none of them chose (13b) or (14b). This trend means that there is a tendency: *be said to V* is more likely to take scope over negation than the other configurations are. Throughout this note, variable judgments about the scope relations are treated in the aggregate. Borkin (1984) treats judgments as a group, and I

follow this precedent. The variability in judgments will be addressed again in Section 4.

B. The Japanese reportative *-sooda* can take wider scope than tense and be embedded in it.

- (15) a. *Satoshi-ga paatii-ni kita sooda.*
 Satoshi-Nom party-to come-Pst *sooda*
 ‘It is said that Satoshi came to the party.’
 b. *Satoshi-ga paatii-ni kuru sooda-tta*
 Satoshi-Nom party-to come *sooda*-Pst
 ‘It was said that Satoshi would come to the party.’

Roughly, in (15a), the rumor about Satoshi coming to the party exists at the time of utterance (*sooda* is out of the scope of past tense), while in (15b), the rumor obtained in the past (*sooda* is within the scope of the past tense). This interaction is also observed in the case of *be said to V*, but not of the other relevant expressions.

- (16) a. He was said to be a doctor.
 b. [√]People say that he was a doctor.
 c. [√]People said that he was a doctor.
 (17) a. He was believed to be a doctor.
 b. People believe that he was a doctor.
 c. [√]People believed that he was a doctor.
 (18) a. It was said that he was a doctor.
 b. People say that he was a doctor.
 c. [√]People said that he was a doctor.

As in the case of the scope relation with negation, some informants chose only (16c), but none of them chose (17b) or (18b), which indicates that *be said to V* is more likely to take scope over tense than other expressions.⁵

3.3. Differences from Epistemic Modals

Evidentials are not the only configuration to show scope-interaction patterns like those in the examples above; epistemic modals also have the same

⁵ According to Faller (2006), the Cuzco Quechua reportative evidential *-si* can never be within the scope of past tense, which is not consistent with *be said to V* and the Japanese *-sooda*, since the latter show scope interaction with tense, as was seen in (15) and (16). This implies that the three expressions might not be in the same category. However, what matters in this subsection is that at least their relations to epistemic modals are similar and therefore *be said to V* should not be analyzed as an epistemic modal. I leave this problem of scope relation with tense for future research.

properties, particularly in English. As for their interaction with negation, de Haan (1997) observes that most epistemic modals in English take wide scope over negation, and with respect to the interaction with tense, von Fintel and Gillies (2007) suggest that epistemic modals may or may not take wider scope than tense does. Additionally, Faller (2002), Matthewson et al. (2007), and von Fintel and Gillies (2007) argue that the two categories of evidentials and epistemic modals partially overlap. Furthermore, Hofmann (1976) calls passive configurations that have no corresponding active forms *epistemic passives*. Thus, one naturally suspects that *be said to V* has acquired properties of epistemic modals. However, there are evidentials that do not show epistemic modal-like properties. Among reportative evidentials, the German reportative auxiliary *sollen* is of the former (epistemic-like) type, while the Cuzco Quechua evidentials and the Japanese *-sooda* are of the latter (non-epistemic) type. I will argue, by comparing *be said to V* with epistemic modals and *sollen*, that *be said to V* shares some properties with the latter type of evidential and should not be categorized as an instance of an epistemic modal.

C. Faller (2002) observes that in Cuzco Quechua, the enclitic *-puni*, which expresses the speaker's certainty about propositions (that is, this enclitic can be regarded as an instance of epistemic modals) and the evidential enclitics *-mi* (direct), *-si* (reportative), *-chá* (inference) can co-occur in a single clause:

- (19) *T'anta-ta-puni-n/-s/-chá irqi-ta-qa qu-rqa-n.*
 bread-Acc-puni-mi/-si/-chá child-Acc-to give-Pst1-3
 Proposition: '(S)he certainly gave bread to the child.'

(Faller (2002: 84))

If *be said to V* is an evidential, it should be compatible with modal expressions, and this prediction is borne out:

- (20) The prime minister may be said to be an idiot.

At least in English, there cannot be more than one epistemic modal in one clause. The compatibility of *be said to V* with epistemic modals might support my claim that the construction is a pure evidential rather than an epistemic modal-like evidential.

The German reportative *sollen* co-occurs with neither *mögen* 'might' nor *müssen* 'must.'

- (21) **Emma soll Arzt sein mögen/müssen.*
 Emma sollen doctor be might/must
 'Emma might/must be said to be a doctor.'

German, like English, does not allow configurations that contain more than

one epistemic modal. Therefore, given (21), *sollen* must possess some epistemic modal-like meaning, making it distinct from *be said to V*.

D. Høye (1997) suggests that a clause containing both an epistemic modal and an epistemic adverb is unacceptable when the two elements display differences in the strength of epistemicity, as in (22).

- (22) a. He must certainly be a doctor.
 b. *He may certainly be a doctor.
 c. *He must possibly be a doctor.
 d. He may possibly be a doctor.

If *be said to V* encodes epistemicity, it follows that it would clash with certain epistemic adverbs, but it does not, as shown in (23).

- (23) a. He is possibly said to be a doctor.
 b. He is certainly said to be a doctor.

Parallel to this, the Japanese reportative evidential *-sooda* can co-occur with epistemic adverbs *moshikasuruto* (weak modal) and *kitto* (strong modal).

- (24) a. *Satoshi-wa kitto paatii-ni kuru sooda.*
 Satoshi-Top certainly party-to come Rep
 'Satoshi is certainly said to come to the party.'
 b. *Satoshi-wa moshikasuruto paatii-ni kuru sooda.*
 Satoshi-Top possibly party-to come Rep
 'Satoshi is possibly said to come to the party.'

In this respect, *be said to V* is similar to reportative evidentials.

On the other hand, the German reportative *sollen* is compatible with *möglicherweise* 'possibly' but not with *bestimmt* 'certainly.'

- (25) a. **Emma soll Arzt bestimmt sein.*
 Emma *sollen* doctor certainly be
 'Emma is certainly said to be a doctor.'
 b. *Emma soll Arzt möglicherweise sein.*
 Emma *sollen* doctor possibly be
 'Emma is possibly said to be a doctor.'

These examples suggest that *sollen* encodes epistemicity of weak modals, and is therefore incompatible with the strong adverb *bestimmt*. This contrasts with *be said to V*, which is useable with both strong and weak modals.

E. The Japanese reportative evidential *-sooda* cannot be within the scope of epistemic modals, as shown in (26).

- (26) a. *Kare-wa isha kamoshirenai sooda.*
 he-Top doctor Eps Rep
 'It is said that he might be a doctor.'
- b. **Kare-wa isha da soo kamoshirenai.*
 he-Top doctor be Rep Eps
 'It might be the case that he is said to be a doctor.'

Example (26b), where the epistemic modal *-kamoshirenai* takes wide scope over the evidential *-sooda*, is unacceptable. The same scope relation is observed with *be said to V* at the level of interpretation:

- (27) a. The prime minister may be said to be an idiot.
 b. [√]It is said that the prime minister may be an idiot.
 c. It may be the case that the prime minister is said to be an idiot.
- (28) a. The prime minister may be believed to be an idiot.
 b. It is believed that the prime minister may be an idiot.
 c. [√]It may be the case that the prime minister is believed to be an idiot.
- (29) a. It may be said that the prime minister is an idiot.
 b. It is said that the prime minister may be an idiot.
 c. [√]It may be the case that it is said that the prime minister is an idiot.

Only *be said to V* can be interpreted above the scope of the epistemic modal *may*. This corroborates the pure evidentiality of *be said to V*.

This section examined the evidential-like function of *be said to V* and suggests that it has no epistemic function, in contrast with the German reportative auxiliary *sollen*. Since there is no clear definition of (reportative) evidential that captures all the puzzling properties listed in (10), it is impossible at present to conclude that *be said to V* is completely a reportative evidential. However, the fact that it demonstrates such properties while other structurally or semantically similar expressions do not underpins at least the claim that *be said to V* and typical reportative evidentials are very similar.

4. Conclusion

In this note, I have demonstrated that *be said to V*, which appears to be a purely reporting expression, is unpredictable in terms of both its structure and meaning. Given the unpredictability and the definition found in (1), I conclude that *be said to V* is a construction in terms of Goldberg (1995, 2006) and that it has come to acquire the function of a reportative eviden-

tial. As for its syntactic properties, *be said to V* can be analyzed neither as an ordinary passive nor as an adjectival passive. Semantically, *be said to V* shows some peculiarities that are not observed in the cases of similar expressions *be believed to V* and *it is said that* (Table 1 summarizes results of the tests conducted in section 3). I also examined the relations among *be said to V*, epistemic modals, and the German reportative *sollen*, and concluded that *be said to V* is a reportative evidential without any epistemic modal-flavor.

It might be argued that the verb *say* is inherently reportative, and therefore the reportative evidential use of *be said to V* is not worth discussing. However, the semantically similar configuration *it is said that* does not show the properties of reportative evidentials listed in (9), though it too contains the verb *say*. Moreover, the syntactic form of this configuration is fully predictable (it has its active counterpart), while that of *be said to V* is quite unpredictable. It does not directly follow that *be said to V* can be used as a reportative evidential simply because it contains the reporting verb *say*.

Let us consider a significant implication of this note. The syntactic peculiarities of *be said to V* should be far more stable than the semantic ones, given that judgments of semantic properties of *be said to V* are variable. This situation presents the possibility that the syntactic uniqueness of *be said to V* was established first for some reason, and then led to its semantic peculiarities; the variation in the judgments about its semantics implies that some change in semantics of *be said to V* is in progress. Assuming that evidentials are functional words, this process is an instance of grammaticalization. Thus, this note suggests the possibility that there is a type of grammaticalization process in which the syntactic properties of an expression instigates the grammaticalization of its semantics. In the case of *be said to V*, the lack of active alternant has led to backgrounding the agent of the denoted 'saying' events, since, in passive sentences, agents are not encoded if unnecessary. The fact that agents are not necessary also holds for reportative evidentials. This similarity might have caused *be said to V* to acquire a reportative evidential function.

The hypothesis that there is a process of grammaticalization occurring in which the form of an expression leads to grammaticalizing its meaning is only a possibility to be verified. However, *be said to V* can reasonably be considered to be an instance of this process.

Table 1: Similarities between *be said to V* and evidentials

	Takes scope over ...			Compatible with ...	
	negation	tense	eps. modal	eps. adv	eps. modal
<i>be said to V</i>	YES	ambiguous	YES	YES	YES
evidential	YES	ambiguous	YES	YES	YES
eps. modal	YES	ambiguous		depends on combinations	NO

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