Peculiar Passives as Individual-level Predicates

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0. Introduction
English prepositional passives of the type *This cup has been drunk beer out of* pose perplexing problems because syntactically, the subject NP is passivized out of an adjunct PP which is not governed by the verb and semantically, they have a peculiar aspectual meaning typically associated with the present perfect. Because of these problems, this kind of passive has hitherto eluded a satisfactory syntactic account and instead attracted pragmatic or functionalist approaches as in Bolinger (1975), Davison (1980), Ziv and Sheintuch (1981), Rice (1987), and Takami (1992). In this note, an attempt is made to pave the way for a syntactically appealing treatment of peculiar passives that resolves both their syntactic and semantic peculiarities by identifying them as individual-level predicates.*

* We are grateful to Roger Martin, Donna Tatsuki, and many other people for their judgments on relevant examples. Special thanks go to a reviewer for this journal, who as a native speaker of English raised important queries about the felicity of some of the example sentences in the first version which we had borrowed from previous studies on peculiar passives. All remaining inade-
1. The Delimitation of the Scope: Pseudo-Passives vs. Peculiar Passives

It is imperative to start our discussion by delimiting the scope of the passive sentences to be addressed in this note. While three terms “prepositional passive,” “pseudo-passive,” and “peculiar passive” have been commonly used in the literature, we propose to make a distinction between pseudo-passives and peculiar passives, which are both subsumed under the superficial nomenclature of prepositional passive.

Baker (1988) argues that the acceptability of the so-called “pseudo-passive” construction, exemplified by (1), depends solely on whether the prepositional phrase from which the promoted subject is extracted is governed by the passivized verb.

(1) a. Fred was laughed at by Sue.
    b. That bed was slept in by the sumo wrestler.

According to Baker, the P of a PP governed by a verb can undergo Abstract Incorporation or V-P Reanalysis (cf. Stowell (1981), Hornstein and Weinberg (1981)), which makes it possible for the object of a preposition to behave syntactically as the direct object of the verb. The claim that the reanalyzed V-P combinations like laugh at and sleep in function as a verb unit is confirmed by the fact, first noted by Chomsky (1955), that they can be conjoined with simple transitive verbs, as shown in (2).

(2) a. Mary [VP [laughed at] and [mocked] Fred].
    b. The sumo wrestler [VP [slept in] and [ruined] the bed].

This kind of coordination is normally disallowed for the sequence of a verb and a pure adjunct preposition which does not undergo Incorporation.
ration or Reanalysis, as demonstrated by (3). (Special care must be taken not to interpret sentences like (3) as Right Node Raising.)

(3)  

a. *Mary \[VP \{played near\} and \{mocked\} Fred].
   
b. *The sumo wrestler \[VP \{talked on\} and \{ruined\} the phone].

According to Baker’s theory, \textit{play near} (Fred) and \textit{talk on} (the phone) are predictably not subject to passivization, as shown in (4).

(4)  

a. *Fred\(_k\) was played near \(_t_k\) (by Mary).
   
b. *This phone\(_k\) was talked on \(_t_k\) (by the sumo wrestler).

Baker’s theory is also able to rule out cases like (5a) and (5b), where the object NP is passivized out of a PP that follows the direct object within the VP. This is because, as shown in (5a’) and (5b’), the V-Object-Preposition sequence cannot be conjoined with a simple transitive verb.

(5)  

a. *This bridge\(_k\) was flown a plane under \(_t_k\) (by Ken).
   
a’. *Ken \[VP \{flew a plane under\} and \{damaged\} the bridge].
   
b. *This bench\(_k\) was found a coin on \(_t_k\) (by John).
   
b’. *John \[VP \{found a coin on\} and \{rubbed\} the bench].

As is well-known, however, there are cases that Baker’s (1988) theory of pseudo-passives fails to capture. Consider the following examples adapted from Bolinger (1975), Davison (1980), and Ziv and Sheintuch (1981).

(6)  

a. This spoon has been eaten with.
   
b. The city has been fought many battles over.
   
c. This pub hasn’t been smoked hash in before.
   
d. This violin has never been played any sonatas on.
   
e. This hall has been signed peace treaties in.

These examples are judged acceptable despite the fact that the PPs in them are not governed by the main verbs, as shown by the failure of the
conjunction test in (7).

(7)  a. *John \[vp \{ate with\} and \{polished\} this spoon].
    b. *The two countries \[vp \{fought many battles over\} and \{ruined\} this city].
    c. *The jazz singer \[vp \{smoked hash in\} and \{praised\} the pub].
    d. *Bill \[vp \{played sonatas on\} and \{damaged\} this violin].
    e. *The ministers \[vp \{signed peace treaties in\} and \{glorified\} this hall].

Since V's government of a PP is a necessary condition for pseudo-passives under Baker's theory, the acceptability of examples like (6) creates a serious problem. The problem is particularly grave in (6b, c, d, e), where direct objects show up with accusative case, resulting in deviating from Burzio's generalization ("all and only the verbs that can assign \( \theta \)-role to the subject position can assign accusative case to an object" (Burzio 1986: 178)).

In discussing prepositional passives, Davison (1980) indiscriminately employs the term "peculiar passives" for both the type exemplified by (1) and the type exemplified by (6). It is crucially important, however, to sort out the truly "peculiar" passives like (6), which violate Baker's government condition and call for special interpretations, from the innocuous prepositional passives like (1), which are formed by V-P Reanalysis and are accepted without any special context. In this note, we will limit the term "peculiar passive" to the former type of prepositional passive in which the object of an adjunct PP looks as if it is being promoted to the subject by passivization.

2. Semantics of Peculiar Passives

Let us compare the ill-formed examples in (4)-(5a, b) with the well-formed ones in (6). Although the PPs involved in both groups of examples are adjuncts, the former resists the peculiar passive formation while the latter tolerates it. Our main idea about the primary difference
between them is that the predicates in the former express "stage-level (or particular) predications" while those in the latter represent "individual-level (or characterizing) predications" in the sense of Krifka et al. (1995). We will argue that the individual-level status is the essential ingredient of the peculiar passive formation. Three sets of observations are now presented to prove this point.

First, it should be noted that the present perfect aspect is involved in all of the well-formed peculiar passive examples in (6), repeated below as (8).

(8) a. This spoon has been eaten with.
   b. The city has been fought many battles over.
   c. This pub hasn’t been smoked hash in before.
   d. This violin has never been played any sonatas on.
   e. This hall has been signed peace treaties in.

What is intriguing here is that their well-formedness deteriorates if the present perfect is changed into the simple past tense, as shown in (9).

(9) a. *This spoon was being eaten with.
   b. *The city was fought many battles over.
   c. *This pub wasn’t smoked hash in.
   d. *This violin was not being played any sonatas on.
   e. *This hall was signed peace treaties in.

As a matter of fact, we have found that almost all the examples of this construction that are presented in the literature contain the present perfect aspect.1) These observations strongly suggest that the present

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1) Takami (1992: 108) gives the following example, which is set in the simple past tense with the time adverbial last month, as an acceptable peculiar passive.

(i) (*)This building was walked in front of by the Japanese emperor last month.

Most of our informants respond, however, that (i) is judged unacceptable or, at the very best, highly marginal, though it can be salvaged if an adverb with
perfect is a necessary condition for the well-formedness of peculiar passives in English. What does the perfect aspect have to do with the formation of peculiar passives? We would like to argue that the change in tense/aspect affects the status of a predicate in terms of the stage/individual-level distinction.

As has been frequently observed in the literature on the descriptive grammar of English since Poutsma (1926) (see, also, Comrie (1976), McCoard (1978), and references cited therein), there are some time-referring adverbials incompatible with the present perfect aspect. From a formal semantics viewpoint, Bennett and Partee (1978) and Stump (1985) show that the present perfect aspect, which always involves reference to an interval of time, is semantically incompatible with the type of adverbials that make specific reference to a point of time in the past. In fact, the peculiar passive sentences in (8), well-formed when accompanied with the perfect aspect, become unacceptable or highly marginal if they are followed by a temporal adverbial like at that moment which pinpoints a particular time at which an event took place. This is shown in (10).

(10) a. *This spoon has been eaten with at that moment.
    b. *The city has been fought a battle over at that moment.
    c. *This pub has been smoked hash in at that moment.
    d. *This violin has been played a sonata on at that moment.
The semantic incongruity of the present perfect with certain punctual adverbials like *at that moment* is reminiscent of the observation by Kratzer (1995) and Diesing (1992) that individual-level predicates are also incompatible with this kind of adverbials, as the unacceptability of (11a) below shows. On the other hand, stage-level predicates, as in (11b), are entirely in line with spatiotemporal adverbials.

(11) a. Individual-level: *Firemen were tall/altruistic at that moment.
   
   b. Stage-level: Firemen were sick/available at that moment.

Intuitively speaking, the adverbial *at that moment* represents a rigidly bounded time and therefore is not congenial to the interpretation of the perfect aspect. To put this in more formal terms, spatiotemporal adverbials, taken as operators (see Davidson (1980) and Lewis (1986)), are required to bind the event variable (what is called a “Davidsonian argument”) that the predicate they modify introduces (see Higginbotham (1985)). If we follow Kratzer’s (1995) hypothesis that stage-level predicates do, but individual-level ones do not, have a Davidsonian (event) argument, the fact that the predicates in the well-formed peculiar passives in (8) are incompatible with spatiotemporal adverbials indicates that they are identified as individual-level.

Now let us consider why the well-formedness of the peculiar passive examples in (8) deteriorates if the perfect aspect involved in them is changed into the simple past, as shown in (9) above. The answer is simple: the predicates involved in (9) are all stage-level. This is shown by the well-formedness of (12), where the active counterparts of the predicates involved in (9) can be properly modified by punctual adverbials.

(12) a. Fred ate with this spoon at that moment.
   
   b. They fought many battles over the city at that moment.
   
   c. John smoked hash in this pub at that moment.
d. Sue did not play any sonata on this violin at that moment.
e. They signed peace treaties in this hall at that moment.

The reason we use the active counterparts in (12) is that we cannot directly examine whether the predicates involved in (9) are stage-level or individual-level because the examples in (9) are initially ill-formed regardless of the attachment of a punctual adverbial. Since the active sentences in (12) are well-formed, we can reasonably conclude that the passive counterparts in (9) also express stage-level predications in which the Davidsonian event argument is at work.

It has thus been observed that peculiar passives attain full acceptability when they are accompanied with the present perfect aspect. We would like to argue that this is due to the nature of the present perfect aspect. Since the present perfect in itself is not compatible with punctual adverbials, it does not have a Davidsonian argument and hence is very congenial to peculiar passives, which are also assumed to lack a Davidsonian argument.

It must be pointed out, however, that the present perfect is not the sole context in which peculiar passive sentences are allowed. Observe (13).

(13) a. This violin can be played any sonatas on.
   b. This pub should not be smoked hash in.

The reason peculiar passives are allowed with the modal auxiliaries like *can* and *should* is that these modals only imply possibilities and probabilities instead of entailing the actual occurrence of the events expressed in the propositions. Because of this meaning, these modals are consistent with the individual-level status of peculiar passives.

In view of the fact that peculiar passive sentences appear to describe the general property of the subject NP, Takami (1992) proposes a functional analysis, according to which peculiar and pseudo-passives serve to “characterize” the subject’s general property. Without a
rigorous definition of the notion “characterization,” however, this kind of account cannot escape criticism for being too obscure. Takami’s analysis not only fails to make the distinction between pseudo-passives and peculiar passives that we have established, but it has no principled limit to the range of phenomena it is intended to cover. It could be easily extended not only to the middle construction (14a) and *tough* construction (14b), which Takami himself includes in its scope, but to all other constructions whose main purpose is to “characterize” the subject, as in (14c, d).

(14)  a. Japanese cars handle smoothly.  (middle construction)
    b. His argument is easy to refute.  (*tough* construction)
    c. Bureaucrats are arrogant.  (generic bare plurals)
    d. Tigers only kill at night.  (Goldberg, to appear)  (subject’s habitual action)

Even a sentence with a stage-level predicate, like *John is drunk now*, may be described as a characterization of the present state of the subject *John*.

More importantly, Davison (1980: 55) observes that the characteristic properties of a subject NP inferred from peculiar (and pseudo-) passives may well be considered conversational implicatures rather than logical entailments, because they are cancelable:

(15)  a. This chair has been sat on by Fred, but there’s absolutely no trace.
    b. This bed may have been slept in by George Washington, but I’m not at all impressed.  (Davison 1980: 55)

If Davison’s observation is correct, it follows that the characterization condition Takami argued for is not the essential feature of peculiar passives. Rather, the real root of the characteristic or “generic” reading, we contend, lies in the absence of the Davidsonian argument.

The second justification for our identification of peculiar passives as
individual-level predications derives from the interpretation of the absolute construction. Stump (1985) and Kratzer (1995) observe that a stage-level predicate, when put in the absolute construction, allows a conditional interpretation as in (16a), whereas an individual-level predicate in the same environment has only a presuppositional reading as in (16b).

(16) a. Standing on a chair, John can touch the ceiling. (=because/if he stands)
   b. Having unusually long arms, John can touch the ceiling. (=because/≠if he has)

It can now be observed that peculiar passives do not have the conditional interpretation if they are cast in the absolute construction.

(17) a. Having been eaten with, this spoon can be cleaned.
   b. If this spoon has been eaten with, it can be cleaned.
(18) a. Having never been played any sonatas on, this violin may be difficult to play.
   b. If this violin has never been played any sonatas on, it may be difficult to play.
(19) a. Having just been drunk beer out of, this cup may be chilly.
   b. If this cup has just been drunk beer out of, it may be chilly.

In (17)–(19), the (a)-sentences do not have the conditional interpretation shown in the corresponding (b)-sentences. This observation corroborates our hypothesis that the predicates tolerant of peculiar passives belong to the class of individual-level predicates.

The third justification for our proposal is found in a restriction on the perception verb construction. Milsark (1974) observes that stage-level predicates can, but individual-level predicates cannot, be embedded in the complements to perception verbs like see.

(20) a. I saw some men sick/available.
b. *I saw the man tall/intelligent. (Milsark 1974)

This difference correlates with the disparity between ordinary pseudo-passives like (21) and peculiar passives like (22).

(21) a. I saw the bed slept in by Chomsky.
     b. I saw many linguists talked about by Chomsky.

(22) a. *I saw the spoon eaten with (by Fred)
     b. *I saw the hall signed peace treaties in (by the ministers).
     c. *I saw this cup drunk beer out of.

The incompatibility of peculiar passives with a perception verb in (22) confirms the validity of our proposal that the peculiar passives function as individual-level predicates.

To recapitulate, a close scrutiny of the semantics associated with the present perfect, absolute, and perception verb constructions has revealed that a peculiar passive is allowed only if the predicate concerned is interpreted as individual-level.

3. Syntax of Peculiar Passives
The three sets of observations in the preceding section demonstrate that peculiar passives in English exhibit the same behavior as individual-level predicates. The remaining question is how this conclusion can be executed in formal ways. What does the syntactic structure of peculiar passives look like, and why is it that only individual-level predicates make well-formed peculiar passives? In this note we can only sketch out our idea, leaving its full implementation to future research.

In regard to the stage/individual-level distinction, Diesing (1992) convincingly shows that an individual-level predicate always has a control structure in which the subject NP that is independently base-generated in the Spec of Infl controls a phonologically null element about which the whole sentence provides a characterizing predication. Following this idea, let us assume that the subject of an individual-level
predicate is always base-generated in the Spec of Infl. Then, from our observations in the previous section, it follows that the clause involving a peculiar passive, whose predicate has been shown to be individual-level, has a control structure in which the subject base-generated in the Spec of Infl controls a phonologically null element (say, pro) within the projection of the predicate involved. This allows us to suggest tentatively that the syntactic structure of peculiar passive sentences looks like (23).

(23) a. This spoon has been [eaten [pp with pro]].
    b. This hall; has been [signed peace treaties [pp in pro]].

In each example of (23), the surface subject of the passive clause is base-generated in the Spec of Infl as the subject of the individual-level predicate (has been eaten with in (23a) and has been signed peace treaties in in (23b)). This is guaranteed by Diesing’s (1992) mechanism mentioned above. In (23), the surface subject controls the pro in the object position of the adjunct PP. Therefore, this pro is not moved by NP-movement. Since there is no movement involved in peculiar passives, it is natural that government by V, which is a prerequisite for passivization under Baker’s (1988) theory, should not come into play in peculiar passives.

There can be other alternative structures which employ a control structure as well. For example, PRO, instead of pro, may be a plausible candidate for the object of the adjunct PP (and it might be moved as an operator to the Spec of some functional category within the split INFL system). What is important is that the postulation of a phonologically null element, be it pro or PRO, coupled with the Kratzer — Diesing hypothesis, dispenses with NP-movement in peculiar passive sentences and gives a reasonable account for the irrelevance of the government requirement to them. Also, this analysis effectively explains the difference in syntactic structure between peculiar passives and simple pseudo-passives of the laughed-at type, which are derived by NP move-
ment by virtue of the reanalysis of verb and preposition. The unaccep-
tability of the prepositional passives given earlier in (4), such as
*Fred was played near (by Mary), and in (5), such as *This bench was
found a coin on (by John), are now straightforwardly accounted for be-
cause they fulfill neither the government condition for ordinary pseu-
do-passives nor the individual-level condition for peculiar passives.

So far we have argued that peculiar passives, though deviant with
regard to the government requirement for pseudo-passives, are syntac-
tically licensed because their semantic characteristic as individual-level
predicates enables them to utilize a control structure, instead of NP-
movement. According to the semantic interpretation rules like those
proposed by Kratzer (1995) or Diesing (1992), the surface subject of an
individual-level predicate is associated closely with a generic interpre-
tation. This leads us to predict that the surface subject of a peculiar
passive sentence is also associated with the generic interpretation.
This prediction is indeed borne out.

As briefly mentioned in the preceding section, the "characteriza-
tion" or generic reading is characteristically invoked for the surface
subject of a peculiar passive sentence. We suggest that the definiteness
restrictions on object NPs, as observed by Ziv and Sheintuch (1981),
are instrumental in removing the "eventive" or stage-level reading and
fortifying the individual-level meaning.

(24) a. I have been thrown stones at.
       b. *I have been thrown these/those stones at.

The generic meaning of the bare plural object stones in (24a) contrib-
utes toward establishing the non-delimited event reading of the whole
passive predicate be thrown at. In contrast, the referential object in
(24b), implying the occurrence of the throwing event at a particular
time, promotes the delimited event reading of the whole passive predi-
cate in (24b). The fact that (24b), but not (24a), lacks the non-
delimited event reading of the predicate involved can be confirmed by
(25) a. John threw (*these/*those) stones (at me) for ten minutes.
   b. John threw *(these/those) stones (at me) in ten minutes.

As is often pointed out in the literature (Vendler 1967, Dowty 1979, among others), the time-adverbial test with the \textit{for/in}-distinction can be utilized to reveal the delimitedness of the event reading: If the \textit{for}-adverbial can be attached, then the predicate has a non-delimited event reading, and if the \textit{in}-adverbial can be attached, then the predicate has a delimited event reading. Since it is natural to interpret the lack of the non-delimited event reading of a predicate as the presence of a Davidsonian (event) argument, the lack of the non-delimited event reading in (24b) means that the whole predicate in (24b) cannot be interpreted as individual-level, because individual-level predicates always lack an event argument. Now that the predicate in (24b) is not interpreted as individual-level, the condition for peculiar passives is not fully met, whence its awkwardness. In contrast, since the predicate in (24a) does not have the delimited event reading, it is considered to be devoid of an event argument and is consequently interpreted as individual-level. This results in the well-formedness of the peculiar passive in (24a).

4. Future Issues

In this note, we first explicated the prerequisite for peculiar passives by demonstrating that the predicates tolerant to the peculiar passive must be individual-level. Then we proceeded to hypothesize that the NP in the subject position of a peculiar passive sentence is not promoted by the usual NP-movement but is base-generated in the Spec of INFL in a clause whose predicate lacks a Davidsonian event argument. The upshot of this paper, then, is that peculiar passives, which have been approached almost exclusively from functionalist viewpoints, are amenable to a proper treatment in syntax if coupled with a formal semantic interpretation rule for individual-level predicates along the lines of
It is sometimes pointed out in the literature (e.g. Kitagawa and Kuroda (1992)) that the so-called indirect passive in Japanese does not involve NP-movement, with the subject NP being independently assigned its \( \theta \)-role at the subject position. Moreover, Huang (1999) suggests that this type of passive with a base-generated subject can be found cross-linguistically in various constructions including the adversity passive constructions found in East Asian languages. The idea of base-generated subjects is remarkably similar to our analysis of peculiar passives.

However, an important difference is observed between English peculiar passives and Japanese indirect passives: the former are marginal and rare, or even nonexistent in written language, while the latter are extremely common in both speaking and writing. This disparity might be attributed to the general admissibility of \textit{pro} in a given language. If our suggested \textit{pro} analysis is on the right track, the overall marginality of peculiar passives in English will be reducible to the general aversion to \textit{pro} in this language.

We cannot as yet answer the fundamental question of why peculiar passives involve the notion of “individual-level predications” in the first place. The answer to this question must await future research in which the syntactic and semantic properties of normal and peculiar passives are elucidated in wider contexts. When fully developed, our analysis is expected to assimilate a variety of passive constructions and other related constructions like the middle construction in English, which Matsumoto and Fujita (1995) analyze as involving individual-level predicates, into a comprehensive theory of passivization.
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個体レベル述語としての英語の「異常受身」

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英語で This cup has been drunk beer out of. のように動詞によって統率されない前置詞句内部から受身化が起こっている受身文は，これまで Bolinger (1975) や Takami (1992) など機能論的な観点からしか分析されていない。本稿では，この種の受身文がどのような時に適切となるのかを形式意味論的に考察し，その適応条件を統語論的に説明する分析を示唆する。

まず，これまでの研究で不明瞭だった「擬似受身」（He was laughed at by Mary. のように動詞と前置詞が統率により「再分析」される場合）と「異常受身」（This cup has been drunk beer out of. のように付加詞から受身化が起こる場合）の統語的な違いを明確化する。次に，後者の異常受身が，Kratzer (1995)，Diesing (1992) の言う個体レベル述語に該当することを，(1) 点的な時間副詞と共起しない，(2) 独立分詞構文で条件節の解釈を持たない，(3) 知覚動詞の補文に入らないという観察から立証する。更に，この意味的性質を反映する統語構造を示唆し，異常受身が名詞句移動によって派生されるのではなく，ともと基底生成された主語を取ることを述べる。これにより，従来，「特徴づけ」などの曖昧な名称で呼ばれていた機能が統語構造から導き出されることになる。

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