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Rethinking the Passive/Anticausative Distinction

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Central to theories of passive are two sets of facts from English: namely, that the logical subject is realized in a *by*-phrase and that purpose clauses and agent-oriented adverbs are licit. Depending on the theory, these facts have been taken to show that the passive morpheme *-en* is itself an argument (Baker, Johnson, and Roberts 1989) or that the syntactically suppressed argument of a passive verb is present in argument structure (Grimshaw 1990). In contrast, the fact that anticausatives cannot combine with *by*-phrases, purpose clauses, or agent-oriented adverbs (Manzini 1983, Roeper 1987) is taken as evidence that the ''binding of the external cause takes place in the mapping from the lexical semantic representation to argument structure'' (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995:108).

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This squib examines certain properties of passives and anticausatives that have hitherto not been discussed systematically, and the ensuing ramifications for a universal theory of these constructions. Section 1 investigates the distribution of *by*- and *from*-phrases across English, Albanian, Latin, and Modern Greek and its significance for theories of passives and anticausatives.[1] Section 2 provides evidence for two primitives that, I contend, underlie the passive/anticausative distinction. Section 3 presents a novel account for the distribution of purpose clauses and agent-oriented adverbs in passives.

1 *By*-Phrases versus *From*-Phrases and the Significance of the Comparison

1.1 English

While anticausatives in English do not sanction *by*-phrases, they can combine with *from*-phrases identifying the cause of an event (e.g., Talmy 1976, DeLancey 1984, Piñon 2001).

(1) a. *The window cracked by the pressure.
b. The window cracked from the pressure.

However, though *from*-phrases identifying causes are possible with anticausatives, they are not possible when the cause is not an event (nominal).[2]

(2) *The window cracked from John/the book.

The contrast between (1b) and (2) is also replicated with nonalternating unaccusatives, as in (3a) versus (3b), though there are unaccusatives that do not combine with a *from*-phrase introducing a cause, as shown in (3c).

(3) a. Eva died from cancer.
b. *Eva died from John/the book.
c. *The refugees arrived from the invasion.[3]

Moreover, *from*-phrases are uniformly disallowed in passives, regardless of whether they introduce events, as in (4a), or noneventive participants, as in (4b).

(4) a. *Eva was killed from cancer.
b. *Eva was killed from John/the book.

[1] From this point onward, *by-phrase* and *from-phrase* are used to represent forms in other languages as well as English.

[2] Following Demirdache (1997), I use the label *event nominal* also for nouns such as *wind*, *earthquake*, *pressure*, *cancer*, even though they involve no verbal base. Importantly, note that an event (nominal) is inanimate. Hence, the generalization that *from*-phrases introducing causes that are not events (or processes) are unacceptable in anticausatives entails that such phrases are unacceptable with animate participants.

[3] The sentence in (3c) is of course fine if the PP is interpreted as a locative source.

To generalize, it seems that only what Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995:chap. 3) refer to as external causation verbs can combine with a *from*-phrase identifying a cause.

1.2 Albanian (and Latin and Modern Greek)

Unlike in English, passives and anticausatives in several languages, such as Albanian, Latin, and Modern Greek (MG) are (often) formally indistinguishable.[4] This is so for two reasons. First, these languages use two distinct conjugational paradigms, namely, active versus nonactive (Albanian and MG) or active versus passive (Latin), corresponding roughly to the unergative versus unaccusative verb classes. Second, they collapse *by*- and *from*-phrases.[5] Hence, the *by*-phrase diagnostic cannot be used to distinguish between passives and anticausatives in Albanian, Latin, and MG. To illustrate, the Albanian counterparts of the sentences in (1b) and (2) are given in (5a) and (5b), respectively. As expected, then, the grammaticality contrast in the English examples in (1b) and (2) is not replicated.

(5) a. Dritar-ja u kris nga presion-i.
window-the NACT crack.AOR,3S from/by pressure-the
'The window cracked from the pressure.'

b. Dritar-ja u kris nga
window-the NACT crack.AOR,3S from/by
Xhon-i/libr-i.
John-the/book-the
'The window was cracked by John/by the book.'

In sum, the distribution of *by*-phrases and *from*-phrases in passives and anticausatives within and across languages suggests that the significance granted to the fact that *by*-phrases are sanctioned with passives but not with anticausatives is not justified. In other words, if the ability of a passive verb to combine with a *by*-phrase is taken as evidence for the existence of the external argument in passives (regardless of whether this argument is syntactically expressed or implicit, depending on the theory), then so should the ability of an anticausative verb to combine with a *from*-phrase identifying the (external) cause of the event. Consequently, anticausatives cannot be lexically reduced, contrary to proposals by Chierchia (1989, 2004), Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995), and Reinhart (1996). Thus, I challenge the view that passives and anticausatives are formed in different modules of the grammar and contend instead that the passive/anticausative distinction hinges entirely on the nature of the features in v^0.

[4] See Kallulli 2006 for Albanian, Gianollo 2000 for Latin, and Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 2004 for MG.

[5] Alternatively, the Albanian, Latin, and MG counterparts of *by*-phrases are ambiguous between *by*- and *from*-phrases.

2 Two Primitives and an Account of the Distribution of *By*- and *From*-Phrases

Consider the following examples from Albanian:

(6) a. Ben-it i-u thye një vazo.
Ben-the$_{DAT}$ him$_{CL}$-NACT break.AOR,3s a vase$_{NOM}$
i. 'Ben unintentionally broke a vase.'
ii. *'Ben felt like breaking a vase.'
b. Ben-it i thy-hej një vazo.
Ben-the$_{DAT}$ him$_{CL}$ break-NACT,P,IMP3s a vase$_{NOM}$
i. 'Ben felt like breaking a vase.'
ii. *'Ben unintentionally broke a vase.'

(7) a. Ben-it i-u hëngër një mollë.
Ben-the$_{DAT}$ him$_{CL}$-NACT ate.AOR,3s an apple$_{NOM}$
i. 'Ben felt like eating an apple.'
ii. *'Ben unintentionally ate an apple.'
b. Ben-it i ha-hej një mollë.
Ben-the$_{DAT}$ him$_{CL}$ eat-NACT,P,IMP,3s an apple$_{NOM}$
i. 'Ben felt like eating an apple.'
ii. *'Ben unintentionally ate an apple.'

Many languages share the construction in (6a), in which a dative (or genitive) argument combines with an anticausative core, yielding among other possible interpretations a so-called unintended causation reading (Rivero 2004, Kallulli 2006). The Albanian sentence in (7a), which is formally identical with (6a), shows that this reading does *not* obtain with non–external causation verbs. Instead, in (7a) an involuntary state reading obtains, which is impossible for (6a). While the unintended causation reading is missing in (7a), both the involuntary state reading and the unintended causation reading may obtain with one and the same verb, as shown in (6a) and (6b), which formally differ solely in terms of aspectual morphology: aorist, which is perfective, versus imperfective.[6] Only the perfective (6a) can have an unintended causation reading; the imperfective (6b) cannot. In contrast, with imperfective only the involuntary state reading obtains; the unintended causation reading does not. This semantic complementarity does not obtain with a verb like 'eat', as is shown in (7a) and (7b), which differ formally in exactly the same way as (6a) and (6b).

The only possible reason why the pattern in (6) does not replicate in (7) must be that nonactive morphology interacts differently with different primitives. Building on accounts that posit flavors of v^0 (Em-

[6] Albanian nonactive paradigms are built using three distinct linguistic means with a well-defined distribution: (a) auxiliary selection (namely, 'be') if the clause contains perfect tense; (b) an inflectional affix if the clause contains present or imperfective past tense (but not admirative); and (c) a reflexive clitic in all other contexts. In other words, the fact that nonactive in (6a) and (7a) is realized by using a clitic is irrelevant in this context, since this means is fully grammaticalized.

bick 2004, Folli and Harley 2005, Kallulli 2006), I submit that v^0 can bear one of the following features: (a) [+act(ivity)] (actor-initiated; i.e., activity verbs), (b) [+cause] (change-of-state verbs), (c) both (actor-initiated caused change of state), or (d) neither (unaccusatives of the 'arrive' type—as opposed to those of the 'die' type; see (3c)).[7] In addition, v^0 may have a [−ext(ernal) arg(ument)] feature (see Embick 2004:152), which has the effect of preventing an overt DP from being merged in Spec,vP.[8] Moreover, as I discuss in section 3, there is strong evidence that v^0 can also carry a [+nonintent(ional)] feature, which is crucially involved in deriving the unintended causation and involuntary state readings of the sentences in (6) and (7).[9]

Consequently, the argument merged in Spec,vP will be interpreted as either actor, cause, unintentional causer, or unspecified, depending on the feature (bundles) in v^0. On this approach, then, θ-roles borne by external arguments are functions of (θ)-features in v^0, a much-desired result (Dowty 1979, 1991, Jackendoff 1990, Wunderlich 1997, Reinhart 2002, among many others).

Assuming that features are privative, the picture in table 1 emerges. Adopting a Late Insertion view of morphology, we can then state that the passive or anticausative morphology is just inserted into (''realizes'') a v^0 containing the [−ext arg] feature. The difference between English and Albanian is that English has a special morpheme that realizes the [$_v$ [+act], [−ext arg]] bundle (the passive morpheme) and a different morpheme that realizes the [$_v$ [+cause], [−ext arg]] bundle (the anticausative). Albanian, on the other hand, has just one morpheme that realizes [−ext arg] v^0s, namely, the nonactive morphology. In Albanian, the absence of a passive/anticausative distinction is then just a syncretism in the v^0 morphology (reminiscent of Embick's (2004) ''u-syncretism'').[10]

But why do languages vary with respect to whether they obscure the distinction between oblique actors and oblique causes, as is the case in Albanian, Latin, MG, and English child language (Clark and Carpenter 1989), or articulate this difference, as is the case in adult English? One obvious difference between Albanian (and Latin and MG) on the one hand and adult English on the other is the fact that in English, anticausatives and passives are always morphologically distinct, as just stated. That is, since Albanian, Latin, and MG both

[7] The distinction made in Kallulli 2006 between [+cause] and [+act] is echoed in Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou, and Schäfer 2006, albeit under a different technical implementation and a slightly different labeling ([+CAUS] and [+AG]).

[8] I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this.

[9] A detailed analysis of the constructions in (6) and (7) is beyond the scope of this squib. However, see Kallulli 2006 for an account that is compatible with the ideas presented here.

[10] For a detailed discussion on the interaction of the featural makeup of the verbs (or verb classes represented respectively by) 'eat' and 'break' with nonactive morphology in Albanian, see Kallulli 2006.

Table 1

Features in v^0	Example
a. [+act]	Ben ate the apple.
b. [+act] [−external argument]	The apple was eaten (by Ben).
c. [+cause]	The pressure cracked the window.
d. [+cause] [−external argument]	The window cracked (from the pressure).
e. [+cause] [+act]	John cleaned the table.
f. [+cause] [+act] [−external argument]	The table was cleaned (by John).
g. [−external argument]	John arrived.

collapse the distinction between passives and anticausatives and also fail to differentiate between *by*- and *from*-phrases, the speculation that there might exist some implicational relation between verbal morphology and the ability to distinguish between *by*- and *from*-phrases (i.e., oblique actors and oblique causes) seems tempting. However, while this correlation might be something to watch for, at this point it would be premature to claim that the *by*/*from* conflation's connection to the passive/anticausative is universal (i.e., the correlation might turn out to be nothing more than a coincidence).

The analysis proposed here can also account for the contrast between (8a) and (8b) in a straightforward manner, since anything that is capable of (an appropriate type of) sustained activity, whether animate or inanimate, should be a fine subject for a [+act] predicate. And while earthquakes involve sustained activity, a construction fault does not.[11]

(8) a. The window was broken by the earthquake.
b. *The window was broken by a construction fault.

3 On the Distribution of Purpose Clauses and Agent-Oriented Adverbs

It is well known that, unlike in passives, purpose clauses and agent-oriented adverbs are illicit in anticausatives, as shown in (9) and (10).

[11] As one of the reviewers points out, note also that *by*-phrases can express agentive as well as nonagentive causes (e.g., *The window was broken by the book*). Hence, the relevant distinction involves not agentivity (contra Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou, and Schäfer 2006) but activity.

(9) a. The boat was sunk to collect the insurance.
(Roeper 1987:268, (3b))
b. *The boat sank to collect the insurance.
(Roeper 1987:268, (3a))

(10) a. The ship was sunk deliberately.
b. *The ship sank deliberately.

To the best of my knowledge, all existing work on this distinction takes these facts to indicate (a) the presence of an argument in the passive, which, as mentioned earlier, is either syntactically expressed or implicit (depending on the theory), and (b) the lack of such an argument in anticausatives (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995:chap. 3 and references therein). However, all that purpose clauses and so-called agent-oriented adverbs do is to identify an intention-bearing (i.e., animate) event participant as the source or initiation of the event named by the verb. Passives (but not anticausatives) control into purpose clauses and combine with agent-oriented adverbs simply because purpose clauses and agent-oriented adverbs make reference to participants capable of intentionality (i.e., actors). Yet this does not entail that the animate participant in passives is a nonoblique argument. One obvious alternative is that the animate participant here is introduced, not by a nonoblique argument, but by a *by*-phrase, and this may in turn be either overt or implicit. If, as established in section 2 (see also footnote 2), animate causes are disallowed with *from*-phrases in English and anticausatives license only *from*-phrases, not *by*-phrases, then the inability of anticausatives to combine with purpose clauses and agent-oriented adverbs follows straightforwardly without further stipulations. More evidence for this view involves the fact that whenever a purpose clause is licit in a passive sentence, a *by*-phrase can be inserted overtly.[12]

Note in this context that agent-oriented adverbs are not incompatible with unaccusative syntax. The Italian examples in (11) show that the unaccusative verbs *cadere* 'fall' and *rotolare* 'roll' continue to

[12] One of the reviewers remarks that purpose clauses are possible with copular sentences that cannot take a *by*-phrase at all, as in *The life jacket was yellow (*by the manufacturer) to attract attention*. However, such examples show precisely that control is not useful for detecting the syntactic presence of an argument (since nothing in the matrix clause is the controller for the purpose clause), as already argued by Williams (1985). As Williams (1985: 310) puts it, for a sentence such as *Grass is green to promote photosynthesis*, ''we could not sensibly say that *is* or *green* has an implicit agent argument (nor can *grass* be sensibly construed as the controller)[;] [r]ather, we must simply suppose that there is some purposeful agent (evolution, God) under whose control is the circumstance 'grass is green'. This is quite different from saying that God or evolution is an Agent in the theta-theoretic sense'' (Williams 1985:315–316). In a similar vein, it is hard to motivate the simple copular sentence above as a passive construction unless a null verb (e.g., MADE) in the spirit of Van Riemsdijk (2002) is postulated, or something similar (e.g., an elided verb), and my claim about the insertion of *by*-phrases concerns passives only. Note also that if such a verb is inserted overtly, a *by*-phrase can be inserted, too.

exhibit the characteristic *essere* 'be' (vs. *avere* 'have') auxiliary selection, even in the presence of an adverb like 'on purpose'.

(11) a. Gianni é caduto/*ha caduto apposta.
Gianni is fallen/has fallen on.purpose
b. Gianni é rotolato/*ha rotolato giu apposta.
Gianni is rolled/has rolled down on.purpose
(Folli and Harley 2006)

German exemplifies this observation as well; witness (12), where *einschlafen* 'fall asleep' selects the auxiliary *sein* 'be' and not *haben* 'have'.

(12) Peter ist/*hat absichtlich eingeschlafen.
Peter is/has deliberately fallen.asleep
'Peter fell asleep on purpose.'

I propose the following explanation. In examples like those in (11) and (12), v^0 bears a [+act] feature (and possibly a [+animate] feature, as suggested in Folli and Harley 2005), but crucially, no [+nonintent] feature. Therefore, it can combine with an agent-oriented adverb such as 'on purpose', the idea being that meaning is composed incrementally. This view is corroborated by the fact that in cases where v^0 bears a [+nonintent] feature, which—as mentioned earlier—I assume for the Albanian sentences in (6) and (7), agent-oriented adverbs are not tolerated. This is shown in (13) and (14), whose active counterparts are all grammatical.

(13) a. Ben-it i-u thye një vazo
Ben-the$_{DAT}$ him$_{CL}$-NACT break.AOR,3S a vase$_{NOM}$
*me dashje.
willingly
*'Ben unintentionally broke a vase on purpose.'
b. Ben-it i thy-hej një vazo
Ben-the$_{DAT}$ him$_{CL}$ break-NACT,P,IMP,3S a vase$_{NOM}$
*me dashje.
willingly
'Ben felt like breaking a vase on purpose.'

(14) a. Ben-it i-u hëngër një mollë
Ben-the$_{DAT}$ him$_{CL}$-NACT ate.AOR,3S an apple$_{NOM}$
*me dashje.
willingly
'Ben felt like eating an apple on purpose.'
b. Ben-it i ha-hej një mollë
Ben-the$_{DAT}$ him$_{CL}$ eat-NACT,P,IMP,3S an apple$_{NOM}$
*me dashje.
willingly
'Ben felt like eating an apple on purpose.'

Moreover, as discussed in Kallulli 2006, this fact holds in all the languages that have constructions of the type in (6) or (7).

It is clear, however, that the presence or absence of a [+nonintent] feature on v^0 amounts to a parameter.[13] For instance, in English no [+act] v^0s may bear this feature, as witnessed by the fact that agent-oriented adverbs and purpose clauses are possible; [+cause] v^0s without the [+act] feature (i.e., the anticausatives) must bear this feature, thus ensuring that agent-oriented adverbs and purpose clauses are not possible; and verbs containing v^0s without the [+act] or [+cause] feature (e.g., *arrive* and other unaccusatives) may bear it as well. In Albanian, on the other hand, [+act] and [+cause] v^0s may freely be assigned the [+nonintent] feature if [−ext arg] is assigned too. In this case, the unintentional causation or involuntary state reading of the external argument's relation to the event emerges (together with the different case assignment, namely, dative). In fact, it could be argued that it is precisely the [+nonintent] feature in v^0 that triggers movement of the dative argument to its specifier position (from Spec,VP, its initial Merge position), thus giving rise to a complex θ-role for this argument, namely, unintentional causer or experiencer, respectively, as argued in Kallulli 2006. The fact that the unintentional causation and the involuntary state readings are not available when sentences like the ones in (6) and (7) contain an agent-oriented adverb confirms the correctness of this analysis; in this case, only a benefactive/malefactive reading, a possessive reading, or both are possible (Kallulli 2006).[14]

4 Conclusion

In this squib, I have reconsidered some well-known facts about passives and anticausatives that have prompted certain widely adopted theoretical claims, which however seem unjustified in the light of new phenomena discussed here. I have provided evidence for two syntactic primitives, *act* and *cause*, and I have shown that the various differences between passive and anticausative constructions in terms of their (in)ability to combine with *by*- and *from*-phrases, purpose clauses, and agent-oriented adverbs can be captured straightforwardly by the proposal that the passive/anticausative distinction is due to the activity/cause types of v^0s. Variation arises from the interaction of the different feature bundles in v^0 with language-specific vocabulary items.

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[13] This was pointed out by an anonymous reviewer.

[14] In this context, so-called out-of-control morphology in St'át'imcets (Demirdache 1997, Davis and Demirdache 2000) can be seen as a realization of the [+nonintent] morpheme in this language too.

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