

Passives

The (c) sentences in the examples below are called “passive” sentences in traditional grammar. Consider the following hypothesis about the derivation of passive sentences.

- (1) *Hypothesis P*
Passive sentences are directly generated with the surface subject in subject position; they do not involve movement.

To implement this proposal, assume that there is a second auxiliary verb be_{psv} (in addition to the one you have already analyzed) which has the lexical entry in (2).

- (2)
$$\left[\begin{array}{l} be_{psv} \\ \text{CAT} \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{TYPE} & \{v, +aux\} \\ \text{INFL} & \left[\text{VFORM} \quad -en \right] \end{array} \right] \\ \text{INFL} \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{VFORM} & _ \end{array} \right] \\ \text{SEL} \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{COMP} & v \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

Part A Show how Hypothesis P derives the following sentence.

- (3) Those walls may have been being replastered.

Part B Use the examples below to construct an argument against Hypothesis P.

- (4) a. The kids threw toys into the playhouse.
b. *The kids threw into the playhouse.
c. Toys were thrown into the playhouse.
d. *Toys were thrown playthings into the playhouse.
- (5) a. The student pursued the hypothesis.
b. *The student pursued.
c. The hypothesis was pursued.
d. *The hypothesis was pursued the idea.
- (6) a. The authorities spotted Henry.
b. *The authorities spotted.
c. Henry was spotted.
d. *Henry was spotted the criminal.
- (7) a. The students may have recognized the difficulty of the problem.
b. *The students may have recognized.
c. The difficulty of the problem may have been recognized.
d. *The difficulty of the problem may have been recognized the complexities.

Base your argument on the selection features of the verbs involved. Be sure to make any new assumptions explicit, and to argue clearly and completely.

Part C Use the examples below to construct a second argument against Hypothesis P. Again, make your reasoning clear and explicit.

- (8) a. We fainted.
b. *We fainted the singer.
c. *The singer was fainted.

- (9) a. The prisoners died.
b. *The prisoners died the jailor.
c. *The jailor was died.

Part D Propose an analysis of passive sentences that does not run into the problems encountered by Hypothesis P. In developing your analysis, you may find it useful to bring together your observations about passives and your observations about the data in Assignment 5. If you find interesting similarities — or differences — between the two sets of data, you should be sure to comment on them. As usual, make all assumptions explicit, argue clearly and completely, and justify all proposals and claims.