An adversative passive in English : in search of origins

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1. Introduction[1]

The English passive, at least at the synchronic level, involves two auxiliaries, i.e. *be* and *get*, and synchronic studies of the so-called *get*-passive include Hatcher (1949), Lakoff (1971), Barber (1975), Chappell (1980), Vanrespaille (1991), Collins (1996), to name some. However, whether the *get*-passive is a true passive or not is questioned by several linguists (e.g. Haegeman 1985: 54–56, Downing 1996: 183); Haegeman considers it as a type of middle construction. Interestingly when it comes to its historical development, little work has been done: Miller (1985), Givón and Yang (1994) and more recently, Gronemeyer (1999) are probably the only works on diachronic principles, apart from Jespersen (1909–49), Visser (1963–73) and Denison (1993), who provide data for earlier periods.

The aims of this paper are two-fold: offer a detailed synchronic analysis of the construction '*get* + past participle', involving a typological sketch of the adversative passive, and a diachronic analysis of the *get*-passive with adversative reading. The statistical results are drawn from the Helsinki corpus (Helsinki) for early Modern English (eModE), ARCHER corpus for late Modern English (lModE), Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen corpus (LOB) for Present-day English (PDE, written data) and London-Lund corpus (LL) for Present-day English (spoken data).

The organisation of the paper is as follows: we start with a synchronic analysis of various adversative constructions from a typological perspective. This will serve as a basis for the study of the English *get*-passive. We analyse its synchronic characteristics and provide a taxonomic generalisation. This leads to the diachronic study of the *get*-passive, with special attention for auxiliaryhood and the source of adversity. We start, then, with the synchronic typological characteristics of adversative passives.

2. Synchronic characteristics

2.1. Typological analysis of the adversative passive

The passive voice is often used to express such extra meanings as potentiality, spontaneity, obligation, etc. (see, for example, Shibatani 1985: 827–828 for examples). One such reading is adversity. The adversative passive is commonly found in restricted areas of the world, i.e. east and south-east Asia and in a restricted number of language families, viz., Altaic (Even, Japanese, Korean, etc.), Sino-Tibetan (Burmese, Chinese, Thai, etc.), Austric (Indonesian, Javanese, Vietnamese, etc.). However, there are some exceptions, such as Yup'ik (Eskimo-Aleut), which is spoken on the west coast of Alaska. Some of these languages form the passive morphologically, others, periphrastically:

(1) Periphrastic : Burmese, Cambodian, Chinese, Lao, Palaung, Thai, Vietnamese
Morphological : Even, Evenki, Indonesian, Japanese, Javanese, Korean, Yup'ik

Languages of the periphrastic type use submissive verbs or so-called in-bound transitive verbs (Chen 1994), sometimes known as verbs of experience (Keenan 1985: 257–261). What is characteristic of this type of verb is that the action is directed toward the subject, which automatically makes the subject a recipient, as in *I fear him*, where the subject is the recipient of fear, as opposed to out-bound transitive verbs, as in *I beat him*, where the direct object is the recipient of the action.

In this type of construction, the adversative or benefactive meaning depends on the auxiliary, e.g. *suffer* yields an adversative reading, *enjoy* a benefactive reading. Consider the following examples:

Chinese (Tiee 1986: 297)
(2) *Nèipíng jiu* ***bèi*** *tā hūwánle*
that-M wine suffer him drink-finish-ASP
'That bottle of wine was finished by him.' (adversative)

Vietnamese (Keenan 1985: 260–261)
(3) *Quang* ***bi*** *(bao) ghet*
Quang suffer (Bao) detest
'Quang is detested (by Bao).' (adversative)

(4) *Quang* ***duoc*** *bao thuong*
Quang enjoy Bao love
'Quang is loved by Bao.' (benefactive)

In the periphrastic construction, we can still observe the valency change commonly found in the passive, which is a valency reducing operation.

The morphological type involves the addition of passive morphemes, as shown below:

Indonesian (Kana 1986: 184)
(5) *Orang itu* ***ke-curi-an*** *sepeda*
person that AFFECT-steal bicycle
'That person had a bicycle stolen.'

Javanese (Davies 1993: 105)
(6) *Siti isa* ***ke-kancing-an*** *lawang-e*
Siti can AD-lock door-DEF
'Siti can get the door locked on her.'

Yup'ik (Eskimo-Aleut, Payne 1997: 207)
(7) *tuntuva nere-****sciu****-llru-u-q (carayag-mun)*
moose-ABS eat-PASS-PAST-INTRNS-3SG bear-OBL
'The moose was eaten (by a bear).'

What is noticeable syntactically is an increase in either cognate or grammatical argument structure, i.e. from two arguments to three. The added argument is a sufferer or beneficiary. Since the passive is known to be a valency decreasing operation in general, and so the morphological adversative passive is rather unusual among passives. An increase in valence is known to be a characteristic of the causative, and indeed, in some languages, adversative or benefactive passive constructions are often considered a type of causative. See, for example, Comrie (1976: 271), Babby (1981, 1993), Shibatani (1976, 1977). Consider the following examples, where the distinction between the passive and the causative is not clear:

Russian (Babby 1993: 343)
(8) *Ona šila sebe novoe plat'e*
she-NOM sewed herself-DAT new dress-ACC
'She made a new dress (by herself).' (Benefactive passive)
'She had someone make her a new dress.' (Causative)

Korean (Kim 1994: 333–334)

(9) *John-un Mary-eykey son-ul*
John-TOP Mary-DAT hand-ACC
cap-hi-ess-ta
hold-PASS/CAUS-PAST-DEC
'John had his hand grabbed by Mary.' (Adversative Passive)
'John made Mary grab his hand.' (Causative)

Indonesian

(10) Adversative passive (Kana 1986: 184)
Anak itu ke-tinggal-an di hutan
child that AFFECT-stay in forest
'The child got left in the forest.'

(11) Causative (Sneddon 1996: 73)
Ibu mem-bangun-kan Siti
mother TRANS-wake up-CAUS Siti
'Mother woke Siti up.'

(12) Causative with interpretation of emotion (Sneddon 1996: 73)
kami men-gkhawatir-kan munculnya
we TRANS-worry about-CAUS appearance
monopoli baru
monopoly new
'We are worried about the appearance of new monopolies.'

Kim (1994: 332–336), for example, shows that there is an equivocal boundary between the passive morpheme and the causative one in a restricted set of verbs in Korean, as exemplified in (9). This depends on the choice of verb. In the case of Indonesian as shown in (10) to (12), there is a group of verbs which can express the subject's emotion once the causative suffix is added.

It is not so rare for the passive to develop from the causative-reflexive construction in world languages, as noted by Keenan (1985: 262), Haspelmath (1990: 46–49) and others. The general change can be expressed in terms of the subject's control over the event/action. As claimed in Croft, Shyldkrot and Kemmer (1987), reflexive verbs often evolve and start to express a passive reading, triggered by the loss of a subject's control.

The presence of alienable possession can be an indicator of the adversative reading. As shown in Shibatani (1994: 461–465), when inalienable possession is present, the whole clause cannot produce the adversative passive, and the reading is just the basic verbal passive. One such pair of examples taken from Japanese are shown below in (13):

Japanese

(13) a. *Kare-wa shiranaihito-ni atama-wo nagur-are-ta*
he-FOC stranger-DAT head-ACC hit-PASS-PST
'He was hit on the head by a stranger.' (Verbal passive)
'*He was adversely affected by stranger's hitting him on the head.' (Adversative passive)

b. *Kare-wa shiranaihito-ni musko-wo nagur-are-ta*
he-FOC stranger-DAT son-ACC hit-PASS-PST
'He was adversely affected by stranger's hitting his son.' (Adversative passive)

The presence of the inalienable noun *atama* 'head' in (13a) prevents the passive clause from triggering an adversative reading, while in (13b), the adversative reading is the only possible one, since the NP *musko* 'son' is not an inalienable noun. We may note that this relationship is also common in dative adversative constructions with possessive or ethical dative (Berman 1982) or *datif étendu* 'extended dative' in French (Leclère 1976, 1978), as shown below:

French

(14) *Je lui ai brisé son vase*
I to.him have broken his vase
'I broke his vase to his detriment.'

Russian (Wierzbicka 1988: 279)

(15) *Oni ubili emu ženu*
they kill.PAST.PL he.DAT wife.ACC.SG.FEM
'They killed his wife.'

Hebrew (Berman 1982: 38)

(16) *rak še hi lo taxle li šuv axšav*
just that she not will sicken to me again now
'Just so she doesn't go and get sick on me again now.'

2.2. The English *get*-passive

The *get*-passive looks superficially similar to the passive with auxiliary *be*. In fact, this construction is treated as passive in the majority of works and

more typically, as the dynamic counterpart of the *be*-passive. However, the status of *get* as auxiliary is questioned by several linguists (i.e. Haegeman 1985: 54–56, Downing 1996: 183). It has been suggested that the *get*-passive should be treated as a construction 'verb + past participle as a complement' like *go* + past participle or *fall* + past participle. However, unlike the latter constructions, the *get*-construction always involves some outer cause, and the subject entity is always a recipient of this cause. In this section, we use the term *get*-passive in a broad sense and later on we further subdivide it into three different constructions. Our purpose in this section is to see into what category the construction falls synchronically. We hypothesize that it consists of several varieties of middle voice, thus creating a continuum in the grammatical voice system in English. This point is extended in the following section, where we will analyse it diachronically.

There are at least three different types of *get*-passive in Present-day English in terms of syntactic and semantic characteristics. Examples belonging to each type are given in (17). Beyond the differences, there is one common denominator, viz. subject's responsibility: (17a) signifies that the event happened due to the subject's carelessness, bravery, etc., (17b), due to the subject's excellence in politics, etc. and (17c), due to the subject's lack of driving skill, etc. Thus, we consider that the subject's responsibility is the basic characteristic of the *get*-passive.

(17) a. *He got shot by the riot police.*
b. *Bush got elected president.*
c. *He got accused of the pedestrian's death.*

Also, it is known that the *get*-passive tends to create a subjective viewpoint of the speaker/writer. This does not normally happen with *be*-passive.

The first distinction hinges on the subject's control over the action (for details, see Lakoff 1971, Vanrespaille 1991, Collins 1996, Downing 1996). In (17a), the subject is still in control, but not in (17b) and (17c). This can be proven by adding adverbs which express volitionality, such as *deliberately*, *on purpose*, *willingly*, etc., as demonstrated below:

(18) a. *He deliberately got shot by the riot police.*
b. **Bush deliberately got elected president.*
c. **He deliberately got accused of the pedestrian's death.*

We can replace (18a) with *be* instead of *get*, i.e. *He was deliberately shot by the riot police*, which means that the riot police shot him deliberately, while (18a) could mean that the subject *he* intended to be shot.

Another distinction relates to the extra meaning dimension, known as adversative or benefactive reading. This semantic import is exemplified in (17c) above, and some additional examples are shown below in (19):

(19) a. *He got arrested by the police.*
b. *The bag of cocaine got found by a police dog.*

Although these examples do not read exactly as (17a) and (17b) above, we can still trace the subject's responsibility, i.e. the subject's previous deed in (19a), the legal status of the substance in (19b), etc. The adversity dimension present in (19) can be highlighted in paraphrases like the following:

(20) a. *He was adversely affected by the police's arresting him.*
b. *I was adversely affected by a police dog's finding the bag of cocaine.*

What is noticeable is that the sufferer tends to be the speaker or writer. This suggest that one of the common characteristics of the *get*-passive is to introduce a subjective viewpoint, as shown in (20b). Interestingly, this holds true regardless of the animacy of the subject. What is characteristic about this type, apart from the adversative reading, is the increase in valence. In this case, however, it is not a syntactic valency increase but a semantic/cognate valence, since the speaker/writer is not involved in the argument structure of the active counterpart.

Thus far, we have shown that three different constructions are involved in the so-called *get*-passive. We now propose to assign a proper label to each type, viz., *get*-middle (17a , i.e. a clause with subject's control), *get*-passive (17b, i.e. a clause without subject's control) and adversative-*get* (17c, i.e. a clause without subject's control, but with adversative reading and increase in cognate valence). We will treat them as basic taxonomic patterns and henceforth we use the term GET-passive to refer to the construction '*get* + past participle' collectively, regardless of semantic differences. The following schema summarises the relationship among the three basic constructions:

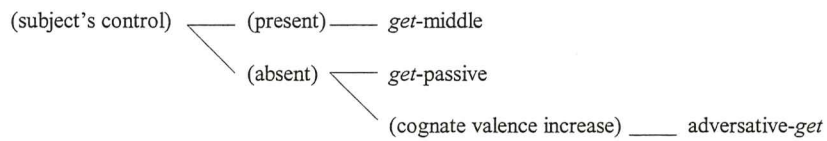

Figure 1. Basic taxonomy of GET-passive

Note that we exclude 'get + adjectival participle', as in *get fed up*, *get accustomed to*, etc., since we concentrate on the verbal construction. However, these adjectival participles have a role in the formation of verbal gradience.

The subject's control functions merely as one of the characteristics which help us to distinguish one construction from the others. In fact, the boundary among them is not so clear, since, as we will see below, there are other factors involved. This distinction, however, yields a differentiation along the lines of the agentivity gradience proposed by Vanrespaille (1991: 107), as shown below:

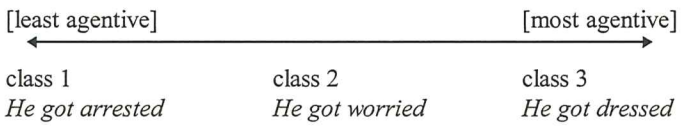

Figure 2. Gradience based on agentivity, adopted from Vanrespaille (1991: 107)

Her work is unique in that it focuses on the range of agentivity attributed to the subject going from "a mere hint of responsibility with a human subject over reflexive activity to causation of the part of the subject" (1991: 104). Her class 3 corresponds to our *get*-middle and class 1 and 2 to our *get*-passive. She does not, however, have a category adversative-*get*. The adversative-*get* tends to belong to class 1, where the agentivity is lowest.

Now that our taxonomy of GET-passive is established, we can proceed to take a closer look at some further semantic characteristics susceptible of clarifying the difference between the three subtypes. We will especially be concerned with the reflexive causative (2.2.1), animacy (2.2.2) and the presence of an actor (2.2.3).

2.2.1. Reflexive causative

The GET-passive, as we have seen so far, differs in some basic characteristics from the prototypical passive: One of its main characteristics

hinges on the responsibility or genericity of the subject. In English, this characteristic is shared with the so-called medio-passive, sometimes known as the middle verb construction. There seem to be two different types of medio-passive, viz. the unaccusative and the unergative. They differ in stativity, the subject's genericity and spontaneity. This can be summarised as follows:

Table 1. Distinction between unaccusative and unergative

	Unaccusative	Unergative
i. time reference	–	+
ii. imperative/progressive	–	+
iii. adverbials	+	–
iv. subject control	–	+
v. subject genericity	+	–

For details of these characteristics, see, for example, Erades (1950: 156), Rosta (1995), Fellbaum (1985) and Toyota (2003a: 158–181).

This distinction can be applied to the GET-passive as well: Some examples from my data seem to show the same pattern as in unaccusative and unergative constructions.

Unergative

(21) *They started courting at 14, and at 15 decided to* ***get married*** *as soon as they were of age.* [LOB F14 184–185]

Unaccusative

(22) *Having lost the chairmanship of the Technical Education Board, Sidney failed to* ***get re-elected.*** [LOB J39 154–155]

Following the criteria given in table 1 above, (21), for example, can be considered unergative, while (22) fits the pattern of the unaccusative. However, there are a number of examples which do not consistently correspond to either pattern, e.g. (23) and (24).

(time reference +, imperative/progressive +, adverbs +, subject control –)

(23) *"You needn't high-hat me! I'm trying to tell you something for your own good – if you ever want to* ***get paid*** *for what you're doing here!"* [LOB L05 137-139]

(time reference +, imperative/progressive –, adverbs –, subject control –)

(24) *It was one of the reasons why Stalin* ***got left*** *on the engine a long time after he was visibly unfit to run the train.* [G14 11–13]

The distribution of each type in our data of PDE is reflected in table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of unaccusative and unergative pattern in GET-passives

Unaccusative	Unergative	Others	Total
23 (11.0%)	30 (14.4%)	156 (74.6%)	209

Lexical restrictions seem to play an important role in the semantic characteristics of the GET-passive. For example, Granger (1983) and Siewierska (1984: 136), claim that there is no active counterpart for some examples, such as *get started*, *get lost*, etc. against the common notion that the *get*-passive has an active counterpart. Examples like *He got dressed*, *They got married* do not seem to have an active counterpart either. There seem to be two different tendencies in this type of exception: middle verbs (as shown above) and reflexive verbs such as *dress*, *wash*, *shave*, etc. As for the latter, about half of the GET-passives in my data have a reflexive reading. We may note that the presence of a reflexive marker is not obligatory for a reflexive reading to be obtained. As shown in table 3, more than half of the cases admit a reflexive reading.

Table 3. Distribution of clauses that admit a reflexive reading

	reflexive possible	reflexive impossible
Written	47 (46.5%)	54 (53.5%)
Spoken	60 (55.6%)	48 (44.4%)
Total	107 (51.2%)	102 (48.8%)

These results indicate that synchronically the GET-passive is closely associated with the reflexive or the middle constructions. This also coincides with the subject's responsibility, which is considered as a typical characteristic of both the GET-passive and the medio-passive in English. Thus, in terms of semantic characteristics, the GET-passive can be considered as a type of reflexive or of medio-passive construction.

2.2.2. Animacy

It is well-known that degrees of animacy can be arranged in hierarchical order. The animacy hierarchy indicates that people tend to look at an event from the viewpoint of the more animate, more human-like entity that occupies the subject slot, since we human beings tend to conceive the action denoted by verbs from the viewpoint of an entity higher in the hierarchy (Saeed 2003: 170). Thus, if the construction in question can behave like the passive, the subject's animacy has to be lower in the hierarchy. However, the animacy of the subject entity in the GET-passive shows somewhat different characteristics from the passive. Consider the following table:

Table 4. Animacy of the subject entity in GET-passive

Human	Animate	Inanimate	Total
177 (84.7%)	2 (1.0%)	30 (14.3%)	209

The active voice tends to view the action from a human viewpoint, while the passive reverses the viewpoint and allows us to see the event or action form the viewpoint of a non-human animate or inanimate. In the *get*-passive and *get*-adversative, this reversal does not seem to happen. Thus, as far as the animacy hierarchy is concerned, it is more like the active or the middle.

Get itself does not seem to have been much grammaticalised as auxiliary of the passive (see the introduction of 2.2.). This lower degree of grammaticalisation may perhaps be explained by its human-based animacy.

2.2.3. Presence of an actor

The middle or reflexive does not require the presence of an actor in an oblique phrase, commonly headed by the preposition *by*. In the GET-passive construction, the presence of an actor phrase is quite rare, as noted in Vanrespaille (1991: 99), Leech and Svartvik (1994: 330). The occurrences of an agent phrase in our data are listed in table 5, and exemplified in (25)–(28):

Table 5. Presence of agent phrase in GET-passive

		Present	Absent
lModE		1 (1.6%)	61 (98.4%)
PDE	(written)	1 (1.0%)	100 (99.0%)
	(spoken)	2 (1.9%)	106 (98.1%)
	(total)	3 (1.4%)	306 (98.6%)

lModE

(25) *the only attention which it subsequently requires is to renew the oil of vitriol when it gets weakened* ***by absorption of aqueous vapour***. [1875 CROO.S6 1:1]

PDE

(26) *'Well, we're not going to bother to train anybody in our industry because they'll promptly get snapped up* ***by another industry,*** *' the Duke added.* [LOB A12 107–108]

(27) *she gets flatly contradicted* ***by Bernard*** *every time she opens her mouth* [LL 1 3 7212310 1 2 A 11 - 1 3 7212310 1 1 A 11]

(28) *I was getting quite impressed* ***by this*** [orderliness and uniformly new paintings of flats] [LL 4 4 12613200 1 1 D 11]

In these marginal examples, it is clear that the subject in each example has no control over the event. The presence of an actor indicates that these examples are *get*-passives. Low frequency may indicate that the GET-passive is still undergoing grammaticalisation and we predict that it will become more frequent in due course.

3. Diachronic Characteristics: emergence of *get*-adversative

The construction '*get* + past participle' has received a lot of attention, but mainly at the synchronic level. When it comes to the diachronic approach, it has been studied by only a few scholars as mentioned earlier, who have provided very valuable insights. Our own argument is similar to the reasoning developed in Givón and Yang (1994), and very sympathetic to Miller's (1985) localist approach.

The causative use of *get* in Givón and Yang (1994) and Gronemeyer (1999) can, in my view, be classified as what Song (1996: 49–67) calls a

purposive type. The purposive type is a type of causative derived by insertion of a recipient of benefit or adversity, as in *He got her a book*, where the recipient of *book* (beneficiary) is often expressed with a purposive case. In English there is no purposive case, and the recipient is normally expressed by a dative, reflexive pronoun or later a nominal preceded by *to* or *for*. The construction with dative beneficiary/reflexive pronoun started to appear around 1300, according to OED (*get* v. I 18a, 18b), as shown below:

(29) *Ay was he bone, To* ***gete*** *[Cott. Fete]his fadir venisun*
always was he ready to get his father venison
'He was always ready to get his father venison.' [a1300 Cursor M. 3502 (Cott.)]

(30) *Melior .. preide hire priueli .. to* ***gete*** *hire þat*
Melior .. asked her in private .. to fetch her the
gode gras as sone as sche miZt
good grass as soon as she could
'Melior asked her in private to fetch her the good grass as soon as she could.' [c1350 Will. Palerne 644]

In our view, following Givón and Yang (1994), Gronemeyer (1999), the locativeness in the purposive case contributed to the development of the causative construction with *get*. Examples (29) and (30) express the causation of possession, they can be paraphrased as 'cause someone to possess something'. Thus, the causative construction *He gets her to help him* can be considered to have been derived from the causation of possession. This change can be represented as follows:

He gets a present for her. *He gets her to help him.*
canonical[*get* benefit[*present*] *for* GOAL[*her*]] ⇒ causative[*get* causee[*her*] *to* GOAL[*help him*]]

Figure 3. Schematic representation of development of causative *get*, from Toyota (2003b)

In the causative, *help him* on its own does not function as GOAL, but it can be metaphorically understood as the entity to which the action is directed. Notice that the preposition *to* functions as an indicator of direction as well as infinitive marker. This explains that the *get*-causative takes a *to*-infinitive, but not bare-infinitive, when it takes a verbal phrase as object, e.g. *He got his brother to clean the room*, but not **He got his brother clean the room*. This *to* can be considered as a case of hypoanalysis (Croft 2000:

126–130) or exaptation (Lass 1990) or regrammaticalisation (Greenberg 1991), i.e. a contextual semantic and functional property of the locative use of *to* is reanalysed as an inherent property of the syntactic unit (infinitive marker). For a similar argument, see Miller (1985: 178–179), Duffley (1992), Español-Echevarría and Mahajan (1995, cited in Gronemeyer 1999: 24), Toyota (2003b). The first example with *to*-infinitive attested in Visser (1963–73: § 2068) dates back to 1386, (31), and the next example is from 1410, (32). In OED (*get* v. III 30a), the first example is dated 1460, (33).

(31) *Non* ***gete*** *me ... to glent out of ryZt*
none made me ... to swerve out of justice
'No one got me to deviate from rightness.' [c1386 St. Erkenwald 242]

(32) *Abideth a litell, and I schal* ***gete*** *Zow to haue more*
wait a little and I shall get you to have more
'Wait a little longer and I shall make it that you will have more.' [c1410 Nicholas Love, Mirrour Blessed Lijf of Chr. (ed. Powell) 106]

(33) *And so myght we* ***gett*** *hym som word for to say.* [c1460 Towneley Myst. Xxi. 218]

The *get*-causative with past participle, another construction related to the GET-passive, started to appear around 1500 (OED *get* v. III. 28), although there are some earlier isolated examples in Visser (1963–73: § 2115), as exemplified below:

(34) *Thow* ***getest*** *fable noon ytold for me*
you get fables none told for me
'You won't hear any fables told from me.' [c1386 Chaucer, C. T .I 31]

(35) *I can* ***get*** *no such some* [= *sum*] *confessed.* [1548 Invent. Ch. Goods (Surtees) 119]

Compare examples (31) to (33) with (34) and (35). Visser (1963–73) notes that examples like (33) and (34) are frequent from late Middle English (lME) to the present (§ 2068), while the constructions in (31) to (33), date from Middle English (ME) to the present (§ 2115). This seems to suggest that *to*-infinitive and past participle both started to appear in the *get*-

causative and gained in frequency around 1500. This may indicate that as long as the indirect object NP retains the purposive sense, the verb phrase in the subordinate clause can take the form of a *to*-infinitive or participle clause.

Among *get*-causatives with past participle, the direct object is sometimes the reflexive pronoun in *-self*. Some of the earlier occurrences are shown below:

(36) *La Fleur .. had* ***got*** *himself so gallantly array'd, I scare knew him.* [1768 STERNE Sent. Journ. (1778) II. 120 (Le Dimanche)]

(37) *Poor Barty .. had applied, and* ***got*** *himself appointed a writer to the .. East India Company.* [1779 R. GRAVES Columella I. 184]

In our view, examples like (36) and (37) are the source of various GET-passive constructions. The development can be explained as follows: the reflexive pronoun makes the clause more like the middle construction, whether unaccusative or unergative. In these examples, the lower clause has a subject, which is still in control of an action or at least responsible for it. As we have seen earlier, the loss of subject's control in the reflexive construction often turns into the passive reading. This is closely related to the animacy of the subject, i.e. when it is inanimate, it is less likely to be in control. In the following example, for instance, the subject is not in control, but still responsible for the event denoted by the past participle.

(38) *One of the most costly, splendid, and elaborate structures in the world ..* ***got*** *itself built.* [1877 MRS. OLIPHANT Makers Flor. Intro. 12]

The first attested example of GET-passive known to us dates back to 1652 (s.v. OED *get* v. 34b), as shown in (39) below. Some authors, such as Gronemeyer (1999: 29), suggest that example (40) should be considered as the first example and should replace (39). The next example (41) is from 1731 (Jespersen 1909–49: IV 108–9).

(39) *A certain Spanish pretending Alchymist ...* ***got acquainted*** *with foure rich Spanish merchants.* [1652 Gaule, Magastrom. 361]

(40) *I am resolv'd to* ***get*** *introduced to Mrs Annabella.* [1693 Powell, A very good wife, II.i. p.10]

(41) *so you may not only save your life, but* ***get*** *rewarded for your roguery.* [1731 Fielding, Letter Writers II.ix.20]

The GET-passive construction seems to be rare at the earlier period, and the earlier examples do not seem to be able to demonstrate the grammaticalisation of *get* as an auxiliary. The period of grammaticalisation is claimed to come much later: Strang (1970: 151) claims that it is late 18th century and Denison (1993: 440) suggests that it is 19th or 20th century. Indeed, examples cited in OED (s.v. *get* v. 34b), Jespersen (1909–49: IV 108–9), Visser (1963–73: §1893) clearly show that the frequency increases after the middle/late 1800s. Denison (1993: 433) also points out that the earlier examples often involve idiomatic phrases, such as *get rid of*, and the past participle may have more adjectival characteristics than verbal.

Examples like (40) and (41) above precede the examples of 'get oneself past participle' construction shown in (36) and (37). This seems to contradict the claim that the reflexive-causative is the source of the *get*-passive construction. However, the reflexive pronoun itself is not normally obligatory, except for certain verbs such as *avail oneself, absent oneself, pride oneself in*, etc. and examples (40) and (41) can imply the reflexive reading. Also, examples prior to the mid/late 1800s tend to have a subject which is still in control of the action. Thus, even if we consider the first occurrence of the source of GET-passive to be example (39) (considered as causative reflexive), it is not until the mid/late 1800s that the frequency increases and the loss of subject's control occurs.

If the GET-passive is derived from the inchoative construction '*get* + adjective' illustrated by (42), as claimed by Gronemeyer (1999: 29), then why wasn't the passive formed with other verbs: *grow*, *become*, *come*, etc.? See Visser (1963–73: § 1893) for a list of such verbs. These verbs can take an adjective as complement, as shown in (43) to (45) below. The emergence of an inchoative construction with these verbs is not simultaneous: some appeared as early as Old English (OE), others in late Modern English.

(42) *How to* ***get*** *cleere of all the debts I owe.* [1596 SHAKS. Merch. V. 1.i. 134]

(43) *þa* ***com*** *Gallicanus eac to gode geborgen*
then came Gallicanus also by God saved
'Then Gallicanus also came to be saved by God.' [Ælfric, Saints' Lives (Skeat) 7, 336]

(44) *The gazer* ***grows*** *enamoured.* [1735-6 James Thomson, Liberty IV, 181]

(45) *It means playing ducks and drakes with things all round and letting the whole business* ***go*** *thoroughly rotten.* [1893 Punch 11 March 109]

These other choices normally cannot take reflexive pronouns as indirect object. Also, the hypothesis that the inchoative construction evolved into GET-passive does not explain why the subject in GET-passive expresses so-called subject's responsibility. This responsibility is often found in the medio-passive, as in *This book sells very well*, where the quality of the book generates sales. This also supports the case for a relationship with the reflexive construction, which often functions as the middle in English.

3.1. Auxiliarity

Linguists such as Givón (1975, 1979, 1984, 1989), Bolinger (1980), Heine (1993) incorporate factors from diachronic change in their treatments of the auxiliary. For example, Givón (1984: 270–271) describes auxiliaries as an intermediate stage between full lexical verbs and clitics. Thus, this diachronic approach supports the idea of a gradience or continuum of auxiliarity.

The choice of auxiliary varies according to the language in question. However, we can taxonomise them into some general groups. Keenan (1985: 257–261) suggests that there are four different types of auxiliary verbs in the periphrastic passive, which are: (i) verb of being or becoming, (ii) verb of reception, (iii) verb of motion and (iv) verb of experience. The auxiliary in question, *get*, is primarily a type of verb of reception, but is now also seen as a verb of becoming. Verbs of being seem to be the most common choice for the passive auxiliary across languages, although there are some languages which do not use *be* as auxiliary at all, such as Hindi or Urdu.

The degree of grammaticalisation varies according to the type of auxiliary. We need some objective method to judge it. For this, we use some of the numerous properties proposed in Heine (1993: 22–24), who lists 22 different auxiliary properties. On the basis of these properties, we can judge how auxiliary-like one verb is, i.e. when two or more verbs are compared, the one which has the most such properties is considered as the best candidate for auxiliarihood and thus, as the most grammaticalised type. The result can be visualized in the following continuum (the number in

brackets indicates the number of auxiliary properties applicable to each type):

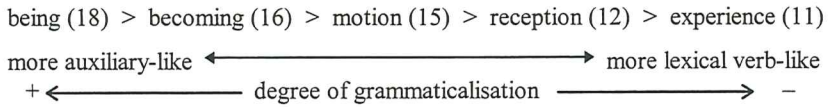

Figure 4. Degree of grammaticalisation of passive auxiliaries

None of them seems to have been fully grammaticalised, and even the verb of being is yet to be cliticised to complete the process of grammaticalisation. We may note that this completion can be found in some morphological passives like the Japanese passive, where the suffix *-(r)are* originates historically from a verb *aru* 'exist' but now fully functions as the passive suffix.

There is a general tendency for auxiliaries to be derived from copula verbs and if not, from motion verbs. Less frequent, but still possible, other complement-taking verbs (often known as quasi-copula) can be a source of auxiliaries (Foley and Van Valin 1984, Payne 1997: 84). In this list of possible lexical sources there is no mention of verbs of reception. Language-specifically, *get* in English possesses only 12 of the properties proposed by Heine (1993: 22–24) as shown above, and it is placed at the lower end of the continuum. Auxiliaries in English in general are known to possess certain characteristics known as the NICE properties. According to the NICE properties, *get* does not behave as auxiliary. For details, see Haegeman (1985: 54–56) and Downing (1996: 183). However, some instances of the GET-passive can be considered to be passives. Thus, judging from the result shown above, *get* itself is less grammaticalised than *be*, but we suspect that it is in transition.

We may also note that the *get*-adversative is typologically rather unusual. As we have seen in the previous section, the periphrastic adversative passive generally has in-bound transitive verbs, but *get* itself is not an in-bound transitive. It also fails to express adversity or benefactiveness based on the lexical meaning of the auxiliary. Equivalents of *get* can be found in other languages as apparent passive auxiliary (verb of reception, Keenan 1985: 257–261), as shown below:

Welsh (Celtic, Awbery 1976: 47)

(45) *Cafodd y bachgen ei rybuddio gan y dyn*
got the boy his warning by the man
'The boy was warned by the man.'

Tzeltal (Mayan, Keenan 1985: 259)

(46) *La y-ich' 'utel (yu'un s-tat) te*
PAST he-receive bawling out (because his-father) ART
Ziak-e
Ziak-ART
'Ziak got a bawling out (from his father).'

Example (46) above does not involve the verb in PAST PART, but instead as noun phrase *ei rybuddio* 'his warning', which functions as complement of *cael* 'have, get'. Constructions like (46) and (47) may be better considered as active voice with passive reading. On the other hand, the reason for considering the English *get*-construction as passive, is the involvement of the verb in past participle. However, the use of *get* in the periphrastic passive is a particular case, since it can express benefactiveness or adversity, while the auxiliary itself cannot be qualified as an in-bound transitive verb. This may cast doubt on whether verbs of reception can be a candidate for the passive auxiliary.

3.2. Adversity

In (48), a typical *get*-adversative, we observe the addition of cognate subject, the recipient of adversity. This recipient is often the speaker/writer, one of the characteristics of the GET-passive, i.e. subjective viewpoint (see, for example, Lakoff 1970, Chappel 1980, Vanrespaille 1991: 97–99, Downing 1996: 200–202). This creates an increase in semantic valence. Thus, example (48) can be paraphrased as (49).

(48) *'Well, we're not going to bother to train anybody in our industry because they'll promptly* ***get snapped up*** *by another industry,' the Duke added.* [LOB A12 107–108]

(49) 'We would be adversely affected by another industry's snapping up people in our industry.'

Earlier in 2.1, we have seen that the increase in syntactic and semantic valence is a common characteristic of the morphological adversative passive. We have also seen that this type of construction also has a lot of characteristics in common with the causative. The characteristics of *get*-adversative seem to be those of the morphological passive, rather than the

periphrastic ones, although it is a periphrastic construction. This confusion can be cleared up by taking into account the origin of the construction, viz., the reflexive causative: the *get*-adversative is a type of causative (reflexive causative) in origin and this explains why it shows characteristics of the causative in spite of its construction. Thus, the increase in semantic valency is triggered by the causative construction.

However, while the object of the causative *get* is reflexive in origin with regard to GET-passive, the cognate subject in the *get*-adversative is normally the speaker or writer, and the reflexive pronoun is not co-referential with the speaker/writer. This is where alienable possession becomes crucial. As shown in (13) above, inalienable possession does not allow an adversative reading. In the case of the *get*-adversative, the reflexive pronoun, whether overtly expressed or simply inferable, corefers to the subject entity, but the link between the subject entity and the speaker or writer is one of alienable possession. Thus, in example (48) above, the subject entity is the workers in the industry which belongs to the Duke. In a loose sense of possession, the Duke owns workers or the workers work under the ownership of the Duke. This fact also contributes to the subjective view of the speaker or writer in the *get*-adversative.

This adversative reading can be strengthened from two sources: the first one is a lexical source, and the second, as we have just seen, alienability. By lexical source, we mean that a verb in the past participle form on its own can express some sort of adversity. These verbs include *beat*, *arrest*, *break*, *steal*, etc. (see Downing 1996: 195–96 for a list of such verbs) as shown in (50) to (52) below:

(50) *so I should just add I meant to send you a postcard signed by Julius and myself but you know the way it is, yes you* ***get chased*** *around like a scalded cat and you haven't got time for any of [dhi:] courtesies in this world.* [LL 9 21 11 7000 1 1 A 1212 - 9 21 11 7070 1 1 A 1112]

(51) *"And who asked you to do the thinking around here?" Gaffer's lip curled in disgust. "Go on, beat it, and if you* ***get nicked****, I'll paper the walls with you."* [LOB L10 52-54]

(52) *You envy your girl friend who embarks on adventures with the necessary precautions - the crash helmets. This explains her ability to get out of events in which other girls might* ***get hurt****.* [LOB F12 108-111]

In this way, the adversity is a carry-over from the lexical meaning of the participle and if the auxiliary is replaced with *be*, adversity is often retained.

The second source is alienability. As we have seen, adversity can be expressed when alienable possession is involved, even if the verb does not express adversity on its own. Example (48) is one such case. We add some more examples below in (53) and (54).

(53) *What do you mean a couple of hundred tiles? Why do you have a couple of hundred tiles? Oh I don't know. You just* ***get left*** *with these things.* [LL 210 28 2250 1 2 c 20 - 210 29 2270 1 1 B 11]

(54) *I mean but they can do something fairly minor and* ***get sent*** *there.* [LL 4 7 15 1380 1 2 c 12 - 4 7 16 1400 1 1(c 11]

Notice that the examples with adversative reading in always involve a human subject. Inanimate subjects without inalienable possession are rare (see table 4 above on the subject's animacy). In those cases, it is harder to decide whether a clause is adversative or not. Consider the following example:

(55) *Now the hoodlums don't run liquor. They run governments. State governments like Nevada. Articles* ***get written*** *about it.* [ARCHER 1956Fleming.F9 1:1]

A first ambiguous point is the recipient of the adversity or benefit: it can be either the speaker/writer, i.e. 'speaker/writer is adversely/positively affected by articles' being written' or the people concerned, i.e. 'the hoodlums are adversely/positively affected by articles' being written'. When the subject is inanimate and an adversative/benefactive reading is possible, the recipient of adversity/benefit seems to be the people concerned, not the speaker/hearer. This reveals an interesting relationship between the adversative or benefactive passive and the causative. Under the adversative reading of (55), the people concerned, i.e. *the hoodlums*, do not expect the event and have no control over it. Under the benefactive reading, on the contrary, they normally expect the event and can sometimes (but not necessarily) have some control or influence. This difference might suggest that the adversative reading is derived from the passive, while the benefactive can come from either the passive or the causative. This can be schematised as follows:

Table 6. Different readings with inanimate subject and the passive/causative

Adversative reading	• subject has no control over the event → similar to the passive, i.e. *Articles are written about it on the hoodlums.*
Benefactive reading	• subject has no control over the event → similar to the passive, i.e. *Articles are written about it for the benefit of the hoodlums.*
	• subject has control over the event → similar to the causative, i.e. *The hoodlums get articles written about it.*

Thus, when we compare (55) above with its source construction, the *get*-middle, we observe two main semantic differences: loss of subject control and loss of subjective view point. In our view, this suggests that the adversity-*get* came after the *get*-passive, i.e. after the late 1800s, especially the one formed without lexical influence, since the adversative without lexical influence seems to be less frequent earlier. This indicates some internal semantic change in the *get*-passive. In the following table, we summarize the frequency difference of the *get*-adversative between late Modern English and Present-day English:

Table 7. Frequency of *get*-adversative

		Adversative	Non-advers.	Total
lModE		13 (21.0%) (non-lexical 1 (7.7%), lexical 12 (92.3%))	49 (79.0%)	62
PDE	(written)	28 (27.7%) (non-lexical 7 (25.0%), lexical 21 (75.0%))	73 (72.3%)	101
	(spoken)	27 (25.0%) (non-lexical 5 (18.5%), lexical 22 (81.5%))	81 (75.0%)	108
	(total)	55 (26.3%) (non-lexical 12 (18.5%), lexical 53 (81.5%))	154 (73.7%)	209

Earlier, we identified three different constructions, viz. *get*-middle, *get*-passive and *get*-adversative, which seem to appear at different periods of time. Considering the period when the frequency increased, i.e. not the date of first recorded appearance, the chronological order of appearance can be summarised as follows.

Get oneself PAST PART → *get*-middle (mid 1700) → *get*-passive (mid/late 1800) → adversative-*get* (late 1800/early 1900)

Figure 5. Chronological order of change in the 'get PAST PART' construction

The occurrence of earlier examples of GET-passive is too sporadic to really contribute to the process of grammaticalisation. The frequency increased after the emergence of the *get*-passive, i.e. the mid/late 1800s. This fits in the sequence of occurrence, since the causative reflexive 'get oneself past participle' appeared in the mid 1700s, thus leaving about a century for the *get*-passive to develop from the *get*-middle.

4. Conclusion

We have suggested that the English GET-passive is derived from the causative-reflexive/middle construction. The first major change happened when the clause subject lost the control over the event. The adversative/benefactive reading from the GET-passive, i.e. our *get*-adversative, evolved from a complex internal structure. The addition of an extra cognate argument is achieved in terms of alienable possession, i.e. the subject entity is in a loose sense under the possession or ownership of the recipient of adversity or beneficiary. This recipient is typically the speaker or writer. The GET-adversative thus reflects the subjective view of the speaker or writer. The adversative meaning is further enhanced by two factors: lexical source and alienability. Some verbs can convey an adversative/benefactive reading by their own, e.g. *beat*, *hit*, *lose*, etc. (adversative) and *donate*, *succeed*, etc. (benefactive). And while inalienable possession is incompatible with the adversative/benefactive reading, alienable possession licenses it.

Notes

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From Action and Motion to Transitivity and Causality

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Nicole Delbecque
Bert Cornillie

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