English *Get*-Passive Constructions:
A Corpus-Based Approach*

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The *get*-passive in English appears to be free variation with the *be*-passive in terms of propositional meaning. The former, however, displays quite distinctive grammatical properties from the latter in many respects. This paper reviews some grammatical properties of the *get*-passive construction and discusses the corpus findings of the data in question, focusing on the contemporary American English. The corpus search shows us that the choice of the *get*-passive depends not only on the dynamic properties of the main verb alone but also on the tight interactions among various grammatical components including the subject's animacy and its responsibility, eventuality type, and speaker's perspective. Pointing out the fact that the recent increase in its usages also reflects social changes, the paper also suggests tight syntactic and semantic links between the intransitive *get*-passive and transitive *get*-passive.

Keywords: corpus-based, affectedness, cause-relation, resultant state, grammatical interface

1. Introduction

The English *get* passive construction shows significant resemblance to the *be*-passive in that it can be interchangeable in many contexts. This can be evidenced from the following corpus examples (COCA: Corpus of Contemporary American English):[1]

(1) a. Anything she didn't be/get caught with evidence for she hasn't admitted to. (COCA Fox HC)
   b. Unfortunately, that issue didn't be/get covered tonight. (COCA ABC Nightline)

There are, however, many environments where the two display contrasting properties. For example, the two are not interchangeable when the verb is a state one or part of a phrasal verb as illustrated from the following attested data (see, among others, Svartvik 1966, Quirk et al. 1985, Huddleston and Pullum 2002):

(2) a. They would be/*get known as silencers or perhaps repressors. (COCA, Npr Talk nation)
   b. I am making the assumption that he helped *be/get rid of the body, is the allegation (COCA, Fox Susteran)

The contrast here seems to be related to many grammatical factors including the properties of the subject as well as those of the main verb, volitionality of the event involved, and others.

To better understand the uses of the *get*-passive in present days, we have investigated the COCA, COHA (Corpus of Historical American English), and BNC (British National Corpus). These corpora all support the view that the *get*-passive is preferred more in spoken than written English. In addition, the use of *get*-passives is steadily increasing from 1990 to 2010 whereas the frequency of the *be*-passive is decreasing, indicating that social context may affect its usages too.

In what follows, we first review main properties of the *get*-passive construction, referring to the *be*-passive when necessary. We then summarize our corpus findings, comparing them with the literature discussion. The key point this paper tries to show is that a single element such as the lexical properties of the main verb or its subject does not determine its usages to a full extent. We show that major determining factors in the choice of the *get*-passive depend on tight interactions among different grammatical properties (e.g., subject property, lexical property of the main verb, eventuality type, contextual cues, and so forth).

2. Basic Properties of the *Get* Passive

According to Collins (1996), the *get*-passive can be classified into five types, as

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minimally edited to increase the readability.

illustrated by naturally occurring data from the COCA:

(3) a. Central: A woman got phoned by her daughter who was already on
   the plane.
   b. Psychological: I got frustrated by the high level of unemployment.
   c. Reciprocal/Reflexive: She never got herself dressed up for work.
   d. Adjectival: His clothes got entangled in sewer equipment.
   e. Formulaic: I got fed up with sitting in front of my computer.

The central *get*-passive in (3a) has its active counterpart with the identical propositional meaning (e.g., *Her daughter phoned her*). When there is no agent present, we can infer it from context as in *The carpet was loose and my hill got caught*. The psychological type in (3b), headed by those like *frustrate*, *worry*, and *satisfy*, displays a mixture of verbal and adjectival properties. The passive form can be modified as in *get very frustrated* and further can be replaced by a lexical verb as in *feel frustrated*. The reciprocal/reflexive type in (3c) has a corresponding intransitive counterpart like *He dressed up* or *He got married*, canonically denoting a resulting state ('in a state of wearing clothes') with no agent.[2] The adjectival passive in (3d) has no relationship with an active construction and has no agent *by*-phrase (e.g., **She entangled/*She got entangled by her uncle*). Finally, the formulaic type in (3e) has lost the verbal properties and is used idiomatically as in *get used to* or *get accustomed to*.[3] Of these five types, the most common one is the central one which can be linked to active counterparts. In this paper, we confine our discussion to the central type showing the highest frequency with general properties, while referring to the other four types when necessary.[4]

   In English, the *be*-passive is the prototypical and unmarked one, but the *get*-passive displays several grammatical properties distinctive from the *be*-passive. The first main difference comes from the status of *be* and *get*. While the verb *be* is a typical auxiliary, *get* is not (cf. Haegeman 1985). This can be observed from the so called NICE properties:[5]

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[2] As a reviewer points out, examples like this seem to have no passive meaning but has a causative reading.

[3] The expression *get started* in examples like *Let's get ourselves started* is taken to be formulaic in the present analysis. See Quirk et al. (1985) and Collins (1996).

[4] Collins (1996) also identified that the central type consists of about 30% of the total 1,011 *get*-passive tokens collected from an about 5 million words spoken and written corpus.

[5] The NICE properties, sensitive to the auxiliaryhood, include Negation, Inversion, Contraction, and Ellipsis. See Kim and Sells (2008) and references therein too.

(4) a. He was not fired by the company.
    b. Was he fired by the company?
    c. He wasn't fired by the company.
    d. John was fired by the company, and Bill was __ too.

(5) a. *He got not fired by the company.
    b. *Got he fired by the company?
    c. *He gotn't fired by the company.
    d. *John was fired by the company, and Bill got __ too.

As seen from the contrast here, the passive verb *got* fails every test for auxiliary verbs: the verb cannot have a sentential negation followed as in (5a), cannot undergo auxiliary inversion as in (5b), cannot have a contraction form as in (5c), and cannot elide the following VP as in (5d). The possible alternatives are where the verb *get* is used as a lexical verb:
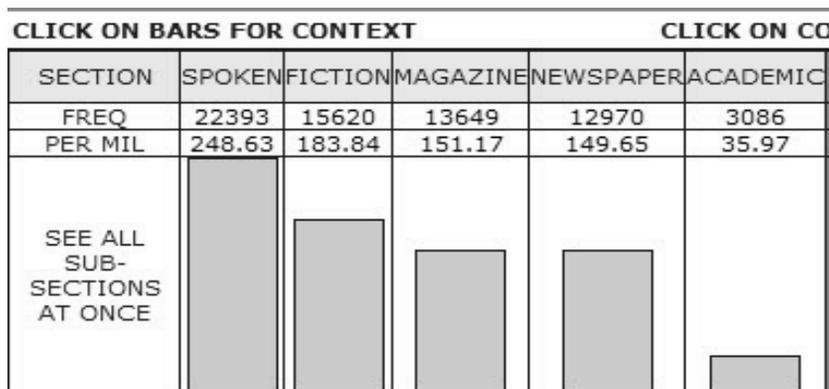
(6) a. He didn't get fired by the company.
    b. Did he get fired by the company?
    c. He didn't get fired by the company.
    d. John got fired by the company, and Bill did __ too.

In addition to these morphosyntactic differences from the *be*-passive, the *get*-passive displays quite different semantic and pragmatic properties. We can summarize some of the main properties that the literature often discusses.

Property 1: The *get*-passive is used less in formal style in both British and American English (see, among others, Collins 1996, Huddleston and Pullum 2002). In the COCA, a balanced corpus with about 400 million words, we have also observed that the *get*-passive is most frequently used in spoken texts and then in fiction, but least frequently used in academic texts as represented in the following figure:[6]

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[6] The search method we used in this paper is the consecutive sequence of the lemma *get* and the *en* participle verbal form. This may miss cases where an adverbial element intervening between the two.

CLICK ON BARS FOR CONTEXT				CLICK ON CO
SECTION	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	ACADEMIC
FREQ	22393	15620	13649	12970	3086
PER MIL	248.63	183.84	151.17	149.65	35.97

Figure 1. Frequency of the *get*-passive in the COCA

Considering fiction focuses on activities rather than description, it seems that the *get*-passive is preferred in describing situations involving an action. Such a preference in spoken texts is also observed in the BNC-WEB corpus as seen from the following table:

Table 1. Frequency of the *get*-passive in the BNC-WEB

Category	No. of words	No. of hits	Frequency per million
Spoken	10,409,858	1,760	169.07
Written	87,903,571	3,240	38.96
Total	98,313,429	5,000	

In the frequency we can also observe that the normalized frequency (frequency per million) in spoken texts is about 11 times higher than the one in written texts. This indicates that both American and British English thus prefer to use the *get*-passive in spoken or informal registers. As we will see in what follows, the high frequency of the *get*-passive in spoken or activity related registers seems to be closely related to the fact that the *get*-passive is preferred to the *be*-passive in representing dynamic activities (cf. Carter and McCarthy 1999).

Property 2: The *get*-passive is found only with dynamic verbs, describing the action in question (Downing 1996, Collins 1996, Taranto 2005). The predicates often used in the *get*-passive include non-stative verbs such as *caught, paid, done, dressed, fired, tested, picked, thrown, killed, asked*. It is not natural to have the

get-passive with a non-dynamic stative verb:

(7) a. It was/*got believed that the letter was a forgery.
    b. He is/*got feared by most of the staff.
    c. Joe hasn't been/*got seen for years.
    d. The teacher was/*got liked by everybody.

Perception verbs like *believe*, *fear*, or *see* are hard to be recognized as activity-denoting ones.

A similar fact can be observed from the contrast between stage-level predicates and individual-level predicates, as also noted by Fleisher (2006):

(8) a. John got arrested.
    b. *John got loved/red-headed.

The contrast here means that unlike the stage-level predication, the individual-level predication is not licensed in the *get*-passive. The tendency of the *get*-passive's emphasis on actions or processes can be further observed from its occurrence with frequency adverbs:[7]

(9) a. People always get caught for the cover-up.
    b. The employees in the company frequently got fired.

Since there is an adjectival passive describing a state, examples like the following can be ambiguous:

(10) a. The child got punished by the teacher. (actional)
    b. The ball got lost. (actional and statal)

There is no corresponding adjectival use for *punish* (e.g., **the punished man*), and (10a) then describes only the action in question. However, since *lost* can be used as an adjective (e.g., *the lost paradise*), (10b) can represent an action or a state.

Property 3: The subject of the *get*-passive is affected by the action in question (Taranto 2005). That is, the status of the subject needs to be changed

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[7] In the adjectival uses, psychological adverbs like *emotionally*, *reasonably* or emphatic adverbs like *so*, *too* are often used as in *get so frustrated*, *get emotionally involved*, and the like.

due to the action performed by the agent. Consider the following:

(11) a. The letter was written by you and no one else.
　　　b. *The letter got written by you and no one else.

The letter came into existence after the action of writing was carried out, so it was in a sense not affected. For an individual to be affected by an action, it needs to be there at the time of the action happens. This means that the preexistence of the subject is thus a necessary condition (Taranto 2005):

(12) The band/?TV programme/?volcanic eruption got watched by thousands.

The 'affected' condition can also explain why examples like the following are not natural:

(13) a. *Bull-headed man got feared by some.
　　　b. *The child got followed by a little lamb.
　　　c. *He got seen by the teacher.
　　　d. *His campaign got invented by a hostile press.

All these examples, possible with the *be*-passive, include non-dynamic verbs. The situation of being fearful of someone or seeing someone may not affect the individual.

　　A caveat lies in cases with the inanimate subject:

(14) a. The fine print sometimes gets neglected.
　　　b. A poem gets written in defiance of the artist's resistance.

The inanimate subject here is hardly affected by the action here, but we can say that the subject is affected from the speaker's point of view. For example, one's negligence of the print may decrease its value or the poem may reflect the defiance. What this means is that the affectedness condition depends not only on physical but also on psychological or conceptual conditions.

　　Property 4: The *get*-passive carries the meaning of 'arrive at a resultant state'. Combined with the property of denoting an action, this also hints that there is a causative relation that brings about a resultant state (cf. Downing 1996):

(15) a. John got hurt on his way home.
       b. John was hurt on his way home.

(15a) implies that someone or something caused John to be hurt, while there may be no such cause relation in the *be*-passive in (15b). This 'resultant' constraint is hard to be violated in the *get*-passive (Taranto 2005):

(16) a. The child got killed by a car.
       b. *The poem got read by a choirboy.
       c. *The bill got written by the House.

Even though reading and writing are a type of action, we cannot say that the choirboy caused the poem to be read. There is no resulting state from the action in question. Being a resultant state means that the eventuality the *get*-passive describes has an endpoint, being telic. The telic property of the eventuality in the *get*-passive can also be observed in the following:

(17) a. John got caught in one hour/*for one hour.
       b. John got promoted in two years/*for two years.

The *get*-passive is unnatural with the durative *for* PP phrase.

Property 5: The *get*-passive is characteristically used in clauses involving adversity, but it is also possible to describe a beneficial situation (Collins 1996):

(18) a. He got promoted multiple times.
       b. The story got published and won some recognition.

The *get*-passive usually conveys the speaker's personal involvement or reflects the speaker's opinion as to whether the event described is perceived as having favorable or unfavorable consequences (Chappell 1980, Sussex 1982, Collins 1996). This is why it is rather unacceptable to use the *get* passive when the predicate is stative or the subject-referent has no control over the process in question:

(19) a. *The teacher got liked by every student.
       b. *Tom got understood to have asked for a refund.

The situation of liking or understanding someone cannot bring out either a

favorable or unfavorable situation.

Property 6: In the *get*-passive, the subject-referent has some responsibility for the event in question (Lakoff 1971, Sussex 1982, Downing 1996, Collins 1996). This is also related to the 'affectedness' condition or the dynamic property of the construction:

(20) a. John was shot by Mary on purpose.
     b. John got shot by Mary on purpose.

The difference here is that the *be*-passive in (20a) implies that it is Mary who shot John deliberately. Meanwhile, the *get*-passive in (20b) implies that it is John who deliberately acted the action of being shot. In this sense, literature has suggested that the subject of the *get*-passive involves responsibility. The supporting evidence for the involvement of the subject's responsibility can be found from the frequent co-occurrence with controlling expressions:

(21) a. She **decided to** get/*be arrested (by the police).
     b. The soldier got/*was injured **on purpose** so he would be sent home.
     c. He ?got/*was arrested **by smoking weed**.

The bold-faced expressions here all indicate a certain degree of the responsibility the subject takes in the situation described.
     However, there are also cases where we can hardly blame the subject for the event in question:

(22) a. John got killed by a big truck.
     b. John got eliminated from the list by his director.

The subject here may not be responsible for what happened: the agent seems to be the responsible one.
     As we have seen, the uses of the *get*-passive construction seem to be governed by various grammatical properties. In sum, we can summarize the canonical properties of the *get*-passive as following:

(23) Proto-typical Properties of the *get*-passive
     The *get*-passive represents an action, focusing on what happened as the result of the predicate and the subject of the *get*-passive is

(psychologically) affected by the action.

In what follows, we will do a corpus search and see if we can find these properties in naturally occurring data.

3. Corpus Findings

3.1. Media

There have been several corpus-based approaches to the *get*-passive in English, but there are few focusing on the present American English (cf. see, among others, Collins 1996, Fleisher 2006, and Hundt 2001). To fill this gap, we have searched the corpora COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) and COHA (Corpus of Historical American English), both of which are freely available online. The COCA is the largest freely-available corpus of English, and the only large and balanced corpus of American English. The corpus, covering the present day English data ranging from 1990 to 2011, contains more than 425 million words of text and is equally divided among spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts.

The COHA allows you to quickly and easily search more than 400 million words of text of American English from 1810 to 2009. In doing the search, we used the lemma of the word *get* followed by [*en*] participle verb form. This means the search includes all the forms of *get* immediately followed by the *en* verb form, but excludes transitive *get*-passives as in (24) or cases with an intervening element as in (25):

(24) a. They like to get things done.
    b. You need to get legislation passed by congress.
    c. We will try to get it fixed.
(25) a. Our school got too caught up in emphasizing characters.
    b. You can get more done behind the scenes.

Central *get*-passives hardly allow an intervening adverb except an emphatic adverb like *too* or *so*, but adjectival and psychological predicates license a preceding intervening adverb. As for the transitive *get*-passive, we discuss its relatedness with the central *get*-passive in section 4.[8]

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[8] At this point, the question remains open of why no intervening adverbs, except an emphatic

3.2. Corpus Findings

We have made an extensive search of the COCA and COHA to see if the observations the previous literature has made are valid enough. We summarize some of the findings here.

Finding 1: In the COCA and COHA, the top 30 frequently used predicates in the *get*-passive include the following in order:[9]

(26) *get rid, marry, catch, start, pay, involve, do, dress, hit, elect, fire, arrest, lay, kill, kick, carry, throw, pick, hook, burn, turn, knock, call, make, send, pass, suck, mix, blow, ...*

As seen from the list, the highest ranking in frequency is the fixed formulaic form *get rid of*. Except this one, most of the verbs are dynamic ones denoting an action. Checking the top 200 high frequency verbs, we can find all the five types, as summarized in the following:

Table 2. Top Frequency Verbs in the *get*-Passive in the COCA and COHA

Types	Examples
Central	*caught, paid, done, hit, fired, arrested, ...*
Reflexive/Reciprocal	*dressed, noticed, ...*
Adjectival	*involved, lost, stuck, married, acquainted, ...*
Psychological	*excited, discouraged, ...*
Formulaic	*get rid of, get started, get used to, ...*

Of these, the central type is the most dominant one as also noted by Collins (1996), followed by the formulaic type.

Finding 2: As noted as one of the main properties, the *get*-passive occurs with dynamic verbs, representing the action in question. This can be supported by the high frequency non-stative verbs in the *get*-passive:

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adverb, can hardly appear between get and the passive verb.

    [9] The lemma form *get rid of* has 8758 tokens, while the ranking 200 *get mired* form occurs 40 tokens.

(27) catch, pay, hit, fire, arrest, kick, pick, turn, hook, invite, burn, suck, ...

However, we have not found non-dynamic stative verbs in the *get*-passive:

(28) be considered, be expected, be remembered, be obtained, be based, be
     required, be needed, be regarded, be believed, ...

These verbs are easily found in the *be*-passive form in the COCA, but do not
occur in the *get*-passive form in the COCA:

(29) a. Germany and France are considered sound investments.
     b. He wants to be remembered for pushing metrics and detailed public
        accounting.
     c. Legal advice is obtained from the department's solicitor.

The search for the *get*-passive with these main verbs yields no results at all,
indicating that the dynamic properties of the main verb are key factors in the
choice of the *get*-passive. That is, the *get*-passive is sensitive to the lexical
properties of the main verb.[10]

   Finding 3: As have been noted in the main property, the subject of the
get-passive is physically or psychologically affected by the action performed by
the predicate. This property is often found in the corpus:

(30) a. You get arrested for crime.
     b. Dave got hit and fell backward.
     c. Barack got elected based upon that movement.

Issues, however, arise from the contrast between the literature data in (31) and
the COCA examples in (32):

(31) a. *The truth got known.
     b. *Mary got followed by a little lamb.
     c. *Mary got seen.
     d. *The light got invented. (Alexiadou 2005: (14))

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[10] The psychological *get*-passive is different from the central type in that the main verb is
non-dynamic.

(32) a. She knows she's got influence with me and doesn't need to be overt to let her opinions **get known**. (COCA 2007 MAG)

b. Because I **get followed** by the paparazzi, we were trying to figure out how to do it without... (COCA 2010 MAG)

c. 14 billion videos **get seen** on YouTube every month. (COCA 2010 NEWS)

d. ...recall a childhood littered with sexual abuse. As with Mel Gavigan, memories of severe trauma may **get invented** rather than discovered, in their opinion. (COCA 1993 MAG)

Literature has assumed that examples like (31) are unacceptable (Alexiadou 2005, Taranto 2005, among others) because they violate the affectedness condition. However, our corpus search gives us examples in (32). Even though these verbs are not frequently used in the *get*-passive (around 50 tokens each in the COCA), their uses cannot be taken to be errors. One thing to note is that the subject in each case here seems to be affected by the event described here. That is, one's knowing her opinions may change the status of the opinions, or the paparazzi's following me surely affects my life. Similarly, people's watching the videos on YouTube may differentiate the ranking of each clip's popularity, and because of the afflicted experience, one may invent the traumatic memories.

What this means is that the affectedness condition can be satisfied by context or conceptual perspectives too. In addition, this also may indicate that it is not the lexical semantics of the main verb alone that determines the availability of the *get*-passive, but the type of eventuality involved in the *get*-passive (cf. Carter and McCarthy 1999, Taranto 2005). The variation between the *be*-passive and the *get*-passive is the matter of the whole eventuality involved.

Finding 4: We have observed that the *get*-passive has tendency to denote a resulting state of an event because of the action involved. In the COCA, we could also observe that the main predicates in the *get*-passive are mainly telic predicates as noted from the following COCA examples:

(33) a. Large numbers of people got killed in this field.

b. I have never seen anyone ever get knocked out by a potato.

c. Doing nontraditional things is a very effective way to get noticed.

The main verbs here describe an endpoint of the situation involved. However, non-telic activities can occur in the *get*-passive too, but most are coerced as telic

ones. This also means that the *get*-passive is preferred to occur with telic verbs:

(34) a. The health care bill will get passed by the House.
     b. You get recognized everywhere you go.

These two situations denote telic eventualities in which the subject reaches a culminating point, caused by the action involved. However, non-telic verbs can hardly found in the corpus:

(35) a. Racism is/*get experienced everywhere.
     b. An illegal action is/*get hated by most.

Of course, this does not mean that non-telic activity verbs do not occur with the *get*-passive. We could observe that verbs like *paint*, *write*, *bake*, *destroy* often occur in the *get*-passive with a goal, describing telic eventualities.

    One thing that has drawn our attention is the contrast in the progressive form between the *get* and *be*-passive forms. Observe the following COCA examples:

(36) a. New plants are/*got being built inside mountains.
     b. The most impressive work is/*got being done by Catholics in the immigrant parishes.

In fact, these COCA examples gave us only three tokens of the form *get being V-en* tokens, while total 20922 tokens for the *be being V-en* form. This again supports the assumption that the *get*-passive describes a resulting state caused by the action in question, while the *be*-passive can represent atelic processes.

    The importance of denoting a resultant state can be also supported by the fact that the *get*-passive form often occurs with a particle denoting the completion of the action involved. Observe the following COCA examples:

(37) a. You will be get burned **out** before physically.
     b. I mustn't get caught **up** in this absurd idea.
     c. After you get settled **down** into your new life, you may want some company.

The particles used here play the function of denoting telic eventualities, supporting the resultant state involved in the *get*-passive (cf. McIntryre 2005).

Finding 5: As noted in Introduction, the uses of the *get*-passive have dramatically increased in 1990's and 2000's. This can be observed from the chart search results of the COHA given in Figure 2.[11]

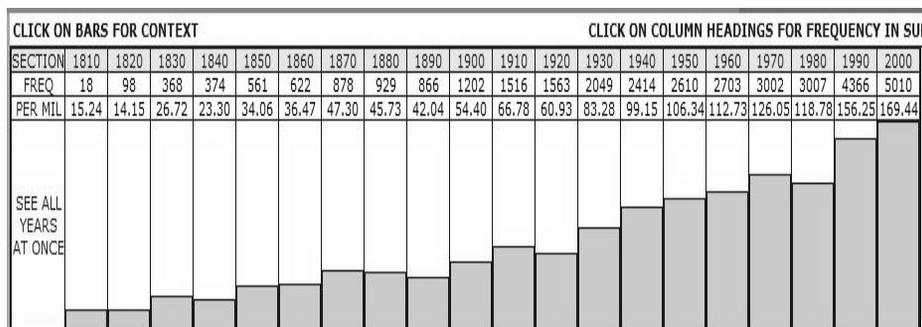| CLICK ON BARS FOR CONTEXT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | CLICK ON COLUMN HEADINGS FOR FREQUENCY IN SU |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SECTION | 1810 | 1820 | 1830 | 1840 | 1850 | 1860 | 1870 | 1880 | 1890 | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 | 1930 | 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 |
| FREQ | 18 | 98 | 368 | 374 | 561 | 622 | 878 | 929 | 866 | 1202 | 1516 | 1563 | 2049 | 2414 | 2610 | 2703 | 3002 | 3007 | 4366 | 5010 |
| PER MIL | 15.24 | 14.15 | 26.72 | 23.30 | 34.06 | 36.47 | 47.30 | 45.73 | 42.04 | 54.40 | 66.78 | 60.93 | 83.28 | 99.15 | 106.34 | 112.73 | 126.05 | 118.78 | 156.25 | 169.44 |

Figure 2. Frequency of the *get*-passive in the COHA

Seeing that in the 1810's, the normalized frequency per million was 15.24 while the frequency in the 2000's was 169.44: the frequency has doubled about 111%. Though the exact reason of the rapid increase requires further research, we may conjecture that from the mid 20 century, the social context became more dynamic and active. On the contrary, we found that the uses of the *be*-passive have been diminishing, as shown in Figure 3.

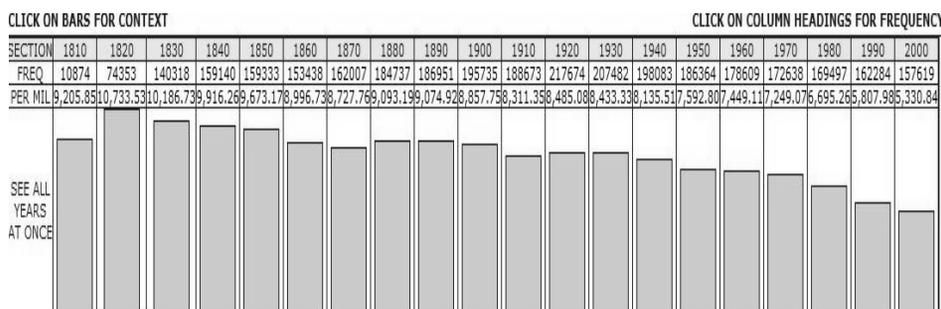| CLICK ON BARS FOR CONTEXT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | CLICK ON COLUMN HEADINGS FOR FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SECTION | 1810 | 1820 | 1830 | 1840 | 1850 | 1860 | 1870 | 1880 | 1890 | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 | 1930 | 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 |
| FREQ | 10874 | 74353 | 140318 | 159140 | 159333 | 153438 | 162007 | 184737 | 186951 | 195735 | 188673 | 217674 | 207482 | 198083 | 186364 | 178609 | 172638 | 169497 | 162284 | 157619 |
| PER MIL | 9,205.85 | 10,733.53 | 10,186.73 | 9,916.26 | 9,673.17 | 8,996.73 | 8,727.76 | 9,093.19 | 9,074.92 | 8,857.75 | 8,311.35 | 8,485.08 | 8,433.33 | 8,135.51 | 7,592.80 | 7,449.11 | 7,249.07 | 6,695.26 | 5,807.98 | 5,330.84 |

Figure 3. Frequency of the *be*-passive in the COHA

This change may indicate that the *get*-passive has been overtaking the *be*-passive in representing unambiguous active-related state of affairs.

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[11] See Hundt (2001) for a similar point for the corpus ARCHER.

4. Relatedness Among the Five Types

We have seen that the choice of the *get*-passive does not depend only on one aspect, such as the lexical properties of the main verb. The *get*-passive is employed to place emphasis on the action in question. The subject is generally affected by the action in question. Most of these properties are centered on the central type of the *get*-passive. In addition to the five types we have discussed, we also have the so-called 'transitive' *get*-passive with the form of '*get* + object + V[*en*]'. Observe that all the five types occur in the transitive *get*-passive form, as seen from the following COCA examples:

(38) a. He couldn't get the job done that way.
　　 b. I have to get myself dressed so quickly in the morning.
　　 c. The debate got them frustrated.
　　 d. It is not difficult to get people involved in something.
　　 e. I have been trying to get them fed up with part frames.

The clear difference from the 'intransitive' *get*-passive we have seen so far is the presence of the agent subject with the patient being in the object. These transitive *get*-passives have pragmatic constraints similar to the intransitive *get*-passive:

(39) a. *We get him believed that the letter was a forgery.
　　 b. *We got him feared by most of the staff.
　　 c. *We got the student seen by the teacher.

The non-dynamic stative predicates do not occur in the transitive *get*-passive. The transitive *get*-passive also has a cause relation bringing about the resultant state in question: the subject causes the object patient to be in the resultant state denoted by the predicate. As noted by Haegeman (1985), Taranto (2005), and others, the *get*-passive and the transitive *get*-passive seem to be closely related. In particular, they both include the patient who is affected by the action involved. We believe that this causation reading lies in both transitive and intransitive *get*-passive constructions.
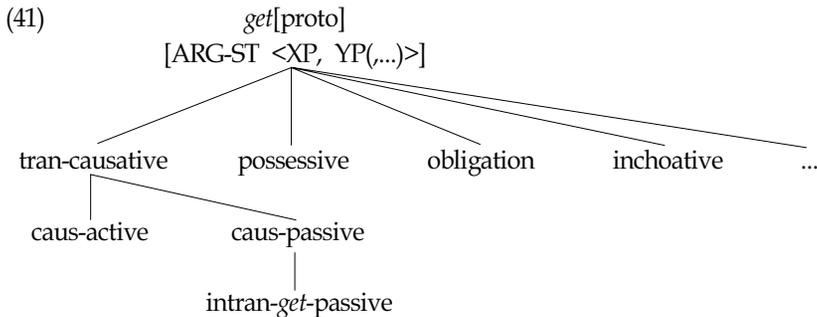
　　 Note that the verb *get* can appear with various different types of complement (cf. Haegeman 1985, Taranto 2005):

(40) a. Tell me how to get a refund without a receipt.
　　 b. People are starting to get angry.

      c. How did you get into this awkward position?

      d. You will have the chance to get in.

      e. I can see you already got rolling without me.

      f. You got to attend the big county fair.

There is no intransitive *get*: the verb takes an obligatory complement, representing varied meanings such as possession, movement, causation, obligation, permission, passive, and inchoative. However, as noted by Gronemeyer (1999), each complement here describes a resultant state that the affected patient (the subject) would be in due to the action involved.

    The question that follows is then how we can capture the multifunctionality or polysemy properties of *get* including the *get*-passive (Givon and Yang 1994, Fleisher 2006). Incorporating Haegeman (1985), Gronemeyer (1999), and Taranto's (2005) observations into the present system, we assume the following polysemy hierarchy for the verb *get*:[12]

(41)

$$get[\text{proto}]$$
$$[\text{ARG-ST} <\text{XP, YP}(,...)>]$$

tran-causative   possessive   obligation   inchoative   ...

caus-active   caus-passive

intran-*get*-passive

The hierarchy means the prototypical *get* is a transitive predicate selecting more than two arguments. One of its main subtypes is transitive 'causative', which can take an active or passive VP complement. The intransitive *get*-passive is a subtype of this transitive one. The example of the each type is illustrated in the following:

(42) a. Transitive-Causative (active): She got the police arrest him.

     b. Transitive-Causative (passive): He got the paper finished.

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[12] As a reviewer points out, this hierarchy is incomplete in the sense that each subtype has its own grammatical constraints too. Since the scope of this paper is limited to the uses of *get*-passives in American English, we leave it open to provide a formal analysis of *get*-passives. See Choi (2011) for issues in formalization too.

      c. Possessive: I got a book.
      d. Obligation: He has got to go now.
      e. Inchoative: He got wet.
      f. Intransitive-Get-Passive: He got fired.

Though the prototypical meaning of the verb *get* still needs to be defined, all the uses have at least two arguments: the subject undergoes a certain process denoted by the second complement. This is why no intransitive use of the verb *get* is licensed (e.g., *She got*). The active and passive *get*-causative both have a causer or initiator of the action and the patient affected by this casual action. We take the intransitive *get*-passive is directly linked to this transitive *get*-passive. This explains why the two have many similarities as we sketched before.

    This direction, in which the transitive *get*-passive and the intransitive *get*-passive are closely linked, is similar to the analysis presented in Haegeman (1985), Taranto (2005), and Fleisher (2006). For example, Haegeman's movement approach proposes that the passive *get* is the unaccusative alternative of the causative *get*:

(43) a. He got [them$_i$ [arrested t$_i$]].
     b. They$_i$ got [t$_i$ [arrested t$_i$]].

The transitive causative *got* in (43a) assigns the accusative case to the object via ECM after moved to the object position. The intransitive passive *get* in (43b) assigns no theta role or case to the internal argument *they*, so it is moved to the matrix subject position.

    This kind of derivational analysis is appealing, but our approach departs from this in many respects. For example, the present analysis does not adopt any movement processes of deriving one from the other. More importantly, we do not take the causative as an ECM type like *believe* or *expect*. Even though there are some similarities between the two as shown by Haegeman (1985), the two are clearly different in many respects as seen from the following contrast (cf. Butler and Tsoulas 2006):

(44) a. John expected there to be protests in the stadium.
     b. *John got there to be protests in the stadium.
(45) a. It is expected to bother her that John snores.
     b. *It is got to bother to bother her that John snores.

It seems to us that the object of the transitive causative *get*, unlike that of the ECM verb *expect*, is assigned a theta role, and the subject of the intransitive *get*-passive is not different in this respect: it has a thematic role of affected individual. This then supports the idea of base-generating the subject of the intransitive *get*-passive rather than deriving it from the internal object position through movement in accordance with Burzio's generalization.[13]

5. Conclusion

The English *get*-passive has many peculiar properties, different from the *be*-passive. These two types of passives are interchangeable in most cases, but each induces quite different grammatical properties. We have shown that the verb *get* in the passive first does not have full auxiliary properties like *be*. In addition, it induces idiosyncratic semantic and pragmatic properties, not linked to the *be*-passive. For example, the main verb in the *get*-passive needs to be dynamic and the eventuality involved is canonically telic in representing a resultant state reached by the action in question. The subject of the *get*-passive is in general unfavorably affected by the action too.

Our corpus findings also support these previous observations, but show us that the availability of the *get*-passive depends not on the lexical properties of the main verb alone: it relies on varied grammatical properties including the eventuality type of the event involved and contextual constraints such as the speaker's psychological perspectives. With the discussion of the multi-functionality of the verb *get,* we have shown that the most viable way to treat *get* is to link the transitive causative *get* with the intransitive *get*-passive. These two display identical semantic and pragmatic constraints: the only difference seems to be the presence of the causer.

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[13] Space limit does not allow us to discuss this issue in full detail.

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