

Parameters of passivization (under ECM)*

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1. Introduction

This note briefly explores situations in which passivization (PASS) is barred, concentrating on local and non-local PASS (more so on the latter, since it is the one showing parametric quirks; cf. Ciutescu 2018, Ordóñez & Saab 2018, Sheehan 2019, 2020a, Santorini & Heycock 1988, among others), and references therein. I outline an approach to the facts whereby PASS is barred if the relevant NP has already received inherent Case (being ‘inactive,’ *sensu* Chomsky 2000), following ideas by Uriagereka (2016) and Uriagereka & Gallego (2020); I apply this idea to all PASS (local and non-local) constraints. Our discussion pays special attention to Spanish data, and suggests that the appearance of *de* (in Spanish) / *to* (in English) has an effect on the activation of the Case-agreement systems (cf. Hornstein et al. 2010, Sheehan & Cyrino to appear), and probably concerns the nominal nature of clauses; cf. Ruiz-Alonso 2020).

2. The data

This section briefly reviews situations in which PASS in Spanish is blocked. I focus on simple and complex sentences: local and non-local PASS.

2.1. Local passivization

A well-known property of transitive verbs in Spanish (and other languages) is that they allow PASS. However, Mendikoetxea (1999) observes that certain, apparently transitive, predicates do not:

- (1) a. La fe obra milagros. (Spanish)
the faith bring-about miracles
‘Faith brings about miracles’
b. *Milagros son obrados por la fe.
miracles are brought-about by the faith
‘Miracles are brought about by faith’

* This is the first version of a paper that will be incorporated into the discussion in Gallego et al. (in progress). Thanks to Michelle Sheehan and Cristina Ruiz-Alonso for comments to a previous draft and much on-going discussion.

- (2) a. Yo tengo pocos libros. (Spanish)
 I have few books
 'I have few books'
 b. *Pocos libros son tenidos por mí.
 few books are had by me
 'Few books are had by me'
- (3) a. Di una patada a la pared. (Spanish)
 gave a kick to the wall
 'I kicked the wall'
 b. *?Una patada fue dada a la pared.
 a kick was given to the wall
 'A kick was given to the wall'

2.2. Non-local passivization

Sheehan (2019, 2000) discusses PASS in ECM contexts (for a robust Romance-based overview, see Ciutescu 2018 and references therein). As she observes, PASS is possible in English only with *to*-infinitival complements (cf. Hornstein et al. 2010 for additional discussion):

- (4) a. Kim_i was made [t_i **to** fall / run / read the book]
 b. *Kim_i was made [t_i fall / run / read the book]
- (5) a. Kim_i was seen [t_i **to** fall / run / read the book]
 b. *Kim_i was seen [t_i fall / run / read the book]

[from Sheehan 2019: 2]

When we turn attention to Spanish PASS in ECM contexts, judgments are far from uniform (cf. Treviño 1993, RAE-ASALE 2009: 26.10k, Tubino-Blanco 2011, Ciutescu 2018, among others). Nonetheless, there seems to be a consensus with respect to the factors regulating PASS: (i) the argument-taking properties of the embedded verb (transitive/unergative vs. unaccusative) and (ii) the nature of the matrix verb (perception vs. causative).

By and large, EA cannot undergo PASS with causative predicates, but the result seems to be better with perception ones:^{1, 2}

¹ The same holds with clitic climbing (cf. Paradís 2019, Saab 2015).

- (i) Juan se_i { *hizo / vio } [t_i comprar un auto] (Spanish)
 Juan SE made saw buy a car
 'Juan made / saw himself buy a car'
- (ii) Juan se_i { hizo / vio } [besar t_i]
 Juan SE made saw kiss
 'Juan made / saw someone kiss him'

- (6) a. *Juan_i fue hecho [t_i tomar un café] (Spanish)
 Juan was made take a coffee
 ‘Juan was made have a coffee’
 b. ??Juan_i fue visto [t_i tomar un café]
 Juan was seen take a coffee
 ‘Juan was seen have a coffee’

Typically, PASS is fine when the embedded predicate is unaccusative:

- (7) Juan_i fue visto [salir t_i de casa] (Spanish)
 Juan was seen go-out from home
 ‘Juan was seen leave’

Notice that what matters is not being EA or IA in and of itself: IA PASS is impossible with transitive predicates:³

- (8) a. *Los libros_i fueron hechos [recoger t_i]
 the books were made pick-up
 ‘The books were made pick up’
 b. *Los vecinos_i fueron vistos [recoger t_i]
 the books were seen pick-up
 ‘The neighbors were made pick up’

Details aside, the paradigm in (8) might plausibly be derived from minimality (cf. Ciutescu 2018 and references therein).

The problem with EA’s PASS in the case of causatives should be related to the fact that this argument can be raised from a post-verbal (inherently Case marked) position (after restructuring applies), according to our analysis below. Cf. Torrego (2010), Ciutescu (2018), and Sheehan (2020b).

² Example (6b) improves if the infinitival is a gerund. I will not discuss those cases here, as they probably involve a different structure (the gerund being a predicative of sorts. Cf. Sheehan (2019, 2020).

³ Although it improves with certain creation predicates, and if the *by*-phrase is added, as M. Sheehan observes through personal communication. The anti-minimality effect triggered by the *by*-phrase could follow if the preposition shields the agent NP, just like it does with experiencers in English raising configurations (cf. Gallego 2010).

2.3. Parameters

RAE- ASALE (2009:41.2d) points out that IOs can be passivized in some varieties of (oral) American Spanish, probably due to contact. Other than that, local PASS shows no significant dialectal variation, as far as I can tell.

What about non-local PASS? This pattern is subject to much subtler parametrization, as Sheehan (2019, 2020a) recently observes. In terms of dialectal variation, Montalbetti (1999) observed that IOs can undergo PASS in Peruvian Spanish if the embedded clause deploys *de* (Eng. *of*):

- (9) a. Juan le prohibió leer el libro a María (Peruvian Spanish)
Juan her.DAT prohibited read the book to María
'Juan prohibited to read the book to María'
b. María fue prohibida de leer el libro (Peruvian Spanish)
María was prohibited of read the book to María
'María was prohibited to read the book'
[from Montalbetti 1999:133-134]

The observation by Montalbetti (1999) is too similar to the English data to be a coincidence. A key question here is whether the control analysis is the right one for these predicates (as Montalbetti 1999 suggests), or an ECM one is plausible. The fact that (10) is possible supports the latter conclusion:

- (10) a. *Alguien obligó [que María leyese el libro] (Spanish)
someone forced that María read the book
'Someone forced that María read the book'
b. Alguien prohibió [que María leyese el libro]
someone forced that María read the book
'Someone forced that María read the book'

With this in mind, let us go back to a possible analysis of the facts.

3. An analysis

An agreed-upon approach to passivization (cf. Jaeggli 1986, Baker et al. 1989, and much subsequent literature) takes participial morphology to suppress accusative case and absorb the AGENT theta-role (*pace* Collins 2005). Chomsky (1995) takes this to be connected to *v*, a head that embodies Burzio's Generalization in his system. From the perspective of a Probe-Goal system, passivization is nothing but a VP internal Case-less Goal that is matched by the closest Probe: T (or C). If that is correct, then we must conclude that PASS fails if a Goal has not been deprived from Case, being

(11) *John_i seems [CP that [TP t_i is happy]]

(12) a. [_{VP} EA v [P (Aspect) [_{VP} V P IA]]] (European Spanish)
 b. [_{VP} EA v [D (Clitic) [_{VP} V IA]]] (River Plate Spanish)

(13) I made / had / let / saw / heard [_{voiceP} the perpetrators be fired]

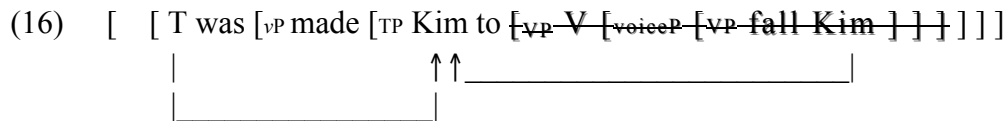
(14) a. Vi [a los delincuentes ser detenidos] (Spanish)
saw DOM the perpetrators be arrested
'I saw the perpetrators be arrested'

b. *Hice [a los delincuentes ser detenidos] (Spanish)
made DOM the perpetrators be arrested
'I saw the perpetrators be arrested'

(15) [[T was [_{VP} made [_{VP} ~~V~~ [_{voiceP} [_{VP} ~~fall~~ Kim]]]]]]

Notice that this story crucially assumes Chomsky's (2001) version of the PIC (PIC2, in Gallego 2010), which is discarded by Chomsky (2008) and Chomsky et al. (2019) on empirical grounds.

What about *to* insertion? Sheehan (2019) claims that this preposition corresponds to T, which has an EPP feature that triggers movement of the voiceP-internal NP, making it visible to external probes. This turns (15) into (16), where *Kim* can be probed by matrix T.



I will not assume Sheehan's (2019) approach to the letter. I do want to capitalize on the idea, rooted in Torrego's (1999) work, that *to*'s presence is related to an aspect-based Case assignment system (similar to Torrego & Pesetsky's 2004). More accurately, the intuition I want to pursue aims at treating the problems of local and non-local PASS, illustrated below, as one and the same:

- (17) a. *The book was had.
a. *Someone was made fall.

If PASS involves accusative absorption, so that the relevant VP internal NP is left Caseless, it is clear what is going on in (17): the NPs are not Caseless (as in hyperraising configurations, as pointed out above), for otherwise PASS would work, contrary to fact. The situation should not be too different from the Galician pair in (18), taken from Uriagereka & Gallego (2020), where agreement morphology in the embedded infinitival (*en*) blocks PASS.

- (18) a. Alguns_i foron vistos [t_i falar] (Galician)
some were seen.3.pl talk.inf
'Some were seen to talk'
b. *Alguns_i foron vistos [t_i falaren] (Galician)
some were seen.3.pl talk.inf.3.pl
'Some were seen to talk'

I assume (following ideas in Uriagereka 2006, Uriagereka & Gallego 2020) that clausal complementation involves the patterns in (19):

- (19) a. [*v* . . . [*V* . . . [CP NP **to** [_{voiceP} . . .]]]]

- ① *v* assigns ACC to NP
 ② *V* assigns INH to CP

- b. [*v* . . . [*V* . . . [_{voiceP} NP . . .]]]

- ① *V* assigns INH to NP

Three caveats are in order. First, I assume that *to* is actually a manifestation of *C*, under Gallego's (2014) analysis of the C-T connection. Second I take *V* to assign inherent case ('Null' in Uriagereka 2006, 'Partitive' in Uriagereka & Gallego 2020). Third, I argue that voiceP (and *v*P) cannot receive Case; more accurately, I assume that the activation of *v*'s accusative-assigning properties depends on the type of verb complement we have, whereas the activation of *V*'s inherent-assigning properties is default (being lexical). If that is correct, then we can explain why NP PASS is barred if *to* is absent. The same should hold for other PASS scenarios: *ceteris paribus*, NP PASS fails if the NP has (already) been assigned INH.

Before concluding, let us go back to the Spanish data, repeated below:

- (20) a. **Juan*_i fue hecho [*t*_i tomar un café] (Spanish)
 Juan was made take a coffee
 'Juan was made have a coffee'
 b. ??*Juan*_i fue visto [*t*_i tomar un café]
 Juan was seen take a coffee
 'Juan was seen have a coffee'

Under our proposal, the asymmetry above follows from the fact that *Juan* receives INH (inherent Dative) in (20a) before PASS applies. In (20b), *Juan* receives DOM, which shows a hybrid (structural / inherent) behaviour, as Ordóñez & Treviño (2016) argue (Torrego 1998 already claimed that there are different types of DOM, some structural, others inherent). The following data confirms the dative-like nature of *Juan* in (20a), a matter that is subject to variation (cf. Ordóñez & Roca 2017, Ordóñez & Treviño 2016, and references therein):

- (21) a. {*Le*/*?*Lo*} hice tomar un café (Spanish)
 him.dat/acc made.1sg take a coffee
 'I made him have a coffee'
 b. {*Le*/*Lo*} vi tomar un café
 him.dat/acc saw.1sg take a coffee
 'I saw him have a coffee'

At this point, a relevant question is why (22a) is better than (22b):

- (22) a. *Juan*_i fue [visto *t*_i] (Spanish)
 Juan was seen
 ‘Juan was seen’
 b. ??*Juan*_i fue visto [*t*_i tomar un café]
 Juan was seen take a coffee
 ‘Juan was seen have a coffee’

The logic above is that *Juan* receives structural DOM in (20a) before participial morphology kicks in, whereas it does inherent DOM in (20b), due to the presence of the embedded clause. In terms of the analysis in (19), above, (20b) involves (21), with the additional category postulated by Torrego (1999):

- (23) a. [*v* . . . [P/D . . . [V . . . [CP NP **to** [voiceP . . .]]]]]
 ① P assigns inherent DOM to NP
 ② V assigns INH to CP

Now, why do some speakers accept (marginally though, as pointed out in Sheehan 2019, 2020) (20b)? Our logic forces us to assume that such possibility is related to a parameter allowing PASS from a structural DOM situation.⁴ To be specific, suppose that movement can take place from a derived (PASS barring) or a base-generated (PASS allowing) position:⁵

- (24) a. [TP [T . . . [NP_i P/D . . . [V . . . [CP *t*_i **to** [voiceP . . .]]]]]] PASS ☹
 ↑
 b. [TP [T . . . [P/D . . . [V . . . [CP NP **to** [voiceP . . .]]]]]] PASS ☺
 ↑

The analysis in (24a) should hold for datives more generally, which cannot undergo PASS if their Case is *bona fide* INH. Needless to say, a more fine-grained analysis is needed here, as what we call DOM is a non-monolithic notion, with different degrees of variation going from accusative to dative, a distinction that further crosscuts the structural vs. inherent dichotomy (cf. Torrego 1998, Pineda 2014, Ordóñez & Roca 2017, Gallego 2013, 2020, and others).

⁴ Interestingly enough, this resembles Rizzi’s (1990) account of subject extraction and the lack of *that*-trace effects.

⁵ The availability of two positions has also been argued for causatives and other restructuring contexts (cf. Ciutescu 2018).

Consider, to conclude, the Montalbetti (1999) data again. Given our approach, the possibility to apply PASS to a dative, follows from the same reason that allows PASS with English causatives / perception verbs: *de* insertion signals the presence of a CP of sorts (an analysis that would carry over to *deísmo*, cf. Camus 2013), which then gets INH Case, and the NP receives structural DOM, and can therefore undergo PASS later on.

4. Conclusion

The previous pages have sketched a solution to a long-standing puzzle of Romance syntax: the restrictions on non-local PASS. I have argued for an explanation based on some version of the Case Filter (and Case uniqueness): Case assignment to an NP (here, PASS) fails if the NP already bears Case. If correct, the problem is akin to hyperraising. In particular, I wanted to draw a parallism among the situations in (25):

- (25) a. *La solución fue tenida (Spanish)
 the solution was had
 ‘The solution was had’
 b. ??Ana fue vista cantar
 Ana was seen sing
 ‘Ana was seen sing’
 c. *Ana fue hecha cantar
 Ana was made sing
 ‘Ana was made sing’
 c. *Mis primas parecen que cantan
 my cousins seem that sing
 ‘My cousins seem to sing’

The overall idea is that these cases are all out because the NPs are not Caseless by the time matrix T probing operates (or because the NP is frozen, if you prefer). It goes without saying, this must address the multiple (micro)parametric nuances recently reported in Sheehan (2019, 2020a); in fact, even the hyperraising situation has been shown to be possible in Romance (cf. Fernández-Salgueiro 2005 and Fernández-Sánchez 2015 for discussion). This should not come as a surprise, given what we know about other famous case of subject extraction: the *that*-trace effect (Rizzi 1990, Rizzi & Shlonsky 2007). Whatever the right account turns out to be, it must dissect the accusative-dative / structural-inherent cuts in a comprehensive way. I leave that for future work.

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