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The origin of passive *get*[1]

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The history of English passive *get* is examined, in an attempt to determine both the diachronic pathway of development and the linguistic mechanism of syntactic change. Passive *get* (as in *He got arrested*) is shown to have developed from inchoative *get* (*He got sick*), and not from causative *get* (*He got himself arrested*). Passive *get* arose in cases where inchoative *get* took an adjectival passive participle as complement and where viewpoint aspect was perfective. Perfective aspect, which yields a bounded-event reading, encouraged the reanalysis of the adjectival passive participle as a verbal passive participle. Though the pathway of change is the same as that identified by Gronemeyer (1999), the mechanism of change proposed here is novel. The theoretical import of the article is to show how semantic and pragmatic factors like aspect influence morphosyntactic reanalysis, and thereby to raise our expectations about what constitutes a plausible reanalysis and improve our understanding of syntactic change more generally.

1 Introduction

In this article I examine the history of English passive *get*, in an attempt to determine both its diachronic course of development and the linguistic mechanism by which that development occurred. Passive *get* is exemplified in sentences like *He got arrested*. The empirical interest of the article is to elucidate the history of an English grammatical construction that has existed at or near the margins of formal usage for several centuries but has garnered somewhat less than its fair share of attention in the linguistic literature. The theoretical contribution of the article is its suggestion for how to restrict and motivate the process of morphosyntactic reanalysis, in the hope of improving our understanding of syntactic change more generally. Following Fischer (1997) and Garrett (1998), I argue that structural ambiguity alone does not lead to syntactic change, but that there must be some additional interpretive influence that favors one analysis of an ambiguous structure over the other. I will show that this mode of explanation has significant empirical advantages for the analysis of the history of passive *get*, and that it is compatible with a generative approach to syntactic change.

The organization of the paper is as follows. Section 2 contains background information on passive *get* and on the sources used in the present study. Section 3 describes the pathway of change that led to the development of passive *get*, following

[1] Many thanks are due to David Denison and to three anonymous reviewers, whose comments have led to significant improvements to the article. Earlier versions of this work were presented at DIGS VIII at Yale University and at the UC Berkeley Syntax Circle in 2004; I am grateful to those audiences for helpful feedback. Special thanks are due to Andrew Garrett and Line Mikkelsen, who offered invaluable comments, advice, and support throughout the writing of this article.

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Gronemeyer (1999). In section 4, I present my analysis of the change and of the linguistic mechanisms involved, departing significantly from Gronemeyer's analysis. In section 5, other potential pathways and mechanisms of change are considered and rejected. Section 6 contains discussion of the theoretical implications of the analysis.

2 Background information on passive *get*

2.1 Passive and other uses of get

The English verb *get* has many uses, so it will be helpful to define precisely what is meant by 'passive *get*' and by the other *get* constructions discussed here in order to avoid confusion. As noted by Gronemeyer (1999: 10), in Present-day English *get* has at least the following senses: onset of possession, stative possession,[2] motion, permission, causation, obligation, inchoative, and passive. These are exemplified in (1) (examples from the British National Corpus):[3]

(1) (a) *onset of possession:* Next day it's the only way to **get** a ticket. (A06 937)
(b) *stative possession:* You'**ve got** a perfect motive. (A0D 358)
(c) *motion:* Without using any money, some of the escapees **got** as far as North Wales, Yorkshire, and Scotland. (A03 1009)
(d) *permission:* You may not **get** to attend client meetings, but this depends on whether you were employed as an experienced but young professional or are a new entrant who is just beginning. (EVF 1759)
(e) *causation:* Unfortunately, it is often difficult to **get** agents to attend these productions. (A06 1467)
(f) *obligation:* You'**ve got to** look at evidence, that's what you'**ve got to** do! (A0D 2317)
(g) *inchoative:* Sometimes students **get** anxious about this, and believe they are not making audience contact early enough. (A06 1394)
(h) *passive:* Well, we **got** caught, of course, by this very Mr Snead. (A06 924)

Syntactically, passive *get* consists of the verb *get* followed by a passive-participial complement. Semantically, it denotes a process or event undergone by the syntactic subject, much like ordinary passive *be* (though see section 6.2 for discussion of semantic differences between the two). Syntactic '*get* + passive participle' strings that denote a change of state, rather than a precisely delimited event, are typically classified as inchoatives or 'adjectival passives' in synchronic accounts of passive *get* (e.g. Chappell, 1980: 422–3; Collins, 1996: 48). These include examples like *get acquainted* and *get annoyed*. An oft-invoked diagnostic for distinguishing inchoatives from passives is that passives have an active paraphrase; however, for inchoative examples like *get acquainted* and especially *get annoyed*, this is not always a reliable

[2] I ignore the issue of whether the expressions *have got* (1b) and *have got to* (1f) are best analyzed as separate constructions. My purpose here is simply to demonstrate the range of uses of *get*, whatever their proper analysis.

[3] The BNC (http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk) is a 100 million-word corpus of contemporary written and spoken British English.

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test. Gronemeyer (1999: 6) acknowledges that there is much semantic overlap between the inchoative and the passive, writing that 'the boundary between the two uses is subtle and many examples are ambiguous'. This overlap is important for the diachronic analysis proposed in sections 3 and 4.

Excluded from our 'passive *get*' category are expressions that consist of *get* followed by a reflexive (or nonreflexive) NP object and a passive participle, such as *He got himself arrested*. These are classified as causatives here, though Chappell (1980: 430) and Collins (1996: 49–50) call them 'reflexive passives'. Section 5.1.1 contains a detailed analysis of these structures, in which they are shown to be syntactically quite different from passive *get*.

2.2 Chronology

Passive *get* is first attested in the middle or late seventeenth century, but occurs only sporadically prior to the late eighteenth century. The earliest examples of passive *get*, according to the *OED*,[4] Jespersen, and Gronemeyer, are shown in (2a–c), respectively:

(2) (a) A certain Spanish pretending Alchymist . . . **got acquainted** with foure rich Spanish merchants. (1652 GAULE *Magastrom.* 361) (*OED get*, v. 34b)
(b) You may not only save your life, but **get rewarded** for your roguery (1731 Fielding 1.446) (Jespersen, 1909–49: IV, 108)
(c) I am resolv'd to **get introduced** to Mrs Annabella (Powell, *A Very Good Wife*, 1693. II.i p. 10 from the ARCHER Corpus) (Gronemeyer, 1999: 29)

Visser (1963: I, 201) and Denison (1993: 419) follow the *OED* in citing (2a) as the first example, though Denison argues that since it contains the phrase *got acquainted*, it is equally interpretable as an inchoative; Denison (1998: 320) identifies (2c) as the better example (see note 10 below for further discussion of this point). All of these sources note that passive *get* does not become common until roughly a century later, with the *OED*'s next example dated 1793.

The data I collected (see section 2.4 for details) indicate that there were at least two stages in the development of passive *get*. Prior to 1760, the class of passive participles that could occur as the complement of *get* was restricted almost entirely to those that could be interpreted adjectivally (see section 4.1 below). By 1760, this restriction had been dropped, and the class was greatly expanded. The hundred-year gap in attestation noted above reflects the initial restriction of passive *get* to a small class of passive participles, many of which yielded an inchoative (adjectival) interpretation. In sections 3 and 4, I discuss the extension to other passive participles in detail.

2.3 Syntactic status of passive get

The verb *get*, in its passive use, is often called an auxiliary. Though its meaning and grammatical function appear to be similar to those of passive *be*, Haegeman (1985)

[4] I cite the *OED online* (http://dictionary.oed.com).

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shows that passive *get* fails all of the accepted syntactic tests for auxiliaries. It fails to invert with subjects in questions, triggers *do*-support in negative expressions, and fails to occur in tag questions, as shown in (3):

(3) *Subject-aux inversion*
(a) *Got he arrested?
(b) Did he get arrested?
Negative expressions
(c) *He got not arrested.
(d) He did not get arrested.
Tag questions
(e) *He got arrested, gotn't he?
(f) He got arrested, didn't he?

This fact is also hinted at by Jespersen (1909–49: IV, 110), who writes that 'The use of emphatic *do* with *get* or *become* is especially noticeable, because *do* cannot be employed with *be*.' Thus, passive *get* is syntactically quite different from its passive counterpart *be*, which behaves like a true syntactic auxiliary.

2.4 Sources used in the present study

All examples cited in the remainder of the article were collected from the drama and prose sections of the Literature Online (LION) corpus (http://lion.chadwyck.com). This is an unparsed corpus of English and American prose, poetry, and drama comprising more than 350,000 works from the fifteenth century to the present. All examples are cited by author/playwright, work, and year.

3 The pathway of change

In this section I briefly review evidence that passive *get* evolved from inchoative *get*, focusing on similarities in the syntactic distribution of complement types and semantic interpretation. I refer the reader to Gronemeyer (1999) for detailed arguments in favor of this pathway, as well as for evidence that inchoative *get* arose from motion *get*. Evidence against the position that passive *get* arose from causative *get* is presented in section 5.1.

The complements of inchoative and passive *get* share a strikingly similar syntactic distribution. Inchoative *get* takes an adjectival complement, while passive *get* takes a passive-participial complement. Passive participles occur in many of the same syntactic positions as adjectives, as shown in (4):

(4) *Predicative position*
(a) if my Child is dead, Smile when thou tell'st me, for he is **happy**! (Trotter, *Fatal Friendship*, 1698)
(b) 'Tis true that he is **married** (Lacy, *The Dumb Lady*, 1672)
Attributive position
(c) Providence points out the **happy** Pair (Beckingham, *Henry IV*, 1720)

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(d) I forsee a grand misfortune hanging over the heads of many a **married** Man (Anon., *The Mistaken Beauty*, 1685)
Small clause predicate
(e) you promis'd me this day, the death of Towerson, and now instead of that, I see him **happy** (Dryden, *Amboyna*, 1673)
(f) Mark it in me, I that thought to have stood the fairest pattern of my Sex; and would have blotted all the annals of guilty Love, yet now am lost fonder of my Beauclair than of Family or Fame, yet know him **married** (Pix, *The Innocent Mistress*, 1697)

Extension of the inchoative complementation pattern from adjectives to passive participles is unsurprising, given this distributional similarity.

Of course, we must distinguish between adjectival and verbal passive participles.[5] The examples in (4) all involve adjectival passive participles, whose syntactic similarity to adjectives is normally explained by analyzing both as projecting APs; i.e. the two elements have similar syntactic distribution because they are categorially identical (Levin & Rappaport, 1986). Passive *get*, on the other hand, takes verbal passive participles as complement. These have a somewhat different syntax than their adjectival counterparts, as they project a VP.[6] A proposal for how *get* goes from taking adjectival passive-participial complements (inchoative) to verbal passive-participial complements (passive) forms the major part of section 4. For now, it is enough to note that the two types of passive participle are morphologically identical, and that inchoative *get* can take the adjectival type as complement.

Inchoative and passive *get* are also semantically similar, as both constructions are associated with a resultative interpretation. The inchoative expresses a result state that holds after some onset event or process (as in *He got sick*); the passive focuses instead on the onset event or process that brings about the result state (as in *He got arrested*). In both cases, the result is an essential component of the meaning. Typological surveys and studies of grammaticalization have shown that resultative expressions often give rise diachronically to expressions denoting the event from which the result springs (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca, 1994: 68; Nedjalkov & Jaxontov, 1988: 49; Talmy, 1985: 92). As

[5] See Wasow (1977) for diagnostics distinguishing the two types of passive participle. Embick (2004) proposes a ternary distinction among English passive and resultative participles, the details of which do not affect the analysis offered in section 4.

[6] The verbal status of the passive participles in passive *get* can be demonstrated by considering the semantics of *un-* prefixation. When *un-* attaches to an adjective, it gives the meaning 'not A'; when it attaches to a verb, it gives the meaning 'to reverse the process of V'. The two meanings are shown in (i).

(i) (a) The gift was unwrapped.
(1) 'the gift was not wrapped' *un + adjective*
(2) 'someone removed the wrapping from the gift' *un + verb*
(b) The gift got unwrapped.
(1) *'the gift was not wrapped' *un + adjective*
(2) 'someone removed the wrapping from the gift' *un + verb*

The impossibility of the adjectival reading in (ib,1) shows that passive *get* always takes a verbal passive participle as complement (cf. Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 1441; contra Taranto, 2002).

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Nedjalkov & Jaxontov (1988: 49) put it, 'the resultative is historically an older pattern . . . in the opposition "resultative : passive" '. The inchoative-to-passive pathway of change is thus typologically quite normal.[7]

The available morphological, syntactic, and semantic evidence argues in favor of inchoative *get* being the source of passive *get*. The extremely close relationship between the two constructions outlined in this section suggests a diachronic development linking one to the other. In section 4, I turn to a detailed examination of how this change took place.

4 The mechanism of change

In this section, I show in detail how inchoative *get* gave rise to passive *get*. The explanation consists of two parts: (i) an examination of the multiple structural ambiguities that allowed morphosyntactic reanalysis to take place (sections 4.1 through 4.3), and (ii) a suggestion about the motivation for reanalysis (section 4.4). These two parts are the 'how' and 'why' of the change. I will show that, though the inchoative-to-passive change is syntactic in nature, the forces that motivate it are semantic and pragmatic.

4.1 Morphological ambiguity

As mentioned above in section 3, the formal identity between adjectival passive participles, which are complements of inchoative *get*, and verbal passive participles, which are complements of passive *get*, played an important role in the inchoative-to-passive change. A working assumption underlying the analysis offered here is that morphosyntactic changes occur neither at random nor by design, but instead through unintentional reanalysis of the linguistic forms involved (see, e.g., Lass, 1997: 341 and Croft, 2000: 66ff. for discussion of the problems with a teleological view of change). The morphological ambiguity that characterizes adjectival and verbal passive participles facilitated such unintentional reanalysis in the case of inchoative and passive *get*. By contrast, ordinary adjectives without passive morphology were unlikely to be reanalyzed as verbs or to give rise to a verbal interpretation.

Very basic facts about the change – its chronology and direction – suggest that, if passive participles were indeed the 'pivot' complements, we should expect to see adjectival passive participles as complements of *get* at an earlier date than the first verbal passive-participial complements. The available evidence supports this prediction. In the data I collected, only the following passive participles occur as complements of *get* prior to 1760: *acquainted* (46 attestations); *married* (3); *cleared*, *discharged*,

[7] This is not to say that passives based on verbs meaning 'get' are typologically common; as an anonymous reviewer points out, they are quite rare in the world's languages. Rather, given the preexisting (if typologically unusual) fact of an inchoative expression based on *get* in English, extension to a *get* passive is typologically unsurprising.

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dress'd, *engaged*, *introduced*, *prefer'd*, *provided for*, *served*, *shav'd*, *shifted*, *tipsy'd*, and *unmarried* (1 each).

Many of these passive participles, in particular *acquainted* (which accounts for most of the attestations), *married*, *dress'd*, *engaged*, and *unmarried*, are clearly interpretable as adjectives. They occur frequently in attributive position (when not occurring as complements of *get*)[8] and denote socially salient states that hold continuously of their arguments. According to the analysis proposed here, it is precisely their adjectival interpretation, and the AP syntax associated with that interpretation, that allows these passive participles to occur as complements of *get* in the first place. Inchoative *get* simply cannot take verbal complements, and so before the emergence of passive *get*, only those passive participles that could be interpreted adjectivally could occur as complements of *get*.[9]

Between 1760 and 1800, we see an explosion of new passive-participial complements: *admitted, announced, buttoned up, caricatur'd, clapp'd up, covered, cussed, delivered, drown'd, entangled, entrenched, established, expell'd, fix'd, frightened, fuddled, heated, hurt, hustl'd, julapped, jumbled, kicked, killed, love coddle'd, mobb'd, paid, perched, pickled, planted, praised, rammed, recommended, reproved, run through, scalped, scattered about, scoffed at, seated, settled, shut, slamm'd, snapt up, snubbed, squeezed, stunned, supported, sworn to, tinctured, undressed,* and *wedged*. Examples are shown in (5):

(5) (a) from thence you **got expell'd** for robbing the poors' box (Foote, *A Trip to Calais*, 1778)
(b) I was in a splenetic humour, and indulged myself in an exclamation against such an abominable waste of gunpowder; for which I **got reproved** by my angelic monitress (Holcroft, *Anna St Ives*, 1792)
(c) then I **got mobb'd** by the watermen, and broke my nose over a post running away from the link boy (O'Keeffe, *Modern Antiquities*, 1792)

[8] An exception to this diagnostic is *acquainted*, which is quite restricted in attributive position for two independent reasons. (i) Ordinary transitive *acquaint* requires a complement PP headed by *with*; however, in English no complement may intervene between an attributive adjective and the noun it modifies (Williams, 1982). This accounts for the ungrammaticality of **the proud of their daughter parents*, as well as **the acquainted with them gentleman*. (ii) When *acquaint* is not followed by a *with*-PP, it has a reciprocal interpretation, as in *They got acquainted*. Due to the syntactic constraint in (i) and the interpretive restriction in (ii), *acquainted* may occur in attributive position only when it has a reciprocal interpretation, as in *the newly acquainted couple*. The class of head nouns that may be interpreted reciprocally is naturally quite limited (apart from plurals). Thus, *acquainted* is possible in attributive position, but independent factors conspire to make this a rare occurrence.

[9] Of course, 1760 is an arbitrary cut-off point, and there are scattered examples of passive *get*, with passive-participial complements that are clearly verbal, prior to 1760, as shown here and above in (2). However, the use of verbal passive participles as complements of *get* did not become productive until after 1760, as shown below. The use of adjectival passive participles like *acquainted* was productive at a much earlier date, with the first attestation in 1616 (though note that in this example both adjectival and verbal readings seem to be available, as discussed below in note 10):

(i) Shee is like one of your ignorant Poetasters of the time, who when they haue **got acquainted** with a strange word, neuer rest till they haue wroong it in, though it loosen the whole fabricke of their sense. (Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels*, 1616)

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(d) he referr'd me to another, who kindly sent me to a third, that politely hurried me to a fourth, till at last I **got kicked** down stairs by a person who said he knew none of us (Reynolds, *How to Grow Rich*, 1793)
(e) A Member spied me – clear'd the gallery – **got hustl'd** by my brother spectators (Morton, *A Cure for the Heart-Ache*, 1797)

These complements of *get* are verbal passive participles, as evidenced by the eventive interpretation associated with them and the presence of a *by*-phrase in (5b–e) marking the logical agent of the event. These participles, particularly those in (5c–e), do not denote lasting states, in contrast to those from before 1760. The availability of an active paraphrase likewise provides clear evidence that these examples are passives, not inchoatives. Thus, by 1760 the inchoative-to-passive reanalysis had taken place. The morphosyntactic details of the reanalysis are the subject of the next section.

4.2 Syntax of the change

To understand the reanalysis that drove the inchoative-to-passive change, we must examine the syntax of the structures that served as the input and output of the reanalysis. Though adjectival and verbal passive participles are morphologically identical, they are syntactically quite different, and this is reflected in a syntactic difference between the two '*get* + passive participle' collocations. As *acquainted* is the passive participle that occurs most frequently before 1760, it will be used to illustrate the adjectival-to-verbal reanalysis.[10] Throughout, I adopt the syntactic framework of Government and Binding theory (Chomsky, 1981) as an expository convenience; the morphosyntactic and semantic facts discussed should be translatable into one's syntactic framework of choice.

I follow Levin & Rappaport (1986) in analyzing adjectival passive participles as projecting an AP in the syntax. On this account, adjectival passive participles are

[10] An anonymous reviewer objects that the passive reading is unavailable for *acquainted* and that it is therefore an inappropriate candidate for exemplifying the inchoative-to-passive change. Likewise, Denison (1993, 1998) suggests that example (2a), with *got acquainted*, is not a true passive (see section 2.2). I believe that there are at least two reasons why the passive reading, though available, can be difficult to get with *acquainted*. First, the verb *acquaint* is only rarely used in the active voice, and so it is difficult to construct passive examples with *by*-phrases that do not sound forced. Consider the active *Anne acquainted me with Fred* and the passive ??*I was/got acquainted with Fred by Anne*. The former is fine, if a little stilted, while the latter is quite awkward with either passive auxiliary. The reason for this, it seems, is that *acquaint* only weakly implies the existence of an acquainter-agent (in contrast to *introduce*, which requires such an agent). In the absence of an agent, the passive voice is used, but when an agent is present the active voice is preferred, perhaps because the relatively 'marked' presence of the agent is paralleled by the marked nature of the active voice for this verb. In any case, this complicates the active-paraphrase test for *acquainted*. Second, *acquainted* indicates a lasting, nondefeasible state, as opposed to participles like *dressed*. Once acquainted, one cannot become *unacquainted* with someone. Since an event of getting acquainted entails an unending state of acquaintance, a passive *get acquainted* can be difficult to distinguish from an inchoative, and in many cases both readings are available. This does not mean, however, that *acquainted* is impossible to interpret eventively, that is, as a verbal passive participle. The examples in (2a), (20b), and (i) in note 9 all denote events of acquainting which then lead to states of acquaintance, as indicated by the perfective aspect in all three examples and in particular by the onset-time adverbial in (20b). This allows the onset component of the event-structure to be attributed to the participle, as described below in sections 4.3 and 4.4. Though the two factors identified here can make it difficult to discern the passive reading, I maintain that *acquainted* has this reading and that the examples listed here are indeed interpretable as passives, even if the inchoative reading is not excluded.

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syntactically indistinguishable from ordinary adjectives, as shown in (6):

(6) (a) [$_{VP}$ acquaint NP$_i$] *verb*
(b) [$_{AP}$ NP$_i$ [acquainted]] *adjectival passive participle*
(c) [$_{AP}$ NP [happy]] *adjective*

Notice that there is no internal argument trace in (6b). Our analysis of the syntax of inchoative *get* must include structures like those in (6b) and (6c) as complements.

As for the verb itself, the *get* of inchoative *get* is a raising verb. It is intransitive and fails to assign any θ-role, as shown by its ability to take an expletive subject associated with the adjectival complement, as in the 'weather' predicate in (7):

(7) Last October, on the set in of winter – 'Ha, **it**'s got astonishingly sharp' – then, nobody like Sam Duffil the woollen draper – you smirk'd and smil'd, 'till he made you a present of a handsome Bath great coating (O'Keeffe, *The Czar Peter*, 1798)

The syntactic structure of the inchoative expression *He got acquainted with them* is shown in (8):

(8) He$_i$ got [$_{AP}$ t$_i$ [acquainted with them]] *inchoative* get

This structure combines the raising verb *get* with an AP complement whose external argument raises to the subject position of *get*. This is the basis for the reanalysis that produces passive *get*.

Verbal passive participles, which occur in the output of the reanalysis, are syntactically quite different from their adjectival counterparts. Categorially they are verbs, projecting a VP in the syntax, and they still assign an internal θ-role. An example is shown in (9):

(9) (a) [$_{VP}$ acquaint NP$_i$] *verb (assigns internal and external θ-roles and Case)*
(b) [$_{VP}$ acquainted NP$_i$] *verbal passive participle (assigns internal θ-role)*

In the reanalysis that produces passive *get*, the complement of *get* is analyzed as a structure like the one in (9b). The matrix verb remains the raising *get* of the inchoative, yielding a structure like the one in (10) (cf. Haegeman, 1985: 69):[11]

(10) He$_i$ got [$_{VP}$ acquainted t$_i$ with them] *passive* get

In this structure, the internal argument of the verbal passive participle raises to the matrix subject position to get Case.

The inchoative-to-passive change thus involves the reanalysis of structures like (8) as structures like (10). Both the input and the output of the reanalysis, repeated in (11), comprise the same morphosyntactic surface string:

[11] This structure differs slightly from Haegeman's, in that the internal argument does not move through an intermediate landing site between *get* and the participle. Full discussion of this issue will take us too far afield, but there is ample evidence from quantifier float that the intermediate position is unavailable in the passive (see Fleisher, to appear).

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(11) *Inchoative to passive: the morphosyntactic reanalysis*[12]

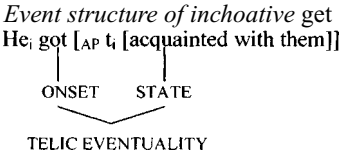
He_i got [$_{AP}$ t_i [acquainted with them]]	*inchoative* get
He_i got [$_{VP}$ acquainted t_i with them]	*passive* get

The reanalysis proposed in (11) also accounts for Haegeman's (1985) observation that, in the passive, *get* is syntactically a full lexical verb, not an auxiliary. The *get* of passive *get* inherits its syntactic status from the *get* of inchoative *get*, its diachronic source, which is not an auxiliary. While reanalysis affects the complement, *get* itself remains untouched syntactically, continuing to trigger *do*-support in all of the familiar contexts. This is taken to be a null hypothesis about changes in syntactic complementation: unless some unrelated factor intervenes, a change in complement type should not affect other properties of the expression.

4.3 Semantics of the change

In this section I show that the ambiguity in morphosyntactic structure described above is paralleled by an ambiguity in event structure, and that both ambiguities are crucial to making the inchoative-to-passive reanalysis possible. If the change in form described above were incompatible with the concomitant change in meaning, reanalysis would be heavily disfavored, as the lack of semantic ambiguity would prevent the two structures from being confused. Inchoatives involve a change of state: they consist of an onset and a state that holds as a result of the onset. The onset-plus-state structure yields a telic eventuality: in Aktionsart terms, either an achievement or an accomplishment (Vendler, 1957), depending on whether the onset event is punctual or not. We have seen above that the complement of inchoative *get* is an adjective, the prototypical state-denoting expression. By subtraction, we may infer that the *get* of inchoative *get* denotes the onset of the change-of-state event, i.e. the portion of the semantics not contributed by the complement. The event structure of inchoative *get* is shown in (12), with association lines linking event-structural elements to morphosyntactic items, as well as showing the internal structure of the event:

(12) *Event structure of inchoative* get



Passive *get* likewise involves a telic eventuality consisting of an onset and a result state; however, the verbal passive participle alone denotes both of these event-structural

[12] Though I do not pursue the details in the text, this change appears to support Roberts & Roussou's (2003: 34) proposal that syntactic change always proceeds in the direction of increased derivational economy, via 'change from the Move to the Merge option'. On a minimalist analysis, in the inchoative, *get* is merged under V and then raises, whereas in the passive, *get* is merged directly under *v*. Though their generalization is upheld here, the limitations on its explanatory power are made plain by the aspectual restriction discussed in section 4.4, which resists explanation in terms of economy.

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elements. This can be seen by considering the ambiguity of copular clauses with passive-participial complements, as in (13a) (Wasow, 1977: 350; cf. note 6 above):

(13) The door was closed.
  (a) Paraphrase 1: 'The door was not open.'
  (b) Paraphrase 2: 'Someone or something closed the door.'

The reading in (13a) involves only a state in the event structure, with an adjectival passive participle in the syntax. By contrast, the reading in (13b) involves both an onset and a result state (i.e. a telic eventuality), with a verbal passive participle in the syntax. From the interpretation in (13a), we may conclude that the copula does not contribute an onset to the event structure (in contrast to inchoative *get*), and so in (13b) the onset must be provided by the verbal passive participle.[13]

The morphosyntactic reanalysis that produces passive *get* therefore entails an event-structural reanalysis, i.e. a realignment of the onset and the state with respect to the morphosyntactic items in the expression. The event structure of passive *get* is shown in (14):

(14) *Event structure of passive* get
He_i got [$_{VP}$ acquainted t_i with them]



In passive *get*, the onset is associated not with *get* (cf. (12)) but with the verbal passive participle in the complement.

The event-structural reanalysis is comparable to what Ohala (1993) calls 'hypocorrection' in sound change, that is, misidentification of the source of a feature.[14] In both the inchoative and the passive, there is a telic eventuality consisting of an onset and a state; however, the '*get* + passive participle' string is ambiguous with respect to how those event-structural elements link to the morphosyntactic items making up the expression. As seen in the contrast between (12) and (14), the event-structural reanalysis – i.e. the misattribution of the onset – is intimately tied to the morphosyntactic reanalysis of the passive-participial complement as verbal.[15]

[13] As an anonymous reviewer points out, this inference does not necessarily follow in frameworks other than the generative-compositional one I adopt, following Wasow (1977). In a functionalist or construction-based framework, verbal and adjectival passives might be regarded as distinct constructions, with the difference in meaning not necessarily attributable to a single lexical item.

[14] This is not to be confused with Croft's (2000: ch. 5) notion of 'hypoanalysis'. The reanalysis described here is not 'form-function reanalysis' in Croft's sense; no 'functional' part of the interpretation is reanalyzed as a grammatical component of the sentence, or vice versa, and so this change does not match any of Croft's four proposed types of reanalysis. Rather, the reanalysis is entirely at the level of grammatical form.

[15] The inchoative-to-passive reanalysis conforms to the generalization that semantic change always proceeds in the direction of removing semantic information from a lexical item, and never adding information, a fact explored in detail by Traugott & Dasher (2002). Note that, though the event-structural onset is 'added' to the complement of *get* in the reanalysis described here, the complements of inchoative and passive *get* are different lexical items (different types of passive participle), and so, strictly speaking, the reanalysis involves

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It is important to note that the event-structural reanalysis is not simply derivative of the morphosyntactic ambiguity and reanalysis. On the contrary, morphosyntactic reanalysis would be impossible here if the event structure could not be satisfactorily reanalyzed, as well. For comparison, consider the verb *remain*, which, like inchoative *get*, takes adjectival complements, including adjectival passive participles:

(15) He remained married/frustrated/involved/interested/etc.

The adjectival passive participles in (15) are morphologically identical to their verbal counterparts. Unlike *get*, however, *remain* does not denote an onset; it denotes a state. Since the event structure of '*remain* + adjectival passive participle' contains no onset event, the adjectival passive-participial complements of *remain* cannot be reanalyzed as verbal; the requisite event-structural ambiguity never arises.

What becomes of *get*, then, after the passive reanalysis? Though *get* is not linked to anything in the event structure in (14), it retains its role as a locus of viewpoint-aspectual information. The examples in (16) show different viewpoint aspects encoded by passive *get*:

(16) (a) He **got** arrested yesterday. *perfective*
(b) He **was getting** arrested when I saw him. *imperfective*
(c) He **has got(ten)** arrested twice. *perfect*

The event-structural reanalysis does not affect the way in which viewpoint aspect is expressed. This is in accordance with the null hypothesis about change put forward at the end of section 4.2: a reanalysis in a particular domain should not affect other properties of the expression unless some independent factor intervenes.

The inchoative-to-passive change thus relies not just on morphosyntactic ambiguity, but also on event-structural ambiguity. In order for the change to take place, reanalysis must be possible in both domains, and the two reanalyses must be compatible with one another. The possibility of reanalysis, however, does not drive change by itself. Morphosyntactic and event-structural ambiguity may be viewed as necessary conditions for change, but as with all cases of hypocorrection, we must now consider the actual motivation for the change.

4.4 Explaining the change: the role of aspect

In this section I argue that the morphosyntactic and event-structural reanalyses detailed above were driven by (i) a general semantic ambiguity between the inchoative and the passive and (ii) the influence of the viewpoint-aspectual environment in which the change occurred, which strongly favored the verbal, eventive interpretation associated with the passive. These factors differ from the structural ambiguities described above in that they not only account for the possibility of change, but they suggest a reason why

the replacement of one lexical item with another. Thus, the unidirectionality in semantic change noted above is not violated, as it pertains only to single lexical items.

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the change occurred in the way that it did, providing an answer to what Garrett (1998: 323) has called 'the problem of motivation: Why, apart from its formal possibility, does a particular reanalysis happen?'

The semantic overlap between the inchoative and the passive, and more generally between resultative expressions and their corresponding onset expressions, has been noted in the typological literature, as mentioned above in section 3. Nedjalkov & Jaxontov (1988: 45) write that resultatives and verbal passives 'can be interchangeable in certain contexts, the differences in the overall meaning being insignificant'. Such semantic interchangeability exists between inchoative and passive *get*. We have seen above how inchoative and passive *get* are composed of the same event-structural primitives, with the sole difference that these link to different morphosyntactic elements in the different constructions. Informally, we might characterize the semantic difference between the two as 'onset of result state' (inchoative) versus 'event triggering onset of result state' (passive). The main difference is one of highlighting, or subjective framing: the result state is highlighted in the inchoative, while the entire onset-plus-result event is highlighted in the passive. An example is shown in (17):

(17) He got married.
  (a) Inchoative paraphrase: 'the state of being married began to hold of him'
  (b) Passive paraphrase: 'an event of marrying took place, with the result that he ended up married'

Clearly, the two interpretations are closely bound up with one another. One cannot begin to be married without having been the object of an event of marrying, and likewise one cannot be the object of an event of marrying without ending up in a state of being married. The two meanings are contained together in the passive participle, which names both the onset event and the result state in a single form. In this way, the inchoative and the passive are semantically interchangeable.

What, then, accounts for whether the result state or the entire event is highlighted? I propose that the difference is due in large part to the effect of viewpoint aspect. In particular, the contrast between perfect (i.e. resultative) and perfective aspect plays a significant role in determining which event-structural element – the result state or the entire onset-plus-result event – is highlighted. Perfect aspect signals the continuing relevance of some past event at the time of utterance, while perfective aspect treats events as discrete, bounded units (for an overview, see Comrie, 1976). While inchoative *get* occurs freely in both aspects, the earliest cases of passive *get* occur exclusively in perfective contexts. This can be seen both in the tense forms of the verb and in the use of temporal adverbials, which tend to refer to the time of the result state (which overlaps with the time of utterance) in perfect contexts but to the time of the onset event in perfective contexts. Viewpoint aspect is the crucial factor that can tease apart the semantic interchangeability described above and positively influence the development of the passive.

In the inchoative, examples of perfect aspect abound. The inchoative typically describes a state that holds of the subject for some period of time, and so the perfect,

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with its highlighting of a result state that overlaps with the time of utterance, is a good fit for the inchoative in many contexts. Examples are shown in (18), with perfect aspect signaled by the use of a perfect auxiliary (*have got* or *be got*) and speech-time and -place adverbials like *here* and *now*.

(18) (a) Polla, Polla! what a hooping and a hollaing is here? what **are** you **got drunk** again? (Ruggle, *Ignoramus*, 1630)
(b) Captain Plume, your Serjeant here **has got** so **drunk** he mistakes me for you. (Farquhar, *The Recruiting Officer*, 1706)
(c) About a month ago I had a little touch of the gout or so – but that's nothing – I **am** now **got** pretty **stout** again. (Bacon, *The Taxes*, 1757)
(d) you must know, Mr. Barnavag, our gentlefolks down in the country, to ape the elegance of your London taste, **have got mad** after camels, birds, horses, musical hares, balloons, and such things (O'Keeffe, *A Beggar on Horseback*, 1798)

Though result states are often quite important in the inchoative, nothing prohibits one from choosing instead to view such eventualities as discrete and bounded. As a result, the inchoative also occurs frequently in the perfective aspect, with the entire onset-plus-result structure treated as a unit. Morphosyntactically, perfective aspect is typically signaled by the simple past tense or the infinitive and by onset-time adverbials, as shown in (19):

(19) (a) S'foote man, I carried him last night among the Rorers, to flesh him, and by this light he **got drunke**, and beate e'm all. (Field, *Amends for Ladies*, 1618)
(b) I **got ready** as soon as e're I cou'd (Shadwell, *Bury-Fair*, 1689)
(c) Weel, Sir, I watched her motions – handed her till her chair – waited on her home – **got** most releegiously **intimate** we her – in a week married her – in a fortnight buried her. (Macklin, *The Man of the World*, 1797)

Despite the discrete, eventive interpretation of the examples in (19), which contrasts with the more stative interpretation favored in (18), nothing leads speakers to construe the complements of *get* as eventive. These inchoative complements are all adjectives and are morphosyntactically incompatible with anything other than a stative reading. The eventive interpretation comes solely from *get*, which contributes the onset to the event structure.

With passive-participial complements, by contrast, the complement of *get* is morphosyntactically compatible with both a stative, adjectival interpretation and an eventive, verbal one. As seen above in (17), viewing '*get* + passive participle' as a discrete event leads one to interpret it as an instance of the event named by the participle. That is, a temporally bounded event of 'beginning to be married' (*get* + adjectival passive participle) is more felicitously interpreted as a temporally bounded event of 'marrying' in which the subject is the undergoer (*get* + verbal passive participle). The viewpoint aspect of the expression can therefore influence the choice of interpretation, i.e. the choice between an adjectival passive participle and a verbal passive participle. This is not to say that the 'function' of perfective aspect is grammaticalized in some way, as in Croft's (2000: ch. 5) conception of 'form-function reanalysis'. Rather, perfective aspect introduces a semantic-pragmatic bias into the choice between two possible forms.

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If aspect drives the interpretation in this way, then we should expect the earliest examples of passive *get* to occur with the aspect that favors the discrete-event interpretation: the perfective. This is precisely what is attested in the data. In (20), we see early examples of passive *get* with perfective aspect and adverbials that refer to the event time (i.e. the onset time).

(20) (a) In the mean time, she got safe away with her Chevalier, he having provided for her all manner of rich Accoutrements, and took the first opportunity to **get married**. (Barker, *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen*, 1726)
(b) About this time I **got acquainted** with a Country-Gentleman, of a small paternal Estate. (Paltock, *Peter Wilkins*, 1751)
(c) Let the fellow go to America and **get scalped**; his hot head wants to be cooled. (Johnstone, *Chrysal*, 1760)
(d) In an instant, upon quitting the school, and first coming to town, I **got recommended** to the compiler of the Monthly Review. (Foote, *The Lyar*, 1764)

In the data I collected, every instance of passive *get* prior to 1800 occurs in the perfective aspect. The only passive-participial complements of *get* to occur in the perfect aspect are ones that can be interpreted adjectivally by the criteria mentioned earlier: *acquainted*, *engaged*, *entangled*, *entrenched*, and *shut*. Unambiguously verbal interpretations, in which the passive participle is incompatible with an adjectival reading, are restricted to cases with perfective aspect.

This aspectual restriction allows us to define more precisely the class of cases in which passive *get* develops from the inchoative. Morphosyntactically, there must be a passive-participial complement; aspectually, the expression must be perfective. Moreover, whereas the structural ambiguities described above establish the formal possibility of the change, the restriction to perfective contexts suggests a reason for why the reanalysis takes place. Perfectivity favors an interpretation in which the onset-plus-result structure is viewed as a single, discrete event. Unlike with plain adjectival complements, where such an interpretation cannot lead to morphosyntactic or event-structural reanalysis, with adjectival passive participles it can and does. That is, though an expression like *I got kicked* is fully compatible with the meaning 'I came to be in a state of being kicked,' it is far more natural in perfective contexts for the full semantics of the event – both the onset and the result state – to be attributed to the participle *kicked*, given the morphosyntactic and event-structural possibility of such an analysis. The influence of perfective aspect is the critical motivating factor that explains the inchoative-to-passive change.

5 Other proposed pathways and mechanisms of change

5.1 The causative source hypothesis

Many linguists have attempted to link passive *get* to causative *get*, based on the observation that these are syntactically and semantically closely related constructions (Dixon, 1991; Downing, 1996; Givón & Yang, 1994; Haegeman, 1985; Taranto, 2002).

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In particular, the similarity between the reflexive causative *He got himself arrested* and the passive *He got arrested* has aroused much theorizing about the connections between the two.[16] Analyses linking the passive to the causative cluster in two groups: those that focus on the synchronic syntactic relationship between the constructions (most clearly elucidated by Haegeman, 1985) and those that propose a diachronic development in which passive *get* comes from a causative source (Givón & Yang, 1994). My primary concern here is the diachronic proposal, which I show in this section to be unsupported by corpus evidence and semantically problematic.

Syntactically, causative *get* has the structure '*get* + NP + complement'; semantically, the causative involves an external agent, realized as the subject, causing the NP to enter a state or undergo some action. Here I limit my focus to cases where the complement is a passive participle, as this is the causative construction most closely related to passive *get*, and Givón & Yang's (1994) diachronic proposal takes this to be the source of the passive.

Givón & Yang argue that passive *get* develops from instances of causative *get* that contain a reflexive NP argument. The change from causative to passive consists of the elimination of the reflexive NP, as in (21).

(21) I got myself banished. > I got banished.[17]

On this analysis, the difference between the reflexive causative and the passive in Present-day English reduces to the presence versus absence of the reflexive NP; the rest of the structure is the same in the two constructions. This proposal is highly problematic, as it fails to account for thematic differences between the reflexive causative and the passive, and offers no explanation for differences in semantic and pragmatic properties of the subjects of the two constructions. I now examine each of these points in turn.

5.1.1 Thematic differences between reflexive causative and passive

In this section I show that the proposed causative-to-passive change cannot consist of elimination of the reflexive NP, contrary to Givón & Yang's analysis. By proposing that the reflexive NP is eliminated, Givón & Yang make the tacit assumption that all other elements of the causative construction are retained in the passive. This assumption can be shown to be false, by comparing the proposed causative-to-passive change to a true case of reflexive elimination. Amending the change in order to account for

[16] The semantic similarity between the reflexive causative and the passive has resulted in some terminological conflict, as noted in section 2.1, with Chappell (1980: 430) and Collins (1996: 49–50) calling '*get* + reflexive + passive participle' the 'reflexive passive'. I persist in using the term 'reflexive causative', due to the thematic differences discussed in section 5.1.1. See Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 1443) for a concise statement of the semantic differences between the two constructions.

[17] More precisely, Givón & Yang (1994: 144–5) argue that the infinitive *to be* is present until the last stage of the development: *I got myself to be banished* > *I got to be banished* > *I got banished.* I have omitted the infinitive here, as the semantic and thematic arguments made below are the same in either case, and there is little empirical justification for insisting on the presence of the infinitive, as infinitive-free examples are attested as early as 1633 in the data I collected:

(i) At length ('t is true) I **got** thee **banished**; If not reuenge, at least security (Greville, *Alaham*, 1633)

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this problem renders it implausible according to independent considerations about the nature of syntactic and semantic change.

The proposal that a reflexive NP should be eliminated from an expression, or that this should yield a synchronic overt/null alternation involving a reflexive NP, may be tested against other such cases in the literature. Safir (2004: 123) examines many examples of so-called 'zero reflexives' in English, in which a reflexively marked object may optionally be dropped without a significant change in meaning. Expressions of this type are shown in (22):

(22) (a) He washed himself. / He washed.
(b) He shaved himself. / He shaved.

Thematically, the subject of each sentence is the agent of the action, while the reflexive object is the patient. Importantly, elimination of the reflexive object does not affect the thematic status of the subject, which remains the agent in both types of expression. This can be demonstrated by adding a secondary predicate of result, which picks out thematic patients, as shown unambiguously in (23c) (cf. Levin & Rappaport Hovav, 1995: 39):

(23) (a) He washed himself clean. / *He washed clean.[18]
(b) He shaved himself bald. / *He shaved bald.
(c) He froze the water solid. / The water froze solid.

The ungrammaticality of the reflexive-less examples in (23a–b) shows that their subjects are thematic agents, and are therefore incompatible with the secondary predication. They correspond to the subject (agent) in the reflexive-containing examples, and not to the reflexively marked object (patient). Thus, elimination of the reflexive object does not alter the thematic status of the subject.

The situation with causative and passive *get* is quite different. As shown in detail by Haegeman (1985), the subject of passive *get* corresponds thematically not to the subject of causative *get* but to the object. This can be demonstrated by considering the grammaticality of secondary predicates of result, as in (24):

(24) (a) He got himself shaved. *reflexive causative*
(b) He got shaved. *passive*
(c) He got shaved bald. *passive with secondary predicate of result*

The grammaticality of the secondary predication shows that the subject of the passive (*he*) in (24b–c) corresponds thematically to the reflexive object of the causative (*himself*) in (24a). While the subject of the causative is a thematic agent, the subject of the passive is a thematic patient. Moreover, this secondary predication has been grammatical for subjects of passive *get* since the time when passive *get* first emerged, as shown in (25):[19]

[18] This is a judgment for the agentive interpretation, the relevant one for our purposes, and not for the grammatical middle interpretation, which is syntactically different.

[19] As an anonymous reviewer points out, a tacit assumption has been made that the Present-day English examples offered in this section reflect the grammaticality of the corresponding eighteenth-century sentences. In the

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(25) then I mounted up behind a physician's carriage, there I got jumbled and julapped **to death** (Colman, *Two to One*, 1785)

The thematic asymmetry between the zero-reflexive examples and the causative-to-passive change is schematized in (26). Underlining is used to indicate the syntactic arguments that share a thematic role in each pair of expressions.

(26) (a) Zero reflexives
(i) He shaved himself.
(ii) He shaved.
(b) Causative and passive *get*
(i) He got himself shaved.
(ii) He got shaved.

From (26), we see that we must abandon Givón & Yang's tacit assumption that the subject of the causative corresponds to the subject of the passive. Without this assumption, in turn, we can no longer maintain that the change consists simply of the elimination of the reflexive argument from the causative. By contrast, the zero-reflexive case is a true example of reflexive elimination.[20]

The thematic facts now force us to amend the causative-to-passive proposal. However, the change that must be accounted for – with the reflexively marked object of the source construction corresponding to the subject of the target construction – would be highly unusual both syntactically and semantically. There seem to be two main options for amending the change: (i) propose that the subject of the source construction is lost and the object is displaced in order to occupy the syntactic position left vacant, or (ii) propose that the reflexive NP is lost and the subject of the source construction, an agent, is thematically reanalyzed as a patient. These are shown in (27):

(27) (a) ~~He~~$_{Ag}$ got himself$_{Pat}$ shaved. > He$_{Pat}$ got shaved.
(b) He$_{Ag}$ got ~~himself~~$_{Pat}$ shaved. > He$_{Pat}$ got shaved.

The first option is the stuff of synchronic syntactic analysis; I know of no proposals suggesting that diachronic processes work in this way. Harris & Campbell's (1995) crosslinguistic study of syntactic change and the theoretical framework they advance certainly do not countenance a syntactic change of this type.

The second option, though on firmer ground syntactically, is semantically problematic. It is unclear how the thematic reanalysis of the subject, from agent to patient, would be motivated. Despite the fact that the two arguments of the reflexive causative are referentially identical, we would still have to account for the loss of the agent role – a significant mystery (see section 5.1.2 for more on just how problematic this

absence of native speakers of eighteenth-century English, it is of course impossible to get judgments of *un*grammaticality, but the attestation of the sentence in (25) suggests that the relevant thematic facts at the time were as they are today.

[20] The issue of whether the zero-reflexive alternation arose diachronically through elimination of the reflexive object is of secondary importance and is not addressed here. The zero-reflexive examples are discussed because they exemplify thematic correspondence between subjects of different expression types, in contrast to the thematic noncorrespondence between the subjects of causative and passive *get*.

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would be). In his study of semantic change, Stern (1931: 167) identifies 'shortening', or elimination of an element from an expression, as a type of change, but notes that 'the remaining words or word have to carry the total meaning that formerly belonged to the whole expression'. The causative-to-passive change, in which the total meaning of the input is markedly different from the total meaning of the output, is semantically ill motivated.

The thematic asymmetry between causative and passive *get* makes it highly unlikely that this is the correct pathway of change. The change cannot consist simply of the elimination of the reflexive NP, as proposed by Givón & Yang. Once amended to account for this fact, the change becomes both syntactically and semantically implausible. The thematic facts thus argue strongly against causative *get* being the source of the passive.

5.1.2 Subjects and control of the event

An additional difficulty for the causative-to-passive proposal is the fact that causative and passive *get* differ greatly with respect to whether or not their subjects are understood to be in control of the event denoted by the passive participle. This semantic-pragmatic property is related to the thematic difference discussed above. Subjects of causative *get* are uniformly taken to be in control, while subjects of passive *get* are more often understood as not in control (see table 1, below). This difference is puzzling for an analysis in which the causative gives rise directly to the passive.

A terminological note is in order. By 'in control', I mean simply that full responsibility for the event denoted by the participle is ascribed to the subject. This should not be confused with direct causation, as reflexive causative *get* almost always denotes indirect causation. Rather, when the subject is in control, we infer that the event would not have come about were it not for some particular action or trait of the subject. By contrast, when the subject is 'not in control', some degree of responsibility is ascribed to another participant (typically the logical agent in passive expressions). In such cases, responsibility may be understood to be shared between the syntactic subject and this other participant.

The distinction between control and lack of control is illustrated in (28–30):

(28) Causative *get*: in control
- (a) The Guide used means to **get himself paid** for his Pains (Brown, *Amusements Serious and Comical*, 1700)
- (b) But he is un-ambitious, and retir'd, Nor will use Arts to **get himself admir'd** (Pagett, *Memnon*, 1741)
- (c) He told me last night, he intended to sail for France, the first opportunity; and there, **get himself dubb'd** a Knight of the Golden Fleece. (Barton, *The Disappointment*, 1767)

(29) Passive *get*: in control
- (a) I am resolv'd to **get introduced** to Mrs Annabella (Powell, *A Very Good Wife*, 1693)
- (b) Then you became doer of the Scandalous Chronicle; mow'd down reputations like muck; push'd yourself into the pay of lady Deborah Dripping, produced anonymous paragraphs against her of your own composition, and **got paid** by her for not putting them into your paper. (Foote, *A Trip to Calais*, 1778)

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Table 1. *Number of examples with subject in control (C) vs not in control (NC) of the event (in parentheses: number of animate subjects)*

	Motion		Inchoative		Passive		Causative	
Years	C	NC	C	NC	C	NC	C	NC
1551–1600	11 (11)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (8)	0 (0)
1601–1650	130 (128)	21 (1)	5 (5)	4 (4)	1 (1)	0 (0)	56 (53)	0 (0)
1651–1700	206 (204)	31 (6)	18 (18)	5 (5)	0 (0)	1 (1)	71 (70)	1 (1)
1701–1750	99 (99)	21 (15)	5 (5)	4 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	40 (39)	0 (0)
1751–1800	257 (256)	59 (41)	43 (43)	33 (24)	4 (4)	16 (14)	86 (85)	0 (0)
Total	**703 (698)**	**133 (64)**	**71 (71)**	**46 (37)**	**5 (5)**	**17 (15)**	**261 (255)**	**1 (1)**
% NC	**15.9%**		**39.3%**		**77.2%**		**0.4%**	

(c) Passing frequently, Sir, this way, I continually noticed her at some industrious employment; I enquired who she was, **got introduced**, and loved her. (Dibdin, *The Chelsea Pensioner*, 1779)

(30) Passive *get*: not in control

(a) They were lurch'd at Crown-point, and lost deal, And faith, they **got slamm'd** at Quebec. (Stevens, *The Trip to Portsmouth*, 1773)

(b) I never could bear gunpowder since I **got fuddled** at the fair, and the boys ty'd crackers under Dobbin's tail in the market place. (Colman, *The Battle of Hexham*, 1790)

(c) I sent Tom for the old thunder from the other house, his foot slipt, the lightning **got scattered** about and is so wet that you might as well try to flash with a snow-ball. (Milns, *All in a Bustle*, 1798)

As can be seen in (30), not-in-control subjects of passive *get* may still bear some of the responsibility for the event. There is a large literature on the question of precisely how to characterize the responsibility borne by the subject of passive *get*, particularly with respect to how this differentiates passive *get* from passive *be* (Chappell, 1980; Collins, 1996; Dixon, 1991: 302ff.; Downing, 1996; Granger, 1983: 192ff.; Hatcher, 1949; Lakoff, 1971; Sussex, 1982). However, as shown in (30c), passive *get* also admits inanimate subjects, which can hardly bear responsibility for anything. Here I distinguish only between full responsibility (in control) and lack of full responsibility (not in control), as the distinction between partial responsibility and no responsibility is largely determined by the animacy of the subject.

Table 1 shows the control distinction for four different *get* constructions – motion, inchoative, passive, and causative – from 1551 to 1800.[21]

From the data in table 1, we can see clearly that the causative is the outlier construction with respect to control. Motion, inchoative, and passive *get* all contain many examples

[21] The data in table 1 include only instances of the form *got*, both in the simple past tense and as the past participle, and are restricted to examples collected from the Literature Online drama corpus. The 'causative' category is not restricted to examples with passive-participial complements, but also includes those with adjectival, infinitival, and PP complements.

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of both control types, with the percentage of not-in-control cases increasing steadily along this diachronic pathway of development. By contrast, the percentage of not-in-control examples for the causative is effectively zero, with the lone example shown in (31):

(31) She's a Whimsical, Ill-natur'd Bitch, and when I **have got** my Bones **broke** in her Service, 'tis Ten to One but my Recompence is a Clap (Vanbrugh, *The Provok'd Wife*, 1697)

Even in (31), a full-responsibility, in-control reading is possible: we may infer that the subject somehow intends to injure himself in order to gain the attention of the woman in question. In contrast to most other causative examples, however, a not-in-control reading is also possible here.

The control data presented in table 1 provide empirical confirmation of the thematic facts discussed in section 5.1.1. The near-total requirement that causative *get* take the in-control reading is intimately tied to the fact that the subject of causative *get* is a thematic agent, while the propensity for passive *get* to take the not-in-control reading is related to the fact that its subject is a thematic patient. The causative-to-passive change, consisting simply of the loss of the reflexive object, must therefore account for a great semantic disparity between the constructions that is reflected with numerical force in table 1.

One might object that table 1 also shows that thematic patients can take the in-control reading, as seen in the motion, inchoative, and passive columns. In theory, a thematic agent-to-patient reanalysis (as schematized in (27b)) could have been facilitated by the common in-control reading. However, such an analysis leaves unexplained the large proportion of not-in-control cases seen for passive *get*, which show up in the same time period as the in-control cases, ruling out the possibility that the not-in-control passives developed via extension from the in-control passives. It is also difficult to discern any motivation for an agent-to-patient reanalysis when the subject is in control; if anything, one imagines that the in-control reading would encourage an analysis of the subject as a thematic agent, not as a patient. Thus, the control data support the conclusion that a thematic agent-to-patient reanalysis is implausible.

We are left with the same old problem for the causative-to-passive change: it is hard to imagine how the elimination of a reflexive object could result in such a large semantic shift, given the assumptions mentioned earlier about the nature of and conditions on reanalysis. Moreover, the existence of in-control passives need not be explained by appealing to inheritance from the causative, as inchoative *get* also has a large proportion of in-control examples. The thematic asymmetry discussed in section 5.1.1, bolstered by the control data in table 1, makes it difficult to maintain the position that causative *get* was the diachronic source of passive *get*.

5.2 Type coercion as a mechanism of change

I now return to the inchoative-to-passive pathway of change, in order to evaluate a mechanism of change different from the one proposed in section 4. The mechanism

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is type coercion (Gronemeyer, 1999), in which an expression takes a complement of a new syntactic category while the semantics of the verb-plus-complement collocation is held constant. Though it can be used successfully to model diachronic change, the mechanism fails to address the issue of motivation for change and is therefore ultimately unexplanatory.

The inchoative-to-passive change is not discussed in great detail by Gronemeyer, who writes simply, 'I propose that the *get*-passive evolved out of the inchoative construction when the matrix subject is reanalyzed as controlling the implicit internal argument of the participle, rather than the implicit external one as in the inchoative' (Gronemeyer, 1999: 29). In order to see how type coercion can be applied to the inchoative-to-passive change, we must first examine how it is used to analyze the development of inchoative *get* from its diachronic source, motion *get*.

For the motion-to-inchoative change, Gronemeyer (1999: 28–9) notes that motion *get* takes PP or particle complements at the earliest stage, then adverbial complements, and finally adjectival complements. She writes:

> The linking mechanism . . . is type-coercion, in that *get* coerces the adverbial and later adjectival complements into a goal reading. While the semantics remain constant from one example to the next (i.e. the semantic selection of a goal is satisfied in each step), the category change allows a new interpretation to be established. Once the category AP is established, type-coercion no longer takes place, and the new complement type favors a different interpretation from the source, namely change-of-state rather than change-of-location.

In the type coercion analysis, the development of inchoative *get* begins when motion *get* simply starts taking adjectival complements. These are first interpreted as motion events, but after a period of settling-in they are interpreted as true inchoatives, with '*get* + AP' now 'established' as a full-fledged *get* construction.

The inchoative-to-passive change must look quite similar in a type coercion analysis. The change begins when inchoative *get* simply starts taking verbal passive-participial complements, and it ends when these begin to be interpreted as verbal and eventive, not as adjectival and stative like their adjectival passive-participial forebears. In between is a period in which verbal passive-participial complements are interpreted adjectivally, through type coercion.

Unfortunately, no stage of the type coercion process is well motivated, semantically or otherwise. To begin, it is unclear why an expression should spontaneously take on a new syntactic category as complement. Gronemeyer (1999: 28) suggests that distributional similarity regulates the categorial identity of the new complement type, but it remains mysterious why such selectional extension should occur in the first place. Second, the details of establishment are difficult to divine. It seems odd to suggest that the compositional semantic interpretation most naturally associated with an expression should be held in abeyance for an indeterminate period, only to emerge later. Other examples of type coercion noted in the literature seem not to undergo such processes. For example, the coercion of mass nouns into a count-noun reading, as in *I drank a*

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beer, does not appear to be yielding, via establishment, to a mass-noun interpretation. That is, *I drank a beer* does not, and presumably will not, mean the same as *I drank beer*, even though *beer* is a mass noun and the collocation '*a* + mass noun' should in principle be subject to the same pressures of establishment as '*get* + verbal passive participle'. Establishment is therefore a problematic notion, and together with the lack of motivation for categorial change, it renders the type coercion analysis unconvincing.

The mechanism of change proposed in section 4 is roughly the inverse of the type coercion analysis. Instead of deriving semantic change from a change in abstract syntactic complementation, it suggests that syntactic change occurs when semantic and pragmatic factors – in this case, the influence of perfective aspect – conspire to favor a new analysis for a morphosyntactic string that is in principle ambiguous. An advantage of the analysis offered here is that the semantic equivalence of the input and output constructions falls out automatically. We need not hold the semantics constant; semantic identity, within an appropriately defined class of environments, is what motivates the reanalysis in the first place. By contrast, in the type coercion analysis semantic equivalence must be stipulated; we do not know how or why the old interpretation is retained with the new complement type. Moreover, with type coercion we have no explanation for why passive *get* is restricted to perfective contexts, as no attempt is made to define the environments in which the change occurs. Type coercion is thus both theoretically and empirically unsatisfactory as a mechanism of change.

6 Theoretical implications and other issues

6.1 Motivation is not determinism

In seeking to understand the causes of linguistic change, we must not overreach and imagine that the factors we identify lead inexorably to the changes in question. In any instance of linguistic change, the unpredictable circumstances of language usage influence the course of development alongside the structural and grammatical factors involved. The search for 'motivation' undertaken in section 4 is therefore not an attempt to articulate a predictive account of change.[22] Rather, the insistence on motivation should be understood as an insistence on identifying extra-grammatical factors that positively influence the reanalysis of ambiguous structures, as argued by, for example, Fischer (1997) and Garrett (1998). As Garrett (to appear) writes, 'A mature research program should . . . not only characterize structural reanalysis in specific cases but should also seek to understand what triggers it.'

Recent theoretical conceptions of linguistic change reject the idea that change can be predicted or determined in advance:

> It is not possible to predict precisely under what circumstances and when a change will take place. (Traugott & Dasher, 2002: 36)

[22] Cf. Lass (1997: 341), who uses the term 'motivation' as a synonym for predestination, and rightly criticizes such a notion.

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> People seeking a substantive theory of change are too ambitious, too principled and seeking to explain too much, and they fail to come to grips with the essentially contingent nature of language change. (Lightfoot, 1997: 270)

Importantly, in the inchoative-to-passive change examined here, the influence of perfective aspect is not a deterministic mechanism of change, and its inclusion in the analysis does not make for 'a substantive theory of change'. As noted by Hatcher (1949: 442), verbs such as *become*, *grow*, *wax*, and *turn*, all of which take adjectival complements and have the same change-of-state semantics as inchoative *get*, have failed to develop passive meanings. Hatcher takes this as evidence that the inchoative-to-passive pathway of change cannot be correct for *get*. However, her objection misses the point that nothing about the change forces it to occur. We cannot say precisely why the inchoative-to-passive change happened with *get* and not with other verbs, beyond speculation about the role of frequency in grammaticalization (cf. Gronemeyer, 1999: 15; for an overview of the frequency of various *get* constructions from the seventeenth century to the present, see Hundt, 2001). Instead, we must be satisfied to identify the factors that likely played a role in the change and show how the resulting analysis is maximally plausible.

Plausibility is maximized when we identify not just structural ambiguities that allow for reanalysis, but also extra-structural factors that nudge the interpretation in the direction of a particular analysis. This basic position has been advocated by Fischer (e.g. 1997, 2004), who emphasizes the importance of both 'internal' and 'external' – i.e. grammatical and extra-grammatical – factors in explaining change. As reflected in the present study, this is an empirically advantageous move: in the inchoative-to-passive case the influence of perfective aspect explains an otherwise puzzling restriction in the data, namely the initial restriction of the change to perfective contexts. Garrett (to appear) similarly shows how an analysis that incorporates semantic and pragmatic factors accounts straightforwardly for the restriction to progressive aspect in the development of the English *be going to VP* construction.

Acknowledging the influence of external factors like viewpoint aspect, however, does not compel any particular theoretical conclusion. Contrary to Fischer's (2004: 712) suggestion that 'the separation of internal and external factors . . . may lead to a loss in explanatory value', it seems clear that one's theoretical stance on the relationship between internal and external factors is logically independent of the explanatory benefit reaped by acknowledging their basic role in change. Indeed, I hope to have shown here that external factors – in particular, semantic and pragmatic ones like viewpoint aspect – are fully compatible with a generative approach to change, and are in fact an important addition to it.[23] To the extent that reanalysis plays a role in 'grammar change' (Lightfoot, 1999), the external factors discussed here give us a better sense of

[23] Of course, the inchoative-to-passive *get* change is not an example of parameter shift; rather, the external factors emphasized here apply more generally to the process of reanalysis, which in turn may influence parameter shift.

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the forces driving such change and increase the plausibility of explanations offered in particular instances.

To summarize, in our attempt to understand the motivation for reanalysis and syntactic change, we must appeal to more than just the enabling effect of structural ambiguity, as Fischer and others have argued. A deeper and more explanatory account of syntactic change may be sought by considering semantic and pragmatic factors that motivate reanalysis. Crucially, the increase in plausibility afforded by this analytical stance need not come at the theoretically unpalatable cost of courting determinism.

6.2 Adversative and beneficial semantics of passive get

Linguists have long debated the proper characterization of the semantics of passive *get*, especially with respect to how it differs from passive *be* (Chappell, 1980; Collins, 1996; Dixon, 1991: 302ff.; Downing, 1996; Granger, 1983: 192ff.; Hatcher, 1949; Lakoff, 1971; Sussex, 1982). Chappell (1980: 440) contends that passive *get* involves either adverse or beneficial (i.e. non-neutral) consequences for the subject of the expression or for some human participant understood to be affected, as in *Jane's bike got stolen/fixed*. Though the adversative/beneficial semantics of *get* plays no significant role in the diachronic development of the passive, the pathway of change identified here may explain in part how passive *get* came to have this semantic profile.

Inchoative *get*, the ancestor of the passive, often has adversative or beneficial semantics along the lines described for passive *get*. This seems to be due to its development from motion *get*: many of the pivotal complements in the motion-to-inchoative change (as identified by Gronemeyer, 1999) were adverbs or adjectives describing events of escape or loss. Early examples of the inchoative are shown in (32), and later examples, without the escape interpretation, are shown in (33).

(32) (a) After she was with much adoe **got loose**, Away shee hurryed strait, swift as a Doe, Without so much as 'Thanke yee', or farewell (Reynolds, *Aminta*, 1628)
(b) With much a doe I have at length **got clear** of e'm. (Ravenscroft, *The Careless Lovers*, 1673)
(c) From my restraint, I, but just now, **got free**, First hither ran, to give you Libertie (Pordage, *The Siege of Babylon*, 1678)

(33) (a) **Get sick**, I beseech you, Nurse, **get sick** for my sake. I should take all the Pleasure in the World to cure you. (Baker & Miller, *The Mock-Doctor*, 1739)
(b) but, in the midst of a violent struggle (by which means I **got lame** on this leg, and obtained the nick-name of the Devil Upon Sticks) (Foote, *The Devil Upon Two Sticks*, 1778)
(c) I told him, when father died, that I was agreeable to his having of you, provided matters **got a little smoothish** with you. (Colman, *The Heir at Law*, 1798)

In the examples in (33), inchoative *get* has the adversative/beneficial meaning that is present in the earlier escape examples in (32). Such an inheritance is in accordance with Hopper's (1991: 22) observation that 'details of [a form's] lexical history may be reflected in constraints on its grammatical distribution', a phenomenon

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he calls the 'principle of persistence'. Similarly, by the principle of persistence, the adversative/beneficial semantics of motion and inchoative *get* may have later been passed on to passive *get*. Without firmer numerical data on the proportion of 'escape or loss' uses of motion and inchoative *get*, this hypothesis about the source of the adversative/beneficial semantics of passive *get* must remain speculative, but it points the way to future research on this issue. It is possible that passive *get* has non-neutral connotations at least in part because its diachronic source was semantically non-neutral in the same way.[24]

7 Conclusion

I have shown that passive *get* developed from inchoative *get*, and not from causative *get*, a conclusion supported by the evidence amassed in sections 3 and 5. The mechanism of change was a combination of structural ambiguity – in both morphosyntax and event structure – and the semantically and pragmatically disambiguating influence of viewpoint aspect. In addition, I have suggested that the adversative/beneficial semantics typically associated with passive *get* may have been inherited from its inchoative source.

The main theoretical concern of the article has been to elevate the status of semantic factors like the influence of aspect in explaining syntactic change. In seeking to understand reanalysis, we may rely on more than just structural ambiguity; the plausibility of a particular reanalysis is greatly enhanced when we can identify a motivation for it, that is, some external factor that encourages a disambiguation of the structure in favor of the new analysis. In the case of passive *get*, I have shown that this has significant empirical advantages, as it explains the otherwise puzzling initial restriction of the change to perfective contexts. Moreover, integrating semantic motivation into the theory of syntactic reanalysis does not land us in the theoretically dubious territory of determinism. Rather, semantic motivation is intended to provide an additional constraint on reanalysis and thereby to improve our understanding of syntactic change more generally.

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[24] Synchronic opposition to passive *be* may also contribute to the semantic profile of passive *get*, as noted by the authors cited above.

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