

## A Pragmatic Licensing Condition for Peculiar Passives\*

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### 1. Introduction

This article is concerned with passives of the type such as example (1b), where the subject NP is passivised out of an adjunct PP.

- (1) a. The two countries have [<sub>VP</sub> fought many battles] [<sub>PP</sub> over the city].  
 b. The city has been fought many battles over.

(Kageyama and Ura (2002:183))

The sentence in (1a) has the sequence of a VP and an adjunct PP. In (1b), the NP in the adjunct PP is passivised and serves as the subject of the sentence. This is different from canonical passives, where the argument of a verb is passivised. Kageyama and Ura (2002) (henceforth, K and U) call passives like sentence (1b) “peculiar passives.” The purpose of this paper is to clarify how peculiar passives are licensed and to propose a pragmatic condition for them.

### 2. Definition of Peculiar Passives

#### 2.1. Pseudo-Passives vs. Peculiar Passives

Passives in which the object of the preposition in a V-PP combination becomes the subject are generally known as pseudo-passives, and they have received uniform treatment (Bolinger (1975), Davison (1980), Rice (1987), and Takami (1992)). K and U (2002), however, sort prepositional passives into two types syntactically: pseudo-passives and peculiar passives.

K and U (2002:184) define passives “which are formed by V-P Reanalysis and are accepted without any special context” as “pseudo-passives.” Pseudo-passives involve sentences like the following:

- (2) a. Fred was laughed at (by Sue).  
 b. That bed was slept in (by the *sumo* wrestler).

(K and U (2002:182))

In (2), the reanalysed V-P combinations *laugh at* and *sleep in* function as a single verb, which is demonstrated through a test provided by Chomsky (1975). The test is concerned with coordination. Observe the following:

- (3) a. Mary [<sub>VP</sub>[laughed at] and [mocked] Fred].  
 b. The *sumo* wrestler [<sub>VP</sub>[slept in] and [ruined] the bed].

(K and U (2002:182))

The V-P combinations *laugh at* and *sleep in* can be conjoined with the simple transitive verbs *mock* and *ruin*, as shown in (3). This proves that *laugh at* and *sleep in* are reanalysed as a transitive verb.

This kind of coordination is disallowed when the PP involved is an adjunct and the V-P

combination does not undergo reanalysis, as shown in (4):

- (4) a. \*Mary [<sub>VP</sub> [played near] and [mocked] Fred].  
 b. \*The *sumo* wrestler [<sub>VP</sub> [talked on] and [ruined] the phone].  
 (K and U (2002:183))

The V-P sequences *play near* and *talk on* are not reanalysed, and resist passivisation as shown in the following:

- (5) a. \*Fred was played near (by Mary).  
 b. \*This phone was talked on (by the *sumo* wrestler).  
 (K and U (2002:183))

There are nevertheless cases where passive sentences are accepted without V-P reanalysis, as K and U point out. Let us consider the following:

- (6) a. This spoon has been eaten with.  
 b. The city has been fought many battles over.  
 c. This pub hasn't been smoked hash in before.  
 d. This violin has never been played any sonatas on.  
 e. This hall has been signed peace treaties in.  
 (K and U (2002:183))

The passives in (6) are acceptable in spite of the fact that the V-P combinations are not reanalysed, which is shown by the failure of the conjunction test:

- (7) a. \*John [<sub>VP</sub> [ate with] and [polished] this spoon].  
 b. \*The two countries [<sub>VP</sub> [fought many battles over] and [ruined] this city].  
 c. \*The jazz singer [<sub>VP</sub> [smoked hash in] and [praised] the pub].  
 d. \*Bill [<sub>VP</sub> [played sonatas on] and [damaged] this violin].  
 e. \*The ministers [<sub>VP</sub> [signed peace treaties in] and [glorified] this hall].  
 (K and U (2002:184))

K and U differentiate passives such as those in (6) from pseudo-passives like those in (2) and call the former "peculiar passives." According to them, peculiar passives are defined as passives in which the object in an adjunct PP becomes the subject by passivisation.

We follow K and U's distinction between pseudo-passives and peculiar passives. Note here that though K and U distinguish these two types of passives by the conjunction test, the test is not absolute; there are cases where the conjunction test does not prove adequately whether V-P combinations are reanalysed or not.<sup>1</sup> Therefore we add the following criterion to distinguish the two types of passives:

- (8) a. The active counterpart of a pseudo-passive has the sequence of  
 $V_{[INTRANSITIVE]-PP}$   
 b. The active counterpart of a peculiar passive has the sequence of  
 $V_{[TRANSITIVE]-NP-PP}$

Based on this criterion, the passive counterpart of sentence (9a) is defined as a pseudo-passive and that of sentence (9b) a peculiar passive:

- (9) a. Sue laughed at Fred.  
 b. Two countries have fought many battles over the city. (= (1a))

The sentence in (9a) contains the intransitive V *laugh* and the PP *at Fred*. In (9b), the verb *fight* is transitive and it takes the object NP *many battles*, and the sentence contains the adjunct PP *over the city*.

We refer to a passive sentence as a peculiar passive when the active counterpart has a transitive V, the object NP and an adjunct PP, and the sequence does not have an idiomatic reading. We regard verbs like *eat*, *drink*, and *smoke* which take unexpressed objects and behave like intransitive verbs as transitive verbs (Lehrer (1970), Brisson (1994), Fellbaum (1999), Matsumoto (2004), and Yasui (2008)).<sup>2,3</sup>

## 2.2. Peculiarity of Peculiar Passives

This subsection investigates what is so “peculiar” about peculiar passives. To anticipate, we argue that peculiar passives are not acceptable by themselves because they do not meet the affectedness constraint (Bolinger (1975)).

Let us take a brief look at the affectedness constraint. Bolinger (1975:67) proposes the following hypothesis for the passive in English:

- (10) The subject in a passive construction is conceived to be a true patient, i.e., to be genuinely affected by the action of the verb.

Put another way, this principle can be stated as follows:<sup>4</sup>

- (11) A passive sentence needs a patient that is construed to be affected by the action of the verb.

Let us first see how canonical passives satisfy the constraint. The following examples are from Bolinger (1975:74):

- (12) a. George left the city.  
 b. \*The city was left by George.  
 c. The city was left by all the male inhabitants.

In (12a), the verb *leave* takes *the city* as the object. Since *the city* is the object of the verb, it is a potential patient. However, since George is merely an ordinary citizen, his leaving the city has no significant effect on that city; the city is not affected by the action of the verb. Hence, sentence (12a) cannot be passivised, as in (12b). In contrast, sentence (12c) is acceptable, because all male inhabitants leaving the city would be extraordinary, and it is easily assumed that the city was affected in some significant way; for instance, the sentence allows us to draw an inference that the described event caused the city not to fulfil its social function. The city is thus conceived to be a patient. In a simple transitive sentence, because the object of a verb

potentially can be a patient who is affected by the action of the verb, the sentence can be passivised as long as the object is construed to be a patient and the sentence meets the affectedness constraint.

The same holds true for pseudo-passives:

- (13) a. The dog walked under the bridge.  
 b. The dog [walked under] and [licked] the bridge.

In sentence (13a), *walk* and *under* are reanalysed and they function as a single verb. This is confirmed by the fact that *walk under* can be coordinated with the simple transitive verb *lick*, as in (13b). The NP *the bridge* then is regarded as the object of the reanalysed verb *walk under*. Therefore, sentence (13a) is assumed to be a simple transitive verb sentence. So, the object *the bridge* can be potentially a patient. And in fact, it is a patient when it is affected by the action of the verb, and becomes the subject of a passive sentence, as in (14a).

- (14) a. This bridge was walked under by generations of lovers.  
 b. \*This bridge was walked under by the dog.

(Bolinger (1975:69))

Sentence (14a) describes the customary actions of generations of lovers' walking under the bridge, by which the bridge can be affected. For instance, the bridge becomes famous and a tourist spot. The bridge is construed to be a patient and the passive sentence is accepted. On the other hand, in (14b), just a dog walks under the bridge; the bridge merely represents a location where the dog walked. The bridge is not assumed to be affected at all, and is not construed as a patient. Hence the unacceptability of (14b).

Let us proceed to consider the cases of peculiar passives. As we have seen, peculiar passives are different from canonical passives; the subject NP is passivised out of an adjunct PP. It is this type of passivisation that makes peculiar passives strange. Observe the examples in (1), repeated below as (15):

- (15) a. The two countries have [<sub>VP</sub> fought many battles] [<sub>PP</sub> over the city].  
 b. The city has been fought many battles over.

In the active counterpart of the peculiar passive in (15a), the verb *fight* takes *many battles* as the object, and *the city* is included in the adjunct PP. So, what is affected by the action of the verb is *many battles*, not *the city*. The adjunct PP is outside the scope of the action of a verb, and *the city* is not identified as a patient from the lexical information of the verb.

The NP in the adjunct PP, however, can be passivised, as shown in (15b). Peculiar passives are acceptable notwithstanding the fact that their intrasentential information does not satisfy the affectedness constraint.<sup>5</sup> How then are peculiar passives licensed? In the next section we will consider certain licensing conditions for peculiar passives proposed by previous studies.

### 3. Previous Studies and Their Problems

This paper differentiates peculiar passives from pseudo-passives, as argued in section 2. However, not all previous studies share this distinction; there are two types of approaches: approaches that do not distinguish the two types of passives and those which do. Let us first consider the former type.

#### 3.1. Uniform Approach

Davison (1980) and Takami (1992, 1995) do not distinguish peculiar passives from pseudo-passives, and propose pragmatic conditions for prepositional passives in general. The following are some of their examples:

- (16) a. The bridge has been flown under by George.  
 b. That bed has been slept in today.  
 c. This spoon has been eaten with.  
 d. The cup was drunk out of by Napoleon.

(Davison (1980:44f.))

The examples in (16a,b) are pseudo-passives and the examples in (16c,d) are peculiar passives in our distinction.

Davison (1980) groups all of the instances together, referring to them as peculiar passives and proposes a pragmatic condition, which is summarised by Menuzzi (2005:10) as follows:

- (17) [U]nlike normal passives, peculiar passives require the subject to be a topic.

Davison (1980:56) gives the following contrast and shows the validity of the condition in (17):

- (18) a. ??John was on my right, and the sofa in the corner was sat on by Fred.  
 b. John was on my right, and Fred sat on the sofa in the corner.

Davison (*ibid.*) says that sentence (18a) is “quite strange because the topic does not match.” The first clause gives a description of *John*; the new subject of the second clause *the sofa* cannot function as the topic in this context. The active counterpart in (18b) is perfectly well-formed.

Takami (1992, 1995) groups pseudo-passives and peculiar passives together and refers to them as pseudo-passives. Takami proposes the Characterisation Condition for Pseudo-Passives and defines it as follows:

- (19) A pseudo-passive sentence is acceptable if the subject is characterised by the rest of the sentence; namely, if the sentence as a whole serves as a characterisation of the subject. Otherwise, it is found unacceptable, or marginal at best.

(Takami (1992:126))

Take the sentences from Takami (1992:127) as an example to illustrate the condition:

- (20) a. \* The office was worked in.  
 b. This office has never been worked in before.

According to Takami, in (20a), the fact that someone worked in an office does not suffice to

characterise the office at all. Therefore sentence (20a) fails to fulfil the condition and is not acceptable. On the other hand, in (20b), the fact that no one has ever worked in an office can serve as a characterisation of that office; sentence (20b) tells us the office is brand-new. Hence the acceptability of sentence (20b).

Recapitulating Takami (1992, 1995), Kobukata and Konno (2002:135) point out the following: Takami's condition seems essentially synonymous with an informational requirement that the subject function as the topic of the sentence and the rest of the sentence be a comment on the topic. Given their suggestion, pseudo-passives are topic-comment sentences, and the subject must serve as the topic of the sentences. If this understanding is on the right track, we can say that Takami's Characterisation Condition and Davison's condition in (17) are substantially the same. Consequently, their conditions can be generalised as follows:

- (21) All passives in which the object of the preposition in a V-PP combination is the subject are topic-comment sentences.

This condition leads us to the following generalisation, because topic-comment sentences contrast informationally with event-reporting sentences (Lambrecht (1994)).<sup>6</sup>

- (22) Passives in which the object of the preposition in a V-PP combination is the subject do not function as event-reporting sentences.

A closer look, however, reveals that there are pseudo-passives (in our terms) that function as event-reporting sentences. Observe the following:

- (23) a. Rain was prayed for, but no avail. (Couper-Kuhlen (1979:58))  
 b. A chair was stumbled over. (Couper-Kuhlen (1979:109))

The sentences in (23) include intransitive verbs and prepositions, and the V-P combinations in (23) can be conjoined with a simple transitive verb, as shown in (24). Thus, they are pseudo-passives.

- (24) a. People [prayed for] and [got] rain.  
 b. John [stumbled over] and [damaged] the chair.

These pseudo-passives can be used as presentational sentences. Observe the following instances:

- (25) a. What happened?  
 b. Rain was prayed for.  
 c. A chair was stumbled over.

The question *What happened?* in (25a) asks what event occurred. An answer to the question is necessarily a presentational sentence which explains what event took place, i.e., it must be an event-reporting sentence. As an answer to the question in (25a), the pseudo-passives in (25b,c) are felicitous, which proves that they are event-reporting sentences.

Note that peculiar passives are not appropriate replies to *What happened?*:

- (26) a. What happened?

- b. # The hall has been signed peace treaties in. (= (6e))  
 c. \* A hall was signed peace treaties in.

The peculiar passive in (26b) cannot be used as an answer to the question in (26a). Even if we change the definiteness of the subject NP and the tense and the aspect of the sentence, as in (26c), the peculiar passives are still infelicitous to be used in this context.

Consequently, Davison's and Takami's conditions may hold true for peculiar passives, but not for pseudo-passives. They fail to capture the fact that a pseudo-passive functions not only as a topic-comment sentence, but as an event-reporting sentence. It follows from the inadequacy of the conditions in Davison (1980) and Takami (1992, 1995) that we should better differentiate peculiar passives from pseudo-passives. We will review an approach which distinguishes peculiar and pseudo-passives in the next subsection.

### 3.2. *Classificatory Approach*

As mentioned in section 2, K and U (2002) sort out peculiar passives from pseudo-passives. Their condition is described as follows:

- (27) Peculiar passives are allowed only if the predicate concerned is interpreted as individual-level. (K and U (2002:191))

They prove the validity of this condition with three behaviours of peculiar passives. The first is that peculiar passives are accompanied with the perfect aspect and incompatible with temporal adverbials such as *at that moment*. As Diesing (1992) and Kratzer (1995) observe, individual-level predicates, expressing a permanent property of the subject, are incompatible with punctual adverbials such as *at that moment*, whereas stage-level predicates, describing a temporary property of the subject, are compatible with such adverbials. Observe the following instances:

- (28) a. Individual-level: \*Firemen were altruistic at that moment.  
 b. Stage-level: Firemen were available at that moment.

In (28a), an altruistic disposition is an attribute of firemen and it does not change momentarily, and the predicate is not compatible with *at that moment*. On the other hand, the stage-level predicate *available* describes a temporary property and it is compatible with such an adverbial. Let us consider the case of peculiar passives:

- (29) a. \* This spoon has been eaten with at that moment.  
 b. \* The city has been fought a battle over at that moment.  
 c. \* This violin has been played a sonata on at that moment.

(K and U (2002:186))

According to K and U, the peculiar passives in (29) are accompanied with the perfect aspect and are not compatible with *at that moment*, which shows that peculiar passives have individual-level predicates. When the perfect aspect involved in peculiar passives is changed

into the simple past, as shown in (30), peculiar passives are not acceptable:

- (30) a. \* This spoon was being eaten with.  
 b. \* The city was fought many battles over.  
 c. \* This violin was not being played any sonatas on.

(K and U (2002:185))

The unacceptability of the sentences in (30) also demonstrates that the predicate involved in peculiar passives must be individual-level. The active counterparts of the sentences in (30) can be modified by punctual adverbials. Look at the following:

- (31) a. Fred ate with this spoon at that moment.  
 b. They fought many battles over the city at that moment.

(K and U (2002:187))

K and U test it by using the active counterparts, as shown in (31), since the examples in (30) are ill-formed regardless of the attachment of a punctual adverbial. Since the active sentences in (31) are well-formed, K and U conclude that the passive counterparts also contain stage-level predicates, and thus the passives in (30) are not acceptable. Consequently, peculiar passives must have individual-level predicates.

The second test concerns the interpretation of the absolute construction. When put in the absolute construction, a stage-level predicate allows not only a presuppositional reading, but also a conditional interpretation, whereas an individual-level predicate has only a presuppositional interpretation (Kratzer (1995)). Let us apply this test to peculiar passives:

- (32) a. Having been eaten with, this spoon can be cleaned.  
 b. ≠If this spoon has been eaten with, it can be cleaned.  
 (33) a. Having never been played any sonatas on, this violin may be difficult to play.  
 b. ≠If this violin has never been played any sonatas on, it may be difficult to play.

(K and U (2002:190))

The absolute construction in (32a) does not have the conditional reading shown in the corresponding sentence in (32b). The sentence in (32a) is interpreted into only the presuppositional reading (*Because this spoon has been ...*). Similarly, the sentence in (33a) does not have the conditional interpretation in (33b). This observation leads us to conclude that the predicates of peculiar passives are identified as individual-level.

The third test is concerned with a restriction in the perception verb construction. Only stage-level predicates can be embedded in complements to perception verbs like *see*. K and U observe that peculiar passives cannot be embedded in complements to the verb *see*.

- (34) a. \* I saw the spoon eaten with (by Fred).  
 b. \* I saw the hall signed peace treaties in (by the ministers).

(K and U (2002:191))



The sentences in (34) are not acceptable, and peculiar passives like *The spoon has been eaten with*, or *The hall has been signed peace treaties in* are not appropriate complements to the verb *see*.

Based on these observations, K and U (2002) conclude that the predicates of peculiar passives are individual-level. If their condition in (27) is correct, then the following generalization suggests itself:

(35) Peculiar passives which contain stage-level predicates are not acceptable.

We can, however, find some instances of peculiar passives where the predicate involved is stage-level. Observe the following examples:

(36) Here is my Vauxhall Omega Elite [...]. Full Leather interior, heated seats, cd player, climate control, air con. This car has been used on a daily basis and is an excellent runner. The bad bits are: [...] The car was smoked in by the previous owner.

(37) A cup of wine is lifted up and drunk by the Bride to seal the Betrothal. The written marriage contract is drawn up and in it the Bride is promised that she will be provided and cared for in every way. [...] At this point the cup was drunk from. This cup is also called the shared cup of the Brit, i.e. Covenant. The two are now really married.

These two fragments are quoted from Web sites and the relevant parts are underscored for the sake of clarity.<sup>7</sup> The V-P combinations of the passives cannot be conjoined with a transitive verb, as shown in (38):<sup>8</sup>

(38) a. ??John [smoked in] and [drove] the car.

b. ? John [drank from] and [broke] the cup.

The sentences in (38) are unnatural and the verbs and the prepositions do not seem to be reanalysed. Furthermore, the verbs *smoke* and *drink* take unexpressed objects which are easily inferred from our knowledge of the world, for instance, *smoke cigarettes* and *drink wine*. Therefore, we can regard the underscored passives in (36) and (37) as peculiar passives.

Let us confirm that the peculiar passives in (36) and (37) involve stage-level predicates by the tests K and U use. First, these peculiar passives are compatible with the punctual adverbial *at that moment*:

(39) a. The car was smoked in at that moment.

b. The cup was drunk from at that moment.

In (39), both sentences are impeccable.

Second, the peculiar passives concerned have both a presuppositional reading and a conditional interpretation when they occur in the absolute construction.

(40) a. Smoked in by the driver, the car could be dirty.

b. {Because/If} the car was smoked in by the driver, it could be dirty.

- (41) a. Drunk from by John, the cup could be dirty.  
 b. {Because/If} the cup was drunk from by John, it could be dirty.

The absolute construction in (40a) can be interpreted either presuppositionally or conditionally, as in (40b). Likewise, the sentence in (41a) has two readings, as in (41b).

Finally, these peculiar passives can be embedded in the complement to *see*:

- (42) a. I saw the car smoked in by the driver.  
 b. I saw the cup drunk from by John.

The observations made above show that the peculiar passives in (36) and (37) have stage-level predicates, and they do not meet the generalisation in (35). K and U's condition predicts that peculiar passives involving stage-level predicates are unacceptable, and it cannot capture the fact that peculiar passives have either stage- or individual-level predicates.

Thus far, we have observed three previous studies which concern the pragmatic and semantic conditions for peculiar passives, and made it clear that they are inadequate for empirical reasons. It is therefore necessary to propose a more precise condition which can solve the problems and account for the behaviours of peculiar passives. An alternative pragmatic condition will be proposed in the next section.

#### 4. A Pragmatic Licensing Condition for Peculiar Passives

To solve the problems pointed out above, we propose the following pragmatic licensing condition for peculiar passives:<sup>9</sup>

- (43) In order for a peculiar passive to be acceptable, the subject must function as the topic of the sentence, and the sentence must fulfil the affectedness constraint.

If peculiar passives are distinguished from pseudo-passives and the condition in (43) is imposed, the phenomena which are not adequately accounted for in the previous studies can be explained sufficiently.

The first problem is that Davison's and Takami's condition in (21), i.e., all pseudo-passives are topic-comment sentences, is not sufficient to capture the fact that pseudo-passives function not only as topic-comment sentences but as event-reporting sentences. If we differentiate peculiar passives from pseudo-passives, we do not need to propose any conditions for pseudo-passives to be acceptable except for the affectedness constraint. In pseudo-passives, reanalysed V-P combinations function as transitive verbs; we can assume that pseudo-passives show the same behaviours as passive sentences with simple transitive verbs. Therefore, it is natural that pseudo-passives function as either event-reporting or topic-comment sentences in the same way as canonical passives. Hence, pseudo-passives do not require any special conditions to be accepted except for the affectedness constraint.

The second problem is in K and U's condition in (27): peculiar passives are allowed if the predicate concerned is interpreted as individual-level. This condition fails to account for the

fact that the predicates of peculiar passives can be either stage- or individual-level. Our condition in (43), however, explains this fact sufficiently. As we have seen in 3.2, an individual-level predicate expresses a permanent property of the subject. A sentence which involves an individual-level predicate is always a topic-comment sentence. Hence, the subject of the sentence is inevitably the topic of the sentence. Consequently, peculiar passives with individual-level predicates automatically satisfy the first part of the condition in (43), i.e., the subject must function as the topic of the sentence. Even in peculiar passives with stage-level predicates, which express temporary properties of the subject, when it is the topic of the sentence, the peculiar passives meet the former part of our condition.<sup>10</sup>

We shall examine the validity of our condition and show that the condition must be satisfied when peculiar passives are acceptable.

First, the subject must function as the topic of the sentence; this is confirmed by the following examples:

- (44) a. \*India and Pakistan have gone to war for their own national interests, and a city has been fought many battles over.
- b. The conflict over Kashmir was triggered by the breaking away of India and Pakistan from the UK in 1947. Both countries claim that Kashmir is a part of their territory. So, the region has been fought many battles over and been in confusion.

In the preceding context before the underscored sentence in (44a), there is no expression which corresponds to the subject of the peculiar passive, *a city*. Therefore, *a city* cannot function as the topic of the sentence in terms of information structure, and the peculiar passive cannot be used. On the other hand, in (44b), the words *Kashmir* and *territory*, which are equivalent to the subject of the peculiar passive, *the region*, appear in the preceding context. In this context, the subject of the peculiar passive can serve as the topic of the sentence and the peculiar passive is acceptable.

Next, let us turn to the second point: peculiar passives must fulfil the affectedness constraint. Consider the following:

- (45) There is an old hall in the countryside of Italy. The hall was going to be closed because of its outdated equipment. But because the old hall has been sung songs in by {\*George/Pavarotti}, it is now very famous.

In (45), even if George, who is an ordinary person and has a mediocre singing voice, sings songs in the hall, the hall does not become famous and is not affected by the action of the verb. So the underscored passive is not acceptable with *George*. If we change *George* to *Pavarotti*, the discourse tells us that Luciano Pavarotti, a world-famous singer, sang songs in the hall. The old halls then may become famous all over the world. The hall is construed as a patient here, and the peculiar passive is accepted.

The facts illustrated in (44) and (45) show the validity of our condition in (43). Consequently, we conclude that peculiar passives are acceptable in the context which satisfies the condition in (43). Furthermore, we predict that even though K and U provide well-formed peculiar passives without any context, as seen in (6), they are basically infelicitous. In fact, my informants say that the peculiar passives without any context in (6) are less acceptable than the passives in context.<sup>11</sup> But because of the definite subject and the perfect aspect, it is easy to infer contexts in which the subjects of peculiar passives in (6) are topics. So we assume that whenever peculiar passives are accepted, the context which satisfies the condition in (43) is automatically set up.

Recall here the sentences in (30), repeated below as (46):

- (46) a. \* This spoon was being eaten with.  
 b. \* The city was fought many battles over.  
 c. \* This violin was not being played any sonatas on.

According to K and U, these examples are unacceptable because they contain stage-level predicates. With respect to these examples, our condition predicts the following:

- (47) Although a peculiar passive which involves a stage-level predicate is not acceptable on its own, if it satisfies condition (43), it becomes acceptable.

Let us see if our prediction is borne out. Take (46b) as an example:

- (48) \* The city was fought many battles over.

This sentence can be licensed under a well arranged context where the subject of the peculiar passive serves as the topic of the sentence, and the affectedness constraint is satisfied. Observe the following:

- (49) The formation of the Republic of Kosovo is a result of the turmoil from the disintegration of Yugoslavia, in particular from the Kosovo War of 1996 to 1999. Albania claimed to be independent of Kosovo, but the Republic of Serbia refused to recognize this claim and war broke out. The region was fought many battles over until the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. After this, the territory came under the interim administration of the UNMIK.

In (49), the underscored peculiar passive, which is alleged to be unacceptable at the sentence level, is used and accepted. Here the subject is introduced in the preceding context and the sentence concerned describes what happened to that subject. Thus, the subject functions as the topic of the sentence. As for satisfying the affectedness constraint, the Republic of Serbia and Albania in Kosovo fought over Kosovo independence, and it is easily assumed that the city was affected in some significant way; for instance, the region was damaged and people living there are engulfed in the maelstrom of war. The region is thus conceived to be a patient and the affectedness constraint is fulfilled.

The example in (49) illustrates that the peculiar passives with stage-level predicates,

which are assumed to be unacceptable at the sentence level, can be acceptable in appropriate contexts. This also shows that the peculiar passives in (46) are alleged to be unacceptable because they occur without any context. In fact, in the attested examples from the Internet in (36) and (37), the peculiar passives with stage-level predicates are embedded in contexts, which verifies our condition. Consider again the example in (36), repeated here as (50):

- (50) Here is my *Vauxhall Omega Elite* [...]. Full Leather interior, heated seats, cd player, climate control, air con. *This car* has been used on a daily basis and is an excellent runner. The bad bits are: [...] The car was smoked in by the previous owner.

In (50), the subject of the peculiar passive, *the car*, appears in the preceding context, as the italicised words show. The peculiar passive describes what happened to the subject. Hence, the subject serves as the topic of the sentence. The example is an advertisement for car sales. If the previous owner smoked in the car, there might be burn marks or the smell of cigarettes, and the value of the car is diminished. So, the car is construed to be a patient and the affectedness constraint is satisfied.

To sum up, we have shown that peculiar passives require contexts where the subject functions as the topic of the sentence and the sentence fulfils the affectedness constraint in order to be licensed.

## 5. Peculiar Passives and Unintentional Periphrastic Causative Passives

It should be clear by now how peculiar passives are licensed. Through the analysis of peculiar passives, we have seen that a certain construction is infelicitous by itself but can be accepted in an adequate context. This is not unique to peculiar passives. Osawa (2007) argues that unintentional periphrastic causative passives, exemplified in (51), are also not acceptable at the sentence level, but become acceptable in appropriate contexts. Osawa proposes a licensing condition for them, as shown in (52):<sup>12</sup>

- (51) a. \* Prices were caused to rise (by the inflation). (Mittwoch (1990:119))  
 b. ? The mushrooms were made to come out (by the rain). (Mittwoch (1990:113))

- (52) In order for an unintentional periphrastic causative passive to be acceptable, the subject must function as the topic of the sentence, and the cause of the event expressed by the sentence must be described in the context. (Osawa (2007:100))

The sentences in (51) are acceptable in contexts which satisfy the condition in (52). Observe the following:

- (53) The oil crisis caused a serious inflation in the 70's in Japan. Inflation lead to a general increase in prices and a fall in the purchasing value of money. Needless to say, prices were caused to rise in this country.

(Osawa (2007:97))

- (54) One kind of mushroom needs a lot of rain to grow and it usually comes out in June every year. But it rained enough for the mushrooms in May this year and so they were made to come out one month earlier than usual.

(Osawa (2007:99))

In (53), the same *cause*-causative passive that is not accepted in (51a) is used and accepted. Here the subject is introduced in the preceding discourse, and the sentence in question describes what happened to the subject. Thus, the subject serves as the topic of the sentence. As for the condition for the cause, the context points to *inflation* as the cause of the event expressed by the passive. Therefore, the *cause*-causative passive satisfies condition (52) and is accepted.

Likewise, in (54), the passive subject *they (mushrooms)* is mentioned beforehand, and the *make*-causative passive describes what happened to the subject. Thus, the subject represents the topic of the sentence. The cause of the event, *a lot of rain*, is given in the context. Embedded in the context shown in (54), the unacceptable sentence in (51b) is judged to be acceptable.

Osawa points out that the reason why unintentional periphrastic causatives are not passivised at the sentence level is that they do not contain a patient. In other words, the NP in the complement clause of the unintentional causative verbs *cause* or *make* cannot be identified as a patient from the lexical information of the verbs. As we have seen in 2.2, peculiar passives are not acceptable by themselves since the NP in the adjunct PP of the active counterparts cannot be identified as a patient from the lexical information of the verb.

Both peculiar passives and unintentional periphrastic causative passives are not acceptable by themselves, but they are accepted successfully in contexts which fulfil each of the condition in (43) and (52). In regard to this point, we can assume that peculiar passives and unintentional periphrastic causative passives constitute a natural class.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have concerned ourselves with how peculiar passives are licensed. We have pointed out that the conditions proposed by the previous studies have some problems and they do not capture the following facts: pseudo-passives can serve as either topic-comment or event-reporting sentence, and peculiar passives have not only individual-level predicates but stage-level predicates. To solve the problems, we have proposed a pragmatic licensing condition for peculiar passives. Peculiar passives are not acceptable at the sentence level, but can be licensed in contexts where the subject can function as the topic of the sentence and the affectedness constraint is satisfied. Our investigation has revealed that peculiar passives and unintentional periphrastic causative passives form a natural class in the way they are licensed.

## NOTES

\* I would like to express my gratitude to the following people for helpful comments and discussion with me in the course of developing the idea to be presented: Yukio Hirose, Nobuhiro Kaga, Masao Okazaki, and Hiroaki Konno. I am also grateful to Hiroyuki Iwasaki, Tetsuya Kogusuri, and Takashi Shizawa for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. My special thanks go to Owen Davies and Jim George for kindly acting as informants. I remain responsible for any errors.

<sup>1</sup> Chomsky (1975:562), though he does not exemplify it, notes that “conjunction is indecisive” with respect to sentences like (ia) and (ib).

- (i) a. John thought of a good answer.
- b. the staff went over the list.

In spite of Chomsky’s remark, the sentences in (i) can be passivised:

- (ii) a. an answer was thought of (by John)
- b. the list was gone over (by the staff)

(Chomsky (1975:563))

Based on Chomsky (1975), we can predict that the sentences in (i) are not passivised because of the failure of the conjunction test. We have, however, the passive sentences, as in (ii). Consequently, we cannot fully confirm whether or not the V-P combinations are reanalysed by the conjunction test.

Furthermore, Baker (1988) determines whether reanalysis (incorporation) occurs or not without the conjunction test. According to him, if a sentence involving V-P combination is passivised, the V-P combination is reanalysed; the acceptability of passivisation proves the reanalysis of V-P combinations. However, this is a circular definition.

<sup>2</sup> Instances with these verbs are shown in section 3. See section 3.

<sup>3</sup> See especially Brisson (1994), Fellbaum (1999), and Matsumoto (2004) for details about unexpressed (unspecified) objects.

<sup>4</sup> Though Bolinger (1975) does not define the precise notion of affectedness, on the basis of his analysis we assume that whether or not the patient is affected depends on whether or not the patient undergoes a change of location or state because of the action of a verb.

<sup>5</sup> Although K and U (2002) judge peculiar passives as acceptable without any context, we predict that they are basically infelicitous at the sentence level because the NP in the adjunct PP cannot be a patient. We will discuss this point in section 4.

<sup>6</sup> Lambrecht (1994:14) notes that the communicative function of event-reporting sentences is to announce an event involving a new discourse referent. In event-reporting sentences, the domain of the new information extends over the preposition.

<sup>7</sup> I have found eight examples on the web, but I only use two of them in this study for the sake of convenience. The data was chosen upon the condition that the texts should be written by native English speakers. All of the data were judged as acceptable and natural by my informants.

<sup>8</sup> One of my informants judges sentence (38b) as acceptable. This is because the verb *drink* is adjacent to

the preposition *from* on the surface, and this sequence might be interpreted as a reanalysed verb. However, the verb *drink* is originally a transitive verb and behaves like an intransitive verb taking an unexpressed object, so we regard the passive in (38b) as a peculiar passive.

<sup>9</sup> As for the notion of topic, we follow Lambrecht (1994:131): [A] referent is interpreted as the topic of a proposition if in a given situation the proposition is construed as being about this referent.

<sup>10</sup> There are two types of sentences involving stage-level predicates: event-reporting sentences and topic-comment sentences. Consider the following:

- (i) a. What happened?
- b. A car ran over a dog at that moment.
- (ii) a. What happened to the car?
- b. The car broke down at that moment.

Both sentences in (i) and (ii) have stage-level predicates because they are compatible with *at that moment*. Sentence (i) is an event-reporting sentence since it serves as an answer of the question *What happened?*. On the other hand, sentence (ii) is a topic-comment sentence since the question *What happened to the car?* asks what occurred to *the car*. *The car* is referred to beforehand, and sentence (ii) is about that car. So, *the car* is the topic of the sentence in (ii).

<sup>11</sup> My informant points out that to express the same meaning of the peculiar passive in (i), using the non-causative *have* sentences, as in (ii), is more natural:

- (i) a. The city has been fought many battles over.
- b. The city has had two countries fight many battles over it.

Furthermore, he said that native speakers of English seldom use peculiar passives, but they use the *have* sentences instead. Actually, we can find few examples of peculiar passives on the Internet. Why then do peculiar passives exist? Davison (1980) points out that the subject of a peculiar passive has some perceptible property connected to the event described and should be affected. For example, in (i), the city must have been ruined or destroyed because of the battles. On the other hand, in the *have* sentence in (ii), the city does not need to have perceptible damage or to be destroyed. Peculiar passives contain implications which are not contained in *have* sentences. Therefore, if you want to express those implications, you should use peculiar passives instead of *have* sentences. We simply mention this tendency here without further comment.

<sup>12</sup> See Osawa (2007) for details.

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