

Why can we never say,
'The book was bought the girl'??*

Kenji KANNO

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to show why such sentences as 'The book was bought the girl' are never acceptable in any dialect. Little attention has been paid to this kind of sentence, where Passivization applies to the direct object of the For-Double-object Construction,¹ while much attention has been paid to sentences where Passivization applies to the indirect object of the To-Double-object Construction. The investigation here sheds light on Direct-object fronting by Passivization in the For-Double-object Construction, which has not been studied very much so far.

2. A dialect

There exists a dialect like (1).²

- (1) a. The girl was given the book by the boy.
- b. The book was given the girl by the boy.
- c. The girl was bought the book by the boy.
- d. *The book was bought the girl by the boy.

In this dialect, only the example sentence (1d) is unacceptable whereas the others are perfectly acceptable.

3. Three constraints on object fronting in double-object constructions

There are four types of object-fronting behavior in English double-object constructions.

(2) Wh-question Formation³

- a. *Who(m) did the boy give the book?
- b. What did the boy give the girl?
- c. *Who(m) did the boy buy the book?
- d. What did the boy buy the girl?

(3) Tough-movement

- a. *The girl is tough for the boy to give the book.
- b. (?)The book is tough for the boy to give the girl.
- c. **The girl is tough for the boy to buy the book.
- d. *The book is tough for the boy to buy the girl.

(4) Passivization

- a. The girl was given the book by the boy.
- b. (?)The book was given the girl by the boy.
- c. (*)The girl was bought the book by the boy.
- d. *The book was bought the girl by the boy.

(5) Left Dislocation⁴

- a. As for the girl, the boy gave her the book.
- b. *As for the book, the boy gave the girl it.
- c. As for the girl, the boy bought her the book.
- d. *As for the book, the boy bought the girl it.

In the case of Indirect-object fronting, Wh-question Formation and Tough-movement are not permitted while Passivization and Left Dislocation are permitted. The former rules make the indirect object non-phonetically-realized in the context [_{VP} V ____ NP]. On the other hand, the latter do not, since the Indirect-object fronting by Passivization makes the indirect object a subject and that by Left Dislocation leaves a copy of the indirect object in the context [_{VP} V ____ NP]. Hence, Indirect-object fronting in double-object constructions is subject to the following syntactic

constraint.

(6) Syntactic Constraint:

Indirect objects must be phonetically-realized in the context [_{VP} V ____ NP].

The Direct-object fronting by Wh-question Formation in double-object constructions (i.e. 2b, 2d) is acceptable, that by Tough-movement and that by Passivization (e.g. 3b, 4b) are less acceptable, and that by Left Dislocation (i.e. 5b, 5d) is unacceptable. Direct objects in double-object constructions, which are focal, can be moved into focal position but cannot be moved into topic position. They are difficult to move into subject position, whose topichood is not high, and are impossible to move into topic position in its narrow sense. From the viewpoint of a functional principle that a focal element cannot be topic, Direct-object fronting in double-object constructions is subject to the following functional constraint.

(7) Functional Constraint:

Direct objects in double-object constructions are difficult to make subjects, and are impossible to make topics in its narrow sense.

In both Indirect-object fronting and Direct-object fronting, Wh-question Formation and Left Dislocation exhibit no acceptability difference between To-Double-object Constructions and For-Double-object Constructions, whereas Tough-movement and Passivization exhibit a certain acceptability difference between them. This difference corresponds to the condition (8), proposed by Hawkins(1981), which is based on the contrast between (9b) and (9c).

(8) The Thematic Hierarchy Condition on Dative Movement

1. GOAL

2. BENEFACTIVE

(9) a. Jim sent some chocolates to Margaret for Harry.

b. Jim sent Margaret some chocolates for Harry.

c. *Jim sent Harry some chocolates to Margaret.

The object fronting by Wh-question Formation and that by Left Dislocation are insensitive to (8) because these two rules do not form a new grammatical relation. On the other hand, the object fronting by Tough-movement and that by Passivization are sensitive to (8) because these two rules, like Dative Movement, form a new grammatical relation. Therefore, object fronting in double-object constructions is subject to the following semantic constraint.

(10) Semantic Constraint:

The Thematic Hierarchy Condition on Dative Movement is also true of Tough-movement and Passivization.

Four types of object-fronting behavior in double-object constructions are classified in terms of three heterogeneous constraints; the Syntactic Constraint, the Functional Constraint and the Semantic Constraint.

4. A metarule

In order to explain the behavior of the dialect (1), we propose a metarule (11), which is a revised⁵ version of that in Kanno(1981).

(11) A rule cannot be applied with more than one violation of a constraint on it.⁶

To illustrate (11) concretely and to show that it is not ad hoc, two arguments for it are prepared. First, Pronominalization (14), as discussed in Langacker (1969), has the two constraints (12) and (13), and observes (11). In (14), "+" means "no violation" and "-" "violation."

(12) A pronoun must be preceded by its antecedent.

(13) A pronoun must be commanded by its antecedent.

(14) Pronominalization

a. Tom was thirsty after he went to bed.

(+(12), +(13))

b. After Tom went to bed, he was thirsty.

(+(12), -(13))

c. After he went to bed, Tom was thirsty.

(-(12), +(13))

d. *He was thirsty after Tom went to bed.

(-(12), -(13))

(14a-c) are acceptable since they have no double violation of (12) and (13). On the other hand, (14d) is unacceptable, because Pronominalization is applied in (14d) despite the fact that it has double violation of (12) and (13).

Second, Deletion in an Answer (17) has the two constraints (15) and (16),⁷ and observes (11).

(15) More important information must not be deleted.

(16) Less important information must be deleted.

(17) Deletion in an Answer⁸

As an answer to the question "Were you

already born in 1960?"

more important less important

a. Yes, I was already born.

- (17) b. Yes, I was already born in 1960.
 c. Yes, I was.
 d. *Yes, I was in 1960.

(17a-c) are acceptable since they have at most a single violation of (15) and (16), whereas (17d) is unacceptable since in (17d) Deletion is applied with double violation of (15) and (16).

5. The absolute impossibility of Direct-object fronting by Passivization in the For-Double-object Construction

Let us examine Direct-object fronting by Passivization from the viewpoint of the metarule (11). As is shown in section 3, object fronting by Passivization is immune from the Syntactic Constraint (18) and it is subject to the Functional Constraint (19) and the Semantic Constraint (20).

(18) Syntactic Constraint:

Indirect objects must be phonetically-realized in the context [_{VP} V ____ NP].

(19) Functional Constraint:

Direct objects in double-object constructions are difficult to make subjects, and are impossible to make topics in its narrow sense.

(20) Semantic Constraint:

The Thematic Hierarchy Condition on Dative Movement is also true of Tough-movement and Passivization.

(19) and (20) imply (21) and (22), respectively, in connection with object fronting by Passivization in double-object constructions.

- (21) Direct objects in double-object constructions (i.e. both To-Double-object Constructions and For-Double-object Constructions) must not be passivized functionally.
- (22) Objects (i.e. both Indirect objects and Direct objects) in For-Double-object Constructions must not be passivized semantically.

In terms of (21) and (22), the dialect (1) can be characterized as follows.

- (23) a. The girl was given the book by the boy.
(+(21), +(22))
- b. The book was given the girl by the boy.
(-(21), +(22))
- c. The girl was bought the book by the boy.
(+(21), -(22))
- d. *The book was bought the girl by the boy.
(-(21), -(22))

In the dialect in question, i.e. (1) (= (23)), only the fourth example is unacceptable, where Passivization is applied in spite of the double violation of (21) and (22). In this kind of dialect, the metarule (11) is true of object fronting by Passivization in double-object constructions, as in the cases of Pronominalization and Deletion in an Answer.

6. An implication

Given the fact that Direct-object fronting by Passivization in the For-Double-object Construction is unacceptable in the dialect (1) (= (23)), it is easy to understand that sentences like (1d) (= (23d)) are unacceptable in the following

three dialects.⁹

- (24) a. The girl was given the book by the boy.
 b. ?The book was given the girl by the boy.
 c. *The girl was bought the book by the boy.
 d. *The book was bought the girl by the boy.
- (25) a. The girl was given the book by the boy.
 b. The book was given the girl by the boy.
 c. *The girl was bought the book by the boy.
 d. *The book was bought the girl by the boy.
- (26) a. The girl was given the book by the boy.
 b. ?The book was given the girl by the boy.
 c. The girl was bought the book by the boy.
 d. *The book was bought the girl by the boy.

The operation in question is not permitted even in the dialect where the relevant constraints on object fronting by Passivization are loose, much less in the dialects where those constraints are less loose.¹⁰

7. Three alleged alternatives¹¹

One might think of alternative proposals that (ld) (= (23d)) is ruled out only by a single constraint. There might be at least three alleged ones. A first alternative is that (ld) is ruled out by a single constraint like (21). If (ld) were ruled out by (21), (lb) would be also ruled out; but actually (lb) is perfectly acceptable in the dialect (1).

A second alternative is that (ld) is made unacceptable by a single constraint like (22). If (ld) were ruled out by (22), (lc) would be also made unacceptable; but actually (lc) is not unacceptable in the least in the dialect in question.

A third alternative may be that (1d) is unacceptable because (27) might be less natural than (28).

(27) John gave the book.

(28) John bought the book.

According to this alternative, since (28) is natural, the grammatical relation of the girl in (1d) would be very hard to perceive. This alternative, however, is not very convincing, either. Although (29) is as natural as (28), (30) is perfectly acceptable.

(29) John taught English.

(30) English was taught the girl by John.

In this way, it is undeniable that (1d) cannot be ruled out by a single constraint. It is reasonable that (1d) is ruled out by both (21) and (22) to the extent that the meta-rule (11) is correct.

NOTES

* This paper is a revised version of section 7.4. of Kanno(1982) and an enlarged version of the second half of a paper read at the 3rd meeting of The Tsukuba English Linguistic Society, whose summary is included in this volume.

I express my gratitude to those who gave me comments and suggestions: Norio Hirota, Yukio Hirose, Masaki Sano, Kozo Iwabe, Nobuhiro Kaga and Katsunori Fukuyasu. Needless to say, all remaining errors are of my own responsibility.

¹ Here I refer to (i) as a For-Double-object Construction and (ii) as a To-Double-object Construction, since each preposition appears in its paraphrase.

(i) The boy bought the girl the book.

(=The boy bought the book for the girl.)

(ii) The boy gave the girl the book.

(=The boy gave the book to the girl.)

² This fact has been pointed out to me by Gary D. Prideaux and Kunitoshi Takahashi independently.

³ Clefting, Relativization, Infinitival Relativization and Topicalization of Comment (i.e. Focus) in the sense of Gundel(1974) belong to this type.

⁴ Right Dislocation behaves in the same way as Left Dislocation, so does Topicalization of Topic, as is discussed in Erteschik-Shir(1979).

⁵ I owe much of this revision to Masaki Sano.

⁶ (11) implies that there are some cases where a rule can be applied with a single violation of a constraint on it. See Hasegawa(1980a, 1980b) and Sano(1981).

⁷ Contrast Kuno(1980, 1982a, 1982b) and Kuno(1978, 1979).

⁸ (17) is borrowed from Kuno(1979).

⁹ (25) is described in Fillmore(1965). And (26) is in Quirk et al.(1972).

¹⁰ Czepluch(1983) points out that Allerton(1978) accepts "The book was bought the girl," and that Oehrle(1976) accepts not "The book was bought the girl," but "The book was bought her." It is, however, not until these judgments are proven to be true that they are worth considering.

¹¹ Channon's(1982) and Takahashi's(1982) analyses are convincing. They are, at least, parallel to the analyses here and in Kanno(1983) in that both of them are based on the concept BENEFICIARY (i.e. BENEFACTIVE).

REFERENCES

- Allerton, D.J. 1978. "Generating indirect objects in English," JL 14, 21-33.
- Channon, R. 1982. "3-2 advancement, beneficiary advancement, and with," BLS 8, 271-82.
- Czepluch, H. 1983. "Case theory and the dative constructions," The Linguistic Review 2, 1-38.
- Erteschik-Shir, N. 1979. "Discourse constraints on dative movement," in T. Givón (ed.) Syntax and semantics 12, 441-67. New York: Academic Press.
- Fillmore, C.J. 1965. Indirect object constructions in English and the ordering of transformations. The Hague: Mouton.
- Gundel, J. 1974. The role of topic and comment in linguistic theory. Ph. D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.
- Hasegawa, K. 1980a. "Henkei-tekiyoo eno ippan-teki seiyaku," The Rising Generation 126, 274-79.
- Hasegawa, K. 1980b. "Saikin no Chomsky-ron hihan," Gengo 9, 26-35 and 103.
- Hawkins, R. 1981. "On 'Generating indirect objects in English': a reply to Allerton," JL 17, 1-9.
- Kanno, K. 1981. "On one of the typical argumentations in linguistics," DAL 14, 49-55.
- Kanno, K. 1982. "Remarks on double-object constructions in English: with special reference to object-fronting behavior." M.A. thesis, University of Tsukuba.
- Kanno, K. 1983. "Between object and oblique: in defence of secondary object," in S.C. Dik (ed.) Advances in functional grammar. 175-82. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.

- Kuno, S. 1978. "Two topics on discourse principles," DAL 11, 1-29.
- Kuno, S. 1979. "On the interaction between syntactic rules and discourse principles," in G. Bedell et al. (eds.) Explorations in linguistics: papers in honor of Kazuko Inoue. 279-304. Tokyo: Kenkyusha.
- Kuno, S. 1980. "Discourse deletion," Harvard Studies in Syntax and Semantics 3, 1-144.
- Kuno, S. 1982a. "Principles of discourse deletion: case studies from English, Russian and Japanese," Journal of Semantics 1, 61-93.
- Kuno, S. 1982b. "Principles of discourse deletion," in Preprints of the plenary session papers. 36-46. Tokyo: Editorial Committee of The XIIIth International Congress of Linguists.
- Langacker, R.W. 1969. "On pronominalization and the chain of command," in D.A. Reibel and S.A. Schane (eds.) Modern studies in English: readings in transformational grammar. 160-86. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Oehrle, R.T. 1976. The grammatical status of the English dative alternation. Ph. D. dissertation, M.I.T.
- Quirk, R.T. et al. 1972. A grammar of contemporary English. London: Longmans.
- Sano, M. 1981. "Extraction phenomena and markedness." Paper read at the 2nd meeting of The Tsukuba English Linguistic Society.
- Takahashi, K. 1982. "Yokaku-koobun sai-hoo," Studies in Languages and Cultures 13, 141-66.

(15 June 1983)