Collins 2005: *A Smuggling Approach to the Passive in English*

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1 Introduction

Important points of Collins’ analysis:

- The thematic subject is merged in Spec-vP as in active clauses.
- The the preposition in the *by*-phrase does *not* form a constituent with the DP.
- The direct object of the verb is ‘smuggled’ across the higher subject to circumvent MLC / Relativized Minimality, etc.
- *by* is a ‘dummy preposition’ and the (optional) Spellout of the Voice head.

2 The Analysis

2.1 Architecture of the passive (VP)

- Unlike Baker, Johnson & Roberts (1989), the passive suffix *-en* does not absorb accusative case and the theta-role.
- Instead, the suffix is the head of a participle projection (PartP) to which the lexical verb moves:

```
(1) VoiceP
  \   / \\
 Voice -vP- [v DP]  [v PartP]
        \   /       \   /       \   /
           Part     VP     DP
                  \   /     \   /     \   /
                   -en     -en     -en
```

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2.2 Where is the by-phrase?

- Collins assumes that there is no difference between DP subjects in active clauses and DPs in by-phrases in passives, they are both situated in Spec-vP. This presents an immediate problem as to why the following order is not possible:

(2) a. The book was written by John.
   b. *The book was [vP [PP by John] [vP written thebook]]

There are a few options open to us:

1. Rightward specifier of vP
2. Head movement of written to Voice
3. XP movement of the 'VP' (cf. roll-up movement)

(3) The book was [VoiceP Voice+written [vP [PP by John] [vP written thebook]]]

- Collins argues that this cannot be a rightward specifier due to binding facts such as the following:

(4) *The book was given to any student by no professor.

2.3 Particle verbs

- Important arguments against a head movement approach come from the following data:

(5) a. The argument was summed up by the coach.
   b. *The argument was summed by the coach up.

(6) a. He summed the coach’s arguments up.
   b. He summed up the coach’s arguments.
(7)  *Pseudo-passives:*

a. John was spoken to by Mary.
b. *John was spoken by Mary to.

- It is unclear as to why head movement of the lexical verb to Voice (stranding the particle) cannot derive the (b) cases:

\[
\text{TP} \quad \text{John} \quad \text{T'} \\
\quad \text{VoiceP} \quad \text{was} \quad \text{vP} \\
\quad \text{Voice} \quad \text{v+spoken} \quad \text{PP} \\
\quad \text{by} \quad \text{Mary} \quad \text{PartP} \\
\quad \quad \quad \quad \text{t_{v+spoken}} \quad \text{VP} \\
\quad \quad \quad \quad \text{t_{spoken}} \quad \text{t_{speak}} \quad \text{PP} \\
\quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \text{t_{John}}
\]

- Instead, Collins assumes that there is a movement of PartP to Spec-VoiceP to ensure the PP follows the verb (and its particles):
John was spoken to by Mary.
2.4  *by* as the Head of VoiceP

- We might assume that the *by*-phrase is in Spec-vP in passives as above.

- Collins instead proposes that by is the head of the Voice phrase and assigns accusative case to the DP in Spec-vP.

- *NOTE:* One can assume that Voice is responsible for case assignment in passives, whereas v is responsible for theta-role assignment (and is defective in these cases).

- The passive analysis therefore looks as follows:

\[(10)\] The book was written by John

\[
\begin{align*}
&TP \\
&\mid \downarrow \\
&\quad DP \\
&\quad \mid \downarrow \\
&\qquad \text{The book} \\
&\quad \mid \downarrow \\
&\qquad T' \\
&\quad \mid \downarrow \\
&\qquad T \\
&\quad \mid \downarrow \\
&\qquad \text{was} \\
&\mid \downarrow \\
&\quad \text{PartP} \\
&\mid \downarrow \\
&\quad \text{VP} \\
&\mid \downarrow \\
&\quad \text{written} \\
&\mid \downarrow \\
&\quad t_{\text{written}} \\
&\quad \mid \downarrow \\
&\text{Mary} \\
&\mid \downarrow \\
&\text{vP} \\
&\mid \downarrow \\
&\text{v'} \\
&\mid \downarrow \\
&\text{t_{PartP}}
\end{align*}
\]
NB: The *von* instantiation of Voice in German passives would assign dative. What about passives without a *by*-phrase?

(11) The book was written

This means that there have to be two types of Voice head:
- Voice\(_1\): *by* (assigns accusative)
- Voice\(_2\): Ø (assigns null case?)

Collins draws a parallel between *for* and Ø complementizers in infinitive clauses. Where the latter licenses a null object:

(12) a. \[CP \[C *for* \] TP John to win would be exciting.]]

b. \[CP \[C Ø \] TP PRO to win would be exciting.]]
2.5 Smuggling

Why is this analysis referred to as smuggling? Consider the following example:

If a T head has an EPP or similar movement-triggering feature, traditional locality restrictions mean that the only the closest DP can move to Spec-TP.

Therefore, it is unclear how the direct object can move to Spec-TP when the subject is closer.

Collins’ solution is that the movement of PartP to Spec-VoiceP (higher than the subject in Spec-vP) ‘smuggles’ the soon-to-be syntactic subject past the higher phrase in Spec-vP.

Assuming that subextraction from a moved constituent is permissible (cf. Freezing), then the now closer DP can be extracted.
(14) The book was written by John.