Unexpected passive structures in Romance: indicative of deficiency in the verbal domain

Isabel Crespí
Centre de Lingüística Teòrica / Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

It is widely accepted in the literature that, in Romance languages, only transitive and unaccusative verbs can yield a structure with a passive participle (Demonte 1995, McIntyre 2013, Bruening 2014, Pérez Saldanya and Rigau 2018, Armstrong 2017). Languages such as Catalan and Spanish, unlike English, are said to not allow the passivisation of indirect and prepositional complements (Demonte 1995), as we show in (1b) and (2b), from Catalan.

(1) a. Mary was given a book
    b. *La Maria fou donada {un llibre / amb un llibre / de llibres}
       det. Maria was given   a book   with a book   of books

(2) a. Paul can be relied on
    b. *El   Pol pot ser confiat (en)
       det. Pol can be relied on

However, it has been noticed that a few "anomalous" constructions exist in Spanish and Catalan where we do find (i) passive structures from some prepositional verbs, such as *participar en* ('participate in'), *interferer en* ('interfere') or *informar de* ('inform of/about') and (ii) passivised indirect objects from ditransitive verbs like *preguntar* ('to ask'), *robar* ('to steal') or *disparar* ('to shoot'), among others (Solà, personal notes, GIEC 2016, Pérez Saldanya and Rigau 2018). These constructions clearly violate the traditionally assumed restriction which predicts them to be impossible. In (3) and (4) we provide some examples from Catalan.

(3) a. Ponència que   *està* **participada** per tots els partits polítics [*Regió7*, 23.07.2016]
      speech   which is   participated   by all   the parties political
      'A speech that all the political parties are participating in'
    b. La   informació *arriba*   **interferida** per la premsa [CIVAL]
      the information arrives interfered   by the press
      'The information arrives interfered by the press'

(4) a. El   president, **preguntat** pels   periodistes, va assegurar que declararia [CIVAL]
      the president asked   by-the journalists   assured   that declare-cond.3sg
      'The president, asked by the journalists, assured that he would declare'
    b. La víctima **va ser robada** a la   plaça de l' Estació [Pineda 2016 : 342]
      the victim was   stolen at the square of the station
      'The victim was stolen at the Station square'

Concerning prepositional passivisation, we made three observations: (i) following the analysis of Roy (2010) for adjectives, these participle are predicative, i.e., they can appear in combination with copulas (3a) and as a secondary predicate in a small clause (3b); (ii) prepositions selected by these verbs ('in', 'of', 'with') are functional and (ii) whenever we form the predicative participle, the preposition disappears. Following Svenonius (2004) a functional preposition (*p*) establishes a formal relation between a Figure and a Ground. We argue that these verbs select a small clause (Demonte 1991), i.e., a PredP, whose head is the functional preposition, so it formally relates the DP subject (the Figure) and the predicate (the Ground).

(5)   [ᵥ [ᵥ interferir] [Pred P [DP la política] [Pred′ [Pred **en**] [DP la llengua]]]

According to Roy (2010), predicative adjectives project a Pred head, and we apply the same analysis to these participles, since they are predicatively used. We propose that, in order to create a passive participle from a prepositional verb, first the preposition has to be incorporated into the verbal root to allow the promotion of the internal argument. We suggest that the *v*P is not projected, so that the element [P+V] can now raise to the two functional layers projected by

the participle: first Aspect and then Pred. When this happens, both the preposition and the participle are identically read at the interfaces, because they are instances of the same projection and have the same function. Since the Pred projection of the participle c-commands the preposition, which is the lower element, the preposition is deleted.

For the passivisation of indirect objects, we observe it always happens with ditransitive verbs which do not participate in the dative/accusative alternation, deeply studied in Catalan (Solà 1994, Rosselló 2002, Morant 2008, Pineda 2016), so that when the verb is inflected, the receiver cannot be in accusative case, it must be always dative. We argue that this passivisation is not based on a ditransitive structure in lexical syntax, but in a structure like that of *locatum* verbs proposed by Hale & Keyser (1993, 1998), in which the receiver of the verb is not, in fact, an indirect object, but the internal argument of the verb, for what it can be passivised: *preguntar* ('to ask') = 'to put + someone + with question'. As we show in the following examples from Spanish, in sentential syntax, these structures are possible when the participle appears alone or with the auxiliary *ser* (6a), but they are ungrammatical with the auxiliary *estar* (6b).

(6) a. Tras **haber sido preguntada** sobre si se consideraba feminista, …
     'After being[ser] asked whether she considered herself a feminist, ...'
   b. *Rajoy **estuvo preguntado** en todo momento sobre la situación en Murcia
     '*Rajoy was[estar] asked all the time about the situation in Murcia'

After proving that the impossibility of combining *estar* with these participles is not due to the aspectual restrictions imposed by this verb, we propose it has to do with Case. In sentential syntax the participle cannot assign Case (in the sense of Ormazábal & Romero 2013) by himself to the argument because it lacks the *v*P layer, and that is why this argument can be promoted to the subject position. *Ser* projects an AuxP (Schmitt 1992, Camacho 2012) and, at this level, the verb still does not assign Case to the argument, so that it can still be promoted. However, e*star* projects an AspP (Camacho 2012, Silvagni 2017) and, to raise to this projection, the participle must assign Case to the argument, so that the argument is fixed and cannot be promoted.

Based on these data, we propose that both types of verbs select a relational structure and we suggest that participles lack the *v*P projection, which can explain why they show such an elastic behavior, making possible those structures which are predicted to be ungrammatical.
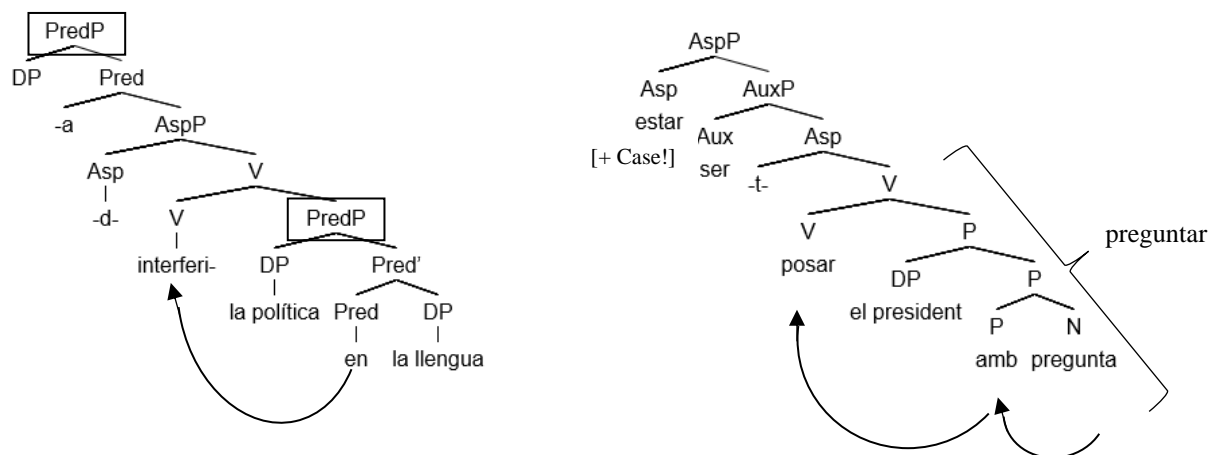
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