

The (Un)passivizability of *Have*, *Own*, and *Possess*

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This study attributes the difference in passivizability of the possessive verbs shown in (1) to the presence or absence of a bound variable in the second argument of each verb.

- (1) a. * A sister / pen was had by Mowgli. (Tham (2005:232))
b. A huge old house is owned by the Irish doctor. (Kageyama (1997:50))
c. A very powerful engine is possessed by the car. (Kobukata (2010:31))

More specifically, I assert that there is an implicit bound variable in the second argument of *have* in its semantic structure (SS), which is a modified version of that of Pinker's (1989) (cf. Culicover and Jackendoff (2005)). In what follows, I overview several accounts of previous studies, morphological (Kageyama (1997)), syntactic (Morita (2003)), and functional (Tham (2005)), and point out their problems.

Assuming that passivization is a process in which the external argument of a verb is suppressed, Kageyama (1997) reduces the difference in passivizability to the presence or absence of an external argument, which Kageyama claims is illustrated by the following:

- (2) *haver / owner / possessor

Contrary to his claim, however, it is not so difficult to find the form *haver*.

- (3) The haver is not open to others, the very essence of his being is "closed."

(W. Cooney, *The Quest for Meaning*)

This fact indicates the inadequacy of the morphological explanation for the unpassivizability of *have*.

Morita (2003) reduces the unpassivizability of *have* to the structural partitive Case assigned to its second argument. It is assigned to the second argument of a verb when the first and second arguments exhibit the whole-part relation, which covers a possessor-possessed relation. According to Morita, this structural Case resists passivization. However, the passive sentences of *own* and *possess* in (1b, c) constitute serious counterexamples to his account, since both verbs exhibit the whole-part relation, but they do passivize.

Tham (2005) attributes the unpassivizability of *have* to its presentational function. He asserts that the second argument of *have* always has the status of presentational focus, whereas the passive subject has the status of topic; therefore, the second argument cannot be a passive subject. However, not only can both arguments of *have* bear a presentational focus (Kobukata (2009:11)), but both *own* and *possess* exhibit the same behavior, as in (4).

- (4) a. It is a house that John {has/owns/possesses}.
b. It is John who {has/owns/possesses} a house.

This fact confirms the inadequacy of the functional explanation for the difference in passivizability.

The alternative account that I offer here is to reduce the unpassivizability of *have* to the implicit bound variable present in the second argument in its SS. Consider the contrast below:

- (5) a. I have {a/my/*his/*the/*every} {house/sister}.
b. I {own/possess} {a/my/his/the/every} house.

As (5a) shows, a possessive pronoun in the second argument of *have*, when it appears, must be anaphoric to the first, while in (5b), there is no such restriction. This fact indicates that there is an

implicit bound variable in the second argument of *have*, meaning that *I have a house* and *I have a sister* are construed as *I have a house (of my own)* and *I have a sister (of my own)*, respectively.

On the basis of this fact, I propose the following SS for *have*.

(6) [state HAVE ([THING]^α, [THING(α)])]

This structure shows that α in the second argument of *HAVE* has to be anaphoric to and bound by the first argument, which is indicated by the superscript. This enables us to answer the question of the unpassivizability. That is, when the second argument is put in subject position, the bound variable associated with it cannot be bound by the first argument. Note here that on the basis of the behavior in (5a) and the conjoinability shown in (7), I assume that the same SS holds regardless of the alienability of the value of the second argument.

(7) John has a wife, and a house. (cf. Partee (1983/1997:187))

The SSs of *own* and *possess* are similar to that in (6), but there is no variable in them.

The SS in (6) accounts for the following contrast.

(8) a. Who {owns/possesses} this land? John {owns/possesses} it.

b. * Who has this land? John has it.

cf. John has some land. He has had it for five years.

The second argument of *have* has to be anaphoric to the first; however, *this* and *it* in (8b) cannot be. Hence the sentence in (8b) is ungrammatical. This constraint also explains the fact that only *have* exhibits the definiteness restriction (DR), shown in (5). That is, “strong quantifiers” cannot be bound by the first argument. On the other hand, the second arguments of *own* and *possess* need not be anaphoric to the first; therefore, these verbs do not exhibit DR and the sentences in (8a) are grammatical.

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