



Passive Clauses Argument Structure of Give Verbs in Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)



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Abstract

This study is entitled Passive Clauses Argument Structure of Give Verbs in Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). It is concerned with the argument structure which is mapped to the grammatical relation. This study aimed to recognize the grammatical relations in passive clauses which have “give verbs”. This study is library research. The data of this study were taken from Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) which is concerned with passive clauses. To collect the data, the documentation method and note-taking technique were applied. The descriptive-qualitative method was applied in analyzing the data. The data were described and explained based on the theory argument structure and the theory of passive. Based on the analysis, the grammatical relation operated within passive clauses with the class of give verbs involves subject, object, and oblique. Verb feed, give, and pay in passive can be constructed with S-V, S-V-O, S-V-OBL, and S-V-O-OBL. However, the construction found with verb lease in passive is S-V and S-V-OBL. On the other hand, the possible construction found in verb lend in passive is S-V, S-V-OBL, and S-V-O.

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1 Introduction

A clause could be written in active or passive voice. According to [Huddleston & Pullum \(2005\)](#), the terms active and passive show the fact that in clauses describing an action the subject of the active version denotes the active participant, the performer of the action, while the subject of the passive version denotes the passive participant, the undergoer of the action ([Bickel & Yādava, 2000](#); [Newton & Kennedy, 1996](#)). The implied argument might occur in passive clauses. The author is interested in conducting this research. This study will try to recognize the arguments in passive clauses, which concerns the arguments and the relation to the verbs.

Some previous studies were also concerned with the argument structure of verbs; however, the verbs taken into account in the data were different ([Lidz & Gleitman, 2004](#); [Thompson, 2003](#)). Moreover, particular verbs had not been determined before the study was conducted. Particular verbs, including active and process verbs, became the concern within the study proposed by [Cahyadi \(2013\)](#). However, a different method was applied in determining the verbs. This study will provide a different method of determining the verb which is given verb based on [Levin \(1993\)](#). This category of verb frequently appears in passive which might appear with the agent or without the agent. These various construction must have particular patterns of construction. To obtain various use of the verb and the arguments, the data of this study were collected from Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), an online platform that provides thousands of actual data from different genres. In other words, it is the collection of the text or text extracts for language learning, and it represents the variety of English ([Van Valin Jr, 2001](#)). Therefore, this study is concerned with the argument structure of passive clauses arguments that have to *give* verbs ([Marantz, 2013](#)).

2 Materials and Methods

The method applied in this study is a descriptive method that describes linguistic phenomena like what it is. The data were taken from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The data source provides written data in the form of clauses or sentences. Furthermore, to provide a framework for the passive clauses, understanding related to passive clauses is provided with the theory proposed by [Huddleston & Pullum \(2005\)](#). Some verbs have been determined before the analysis is started to provide clear steps in collecting the data. The verbs concerned in this study are presented as follows.

GIVE VERBS ("verbs that inherently signify acts of giving"): *feed, give, lease, lend, loan, pass, pay, peddle, refund, render, rent, repay, sell, serve, trade* ([Levin, 1993: 45](#))

The give verbs are considerably regarded as verbs that bear alternations involving arguments within the VP. Within this study, the verbs were concerned involved *feed, give, lease, lend, and pay*. These verbs were chosen as these are considerably regarded as verbs that most frequently appear within the language use ([Fisher et al., 1994](#); [Pickering & Branigan, 1998](#)).

The data were collected by using the documentation method and note-taking technique. [Arikunto \(2002\)](#), states "Documentation is the act of looking for data which concern with matters such as note, book, newspaper, magazine, transcript, and agenda". Then, the second technique is taking notes. [Hornby & Witte \(2010\)](#), defines it as the action of paying attention to something and being sure to remember it.

The data was collected by using a website tool that lists certain words, phrases, and sentences, not through a book. The steps of data collection were presented as follows: the first step conducted is to input the verb determined in this study, the giving verbs based on [Levin \(1993\)](#). Accordingly, the following step is to sort and note down the passive clauses in the big data.

According to [Kroeger \(2005\)](#), arguments are those elements that are "selected" by the verb; they are required or permitted by certain predicates, but not by others. According to [Kroeger \(2005\)](#), to express grammaticality, arguments must be assigned a grammatical relationship within the clause. The verb is the center of the clause and it determines the argument and as well its number. However, the grammatical relation contributes to how well-formed the clause is, either grammatical or ungrammatical. According to [Kroeger \(2005\)](#), here are the following properties of the subject in English.

- 1) Word order: In a basic English sentence, the subject normally comes before the verb, and the object and other elements come after the verb.

- 2) Pronoun forms: Pronouns have a special form when they appear in a certain position that indicates whether they are subject or object pronouns.
- 3) Agreement with a verb: In the simple present tense, a morphological marking, a suffix -s, is added to the verb when a third person subject is singular. However, the number and person of the object or any other element in the sentence does not give any effect to the form of the verb:
- 4) Content questions: If the subject is replaced by a question word (who or what), the rest of the sentence remains unchanged. However, if the object is replaced by a question word, there must be an auxiliary before the subject.
- 5) Tag questions: A tag question is used to seek confirmation of a statement. It always contains a pronoun that refers back to the subject, and never to any other element in the sentence.

In some cases, the subject in a sentence is not always the agent and the object is not always the patient; in other words, the agent and patient of a proposition do not determine the grammatical relation of an argument. According to [van Valin \(2001\)](#), the primary coding properties are verb agreement, case marking, and (in languages with very rigid word order) the position of an argument in the sentence, which may serve to express a particular grammatical relation. This feature is relevant to feature c which discusses the relation of the verb and the subject, in which the verb form depends on what type of subject appears ([Suryasa, 2016](#); [Putrayasa, 2017](#)). The grammatical relations hierarchy was also proposed due to some facts discovered.

Grammatical relations hierarchy:

SUBJECT > DIRECT OBJECT > INDIRECT OBJECT > NON-TERMS

Figure 2 van Vallin (2004: 46)

This hierarchy emphasizes the idea that if syntactic phenomena are limited to a single term type, it is always limited to subjects. In other words, if construction has a single privileged syntactic argument, it is the subject. The subject and direct object are the two privileged arguments. Subject, direct object, and indirect object are the three options if there are three. As a result, whenever a syntactic event affects more than one term type, subjects are always included. [Kroeger \(2005\)](#), stated that the term “indirect object” in traditional grammar is used to refer to the semantic role of the recipient (or sometimes beneficiary), rather than to a specific Grammatical Relation ([Cohn & Paczynski, 2013](#); [Lim et al., 2013](#)). Related to the previous discussion on the subject term, the semantic role of argument does not determine the grammatical relation.

- a) Susan slapped Bill.
- b) John stored his coin collection in the attic.

The first sentence shows Bill as the primary object; it follows the verb directly. The same as the first data, his coin collection is regarded as a primary objective as it comes directly after the verb. To provide information related to the secondary object, these data are presented as follows:

Mary gave [her son]OBJ [a new bicycle]OBJ2

The first of these bears the OBJ relation; we call it the direct or primary object. The second NP is the secondary object (OBJ2). In other words, the Primary object comes after the verb, and the secondary object comes after the primary object.

[Kroeger \(2005\)](#), defined that elements that are not closely related to the meaning of the predicate but which are important to help the hearer understand the flow of the story is called adjunct. In other words, an adjunct is an optional unit within the relation, and oblique is semantically required by the verb. However, it might be confusing since oblique and adjunct could have a similar forms. Oblique must be preceded by a preposition, and adjunct could be preceded by a preposition as well. However, an adjunct is not obligatory in the subcategorization. The following data, [Kroeger \(2005\)](#), will be presented to provide a better understanding related to adjunct and oblique.

Henry put the money into his pocket.
George fell down the stairs last night

The argument after the preposition is considered as oblique as it is required by the verb put. It is different from the second data presented, the italic, considered as an adjunct that can be omitted at any time without causing any sense of incompleteness.

According to [Huddleston & Pullum \(2005\)](#), grammar makes it possible, in many cases, to say essentially the same thing using syntactically different constructions. In other words, a message can be conveyed by using different constructions. The information can be packaged in three ways, passive clause, preposing, and extraposition. [Huddleston & Pullum \(2005\)](#), stated that the terms active and passive reflect the fact that in clauses describing an action the subject of the active version denotes the active participant, the performer of the action, while the subject of the passive version denotes the passive participant, the undergoer of the action. The other ways are preposing and extra position ([Pullum, 2014](#)) give verbs. Canonical clauses have their elements in the basic order, with departures from this order being handled in our account of various types of non-canonical clauses, such as the proposed complement construction. Meanwhile, the extra position is explained as follows:

- a) That I overslept was unfortunate. [BASIC (no extra position)]
- b) It was unfortunate that I overslept. [EXTRAPOSITION (non-canonical)]

In [a] the subject is a subordinate clause - occupying the usual subject position. In [b] the subject position is occupied by the pronoun it and the subordinate clause appears at the end: it is called an extra posed subject. Although information packaging involves three constructions, this study will only be concerned with the passive clauses since the passive construction might have an implied agent. To get a clear understanding, the data from [Huddleston & Pullum \(2005\)](#), were presented as follows. The passive construction will be presented in detail in the following section. To provide a better understanding related to passive construction, these data were taken from [Huddleston & Pullum \(2005\)](#).

- a) The dog bit me. [ACTIVE]
- b) I was bitten by the dog. [PASSIVE (non-canonical)]

These have the same meaning; they describe the same situation and if used in the same context it would be impossible for one to be true while the other was false. Based on Quirk (1972), there are three passive scales: agentive passives, quasi – passives, non – agentive passives.

- a) Agentive Passives

According to Quirk (1972:808), the agentive passives involve expressed agent and without expressed agent; in other words, the performer has a personal agent and has a non – personal agent. The agentive passives with expressed agent or a personal agent has a direct passive – active relation. For instance:

- (1-3) Bobby kissed Anna
- (1-4) Anna was kissed by Bobby
- (1-5) This difficulty can be avoided in several ways

Sentence 1-3 is the active transform; however, 1-4 is the passive transform and has been given the interpretation of the by- phrase; in other words, the active subject is added and marked by the preposition by. While, the sentence 1-5 is the most common type of passive which has no expressed agent or has non – personal agent. Furthermore, the agent of the without-expressed-agent is implied within the context. The context provides more explanation about to what/who the agent refers.

- b) Quassi – Passives

According to Quirk (1972:809), the quassi – passive is the passive “mixed” class whose members have both verbal and adjectival properties. The quassi – passive is also called pseudo passive that has passive form but the meaning is active. For instance:

- (1-6) Anna was interested in Japanese
- (1-7) Japanese interested Anna

- c) Non – Agentive Passives

Based on Quirk (1972:810), non – agentive passive is the passive that has no active transform; there is no possibility of agent added and no performer is conceived of. In non – agentive passives, there is no way in the context that can supply the agent being specific. For instance:

- (1-8) He has been robbed
- (1-9) The flight NDW1 to Malaysia was delayed

In both sentences, the agent was not conceived since if the agent is added, it will make the sentence exaggerate (Quirk, 2014). The agent is already known by the public. In other words, the agent was not expressed but will be understood. In (1-8), the agent that can do the action of robbed is the robber, and in (1-9), the agent that can make the flight delayed is the one that has the authority, the flight operations officer. However, both agents do not need to be mentioned; in addition, in non-agentive passive, no context can supply which agent is being specified. However, this study is concerned with two types of passive, agentive and non-agentive passive.

3 Results and Discussions

Feed → *fed*

SV	Data (1)	Young animals are fed every day, adults in a day
	Data (2)	Turkey is fed for a thousand days
	Data (3)	Misinformation was fed to the U.S
SVO	Data (4)	You really have been fed some doctored facts on the situation
	Data (5)	We were fed maize, beans, a spinach dish and chicken all cooked on an open fire for supper
	Data (6)	The younger generation has been fed a load of crap
SV OBL	Data (7)	This community was founded, and has been consistently fed , by the work of Melissa McEwan
	Data (8)	The moon-shaped transparent food in variation century is being fed by private butler
SVO OBL	Data (9)	Politicians will be fed Big Data results by lobbyists to support a given conclusion
	Data (10)	Many farmed fish are fed the fish meal by products of fish oil production

Based on the presented data, Verb *fed*, which derives from *feed*, in passive can be constructed with Subject-Verb, Subject-Verb-Object, Subject-Verb-Oblique, and Subject-Verb-Object-Oblique. All operated construction can be performed in either agentive or agentless.

Give → *given*

SV	Data (11)	Awards are given in several clean energy
	Data (12)	30 awards are given
SVO	Data (13)	He should have been given the security he requested
	Data (14)	Students from Macdonough Elementary School have been given the option to choose 1 of 4 movies that are being shown at the Health Center
SV OBL	Data (15)	Our religious liberty is given by God
	Data (16)	Special emphasis was given to the public diplomacy and deliberation dimension of the peace process
	Data (17)	Today, much attention is given to the marketing of suites to a small group of affluent individual consumers and corporate entities that can afford the seating (Brown et al., 2010)
SVO OBL	Data (18)	The Black man should not be given power to run government
	Data (19)	Hundreds of families in one of the world's poorest countries have been given shelter by a UK aid agency
	Data (20)	184 Parents are instead often given misinformation by police

Based on the presented data, Verb *given*, which derives from *give*, in passive can be constructed with Subject-Verb, Subject-Verb-Object, Subject-Verb-Oblique and Subject-Verb-Object-Oblique. All operated construction can be performed in either agentive or agentless.

Lease → *leased*

SV	Data (21)	Both buildings were fully leased at the end of the third quarter in filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission
	Data (22)	Unit 31 was leased for ten years
	Data (23)	Our current flat is leased on a year to year basis
SV OBL	Data (24)	Currently, some of these lands are leased to ranchers, farmers, miners, and oil and gas companies for a fraction of their market value
	Data (25)	This land was leased out at the agency
	Data (26)	The ship has been leased by the World Indigenous Peoples Fund to carry seventeen passengers
	Data (27)	30,000 ha of land has since been leased to the British firm CAMEC to produce biofuels from sugar cane
	Data (28)	The space is apparently being leased to someone else
	Data (29)	The aircraft was leased from a Canadian company
	Data (30)	Each theatre was exclusively leased by a manager

The construction found with verb *lease* in passive is Subject-Verb and Subject-verb-oblique. The construction which operates subject-verb-object or even subject-verb-object –oblique is not possible within a clause in which the verb is *lease* in passive.

Lend → *lent*

SV	Data (31)	Money is lent first
	Data (32)	The city of Florence is lent to welcome a demonstration of this kind
SV OBL	Data (33)	The painting, Van Gogh's largest, was lent by Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum
	Data (34)	Another dlrs 2 million will be lent by a major French bank
	Data (35)	Considerable logistical help was lent by the Kubitschek administration
	Data (36)	\$250 million has been lent to Brazil
	Data (37)	In 1868, the picture was lent by Matthew Anderson to the National Exhibition of Works of Art in Leeds
	Data (38)	Half of that amount was lent to America by foreigners
	Data (39)	This portrait was lent to the Metropolitan Museum by John D. Rockefeller from 1927 until 1929
SVO	Data (40)	I was lent the camera

The possible construction found in verb *lend* in passive is Subject-verb, subject-verb-oblique, and subject-verb-object. However, although the construction of subject-verb-object-oblique is not found within the corpus, it is possible to add more information depending on the information required to be delivered as oblique is possible to be added to the construction.

Pay → *paid*

SV	Data (41)	One million cotton farmers were paid to destroy their crops
	Data (42)	Teachers are paid to educate
	Data (43)	These soldiers are being paid for defending their country
SV OBL	Data (44)	One tax is paid to private companies
	Data (45)	Little attention is being paid to the fact how much money is wasted in the administration part of your health care services
	Data (46)	A tenth would be paid to the Church
SVO	Data (47)	The subject is paid the payoff sum from all periods
	Data (48)	He is paid the big bucks
SVO OBL	Data (49)	Cross is paid the bounty on the players head by Nikki
	Data (50)	Brown is paid a fee by the landlord

Based on the presented data, Verb *paid*, which derives from *pay*, in passive can be constructed with Subject-Verb, Subject-Verb-Object, Subject-Verb-Oblique, and Subject-Verb-Object-Oblique. All operated construction can be performed in either agentive or agentless.

4 Conclusion

The passive construction which involves the class of give verbs can be constructed with the agent or without the agent. Based on the analysis of the data, the conclusion of both problems is presented as follows. The grammatical relation operated within passive clauses with the class of give verb involves subject, object, and oblique. Verb feed, give, and pay in passive can be constructed with Subject-Verb, Subject-Verb-Object, Subject-Verb-Oblique, and Subject-Verb-Object-Oblique. However, the construction found with verb lease in passive is Subject-Verb and Subject-verb-oblique. On the other hand, the possible construction found in verb lend in passive is Subject-verb, subject-verb-oblique, and subject-verb-object. Within the analysis, it is found that the passive can be agentive or non-agentive.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declared that /they have no competing interests.

Statement of authorship

The authors have a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The authors have approved the final article.

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