

## Pseudopassives as complex predicates: A Scandinavian perspective

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### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Passives in which the subject corresponds to the object of a preposition in the active are usually called pseudopassives or prepositional passives. Examples are (1)-(2). The pseudopassive is a rare and marked phenomenon in the world's languages, which represents a problem for all approaches to grammar.

- (1) John was **talked about**  
 (2) John ble **snakket om** (Norwegian)  
     John was talked about

Both in traditional and modern grammar, the standard opinion on the English pseudopassive is that the verb and the preposition in some way form one complex verb (e.g. Jespersen 1969:138-39, Hornstein and Weinberg 1981, Bresnan 1982). This is often called reanalysis — unfortunately a term that is used of various phenomena, which will here only be used of verb + preposition reanalysis.

A pseudopassive can have a retained object, in more or less idiomatic expressions.

- (3) She has been **taken advantage of**  
 (4) I don't like to be **told lies about** (Bolinger 1977:62)

Sentences such as (3)-(4) are often marginal in English (but see Ziv and Sheintuch 1981, Riddle and Sheintuch 1983). It has been observed that a retained object is often non-specific (Ziv and Sheintuch 1981), and it has been proposed that retained objects must be "abstractly" incorporated in the verb, in a way that is not well understood (Asudeh and Mikkelsen 2000, Mills 2008, Kiparsky 2013). This group will be put aside here.

Pseudopassives prototypically involve a PP that is selected by the verb. It is well known that non-selected PPs sometimes occur.

- (5) This bed has been **slept in** by Napoleon.

This must be seen in connection with the fact that verbs sometimes seem to extend their a-structure to include e.g. locatives and benefactives and instrumentals (see e.g. Alsina 2009:55, Needham and Toivonen 2011, Toivonen 2021).

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## State of the art

The state of the art for the pseudopassive is unusual: On the one hand, a number of problems with the reanalysis approach have been pointed out, see e.g. Postal (1986) and Baltin and Postal (1996). The recurring point is that various phenomena show that the verb + the preposition do not constitute one word. An example from Postal (1986:283, note 14) is (6).

(6) The bridge was **flown over** and then, but only then, **under**

There seem to be no attempts to counter these objections to save the traditional reanalysis.

On the other hand, there does not seem to be any accepted alternative analysis. Alternative analyses have been proposed, but there does not seem to be any analysis that is taking over as a new standard.

Within Minimalism, Abels (2012) gives an analysis based upon phase theory and abstract case. Drummond and Kush (2015) propose that the preposition raises "covertly" to an Agr head, and that its complement can then raise to object position.

Within LFG, Lødrup (1991) and Alsina (2009) propose that the passive subject is raised from the object position of the preposition to the subject position (see also Tseng 2006). Findlay (2015, 2016) criticizes this analysis, and proposes to account for pseudopassives in the mapping between f-structure and semantics. In his analysis, pseudopassives represent a mismatch between f-structure and semantics. Dyvik et al. (2019:82-83) give an analysis in which the mismatch is between c-structure and f-structure. The same kind of mismatch can be found in the analysis to be discussed below. An important difference from Dyvik et al. (2019) is that the analysis discussed here has verb + preposition as a complex predicate — an option that has been mentioned briefly in the literature by Richards (2017) in a Minimalist setting, and by Lødrup (2022) in an LFG setting. The a-structure of this complex predicate is derived from the a-structures of the elements involved, in the same way as in a complex predicate consisting of two verbs (see e.g. Butt 1995, Alsina 1996, 1997).

## The Scandinavian situation

Insular Scandinavian does not have pseudopassives (Maling and Zaenen 1985, Truswell 2008), so Scandinavian is here Mainland Scandinavian. There has been some discussion and confusion about the distribution of pseudopassives in Mainland Scandinavian. Danish and Swedish pseudopassives have sometimes been claimed to be ungrammatical or "extremely marginal" (Maling and Zaenen 1985:207, see also e.g. Herslund 1984). However, pseudopassives are discussed in the standard reference grammars of all three languages: Faarlund et al. (1997:843-45) on Norwegian, Hansen and Heltoft (2011:1295-97) on Danish, and Teleman et al. (1999 IV:369-70) on Swedish (the latter says that pseudopassives occur "primarily in spoken language and informal writing" [my translation]).<sup>2</sup> Engdahl and Laanemets (2015) present a corpus-based study of Norwegian and Swedish and Danish pseudopassives.

Examples are the Norwegian (7) from *www*, the Swedish (8) from Teleman (1999 IV:370), and the Danish (9) from Hansen and Heltoft (2011:1295).

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<sup>2</sup> The pseudopassive is not a new development. Mikkelsen ([1911] 1975:135) gives Danish examples from the 19th century. Körner (1949:66) says that Swedish examples can be found from the 17th century.

- (7) Slik **snakkes** han **om** av andre (Norwegian)  
 this.way talk.PRES.PASS he about by others  
 'He is talked about this way by others'
- (8) Den förtjänar inte att **satsas** **på**. (Swedish)  
 it deserves not to concentrate.INF.PASS on  
 'It doesn't deserve to be concentrated on'
- (9) Vi er blevet **løjet for** (Danish)  
 we are become lied for  
 'We have been lied to.'

Engdahl and Laanemets (2015:326) say that pseudopassives in these languages are "remarkably similar". A difference is that they are more frequent in Norwegian (with 0.5% of all passive clauses). Scandinavian will be represented by Norwegian in the following, unless otherwise stated. Norwegian is here understood as urban south-eastern Norwegian and the Bokmål written standard.

An account of pseudopassives presupposes a distinction between regular prepositions and verbal particles. Some words can have both uses, e.g. *på* 'on'. Verbal particles behave differently in Scandinavian languages and dialects (Lundquist 2014a, b). Regular prepositions and verbal particles can be distinguished using different criteria (Engdahl and Laanemets 2015:287-88), even if there might be cases of doubt.

### Reanalysis in Scandinavian

It was mentioned above that reanalysis of verb + preposition is a traditional analysis of English. Reanalysis has also been assumed in traditional Scandinavian grammar (e.g. Western 1921:155-56, 133-137, Körner 1949, Knudsen 1967:83-85). The situation is different in modern Scandinavian grammar, understood as grammar in the generative tradition from the eighties. Reanalysis is rejected in Lødrup (1985, 1991), Christensen (1986), Hestvik (1986), and Åfarli (1989, 1992:86-88). I am not aware of modern work on Scandinavian that argues for reanalysis, except a short discussion in Holmberg and Platzack (1995:221-22).

The Scandinavian criticism of reanalysis is based upon a couple of differences between Scandinavian and English. Two arguments for reanalysis in Bresnan (1982) are the following:

1) English has adjectives that are derived from a passive participle + a preposition, as in (10).

(10) Each unpaid for item will be returned (Bresnan 1982:53)

2) English requires that the verb and the preposition are adjacent in pseudopassives. This requirement only applies to pseudopassives — not to preposition stranding with unbounded dependencies.

(11) \*Everything was **paid twice for** (Bresnan 1982:54)

(12) That is something that I would have paid twice for (Bresnan 1982:54)

Scandinavian is different in both respects.

1) Scandinavian does not have adjectives that are derived from a passive participle + a preposition, as in (10).

2) Scandinavian allows sentences that violate the requirement that the verb and the preposition should be adjacent in pseudopassives.

It is necessary to distinguish two kinds of adjacency violations in Scandinavian: violations in sentences with a finite main verb, and violations in sentences with a non-finite main verb. Norwegian and Swedish and Danish have both an inflectional passive and a periphrastic passive, as in (13)-(14).

(13) Pølsene blir spist nå  
sausages.DEF become eaten now  
'The sausages are eaten now'

(14) Pølsene spises nå  
sausages.DEF eat.PRES.PASS now  
'The sausages are eaten now'

Only Swedish has the full paradigm of the inflectional passive. Norwegian and Danish have the infinitive and the present, and Danish also has some options for preterit forms. Finite forms of the inflectional passive behave syntactically like all other finite verbs — they must be in the C or I position in main clauses. In a pseudopassive, it is impossible to realize the finite verb and the preposition as one unit in the C or I position.

(15) Selvfølgelig **satses** de **på**  
obviously concentrate.PRES.PASS they on  
'Obviously, we concentrate on them'

(16) \*Selvfølgelig **satses** **på** de  
obviously concentrate.PRES.PASS on they

Non-finite main verbs can also violate the adjacency constraint in Scandinavian. Examples (17)-(18) show adjacency violations with the infinitive of the inflectional passive, where an adjunct occurs between the infinitive and the preposition.

(17) Elevene bør **snakkes** mye **med**  
pupils.DEF should talk.INF.PASS much with  
'The pupils should be talked to a lot'

(18) Systemet må også **sees** grundig **på**  
system.DEF must also look.INF.PASS thoroughly on  
'The system must be looked at thoroughly'

Examples (19)-(20) show adjacency violations with the periphrastic passive, where an adjunct occurs between the passive participle and the preposition.

(19) Jentene ble **glodd** intenst **på** (Hestvik 1986:191)  
girls.DEF became stared intensely at  
'The girls were stared at intensely'

(20) Du blir **ledd** høyt **av** her i stuen  
you become laughed loudly of here in living.room.DEF  
'You get laughed at loudly here in our living room.'

Corresponding sentences that violate adjacency are also found in Swedish and Danish.<sup>3</sup>

- (21) Han sa bland annat "Snuskhummel" vilket har **skrattats** mycket **åt** (Swedish)  
 he said among other "Snuskhummel" which has laughed.PASS much of  
 'He said among other things "Snuskhummel", which has been laughed at a lot'
- (22) Deres sag bliver **set** grundigt **på** fra begge vinkler (Danish)  
 their cause becomes seen thoroughly at from both sides  
 'Their cause is looked at thoroughly from both sides'

## A complex predicate analysis

### **Introduction**

Bresnan (1982) gave a classical and influential LFG analysis of the English pseudopassive. She proposed a lexical rule which incorporates a preposition into a verb, making it a unit in the lexicon and in c-structure. This analysis accounts for the fact that the verb and the preposition behave as a unit in English pseudopassives.

The analysis discussed in this paper keeps the traditional idea that the verb and the preposition are one unit, but this unit is a complex predicate, and not a constituent in c-structure.

Another traditional assumption is that this complex predicate exists independently of the passive (e.g. Western 1921:155-56, 133-137, Jespersen 1969:138-39, Kiparsky 2013). There is no special rule for pseudopassives — they are simply the passives of corresponding actives. There are phenomena beside the pseudopassive that suggest that the noun phrase following the preposition is an object on sentence level. (The facts are not without their problems, however, cf. Baltin and Postal (1996) on English.) One case concerns functional control. This type of control requires the controller to be a subject or an object. In some cases, functional control is possible with an object that is the result of verb + preposition reanalysis (Lødrup 2008). It is not as productive as the pseudopassive, however.

- (23) Vi **ser på** ungene spille  
 we look at kids.DEF play  
 'We look at the kids play'

The c-structure and f-structure assumed are shown in figures 1 and 2.

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<sup>3</sup> Some French dialects in Canada allow pseudopassives (King and Roberge 1990). It is striking that one of the few published examples violates adjacency. Example (i) could be translated word-by-word into Scandinavian.

(i) Robert a été **parlé** beaucoup **de** au meeting (King and Roberge 1990:356)  
 Robert has been talked alot about at.DEF meeting  
 'Robert was talked about alot at the meeting'

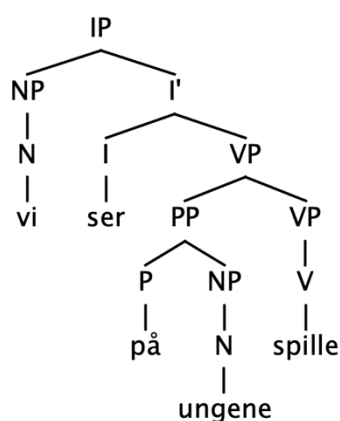


Figure 1

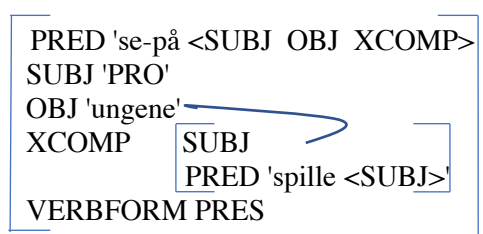


Figure 2

Reanalysis of verb + preposition must be optional (see e.g. Bresnan 1982:52). There are phenomena that require that reanalysis has not taken place. Consider the presentational sentence (24).

- (24) Det ble snakket om John  
 EXPL became talked about John  
 'John was talked about'

The nominal argument following the preposition in (24) is definite. It is not subject to the definiteness constraint on presentational sentences, which shows that it is not the object of a reanalyzed verb *snakke om* 'talk about' but rather the object of the preposition.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> A possible argument against the complex predicate analysis comes from binding. The traditional account of simple and complex reflexives in Norwegian (Hellan 1988) says that the complex reflexive is used when the binder and the reflexive are arguments of the same predicate. Following a preposition that is selected by the verb, a reflexive must be the complex reflexive.

- (i) Ola tenkte på seg selv / \*seg  
 Ola thought about REFL SELF / REFL  
 'Ola thought about himself'

Given these premises, the complex predicate analysis would predict a complex reflexive in (i), because the verb and the preposition are one predicate. However, the problem would be that verb + preposition reanalysis is optional, so one would expect the simple reflexive to be possible when reanalysis has not taken place. This problem disappears if one rejects the traditional account of simple and complex reflexives. Lødrup (2007) says that the simple reflexive is used locally when the verbal action is on or in relation to a person's physical body, or something is located relative to a person's physical body — which is not the case in a sentence such as (i), independently of reanalysis.

Dyvik et al. (2019:82-83) present the analysis that is implemented in the Norwegian Bokmål grammar for the parsing system XLE.<sup>5</sup> This analysis also involves a mismatch between c-structure and f-structure. The preposition is the head of a PP in c-structure, while it is "incorporated" (Dyvik et al. 2019:82) in the PRED in f-structure. This analysis differs from the one proposed here in that the PRED does not derive its a-structure from the a-structures of the elements involved. Dyvik et al. (2019) assume that the prepositions involved do not have a PRED. The PRED of the pseudopassive is then not complex predicate, because it does not combine two PREDs.

The analysis in this paper is based upon the assumption that the relevant prepositions in the relevant languages have a PRED which can assign a thematic role. (However, there is no implication that prepositions without a PRED do not exist.) It is clear that pseudopassives are possible with prepositions that are uncontroversially not desemantized, both in English (examples (5) and (6) above) and Scandinavian.

- (25) Huset har ikke vært **bodd i** på 15-20 år  
 house.DEF has not been lived in for 15-20 years  
 'The house has not been lived in for 15-20 years'

With a desemantized preposition (e.g. *se på* 'look at'), the role assigned is presumably theme or patient.

Another difference between the analysis in Dyvik et al. (2019) and the analysis here is that Dyvik et al. (2019) assume that an active sentence that corresponds to a pseudopassive has the nominal following the preposition as an OBL $\theta$  in f-structure. The motivation for this assumption is difficult to understand.

### Something about complex predicates

Complex predicates raise difficult problems for grammatical theory, and their treatment has been discussed again and again both inside and outside LFG. (For work inside LFG: see e.g. Butt 1995, Alsina 1996, 1997, Mohanan 1997, Niño 1997, Butt et al. 2003, Sells 2004, Lowe 2015, Lovstrand 2020, Andrews to appear. For work outside LFG: see e.g. Rizzi 1978, Aissen and Perlmutter 1983, Cinque 2006, Wurmbrand 2001, 2014, Wurmbrand and Shimamura 2017.)

A complex predicate consists of a verb and a second element, which together constitute one predicate in a monoclausal structure. This second element is a verb in many cases, but it can also be a different element, such as a noun or an adjective (see e.g. Mohanan 1997 on Hindi). The process of forming a complex predicate is often called reanalysis or restructuring, and the first verb is called a light verb or a restructuring verb. A complex predicate combines the a-structures of the elements involved into one. It can undergo some grammatical processes that are usually reserved for one verb, such as the passive. Restructuring is normally optional. Light verbs are tightly connected to their corresponding main verbs, and do not usually represent a first stage of further grammaticalization (Butt and Lahiri 2013).

A useful overview of the LFG discussion of complex predicates is given in Andrews (to appear). I assume a traditional LFG analysis of complex predicates in the tradition of Alsina and Butt. C-structure is not necessarily affected by complex predicate formation — it is f-structure that represents the monoclausal structure (Butt 1995, Alsina 1996, Niño 1997, Sells

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<sup>5</sup> <https://clarino.uib.no/iness/xle-web>

2004). It is often assumed that a verb that can be the first verb in a complex predicate has a special lexical entry for its use as a restructuring verb. It is then an incomplete verb with an a-structure in which the internal argument is not a thematic role, but an open position (Alsina 1997:235-37). When the f-structure is built, a process of predicate composition combines the restructuring verb and the verb below it, creating a complex predicate. The a-structure of the complex predicate is the result of combining the a-structures of the two verbs (Alsina 1997:235-37). This can be done using the restriction operator (Butt et al. 2003).

ACTIVE *unngå* 'avoid' < agent < P < .. > >  
 | \_\_\_\_\_ |

ACTIVE *unngå* 'avoid' < agent < *gjøre* 'do' < agent theme > > >  
 | \_\_\_\_\_ |           |  
                   SUBJ               OBJ

This kind of analysis could be transferred to verb + preposition. I assume that verb + preposition form a complex predicate in the same way as verb + verb.

ACTIVE *satse* 'concentrate' < agent < P < .. > >

ACTIVE *satse* 'concentrate' < agent < *på* 'on' < theme > > >  
                                   SUBJ                       OBJ

One might object that there is no argument sharing when a verb and a preposition are restructured. However, the literature on complex predicates does not consider argument sharing a requirement for complex predicate formation — as shown for example by the overview of first verbs assumed in the literature in Wurmbrand (2001:342–345). Subject-to-subject-raising verbs can be used as restructuring verbs, even if they take only one semantic argument. Example (26) shows that the subject-to-subject-raising verb *pleie* 'use to' allows the following verb to share its participle form instead of taking on the expected infinitive form (Aagaard 2016:77-78). This is an important criterion for restructuring (Andrews to appear).

(26) Kjøttdeig har de **pleid å fått** hver dag (Aagaard 2016:77)  
       ground.beef have they used to get.PART every day  
       'They have used to get ground beef every day'

*pleie* 'use to' < < P < .. > >

*pleie* 'use to' < < *få* 'get' < benefactive theme > > >

A pseudopassive can be compared to a passive of a complex predicate consisting of two verbs — a so-called long passive. In both cases, it is typically the internal argument of the second element that is realized as the subject of the predicate as a whole. And in both cases, there is no requirement for the two elements of the complex predicate to be one constituent in c-structure.

(27) Hvorfor **unngås** det **å gjøres**?  
       why avoid.PRES.PASS it to do.INF.PASS  
       'Why do they avoid doing it?'



PASSIVE *unngås* 'avoid.PASS' < agent < *gjøre* 'do' < agent theme > > >  
 |—————|  
 Ø SUBJ

PASSIVE *satses* 'concentrate.PASS' < agent < *på* 'on' < theme > > >  
 Ø SUBJ

The first verb of a complex predicate is usually assumed not take an internal argument (Cinque 2004). This assumption correctly accounts for the ungrammaticality of a pseudopassive with a retained object, such as (28).<sup>6</sup>

(28) \*The table was put a book on

Pseudopassives with non-specific idiomatic or non-idiomatic objects are then not accounted for, but these sentences must probably be derived by "first" incorporating the object in some way to be worked out, and "then" creating a complex predicate (Asudeh and Mikkelsen 2000, Mills 2008, Kiparsky 2013). Examples (3)-(4) are reproduced as (29)-(30).

(29) She has been **taken advantage of**

(30) I don't like to be **told lies about** (Bolinger 1977:62)

Another prediction of the complex predicate analysis is that the preposition cannot be in the position for discourse functions in a main clause.

(31) Gardinene kan ikke sees **gjennom**  
 curtains.DEF can not see.INF.PASS through  
 'One cannot see through the curtains'

(32) \***Gjennom** kan de ikke sees  
 through can they not see.INF.PASS

This is not surprising — the preposition does not seem to be a good choice for a topic or focus. However, sentences such as (32) are markedly unacceptable, and this follows from the complex predicate analysis. The preposition is a part of the PRED in f-structure. It does not have a syntactic function in f-structure, which is a general requirement for having a discourse function (see e.g. Kaplan to appear).<sup>7</sup>

It has been observed that the pseudopassives can be more or less acceptable, and intuitions vary between speakers. This is only to be expected of a lexical phenomenon. The same kind of situation can be found with complex predicates consisting of two verbs, see e.g. Reis and Sternefeld (2004) on German, Hobæk Haff and Lødrup (2016) on French, and Wurmbrand and Shimamura (2017:203-4) on English.

<sup>6</sup> Wurmbrand (2004:997-98) shows that German can allow a dative argument with verbs such as *erlauben* 'allow' or *empfehlen* 'recommend'. These arguments must be considered OBJ $\theta$ , so the relevant generalization must be that the first verb of a complex predicate cannot take OBJ.

<sup>7</sup> A possible problem for this account is that German can topicalize the second verb (phrase) in a long passive, see Wurmbrand (2007).

### A new argument: Prepositions in long passives

There is an independent piece of evidence for verb + preposition reanalysis that has not been mentioned in the literature, except briefly in Lødrup (2022). Long passives in Scandinavian allow — as expected — a pseudopassive as their second verb, cf. (33). However, the fact that is of interest in the present context is that the first verb can also be followed by a preposition, as in (34). This preposition cannot at the same time be the PRED of an OBL $\emptyset$  and a part of a complex predicate involving the second verb.

(33) Dette **forsøkes**      **å satses**                      **på**  
 this try.PRES.PASS to concentrate.INF.PASS on  
 'They try to concentrate on this'

(34) Dette **satses**                                      **på å gjøres**  
 this concentrate.PRES.PASS on to do.INF.PASS  
 'They concentrate on doing this'

A preposition with the first verb can also be found in Swedish and Danish.

(35) Detta är något      som måste **satsas**                      **på att göras**              rätt (Swedish)  
 this is something that must concentrate.INF.PASS on to do.INF.PASS right  
 'This is something that we must focus upon doing in the right way'

(36) Cremen kan **fortsættes**                      **med at bruges** (Danish)  
 cream.DEF may continue.INF.PASS with to use.INF.PASS  
 'One may continue using the cream'

The c-structure of (34) is assumed to be as in Figure 3. It is important that *på* 'on' is not a verbal particle here. (Norwegian prepositions take infinitivals with the infinitival marker as a completely regular option.)

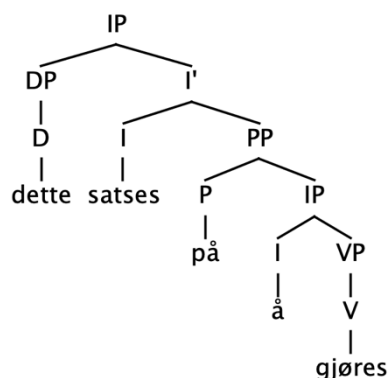


Figure 3

The long passive in sentences such as (34) requires that the first verb and the preposition are "first" reanalyzed. We then have a unit that can be combined with a second verb.

PASSIVE *satses* 'concentrate.PASS' < agent < *på* 'on' <*gjøre* 'do' <agent theme>>> >  
 |—————|  
 Ø SUBJ

We see, then, that verb + preposition reanalysis is necessary to allow a preposition with the first verb in the long passive. This gives a new argument for (some version of) reanalysis in Scandinavian.

There is, however, a different type of passive which might seem to give an argument against reanalysis of verb + preposition. Norwegian and Danish have the so-called complex passive, as in (37), in which an inflectional passive or a passive participle is followed by a passive participle. This construction is usually seen as a case of subject-to-subject-raising (see e.g. Christensen 1991, Ørsnes 2006).

- (37) Dette ble forsøkt gjort  
 this became attempted done  
 'One tried to do this.'

An interesting difference between the long passive and the complex passive concerns verbs that take an OBL $\theta$  PP, such as *satse* (*på*) 'concentrate (on)'. These verbs can never be the first verb of a complex passive – neither with nor without the preposition. Example (38) is based on a Danish example in Ørsnes (2006)

- (38) \*Konkurransen blir satset (på) gjennomført.  
 contest.DEF becomes concentrated on completed  
 'They intend to complete the contest.' [intended]

This restriction has been discussed thoroughly in the literature (Christensen 1986, Engh 1994:111-113, Hellan 2001, Ørsnes 2006). It could follow from a subject-to-subject raising analysis of the complex passive – the extra structural layer created by the PP would make the raising path too "long" (Ørsnes 2006). However, if we assume reanalysis of verb + preposition, there seems to be nothing to prevent a prepositional complex passive.

The solution to this problem must lie in the type of complement that the preposition takes in c-structure. Reanalysis of verb + preposition to a complex predicate is an f-structure phenomenon. In c-structure, the preposition is the head of a PP with the infinitive as an object. Norwegian infinitives with the infinitival marker can be objects of prepositions in PPs with all kinds of functions. Infinitive phrases can be considered CPs or IPs — depending upon the category assigned to the infinitival marker. This choice plays no role here, but IP will be assumed.

The point is that a long passive with a preposition with the first verb, such as (34), repeated as (39), has an unproblematic c-structure (Figure 3 above). In contrast, a complex passive such as (40) has the ungrammatical c-structure in Figure 4 (shown below). The reason it is ungrammatical is that the complement of the preposition is a VP – a category that cannot take this function. (This account is similar to the one in Christensen 1986).

- (39) Dette satses på å gjøres  
 this concentrate.PRES.PASS on to do.INF.PASS  
 'They concentrate on doing this'
- (40) \*Dette satses på gjort  
 this concentrate.PRES.PASS on done

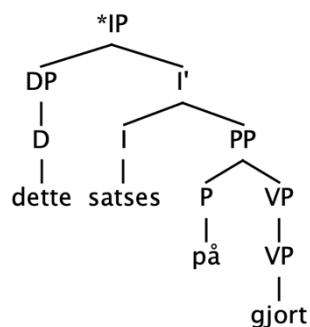


Figure 4

We see, then that the complex passive does not create a real problem for reanalysis of verb + preposition.

### Is English basically different from Scandinavian?

This paper has argued for a complex predicate analysis of Scandinavian pseudopassives. The question is now if this analysis can be transferred to English. The adjacency constraint appears to be an important difference between Scandinavian and English. The complex predicate analysis has nothing to say about adjacency. The strategy in this paper will be to try to make the relevant difference between English and Scandinavian smaller, partly by pointing out that the adjacency constraint is not absolute in English, and partly by arguing that Scandinavian also has some kind of adjacency constraint.

It is noteworthy that the English adjacency constraint is less than absolute. Non-specific objects can to some extent occur between the verb and the preposition, both idiomatic and non-idiomatic ones (see (3)-(4) above). Even when these cases are put aside, there are phenomena that undermine the adjacency constraint, as pointed out by Tseng (2006) and Findley (2015, 2016).

First, a verbal particle can appear between the verb and the preposition (Findley 2015:117).

(41) As the first local settler he was **looked up to** by most

However, this could be accounted for by assuming that verb + particle "first" form a complex predicate (Forst et al. 2010), which is "then" combined with the preposition to a larger complex predicate.

Second, the preposition can be modified, as in (42) (text example from Findlay 2016:258)

(42) I've stood there, heavily pregnant (and obviously so), and been **looked straight through**.

In addition, some speakers of English accept — to some degree — other violations of adjacency. Findley (2016:259) gives the text example (43).

(43) Yerba mate ( .. ) is **relied especially on** by poor Argentines when food is scarce.

Some speakers find a sentence such as (44) better than ungrammatical (suggested by Dr. Jamie Findlay, pc).

(44) ? Those issues were **spoken** frequently **of** at the meeting

Even if the relative acceptability of adjacency violations in English has not been investigated, adjacency seems to be a constraint that is not absolute.

### A second look at Scandinavian

As discussed above, Scandinavian allows sentences that violate the adjacency constraint. This was the motivation for the rejection of the traditional reanalysis by Scandinavian grammar in the eighties. Scandinavian violations of adjacency fall into two distinct types. Finite forms of the inflectional passive behave syntactically like other finite verbs — they follow the V2 rule, being in the C or I position in main clauses. It is impossible to have the preposition with the finite verb in these positions.

(45) Selvfølgelig **satses** de **på**  
obviously concentrate.PRES.PASS they on  
'Obviously, we concentrate on them'

(46) \*Selvfølgelig **satses** på de  
obviously concentrate.PRES.PASS on they

This is an argument that verb + preposition are not one constituent in c-structure. It might be objected that there could be a general constraint saying that nothing but a "pure" finite verb can be in I and C. This is not clear, however. Among young children in Oslo, it is common to incorporate verbal particles in verbs.<sup>8</sup> When the resulting complex verb is finite, it can appear in C and I. An example is (47). The preposition *på* 'on' can be used as a regular preposition, or as an intransitive particle, as in (47). In the latter case, the children can have it as a part of a complex finite verb in C and I.

(47) Har-på du sokker? [grandchild, 3.2 years, March 2021]  
have on you socks  
'Do you have socks on?'

This option seems to be limited to intransitive verbal particles. Even so, the incorporation phenomenon in sentences such as (47) suggests that it is not unthinkable that a verb + preposition constituent — if it existed — in a pseudopassive could be in I or C in c-structure.

Richards (2017) gives a Minimalist analysis of English pseudopassives building upon the analysis of complex predicates consisting of two verbs in Wurmbrand (2001). Richards (2017) gives the structures in Figure 5 (below) for the sentence *They talk about the movie* with and without reanalysis. The important difference between the trees is the functional projection *pP* above the *PP* in the first tree (see arrows). The general idea is that the second part of a complex predicate lacks functional structure.

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<sup>8</sup> This kind of sentences are well known to me from my grandchildren, as well as discussions with people who interact with the relevant age group. The phenomenon has never been discussed in the literature. It is mentioned briefly in Aa (2020: 52-53, note 20).

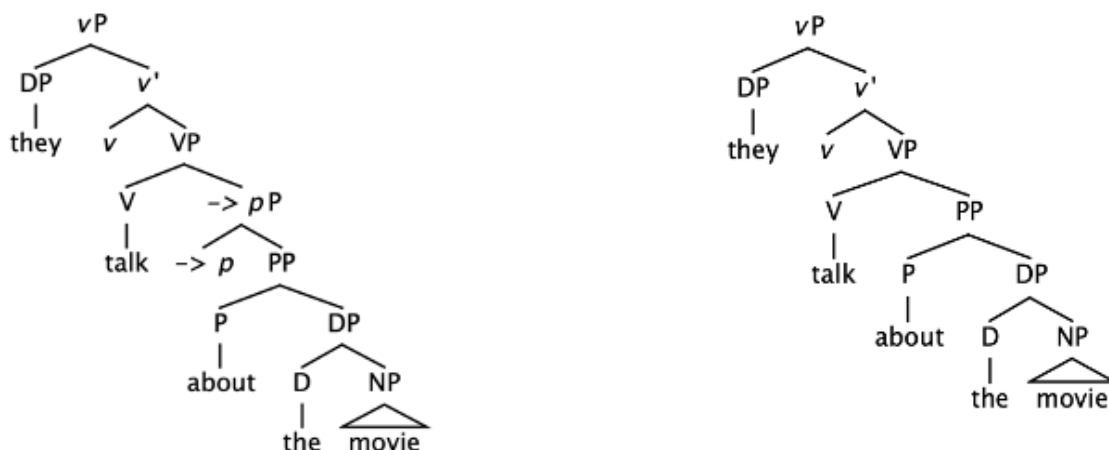


Figure 5

If Richards' analysis should be transferred to Norwegian, the finite verb must be in the C or I position. There is no reason the preposition should move with a verb given the structure proposed by Richards, so this kind of Minimalist analysis seems to give the right prediction for finite verbs. However, the analysis could not be extended to pseudopassives with non-finite main verbs and adjacency violations, such as (17)-(20) above. Richards (2017:313) says explicitly that his goal is to account for the adjacency constraint in English.

We will now focus on pseudopassives with a non-finite main verb, and the first question is what can appear between a non-finite main verb and the preposition. We will only discuss prototypical pseudopassives without retained objects.

Just like English, Norwegian can have a particle between the verb and the preposition, as in (48) as well as a modified preposition, as in (49).

- (48) Jeg blir **sett** ned **på**  
 I become looked down on  
 'I am looked down on'
- (49) Vi andre blir **sett** tvers **gjennom**  
 we others become looked straight through  
 'We others are looked straight through'

When it comes to pseudopassives with an adjunct between a non-finite main verb and the preposition, it is first necessary to put pseudopassives aside, and say a few words about Scandinavian constituent order in general. The ordering of adjuncts and obliques following a non-finite verb is not very strict. There seem to be different rules and tendencies, which can be formal, functional, semantic or information structural. This has not been investigated thoroughly, but some remarks can be found in Faarlund et al. (1993:896) and Teleman (1999 III:489-490).

One general tendency is that obliques precede adjuncts. Even so, there are also options for adjuncts to precede obliques. An important group is adjuncts of manner, which most often precede obliques in Norwegian (Faarlund et al. 1993:896, see also Teleman 3 1999 III:481, 489-490 on Swedish). An example is (50)-(51), which is degraded with the adjunct of manner following the oblique. The same tendency can be found with some adjuncts of degree, intensity, etc, as in (52)-(53).

- (50) Hun la boka pent på bordet (Faarlund et al. 1993:896)  
 she put book.DEF nicely on table.DEF  
 'She put the book nicely on the table'
- (51) ??Hun la boka på bordet pent. (Faarlund et al. 1993:896)  
 she put book.DEF on table.DEF nicely
- (52) Vi har arbeidet mye/ intenst med saken  
 we have worked much / intensively with case.DEF  
 'We have worked a lot / intensively with the case'
- (53) ??Vi har arbeidet med saken mye/ intenst  
 we have worked with case.DEF much / intensively

Adjuncts that are found between the non-finite verb and the preposition in pseudopassives are of the type that require or prefer the position preceding the oblique. If this position had been forbidden by a strict adjacency constraint, there would be no alternative position for these adjuncts that is fully acceptable.

Adjuncts of place and time are different. They usually follow an oblique, but they can also precede it, under conditions that seem not to be known. Example (54) has the time adjunct following an oblique, while (55) has the adjunct preceding the oblique. (Examples (54)-(55) are impersonal passives — used here because they are more similar to pseudopassives than personal actives.)

- (54) Det ble snakket om landbrukspolitikk i mange timer  
 EXPL became talked about agricultural.policy for many hours  
 'They talked about agricultural policy for many hours'
- (55) Det ble snakket i mange timer om landbrukspolitikk  
 EXPL became talked for many hours about agricultural.policy  
 'They talked for many hours about agricultural policy'

In corresponding pseudopassives, an adjacency effect shows up: Having the time adjunct preceding the preposition is not good, even if it is acceptable in the impersonal passive (55).<sup>9</sup> There must be adjacency, as in (57).

- (56) ??Landbrukspolitikk ble **snakket i mange timer om**  
 agricultural.policy became talked for many hours about
- (57) Landbrukspolitikk ble **snakket om i mange timer**  
 agricultural.policy became talked about for many hours  
 'Agricultural policy was talked about for many hours'

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<sup>9</sup> Åfarli (1989:105, 1992) used example (i) (here rendered in Bokmål Norwegian) to establish that Norwegian does not have the adjacency constraint in pseudopassives.

- (i) Ola ble **snakket to ganger med**  
 Ola became talked two times with  
 'Ola was talked to twice'

The adjunct is acceptable preceding or following a selected PP in the active.

- (ii) Vi har snakket to ganger med Ola / med Ola to ganger  
 we have talked two times to Ola / to Ola two times  
 'We have talked twice to Ola'

Three linguists who were asked to rate the acceptability of (i) on a scale from 1 to 5 gave it an average of 2

This seems to be an adjacency effect that is special for pseudopassives. It is not +/-passive or +/-preposition stranding per se that is decisive, as can be seen from sentences such as (55) (which is passive) and (58) (which has preposition stranding).

- (58) Det har de snakket i mange timer om  
 that have they talked for many hours about  
 'They have talked about it for many hours'

We see, then, that Scandinavian like English is not without restrictions on what can occur between the non-finite verb and the preposition which are special to pseudopassives. However, it must be possible to violate the adjacency constraint in Scandinavian. For a finite main verb in a pseudopassive to satisfy the V2 constraint, adjacency must be violable. Pseudopassives with a non-finite main verb show adjacency when higher ranked rules do not require otherwise. Adjuncts of manner, degree, intensity, etc have a general preference for the position preceding an oblique, and they are allowed to violate adjacency. Adjuncts of time, place etc are often realized following obliques, so they have no "need" to violate the adjacency constraint.

Adjacency could be seen as a kind of iconicity effect: It is natural, but not necessary, for the parts of a complex predicate to be adjacent in c-structure. This is also true of complex predicates consisting of two verbs. They must follow the V2 constraint, but those with a non-finite main verb seem to be even stricter than pseudopassives in being adjacent in c-structure.

- (59) \*Dette må **forsøkes** hardere **å gjøres**  
 this must try.INF.PASS harder to do.INF.PASS  
 'We must try harder to do this'

Other cases of complex predicates also show an iconicity effect. Lødrup (2016) discusses complex predicates in Norwegian with a present participle as their second part. The verb *ha* 'have' can form a complex predicate with some present participles. This present participle can then take the position between the verb and the object. Other present participles (derived adjectives functioning as adjuncts) cannot take this position (Faarlund et al 1997:752-53, Lødrup 2016).

- (60) Jeg **har stående** en fin gammel portvin (Faarlund et al 1997:753)  
 I have standing a fine old port.wine  
 'I have a fine old port wine standing'

- (61) \*Vi kan ikke ha snokende en skatteinspektør her  
 we can not have snooping a tax.inspector here  
 'We cannot have a tax inspector snooping here' [intended]

Note that there is no absolute requirement for adjacency. When *ha* 'have' is finite, it can be followed by the subject, a sentence adverbial, etc. Other examples that there can be a preference for the parts of a complex predicate to be adjacent in c-structure are easily found in different languages (Lødrup 1996, Sheehan 2016).

The general conclusion of this section is that English and Scandinavian are less different than previously thought when it comes to adjacency. Some kind of adjacency requirement is not unexpected with a complex predicate, but it has to compete with other syntactic restrictions. This fact makes it more attractive to apply the complex predicate analysis to English. More research is needed to work out the details.



## Conclusion

This paper has not discussed all aspects of pseudopassives. Some problems were put aside, such as the treatment of pseudopassives with retained objects, and pseudopassives with adjunct PPs.

The complex predicate analysis proposed can be seen as a development of the reanalysis approach of traditional and modern grammar. It keeps the basic intuition, and avoids the problem raised by word order in Scandinavian pseudopassives. A complex predicate analysis also has the advantage that it can build upon insight from decades of work on other types of complex predicates. With its distinction between c-structure and f-structure, LFG gives a framework that is ideal for this kind of analysis.

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