On The Causative Construction
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Abstract

The work to be presented here is the result of the collaborative efforts of ten students of syntax. The aim here—as it is of all syntactic analyses—is to be able to account for a construction while working within the domain of a certain syntactic theory, upholding the tenets of said theory, making minimal adjustments to it only as necessary, and creating little to no stipulation. Here, this analysis is presented under a Minimalist framework (Chomsky, 1993).

To narrow the focus, the specific goal of the present analysis is to capture the syntax of causatives, which are sentences of the form Bill made John wash the dishes. There are two verbs in this construction: the causative verb, which here is make (though the other causative verbs have and let will also be examined) and what is known as the main verb, here wash. Of interest in these constructions is that there is not only the main action being performed—the washing that is done by John—but that there is an additional event: that Bill is causing (or bringing about) the action of John washing dishes.

There is an additional verb, get, which seems to pattern like these causative verbs but has some additional properties such that it also patterns like passive constructions. The sentence Bill got John arrested certainly seems to be of the same form as the make causative sentence. This sentence, however, also permits the following addition: Bill got John arrested by the police. This addition, which is called the by-phrase, is something that is also seen in passive constructions. For example, an active form of a sentence is The police arrested John while the passive is John was arrested by the police; here, what is the subject in the passive is the object in the active, and the subject of the active is housed in this by-phrase in the passive. While there is this rearrangement, the relationship between what is being done and who is doing it is crucially retained; the police are still the participants doing the arresting and John is always the participant being arrested. This is not possible for the causative verbs make, let, and have (*John made Sally arrested by the police). Returning to the structure with get, an analysis must account for get having the same surface distribution as other causative verbs, but additionally permitting this passivization that is not possible with the others.

Moving from this more descriptive picture to one that is more theoretical, the objective is as follows: The analysis that will be explicated will address these various causative verbs, the structures associated with them, and how make, let, and have are distinct from get. In a general sense, these constructions are interesting in that they seem to complicate a picture of verbal structures enumerated by a classical understanding of syntax. Not only are there verbs, but there are also light verbs—an extension of the verb within a theoretical representation of syntax. These light verbs are thought to control the voice of the sentence (if the sentence is active or passive); the passive be, as seen in John was arrested by the police, is such a light verb. Causatives are therefore of great consequence to one’s understanding of so-called light verbs, as the verb get seems passive in nature. The two verbs get and be should then, intuitively, have similar syntactic constructions. Proposed in this paper will be that get, like passive be, is a light verb. Make, let, and have differ from get in that they do not originate in this same light verb position, but higher in the structure. To account for the similarity in surface distribution of these causative verbs, it is posited that get originates as a light verb and moves to occupy the same position as these other causative verbs. This account is able to succeed then in capturing the nuances of the different causative verbs with a structural account, uniting their position and cause-like elements while also retaining particular similarities to the passive in the case of get.
1 Background & Assumptions

This section will explicate various terms and concepts used in this analysis. The current theory of syntax employs a bottom-up Minimalist system that is meant to describe the relation between lexical items. Simply put, the order in which morphemes merge together explains what relation they have to what they merge with. For example, a DP argument that merges first with a verb head is the complement of that verb, whereas a DP argument that merges second is the specifier. By definition, a head is a terminal node whose label commands itself and its complements/specifiers. The notion of the clausal spine is an assumed order of phrases that occur in a given language. This order is variable for any given language, but fixed within a particular language. A similar variable within a language is the presence of an EPP feature on given heads. If a language has an EPP feature on a particular head, then that head will need to have something in its specifier by derivation’s end. The presence of EPP can be seen in English through, for example, the tendency to require a phonologically present subject. In this case, the T head contains the EPP feature, which internaationally merges a DP argument to its specifier (subject position, i.e. before the verb). In contrast, other languages do not have this subject-verb tendency and therefore would not have an EPP feature on T.

It is also understood in the current framework that all arguments must undergo case assignment and every case-assigning element must assign case by derivation’s end; otherwise, the derivation fails. For example, T must assign nominative case to an available element within the structure. If there is no element to which T is able to assign case, then the derivation fails. Likewise, the current system requires that arguments must undergo agreement with its case assign - i.e., the DP subject of a sentence must provide T with person and number information so that the morphology knows how to phonologically represent T (e.g., He knows and They know instead of He know and They knows). The existence of a little v head accounts for the alternation between active voice (e.g., Sue hit Bill) and passive voice (e.g., Bill was hit by Sue). This functional head occurs between T and the main verb. This analysis will be proposed with the understanding that there exists a little v head.

2 The Taxonomy of Causatives

2.1 The Causative Verbs: Make, Let, Have

The causative verbs to be examined are make, let and have as they appear in such sentences as (1):

(1) I {made, let, had} Sally read that book.

The primary function of any causative is to introduce an argument—the ‘causer’—which brings about the happening of the main verb; in the example above, the main verb is read. For (1), the lexical items (now: LI) in question are causatives, which select the external argument causer I and an active voice little v. The syntactic category of the causative is also little v, which predicts that causatives select other instances of little v —either other causatives or passive/active little v. There are a number of well-motivated reasons for why one might predict the little v label for the causative, the most salient being that for every main verb in the structure, one expects to find a little v associated with it, which licenses an agentive/expericier thematic role. For example, the active little v head in (1) establishes the agent’s relationship to the main verb —Sally is the one actively reading. It comes out rather cleanly for the theory that causatives be realized on little v since it is the causative verb that establishes the cause’s relation to the active voice vP. The I in (1) is related to read as being the agent who brought about the reading-event’s eventuality. This concept of little v as what establishes the relation between the subject and the active main verb seems to be confirmed in the case of ditransitive constructions, such as (2):

(2) I gave Sally the book.

The verb first merges with the direct object the book and then merges with the indirect object Sally in Spec, V. Next, an active little v merges with the entire V and selects a subject to merge at Spec, little v. If one then considers little v as the mediator between this subject and the main verb (via active little v), then
it is no mystery that at this point in the derivation, gave internally merges at the little \( v \) head. The subject is related to the main verb as the external argument of the main verb’s final landing site. In ditransitives, there is ambiguity since the Spec of the main verb is initially filled with the indirect object. One might say the ambiguity between which argument functions as the agent to the main verb is eliminated when the main verb moves to the little \( v \) head, the external argument of which is determined to be the agent.

This detour into ditransitives is germane to the larger discussion of the causative construction since it demonstrates clear evidence that little \( v \)’s role is one of relation between the subject argument of the causative and the main verb—in what manner the subject effectuates the verb (i.e. actively, causally) or is affected by it (passively). To return to the discussion of causatives, the following structure is the proposed shape of these sentence types:

\[
\text{TP} \quad \text{T} \quad [+\text{past}, +\text{EPP}] \quad \text{vP} \\
\quad \text{DP} \quad \text{vP} \\
\quad \quad \{\text{make, let, have}\} \\
\quad \quad \quad \text{v} \\
\quad \quad \quad \text{DP} \\
\quad \quad \quad \quad \text{Sally} \\
\quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \text{v} \\
\quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \text{VP} \\
\quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \text{read} \\
\quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \text{that book}
\]

The merge operations proceed in the typical manner for an active sentence with the additional external merge of the causative little \( v \) to the active little \( v \). From there, the external argument is introduced by means of an external merge satisfying the causatives’ selectional requirements; EPP on T merges this argument to Spec, T and the derivation converges.

One should not be too concerned that putting causatives in little \( v \) affects the status of little \( v \) as a functional voice (active/passive) head since there is cross-linguistic evidence for such overt functional heads. For example, in various analyses of the Irish language, some posit a progressive aspect functional head on little \( v \), realized as \( ag \). Ultimately, the decision to place causatives in little \( v \) comes down to four basic facts: (1) their verb-like qualities (each causative can appear as a main verb); (2) their propensity to select an external argument; (3) their ability to assign accusative case (‘I made him read that book’); and (4) their distribution. This distribution mirrors that of the voice \( vP \) in that it generates an external argument in its specifier that commonly internally merges to Spec, T. It would seem causative \( vP \)s do contrast with the voice \( vP \) in one important aspect; that is, their ability to select another causative \( vP \) and in essence ‘stack’. One finds that this ability to stack operates quite freely, with the singular constraint that the causative \( vP \) get cannot select another causative \( vP \) and so always must appear last in a stacked sequence. This phenomenon
is illustrated in the example below:

(3) John made Sally have Molly let Tom...get Susan arrested.  
(Where ‘...’ is an indefinite continuation of stacked causatives)

While the ordering of get with respect to the other causative vPs is determined in the syntax, make, have and let in (3) could just as well have been ordered in any other way. So, we might rewrite (3) as in (4):

(4) John make, let, have Sally have, make, let Molly let, have, make Tom...get Susan arrested.

To be entirely thorough, the distributions of our causative verbs (and all of their potential ‘stacking’ permutations) have been provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causative A</th>
<th>x Causative A y VP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x Causative A y Causative A z Causative A...VP</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x Causative A y Causative B[A]...VP</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x Causative A y Causative C]...VP</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x Causative A y Causative B z Causative C]...VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x Causative A y Causative C z Causative B]...VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x Causative A y $ z $ ...VP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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...where Causative A, B and C can be make, let, and have, $[^n]$ is a possibly infinite iteration of the sequence in brackets, with unique variables in each iteration, and $\emptyset$ is either ‘Causative B’ or ‘Causative C’ unordered. The ‘...’ intervening between the stacked causatives and the VP represents any additional phrases specific to the sentences, such as relative clauses or PPs for example.

In addition to this distribution, causatives can also select a passive little v (including get, discussed further in §2.2 and §3):

(5) a. John made, let, had Sally be arrested (by the police).  
    b. John made, let, had Sally get arrested (by the police).

### 2.2 A Causative (like) Verb: Get

Along with the causatives make, let, and have, there is another LI with fairly similar properties—namely, get. Get seems to have a unique distribution compared to the other causatives observed here. This can be seen in the examples below:

(6) a. Doug got Sally arrested (by the police).  
    b. Doug let Sally get arrested (by the police).  
    c. Sally got arrested (by the police).

There are several important observations to be made from these examples. Firstly, an agent is permitted to be expressed in the form of an adjoined by-phrase; this allows sentences like (6a) to have a ditransitive-esque structure (as discussed in the previous section) with the roles here being the causer, the patient, and the agent.

The patient of the action in sentences (6a)−(6c)−Sally−is permitted to appear in two different places, as seen in (6a) and (6b): preceding and following get. The order with the patient preceding the causative is unusual and is not seen with any of the other causatives (i.e. *Sally had arrested by the police*).

(7) a. Sally was arrested (by the police).  
    b. Sally got arrested (by the police).
The clause structure of (7b) is very similar to another familiar structure: the passive. Given this, it may not be out of the question to equate *get* with passive *be* in terms of structural placement—a new functional head for the purpose of accounting for the data. This aforementioned observation will continue to be relevant throughout the analysis.

Unlike the other causatives presented in the previous section, *get* cannot stack in the same way and must be the last causative within the context of stacked causation. Consider:

\[(8)\]
\[
a. \text{I made my sister have the dog get walked by my little brother.} \\
b. *I got my sister have the dog made walked. \\
c. *I got my sister make the dog had walked. \\
d. *I had my sister get the dog made walked. 
\]

This follows the intuition that *get*, although similar to the other aforementioned causatives, is inherently different from them and therefore must be accounted for in a different manner.

3 Analyzing *Get*

The analysis moves forward from here with the consideration of two hypotheses regarding *get*. As discussed in §2, the analysis operates under the notion that *make*, *let*, and *have* seem to form a certain class of *vs* that does not include *get*. The hypothesis presented in §3.1 proposes that there are two variants of *get*. In §3.2, an alternative will be considered—that there is only one *get* that is used in either context.

3.1 Causative as a *v*: The Two *gets* Analysis

It is possible that there are (at least) two variants of *get*, which we can call get\(_2\) and get\(_3\). Their subcategorization frames are given here:

\[
\text{get}_2, \ v <D[\_V]> \\
\text{get}_3, \ v [\_V]
\]

These items show that get\(_2\) selects a specifier while get\(_3\) does not. Subcategorization frames for the causatives *make*, *have*, and *let* are presented here:

\[
\{\text{make, have, let}\}, \ v <D[\_V]>
\]

One can see how this system would work by examining some sentences:

\[(9)\] Sally got arrested.
The derivation begins with an instance of merge between arrest and Sally. The LI get3 selects arrest, but does not select a specifier per our subcategorization frame above. T selects get and its EPP is satisfied via internal merge by Sally. Next, examine (10):

(10) Doug got Sally arrested.

Example (10) shows why it is necessary to posit an EPP on V. The derivation begins with arrest merging with Sally. Get merges with arrest and selects Doug as its specifier. By the derivation’s end, Doug is the argument that fulfills T’s EPP (rather than Sally). Without this EPP on V, derivation (10) would incorrectly yield the sentence *Doug got arrested Sally. Positing EPP on all verbs would also require positing that V always moves to v in order to account for the word order in an ordinary declarative clause. The analyses of ditransitive clauses presents the same proposal. This would also mean that Sally moves to the specifier position of arrest in (9). Next, a structure with a causative v and get will be examined:

(11) Doug let Sally get arrested.

It should be noted that in (11), Sally precedes get, whereas in (10), Sally follows get. In this construction, one can assume that let is the head that selects Doug as its specifier and that get is get3. Given the analysis presented earlier, an EPP on get3 will also need to be posited in order to account for the word order in (11). The derivation would look like this:
Next, some ungrammatical constructions will be examined. It will be demonstrated how they are accounted for with this current hypothesis:

(12) *I got the police arrest Sally. / I got the police to arrest Sally.
(13) *Sally was made, let, had, got read that book.

Whether get in example (12) is $get_2$ or $get_3$, the ungrammaticality of (12) stems from having too many arguments in this structure. If (12) contains $get_2$, get would select $I$ as its specifier and arrest would select Sally. Because arrest does not select a specifier, introducing the police in this structure would violate its subcategorization frame. Another way to think about this would be to say that arrest does not assign an external theta-role (which would go to the thing in its specifier). In this case, (12) would be ill-formed because there would be no probe relationship in which the police would serve as a goal. Example (13) is ungrammatical because passive be does not select a causative little $v$.

3.1.1 Implications Concerning the Passive Construction

The analysis presented in §3.1 provides interesting insight that, in order to account for causative constructions, aspects of the fundamental understanding of passive constructions is further complicated. On a structural level, what has been developed for passive constructions still works, but the analysis of the get passives seems to flout more fundamental characteristics of passive constructions which the current understanding necessitates. The following characteristics, in a sense, define passive constructions in the current system:

- Suppression of external arguments
- Passive voice marker in little $v$
- Optional by-phrase adjunct (typically containing agentive role)

The passive marker in little $v$ (most commonly realized as be but now also realized as get) and the optional by-phrase are perhaps the most simple and clear indicators of a passive construction. These two characteristics are not lost in the analysis posited in §3.1—one can still see a sentence with a by-phrase and a passive little $v$ realized as get: Sally got arrested by the police. In fact, this sentence includes all of the given characteristics of passive constructions; the little $v$ get does not have an external argument (hence Sally appearing in subject position), and by the police is an optional adjunct with the police receiving an agentive theta role. Other get-passives, however, do not contain all of these characteristics.

External argument suppression is accounted for in the already-familiar passives, e.g. The ball was kicked. The passive little $v$, be, suppresses any external arguments from appearing; that is, little $v$ does not introduce a specifier if it is passive. This explains how the subjects of passive sentences are typically the complements of the verbs in (for lack of a better term) their active counterparts the lack of another argument introduced by little $v$ eradicates the possibility of any other argument being the subject that satisfies the EPP on T.

This is a fundamental part of passive constructions; that is, the understanding of passive constructions hinges on the suppression of external arguments by the passive little $v$. This particular characteristic runs into trouble when faced with the analysis of get passives as suggested in §3.1.

Taking into account the characteristics of passive constructions, as well as the analysis in §3.1 (two gets), how is it possible that the analysis posited and the characterization of passives can both hold? It does not seem to be possible that they can both be true if the passive suppresses the external argument, but get, which is also stated to be passive, must have an external argument. This can be seen in the subcategorization frames of the two gets, which are reiterated here:

$get_2, v <D[V]\>
get_3, v [\_V]$
The two gets can be most easily characterized in the following way: they are both passive in that they have a by-phrase, but where they differ is that get2 must introduce an external argument in order to account for the structure below:

Here, get2 must introduce the external argument Doug, which is the causer of the event of Sally getting arrested. Since this is a passive little v, it would be expected to suppress its external argument. However, as stated earlier, there certainly needs to be an external argument, i.e. there needs to be an agent of the causing event, a ‘causer’. It would be strange to posit that this argument should instead be placed in a lower specifier (perhaps in the specifier of arrest) since this would then make Doug the agent of the arresting event, which is not what this sentence is meant to convey. While this would fix the issue of a passive little v having an external argument, it does not make the correct prediction about argument structure and theta-role assignment. An example that can further elucidate this is to include a by-phrase in the sentence above.

(14) a. Doug got Sally arrested by the police.
    b. Sally got, was arrested by the police.

The ‘sub-sentence’ within (14a), or sentence (14b), is clearly passive. The characteristics of the passive are evident, as there is switching in prominence of the arguments and a by-phrase, differing here in the lexical head being get rather than the passive be. A point to consider about the passive is that while the external argument is suppressed from where it might normally be seen (the specifier position), the argument can appear in the by-phrase. This is the case with the police here. In stating that the by-phrase expresses the argument that would be in the specifier, and going even further to say that the agentive theta-role can be assigned to the by-phrase if it is included in the local domain of little v as an adjunct, then it would not follow to put Doug into this specifier position. The agentive, ‘causer’ theta-role of the arresting event would be assigned to the argument that is in the specifier of the verb rather than to the argument in the by-phrase. In the examples above, however, the reading in (14b) is that the police are the agents of the arresting event, not Doug. For this reason, it is not plausible to state that the argument should be in the lower specifier. Rather, it should be in the higher specifier because Doug does seem to be the agent of the causing event.

If it is the case that the external argument does need to be present but it cannot be lower, then some reconciliation must be made on the part of the current proposal or on the part of how the passive is to be characterized; the former seems to be the most plausible place to make some change. If the passive is no longer characterized by the suppression of the external argument, this would have a huge effect on how the current passive works. The reason why the switching in prominence of arguments is exhibited and the expression of the agent role in the by-phrase (two hallmarks of the passive) are able to be accounted for is crucially through this suppression. It states that verbs have one lexical entry, and that when the voice head is active, that if there is an argument in the specifier, it will be suppressed. Then, because of EPP (a feature on T which enters into a Case/Agree relation with the highest DP), the object would be raised to the the
specifier of TP (the surface subject position), as it is the highest in the structure; this explains this switch in prominence. If this suppression were lost, however, and the possibility that passives could have external arguments were valid, a different account of the passive construction would be needed. This would be of particular concern when one considers the strong cross-linguistic evidence that argument suppression is a fundamental component of the passive. In their paper, *Passive in the world’s languages*, authors Keenan and Dreyer point out that across languages in which the passive construction exists, it is consistently a valence reducing operation—it suppresses an argument of the verb. This is true of multiple language types, even ones in which the marking of the passive is markedly different from languages like English. Some systems employ morphology while others employ auxiliary verbs, but what remains consistent is the suppression of an argument. What would also be lost with a change to the passive construction would be Burzio’s Generalization: that active little v’s are characterized by introducing an external argument and passive little v’s, by the lack of such an introduction. Possibly, it could be the case that verbs would need to be reduplicated for active and passive forms, but this would also be a large loss as it invokes a listing hypothesis rather than an analysis of the passive that falls out cleanly from mechanisms already present in the current framework. It seems more plausible, then, that the passive analysis should be kept intact, but that somehow there should still be the ability for these causatives to have external arguments.

The following hypothesis will account for the same range of causative data constructions seen thus far while addressing the issues that appear under the first hypothesis.

### 3.2 Causative Functional Head: The Single get Analysis

This section will introduce the existence of a functional, causative head which eliminates the need for multiple gets presented in the previous proposal. In this analysis, this head is phonologically null, and will select what has thus far been called passive get under this analysis, this is the only get. Despite the fact that it is dispreferred to posit phonologically null functional heads, there does seem to be evidence that indicates that there is one such head present in causative structures involving get.

(15) Sally got arrested.

Sentence (15) contains the so-called passive get. The structure of this sentence is exactly like a passive. The LI get is a passive little v, which suppresses an external argument. Like the passive be, the passive get can also take the by-phrase, as in the following:

(16) Sally got arrested by the police.

The causative structure involving get is similar to the passive, except that it takes an external argument. By suggesting that there is actually a passive structure within the following example (17a), an explanation for how a structure like (17b) is possible can be presented, since it has thus been suggested that the by-phrase is externally merged following the merging of the passive head:

(17) a. John got Sally arrested.

   b. John got Sally arrested by the police.
Rather than suggesting that there are two \textit{gets} (i.e. one selecting an external argument, and one not), it may be more perspicious to posit a single \textit{get}. Under this analysis, a functional head—such as a null causative head—could introduce an external argument and select the passive \textit{get}. Then, the derivation would require the movement of the passive \textit{get} to the place of the null causative functional head. With all of the EPP features satisfied, we derive the correct word order of (17a) while explaining the sentence’s passive nature while also drawing a distinction between \textit{get} in causative structures and other causative heads. The advantage of this functional causative head includes the preservation and delineation of a clear definition of the passive, as well as the ability to provide an explanation for the distinction between \textit{get} and other causative LIs, such as \textit{make}, \textit{let}, and \textit{have}. Consider, now, the following:

(18) John \underline{let/made/had} Sally \underline{get} arrested.

The above structure is similar to the causative structure involving \textit{get}. Notice that structure (19) is also possible with \textit{make/let/have}, but not with \textit{get}.

(19) John \underline{let/made/had} the police arrest Sally.

Replacing \underline{let} with \underline{get} results in an ungrammatical structure and illustrates the distinction between \underline{made/let/have} on the one hand and \underline{get} on the other. Sentence (20) is indicative of the fact that \underline{get} cannot select an active head with an external argument. The single-\underline{get} analysis explains this by suggesting that \underline{get} is a passive head, so structures like (20) cannot be generated since a passive head could not select an active head:

(20) *I \underline{got} the police arrest Sally.

Notice that \underline{get} is distinct from these other items in that it cannot occur in causative chains, except at the end:

(21) Tony let Sean have Britt make Vince \underline{get} arrested.
(22) *Tony let Sean get Britt make Tony \underline{get} arrested.

The causatives \underline{make}, \underline{let}, and \underline{have} are distinct from \underline{get} in that they do not allow the option to omit an external argument:

(23) *Sally had \underline{arrested}
Another advantage of the functional causative head and single passive get analysis is that it does not require the positing of an EPP feature on a lexical (non-functional) head, as is necessary in accepting the previously presented analysis where there are two gets.

While positing a functional head and only one get for causatives has many advantages and seems to be suggested by the data, there are also disadvantages to such an analysis that might raise well-warranted skepticism. It is suspicious, for example, to suggest that a functional (and therefore invisible) head can only select one thing, the passive get. Furthermore, we are left with the dissatisfaction of new theoretical machinery, including head movement and a functional CAUSATIVE, a result that may make the minimalists cringe. Despite the bad news, the single get analysis explains many nuances in the data with a relatively fell swoop, especially when compared to the myriad of fundamental issues that arise under the analysis wherein there exist two separate get LIs.

A Summary of the Two Analyses

These two hypotheses diverge in one fundamental respect. In the double get analysis presented in §3.1, the ‘causer’ role is attributed to get2 while in the single get analysis from §3.2, the ‘causer’ role is attributed to the causative head. The greatest advantages of the double get analysis includes the lack of necessity to posit any levels of structure with silent heads that introduce arguments and assign theta roles. Two disadvantages of this view are: (1) the understanding of what constitutes a passive construction had to have been reexamined and redefined in §3.1.1, and (2) it must be posited that the lexical head V has an EPP. The greatest advantage of the single get analysis from §3.3 is that the definition of passives was preserved. Furthermore, there is no need to posite an EPP on a lexical head. The disadvantage of this hypothesis is that a silent causative v head must be posited in order to account for the ‘causer’ argument. These advantages and disadvantages will be revisited in a later section, but first two brief and relevant issues will be explored that are meant to clarify some of the questions that both of these analyses raise.

4 Additional Explorations

4.1 A TP Boundary

This section explores the possibility of get selecting for both a main verb and a non-finite TP. As was seen earlier, in both analyses, get selects a main verb, like in the sentence (a) Sally got arrested (by the police) or (b) I got Sally arrested (by the police) (where Sally undergoes internal merge). Another sentence that should be considered can be seen below in (25):

(25) *I got the police arrest Sally.

The first subject—the causer of the event (DP I)—is placed first and is followed by get, which is then followed by the subject/agent of the event (DP the police), the main verb arrest, and the causee/object of the event, Sally. Notice that in sentence (25), the DP the police (the subject/agent) occurs after get, while in sentence (b), the causee/object Sally occurs after get. There is also a semantic discrepancy between sentence (b) I got Sally arrested by the police and the intended meaning of (25), I got the police to arrest Sally. The main point of interest here is that sentence (25) above is suddenly grammatical if to is placed after the police, like in sentence (26):

(26) I got the police to arrest Sally.

Notice that arrest does not carry inflection like it does in the aforementioned sentences, Sally got arrested and I got Sally arrested. This is expected, as arrest follows the infinitival to. In every other causative construction with get that does not contain the infinitival to, the agent-like DP (e.g. the police) does not
occur after *get*—only the causee *Sally* can come directly after *get*. The subcategorization frame for *get*, then, would be as follows:

\[
get, v < (D)\langle\_V\rangle >
\]
\[
get, v < (D)\langle\_TP[-FIN]\rangle >
\]

This subcategorization frame attempts to take into account both analyses—whether there are two different 

gets is irrelevant to this section. The derivation of sentence (26) *I got the police to arrest Sally* is given here:

**Numeration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sally</th>
<th>arrest</th>
<th>D1: [arrest[Sally]]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>got</td>
<td>T[pst]</td>
<td>D2: [[[the]police][arrest[Sally]]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the</td>
<td>v[caus]</td>
<td>D3: [to[[[the]police][arrest[Sally]]]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>police</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>D4: [get[to[[[the]police][arrest[Sally]]]]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td></td>
<td>D5: [I[get[to[[[the]police][arrest[Sally]]]]]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D6: [T[pst]I[v(caus)get[to[[[the]police][arrest[Sally]]]]]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D7: [I[T[pst]I[v(caus)get[[[the]police][to][arrest[Sally]]]]]] (Internal Merge)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the non-finite TP that *get* selects, the specifier of arrest raises to the specifier of T to, which accounts for the word order. As usual, the specifier of *get* (the DP I) raises to the specifier of T through Internal Merge.

### 4.2 A Null Passive Head

Example (27) strongly suggests the existence of a phonologically null passive head:

(27) *Bob had Sally arrested by the police.*

There are all the hallmarks of a passive present in this example: a suppressed agentive argument which can optionally be (and in this case, has been) realized in an oblique by-phrase, a promoted patientive argument from the domain of V (typically, and in this case, the complement of V), and a main verb inflected in the -EN form. And yet, there is apparently no overt passive head in this example. We have argued elsewhere in this paper that have does not have a passive version, evidenced by the ungrammaticality of (28):

(28) *Sally had arrested.*

As always, however, positing silent heads is dangerous business, particularly when they only appear in specific environments. In the case of this silent passive, there are a few restrictions on its distribution. While (27) is widely acceptable, (29a) and in particular, (29b), which utilize the other causative heads, are dramatically degraded.

(29) a. */? Bob made Sally arrested.
    b. *Bob let Sally arrested.*

Though (29a) received mixed but generally low grammaticality judgments, (29b) was roundly rejected. This means that the subcategorization frames for *make* and *let* would have to exclude a head from their specifications. This might potentially be a worrisome development. In the past, one has only seen subcategorization frames that discriminate based on category (e.g., v or D) or, if they do mention a specific head, it is to restrict selection to only include that head, rather than to exclude that head. For example, depend requires that the head of its complement be on. As of yet, there are no known subcategorization frames that exclude a specific head. However, this is the claim for the causatives with respect to the silent passive. If such a head exists, the subcategorization frame for the causatives is as follows:
Make, Let label: \( v \) \(<\text{DP} \{ \text{be[PASS]} \}] >
\emptyset \text{[ACT]}
g[\text{PASS}]
v[\text{CAUSE}] \text{(i.e. all other causatives)}

Have label: \( v \) \(<\text{DP} \{ \text{be[PASS]} \}] >
\emptyset \text{[ACT]}
g[\text{PASS}]
v[\text{CAUSE}] \text{(i.e. all other causatives)}
\emptyset \text{[PASS]}

The subcategorization for have includes one additional head—the silent passive. Either the subcategorization includes a list of all possibilities for head selection, or the subcategorization for make and let specifies that the silent passive is excluded.

5 Conclusions

Examined here were the syntactic properties of make, let, have and get. According to the analysis here, these LIs (with the exception of get) are light verbs and assign a ‘causative’ thematic role—a ‘causer’—in Spec vP. In §21, reasons were presented for why one might think causatives should be realized syntactically on a vP head. Aside from distribution and verb-like qualities, the causatives’ ability to select an external argument and assign accusative case were decisive factors. At the end of §2, get—unlike the other items under consideration—is presented not as a causative, but as a realization of the passive head. The unusual properties of get as a passive (such as the ability to allow for an external argument) motivated a deeper analysis of the item in §3. Two analyses of get were then put forward: one which posited two distinct gets and the other which posited one. The single-get analysis additionally posited a null functional causative head that would select an external argument and internally merge with get. The single-get analysis gives more precedence to syntactic structure and less to redundancies in the lexicon. The addition of a null functional head, however, reasonably evokes a bit of apprehension, since positing functional heads to meet the purpose of an analysis can appear stipulative without further support. The multiple-get analysis had the advantage of not having to posit any excessive silent structures, but had the disadvantage of breaking the current working understanding of the passive—something which is, comparatively, a more worrisome issue. One might also consider the need for V to bear an EPP feature under this analysis as an undesirable stipulation. Despite the myriad of pros and cons presented with both analyses, however, it is ultimately more advantageous to favor the single-get analysis of the causative. The issues presented under this analysis crucially do not warrant any changes to the fundamental understanding of passive constructions, which should not be affected by an analysis meant to account for a different construction. The addition of a functional head that this analysis puts forward is a much easier stipulation to accept than the need to reconsider larger elements of the syntactic theory and framework as a whole. Thus, this paper puts forward two possible analyses of the causative but endorses only one: the single-get analysis.

It is important to note that if—as it is proposed here—causatives are a flavor of little \( v \), then some of the tenets of the clausal spine have to be reevaluated. The idea that each instance of little \( v \) must co-occur with an instance of V must not be correct. The analyses in this paper have been grounded in the assumption that there exists a causative little \( v \) that is distinct from the voice little \( v \) and its distribution in the spine is predictable. In §2.1, the reasoning behind labeling the causative heads with the little \( v \) label was justified, but on this view, it seems that every instance of little \( v \) is not associated with V. So, although the precise label for this class of heads is not particularly important and although there are some differences between the behavior of causative little vs and that of other little vs, it is important to consider the behavioral similarities between the causative and every other little \( v \) that has been considered here. This thought could be further reasoning for accepting the single-get analysis, as the causative is represented as its own functional head.
rather than a reiteration of a little_v that does not seem to warrant a V to accompany it.

In summary, two possible analyses of the causative were put forward, but only one ‘the single-get analysis’ captures the different surface distributions of causative and passive sentences while also accounting for their underlying surface similarities.