Agentivity, causation and passive participles in Finnish

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In English, non-canonical passives with *get* (e.g. *Bill got killed*) are often analyzed as intransitive variants of causative sentences with *get* (e.g. *John got Bill killed*), where the subject of the passive is assumed to have raised from inside the participial phrase complement (i.e. [PrćP Bill killed]). The same line of analysis is extended to many other uses of *get*, including the patterns *Bill got ready/John got Bill ready* and *Bill got into trouble/John got Bill into trouble* (e.g. Haegeman 1985).

In Finnish, agreeing passives with *tulla* ‘get/become’ and *joutua* ‘get/end up’ (1a) show a similar pattern in relation to causative sentences with *saada* ‘get/receive’ (1b). A corresponding relation exists even between many other uses of *tulla/joutua* and *saada*, as shown in (2) and (3):

    *Pekka* nom get-past.3sg kill-PassPrtc-translative
    ‘Pekka got killed’

    *Jukka* nom get-past.3sg *Peka*-accusative kill-PassPrtc-translative
    ‘Jukka got *Peka* killed’

    *Pekka* nom get-past.3sg ready-translative
    ‘Pekka got / became ready’

    *Jukka* nom get-past.3sg *Peka*-accusative ready-translative
    ‘Jukka got *Peka* ready’

    *Pekka* nom get-past.3sg trouble-illative
    ‘Pekka got into trouble’

    *Jukka* nom get-past.3sg *Peka*-accusative trouble-illative
    ‘Jukka got *Peka* into trouble’

In the literature on Finnish, (1a) and (2a) are almost invariably treated as active sentences containing a copula (*tulla/joutua*) and an adjectival phrase (i.e. a predicative adjective; *tapetuksi/valmiiksi*). (3a) is an active sentence containing a lexical verb (*joutua*) and a noun phrase (i.e. a locative adverbial; *pulaan*).

This talk has two goals: first, I will show that (1a) displays properties that strongly suggest for a passive analysis for such data. These properties are not present in the ‘copular’ or ‘lexical verb’ uses of *tulla/joutua*. I will then show that many of these properties originate from inside the participial phrase, and they can therefore even be observed in the causative sentence in (1b). A case in point is the ambiguity between an agentive and a causative reading in both (1a) and (1b). As (2a-b) and (3a-b) do not contain participial phrases, they are also not ambiguous between these two readings. Secondly, I will assess the idea that the subject of the passive in (1a) has raised from inside the participial phrase complement; I will show that in Finnish, an alternative line of analysis – proposed in e.g. Huang (1999) and Butler & Tsoulas (2006) – where the data are treated as control constructions, is able to explain the behaviour of the data in a maximally simple and elegant way.