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On *rid* and the origin of the *get*-passive

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Abstract

This paper analyses the history and semantic/functional characteristics of the English verb *rid* in relation to the development of the *get*-passive. In earlier occurrences of the *get*-passive during the Late Modern English period, a serial verb *get rid of* is frequently found, to the extent that the collocation of *get* and *rid* deserves special attention to evaluate the impact of the serial verb on the development of the *get*-passive. *Rid* seems to possess some peculiar grammatical characteristics associated with the *get*-passive and not with the *be*-passive. In particular, an adversative/benefactive reading, a function not expressed by the passive among the Indo-European languages, can be found in the *get*-passive. It may be this peculiarity that allows both the *get*-passive and *rid* to form a serial verb. Therefore, it is highly possible that *rid* has had some impact on the development of the *get*-passive. It is hoped that this paper offers a new piece of evidence to help solve the conundrum of the origin of the *get*-passive. (received: 2 June 2021; accepted: 4 July 2021)

1. Introduction

Although its history is reasonably recent, i.e. grammaticalisation took place in the 19th or even the 20th century (Toyota, 2008: 150), the developmental path of the *get*-passive has not been clearly identified.¹ The past several decades have seen how corpus-based research (e.g. Hundt, 2001) attempted to clarify the source, but none has been completely satisfying. There are numerous factors that need to be investigated in relation to the *get*-passive, both synchronically and diachronically, and this paper attempts to shed light on one of them, i.e. the verb *rid*. This verb has rarely been given any attention whatsoever in research but, as this paper reveals, it has a rich history and it has an intricate relationship with the *get*-passive, especially in terms of the serial verb phrase *get rid of*. This serial verb appears very frequently in earlier occurrences of the *get*-passive during the Late Modern English period (Toyota, 2008: 175), and why the collocation of *get* and *rid* is possible will be discussed here, as well as whether this can have an impact on the development of the *get*-passive.

This paper is organised as follows: previous research on the *get*-passive is first reviewed, allowing us to see how difficult it is to identify the source of this construction, and this section shows two mainstream lines to this argument. Following this, the verb *rid* is analysed, both synchronically and diachronically. Then the relationship between *rid* and the *get*-passive is examined. As discussed in Section 4, both *rid* and *get* are originally loan words from Old Norse, and the possible impact of language contact is also discussed.

It should also be noted that data of British English from corpora are used, especially in Section 2, including ARCHER for Late Modern English, and London-Oslo-Bergen (LOB) and London-Lund (LL) corpora for Present-Day English. The statistical data and examples of earlier English are, unless otherwise mentioned, taken from Toyota (2008).

2. The *get*-passive: What is it?

In previous research such as Downing (1996), it has been reported that there are several characteristics that distinguish the *get*-passive from the *be*-passive. Perhaps an argument put forward by Toyota (2008: 151–172) points out the differences the most clearly. For instance, *be* and *get* are not normally interchangeable without altering overall meanings of a structure. One of the most striking differences is that the *get*-passive implies that the subject NP deliberately does the action. Thus, (1b) can be rephrased as (2b), with a possible reading with the addition of a reflexive pronoun. The subject in (1b) is in full control of the event denoted by the clause, i.e. 'He was shot on purpose, not by accident, by the police'. Its *be*-passive counterpart does not have the same meaning, and it is the NP in the *by*-phrase that acts deliberately. In addition, the event in (1b) is made possible due to various generic

1 The abbreviations used in this paper are as follows: ACC = accusative; ART = article; CAUS = causative; DAT = dative; DEF = definite; NOM = nominative; NONFUT = non-future; PASS = passive; PL = plural; PRT = participle; PST = past.

characteristics of the subject entity, e.g. his recklessness, courage, being inherently unfortunate, etc. These characteristics are known as subject responsibility or facilitative (Kemmer. 1993), but one should be aware that the responsibility here is in gradience as Toyota (ibid.: 158) states, and some examples exhibit this character better than others. Consider the examples in (3). These demonstrate a mixture of characteristics: the subject in (3a) is in control of the event, but not in the rest of the examples. Generic characteristics of the subject entity are present in (3a) and (3b), but absent in the others. A reflexive pronoun can be added, as indicated by brackets in the examples in (3), except (3d). These patterns are summarised in Table 1.

- (1) a. *He was shot by the police.*
 b. *He got shot by the police.*
- (2) a. *He was shot by the police deliberately/was deliberately shot by the riot police.*
 b. *He deliberately got (himself) shot by the riot police.*
- (3) a. *He got (himself) shot by the riot police.*
 b. *He got (himself) promoted last week.*
 c. *He got (himself) accused of the pedestrian’s death.*
 d. *He got worried about the result.*

	Subject in control	Generic characteristics	Reflexive pronouns
(3a)	+	+	+
(3b)	–	+	+
(3c)	–	±	+
(3d)	–	±	–

Table 1. Various semantic characteristics of subject in the get-passive

Toyota (2008) further argues that the actor phrase headed by a preposition *by* is hardly detectable in the *get*-passive. The actor phrase itself is normally omitted even in the *be*-passive, and only ca. 20-30% of examples have an overly marked actor phrase. Nevertheless, this ratio for the *get*-passive is very low, as low as 1% of the total occurrence, as shown in Table 2.

	Present	Absent	Total
IModE	1 (1.6%)	61 (98.4%)	62 (100%)
PDE	3 (1.4%)	206 (98.6%)	209 (100%)

Table 2. Actor phrase in the get-passive (adapted from Toyota 2008: 159)

In addition to this tendency, the subject animacy of the *get*-passive radically differs from its *be*-passive counterpart. The passive often reverses the anthropocentric

perspective found in the active voice, and the most frequent animacy of the subject is inanimate. However, the *get*-passive in this sense behaves like the active voice, and its most frequent subject entity is human animate. Consider the distribution of frequency in Table 3. Solely based on the pattern, one might think that this is a comparison between the active voice (the top half for the *get*-passive) and the passive voice (the second half for the *be*-passive). Even among human entities the occurrence of the first person subject in the *get*-passive is reasonably frequent, although the third person subject is marginally more frequent. Consider the distributional patterns in Table 4. The *be*-passive makes a sharp contrast when employing the third person subject. The *get*-passive exhibits a very odd pattern, but at the same time this allows the subject generic characteristics to play an important role in the *get*-passive. As Toyota (ibid.: 163) states, ‘the *get*-passive is capable of expressing meanings such as sentiment, sympathy, etc., of which the *be*-passive is not capable. These extra meanings may be taken for direct involvement, since the speaker needs to associate himself/herself with the participants of the event.’

		Human	Non-human animate	Inanimate	Total
<i>Get</i> -passive	lModE	57 (91.9%)	0 (0%)	5 (8.1%)	62 (100%)
	PDE	177 (84.7%)	2 (1.0%)	30 (14.3%)	209 (100%)
<i>Be</i> -passive	ModE	609 (27.6%)	28 (1.3%)	1568 (71.1%)	2205 (100%)
	PDE	590 (23.8%)	16 (0.6%)	1875 (75.6%)	2481 (100%)

Table 3. Animacy of the subject entity in *get*- and *be*-passives (adapted from Toyota ibid.: 161)

		1 st Person	2 nd Person	3 rd Person	Total
<i>Get</i> -passive	lModE	13 (22.8%)	11 (19.3%)	33 (57.9%)	57 (100%)
	PDE	66 (37.3%)	28 (15.8%)	83 (46.9%)	177 (100%)
<i>Be</i> -passive	lModE	182 (30.0%)	15 (2.5%)	411 (67.5%)	609 (100%)
	PDE	120 (20.3%)	13 (2.2%)	457 (77.5%)	590 (100%)

Table 4. Hierarchy among human subjects (adapted from Toyota ibid.: 163–164)

It is very common for the *get*-passive to be mistaken for a dynamic counterpart of the *be*-passive, but this is very short-sighted once the history of the passive auxiliary is considered. In Old and Middle English, three auxiliaries were used in the origin of the periphrastic passive, namely *bēon/wesan* ‘be’ and *weorðan* ‘become’ (Toyota, 2008: 18–21). It is believed that they formed the stative (i.e. *bēon/wesan* ‘be’) and dynamic (i.e. *weorðan* ‘become’) distinction in the passive. Since the passive was not fully formed before the Early Modern English period, the aspectual distinction was, as declared by Toyota (2009), irrelevant before the grammaticalisation of the copula as the passive auxiliary. For some reason there was a period when scholars considered that the stative-dynamic aspectual pair was one of the core characteristics of the

passive (e.g. Beedham 1987; Andersen 1991). With the surge of *get* in the 19th century, the *be*-passive could be considered a stative passive, complementing the *get*-passive as a dynamic counterpart. However, chronologically there was a lack of any stative-dynamic pair for several centuries, as shown in Figure 1. Even if the restoration of a stative-dynamic pair of auxiliaries was the motivation for the emergence of the *get*-passive, a question still remains as to why other choices that appeared before *get* in Figure 1 could not materialise as an auxiliary. These inchoative verbs were used as pseudo-auxiliaries at one stage, but they never became fully grammaticalised as passive auxiliaries. Note that the dates shown in the figure should not be confused with the date of the first attested example but refer to a period of reasonable frequency. Also, the end of use is shown only for *weorðan* 'become.' Examples of these verbs are shown in (4) to (8), taken from Visser (1963–73: §1893).

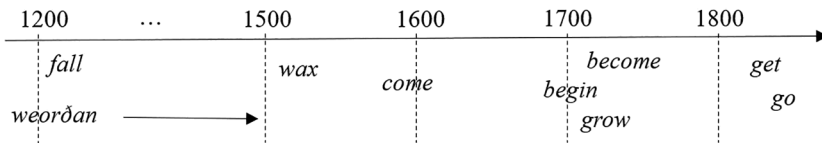


Figure 1. Chronological order of appearance: inchoative verbs

- (4) *This Master Benedicke fell inamoured of this maiden.* (1578 Roper, *Life of More* (1913) 47)
- (5) *such foolish brethren ... as ... would waxe offended with all.* (c1534 St. Thomas More, *Wks.* (1557) 1184 A11)
- (6) a com Gallicanus eac to gode geborgen
then came Gallicanus also to God saved
'Then Gallicanus also came to be saved by God.' (Ælfric, *Saints' Lives* (Skeat) 7, 336)
- (7) *The gazer grows enamoured.* (1735–6 James Thomson, *Liberty* IV, 181)
- (8) *It means playing ducks and drakes with things all round and letting the whole business go thoroughly rotten.* (1893 *Punch*, 11 March 109)

Typologically, the passive voice is predominantly formed morphologically, and the periphrastic passive is mostly confined to the Indo-European languages (Toyota, 2009a). Furthermore, the choice of the auxiliary has been known to be one of the following four, i.e. (i) a verb of being or becoming, (ii) a verb of reception, (iii) a verb of motion and (iv) a verb of experience (cf. Keenan, 1985: 257–261). The use of *get* in English seems to fit into the second category, verbs of reception, but examples of this category are influenced by an Anglocentric view in research, i.e. given the presence of the *get*-passive, one may assume that a similar structure also exists in

other languages. Thus, the use of reception verbs in the periphrastic construction in (9), for instance, is dubious and the example may be better considered as a case of serial verbs. Other cases may be better considered as idiomatic verb phrases, e.g. (10). Possible cases of *get* used as the genuine passive auxiliary are found in Norwegian and Dutch, as shown in (11) and (12) respectively. The use of ‘get’ in these languages is restricted to cases where ditransitive verbs are involved and not freely used.

Tzeltal (Mayan, Keenan, 1985: 259)

- (9) *La y-ich’ ’utel (yu’un s-tat) te Ziak-e*
 PST he.receive bawling.out (because his-father) ART Ziak-ART
 ‘Ziak got a bawling out (from his father).’

Irish (Celtic, Nolan, 2006: 157)

- (10) *Fuair sé léigheas ar sin*
 get.PST he healing/medicine on that
 ‘He got healed of that.’

Norwegian (Askedol, 1994: 246)

- (11) *Han fikk tilsendt bokene*
 he get.PST send.PST.PRT book.PL.DEF
 ‘He was sent the books/The books were sent to him.’

Dutch (De Schutter, 1994: 471)

- (12) *Ze kregen het uiteindelijk toch nog toegestuurd*
 they get.PST it finally nevertheless still send.PST.PRT
 ‘In the end, they were sent it anyway’

As we have seen so far, the choice of *get* as an auxiliary among other choices is a puzzle synchronically and diachronically. Thus, there are various reasons to claim that the *get*-passive is not a canonical passive. The *be*-passive is used for objective, or less subjective, descriptions of events, but the *get*-passive can be used for a subjective evaluation. In fact, it carries numerous characteristics associated with the middle voice or the causative. The superficial resemblance in structure, an only difference being the choice of auxiliaries between *be* and *get*, may fool us into believing that this is one of the constructions that should belong to the passive voice, but this view has to be revised. Various characteristics shown so far are summarised in (13). In addition to these, there is yet another characteristic, i.e. an adversative reading, which is described later in Section 4.

- (13) a. The subject’s generic characteristics (i.e. facilitative).
 c. The animacy of the subject is predominantly human animate.
 d. The lack of an agent phrase.
 e. The lack of the dynamic counterpart of an auxiliary after *weorðan* ‘become.’

3. A verb *rid*

Apart from the peculiarities presented so far, there is yet another overlooked oddity in the development of the *get*-passive. As Toyota (2008: 150) points out, earlier occurrences of the *get*-passive contain a relatively high frequency of *rid* as in the phrase *get rid of*. Little attention has been paid to the linguistic characteristics of this verb, let alone its etymology, but it can reveal some insights concerning the origin of the *get*-passive.

This verb was initially a loan word from Old Norse, i.e. *ryðja* ‘clear of obstructions’, and it entered the English language from ca. 1200 (s.v. *OED rid* v. 1.1.a.). Its original sense in English was ‘set free, save’, and the common sense in Present-Day English ‘clear, remove’ emerged around the late 16th century. Due to contact with Old Norse in the northern parts of the British Isles, *rid* first became frequent in Scottish and Northern dialects of English, and a dialectal form with a similar meaning *redd* spoken in these regions is believed to have been derived from Old English *hreddan* ‘save, free from, deliver’, or a merger between Old English *hreddan* ‘save, free from, deliver’ and Old Norse *ryðja* (cf. *OED redd* v.¹). A verbal phrase *get rid of* emerged from the mid-late 17th century, as exemplified in (14) and (15). *OED* considers the appearance of *get rid of* related to the passive use of *rid*, e.g. *be rid of*, which emerged in the 15th century, e.g. (16) and (17). Note that the preposition collocated earlier was *on*, as in (16), not *of* as found in Present-Day English. What is suggested by this chronology (e.g. *OED* s.v. *rid* 3.d.) is that *get* replaced *be* as a passive auxiliary in this phrase.

- (14) *The chief use, which too many make of the Former, is to devise ways to get ridd of the Later.* (1665 BOYLE *Occas. Refl. Ded. Let.*)
- (15) *I cannot get rid of my horrible cold here.* (?1676 in 12th Rep. Hiss MSS. *Comm. App. V.33.*)
- (16) *bus ... he was clere and fullie rid on her.* (c1440 *Alph. Tales* 528)
- (17) *[Dido] sayd in this maner to the for-sayd barthe, for to be ridded of her.* (1490 CAXTON *Eneydos* xxvii. 103)

Unlike *get*, the use of *rid* is very infrequent, as the corpus occurrence suggests. Nevertheless, we may get a glimpse of usage with the corpus data. Although *rid* is an active form, it is normally used in the passive voice or in the phrase *get rid of*. As Table 5 indicates, this use of the phrase is the most dominant, and this trend has not drastically changed since ca. 1700. However, both *rid* (cf. (18) to (21)) and *get rid of* (cf. (22) to (27)) could be passivised, although their frequency is very low. Passivisation of certain tense-aspect or phrases, such as the perfective passive *This work has been done* or the prepositional passive *This work is taken care of* emerged after the Late Middle English period and mark important stages in the

grammaticalisation of the passive voice. Likewise, the passivisation of *get rid of* can be considered a sign that *rid* became better associated with the collocation involving *get*, rather than on its own as a verb.

	Active	<i>be</i> -passive	<i>get rid of</i>	<i>be got rid of</i>	Total
IModE	4 (11.4%)	4 (11.4%)	21 (62.9%)	6 (14.3%)	35 (100%)
PDE	5 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	35 (87.5%)	0 (0%)	40 (100%)

Table 5. Usage of *rid* after Late Modern English

Rid in the passive

- (18) ... *Father B---*, (*who now, I hear, favours you with his Company, and who wants to be rid of me,*) *promises I shall be admitted suitably to the imaginary Title I formerly bore;* (1737anon.f2)
- (19) *I would fain be rid of all apprehension from you.* (1832bulw.f5)
- (20) *Well! no sooner do we think we are rid of him, than, by Proteus!* (1837ains.f5)
- (21) *You will be glad to be rid of us; so I shall not come in.* (1839mart.f5)

Get rid of in the passive

- (22) *Up to the latest date, the locusts had not been quite got rid of;* (1845man1.n5)
- (23) *Some of the most eminent of his opponents have been already got rid of.* (1845man1.n5)
- (24) *The immediately dangerous symptoms being got rid of, if the hair of the head has not been already removed, it ought now to be cut short, and a blister applied to the nape of the neck;* (1864bonn.m6)
- (25) *There is another error which is of less consequence, but still desirable to be got rid of, as it practically reduces the available aperture of the mirror, and consequently the size of the telescope.* (1874lass.s6)
- (26) *as the volume of the shell after descent is less than before, a certain portion of its volume must be extruded or got rid of in some way.* (1874mall.s6)
- (27) *The difference in volume thus to be got rid of is the difference between $n \{(2R)9--(2r)3\}$ and $n \{(2R')3--(2q)3\}$, the constant $n=6$ being=-5236, ...* (1874mall.s6)

The question still remains whether *rid* in this phrase is a past participle of *rid* in a strong conjugation or *rid* used as an adjectival participle or a serial verb construction with *get* and *rid* in the active voice. Since the modification of *rid* with *very* is not possible, e.g. **I got very rid of the problem*, nor is the comparative possible, e.g. *I got more rid of the problem*, it may carry verbal characteristics. In archaic English, especially around Early/Late Modern English, serial verb expressions became productive for a short while, and some residues are still visible in Present-Day English, e.g. *I'll go get some milk*, *Come dine with me tonight*, etc. Thus, *get rid of* can be one such residual example, with *rid* being considered a bare infinitive form. The archaism is also shown in the frequency of the serial verb *get rid of* in relation to the overall appearance of *rid*. Table 6 represents the frequency of the *get*-passive with and without *rid of*. During the Late Modern English period, the frequency of *get rid of* is slightly over 40%, which is reduced to ca. 15% in Present-Day English. The overall occurrence in both Late Modern and Present-Day English periods is not great, but a sudden drop in frequency can be observed. This suggests that this serial verb could have contributed to establishing the *get*-passive at its initial stage, and the *get*-passive without *rid* in Present-Day English could be a sign of development towards a fully grammaticalised *get*-passive, although *get* is still a long way from behaving fully as an auxiliary verb.

	Without <i>rid</i>	<i>Get rid of</i>	Total
IModE	35 (56.5%)	27 (43.5%)	62 (100%)
PDE	174 (83.3%)	35 (16.7%)	209 (100%)

Table 6. Frequency of *get rid of* (including *be got rid of*) among the *get*-passive

Furthermore, the higher frequency of the use of *rid* in the *be*- and *get*-passives resembles so-called passive verbs (Toyota 2009b). These verbs only appear in the passive in Present-Day English, and four such verbs, e.g. *cloister*, *reincarnate*, *repute*, *rumour* have been identified. These verbs became passive-bound due to impersonalisation, i.e. due to their generic characteristics, and it is hard to specify who an actor entity is, although there were instances of the active voice earlier, as exemplified in (28) and (29). Note that these examples are hardly ever found in Present-Day English, and these verbs are confined to the passive voice.

Active *rumour* (s.v. *OED rumour* v. 2c)

- (28) *Art thou not he, whom fame This long time rumours The favour'd guest of Circe?* (1849 M. ARNOLD *Strayed Reveller* 109)

Active *repute* (s.v. *OED repute* v. 1.b.)

- (29) *How he reputes their sufferings . . . to be his own.* (1656 BRAMHALL *Replic.* V. 209)

Judging from the frequency in Table 5, *rid* is still used in the active voice, but its frequency is slightly over 10%. There has been no radical change in the frequency in the past several centuries, but the association with *get* has clearly been very strong. Although it is not a pure passive verb, it is reasonable to state that its characteristics are heading towards the passive verb form.

In addition, what is often overlooked is the use of reflexive pronouns affecting verbal meanings. *Rid* also appears with the reflexive, referring to the removal of something unpleasant, although this usage is now considered rare (*OED rid* 3.b. *refl.*). By removing an adversary, the syntactic subject becomes a beneficiary. This usage emerged in the 16th century, and earlier examples are listed in (30) and (32). Note that the examples listed in *OED* do not necessarily contain the reflexive, but a co-referential indirect object is considered reflexive. In the corpora, there are three instances with the reflexive still found in Present-Day English, as shown in (33) and (35), but not in earlier English. There are five occurrences of the active voice, as already shown in Table 5, and three of them are with the reflexive. This tendency also suggests that this is not a simple active verb.

- (30) *If I coulde conveniently rydde me of this felowe, I wolde go with you with all my herte.* (1530 PALSGR. 691/1)
- (31) *To ridd my self of them I gaue them about 20. Aspres.* (1585 T. WASHINGTON tr. *Nicholay's Voy.* III.xxii.112b)
- (32) *I could not tell how to rid my selfe .. of the troublesome Burre.* (1602 2nd Pt. *Return fr. Parnass.* 11.vi.987)
- (33) *All I remember is walking on and on, seeking a place where I could rid myself of the metal box.* (LOB L12 181–2)
- (34) *... at least we had seemingly rid ourselves, without offending anyone openly, of our Chinese geese.* (LOB R08 75–6)
- (35) *... while Rover have successfully rid themselves of every nipple save one, again.* (LOB E16 115–6)

4. *Rid* and the origin of the *get*-passive

A number of scholars have discussed the origin of the *get*-passive over the past several decades, and one cannot overlook the characteristics shown in (13), which have had a significant impact on understanding the source of the *get*-passive. There are two hypotheses concerning the origin of the *get*-passive, namely inchoative *get* and causative-reflexive. The former is the more popular of the two, stating that the inchoative *get* followed by an adjectival complement, e.g. *The soup got cold*, is the origin of the *get*-passive (cf. Gronemeyer 1999; Hundt 2001, among others).

This line of argument stems from the analysis of corpus data, and the claim is backed up by a steady increase in the frequency of examples. Those who support this hypothesis normally consider the *get*-passive a dynamic counterpart of the *be*-passive. Another line of argument is based on a causative use of *get* along with a reflexive pronoun, e.g. *I got myself promoted*. The *get*-passive is made when the omission of the reflexive took place (cf. Toyota 2007, 2008). The causative use of *get* belongs to what Song (1996: 49–67) calls a purposive type. The purposive type is a type of causative derived by insertion of a recipient of benefit or adversity, e.g. *He got his bother a present*, where beneficiary, i.e. the recipient of the present, is often marked with a purposive case. In English this is normally expressed by a dative, reflexive pronoun or later a nominal preceded by *to* or *for*, and this type of causative emerged 1300 (OED *get* v. I 18a, 18b), and the origin of the *get*-passive involves the reflexive pronoun used in the sense of purposive case. The involvement of the reflexive suggests that the original structure is related to the middle voice, following a typologically common developmental path from the middle to the passive.

Contrary to inchoative *get*, the causative-reflexive *get* allows us to explain peculiar characteristics only found in the *get*-passive, e.g. (13). However, the paucity of data supporting a smooth transition disfavors this line of argument. The inchoative *get* hypothesis, although it is popularly supported, superficially looks at syntactic features, examining a categorical shift from an adjectival to a verbal participle. Also, the date of change given by this hypothesis is around the 15th century, but the *get*-passive was established and increased in frequency from the 18th-19th century. Thus, identifying the source of the *get*-passive has been a conundrum, although its history is relatively young and historical data are available. In order to cope with this, Toyota (2020) proposes that the problem may lie in dialectal differences, and the origin is found in language use through contacts with Old Norse. Further study is yet required, but contact-induced changes may be a key to identifying the source.

What is also not considered is the etymology of *get*. One may think that *get* is an Anglo-Saxon verb due to its frequency in Present-Day English, but it is not. It was initially loaned from the Old Norse *geta* ‘obtain, reach’ around the 13th century. This was the period when the Vikings came to settle in the British Isles under the Dane Law. This meant that the settlers lived in the northern part of Britain, affecting north-south dialectal differences even further. Some argue that the local Anglo-Saxons could communicate with the new settlers without learning each other’s language (cf. Warner, 2017), perhaps because Old English and Old Norse of ca. 1300 could have been dialectal variations among the Germanic languages, akin to the modern dialectal variations of English within the UK. *Get* became firmly rooted in the English language after a dialectal mixing, especially between the northern and southern dialects. This was not an easy feat, because the southerners disliked people from the northern part, who spoke an unrecognisable dialect, as seen in the quote below. It is easily conceivable that it was not simple for *get* and other phrases involving *get* to be accepted in the southern region.

Coincidentally, both *get* and *rid* are loan words from Old Norse, which may account for the late development of the *get*-passive, since both *get* and *rid* needed to be firmly established in the mainstream of the language first before the serial verb could be established. At an earlier stage, the Old Norse *geta* was often followed by an adjectival complement, but a construction with the direct object was common in Old Norse-influenced areas in the Northern and Eastern parts of Britain. Through the contact there were some alternations in its syntactic pattern, and the usage in English was not necessarily the same as that found in Old Norse.

Al þe longage of þe Northumbres, and specialliche at þork, is so scharp, slitting, and frontynge and vnschape þat we wouþerne men may þat longage vnneþe vnderstonde. (1387 Trivisa Polychronicon)
 ‘All the language of the Northumbrians, and especially at York, is so sharp, harsh, and grating and formless that we southern men can hardly understand that language.’

Once the *get*-passive is examined in terms of the serial verb *get rid of*, the analysis can be given a new perspective. Due to the semantic nature of the verb, *rid* often refers to something adversative or unfavourable that should ideally be removed, and this usage often involves the reflexive, e.g. (30) to (35). The passive itself may not be closely associated with adversity, but some languages, such as Evenki (Tungusic) as shown in (38b), have a so-called adversative passive, and the *get*-passive is also known to express adversity (Toyota, 2007). Adversity should be treated with caution, since it can be lexically derived, i.e. verbs such as ‘kill’, ‘break’, ‘hit’, ‘destroy’ are more likely to be associated with negative, not positive, feelings. What is meant by the adversative passive is a case of the passive voice in which verbs denoting neutral meaning express adversity. Some examples of the adversative *get*-passive are shown in (36) and (37). Note that it is not usual to derive adversity from *leave* or *send*, and the *be*-passive alternatives do not yield the same reading. Typologically, the adversative passive is often derived from the causative. As schematically represented in Figure 2, the original overall subject is dropped due to impersonalisation and the direct object in a subordinate clause becomes an overall subject in the passive. Furthermore, if an actor is expressed, it is derived from the indirect object in the original causative clause. The earlier causative marker is reanalysed as a new passive marker, and in some languages, the original dative case is still retained as the actor marker in the passive. A typical example is taken from a Tungusic language, Evenki, in (38). Notice that the actor in (38b) is marked in the dative case, and the dative actor is a sign of a causative origin (cf. Knott, 1995). The actor is normally expressed as a source of cause, commonly marked with the ablative case or prepositions such as ‘from’ or ‘of’, and this oddity in terms of transitivity is better considered a historical residue.

(36) *What do you mean a couple of hundred tiles? Why do you have a couple of hundred tiles? Oh I don't know. You just get left with these things.* (LL 210 28 2250 1 2 c 20 - 210 29 2270 1 1 B 11)

(37) *I mean but they can do something fairly minor and get sent there.* (LL 4 7 15 1380 1 2c 12 - 4 7 16 1400 1 1c 11)

Evenki (Tungusic, Nedjalkov 1993: 195)

- (38) a. *mit homoti-wa eme-v-re-p*
 we-NOM bear-ACC come-CAUS-NONFUT-1PL
 'We brought the bear with us'
- b. *mit homoti-de eme-v-re-p*
 we-NOM bear-DAT come-PASS-NONFUT-1PL
 'We were adversely affected by the bear's coming.'

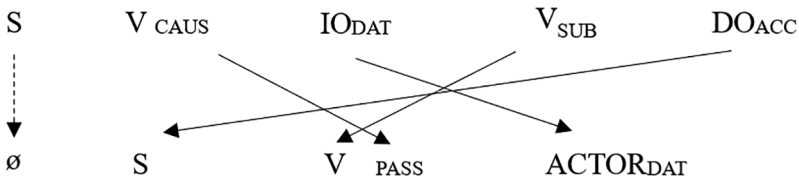


Figure 2. Causative-passive alternation

There are some functional and semantic overlaps between the *get*-passive and *rid*, as summarised in Table 7, based on the features in (13), along with adversity described in this section. In order to highlight finer distinctions, the *get*-passive is divided into causative and reflexive based on the causative-reflexive hypothesis of origin. Considering the peculiarities of the *get*-passive, the lack of actor phrase and the adversative/benefactive reading are triggered by all three constructions. In particular, *rid* itself behaves very similarly to the reflexive pronouns, and by forming a serial verb it could act like a reflexive causative clause. *Rid*, therefore, shows three characteristics that are commonly found in the *get*-passive by itself, and this can be a reason for its collocation with *get* in the serial verb, *get rid of*.

In addition to the semantic and functional similarities, what should be noted is that both *get* and *rid* are of Old Norse origin, introduced into the English language during more or less the same period, ca. 13th century. In addition, one of the daughter languages of Old Norse, Norwegian, has the 'get'-passive (cf. (11)), and the emergence of the *get*-passive may be a case of a contact-induced change known as replication (cf. Heine and Kuteva 2005, 2006). However, replication involves a reproduction of a structure based on native vocabulary; whether both *get* and *rid* can be treated as native words, not loan words, has to be questioned. Details of contact-induced changes are yet to be further investigated, but an analysis of *rid* will reveal something vital in identifying the developmental path of the *get*-passive.

	Causative	Reflexive/Middle	<i>Rid</i>
Facilitative reading		√	
Animacy of subject		√	√
Lack of actor phrase	√	√	√
Lack of dynamic auxiliary			
Adversative/ benefactive reading	√	√	√

Table 7. Characteristics of *get*, reflexive and *rid*

5. Summary

This paper has analysed the English verb *rid* in relation to the development of the *get*-passive. Earlier occurrences of the *get*-passive often involve the serial verb *get rid of*, and this paper sheds light on how *get* and *rid* can be collocated comfortably in the serial verb. Both *get* and *rid* are loan words from Old Norse, emerging around the 13th century in the northern part of the British Isles, although it might have taken some time before these verbs became fully a part of the vocabulary in Standard English due to the north-south dialectal conflict. It may not be obvious at first sight, but they both show causative and reflexive characteristics (cf. Table 7), which are vital features of the origin of the *get*-passive once the peculiarities of the *get*-passive, e.g. (13), are taken into consideration. For this argument, adversative/benefactive readings denoted by *rid* are a key factor, since adversity is present in both *rid* and the *get*-passive, too. The adversative passive is rare among the Indo-European languages and, typologically, the causative is normally a source of the passive if it denotes adversity. Therefore, the *get*-passive can very likely follow this developmental pattern. Nevertheless, the frequent occurrence of the serial verb *get rid of* can be considered a factor in establishing the *get*-passive at an earlier stage, and it is important to understand the history of *rid* in order to decode the intricate developmental path of the *get*-passive.

Thus, contacts with Old Norse are vital in understanding the history of the *get*-passive (Toyota, 2020), but whether or not this is a case of replication needs to be discussed elsewhere. Such an analysis will enrich our understanding of the *get*-passive.

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Ђунићи Тојота

Сажетак

О ГЛАГОЛУ *RID* И ПОРЕКЛУ ПАСИВА СА *GET*

У овом раду се анализирају историја, семантичке/функционалне одлике енглеског глагола *rid* у поређењу са развојем пасива са *get*. У ранијим јављањима пасива са *get* у току периода касног модерног енглеског, серијски глагол *get rid of* се појављује толико често да колокација глагола *get* и *rid* завређује посебну пажњу, како би се утврдио утицај серијског глагола на развој пасива са *get*. Чини се да глагол *rid* поседује одређене карактеристике које се везују за пасив са *get*, али не за пасив са *be*. Наиме, код пасива са *get* се може утврдити постојање адверзативног/бенефактивног читања, функције коју не поседују пасиви индоевропских језика. Могуће је да управо ова специфичност допушта пасиву са *get* и глаголу *rid* да формирају серијски глагол. Из тог разлога постоји велика вероватноћа да је глагол *rid* имао одређени утицај на развој пасива са *get*. Надамо се да ће овај рад изнети нови доказ који ће помоћи да се разреши загонетка о пореклу пасива са *get*.

Кључне речи:

глагол *rid*, пасив са *get*, рефлексивна заменица, адверзативни пасив, језички контакт, старонордијски