1 Introduction

We present an analysis of an underdescribed construction common to Canadian and Philadelphian English dialects which appears to involve an instance of the copula/passive auxiliary *be*, a participial form of *finish* or *do*, and a DP complement receiving accusative Case (see Yerastov (2008) for a description and discussion of its geographical distribution). This construction, which is fully productive and non-idiomatic, is illustrated in (1).

(1) I am done/finished my homework.

This construction raises a number of problems for the theory of Case-assignment and argument structure, including

(2) a. What is the category of the phrase headed by the participle?
   b. Where is the external argument (*I* in example (1)) introduced?
   c. Where does the accusative Case of the internal argument (*my homework* in (1)) come from, given the apparently passive structure?
   d. Why is this construction lexically restricted to the participles of *do* and *finish*?

We will be arguing that the structure for (1) is given in (3).

(3)

```
TP
  DP
    T
      T'
        CopP
          Cop
            am
              aP
                a'
                  vP
                    v+do/finish
                      DP
                        my homework
```

The answers to questions (2a, 2d) are then
a. The construction involves a resultative adjectival passive, rather than a full eventive passive or an active past participle (i.e. there is no Voice head).  
b. The external argument is therefore introduced not in spec-VoiceP (which is absent) but in the subject position of the adjectival small clause (which we depict here as spec-aP).  
c. The accusative Case of the internal argument is assigned by a little-a head, perhaps similar to the little-a head which assigns accusative case to the objects of worth.  
d. The lexical specificity of this construction is due to the selectional properties of this little-a head.

1.1 Outline

§2 Done my homework involves a resultative adjectival passive.  
We will present arguments that finished and done are neither active participles, nor eventive passive participles.

§3 Little-a is the case licenser.  
We will rule out the possibility of other case licensers, including silent adpositions, verbal layers, and the copula. We also argue that the internal argument is interpreted via complement coercion, employing tests from Pylkkänen (2008).

§4 Lexical Specificity  
We address the issue of the lexical specificity of the construction, noting finish and do are uniquely selected to have external arguments in resultative adjectival passives in most dialects.

§5 Remaining Puzzle  
We’ll briefly mention a remaining puzzle regarding the way do functions in this construction.

§6 Conclusion

2 Done my homework involves a resultative adjectival passive participle.

2.1 It is not a perfect

Yerastov (2008) proposes that be done DP is a perfect with a non-standard auxiliary selection, dialectally related to Scots be-perfect, as illustrated in this example from Orkney Scottish English (p.c. Tamminga).

(5) You’ll no be been there afore  
You’ll not have been there before.

If this construction were a perfect, it would have a structure like that in (6), with the introduction of the external argument and the case marking on the internal argument both being done by Voice.

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1 We follow Lundquist (2012) in taking participles to be adjectival in nature, and Embick (2004) in taking resultative participles to involve an event-introducing little-v, which we take to be distinct from Chomsky’s (2001) v*/Kratzer’s (1996) Voice.
However, this hypothesis can be dismissed on the basis of a few diagnostics.

### 2.1.1 Degree Modification

Yerastov (2008, p. 45) points out that *be done* DP is compatible with the degree modifier *all*, which is possible for adjectives, but not active participles.

(7) a. I’m all ready for school.
   b. I’m all done my homework.
   c. *I have all done my homework.

### 2.1.2 Embedding under a perfect

It’s possible to embed *be done* DP under a perfect, while all other perfect “doubling” is impossible.

(8) a. I have been done my homework for a while now.
   b. *I have had done my homework for a while now.
   c. *I is been done my homework for a while now.
   d. *I is had done my homework for a while now.

### 2.1.3 Reduced relatives

It’s possible for *be done* DP to appear in reduced relatives, but this is not possible for perfect participles.

(9) a. Would all the students who have eaten their vegetables please stand up?
   b. *Would all the students eaten their vegetables please stand up?

(10) a. Would all the students who are finished their homework please stand up?
    b. Would all the students finished their homework please stand up?
2.1.4 There is no Voice

Additionally, there are a number of diagnostics which indicate that there is no Voice head in the construction.

**It can’t be passivized.** Unlike *have*-perfects, *be done DP* cannot be passivized

(11) a. I have done my homework.
    b. My homework has been done.

(12) a. I am done my homework.
    b. *My homework is been done.

**No agent oriented modification.** While degree modification is possible, agent oriented modification is not.

(13) a. I am completely/nearly/halfway done my homework.
    b. *I am quickly/carefully/intentionally done my homework.

**The subject is not necessarily the agent.** In the following scenario, (14a) is possible, but (14b) is not.

Commissioner Gordon has just arrested the Joker. The Joker has been terrorizing Gotham City, but with the help of Batman, Gordon has apprehended the Joker before he could put his final act of terror into action. Gordon says to the Joker:

(14) a. You’re finished your reign of terror.
    b. #You finished your reign of terror.

↪ This construction is not a perfect.

2.2 It is not an eventive passive

True eventive passives cannot be embedded directly under *seem* or *look*.

(15) *The homework seems finished by John.

However, *be done DP* can.

(16) John seems finished his homework.

*By*-phrases are also not licensed. Returning to the example of Commissioner Gordon arresting the Joker, the following is ungrammatical.

(17) *You’re finished your reign of terror by me.

↪ This construction is not an eventive passive.

2.3 Conclusion: it is a resultative adjectival passive

Given this construction’s incompatibility with diagnostics for active participles (e.g. appearance in reduced relatives, absence of Voice) and eventive passive participles (e.g. can directly embed under *seem*), and its compatibility with diagnostics for adjectivehood (e.g. degree modification), we conclude that this construction is a resultative adjectival passive.

Also, given the absence of any other location to introduce the external argument, it must be done at spec-aP.

3 Little-<i>a</i> is the case licenser.

We will begin first by considering other possible case licensors in this construction, and ultimately reject them.
3.1 No null preposition

Here, we will consider and reject the hypothesis that a null preposition as the case licencer of the DP. Most
speakers outside of dialects which allow (1) believe that it is related to (18) by eliding with or by using a
null preposition (19-20).

(18) I am done/finished with my homework.
(19) I am done/finished with/∅ my homework.

(20) 

3.1.1 Interpretive Differences

Philadelphian and Canadian dialects allow both (1) and (18), but they have different ranges of interpretations.

Instrumental Readings While (21) can allow instrumental readings (22) cannot.

(21) I am done with the computer.
   a. ✔ using the computer
   b. ✔ building the computer
(22) I am done the computer.
   a. * using the computer
   b. ✔ building the computer

Result State There are also differences in the understood result state of the complement DP between (1)
and (18). Specifically, (1) has the same truth conditions regarding the state of the complement DP as a
simple transitive. Note the contradiction in (23b).

(23) a. I didn’t finish my fries, but I’m done with them.
   b. #I didn’t finish my fries, but I’m done them.

Moreover, when asking Philadelphians if there is a difference in meaning between (24a) and (24b), they
remark that they serve different discourse functions.

(24) a. Are you done with your fries?
   b. Are you done your fries?

They report that (24a) is a request to eat some of the necessarily remaining fries, while (24b) is simply
information seeking.

Moreover, objects which cannot have a completed state, such as mass nouns and generic NPs, cannot be
the object of (25b), but they can be the object of (25a).
(25)  a. John is finished with coffee. (He’ll only drink tea for the rest of his life.)
     b. *John is finished coffee. (He’ll only drink tea for the rest of his life.)
(26)  a. John is finished with books. (He’ll only read magazines from now on).
     b. *John is finished books. (He’ll only read magazines from now on.)

3.1.2 Movement Tests

There is also at least one movement test involving PP stranding which differentiates the complement of be done DP from PP complements: though-movement. It is possible to move a transitive adjective past though and leave its PP complement behind.

(27)  a. Proud though John is [AdjP proud [PP of his daughter ]]…
     b. Angry though John is [AdjP angry [PP with his daughter ]]…
     c. Done though John is [AdjP done [PP with his computer ]]…

This movement is not possible, however, if the complement to the adjective is a DP.

(28)  a. [AdjP Worth [DP the money]] though this may be worth the money…
     b. *Worth though this may be [AdjP worth [DP the money]]…

It is not possible to move finished or done past though and leave its complement behind, leading us to believe that this complement is a simple DP, not a PP.

(29)  a. [Finished/Done [his homework]] though John may be finished/done his homework…
     b. *Finished/Done though John may be finished/done [his homework]…

⇒ There is no silent preposition in this construction.

3.2 No silent V

Here, we will consider and reject the hypothesis that there is a silent verb phrase below do/finish.

(30)
Our arguments against this structure are the same ones made by Pylkkänen (2008) against hidden VP analyses in favor of complement coercion in sentences like John began the book. As Pylkkänen (2008) showed, these diagnostics do not uniformly produce negative results for putative silent VP’s (e.g., they yield positive evidence for the presence of such hidden structure in the complements of want and need), so we will take their negative results here to indicate an absence of a silent VP.

3.2.1 Restrictions on Modification
If there were a lower VP which assigned case to the internal argument, then it should be possible to modify that VP. However, this is not possible, as illustrated in (31b).

(31) a. I am finished reading the book page by page. (I’ll skim from now on.)
    b. *I am finished the book page by page. (I’ll skim from now on.)

3.2.2 Event anaphora
When there is a VP below do/finish, it can be referred to with an event anaphor it. This is not possible with be done DP.

(32) a. John is sad to be done eating his fries, because it was enjoyable.
    b. #John is sad to be done his fries, because it was enjoyable.

↪ There is no silent verbal layer in this construction.

3.3 The copula is not the case licenser.
Given the arguments of Lohndal (2006) that copulas are responsible for Case assignment to predicate nominals in copular constructions, we consider the possibility that the copula is responsible for Case assignment in this construction. However, this can be ruled out by the fact that the small clause done my homework need not be embedded under a copula.

(33) a. So, you did your chemistry exam this morning. That makes you done your exams, right?
    b. With John at long last done his homework, we can go out and have fun!

The possibility of a silent copula, at least in (33a), suggested to us by Kayne (p.c.), can be ruled out on semantic grounds. An overt copula in the complement of make results in an active be reading (see Partee (1977); Collins (2006)) which is not the meaning of (33a).

(34) a. They made me be silly to amuse the children.
    b. ??They made me be done my homework to go out and party.

↪ The copula is not the case licenser.

3.4 Conclusion: a is the case licenser.
After eliminating candidates above a and below do/finish, we conclude that a must be the case licenser in the construction. This is not so strange in principle, because in most dialects at least the adjective worth takes DP complements, and presumably marks case on them.

(35) a. This appliance is certainly worth the money.
    b. Reading this book is not worth my time.
4 Lexical Specificity

While the case marking of internal arguments to stative passives by $a$ is unique to Philadelphia and Canada, the lexically specified specialness of $\text{finish}$ and $\text{do}$ is actually common to almost all dialects. Specifically, it is only with $\text{finished}$ and $\text{do}$ that external arguments to a stative passive are possible. Compare the pattern in (36) to (37).

\begin{itemize}
  \item (36) a. The painting is completed the painting.
  \item b. *Mary is Mary completed.
  \item c. *Mary is Mary completed Mary painting her masterpiece.
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item (37) a. The painting is finished the painting.
  \item b. Mary is Mary finished.
  \item c. Mary is Mary finished Mary painting her masterpiece.
\end{itemize}

The structures for (46a) and (46b) are given in (38a) and (38b) respectively.

\begin{itemize}
  \item (38) a.\[
  \begin{array}{c}
  \text{TP} \\
  \text{DP} \\
  \text{the painting} \\
  \text{T'} \\
  \text{T} \\
  \text{CopP} \\
  \text{Cop} \\
  \text{is} \\
  \text{aP} \\
  \text{a} \\
  \text{-ed} \\
  \text{vP} \\
  \text{v+finish} \\
  \text{DP} \\
  \text{the painting}
  \end{array}
  \]
  
  b.\[
  \begin{array}{c}
  \text{TP} \\
  \text{DP} \\
  \text{Mary} \\
  \text{T'} \\
  \text{T} \\
  \text{CopP} \\
  \text{Cop} \\
  \text{is} \\
  \text{aP} \\
  \text{a'} \\
  \text{vP} \\
  \text{v+finish} \\
  \text{DP} \\
  \text{Mary} \\
  \text{a} \\
  \text{-ed}
  \end{array}
  \]
\end{itemize}

It is our argument that (45b) is ungrammatical because the external argument introducing head $a$, which is present in (38b) does not select for $\text{complete}$.

There is some head $a$ in most dialects of English which introduces an external argument to stative passives. In most dialects, it selects for only $\text{finish}$ and $\text{do}$, while in others only $\text{finish}$, while in even others for $\text{finish}$, $\text{do}$ and $\text{start}$. An independently varying property of this $a$ head is whether or not it can assign case to an internal argument. We can tell that these are two properties of the same head, because in those dialects where it can assign case to an internal argument, it does so for all and only those stative passives which are selected to have an external argument.
5 Remaining Puzzle

All *be finished* DP sentences have a corresponding grammatical *have finished* DP sentence with the same set of coerced meanings for the vP. This is not true for *be done* DP.

(40) a. I am finished my beer. (consuming, brewing)
    b. I have finished my beer. (consuming, brewing)

(41) a. I am done my beer. (consuming, brewing)
    b. ??I have done my beer. (*consuming, brewing)

6 Conclusion

After considering a number of alternatives, we conclude that the structure in (42) is the correct one.

(42)

(43) a. The construction involves a resultative adjectival passive, rather than a full eventive passive or an active past participle. (i.e. there is no Voice head)

\[^2\text{p.c. Sankoff}\]
\[^3\text{p.c. Yerastov}\]
b. The external argument is therefore introduced not in spec-VoiceP (which is absent) but in the subject position of the adjectival small clause (which we depict here as spec-aP).

c. The accusative Case of the internal argument is assigned by a little-a head, perhaps similar to the little-a head which assigns accusative case to the objects of *worth*.

d. The lexical specificity of this construction is due to the selectional properties of this little-a head.

Our conclusions suggest at least three flavors of a.

(44) Distribution for most dialects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>external argument</th>
<th>case marking</th>
<th>selects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$a_1$</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>∅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$a_2$</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>{finish, do}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$a_3$</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>{worth}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is necessary to posit these three distinct flavors to capture the fact that most dialects have the contrast between (45) and (46) (these are (36) and (37) partially repeated), have transitive *worth*, and don’t allow be *done* DP.

(45) a. The painting is completed *the painting*.
    b. *Mary is Mary completed.*

(46) a. The painting is finished *the painting*.
    b. Mary is Mary finished.

These flavors of a are paralleled in the Voice domain.

(47) Flavors of Voice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>external argument</th>
<th>case marking</th>
<th>selects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voice$_1$</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>unaccusatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice$_2$</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>unergatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice$_3$</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>transitives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Philadelphia and Canada, it is actually not possible to distinguish between $a_2$ and $a_3$, meaning these dialects may only utilize $a_1$ and $a_3$.

6.1 Prediction

Based on the currently available dialect data, and our analysis, we might make the following prediction.

(48) a. If for lexical item X in a dialect, it can appear in the be Xed DP construction, it can also appear in be Xed Ving DP and I am Xed.
    • be Xed DP → \{be Xed Ving DP, I am Xed\}

b. Contrapositively, if for lexical item X in a dialect, it cannot appear in I am Xed nor be Xed Ving DP, it cannot appear in be Xed DP.
    • ¬ \{be Xed Ving DP, I am Xed\} → ¬ be Xed DP

References


Lundquist, Björn. 2012. The category of participles. lingbuzz/001545.

