Two constraints on theme passivisation in Swedish

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LAGB
September 17, 2015
Introduction: The passive symmetry problem


(1) **Double object construction** (DOC)

a. Obelix handed Asterix the potion. [Active]

b. _____ was handed Asterix the potion [Passive]
Asymmetric passive languages

- Allow only the goal argument to passivize.
- Fula, Swahili, German, Chichewa, Danish (Baker, 1988; Bresnan and Moshi, 1990; Postal, 2004; Woolford, 1993).

(2) **Danish** (Holmberg and Platzack, 1995)

   Jens was given book-the
   ‘Jens was given book-the.’


(3) **Am. English**

a. Asterix was given the potion.

b. *The potion was given Asterix.
Symmetric passive languages

- Allow both goal and theme arguments to passivize.

(4) **Norwegian**


  Jens was given book-the
  ‘Jens was given book-the.’

b. Bok-en ble gitt Jens.
The locality approach


(5) **Asymmetric passive languages**

```
TP
  \--- Theme
     \- T
       \- XP
         \- Goal
           \- X
             \- YP
               \- Theme
```
The locality approach

- Symmetric languages have an “escape hatch.”

(6) *Symmetric passive languages*

```
TP
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
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<td>T'</td>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
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<tr>
<td>XP</td>
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<td>Theme</td>
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<td>Goal</td>
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<td>X'</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```
Evidence for escape hatch movement

- **Object shift in Mainland Scandinavian**

(7) **Danish** (Anagnostopoulou, 2005)

a. Peter viste **hende den jo.**
   Peter showed her it indeed
   ‘Peter indeed showed it to her.’

b. *Peter viste **den hende jo.**

(8) **Norwegian**

a. Elsa ga **ham den ikke.**
   Elsa gave him it not
   ‘Elsa didn’t give him it.’

b. %Elsa ga **den ham ikke.**
Evidence for escape hatch movement


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme passives</th>
<th>Theme-Goal Object Shift</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swed./Norw.</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence for escape hatch movement


(9) **Passives**

a. %The potion was given *Asterix*.

b. *Asterix* was given the potion.

(10) **Actives**

a. %She gave *it* *him*.

b. She gave *him* *it*. 
Two shortcomings of locality approach

i. In Norwegian and BrE, acceptance of theme-goal orders in actives and passives don’t co-vary across speakers (Haddican and Holmberg, 2012, 2014).

ii. In BrE theme-goal ditransitives in active contexts, the Theme must be pronominal, but themes in spec,TP need not be. The locality approach has trouble expressing this pronoun/DP contrast only in active contexts.

(11) The book/It was given Obelix [the–book/it].

(12) I gave *the book/it Obelix [the–book/it].
A new case-based approach


- Theme passives have a linker head, which probes the goal (Baker and Collins, 2006). In passives, where v assigns no case, the theme raises to T.

\[ \text{TP Theme } [vP \text{ v } [vP \text{ V } [LkP \text{ Lk } [\text{ApplP Goal Theme } ]]]] \]

- The Goal argument, inactive by the time T is merged, does not defectively intervene between T and Theme (Richards, 2004; Broekhuis, 2007; Bruening, 2014).

- Theme-goal constructions in active contexts have an independent source.
A verb class effect in Swedish

- Swedish sometimes described as a “symmetric passive" language, but theme-passives typically marginal (Lundquist, 2014).

(14) ??Pris-et gav-s pojk-en.
    prize-DEF give.PST-PASS boy-DEF
    ‘The prize was given the boy.’

- Holmberg and Platzack (1995) report that theme passives are better with a class of bi-morphemic verbs, including *till-dela*, ‘award, lit. to-share’, *till-skriva*, ‘ascribe, lit. to-write’, and *för-ära* ‘award, lit. for-honor’.

(15) Pris-et till-dela-de-s pojk-en.
    prize-DEF to-share-PST-PASS boy-DEF
    ‘The prize was given the boy.’
A verb class effect in Swedish

The first morphemes in these verbs *till* and *för* are homophonous with forms that, in other contexts are prepositions, counterpart to English *to* and *for*.

(16) a. till Paris
to Paris‘to Paris’
b. för pojk-en
for boy-the‘for the boy’
A verb class effect in Swedish

- From the perspective of Haddican and Holmberg (2012, 2014), a possibility that arises is that *till* and *för* are overt counterparts of the silent linker morphemes posited for BrE and Norwegian.

- An additional difference between Swedish and Norwegian would be that this linker morpheme only accompanies certain verbs.

(17) \[ v_P v [v_P dela [LkP till- [ApplP Goal Theme ]]]]
A’-movement rescues theme passives

In addition, relatives selectively ameliorate theme-passivization (Holmberg and Platzack, 1995; Lundquist, 2014)

(18) *Ingrid såg pojk-en som gav-s priset.
    Ingrid saw boy-the that gave-PASS prize-the
    ‘Ingrid saw the prize that was given the boy.’

(19) Ingrid såg priset som gavs pojken.
    Ingrid saw prize-the that gave-PASS boy-the
    ‘Ingrid saw the boy that was given the prize.’

The contrast between relative and non-relative contexts suggests that A-bar movement is crucial to the availability of theme-passivization.
Main goals of talk

- This paper reports on a judgment survey focusing on the two above effects.

- **Two main claims:**
  1. Results from Swedish provide positive evidence that the availability of theme-passivization is conditioned by the presence of an additional source of case for objects as suggested by (Haddican and Holmberg, 2012, 2014).
  2. Results corroborate observations by Holmberg and Platzack (1995) and Lunquist (2014) that A’-movement repairs theme-passives with verb classes that normally disallow such constructions. Despite appearances, this is not an instance of locality obviation.
Method: subjects

- 101 self-described native speakers of Swedish, 66 F, 35 M.
- 22-87 ($M=38.4, \ SD=12.0$).
- Subjects recruited online by researchers. We did not require subjects to be linguistically naive.
Method: materials

- 2x3 design crossing argument order with context:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Theme-passive</th>
<th>Goal-passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monomorph.</strong></td>
<td><em>Priset gavs pojken.</em> ‘The prize was given the boy.’</td>
<td><em>Pojken gavs priset.</em> ‘The boy was given the prize.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bimorph.</strong></td>
<td><em>Priset tilldelades pojken.</em> ‘The prize was awarded the boy.’</td>
<td><em>Pojken tilldelades priset.</em> ‘The boy was awarded the prize.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relatives</strong></td>
<td><em>Ingrid såg pojken som gavs priset.</em> ‘Ingrid saw the prize that was given the boy.’</td>
<td><em>Ingrid såg priset som gavs pojken.</em> ‘Ingrid saw the boy that was given the prize.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Example sentences for 6 conditions
Method: procedure

- Self-paced online survey in Fall 2014 using Ibex Farm (Drummond, 2013)
- Subjects judged sentences on 11-point (0-10) scale, with endpoints labeled dålig ‘bad’ and bra ‘good’ respectively.
- Results normalized by converting to z-scores based on by-speaker means and standard deviations of fillers.
Results

- No strong geographic effect.
- Hotter colors $\rightarrow$ tendency toward theme-goal orders (by-subject random intercepts).
- No sex/age effects.
- No register effect.

Figure 1: Tendency toward theme-goal order in passives
Results

- Bimorphemic verbs make both object orders better (relative to monomorphemic verbs)
- Bimorphemic verbs improve theme-passives a bit more than goal-passives.

**Figure 2:** Estimated effects and CI’s for 4 conditions
**Item analysis**

- *Till- and för- favor theme-goal orders most strongly.*

The diagram illustrates the normalized acceptability scores for various bimorphemic verbs in Swedish. The verbs are categorized based on their preferences for theme-goal orders, with the most preferred verbs at the top. "tillskriva" and "erbjuda" are among the verbs that favor theme-goal orders most strongly, as indicated by their higher normalized acceptability scores.
Monomorph. verbs, Grammar 1: multiple agree

- v probes both objects—“Multiple agree” (Anagnostopoulou, 2003; Nevins, 2007, 2011)
- In passives, this head assigns no case and one object is left case-less.
- Hence, degradation of both theme and goal passives with monomorphemic verbs.
Something else is needed to model relative improvement of goal passives.

Let’s assume a competing grammar with Appl as a probe as in e.g. Standard English.

\[
\text{(21) Monomorph. verbs, Gr. 2}
\]

\[
\text{vp} \quad \text{VP} \\
\text{v}_\phi \quad \text{V} \\
\text{ApplP} \quad \text{Appl'} \\
\text{Goal} \quad \text{Theme}
\]

Monomorph. verbs, Grammar 2: Appl and v as probes
Bimorphemic verbs: Linker head

- Morphemes *till-* and *för-* are linkers selected only by certain verbs.

- One position for these morphemes is outside Appl. This will make possible theme passivization.

(22) Bimorphemic verbs

```
vp
  v
  VP
    V
    LkP
      till-φ
      ApplP
        Goal
        Appl’
          Appl
          Theme
```
Bimorphemic verbs: Linker head

- A second possible position is in Appl.
- This explains the fact that bimorphemic verbs facilitate goal passives (relative to monomorphemic verbs).

(23) Bimorphemic verbs

```
 vp
  v  VP
     V  ApplP
        Goal  Appl'
          till\phi  Theme
```
Awkward relatives

- Relative to root contexts, goal passives get worse and theme passives get better.

Figure 4: Estimated effects and CI’s for 4 conditions
Other A’-movement contexts

- Availability of other kinds of A’-extraction seems to vary across speakers.

(24) **Wh-questions**

\%Vilket pris gav-s pojk-en?
which prize gave-PASS boy-DEF
‘Which prize was given the boy?’

(25) **Quotatives**

\%“Det kostar för mycket”\ ]; Op\ ]; berättades det Johan.
that costs too much told.PASS EXPL Johan
‘“That costs too much,” John was told.’
Asymmetry in A’-extraction


- Raising of derived subject *wh*-phrases obeys this constraint, unlike in English (perhaps because subject *wh*-phrases unambiguously move to CP in Swedish, but not in English. (Chomsky, 1986)).

- ApplP is a phase. Operator theme raises there before Appl assigns case—perhaps because Appl needs v to assign case.
Asymmetry in A’-extraction

- A source of case is needed for the goal argument. We noted above that Appl can (marginally for many speakers) be a probe.

- We assume that Appl can probe the goal argument in its spec, when relieved of its responsibility to value case on the theme (Béjar and Rezac, 2009).

(26) Monomorph. verbs, Gr. 2

```
vp
  v  VP
    V  ApplP
      Op  ApplP
          Goal  Applp
```
Main claims

Two main claims:

1. Results from Swedish provide positive evidence that the availability of theme-passivization is conditioned by the presence of an additional source of case for objects as suggested by (Haddican and Holmberg, 2012, 2014).

2. Results corroborate observations by Holmberg and Platzack (1995) and Lunquist (2014) that A’-movement repairs theme-passives with verb classes that normally disallow such constructions. Despite appearances, this is not an instance of locality obviation.
Many thanks to ...
References I

References IV

References V