

Slovene and Swedish translation equivalents of the English passive in two discourse types

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Povzetek

Članek obravnava slovenske in švedske prevodne ustreznice angleškega trpnika v dveh besedilnih tipih (leposlovje in neleposlovje). Izdelan je bil dvodelni korpus primerov trpnika na podlagi Pogodbe iz Nice (2001) in romana *A Game of Thrones* (1996) avtorja Georgea R. R. Martina ter njunih slovenskih in švedskih prevodov. S pomočjo korpusnega gradiva je bila izvedena analiza prevodnih ustreznic s posebnim poudarkom na opazovanju trpnika, ohranjenega v prevodih, in vpliva, ki ga imata na izbiro prevodne ustreznice vršilec dejanja in živost trpniškega osebka. Zaradi sistemskih razlik med slovenščino in švedščino ter podobnosti med angleščino in švedščino se trpnik v prevodih iz angleščine pogosteje ohranja v švedščini. Razlike med jeziki so manj izrazite v neleposlovju, v leposlovju pa slovenski prevod z vidika rabe trpnika izrazito izstopa, saj je trpnika mnogo manj kot v angleškem izvorniku in švedskem prevodu.

Ključne besede: trpnik, prevodne ustreznice trpnika, vršilec dejanja, živost osebka

1 INTRODUCTION

Voice is a grammatical category that enables an action to be presented in different ways depending on the perspective of the participants involved – the *agent*, who carries out the action, and the *patient*, who in turn is influenced by it. In many language resources, such as grammars and style guides¹, the passive voice is often regarded as a needless complication compared to its active counterpart, and advised against, except in specific discourse types such as academic texts (cf. Toporišič 1984: 297 for Slovene, Biber et al. 2007: 476–480 and Leech et al. 2009: 144–154 for English, and Laanemets 2009: 145 for Swedish). However, these general stylistic guidelines often fail to mention that the passive voice, despite the fact that it involves the same participants and generally conveys the same message as its active equivalent, plays an important role in terms of cohesion, sentence-level information distribution, and emphasis (cf. Kovačič 1991, Teleman et al. 4 1999, Robinson 2000, Orešnik 2006, Biber et al. 2007, Leech et al. 2009).

Although it is true that passive sentences occur much more often in certain discourse types, such as academic texts, and that diachronic research into the ‘Brown family’ corpora shows an overall decrease in the use of the passive over the late 20th century (Leech et al. 2009),² the fact remains that they can be found – albeit to a lesser extent – in non-academic genres, and often with good reason. Over-generalized assumptions on the (non-)use of the passive voice and anti-passive guidelines are not of much use to authors and translators who encounter passive sentences in their work and would benefit from an in-depth understanding of both the functions of passive constructions and their translation equivalents. For that, extensive corpus research is required, and this paper provides some insight into the use of the passive in English, Slovene, and Swedish.

In the paper³, we first provide a theoretical overview of passive constructions in the three languages and outline the conditions of their use, with particular emphasis on systemic differences between the languages. We then explain the structure of our two-part corpus of passive sentences, and discuss the hypotheses and methodology of our research. We observe the different approaches to translating English passive constructions into Slovene and Swedish by analysing the corpus examples in terms of various factors that influence the choice of the translation

¹ See for instance the European Commission style guides for English, Slovene and Swedish, e.g. http://ec.europa.eu/translation/english/guidelines/documents/styleguide_english_dgt_en.pdf.

² Leech et al. (2009: 148–154) report a decline in the use of the passive voice in both British and American English, noticeably in academic prose, however the percentages there remain highest. On the other hand, the British data show a relative increase of agented passives in British English.

³ The paper is based on Jaka Čibej's MA thesis at the Department of Translation (Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana) under the supervision of Silvana Orel Kos, titled *Rečeno, storjeno: Prevajanje trpnika iz angleščine v slovenščino in švedščino v dveh diskurzivnih zvrsteh* (No sooner said than done: Translation of the passive from English to Slovene and Swedish in two discourse types).

equivalent, especially agented/agentless passives and subject animacy. In the end, we discuss the results of the analysis and provide a number of findings that may prove useful to translators when translating English passive constructions into Slovene or Swedish.

2 PASSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN ENGLISH, SLOVENE AND SWEDISH

Despite similar definitions of the passive voice which at first glance cover the same agent-patient sentence transformation principle, English, Slovene and Swedish passives differ in discourse functions. In addition, all three languages can form more than one type of passive construction, which makes the choice of a translation equivalent even more difficult, as each passive construction comes with semantic, grammatical and contextual restrictions. In this section, we provide a brief overview of passive constructions in the three languages and discuss the conditions of their use.

2.1 The English passive

The English passive is formed by the auxiliary verb *be* and the past participle of the semantic verb (Quirk et al. 1985, Biber et al. 2007), as shown below in [1]. This form is considered «stylistically neutral».

- [1] Halliwell brutally murdered Joe Orton.
Joe Orton *was* brutally *murdered* by Halliwell.

In some cases, the auxiliary verb *get*, which emphasizes the event itself, may be used instead of *be* (as shown in [2]), which is used to describe a state originating from a previous action.

- [2] He *got* taught a lesson. (cf. *He was taught a lesson on the subjunctive.*)
How did that window *get* opened? (cf. *The window was opened manually.*)

However, a number of stylistic and semantic restrictions must be taken into account. First, the *get*-passive occurs rarely, and almost exclusively in informal, conversational contexts (Quirk et al. 1985: 160–162, Arce-Arenales et al. 1994: 19, Leech et al. 2009: 157–158). According to Biber et al. (2007: 476), the *get*-passive accounts for only 0.1% of verb forms in conversation (compared to 2% of

be-passives), and the Brown family corpora show that the *be*-passive is 400 times more frequent than the *get*-passive. However, the frequency of the *get*-passive in American English, especially in fiction writing, has doubled since the 1960s (Leech et al. 2009: 156).

Second, the *get*-passive usually denotes events that are adverse and detrimental to the subject (Givón & Yang 1994, Arce-Arenales et al. 1994, Leech et al. 2009: 156–157), as shown in [3] and [4]. According to Herold (1986), as many as 82% examples of the *get*-passive denote a negative event compared to 40% with *be*-passives, while according to Leech et al. (2009) the 1990s ratio is 66.3%/33.7% respectively⁴.

- [3] He *got run over* by a bus.
[4] James *got beaten* last night.

Third, the *get*-passive occurs almost exclusively with animate subjects⁵ (Lakoff 1971, Givón & Yang 1994). This can be attributed to an additional semantic undertone of the *get*-passive: it implies that the subject retains a certain amount of control or influence over the action despite its non-active role as the patient. As shown in [5] and [6], the difference between the *be*- and *get*-passives is the influence the subject (in this case *Mary*) has on the action itself. With the *get*-passive, Mary purposefully puts herself in a situation in which she is shot.

- [5] Mary **was** shot on purpose. (**Someone** purposely shot Mary.)
Mary **got** shot on purpose. (**She** purposely got herself shot.)
[6] Mary **was** shot on purpose, the bastards!
*Mary **got** shot on purpose, the bastards!

The examples in [7] show that an inanimate subject rarely occurs with the *get*-passive as it cannot influence the action denoted by the verb.

- [7] A house can **be** built of stone, brick or clay.
*A house can **get** built of stone, brick or clay.

However, odd examples can be found to support non-adversative use with an inanimate subject:

⁴ An additional dimension regarding the use of the *get*-passive involves the speaker's education. In Herold's (1986) research, the *get*-passive denoted detrimental events in approximately 90% of examples collected from working class speakers. With speakers with a higher level of education, the percentage of negative events amounted to only 60%. In addition, working class speakers used the *get*-passive much more often (49% *get*-passive vs. 51% *be*-passive) compared to speakers with higher education (17% *get*-passive vs. 83% *be*-passive).

⁵ In this paper, subjects denoting a group of animate individuals (e.g. commission, committee) are regarded as inanimate. A similar approach is implemented in research of the Swedish passive voice by Engdahl (2006) and Laanemets (2004, 2009 & 2012).

- [8] Did they know how wealth from over-large estates **gets** misused? (Leech et al. 2009: 157)

The final difference between the two passive forms involves the statal or eventive nature of the denoted action. The *be*-passive can denote both states and dynamic actions, while the *get*-passive only denotes events (Arce-Arenales et al. 1994: 15, Leech 2009: 155). The *get*-passive can sometimes be used to discriminate between a state and an event, as shown in [9], or between a recurring action and a point-in-time event, as shown in [10].

- [9] [...] and she **got** stationed in Germany where my dad **was** stationed [...]
 [10] [...] well the money (that) **was** sent back and forth **got** cashed in March [...]

2.2 The Slovene passive

In Slovene, the passive can be formed in two ways: by using the passive participle and the auxiliary verb *biti* (the participle passive) or by adding the morpheme *se* to the active form (the reflexive passive) (Toporišič 1984: 296, 2003: 278). Several examples are shown in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Examples of participle passive forms for the Slovene verb *poslati* ('to send').

| TENSE | ACTIVE | PARTICIPLE PASSIVE |
|---------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Present | <i>pošlje</i> | <i>je poslan/-a</i> |
| Past | <i>je poslal/-a</i> | <i>je bil/-a poslan/-a</i> |
| Future | <i>bo poslal/-a</i> | <i>bo poslan/-a</i> |

Table 2: Examples of reflexive passive forms for the Slovene verb *razveljaviti* ('to cancel').

| TENSE | ACTIVE | REFLEXIVE PASSIVE |
|---------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Present | <i>razveljavi</i> | <i>se razveljavi</i> |
| Past | <i>je razveljavil/-a</i> | <i>se je razveljavil/-a</i> |
| Future | <i>bo razveljavil/-a</i> | <i>se bo razveljavil/-a</i> |

Both forms are considered stylistically neutral, but the participle passive is more common (Orešnik 2007: 31). The reflexive passive is generally used only with inanimate subjects (to avoid confusion with the active reflexive form). In [11], the

patient is inanimate and cannot be interpreted as the agent of an active reflexive sentence (*'The contract cancels itself.'). The subject in [12] is animate and may allow for two interpretations: passive ('The boy is being hit.')

or active reflexive ('The boy is hitting himself.'). However, the passive interpretation is less likely in this case, as the natural impulse of a native speaker of Slovene is to assume the active reflexive one.

[11] Pogodba se razveljavi.

[12] Fant se tepe.

An additional restriction of the Slovene reflexive passive is that it can only occur in the third person singular, dual or plural (Toporišič 2003: 279, Orešnik 2007: 31). It could theoretically denote a passive action in the first/second person as well, but as with [12], the active reflexive interpretation is in that case more natural.

The Slovene reflexive passive can only denote dynamic actions, while the participle passive can convey both states and dynamic actions. Both passive forms are commonly agentless as the adverbial of agency (a prepositional phrase containing the preposition *od* and a nominal phrase) is generally avoided for stylistic reasons, although it can be included in the participle passive and, at least in theory, in the reflexive passive as well, as seen in example [13] provided by Toporišič (2003).

[13] Včeraj sem se na križišču skoraj povozil od avtomobila. (Yesterday, I almost got run over by a car at the intersection.)

2.3 The Swedish passive

In Swedish, there are two categories of the passive voice: the morphological passive, usually formed by adding the suffix *-s* to the active form, and the periphrastic passive, formed with an auxiliary verb and the passive participle (Teleman et al. 4 1999: 360). Several examples are shown in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3: Examples of morphological passive forms for the Swedish verb *att tala* ('to speak').

| TENSE | ACTIVE | S-PASSIVE |
|---------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Present | <i>tala-r</i> | <i>tala-s</i> |
| Past | <i>tala-de</i> | <i>talade-s</i> |
| Future | <i>ska tala, kommer att tala</i> | <i>ska tala-s, kommer att tala-s</i> |

Table 4: Examples of periphrastic passive forms for the Swedish verb *att tala* (‘to speak’).

| TENSE | ACTIVE | BLI-PASSIVE |
|---------|----------------------------------|--|
| Present | <i>tala-r</i> | <i>blir talad/talat/talade</i> |
| Past | <i>tala-de</i> | <i>blev talad/talat/talade</i> |
| Future | <i>ska tala, kommer att tala</i> | <i>ska bli talad/talat/talade, kommer att bli talad/talat/talade</i> |

The periphrastic passive is further divided into two subcategories according to the auxiliary verb used: the *bli*-passive, which uses the verb *bli* (‘to become’), and the *vara*-passive, which uses the verb *vara* (‘to be’)⁶. The morphological passive is considered the neutral form and is the most common (Engdahl 2001: 1–3, 2006: 21). The results of a study done by Laanemets (2004) showed that over 90% of passive forms in Swedish are morphological.

In certain cases, the correct choice of the passive form is clear. As pointed out by Engdahl (2006: 24), when it comes to examples denoting rules, general claims, recipes, etc., only the morphological passive is acceptable (see [14] and [15]).

[14] Det ***talas*** inte längre danska i Skåne. (Danish is no longer spoken in Skåne.)

[15] Mjölet ***tillsätts*** under omrörning. (The flour is added while mixing.)

In certain cases, the periphrastic and morphological varieties can be interchangeable, but the choice much more commonly depends on a number of semantic restrictions. For instance, the Swedish morphological passive can only denote dynamic actions, while the periphrastic passive can denote both dynamic actions and states.

Much like the English *get*-passive, the Swedish *bli*-passive tends to denote actions detrimental to the patient. In a corpus study by Engdahl (2006: 34), more than 50% of *bli*-passive examples contained verbs such as *döda* (‘to kill’), *förstöra* (‘to destroy’), and *mörda* (‘to murder’).

Similarly, the Swedish *bli*-passive occurs almost exclusively with animate subjects and implies that the subject retains some form of (indirect) control over the action (Engdahl 2001: 3, Laanemets 2009: 160), as seen in [16].

⁶ It should be noted that the two varieties of the periphrastic passive are not interchangeable, as the *vara*-passive is only used to denote states resulting from a prior dynamic action (Engdahl 2006: 23, Laanemets 2009:146).

- [16] Representanten försökte *bli omvald*. (The representative tried to be re-elected.)

In addition, the *bli*-passive is often used to add emphasis to a change of state (Engdahl 2006: 23) or to focus on the beginning of a state newly achieved by the patient (Teleman et al. 4 1999: 392), especially in combination with atelic verbs. This can be observed in [15] and [16], taken from Engdahl (2006):

- [17] Lisa *blev* på kort tid *uppskattad* av hela personalen. (Lisa quickly earned the respect of the entire staff.)

- [18] Boken *blev* på kort tid *läst* över hela jorden. (In short time, the book was widely read over the globe.)

Finally, the morphological passive tends to occur much more often in combination with modal verbs (Orešnik 2001: 31–33). A corpus study by Laanemets (2004: 88) showed that as many as 86% of passive infinitives occurred in combination with modal verbs, and 95% of these were morphological. The only exception is the modal verb *vilja* ('to want, to wish') (see [17] below), which almost never occurs with the morphological passive and is much more common with the *bli*-passive (Laanemets 2012: 175–176). This can be expected, as the verb implies the patient's desire to influence the action in question – a semantic notion also expressed by the *bli*-passive.

- [19] Talade du för honom att jag inte ville *bli störd*? (Did you tell him that I did not want to be disturbed?)

2.4 Differences between the use of the passive in English, Slovene and Swedish

In this section, we provide a brief overview of systemic differences between English, Slovene and Swedish, as the three languages differ to some extent in certain grammatical and pragmatic features concerning the use of the passive voice.

First, the prepositional passive (Quirk et al. 1985: 1164, see [18]) is much more common in English compared to Swedish, whereas Slovene has no way of forming it (Kovačič 1991: 38).

- [20] This office *has been phoned from* so many times it was natural to assume that it was the source of the latest call.

However, the formation of the English prepositional passive is restricted by a number of factors. According to Quirk et al. (1985), it is more common for the patient of the prepositional passive construction to be abstract, as shown in [19] and [20].

[21] *The problem* was carefully gone **into** by the engineers.

[22] ?**The tunnel* was carefully gone **into** by the engineers.

In Swedish, the prepositional passive is regarded as ungrammatical (see [21]) or at best extremely marginal (Maling & Zaenen 1985: 161–162). However, Truswell (2009: 57) points out that the periphrastic passive is more likely to form acceptable prepositional passives compared to the morphological passive (see [22]).

[23] ?Hon *skrattades åt*. (She was laughed at.)

[24] Hon *blev skrattad åt*. (She was laughed at.)

English and Swedish also have two ways of forming the passive voice with ditransitive verbs: by promoting either the direct or indirect object to the subject (Quirk et al. 1985: 1381, Teleman et al. 3 1999: 308), as shown in [23]–[26]. In Slovene, the indirect object cannot be promoted to the subject of a passive clause.

[25] *Power* was given to the people by Mao. (passive, direct object promoted to subject)

[26] *The people* were given power by Mao. (passive, indirect object promoted to subject)

[27] *Ett stort pris* har tilldelats henne av Akademien. [A great prize was awarded her by the Academy.] (passive, direct object promoted to subject)

[28] *Hon* har tilldelats ett stort pris av Akademien. [She was awarded a great prize by the Academy.] (passive, indirect object promoted to subject)

In addition, both Slovene and Swedish can form impersonal passives, a construction which English lacks (see [27]–[29]).

[29] Vso noč *se je plesalo*.

[30] Det *dansades* hela natten.

- [31] *It was danced all night. (People danced all night. / There was dancing all night.)

In terms of function, the passive voice in the three languages can be used to focus on either the patient or the action by omitting the agent as unimportant, irrelevant or unknown. In Swedish and English, however, the agented passive can also be used to emphasize the agent, as the adverbial of agency is always in sentence-final position (see the above examples [25]–[26] for English and [27]–[28] for Swedish). Because of its case system and flexible word order, Slovene can place the agent in sentence-final position both in active and passive clauses (cf. Kovačič 1991: 48–49), as in [32]–[35].

- [32] **Policija** je pregledala avto. (The police searched the car.) [active, agent in sentence-initial position]
- [33] Avto je pregledala **policija**. (The car [object] searched the police [subject]) [active, agent in sentence-final position]
- [34] Avto je bil pregledan **od policije**. (The car was searched by the police.) [passive, agent in sentence-final position]
- [35] **Od policije** je bil pregledan avto. (?By the police was the car searched.) [passive, agent in sentence-initial position]

The active form is opted for in most cases as it is syntactically simpler and stylistically more elegant than the agented passive (cf. Orešnik 2006).

3 CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

A two-part corpus was made using the material collected from the *Treaty of Nice*, a treaty signed by EU member-states in 2001, and George R. R. Martin's fantasy novel *A Game of Thrones*, first published in 1996. 400 examples of passive constructions and their translation equivalents were collected from each text and its Slovene and Swedish translations⁷ for a total of 800 units in each language (2,400 units in total). The examples were then analysed in terms of the following parameters: (syntactic) structure, subject animacy, agent, and agent change. These categories are presented in further detail in the following section.

⁷ The Slovene translation of *A Game of Thrones* (*Igra prestolov*) was translated by Boštjan Gorenc (2007), while the Swedish version (*Kampen om järntronen*) was translated by Louise Thoulin (2005).

3.1 Syntactic structure

The first parameter concerns the structure of the collected examples, which were categorised according to the type of the construction used (e.g. agented or agentless passive form, active form, combination of the copula and adjective) and their syntactic position (e.g. main clause, dependent clause, relative clause). Because the languages in question differ in terms of available passive constructions, different (but similar) categorisations were used for each language. A sample of English structural categories is shown in Table 5 below, as the entire set of categories is too numerous to mention here⁸.

Table 5: Syntactic structure categories for the English part of the corpus.

| Category ⁹ | Definition | Example |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| DT | long passive, no referent | <i>He was shot by Fred.</i> |
| DTR+ | long passive with referent and auxiliary verb | a decision <i>that was made by the Council</i> |
| DTR- | long passive with referent and no auxiliary verb | a decision <i>made by the Council</i> |
| DTD | long passive in participial clause | They had lived in the magister's house, <i>pampered by his servants.</i> |
| DTN | long passive in infinitival clause | Was I supposed to leave him <i>to be raised by women?</i> |
| DTH | long passive with <i>have</i> | I am not accustomed to <i>having my commands questioned by bastards.</i> |
| DTPV | long passive as complement | Jeyne Poole confessed herself <i>frightened by the look of Jabbar Xbo.</i> |
| DTGET | long passive with <i>get</i> | He <i>got run over</i> by a bus. |
| KT | short passive in main sentence | <i>He was shot.</i> |
| KTR+ | short passive with referent and auxiliary verb | transactions <i>which shall be published</i> in the Official Journal of the European Union |
| KTR- | short passive with referent and no auxiliary verb | measures <i>taken</i> under paragraph 3 |

⁸ For the detailed list of categories, see Čibej (2014).

⁹ The acronyms of all the categories were designed according to their Slovene names, as the thesis was written in Slovene.

| | | |
|-------|---|--|
| KT- | short version of short passive | It seemed almost to vanish when <i>seen</i> edge-on. |
| KTG | short passive in gerundial clause | situation which led to their <i>being imposed</i> |
| KTN | short passive in infinitival clause | this Treaty requires them <i>to be adopted</i> |
| KTNR | short infinitival passive with referent | agreements <i>to be concluded</i> with the States |
| KTNP | short infinitival passive in adjectival phrase | unlucky enough <i>to be born</i> with no name of their own |
| KTPV | short passive as part of catenative verb construction | They set forth at daybreak to see a man <i>beheaded</i> . |
| KTGET | short passive with <i>get</i> | He <i>got run over</i> . |

3.2 Subject animacy

As subject animacy influences the choice of the passive construction in both Slovene and Swedish, we also observed whether the subject (or referent) of the passive construction was animate, inanimate, or formal, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Categories of subject animacy.

| Category ¹⁰ | Definition | Example |
|------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Ž | animate subject | <i>The Deputy Secretary-General</i> shall be appointed by the Council. |
| NŽ | inanimate subject | <i>The lamps</i> were being lit along the streets as they set out. |
| IT | formal subject | <i>It</i> was said that the children of the forest had carved the faces in the trees. |

3.3 Agent and agent change

In the English part of the corpus, the examples were analysed in terms of whether the agent of the passive construction was explicitly expressed or not, as shown in Table 7.

¹⁰ In a small number of cases, the subject was a combination of an animate and an inanimate subject. These cases were categorised as N+NŽ (in all three languages).

Table 7: Categories of agent.

| Category | Definition | Example |
|----------|-------------------|--|
| NI | unexpressed agent | The following Articles shall be inserted: |
| I | expressed agent | Authorisation shall be granted <i>by the Council</i> . |

The Slovene and Swedish translation equivalents were then analysed in terms of agent change, i. e. whether the agent from the English original underwent any changes, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Categories of agent change.

| Category | Definition | Example |
|----------|--|---|
| NNS | unexpressed agent, no change compared to the original | Svet preverja razloge, na podlagi katerih je bila takšna ugotovitev sprejeta [//]. |
| INS | expressed agent, no change compared to the original | Predlog je bil sprejet <i>od Komisije</i> ¹¹ . |
| PTV | conversion into active – agent becomes subject, patient becomes object | Predlog je sprejela <i>Komisija</i> . |
| SUV | change of participant role – patient becomes subject of a different (intransitive) active verb | Odhodki <i>bremenijo</i> sodelujoče države članice. [Expenditure <i>shall be borne</i> by the participating Member States.] |
| PRE | inclusion of the agent in a different phrase | v skladu s predlogi <i>držav</i> članic [in accordance with the proposals made <i>by each Member State</i>] |
| PR | instrumental construction | Postopno oblikovanje skupne obrambne politike bo podprto <i>z medsebojnim sodelovanjem</i> [by cooperation between them] |
| PD | agent is expressed through adverbial | Ti sporazumi so zajeti <i>v teh odstavkih</i> . [by the following paragraphs] |
| VDK | agent is inferred from the context | <i>Vsi</i> se mu bodo izogibali. [He will be shunned.] |

¹¹ This particular example was not found in the corpus, but is provided here as a counterpoint to the much more common PTV example.

| | | |
|-----|--|---|
| VDV | agent is inferred from the content of the sentence (from another phrase, e.g. adverbial) | delež, kakor ga določa člen 205 [proportion as laid down <i>in Article 205</i>] |
| PG | reflexive verb | Brž ko <i>se je končalo</i> [had been completed] uradno pozdravljanje [...] |
| BO | active form with no subject | Ogromne kamnite klade <i>je iztrgalo</i> iz stražnih zidov. [Huge stone blocks <i>were ripped</i> from the parapets.] |
| NZ | indefinite pronoun | Lesena škatla, ki jo je <i>nekdo</i> pustil na mizi v mojem observatoriju. [A wooden box, <i>left</i> on a table in my observatory.] |
| ONI | generic agent <i>oni</i> ('they') | Ko so se odpravili, <i>so</i> vzdolž ulic <i>prižigali</i> svetilke. [The lamps <i>were being lit</i> along the streets as they set out.] |
| TI | generic agent <i>ti</i> ('you') | Skorajda je izginil, ko <i>si</i> ga <i>pogledal</i> s strani. [It seemed almost to vanish when seen edge-on.] |

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we present and discuss the most important results of the corpus analysis.

4.1 Translating the passive with passive constructions

The analysis of the English and Swedish parts of the corpus showed that roughly 75% of English passive constructions in both fiction and non-fiction were translated into Swedish with Swedish passive constructions. As for Slovene, the results were somewhat similar (63.1%) in non-fiction. In fiction, however, the passive translation equivalents are significantly less common, with only 22.3% of the English passive examples translated with Slovene passive constructions.

Table 9: Percentages of passive constructions in translation equivalents.

| Passive construction | Slovene | | Swedish | |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------------|
| | Pogodba iz Nice | Igra prestolov | Nicefördraget | Kampen om järntronen |
| Passive – YES | 63.1% | 22.3% | 74.5% | 75.2% |
| Passive – NO | 36.9% | 77.7% | 25.5% | 24.8% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

The results confirm the similarity between English and Swedish in terms of the frequency and use of the passive voice. In Slovene, the passive is much more common in non-fiction (legal texts), in which the passive voice more commonly involves demoting the agent to contribute to a generic, impersonal writing style. In fiction, the passive (especially agented) in English and Swedish is used for cohesion and sentence-level information distribution. Slovene, with its flexible word order, can achieve the same effect by using active forms, which are regarded as stylistically more elegant and syntactically simpler. See for instance [36]–[38] below, in which Swedish and English employ the passive voice to position the agent in the sentence-final position, whereas in Slovene, the same effect is achieved through the active voice:

[36] Dragonbone bows **are** greatly **prized** by the Dothraki, [...] (passive)

[37] Loke iz zmajevine še posebej častijo Dothraki, [...] (active)

[38] Pilbågar av drakben **skattas** högt av dothrakierna, [...] (passive)

4.2 Predominant types of passive

In Swedish, the morphological passive is the predominant passive construction in both fiction (55.4%) and non-fiction (97.3%). The periphrastic passive is almost completely absent in non-fiction, whereas in fiction, both the *bli*- and *vara*-passives are used to a considerably large extent (19.4% and 24.4%, respectively). There are several factors that contribute to this distribution. First, the *bli*-passive tends to occur with animate subjects, which are more common in fiction. Second, the *vara*-passive can only denote states, which are again more characteristic of fiction. Third, the morphological passive is the only possible option when denoting generic rule-like statements, a trait common in legal texts that form our non-fiction corpus.

In Slovene, the percentages of both passive constructions are almost equal in non-fiction (46.6% of participle passive and 53.4% of reflexive passive), whereas in fiction, the participle passive is the predominant form (78.7%). As is the case with the Swedish corpus, the differences between Slovene fiction and non-fiction corpora can be attributed to the greater number of statal passives in fiction, as well as the reflexive passive's tendency not to occur with first and second person verb forms, which are more common in fiction. In addition, generic rules in the Slovene present tense are commonly expressed through the reflexive passive, as a participle passive construction in the present tense denotes a state.

It is also interesting to note that the English *get*-passive only occurs in two examples in fiction, while no such examples were recorded in the non-fiction corpus. This is in line with the tendency of the *get*-passive to appear in conversational contexts. It can thus be surmised that register also contributes to the sparsity of the *get*-passive in the analysed texts.

4.3 Translation of the agented passive

The English agented passive (or long passive) is generally translated into Swedish using the Swedish agented passive (78.6% in fiction and 65.7% in non-fiction), while the corresponding Slovene equivalents are predominantly non-passive (74.7% in non-fiction and 92.9% in fiction), most commonly active.

The similarity between the English and Swedish agent adverbials is apparent – in both languages, agented passives often serve to emphasise the importance of the agent in accordance with the topic-information sentence distribution. In Slovene, this same distribution can be achieved without the use of the passive voice, as the flexible word order allows the agent to take the sentence-final position with no syntactic changes.

4.4 The role of subject animacy

In terms of subject animacy, the results of the non-fiction part were similar in all three languages: roughly 86% of the subjects were inanimate, with animate subjects taking up approximately 12%. The rest were either impersonal passives or passives with dummy subjects. In fiction, the difference between Slovene and the other two languages is much more notable. The ratio of animate and inanimate subjects in English and Swedish was roughly 50:50, while the results of the Slovene part show that

the Slovene passive occurs more often with inanimate subjects (approximately 70%). This is further confirmed by the analysis of the verbs used in the examples included in the corpus. It appears that in all three languages, the passive occurs more often with verbs that tend to take inanimate objects (e.g. *delete*, *establish*, *structure*, *express*, *allocate* in English; *izrezljati* (to carve out), *načrtovati* (to plan), *skovati* (to forge) in Slovene; *kasta* (to throw), *dölja* (to hide), *polera* (to polish) in Swedish). In non-fiction, the percentages of verbs with predominantly inanimate objects were the following: 82.8% in English, 85.4% in Swedish, and 89.2% in Slovene. In fiction, the results were the following: 60% in English, 65.4% in Swedish, and 86.1% in Slovene.

5 CONCLUSION

The assumption that English passive constructions are generally translated using the passive voice in Swedish has turned out to be true, with roughly 75% of English examples translated into Swedish with passive constructions, both in fiction and non-fiction. In Slovene, the passive is much more common in non-fiction (63%).

Similarly, the agented passive construction in English were much more commonly translated into Swedish using similar agented passive constructions, both in fiction and non-fiction. Slovene translations, on the other hand, demonstrated a tendency to use the active form instead.

The *bli*-passive was absent in non-fiction and more common in fiction (roughly 20% of the examples), which can be attributed to a greater percentage of animate subjects in fiction as well as other factors, such as the distribution of telic/atelic actions in fiction, the emphasis on the initial phase of a state newly achieved by the subject, and stylistic preferences.

An interesting finding concerns the verbs used in passive constructions. The analysis has shown that in all three languages in non-fiction, the passive voice was used with verbs more commonly associated with animate objects. In fiction, however, there was a marked difference in the Slovene examples. While English and Swedish passive constructions were used with verbs associated with both animate and inanimate objects in a quite balanced ratio, the Slovene translations demonstrated a tendency to use the passive voice with verbs more commonly associated with inanimate objects. This finding warrants further research.

In this paper, we strove to provide a thorough analysis of the use of the passive voice in English, Slovene and Swedish, both in fiction and non-fiction. As the

collected examples were limited both in terms of quantity and genre, the results of the analysis can hardly be generalised to fiction and non-fiction or novels and legal texts, but they provide some insight into the tendencies of different passive constructions as well as the factors that contribute to their use.

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