Perspectives on demotion*

Introduction to the volume

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1.   Background

The passive has constituted a core area of research in modern linguistics at least since the introduction of transformational grammar. Though there is little controversy of what constitutes the relevant data, several quite different perspectives on passive constructions have been developed. Whereas formal syntacticians and semanticists have focused on the contrast in argument structure and its realisation with regard to the active-passive diathesis, functionalist approaches have mostly dealt with discourse participant prominence and other distinctions related to what one might term information structure. There has also been an increasing interest in more typologically diverse data which has led to research in other voice-related phenomena such as medial constructions and antipassives. These phenomena, too, have prompted a wealth of various analyses.

In this volume, we aim to bring together different perspectives on voice, centering around the notion of *agent demotion*. The articles are all based on talks from the workshop "Demoting the Agent: Passive and Other Voice-Related Phenomena" (Solstad et al. 2004), which was held in November 2004 at the University of Oslo. Some of the papers address these issues from formal perspectives and some adopt a functional view. They deal with a wide range of data, such as passives, middles, reflexives, impersonals and anti-causatives, from a variety of languages.

In this introductory article, we do not attempt to provide a state-of-the-art overview neither of voice research in general, nor of any of the subdomains which are often subsumed under that term, such as passives, middles etc. Neither do we provide abstracts of the articles included in this volume, although we refer to the

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articles where we touch on similar topics. Abstracts are instead included with the papers. What we aim to do is to briefly introduce the topic of agent demotion as such, by highlighting some of its important aspects and present some of the relevant concepts and terminology. Since these have been used in quite diverse ways in the literature, including this volume, it will be of some importance to outline the dimensions along which they are understood. Of course, the views presented here are our own, and we make no claims that they are reflected in all the papers.

In Sections 2–4, which are mainly introductory, we relate voice phenomena to more general mechanisms of reduced transitivity. Section 2 introduces some central aspects of transitivity and argument structure; Section 3 gives a brief descriptive overview of how these may be realised within a language, in this case, Swedish; and Section 4 addresses the issue of terminology, focusing on the core notions of *agent* and *demotion*. In Sections 5–6, we focus on the passive, first from the viewpoint of information structure (Section 5), and then from a semantic perspective (Section 6). In Section 7, finally, we bring them together and argue in favor of taking both perspectives into account.

2.   Between active and passive: Reduced transitivity

As has become increasingly evident the last few decades, agent demotion and voice concern more than just passivisation. Phenomena that do not quite qualify as either (prototypical) active or passive, including e.g. reflexive- and middle constructions, may be viewed as situated somewhere in between. This domain is sometimes referred to as the middle voice (cf. e.g. Kemmer 1993). However, the notions related to this domain are usually discussed more in relation to event semantics than in terms of voice. A key concept in this regard is transitivity, in the broad sense of e.g. Hopper & Thompson (1980).

In addition to the traditional criterion of involving more than one participant, transitivity in this sense also involves factors like action, telicity, volitionality, and affectedness. Such factors, in turn, serve to distinguish other grammatical categories within the general area between active and passive. In this context, also note the close relation between transitivity and voice: Prototypical active sentences are transitive and vice versa, and transitivity is often considered a prerequisite for the active-passive diathesis.

Thus, compared to a prototypical active transitive sentence, where an animate agent in control of the situation volitionally performs a specific action on an affected patient, there are several ways in which a sentence could be less transitive without actually being passive. In some cases, this is simply a matter of different argument structures for different verbs. In others, various grammatical devices are employed to mark structures that exhibit low transitivity. In the following, we will give a brief overview of some central notions and typical constructions.

Starting with constructions that are intransitive in the traditional sense, i.e. objectless, it is common to distinguish between so-called unergative (1a) and unaccusative (1b) verbs/sentences:[1]

(1)   a.   Sandy is swimming.
       b.   Chris is drowning.

The crucial difference between the verbs in (1a) and (1b) is that unergatives have agentive (or *actor/causer*) subjects, whereas the subject of unaccusatives is typically a patient (or *undergoer*). Thus, with respect to the active-passive dimension, unergatives are more active-like and unaccusatives are more passive-like. Note, for instance, the so-called unaccusative alternation in (2), which resembles passivisation (3) in that the patient argument is promoted to subject. A crucial difference, however, is that the passive implies an agent, or at least a causer, whereas the unaccusative is not inherently causative in this sense (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995; Chierchia 2004; but see also Kallulli, this volume).

(2)   a.   Kim broke the window.
       b.   The window broke.

(3)   The window was broken (by Kim).

The unaccusative alternation in (2) visibly concerns only argument structure, whereas many other detransitivising operations typically involve some kind of morphological marker.[2] For instance, Albanian anti-causatives involve non-active morphology, which seems to be a cross-linguistically common way to indicate reduced transitivity, at least among Indo-European languages (Kallulli, this vol-

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1. The rationale behind this terminology, stemming from Perlmutter (1978), is indirectly based on the well-known differencies between ergative-absolutive and nominative-accusative case systems. Very roughly, one might say that unergatives have agent arguments without ergative marking, and unaccusatives have patient arguments without accusative marking. Note, however, that there is also a tradition where the term *ergative* is used instead of *unaccusative* (e.g. Burzio 1986; Pitz, this volume). For an overview of the development of these notions and terms, see Kuno & Takami (2004: Chapter 1).

2. As an example of the opposite, i.e. morphological marking of a more transitive variant, consider lexical pairs such as *sjunka* ('sink-NON-CAUSATIVE') and *sänka* ('sink-CAUSATIVE') in Swedish, where a normally non-causative verb is rendered causative through a vowel shift.

(i)   *Skeppet sjönk.*
       'The ship sunk'

(ii)   *Ubåten/läckan sänkte skeppet.*
       'The submarine/leak sunk the ship'

ume). Another common element in detransitivising constructions are reflexive morphemes. Both types are often multi-functional, being used in several different constructions. This is illustrated in the following section by a brief overview of some uses of passive- and reflexive morphemes in Swedish. For a comparison between some reflexive- and passive constructions in Czech and Russian, see Fried (this volume).

3.   *S*-verbs and reflexives in Swedish

Passive in Swedish is expressed either periphrastically, with the copula verb *bli* ('become'), or morphologically, with an *s*-suffix (see Engdahl, this volume). It is this *s*-suffix which concerns us here, since it also has a number of other uses, some of which are fairly close to the passive and others further away from it. These functions exhibit a considerable overlap with those of the reflexive pronoun *sig*. Since the *s*-passive developed historically from the reflexive, such an overlap is only to be expected.

To begin with the more passive-like uses, both the *s*-form and the reflexive are used in a number of constructions that may be called medial.[3] These have been characterised in the literature as having a patient or patient-like subject, but – unlike passives – no perceived agent (Teleman et al. 1999: Vol. 1: 197 & Vol. 2: 556).[4] They differ from unaccusatives in that they require morphological marking – in Swedish either the *s*-suffix or a reflexive, as illustrated in (4):[5]

(4)   (Grundprincipen är [...] ett enkelt och inledande penseldrag)
        'The basic principle is [...] one simple commencing stroke of the brush'

This type of alternation is no longer productive in Swedish, but has been lexicalised for a number of verbs. The morphologically marked form is the causative, which also derives historically from the non-causative variant.

3. An alternative term would be *middle*. That term, however, is usually associated with a specific kind of medial construction, which is treated extensively by Lekakou (this volume) and Stroik (this volume). An English example is given in (i):

(i)   *This bread cuts easily.*

4. This does not quite hold for medial constructions such as middles (Lekakou, this volume; Stroik, this volume) and virtual reflexives (Stephens, this volume), which arguably include agents. What the criterion really amounts to is the possibility of an agentive adjunct, such as a *by*-phrase (*av*-phrase in Swedish), which is a typical test for passives (see e.g. Maling, this volume).

5. In the following examples, reflexive morphemes will be glossed SIG, which is the unmarked form for the reflexive in Swedish.

a.   *som   sedan ska   förgrenas i   det oändliga.*
      which then   shall ramify-s   in the infinite
b.   *som   sedan ska   förgrena sig i   det oändliga.*
      which then   shall ramify   SIG in the infinite
      'which then ramifies / is ramified infinitely.'

Swedish also allows so-called impersonal passives, as in (5). Another kind of impersonal use of *s*-forms and reflexives is exemplified in (6), and regular transitive and passive uses of the same verb *vattna* ('water') are shown in (7):

(5)   *Det   snackas mycket.*
       EXPLETIVE talk-s   much
       'There's a lot of talk.'

(6)   a.   *Det vattnas i   munnen.*
             EXPL water-s in the.mouth
       b.   *Det vattnar sig i   munnen.*
             EXPL water   SIG in the.mouth
             'My mouth waters.' / 'It makes my mouth water.'

(7)   a.   *Jag vattnade blommorna igår.*
             I   watered   the.flowers yesterday
             'I watered the flowers yesterday.'
       b.   *Blommorna vattnades igår.*
             the.flowers watered-s yesterday
             'The flowers got watered yesterday.'

The medial constructions in (4) and (6) can be viewed as a blend between passives and unaccusatives, and may correspond to either, depending on the context. It should be emphasized that the distributional overlap between reflexives and *s*-verbs in Swedish medials is only partial. Their interpretations are sometimes basically synonymous, sometimes quite distinct, to some extent lexically determined by the verb.

A medial construction exclusive to reflexives is the so-called virtual reflexive (for a treatment of the corresponding construction in English, see Stephens, this volume). Unlike most other reflexives in Swedish, this construction requires the pronoun *själv* ('self'), which also has to be stressed.

(8)   *Det var en sådan pjäs som skrev sig själv, som en blixt bara, över*
       It   was a   such   play that wrote SIG self, like a   flash only, over
       en vår.
       a   spring
       'It was the kind of play that wrote itself, just like a flash, over spring.'

Turning to more active uses, both reflexives and *s*-forms may indicate reciprocity, as in (9) below. There are also quite a few lexicalised reflexive verbs and *s*-verbs,

such as *förhasta sig* ('be hasty'), *bestämma sig* ('decide'), *finnas* ('exist', literally 'find-s') and *hoppas* ('hope').

(9) a. *Parterna   har   svårt   att enas   i   frågan.*
         the.parties have difficult to unite-s in the.issue
     b. *Parterna   har   svårt   att ena sig i   frågan.*
         the.parties have difficult to unite SIG in the.issue
         'It is hard for the parties to agree on this issue.'

In addition, reflexives and *s*-forms both appear in several more or less object-suppressing constructions, although they exhibit less co-variance among these than among the medial constructions. For instance, *s*-forms are often used with a so-called absolute function (cf. Teleman et al. 1999: Vol. II, pp. 555f.):

(10) *Kalle retas.*
      Kalle tease-s
      a. 'Kalle is teasing someone/me.'
      b. 'Kalle is a tease.'

Characteristic of this absolute construction is object suppression. Whereas the corresponding verb without *-s* requires an object (*reta någon* – 'tease someone'), the *s*-form is intransitive in this respect. Also note that this construction can either refer to specific events (10a) or receive a dispositional reading (10b).

As for reflexive elements, those that correspond to arguments (typically a patient or a benefactor argument coreferent with the subject) are of course more transitive than non-argument reflexives.[6] Both are very common in Swedish, both in the sense that they are employed in many different constructions and in the sense that several constructions are considerably more productive with reflexives than with full NP arguments, or even other pronouns, for instance the resultative constructions in (11):

(11) a. *Han försökte köpa sig / henne / marken fri.*
         he   tried   buy SIG / her / the.land free
         'He tried to buy himself/her/the land free.'
      b. *Han ölade sig / ??henne / ??kvällen odödlig.*   (cf. Jansson 2006)
         he   aled SIG / her   / the.night immortal
         'He drunk himself immortal on ale.' (NOT ??her or ??the night)

There is also a number of exclusively reflexive constructions, such as the Swedish correspondent to the English *way*-construction (cf. Goldberg 1995), illustrated in (12):

(12) *Han grävde sig ut.*
      He dug   SIG out
      'He dug his way out.'

A semi-productive construction bordering between argument and non-argument reflexives is illustrated in (13), where the reflexive obscures the reference of the object without eliminating it (cf. the notion of deobjectification, e.g. Fried, this volume). However, we will not explore the wealth of agentive reflexive constructions in Swedish further, since they do not involve agent demotion.

(13) *Han hade svårt   att uttrycka sig / vad han kände.*
      He had difficult to express SIG / what he felt
      'He had a hard time expressing himself / how he felt.'

Swedish also employs a version of the much discussed middle construction, although perhaps restricted to just one verb: *sälja* ('sell'), illustrated in (14). However, most instances lack the generic or dispositional property typical of middles (cf. Lekakou, this volume; Stroik, this volume), and might therefore be more accurately characterised as unaccusatives.[7]

(14) *Sådana böcker säljer bra.*
      'Such books sell well'

On the other hand, there seems to be different kinds of middles. Although middles in English lack morphological marking, German middles require a reflexive and some Romance languages employ imperfective morphology. Also, Greek middles differ from the Germanic middles in allowing agentive adjuncts (Lekakou, this volume).

Finally, it should be mentioned that the *s*-passive also has acquired other uses, such as the modal passive in (15) (see also Engdahl, this volume). For an analysis of modal passives in Italoromance, see Remberger (this volume). In Icelandic, there even seems to be a passive construction on its way to develop into an active one (Maling, this volume).

(15) *Mjölken förvaras i   högst   +8°C.*
      the.milk keep-s in at.most +8°C
      'The milk should not be kept warmer than +8°C.'

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7. Whether such cases fit within the (somewhat wider) notion of middle voice, whose main characteristic has been claimed to be subject affectedness (cf. Kemmer 1993; Lyons 1968: 373) is of course a different issue (are the books in (14) 'affected' in the relevant sense?) which will not be explored here.

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6. Note, however, that even argument reflexives may be viewed as less transitive than ordinary object constructions, since subject and object are referentially non-distinct.

4. A note on terminology: What does *agent demotion* mean?

The constructions in the former section are all less transitive than typical active sentences. Whether they are also cases of agent demotion, however, is quite another matter. For instance, the absolute construction in (10) and the reflexives in (11)–(13) are not, since they all have agentive subjects. The reduction in transitivity applies to the patient (or, in the dispositional reading, to the action as such) – not to the agent. As for the passive and medial constructions, the issue is a matter of definition. It all depends on one's notion of both demotion and agentivity.

Starting with *demotion*, this term may apply to several different levels. In Relational Grammar, demotion applies to a hierarchy of grammatical functions (as the opposite of advancement). Thus, passives involve agent demotion, since the agent is demoted from subject to (optional) oblique (cf. e.g. Perlmutter & Postal 1983).[8] Non-agentive constructions, however, do not. Unaccusatives and the medial constructions in (4) and (6) simply have no agent arguments to demote.

On the other hand, reduction from presence to absence may also be called demotion, with respect to semantics as well as surface realisation. On this view, the unaccusative alternation illustrated in (2) involves agent demotion on a semantic level, through a shift from agentive to non-agentive. This form of demotion does not apply to passives, where the agent in general is not eliminated semantically (this will be modified somewhat in Section 6). Concerning surface representation, rendering the agent implicit may also be seen as a form of demotion.

Kaiser & Vihman (this volume) effectively treat demotion as absence, in the sense of being available for various linguistic operations. They apply several tests to determine whether implicit arguments in some Finnic constructions are demoted on the semantic, syntactic, or discourse level.

The next question concerns what is actually demoted (in whatever sense). An Agent may be roughly defined as an animate entity that intentionally performs an action. However, not all demoted arguments are Agents in this sense. In passives, for instance, the argument demoted from subject to (optional) oblique may be a Cause (or an Instrument) as well as an Agent (cf. e.g. Marantz 1984; Williams 1981). The crucial difference is that a Cause, which may be animate or inanimate,

does not involve intentionality – at least not with respect to the event at hand (Kallulli, this volume).

(16)   The car was destroyed $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{by my neighbour} \\ \text{by a stone} \end{Bmatrix}$

In example (16) *my neighbour* may be either an Agent or a Cause and *a stone* may be either an Instrument or a Cause, depending on whether the destruction is intentional or not.

What complicates matters is that the term *agent* is sometimes used in a broader sense, which subsumes both Agent and Cause. This is especially common when the term does not refer to the semantic role as such but to the argument fulfilling that role: Causes are more commonly included (implicitly) in utterances like "In passive constructions, the agent is demoted to an optional *by*-phrase" than in "This verb requires its subject to be an agent". To complicate things further, these notions (or very similar notions) are also referred to by other terms, like Actor, Agency, or Causer, and all of these terms are used somewhat differently by different authors. As a superordinate term which subsumes Agent, Cause and, where relevant, Instrument, Dowty (1991) introduced the notion of *proto-agent*.

From a semantic perspective, the distinction between Agent and Cause may be viewed as roughly corresponding to the distinction between individuals (or entities) and events. An Agent is an individual that performs an action, whereas a Cause is an event that brings about another event (or, rather, a *relation* between events).[9] This view will be explored further in Section 6.

In the following sections, we will turn to the passive, as viewed from an information structural perspective in Section 5 and from a semantic perspective in Section 6. Finally, we will try to bring these two together in Section 7.

5. Passive and information structure

A common view on passive and in many cases on voice, most prominently in functional accounts, is to relate it to information structure. Especially in languages with a relatively fixed word order, the passive allows – compared to the active – a different linearisation of the arguments of a predicate. Therefore, in terms of information structure, demoting the agent and promoting the patient has been seen as two faces of the same phenomenon. Put differently: From this perspective, the passive is a means of relating the information of a sentence to its context in a dif-

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8. In impersonal passives, the demotion goes further in some languages, where the agent cannot even appear in an agent phrase, as in English *by*-phrases or Swedish *av*-phrases, although it is semantically present and may appear in a circumstantial adverbial. In other languages, like Dutch, German and Norwegian, however, agent phrases may occur in impersonal passives. A more moderate demotion occurs in presentational constructions, where the subject is demoted to object *position* (with an expletive in the subject position) but retains its subject *function* (see Engdahl, this volume).

9. Note that this is the case even when the causer is animate (as in *Chris (accidentally) squished the toad*), since the Cause from the semantic perspective is not the animate entity as such, but some causing *action* performed by that entity.

ferent way than a corresponding active sentence. A quotation from Judith Aissen (Aissen 1999:687) sums up this view:

> There is general agreement in the functional syntax literature that the choice between active and passive in English is primarily determined by the relative prominence of agent and patient. Crudely put: The passive is used if the patient is more prominent than the agent; the active is used if either the agent is more prominent than the patient, or if neither has greater prominence.

We will not explore the notion of prominence here, but merely conclude that agent demotion and patient promotion, from the information structural point of view, are processes which take place because of the demands of context.[10] Demotion and promotion are first and foremost determined by linearisation and discourse processing. If a discourse referent was introduced in the preceding context, is to be kept in the center of attention, it might be preferable to refer to this referent in a syntactic topicalisation position, often influenced also by factors such as definiteness, animacy, person etc. (cf. e.g. Aissen 1999). This places the passive in a paradigm with other mechanisms of information partitioning such as clefting, inversion, syntactic topicalisation and intonational focusing. See Filtchenko (this volume) and Pitz (this volume) for a discussion of some of the parallels and differences here.

The following examples are intended to illustrate how the passive interacts with various mechanisms of information partitioning as mentioned above. In (17), from a Norwegian original text, the passive has to be chosen in order to make the sequence of sentences coherent (the relevant parts are italicised in the original and its corresponding translation):

(17)   Foran den svartsvidde branntomten var to kvinner avbildet [...]. Billedteksten lød: Kontordame Elise Blom og sekretær Alvhilde Pedersen, som begge kom uskadete fra ulykken, foran den nedbrente fabrikkbygningen på Fjøsangerveien. – *Fotografiet ble ledsaget av intervjuer*, blant annet med de to på bildet, der alle var enige om at eksplosjonen kom fullstendig uventet og "som et sjokk", ifølge frøken Pedersen.
'Two women were photographed standing in front of the blackened site of the fire [...]. The caption read: "Office clerk Elise Blom and secretary Alvhilde Pedersen, who both escaped from the fire without injury, in front of the burned-down factory building on Fjøsangerveien." *The photograph was accompanied by interviews* with, among others, the two women in the photo-

graph; all those interviewed confirmed unanimously that the explosion had been completely unexpected and a shock, according to Miss Pedersen.'

a.   Alternatively: [...] [??]Interviews accompanied the photograph ...

Here, an active sentence as indicated in (17a) simply would not constitute a coherent continuation for the definite topic *fotografiet* ('the photograph').[11]

This is the kind of passivisation addressed by the generalisation in the above quote from Aissen. However, other means of information structuring may lead the demoted agent to be more prominent than the topicalised promoted patient. The German example in (18a) shows a case where the demoted agent is made prominent through intonational focusing (marked by small capitals):

(18)   a.   *Von seinem* BRU*der wurde Abel ermordet, und nicht von seinem*
By his   brother was   Abel murdered and not   by his
Vater.
father.
'Abel was murdered by his BROther, not by his father.'
b.   **Sein Bruder   ermordete Abel, nicht sein Vater*.
His brother.NOM murdered Abel, not   his father.
Intended: 'Abel was murdered by his brother.'

In a context where the agent phrase including a possessive pronoun in determiner position is to be topicalised, the alternative in (18b) is excluded where (18a) may naturally occur, because there can be no correct binding for the possessive pronoun *sein* ('his') in (18b).

There are also examples where the prominence differentiation as defined above does not apply. One such case is the passivisation of one-place predicates like German *tanzen* ('dance'), where there is no difference in relative prominence between an agent and a patient:

(19)   a.   *Es wurde die ganze Nacht getanzt.*
It was   the whole night danced.
'There was dancing going on all night.'

As discussed by e.g. Engdahl (this volume), it is reasonable to assume that for verbs like *dance*, the agent is less prominent in a passive sentence when not overtly expressed than in a corresponding active sentence, where it has to occur. Thus, the notion of prominence would also be relevant when comparing different realisations of one and the same participant and not only in competition with other participants. In such cases, the passive can be said to have the effect of focusing on the event in question.

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10. The direction of causality has been the matter of some dispute, though, i.e. whether agent demotion is the consequence of patient promotion or vice versa, cf. Comrie (1977) and Blevins (2003).

11. Though the noun *photograph* does not occur in the preceding context, it can be seen as a topic due to a bridging effect (Clark 1977; Asher & Lascarides 1998).

In terms of demotion, the Agent will still be present in such cases, although not in focus of the event description provided by the passive. In the next section, we will broaden the perspective on how demotion relates to the semantics of the predicate in question.

6.   On the semantics of voice

Traditionally, much of both functional and formal linguistic approaches have viewed passives and actives as semantically equal. In formal analyses, it is usually assumed that actives and passives do not differ in their truth conditions (Kratzer 1996), whereas in the functional literature, the absence or presence of an agent has been interpreted in pragmatic terms. Thus, Givón (1990: 567–569) gives a list of circumstances under which an agent is often omitted. The agent might for example be unknown (20a), anaphorically predictable (20b), stereotypical (20c), or predictable as the author of the text (20d):

(20) a. He was shot dead in the big rally.
      b. The children ran into the room, and soon all the toys were being played with.
      c. The airplane was landed safely.
      d. It was shown in Chapter 4 that the semantics of CAUSE …

See Kaiser & Vihman (this volume) for a discussion of how the implicitness of an agent may have different consequences for its discourse referent status.

Since the importance or activation status of an agent does not affect the truth conditions of a sentence, the lack of an agent as in the above sentences would be seen as a pragmatic phenomenon within a formal approach as well. Though no agent is mentioned, there is a sense in which it is interpreted as necessarily present at some level in all the sentences (20a–d).

Some of the standard arguments for such a view, mainly stemming from the formal literature, rely on facts found with binding phenomena and purpose clauses. Concerning binding, it can be noted that even though passives allow us not to mention agents explicitly, an example like the following can be seen as evidence that they are present anyway (Frey 1993: 158):

(21) a. *Und da   wurde einander   nicht nur zugeprostet.*
          And there was   RECIPROCAL not only toasted
          'And they didn't only toast at each other.'

Although the agent is not present on the surface in (21a), the reciprocal element *einander* ('each other') demands an antecedent for its meaningful interpretation, and thus an agent has to be assumed to be implicitly present.

Another such test commonly cited in the literature involves combination with purpose clauses (see Kaiser & Vihman, this volume; Kallulli, this volume), which is meant to show that actives and passives (22a-b) differ from unaccusatives (22c) concerning the availability of an agent:

(22) a. They$_j$ sank the ship, to PRO$_j$ collect the insurance money.
      b. The ship$_i$ was sunk (by them$_j$), to PRO$_j$ collect the insurance money.
      c. *The ship sank, to PRO$_?$ collect the insurance money.

In (22b), PRO in the purpose clause is obligatorily coreferent with the agent of the passive matrix verb, even when the agent is implicit.[12] It is clear that whenever a purpose clause occurs in an acceptable sentence, there has to be an agent controlling the eventuality described in the purpose clause. We cannot discuss these data in any detail here, but merely want to point to evidence which indicates that the purpose clause examples cannot always be applied straightforwardly to show that a matrix clause includes an agent of its own, since the origin of the agent can not always be assumed to be the matrix clause, cf. (23):

(23) *Dieses Auto hat den niedrigsten Luftwiderstandsbeiwert in seiner Klasse.*
      This car has the lowest   wind resistance   of its   class.
      Windschutzscheibe und Rückfenster sind stark   geneigt. Das Heck
      Wind shield   and rear window are strongly sloped. The rear end
      hingegen ist hoch, um die Aerodynamik weiter zu verstärken.
      however is high, for the aerodynamics further to strengthen.
      'This car has the lowest wind resistance of its class. The wind shield and the rear window have a considerable angle of slope. The rear end, however, is high, in order to add further to the aerodynamics.'

For a stative predicate such as (*be) high*, it is not very plausible to assume the existence of an (implicit) agent. Still, as mentioned, the acceptability of (23) demands that there is an agent in a control relation with (the PRO of) the purpose clause. The state described in the matrix clause is interpreted as the resultant state of some causing event including an agent. In the case of (23), it can be argued that the purpose clause itself is the most plausible candidate for introducing an agent in the matrix clause. From a semantic viewpoint, a possible analysis for the introduction of an agent in examples such as (23) is to assume some mechanism of accommodation (Sæbø 1991: 931), whereby the presence of a purpose clause with a stative predicate such as in (23) leads to a context modification involving

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12. As for the syntactic representation of implicit agents in passives, we do not propose an analysis in this introduction. See Sternefeld (1995) for an analysis where it is represented as a (little) *pro*, whereas Remberger (this volume) assumes it to be a (big) PRO. A more neutral approach is pursued in Lyngfelt (2002).

the interpretation of an implict agent having intentionally brought about the state in question.[13]

Still, the view that passives always include an agent is in general relatively unproblematic, as long as one disregards the distinction between Agent and Cause. However, this distinction is highly relevant for several aspects of the passive, both theoretical and distributional.

Passives where the demoted element is a Cause rather than an Agent may be termed *event-type passives* (Solstad forthcoming; Sæbø & Solstad 2005). Such passives may lack an Agent altogether. The following examples involving causative predicates illustrate this:

(24) a. Before he could grab his parachute, the plane exploded and he was thrown into the air.
　　 b. As the silk began to stream out, he was flung into the top branches of an oak tree.
　　 c. The car was destroyed (by the blast).

In (24), no agent can be made out as immediately responsible for the caused events. In (24a–b) it is even difficult to name the exact event responsible for the caused events, which might be a motivation for choosing the passive in such a context. Of course, if it is possible to single out such an event and refer to it by a noun phrase, it can be included, as in (24c).

The following point can be made concerning the distinction between Agent and Cause as described in Section 4 and its relation to event-type passives. If a *by*-phrase in combination with causative predicates would be possible in English, but is left out, it is not always possible to predict whether the implicit element should be seen as an Agent or a Cause. Thus there is no straightforward semantic correspondence to the syntactic level, where the various kinds of individuals and events being able to occur both as subjects in actives and in the *by*-phrase in passives behave similarly. This has to do with the fact that the notion of Agent involves an individual, whereas a Cause may include both individuals and events.[14] As an illustration of the difficulties which the event-type passive constitutes for syntactic and semantic theories of voice, consider the following (neo-Davidsonian) representation for the semantics of AGENT assumed by Kratzer (1996) to be the same for passives and actives:

(25) $\lambda x \lambda e. \text{AGENT}(x)(e)$

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13. More accurately, the stative predicate is coerced into a resultant state, whereas the agent is accommodated. We cannot go into a discussion of the formal basis and ordering of these processes here.

14. Note the difference to the formal-semantic CAUSE, which is assumed to be a relation between events or propositions (cf. Dowty 1979).

If one allows the AGENT element to be as broadly defined as including the individuals and objects in the scope of Dowty's (1991) proto-agent, this can be applied in an analysis of examples where the individual is either an Agent, a Cause or an Instrument as described in Section 4. However, the representation in (25) cannot be applied in the case of event-type passives. The reason for this is that the representation in (25) takes entities (including individuals and objects) as arguments (represented by the variable x), whereas the argument in the event-type passives such as in (24) is an event.

Importantly, the class of event-type passives is only found with causative predicates. It is, of course, possible to find passives of *destroy* with an individual as agent. What is important regarding the above discussion is that it is also possible for *destroy* to be interpreted as not having an agent at all. The reason for these two possibilities being available to causatives is that a causative expresses a relation between *events*, and that certain events may be construed as not having an agent.

In relation to this, it can be observed that causative predicates can be divided into (at least) three classes (Solstad forthcoming), inherently agentive (26), non-agentive (27) and agentivity-neutral (28):

(26) The enemy was executed $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{by the soldiers} \\ \text{*by a torpedo} \\ \text{*by the lightning} \end{array} \right\}$

(27) The case was washed ashore $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{*by the soldiers} \\ \text{*by a torpedo} \\ \text{by the undercurrents} \end{array} \right\}$

(28) The ship was destroyed $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{by the soldiers} \\ \text{by a torpedo} \\ \text{by the undercurrents} \end{array} \right\}$

Inherently agentive predicates like *execute* (26) can only be interpreted as including an intentionally acting agent. This lies in the nature of the event of executing. Such predicates thus never allow a reading where some non-controlled event causes the death of the patient. On the other hand, a non-agentive predicate like *wash ashore* (a directional) as in (27), can never be intepreted as including an agent. Only natural forces, which are seen as events here, can occur as active subjects and in the passive *by*-phrase, specifying the CAUSE relation of the predicate. Only event-type passives are allowed with these predicates. In the third, agentivity-neutral class, illustrated in (28), the predicates may vary: they may include intentionally or unintentionally acting agents, and they may occur in event-type passives.

The differentiation outlined above between event-type and non-event-type passives can be illustrated by means of German data (Solstad forthcoming). One of the main functions of the German preposition *durch* ('by'/'by means of') is to mark its complement as the causing event in a causal relation. *Durch* may also be

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used as an equivalent to the passive *by*-phrase in English, with a limited distribution, *von* being the unmarked agent phrase preposition in German. Importantly, the complement noun phrase of *durch* always receives an event interpretation:

(29) a. *Er zerstörte das Auto durch einen Sprengkörper.*
          He destroyed the car   through INDEF explosive body.
          'He destroyed the car by means of an explosive body.'
      b. *Das Auto wurde von ihm durch einen Sprengkörper zerstört.*
          The car   was   by him through INDEF explosive body destroyed.
          'The car was destroyed by him by means of an explosive body.'
      c. *Das Auto wurde durch einen Sprengkörper zerstört.*
          The car   was   through INDEF explosive body destroyed.

          'The car was destroyed $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{by} \\ \text{by means of} \end{Bmatrix}$ an explosive body.'

In (29c), it can be observed that *durch* allows an interpretational variance, which is not available in the active sentence (29a) or the passive one including an agent (29b). The differentiation in the translation as being either *by* or *by means* of is intended to reflect the double nature of the *durch*-phrase, *by means of* presuming intentionality, and *by* allowing lack of intentionality.[15] Example (29c) has a possible interpretation where no agent is involved, where the event of an explosion alone causes the destruction. In (29c), an Agent *can* be interpreted as being present, but what is important here is that it does not have to. If we demand that an agent (of the entity type) always has to be present implicitly, this behaviour cannot be explained.

7. Semantics and pragmatics

It was noted in Section 5 that the information structural or pragmatic aspect of the passive sets it in a context where it interacts with other mechanisms of discourse prominence, such as phonological stress, clefting, topicalisation etc. In example (18), the interplay of voice and intonational focus was illustrated.

From a semantic perspective, however, the passive competes with reflexives and other constructions where no agent is expressed obligatorily, such as anticausatives. Anticausatives are predicates which are often thought to be derived from causative ones (cf. e.g. Wunderlich 1997:54ff.), where the anticausative expresses a change of state without a causing event. In many Indo-European languages, they have reflexive morphology, cf. (31a) vs. (31b). These have not been

studied extensively from an information structure perspective, but have rather been seen as agent demotion constructions from a more semantic viewpoint, where genericity and the aforementioned lack of intentionality (as with the impossibility of combining the anticausative variant of *sink* with a purpose sentence as in (22c)) are of importance.

The relation between passives and reflexives can be illustrated by means of the following examples:

(30) a. *Das Haus wurde durch eine Explosion zerstört.*
          The house was   through an explosion destroyed.
          'The house was destroyed by an explosion.'
      b. **Das Haus zerstörte sich.*
          The house destroyed REFL.
          Intended: 'The house destroyed itself.'

(31) a. *Die Tür wurde geöffnet (um zu lüften).*
          The door was   opened for to let in some air.
          'The door was opened to air the room.'
      b. *Die Tür öffnete sich (*um zu lüften).*
          The door opened REFL for   to let in some air.
          Intended: 'The door opened to air the room.'

For predicates where no reflexive or anticausative variant is available, like *zerstören* ('destroy') in (30), we expect the passive to be more open to non-agentive readings, whereas a passive for a verb like *öffnen* ('open') in (31) should be more agentive, since an anticausative variant is available as a possible way of expression. Though example (31a), without the purpose clause extension, allows non-intentional readings, (30a) has a stronger tendency for such an interpretation. We would claim that this is related to the fact that there is a clearly non-intentional expression available for the predicate *öffnen*, namely the reflexive, which is not possible for *zerstören*.

What is important to note here is that while it is not the case that the passive variant of *öffnen* cannot be used to express non-volitional or non-controlled causation, the anticausative variant can only have such a non-volitional interpretation. Thus, in a context where there could be doubt as to whether something was caused intentionally by someone or only by some force of nature, an agentless passive would be a more natural choice, whereas if one wants to express that the opening event was indeed *not* caused by someone, but by some unknown or unspecified force, one should use the reflexive variant, since the passive allows an intentional, controlled reading.

For *öffnen*, there is a reflexive variant available for the non-intentional reading, and thus the passive is dispreferred in such cases. *Zerstören*, however, lacks that possibility, and therefore the passive will have to do. Consequently in passive

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15. In terms of semantic roles, the different readings of (29c) concerns whether the *explosive body* is interpreted as a Cause or an Instrument.

clauses, the non-intentional reading is more readily available for *zerstören* than for *öffnen*. Note that this is seen as a somewhat different discussion than the one pertaining to the question why there can't be a (reflexive) anticausative variant of *zerstören* (Härtl 2003). What is relevant here, is that the perfectly acceptable *passive* variant of the two predicates has different interpretational preferences and ranges due to the lack or availability of a reflexive variant. A bidirectional optimality-theoretic approach (Blutner 2000; Wilson 2001) seems to suggest itself here, in which there is competition between forms of expression and their corresponding interpretations (Solstad forthcoming).

We have tried to illustrate here how passive – and voice in general – belongs to two different paradigms, one of a pragmatic nature and one semantic. These two sides may seem to relate to different phenomena: either as part of an information distributional paradigm including syntactic topicalisation, intonational patterns, inversion etc., or as part of an event-semantic paradigm including middles and other non-transitive constructions.

However, these may involve both semantic and pragmatic factors as well. Although our illustration of this claim focused on the passive, it seems likely that topicalisation etc. involves semantics as well as information structure – and that middles, reflexives etc. are often contextually motivated, not just issues of event semantics. There has been a tendency in the literature to focus either on pragmatic or semantic aspects. We believe that approaches taking both perspectives into consideration would benefit the understanding of voice and related phenomena.

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Semantic and syntactic patterns in Swedish passives*

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Swedish has two productive ways of forming the passive, a morphological way using the suffix -*s* and a periphrastic way using the copula *bli* (become) together with a passive participle. This article discusses the way the two passive forms are used in written Swedish. A quantitative study reveals substantial differences in the distribution of the two forms with the *s*-form emerging as the most common. The *s*-passive is shown to be the unmarked passive form in Swedish in the sense that it is used more often, in more contexts and with more verbs. The *bli*-passive is a marked option and often requires that the subject has some control over the described situation. The *bli*-passive is also used when the inception or the completion of the event are in focus. The article also discusses the use of passives in impersonal constructions which are common in Swedish. In these constructions, the agent may not be expressed overtly but is understood to be human.

Most languages have a way of forming passives. The mainland Scandinavian languages, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish, actually have two ways, both used in both spoken and written language. It turns out, not very surprisingly, that the two forms are used under different conditions. In this article I will concentrate on how the two forms are used in present-day written Swedish, occasionally comparing the Swedish patterns to the ones found in Danish and Norwegian. After having introduced the two passives in Section 1, I turn to a discussion of when each form is used in Section 2. Then follows a quantitative overview of the distribution of the two passives, Section 3, and a discussion of certain restrictions pertaining to the

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