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Working with Scandinavian Corpora **Case study 1: Passives**

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How is passive voice used in Danish, Norwegian and Swedish?

spoken and written language
different genres
formal/informal
which passive?
[cf. Laanemets (in press)]

Two productive passives:

morphological: verb stem (tense morpheme) –s (-S)
periphrastic: auxiliary verb + perfect participle
(*BLI* become, *BLEV* became)

- (1) Det **talas** ofta engelska i Skandinavien.
it speak-S often English in Scandinavia
'English is often spoken in Scandinavia'
- (2) Talarna **blev avbrutna** flera gånger
the.speakers BLEV interrupted several times
'The speakers were interrupted several times'

Finding comparable corpora

Finding passives

-s-verbs: reciprocal , middle, absolute, deponent

(3) Vi **möttes** flera gånger
We met several times

(4) Barnet **utvecklas** normalt.
The child develops normally

(5) Hunden **biter**.
The dog bites (=tends to bite)

(6) Sådant öl **finns** inte längre
'That kind of beer doesn't exist any more.'

Find a **useful definition of passive** and stick to it!

- (7) i active – passive alternation
ii the agent or cause associated with the active use is still semantically present, although often not expressed

Perfect (or passive) participles: often have adjectival uses:

- (8) a Hon blev (ganska/mycket) intresserad av tavlan
she BLEV (rather/very) interested by the painting
- b Tavlan intresserade henne.
The painting interested her.
- c ?*Hon intresserades av tavlan

- (9) a Hon blev (ganska/mycket) imponerad av tavlan
she BLEV (rather/very) impressed by the painting
- b Tavlan imponerade på henne.
the painting impressed on her.
- c Hon imponerades av tavlan

How often are passives used?

Passive voice overall frequencies (*per finite verb*) (from Laanemets in prep)

	<i>Debate articles</i>	<i>Informal conversations</i>
Danish	10.8%	1.5%
Norwegian	10.8%	0.8%
Swedish	12.9%	1.3%
English*	c. 15%	c. 2%

* Biber et al. (1999: 476)

How are the two passives used?

- (10) a Dörren **öppnas** utåt. *sign*
the door open-S outward
'The door opens outward'

- b *Dörren **blir öppnad** utåt

- (11) a Dörrarna **stängs**! *announcement*
the doors open-S
'The doors are about to be closed'.

b *Dörrarna **blir stängda**.

(12) a I bisatser **placeras** inte framför det finita verbet *rule in subordinate clauses place-S not before the finite verb*
'In subordinate clauses, *not* should be placed in front of the finite verb'

b Mjölet **tillsätts** under omrörning *recipe*
the flour add-S under stirring
'Add the flour while stirring.'

(13) a Fågelfrö **köps** i djuraffären (SAG 4:398) *generic*
bird seed buy-S in the pet shop
'The pet shop carries bird seed.'

b Det **talas** inte längre danska i Skåne
it speak-S no longer Danish in Skåne
'Danish is no longer spoken in Skåne.'

Types of events vs. specific events

(14) a Oppgavene **leveres** hver uke (NRG 1997:514) *generic (N)*
the exercises hand-S in every week
'The exercises are normally handed in every week'

b Oppgaven **ble levert** for seint *specific event*
the exercise BLEV handed in too late

(15) a Indledningen **skrives** til sidst *objective or rule (D)*
the introduction write-S last Heltoft & FalsterJ 1996:(7)
'The introduction is to be written last'

b Indledningen **bliver skrevet** til sidst *subjective prediction*
the introduction BLI written last
'The introduction will be written last'

(16) a Uppgifterna **lämnas** in varje vecka *generic (S)*
the exercises hand-S in every week

b Uppgiften **lämnades** in för sent *specific event*
the exercise handed-S in too late

c ??Uppgiften **blev inlämnad** för sent

- (17) a Inledningen **skrivs** sist *objective or subjective prediction (S)*
the introduction write-S last
 'The introduction is to be written last /
 The introduction will be written last'
- b ??Inledningen **blir skriven** sist

- (18) Table showing the distribution of *s*-passives and *bli*-passives (after Laanemets (in prep. Table 5))

	Written language		Spoken language	
	s-passiv	bli-passiv	s-passiv	bli-passiv
Danish	64.1 %	35.9 %	23.1%	76.9%
Norwegian	62.5 %	37.5 %	20.4%	79.6%
Swedish	98.7 %	1.3 %	84.2%	15.8%

- (19a) Table showing the distribution of *s*-passives in different tenses.
 Data from Laanemets' study of ~500 passive sentences in debate articles in each language (2004:87f.)

	Danish	Norwegian	Swedish
Infinitive	109	129	144
Present	139	120	188
Past	14	0	82
Perfect + pluperf.	0	0	77
Total	262	249	491

(19b) Table showing the distribution of *bli*-passives in different tenses. Data from Laanemets' study of ~500 passive sentences in each language (2004:87f.)

	Danish	Norwegian	Swedish
Infinitive	28	12	1
Present	25	40	4
Past	73	73	1
Perfect + pluperf.	27	24	1
Total	153	149	7

- (20) a Talarna **blev avbrutna** flera gånger
 'The speakers were interrupted several times'
- b Om han till slut **blir övertygad**, ger han sitt medgivande ...
 'If he finally is convinced, he consents'

(21) Distribution of inanimate and animate subjects in informal conversations (Laanemets (in press, Table 8)

	Danish		Norweg.		Swedish	
	s-pass.	<i>bli</i> -pass.	s-pass.	<i>bli</i> -pass.	s-pass.	<i>bli</i> -pass.
I-subj	75.9%	35.5%	85.9%	40.4%	86.3%	27.5%
A-subj	24.1%	64.5%	14.1%	59.6%	13.7%	72.5%*
Total	577	1940	192	775	735	131

- (22) a **Blir säkerhetsrådet** återigen permanent **förlamat** som under det kalla kriget när världens enda supermakt vänder det ryggen?
 (Laanemets 1598, SvD)
 'Will the Security Council be permanently paralysed again as (it was) during the cold war when the only super power in the world turned its back against it?'

- b Det är tänkt att de ska betala in hyran själva, men för säkerhets skull avdelas personal att gå med och se till att *det blir gjort*. (Laanemets 1137, SvD)
'They are supposed to pay in the rent themselves, but as a precaution, staff are assigned to come along and make sure that **it gets done**.'
- c Det var brev som skulle **skrivas** men de **blir** inte **skrivna**
'There were letters that were supposed to be written but they don't get written.'

(23) a Representanten försökte **bli omvald**
the.representative tried BLI reelected

b ??Representanten försökte **omväljas**
the.representative tried reelect-S

c *Representanten försökte ha bruna ögon (cf. Zaenen 1993)
the.representative tried have brown eyes

(24) Overt agent phrases in debate articles and informal conversations
(Table 6 and 7 from Laanemets (in press))

	Danish		Norweg.		Swedish	
written	s-pass.	<i>bli-</i> pass.	s-pass.	<i>bli-</i> pass.	s-pass.	<i>bli-</i> pass.
av-phras	4.7%	12.8%	7.4%	13.6%	12.9%	-
Total	278	156	270	162	513	7
spoken						
av-phras	0.6%	3.0%	2.3%	7.5%	8.9%	15.4%
Total	620	2066	213	830	764	143

Desiderata for corpora:

- standard orthography available
- lemmatized
- reliable morphosyntactic mark-up

Distinguishing s-passives from s-verbs

- (25) Dette høres feil ut (N)
this sounds wrong
- (26) Etter maktovertakelsen var kunngjort **hørtes** skyting
after the taking over of power was announced heard-S shooting
i hovedstaden.
in the capital
- (27) Deretter **hørtes** en kraftig rusing av motoren
after this heard-S a powerful charge of the motor

		Bokmål corpus 18.5 m	NoTa corpus 0.9 m	Google .no
Inf + pres	<i>finnes</i>	4937	14	7 600 000
Past	<i>fantas</i>	483	16	270 000
Perfect + pluperf.	<i>funnes</i>	7	0	1900

References

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Corpora

- BySoc = BySociolinguistik, Danish Spoken Language Corpus.
<<http://isvcbs.dk/~pjuel/BySoc/>>
- GSLC = Göteborg Spoken Language Corpus, Dept. of Linguistics, Göteborg University.
<<http://www.ling.gu.se/projekt/tal/>>
- NoTa = Norwegian Spoken Language Corpus, Oslo part. Tekstlaboratoriet, ILN, University of Oslo.
<<http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/oslo/>>
- The Oslo Corpus of Tagged Norwegian Texts (*bokmål* part).
<<http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/norsk/bokmaal/>>
- Parole/SUC, Swedish written language corpora, Språkbanken, Göteborg University.
<<http://spraakbanken.gu.se/>>
- KorpusDK, Danish written language corpus. <<http://ordnet.dk/korpusdk>>