

Complex passives in Germanic and Romance
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1. The Norwegian bokmål complex passives in (1)-(2) have direct counterparts in some other Norwegian varieties and in Danish, but not in Swedish, Icelandic, English, continental West Germanic or Romance:

- (1) Bilen ble forsøkt stjålet
car-the became attempted stolen
- (2) Søknaden ble besluttet avslått
application-the became decided turned-down

In this respect, (1)-(2) differ from the superficially similar *Bilen ble meldt stjålet* (car-the became reported stolen). Also, in Norwegian, (1) fails to share the syntactic properties of the latter type of example, which has an active counterpart (*Vi meldte bilen stjålet* "We reported the car stolen") and tolerates unaccusative verbs and even adjectives in the position of the second participle: (1)-(2) have no direct active counterparts (**Vi forsøkte bilen stjålet* vs *Vi forsøkte å stjele bilen* "We attempted to steal the car"), and require the second participle to be based on a transitive verb. So, whereas *The car was reported stolen* is simply an instance of a verb taking a small-clause complement, (1)-(2) are not.

2. The verbs *forsøke* and *beslutte* do not assign theta-roles: *Det forsøkte/besluttet å komme mange mennesker på festen* (it tried / decided to come many people to the party). This is consistent with taking them to be functional heads in the extended projection of the lower verb, as in Cinque (1997, 2000), rather than lexical heads selecting a complement containing the second verb, a decision reinforced by the cluster-like properties of the double-participle strings of (1)-(2). This leads to the following partial analysis:

- (3) ... [Voice1-et] forsøk/beslutt V

3. In Romance, the passive can span certain aspectual verbs (*La casa sarà finita di costruire domani*), but not the counterparts of *forsøke/beslutte*, implying :

- (4) ... tentare/decidere ... [Voice –to]... fini ... V ...

In fact, Cinque (1997) suggests that the relatively high Voice of (3) is the Voice head licensing impersonal passives, available in Germanic, but unavailable in Romance, where only the lower Voice requiring a transitive root can be involved in passive participle formation. Thus, the grammaticality of (1)-(2) in Norwegian correlates with the grammaticality of impersonal passives in Norwegian (*Det ble danset hele natten* (it was danced all night)), and the absence of (1)-(2) from English and Romance correlates with the unavailability of impersonal passives in these languages.

4. Taking the formation of the second participle of (1)-(2) to necessarily involve the low Voice head of (4),

- (5) ...[Voice1 –et] ... forsøk/beslutt ... [Voice2 –et] ... V

we correctly predict that even though Norwegian allows simple impersonal passives, the complex passives will have the same properties as English and Romance simple passives: The second participle can't be intransitive, and the object of the second participle must raise. (Unlike Voice2, Voice1 can iterate in the functional domain producing complex passives with more than two participles: *Bilen ble besluttet forsøkt stjålet* (car-the became decided attempted stolen), a property that can be shown to follow from the different way Voice1 relates to the argument structure of the lexical verb.)

5. This analysis relates the Norwegian complex passives of (1)-(2) to the German

(and Dutch) construction in (6)-(7):

(6) ?Der Wagen wurde zu stehlen versucht

(7) ?Der Antrag wurde abzulehnen beschlossen

But unlike Norwegian (and Danish), Continental West Germanic has an infinitive instead of a second participle. This, in turn, will follow from an account of the West Germanic –en occurring both in the formation of infinitives and in the formation of the past participles of strong verbs, an account also providing a link to the West Germanic IPP effect as well as West Germanic *Der Antrag ist abzulehnen* (the application is to reject) (essentially nonexistent in Scandinavian).

6. Within Scandinavian, the following generalization seems to hold: (1)-(2) are possible in just those languages where passive past participles don't show gender/number-agreement (Danish and some varieties of Norwegian). We take this to follow from two independent factors: (1) past participle agreement is only licensed in a Spec/head configuration in (Mainland) Scandinavian, and (2) the DP argument of the lexical V has no landing site between the two participles of a complex passive construction: *Vi fikk søknaden besluttet avslått* 'We got the application decided rejected' vs **Vi fikk besluttet søknaden avslått* 'we got decided the application rejected'. (We will discuss the theoretical interpretation of property (1) and show, on the basis of get-passives like Swedish *Vi fick skjutet vargen* 'We got shot the wolf', with "default" agreement on the participle, that it cannot be made consistent with Chomsky's version of Agree in the way suggested by Holmberg (2000).)

7. The account suggested for the cross-linguistic distribution of complex passives within Scandinavian presupposes that the agreement features of the second participle cannot be licensed by default. This appears to conflict with the previous observation that a past participle can take on the neuter sg form by default in Scandinavian varieties with past participle agreement. The apparent paradox is resolved by taking the "passive" morpheme appearing in Voice1 to be invariant –et, while the one merged in Voice2 has gender/number features to be licensed under Spec/head agreement (in some Scandinavian varieties), enabling us to dispense with the ill-defined notion "default agreement" and also to provide a surprising new perspective on the connection between auxiliary selection and participle agreement (have disallowing participle agreement, be requiring it in varieties with participle agreement) with unaccusative participles.

8. Going back to Romance and Cinque's conjecture about (3), we develop the suggestion that the "impersonal" *si/se* cooccurring with intransitive (unergative) verbs should be significantly similar to the Germanic "passive" affix in Voice1, as a number of shared properties, including the incompatibility with a *by*-phrase, arguably indicate. We will propose a partial unification, essentially taking *si* to occur in Spec of (covert) Voice1, while Scandinavian (invariant) –et and its West Germanic counterparts instantiate the head Voice1, an idea to be implemented incorporating elements of Manzini & Savoia's (2001) recent analysis of Romance clitics. As a result, the cross-linguistic variation with respect to (1)-(2) in Germanic and Romance is seen to be determined by the lexical resources of each individual language.

References:

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