

The Argument Structure of Passive Raising in Swedish

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Abstract

This paper gives an LFG-analysis of the argument structure of the passive raising construction in Swedish. Swedish is a North-Germanic language which employs two modes of forming passive sentences: (i) a morphological passive formed with the suffix *-s* and (ii) a periphrastic passive using the auxiliary verb *bliva* ('become') (or *vara* ('be'), *varda* ('become') and *få* ('get')) in conjunction with a past participle. One difference between the two passive constructions, which for instance has been discussed for Swedish by Engdahl (1999), for Danish by Ørsnes (2011, 2013) and for Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish by Laanemets (2012: 185-187), concerns a construction which I here call passive raising¹. Passive raising involves cases where the subject of the passive predicate has a thematic role only in relation to a predicate within an infinitival clause complement. In Swedish, just like in Danish, it seems as if passive raising, as exemplified in (1), is only possible in conjunction with the morphological passive and not in conjunction with the periphrastic passive (Teleman et al. 1999: 582; Engdahl, 1999; Ørsnes 2011: 26).

- (1) Passive raising with the verb *säga* ('say'):
- a. Hon sägs vara en utpräglad målskytt.
She says.PASS be a specialized goal-scorer
'She is said to be a specialized goal scorer'. (<http://www.vf.se/node/315601>)
 - b. *Hon blir sagd vara en utpräglad målskytt.
She becomes said be a specialized goal-scorer
'She is said to be a specialized goal scorer'. [constructed]

In (1-a), the subject *hon* ('she') of the morphological passive verb *sägs* ('is said') has a thematic role in relation to the infinitival *vara en utpräglad målskytt* and not to the passive verb. While this construction is productive in connection with the morphological passive (e.g. Laanemets 2012: 185-187), the same sentence with the periphrastic passive is unacceptable, as exemplified in (1-b).

For the passive raising construction to be a regular passive construction, in which the subject of the passive construction corresponds to the object of the active construction, the active correspondent to the passive sentences in (1) would be the sentence in (2-a), which is a subject-to-object raising construction. However, as can be seen in (2-a), this active correspondent is unacceptable, as the verb *säga* only participates in the subject-to-object raising construction when the object is a reflexive pronoun, as in (2-b).

- (2) Subject-to-object raising with the verb *säga* ('say'):
- a. *Folk säger henne vara en utpräglad målskytt.
People say her be a specialized goal-scorer
'People say that she is a specialized goal scorer.' [constructed]
 - b. Hon säger sig vara en utpräglad målskytt.
She says PRO.REFL be a specialized goal-scorer
'She considers herself to be a specialized goal scorer.' [constructed]

In contrast to the verb *säga* ('say'), many other verbs that occur in the passive raising construction, such as *anse* ('consider'), also occur in the active subject-to-object raising construction, where the object is not restricted to a reflexive pronoun. This is shown for the verb *anse* ('consider') in (3).

- (3) Subject-to-object raising and passive raising with the verb *anse* ('consider'):
- a. Folk anser henne vara en utpräglad målskytt.
People consider her be a specialized goal-scorer
'People consider her to be a specialized goal scorer.' [constructed]

¹Ørsnes (2011, 2013) calls this construction the *reportive passive*.

- b. Hon anses vara en utpräglad målskytt.
 She consider.PASS be a specialized goal-scorer
 ‘She is considered to be a specialized goal scorer’. [constructed]

There are two questions to be asked in relation to the data shown above: (i) why does only the morphological passive occur in the passive raising construction and (ii) what accounts for the restrictions on the predicates participating in the subject-to-object raising construction.

Regarding the first question, Ørsnes (2011) claims that the difference in grammaticality between (1-a) and (1-b) in Danish is a result of the fact that ‘the passive verb is a subject-raising verb’ and that ‘[s]ubject-raising verbs are very reluctant to form past participles in Danish and German’ (Ørsnes 2011: 26). The reasoning is that, since the periphrastic passive makes use of past participles, passive raising is not possible. This is slightly bewildering, as the active verb *säga* (‘say’) is not a raising verb, and it does occur as a past participle in periphrastic passives that do not involve raising. Why should the fact that a raising verb such as *verka* (‘seem’) does not occur as a past participle matter for the availability of the raising construction for the periphrastic passive? Furthermore, subject-to-subject raising verbs in the past perfect have been reported as grammatical in Danish, for instance the sentence in (4), given by Vikner & Sprouse (1988: 28).

- (4) Marie har syntes at være glad.
 Mary has seemed to be happy
 ‘Mary has seemed to be happy’.

With respect to the second question, Ørsnes (2013), in his HPSG account of the construction, claims that the passive raising construction can be thought of as a non-canonical passive, where the subject of the passive construction does not correspond to the object of the active construction. This analysis ignores the fact that many of the verbs occurring in the passive raising construction also occur in the subject-to-object raising construction, particularly in Swedish and English. In Danish and Norwegian, the subject-to-object raising construction is more restricted (cf. Lødrup, 2008), but is nonetheless an available construction for some of the verbs participating in the passive raising construction. The verb *sige* in Danish is represented in both constructions in the corpus of contemporary Danish KorpusDK (http://ordnet.dk/korpusdk_en/). In (5-a), the subject-to-object raising construction is exemplified and, in (5-b), the passive raising construction.

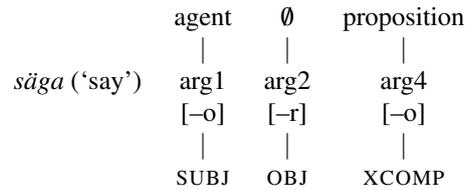
- (5) a. ...gør imidlertid ikke bogen til den digtkreds, den siger sig at være.
 makes however not the-book to the poem-collection it says REFL to be
 ‘... doesn’t make the book into the collection of poems it proclaims to be.’
 b. Det danske flag siges at være faldet ned fra himlen på estisk grund.
 The Danish flag say.PASS to be fallen down from the-sky on Estonian ground
 ‘The Danish flag is said to have fallen down from the sky on Estonian ground.’

In Swedish, approximately the same group of verbs² that occur in the passive raising construction also occur in subject-to-object raising with a reflexive object pronoun (cf. Teleman et al. 1999: 582). All the verbs reported by Laanemets (2012: 187) as participating in passive raising in Swedish (*anses, befaras, föreslås, förutsättes, misstänkas, sägas, uppges, väntas*) are also verbs that occur in subject-to-object raising.

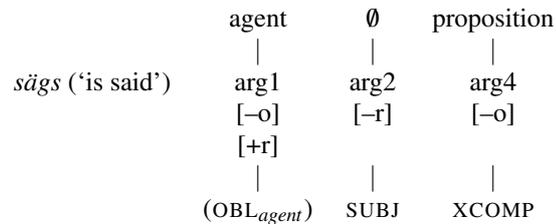
The availability of the subject-to-object raising construction seems to be crucial in licensing the passive raising construction, which is reflected in the fact that all Germanic languages that do not have the subject-to-object raising construction, for instance German and Dutch, also do not have the passive raising construction (cf. Ørsnes (2013). This motivates linking the two constructions together. Syntactically, based on the revised Lexical Mapping Theory of Kibort (2007), I assume the argument structures in (6) and the lexical entries in (7) for the subject-to-object raising predicate *säga* and the passive raising predicate *sägs*.

²There are also a few exceptions, where for instance the passive predicate *ryktas* (‘be rumoured’) only occurs in the passive raising construction and not in the subject-to-object raising construction.

- (6) a. Argument structure for subject-to-object raising *säga* ('say')



- b. Argument structure for passive raising *sägs* ('say')



- (7) a. Lexical entry for the active subject-to-object raising predicate *säger*:

säger ('says') V (↑ PRED) = 'say ⟨SUBJ, XCOMP⟩, OBJ'
 (↑ TENSE) = PRESENT
 (↑ OBJ) = (↑ XCOMP SUBJ)
 (↑ OBJ FORM) =_c REFLEXIVE

- b. Lexical entry for the passive raising predicate *sägs*:

sägs ('is said') V (↑ PRED) = 'say ⟨(OBL_{agent}), XCOMP⟩, SUBJ'
 (↑ TENSE) = PRESENT
 (↑ SUBJ) = (↑ XCOMP SUBJ)

The argument structures in (6-a) and (6-b) account for the alternation between the subject-to-object raising construction and the passive raising construction with the verb *säga* ('say'). The arg2[-r] slot is particularly relevant in the analysis. In the active sentences, it is mapped to OBJ and, in the passive sentences, to SUBJ, after the demotion of the agent argument to an oblique. It is the presence of the arg2[-r] slot that makes the passive raising construction grammatical in Swedish.

Semantically, there seem to be certain restrictions on the passive raising construction and the subject-to-object raising construction, explaining why not all types of predicates occur in both. Certain predicates are only compatible with the semantics of one of the constructions and not with those of the other.

The two passive constructions in Swedish seem to be associated with different interpretations (cf. Engdahl, 2006). The periphrastic passive is often described as expressing subjective specific events, while the morphological passive expresses generic objective events (cf. Laanemets, 2012: 101). As hinted at by Ørsnes (2013), the passive raising construction, which 'attribute a proposition to a (generally) unknown external source' (2013: 321), seems to be semantically incompatible with the periphrastic passive.

For the subject-to-object raising construction in Swedish (in Danish and Norwegian further restrictions might apply), it seems as if it requires the expression of the evidential source for the truth of the proposition expressed in the subclause. For verbs such as *anse* ('consider') and *befara* ('fear') the evidential source is the referent of the subject constituent. However, in the case of the verb *säga* ('say'), the evidential source is typically not expressed, unless a reflexive pronoun is added, in which case the subject referent likewise becomes the evidential source. When there is a reflexive pronominal object, and the subject referent thus says something about herself, the subject referent necessarily becomes the evidential source. This could possibly also explain why the Swedish verb *säga* ('say') is attested in the subject-to-object raising construction, while the English verb *say* is not (cf. Postal, 1974: 3-4). The reason for this would then be that English does not have a correspondent to the Swedish simple reflexive pronoun *sig*.

In conclusion, this paper provides an LFG-analysis of the passive raising construction in Swedish, which makes a connection between the passive raising argument structure and the active subject-to-object raising argument structure. Given the semantic restrictions proposed for the two constructions, this analysis provides an explanation to what set of verbs participate in the constructions, and it also brings the Swedish passive raising construction into the set of regular passive constructions.

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