

Stay in shape!

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Re thinking Co mparative S yntax

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1. Introduction: Two types of languages

Asymmetric passive languages (Fula, Swahili, Chichewa, Danish, varieties of English)

- (1)a. I've been given the letter "B". [Goal passive]
- b. *The letter "B" has been given me. [Theme passive]
- (2)a. Jeg blev givet fem ting. [Danish: Goal passive]
I was given five things
- b. *Fem ting blev givet mig. [Danish: Theme passive]
five things were given me

1. Introduction: Two types of languages

Symmetric passive languages (Kinyarwanda, Norwegian, Swedish, varieties of English)

(3)a. Jeg ble gitt Paralgin Forte. [Norwegian: Goal passive]
I was given Paralgin Forte

b. Lånet ble gitt meg ... [Norwegian: Theme passive]
the.loan was given me

Varieties of English with Theme passives:

(4) A telegram was sent him to that effect. (1914 American English)

(5) The book was given the teacher. [Liverpool English; Biggs 2014]

1. Introduction: Two types of languages

Two approaches to the variation

A. Variation in Case-absorption (Baker 1988, Woolford 1993, Citko 2008)

In asymmetric languages

only the case assigned to the Goal can be absorbed in the passive, so only the Goal can move in the passive.

In symmetric languages

either the Case assigned to the Goal or to the Theme can be absorbed, so either object can move in the passive.

This predicts that a Theme passive should be OK if a Case can be ensured for the Goal.

(6) *The letter “B” has been given **to** me.*

Suggests that Theme passives may have a covert preposition.

1. Introduction: Two types of languages

Two approaches to the variation

B. The locality approach (Anagnostopoulou 2003, McGinnis 1998, Ura 1996):

Passivisation of Theme is ruled out by Locality (Relativised Minimality)



This predicts that Theme passives will be OK if there is a way to shift the Theme object around the Goal object without violating Relativised Minimality.

It suggests that the difference between the symmetric and the asymmetric languages is that the symmetric languages have a way of circumventing Relativised Minimality in double object passives.

1. Introduction: Two types of languages

Anagnostopoulou (2003):

Some languages have short movement of Theme across the Goal.



This makes possible movement of the Theme to spec,TP in the passive.


Is there independent evidence of short Theme movement in symmetric languages, which would be absent in asymmetric languages?

Anagnostopoulou (2003,2005): Object shift in Scandinavian provides independent evidence.

1. Introduction: Two types of languages

Object shift

[_{TP} T ikke [_{VP} Jon skrev den]]
not Jon wrote it

[_{TP} Jon skrev-T den ikke [_{VP} ~~Jon skrev den~~]]


Anagnostopoulou (2003, 2005):
Variation in object order under Object Shift in Mainland
Scandinavian,
matching variation in object order under passivisation.

1. Introduction: Two types of languages

Swedish and Norwegian (symmetric)

Inversion of Goal and Theme possible under Object Shift (Holmberg 1986)

(7) *Jag gav henne den inte.* [Swedish]

I gave her it not

(8) *?Jag gav den henne inte.*

I gave it her not

Theme passives OK.

Danish (asymmetric):

Inversion not possible

(9) *Jeg gav hende den ikke.* [Danish]

I gave her it not

(10) **Jeg gav den hende ikke.*

I gave it her not

Theme passives not OK.

1. Introduction: Two types of languages

Object inversion in British English

Some British English dialects:

- (13) *It was given me.*
The book was given my sister.

Some British English dialects: (typically Western/Northwestern)

- (14) *They gave it me.*
%They gave the book my sister.

1. Introduction: Two types of languages

Predictions by the Locality Hypothesis:

1. Assuming that the structure of the inverted active DOC is
[_{VP} ...Theme... [Goal...]]
 - English, Swedish, and Norwegian speakers that allow inversion in the active DOC, allow Theme passives.
 - English, Swedish, and Norwegian speakers that allow Theme passives allow inversion in the active DOC.
2. Two varieties of English, Swedish, and Norwegian speakers:
 - A. those that allow inversion in active DOCs and allow Theme passives;
 - B. those that allow neither.

We have conducted experiments to test these predictions,
one for British English (in 2010)
one for Norwegian (in 2013)

1. British English:

An online questionnaire testing grammaticality judgments was completed by 136 native speakers of British English.

This is reported in Haddican and Holmberg (2012).

2. Norwegian:

An online questionnaire testing grammaticality judgments was completed by 500 native speakers of Norwegian.

1. Introduction
2. Summary of the British English investigation
3. The Norwegian investigation
4. The case of Swedish and Danish
5. Conclusions: Who is right?

2. British English

The British English investigation in a nutshell:

Three variables:

1. verb class (*give*-type vs. *donate*-type)
2. Theme-Goal in passive contexts (*The books were given me.*)
3. Theme-Goal in active contexts (*She gave it me.*)

Question: Is there a correlation between accepting Theme-Goal order in the active and in the passive?

Results:

1. Positive correlation in scores for Theme-Goal orders in passive and active contexts, as follows:

Accepting Theme-Goal passives entailed accepting inversion in the active.

The book was given me → *She gave it me.*

But not vice versa!

2. British English

- There is a correlation between inverse DOC and Theme passives, supporting the Locality hypothesis, but there is a richer inventory of grammars than the 2-dialect distribution predicted by the short object movement parameter

Grammar	Inverse DOC	Theme passives
1	No	No
2	Yes	Yes
3	Yes	No
*4	No	Yes

2. *British English*

Conclusion:

- The hypothesis that the Theme-Goal inversion in the active provides an escape hatch for A-movement of the Theme is not right, or is not sufficient, to explain the fact.
- Yet the inversion in the active and Theme passives rely on some common property/parameter setting.

2. British English

Proposal (Haddican & Holmberg 2012):

Observation: The active Theme-Goal inversion is most commonly accepted when the Theme is the weak pronoun *it*.

She gave it me. They sent it the wrong person.

**She gave the books me.*

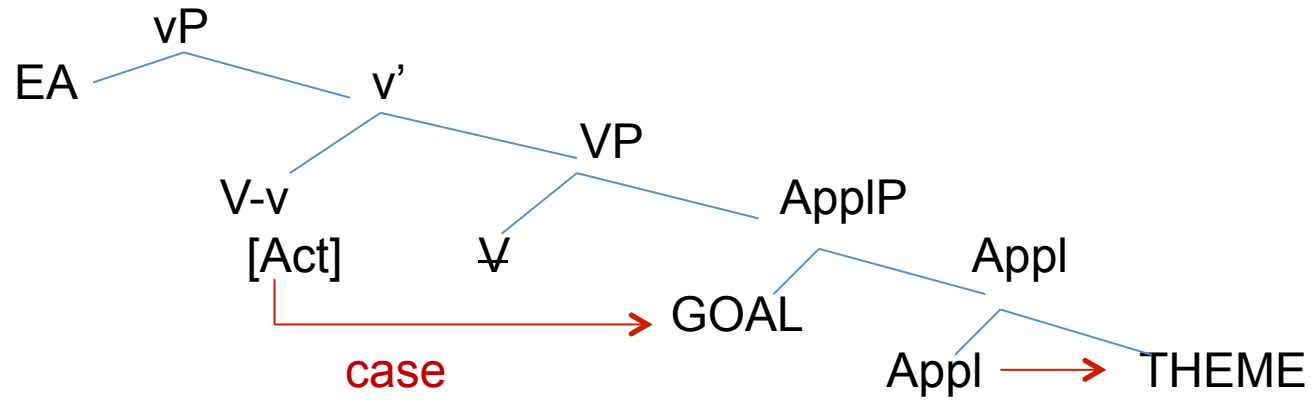
**She gave THEM me.*

Hypothesis:

1. The inversion is derived by incorporation of the clitic pronoun *it* in v (Roberts 2010)
2. The Goal is assigned Case by a null Linker head (Baker & Collins 2006).

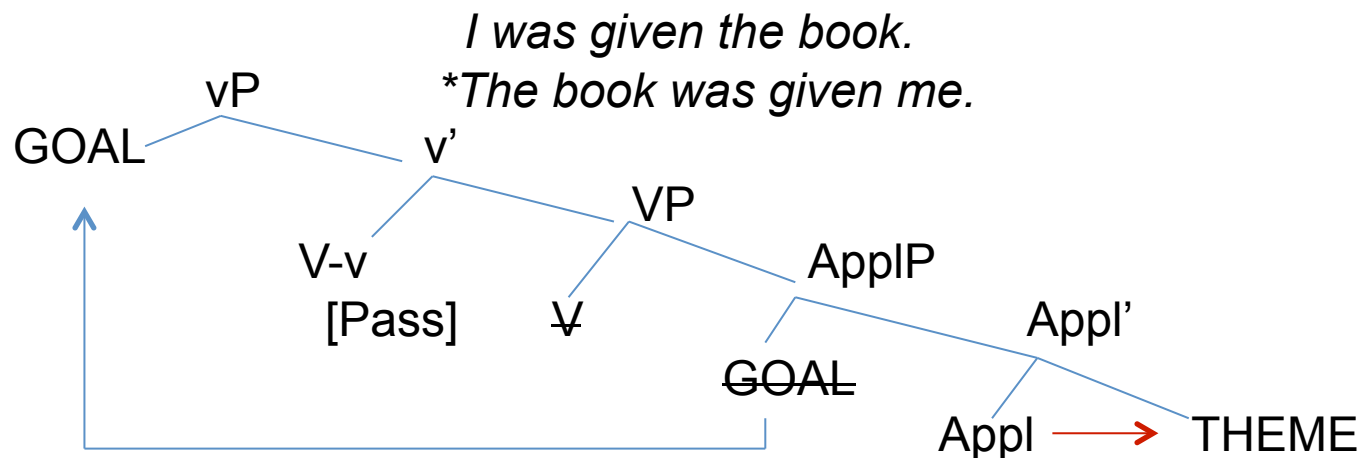
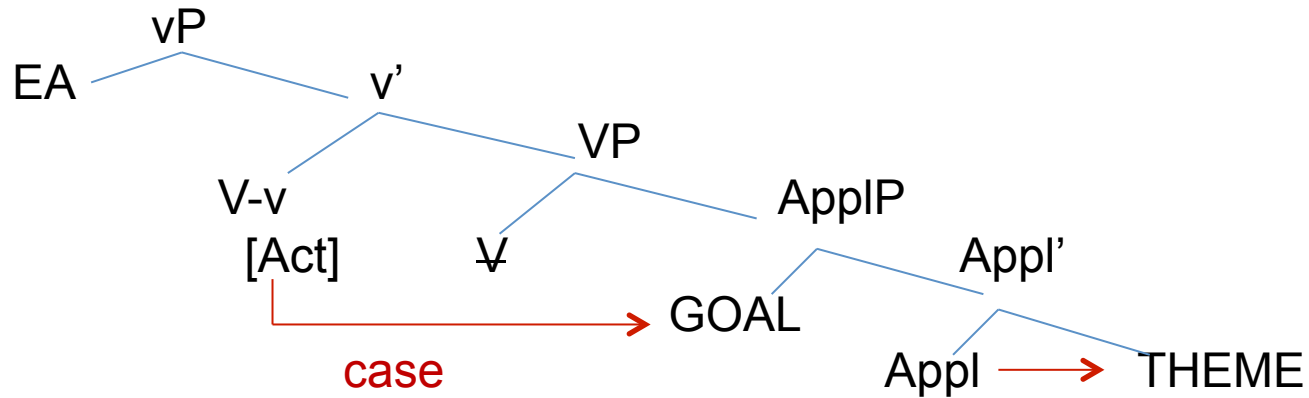
2. British English

Grammar 1 ('Standard English'): *She gave me the book.*



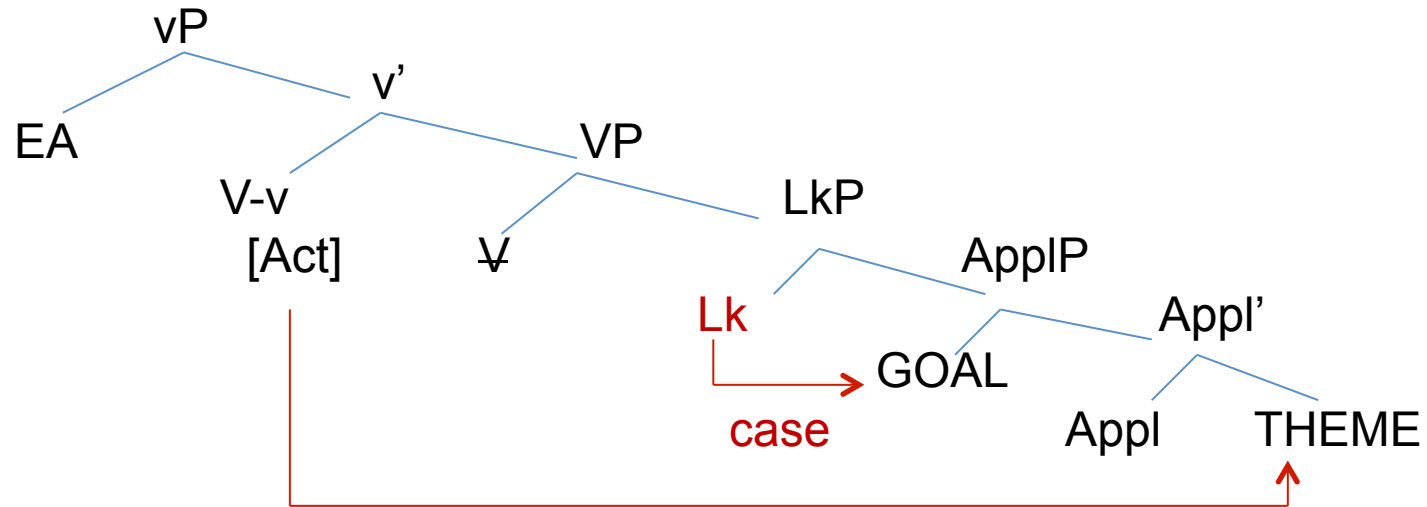
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Grammar 1 ('Standard English'): *She gave me the book.*



2. British English

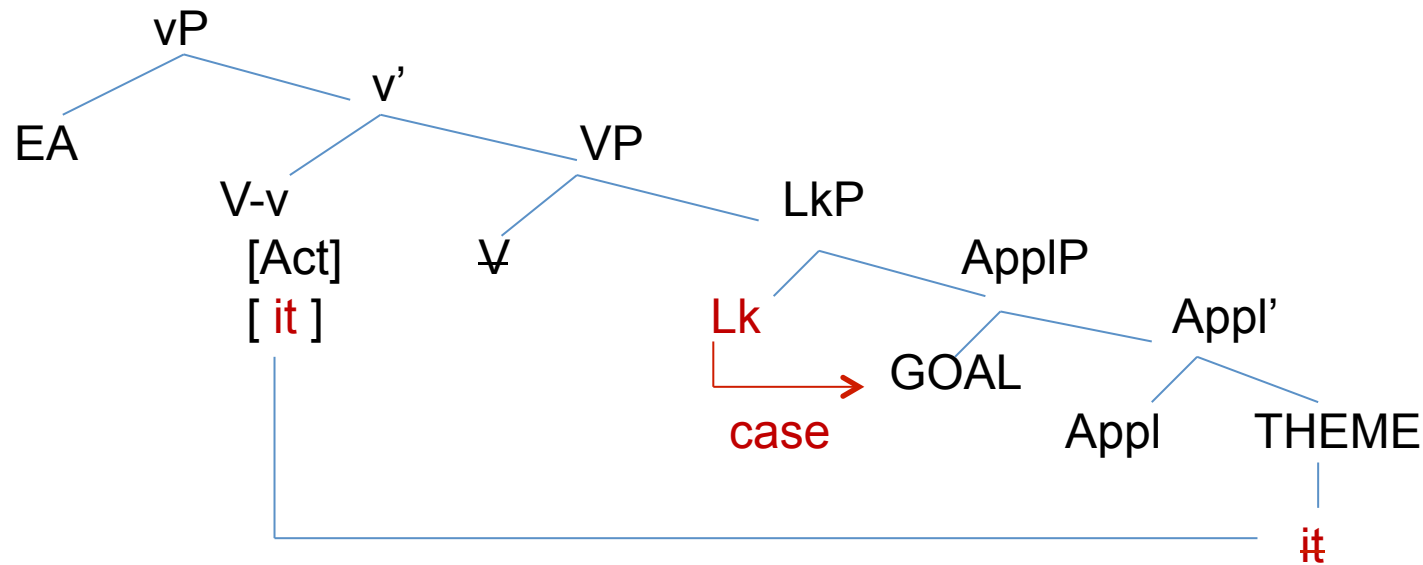
Grammars 2 and 3: *She gave me the book.*



Lk = Linker; Baker & Collins 2006

2. British English

Grammars 2 and 3: *She gave it me.*

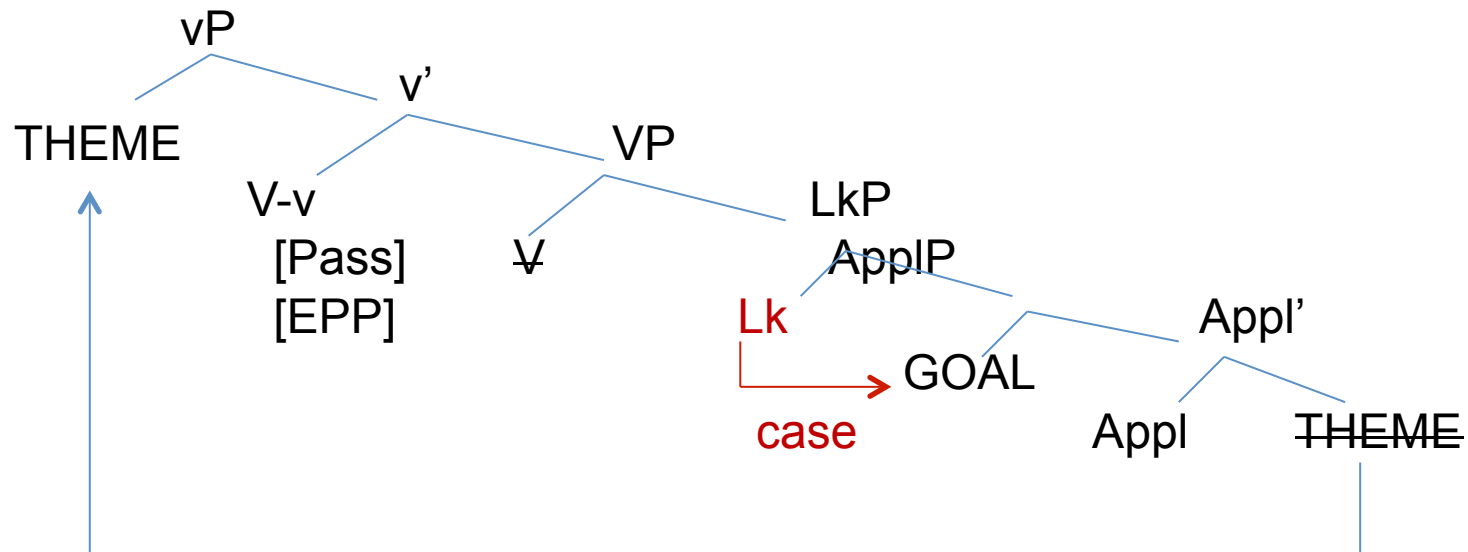


incorporation by Agree (Roberts 2010)

Because the intervening GOAL is assigned Case independently, Agree between *v* and THEME is allowed, and thereby incorporation of the clitic THEME in the active (both Grammars 2 and 3)

2. British English

Grammar 3: *The book was given me.*

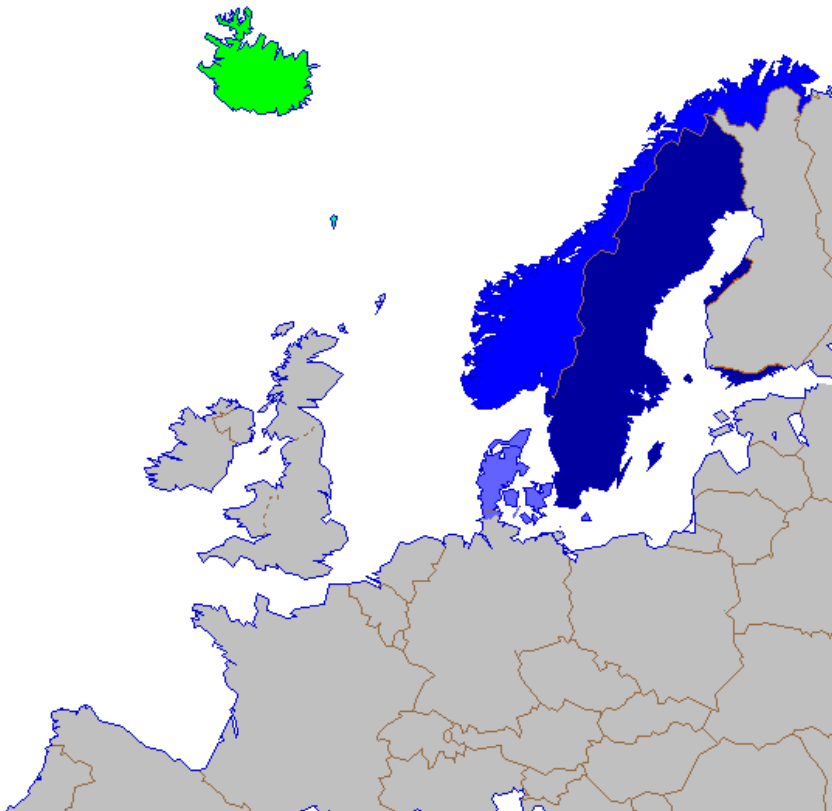


... and, provided passive *v* has an EPP-feature, movement of the THEME in the passive is allowed (only Grammar 3).

3. Norwegian

Passive symmetry and object shift symmetry

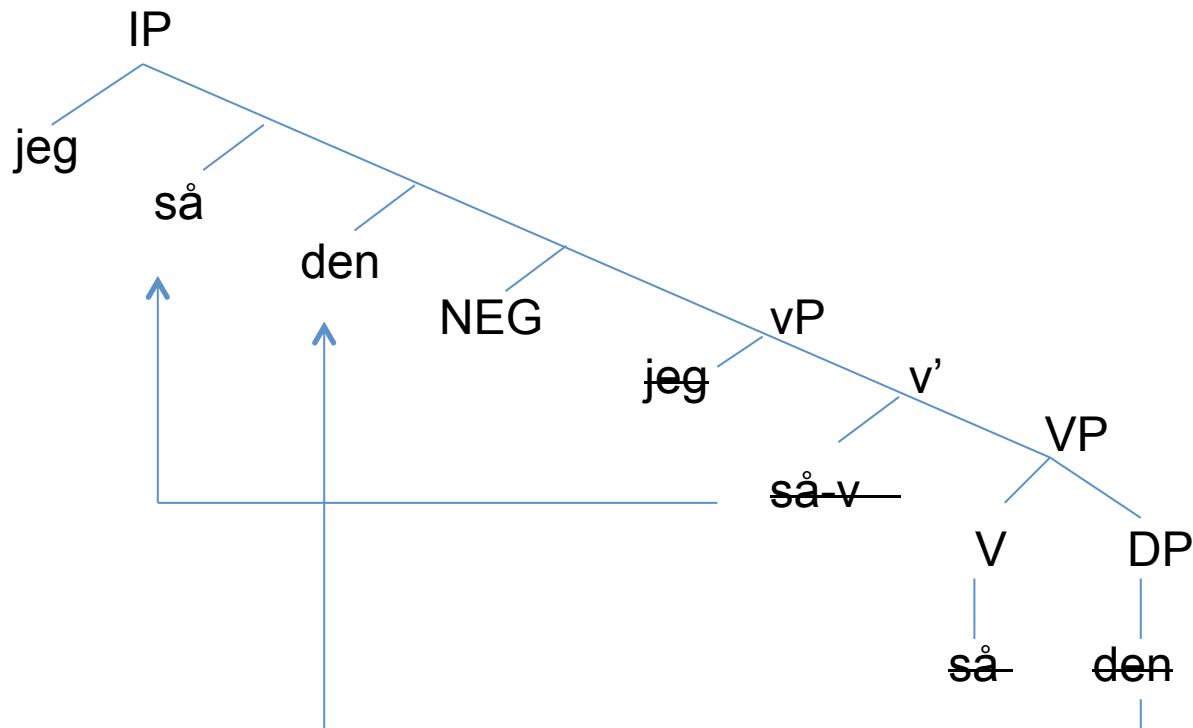
- Recall cross-linguistic correlation in object symmetry effects in Mainland Scandinavian (Anagnostopoulou 2003, Bobaljik 2002, 2005).



	Theme pass	Theme-goal OS
Swedish/ Norwegian	Ok	%
Danish	*	*

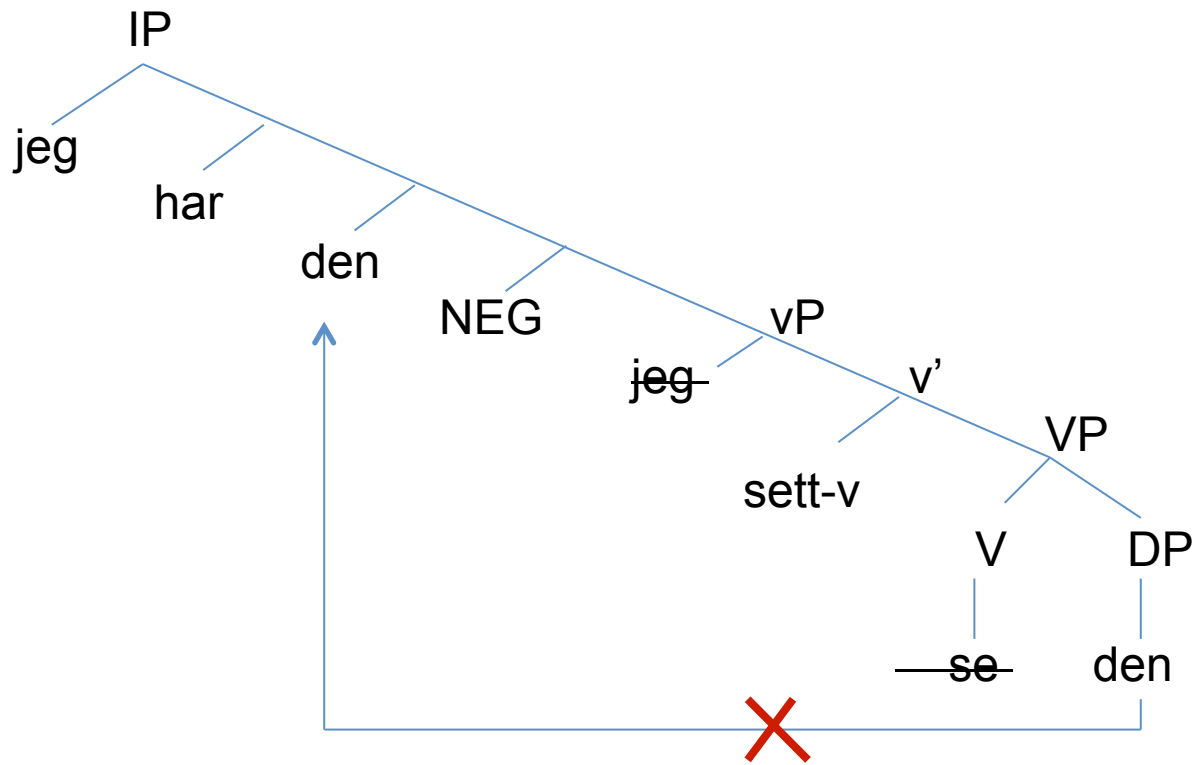
3. Norwegian

Object shift: *Jeg så den ikke.*
I saw it not



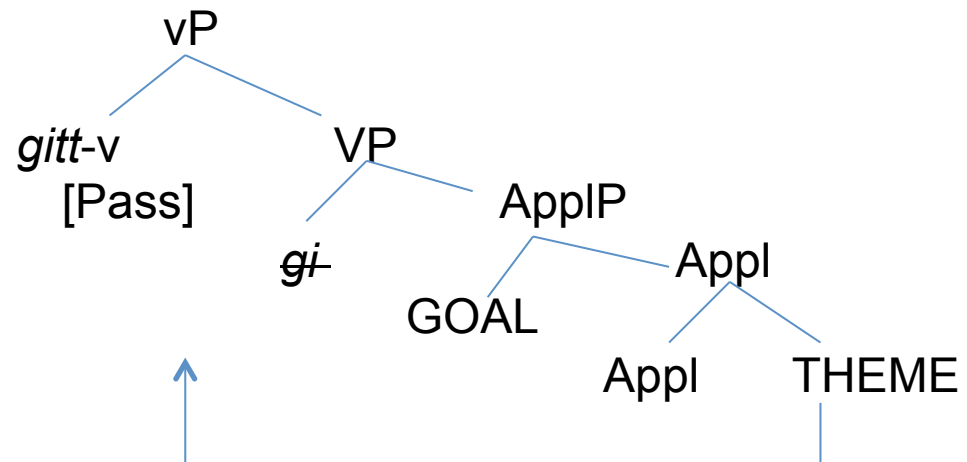
3. Norwegian

Object shift: **Jeg har den ikke sett.*
I have it not seen



3. Norwegian

Under the locality approach,
in order for inversion in the DOC to provide an escape hatch for
the Theme at the vP edge, the inversion must take place within
vP.



3. Norwegian

Predictions made by the locality approach:

- Speakers will accept theme-goal order in passive contexts if and only if they accept theme-goal order in active contexts.
- We expect to see evidence of short theme movement low in the structure, below position targeted by OS (as in British English).

3. Norwegian

Data

Subjects

- 500 self-described native speakers of Norwegian.
- 18-81 years old ($M= 38.9$, $SD=11.5$)
- Subjects recruited online by researchers.
- Not required to be linguistically naive.

3. Norwegian

Data

Materials

- 2x3 design crossing argument order with context:

Context	Theme-goal	Goal-Theme
Passives	Den ble gitt ham. 'It was given him.'	Han ble gitt den. 'He was given it.'
Act. OS	Elsa ga den ham ikke. Elsa gave it him not	Elsa ga ham den ikke. Elsa gave him it not
Act. un-shifted	Elsa har ikke gitt den ham. Elsa has not given it him	Elsa har ikke gitt ham den. Elsa has not given him it

3. Norwegian

Data

Materials

- All theme/goal arguments were 3rd person pronouns. Theme vs. Goal interpretation biased using animate pronouns for Goals, and inanimate pronouns for Themes.
- 12 lexicalizations created for each of 6 conditions, blocked and assigned to lists by Latin square. Subjects pseudo-randomly assigned to lists by software
- 4 items/condition/subject x 6 conditions=24 experimental sentences, pseudo-randomized with 24 fillers.

3. Norwegian

Data

Procedure

- Self-paced online survey in Spring 2013 using IbeX Farm (Drummond, 2013)
- Results normalized by converting to z-scores based on by-speaker means and standard deviations of 24 fillers (half grammatical, half ungrammatical).

Han ble vist den.

(dårlig) (god)

Klikk på en av boksene for å gi karakter på setningen over

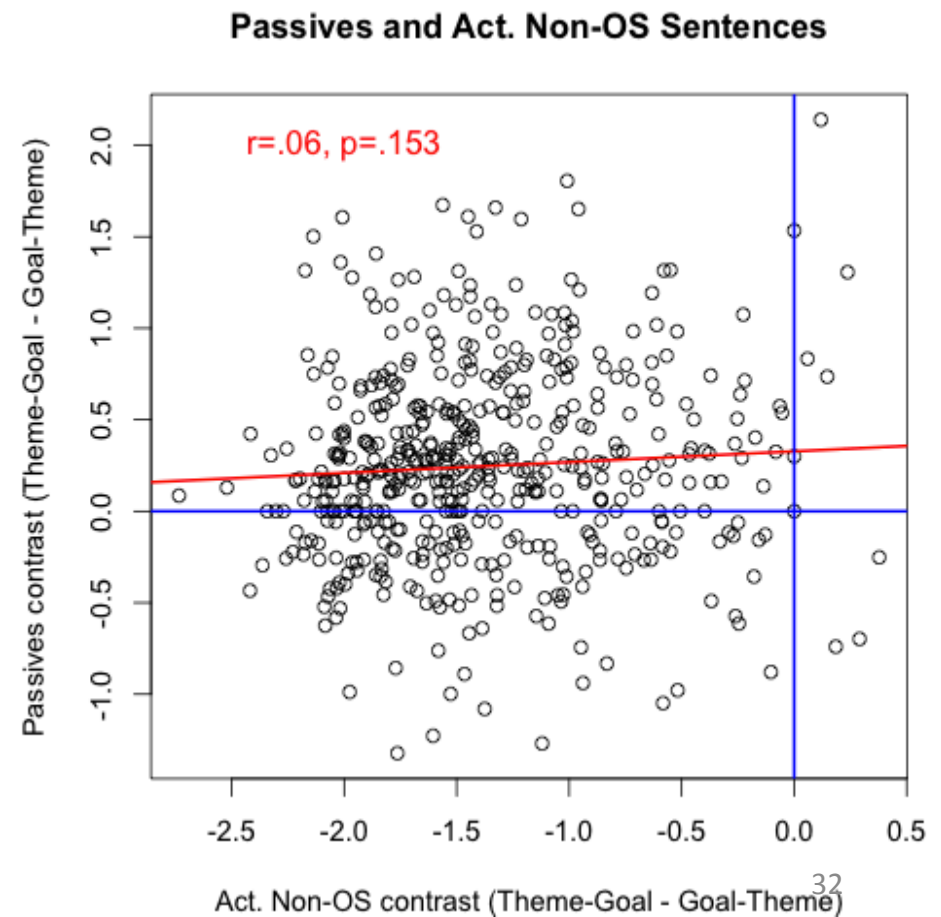
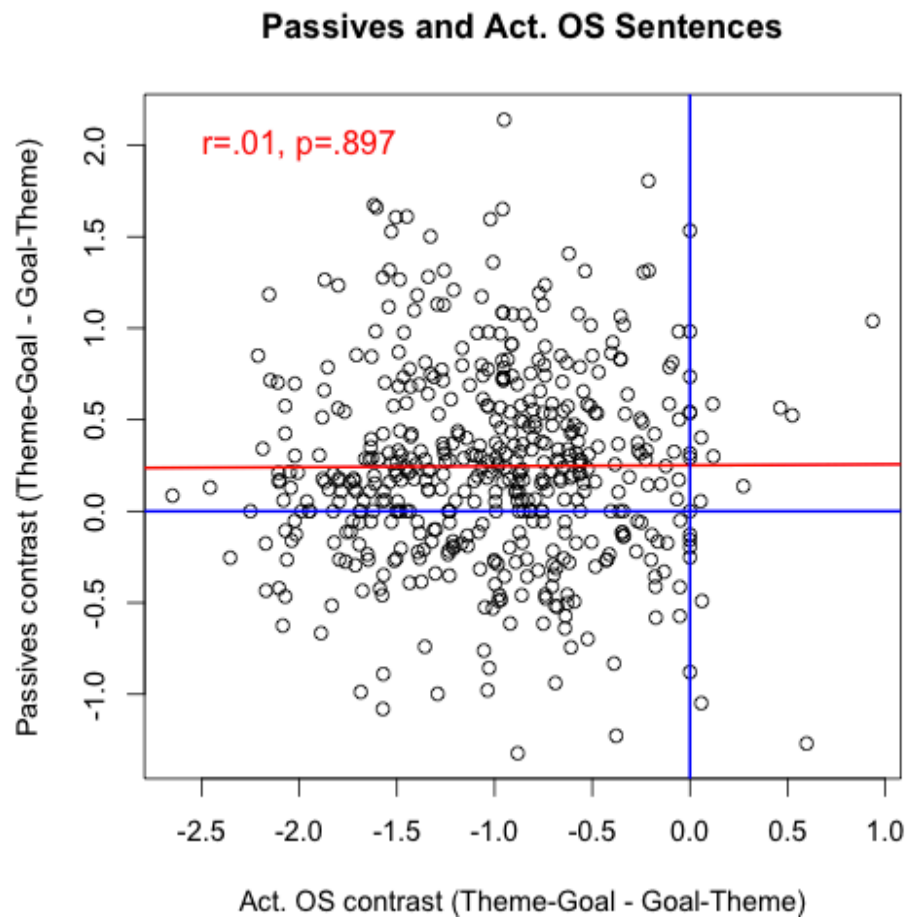


0.0 corresponds to the mean scores for the fillers, half of which were grammatical, half ungrammatical, so it can be taken as a midpoint of acceptability

3. Norwegian

Results

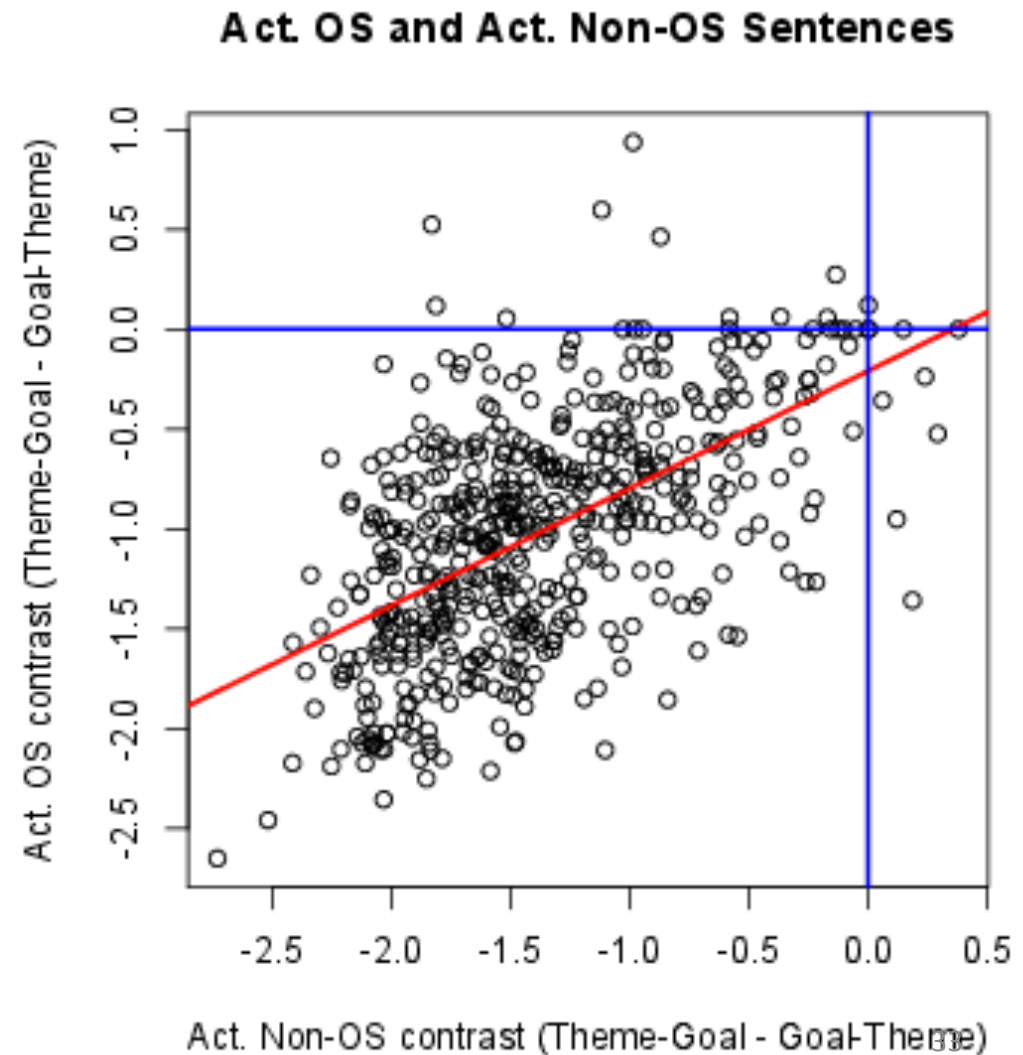
- By-speaker contrasts in actives and passives



3. Norwegian

Results

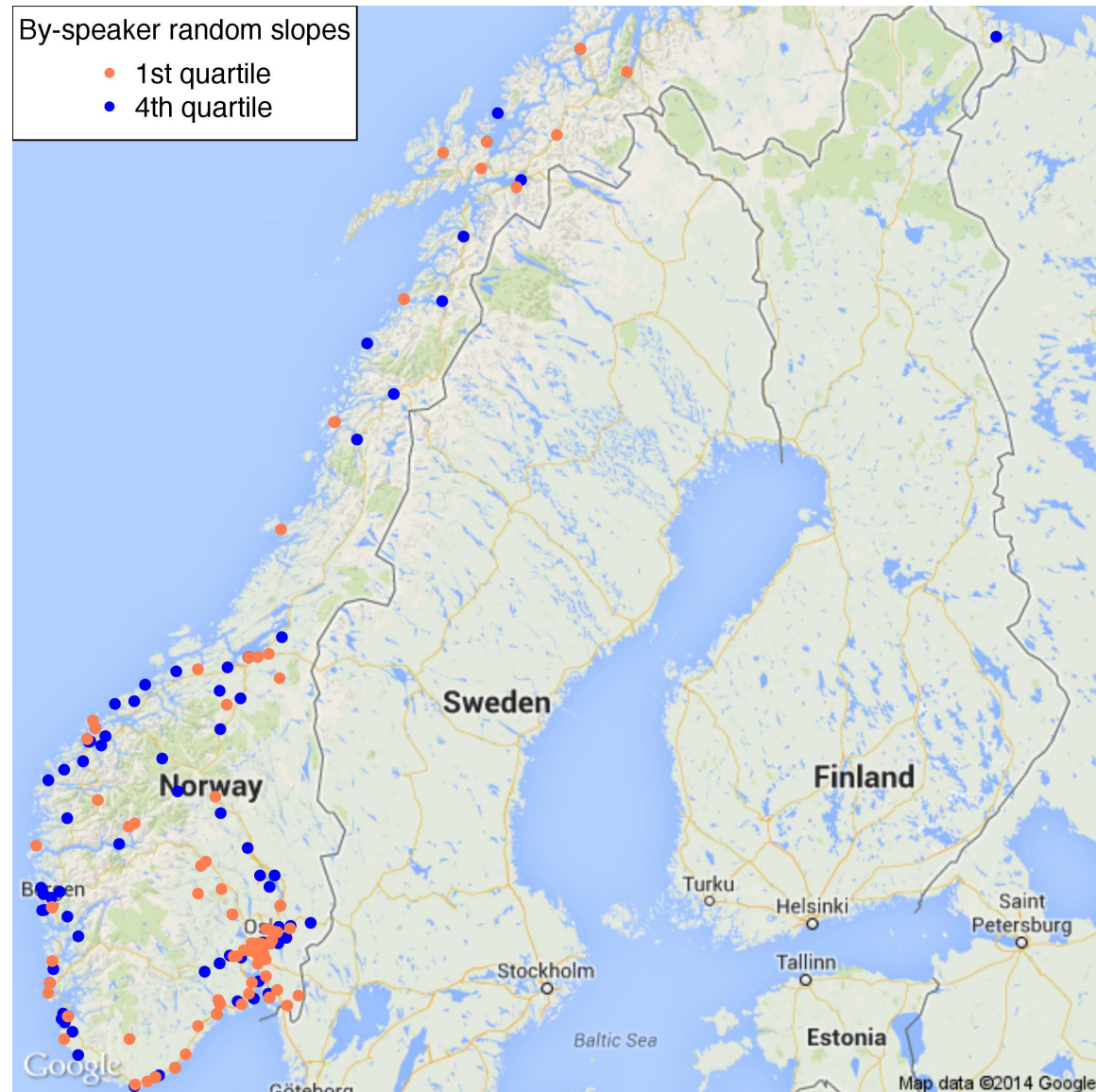
- By-speaker Theme-Goal vs. Goal-Theme contrast in active and passive contexts
 $r=.57$, $p=2.2e-16$



3. Norwegian

Results

- Tendency toward theme-goal orders in OS by participant hometown.
- No strong geographic effect—though some clustering of lower scores in west.



3. Norwegian

Staying in shape in Norway

Conclusions:

- No cross-speaker correlation in acceptance of theme-goal orders in the active (pre-OS or post-OS) and the passive.
- So theme-goal orders in active contexts appear not to feed theme-goal orders in passives,

- But high positive cross-speaker correlation between acceptance of inversion prior to OS and inversion after OS.
- So inversion (short theme-movement) within vP feeds inversion under OS.

3. Norwegian

Staying in shape in Norway

We propose:

- Norwegian results best expressed not in terms of locality but shape conservation following Sells (2002), Fox and Pesetsky (2005), Engels and Vikner (2014).

The ordering generalization is reminiscent of Holmberg's generalization:

[_{TP} V...OBJ ... [_{VP} ... ~~V~~ ~~OBJ~~]]

- a. [_{TP} ...Goal ...Theme [_{VP} ... ~~Goal~~ ... ~~Theme~~]]
- b. [_{TP} ...Theme...Goal [_{VP} ... ~~Theme~~ ... ~~Goal~~]]

3. Norwegian

Staying in shape in Norway

Fox and Pesetsky (2005):

- Precedence relations established phase by-phase. Extra-phasal movement cannot permute the linear order of two syntactic objects, since this would entail conflicting ordering relations.

[Phase-2P X Y ... [Phase-1P ~~X~~ ~~Y~~]]

*[Phase-2P Y X ... [Phase-1P ~~X~~ ~~Y~~]]

3. Norwegian

Staying in shape in Norway

Active contexts:

- Theme-goal orders in active contexts reflect optional movement of the Theme to an outer spec of Appl.

[_{VP} V [_{VP} V [_{AppIP} Theme [_{AppIP} Goal [_{Appl'} Appl Theme]]]]]

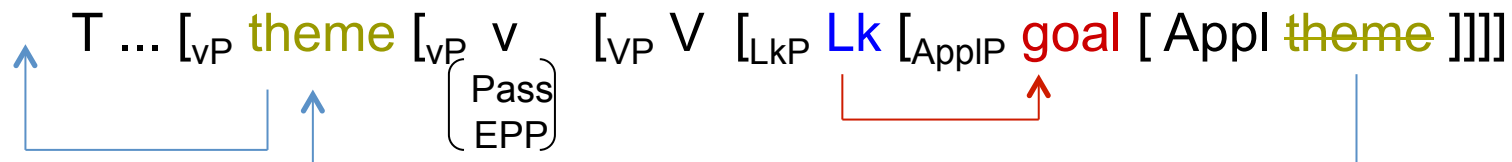
- In active but not passive contexts, little-v is a phase head (Chomsky, 2000). Transitive-v therefore freezes the order of arguments in its c-command domain.
- OS will preserve this derived order.
- This is a highly marginal, basically unacceptable operation in Norwegian.

3. Norwegian

Staying in shape in Norway

Passive contexts:

- Theme-passivisation is not fed by this short Theme movement but rather reflects variation in whether the “extra” probe in applicative structures is located on Appl or a Linker head above ApplP, where it probes the goal.
- In passives, *v* can't assign Case to, but can probe and attract the Theme across the deactivated Goal.



Conclusions so far

1. Passive symmetry facts in English and Scandinavian best modeled not in terms of locality, but a modified version of the Case-based approach.

Presence or absence of a Linker head.

2. OS argument ordering best modelled not in terms of locality, but rather in terms of shape conservation following Fox and Pesetsky (2005).

3. Swedish

Impression:

Theme passives are less acceptable in Swedish than in Norwegian, but more acceptable than in Danish.

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------------|
| (1) | Boka ble gitt meg.
the.book was given me | [Norwegian] |
| (2) | *Bogen blev givet mig.
the.book was given me | [Danish] |
| (3) | *?Boken gav-s mig.
the.book gave-PASS me | [Swedish] |

Norwegian has a Linker head above ApplP,
Danish doesn't.

What about Swedish?

4. Swedish

Holmberg & Platzack (1995: 219-220):

Theme passives are best in Swedish with compound verbs like *tilldela* 'award', *tillskriva* 'ascribe', *förära* 'award', *erbjuda* 'offer'

- (4) a. Detta uttryck brukar **tillskriva-s** Churchill.
this expression is.usually ascribe-PASS Churchill
- b. Varningen **tilldelade-s** honom för sent.
the.warning give-PASS him too late

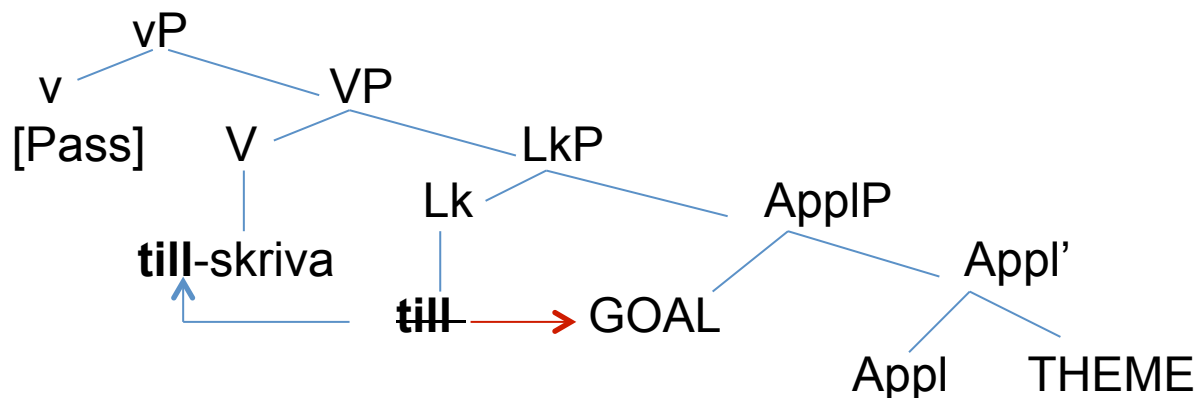
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Hypothesis: Swedish has a Linker head only as an accompaniment of certain verbs.

3. Swedish

The check the intuition regarding Swedish Theme-passives we did a Google search for the terms

“*gett-s mig*”, “*givit-s mig*”, “*gett-s mej*”, all varieties of ‘been given me’ in Swedish,

varying the verb, the object pronoun (‘me’ vs. ‘him’), and ‘me’ vs. ‘to me’, and subsequently the same for Danish and Norwegian.

Results:

There were quite a few hits (about 600).

However, about 90% of them are relatives.

... jag är oxå så tacksam över allt som *givits* *mej* [Swedish]

I am also so grateful for all that (has) give-PASS me

‘I’m also so grateful for all that has been given me’

3. Swedish

This is further confirmed by comparison with

gett-s *till mig*
give-PASS to me

No more than 40% relatives.

Further confirmation by comparison with Goal passives (searched by “givits den” ‘given it/the’ (eliminating irrelevant hits):

Many relatives (about 70%), but clearly fewer than with Theme passives.

Postal (2004) lists six genuine examples of Theme passives from American literary sources, all of them relatives.

*The young men crunched ice cubes and wolfed **cheese sandwiches brought them** by Chris Henry.*

3. Swedish

Significant because there is an explanation:

The Theme object in the relative circumvents Relativised Minimality because it moves by A-bar movement.

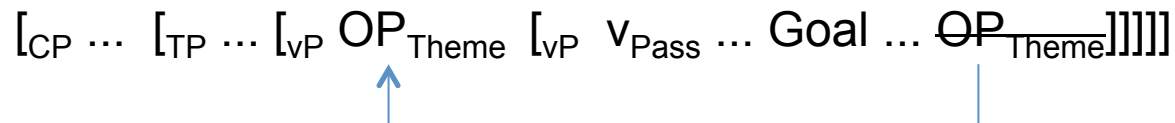
- In a regular ditransitive passive, v can probe the Theme, and its EPP feature can attract the Theme if and only if the Goal is assigned Case, by a P or a Linker.
- Swedish doesn't have any (abstract) Linker.
- In the object relative, Theme movement is not triggered by the EPP of v , but moves to the vP edge because it's a null Operator.

3. Swedish

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- Swedish doesn't have any (abstract) Linker.
- In the object relative, Theme movement is not triggered by the EPP of v , but moves to the vP edge because it's a null Operator.



So the Goal doesn't intervene.

Hypothesis: When the Theme is moved (by A-bar movement), the Goal can receive the “extra Case” from Appl.

4. *Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, English*

In Danish, Theme passives are very rare even in relatives.

Hits on Google are nearly all of them archaic, from the Bible or texts from the early 1900s or older.

while Goal passives are numerous.

In Norwegian, Theme passives are numerous (1310 hits on “ble gitt meg”, ‘was given me’).

Relatives are common, but no more than 50%.

Goal passives are numerous (12700 hits on “jeg ble gitt”)

4. Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, English

Norwegian:



Lk assigns the extra Case to the Goal, which gets fully deactivated, allowing passive v to probe and attract the Theme.

Swedish:

No Lk assigning Case to the Goal, so Theme can't be probed and attracted by v, across the Goal.

But if the Theme is A-bar moved to the vP edge, then Appl can assign the extra Case to the Goal.

Danish:

No Lk assigning Case to the Goal. Even A-bar movement of the Theme cannot ensure Case for the Goal.

Hence Goal passive is the only option.

4. *Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, English*

British English, Grammar 2 and 3 in Haddican & Holmberg (2012):
Like Norwegian.

Lk assigns Case to Goal in the passive.

In Grammar 3, A-movement of the Theme is possible.

British English, Grammar 1 in Haddican & Holmberg (2012):
Like Danish.

No Lk, no Theme passives.

Slightly archaic American English (?):

Like Swedish.

No Lk.

If the Theme A-bar moves in the passive, the Goal can get the extra Case.

Liverpool English (Biggs 2014):

They gave the book the teacher.

The book was given the teacher.

A covert preposition **to** in both actives and passives.

Conclusion 1: How to derive Theme passives

The Case-based view:

Theme passive OK if Case can be secured for the Goal.

The locality-based view:

Theme passives OK if movement of the Theme can circumvent Relativised Minimality.

Under an Agree-based theory of Case and movement, if you can secure Case for the Goal DP, then the Theme can be probed across the Goal, and move.

But also, if you can circumvent Relativised Minimality, for instance by A-bar movement, that may help to secure Case for the Goal.

Conclusion 2 (of the Norwegian investigation) : Movement is subject to shape conservation

Fox and Pesetsky (2005) were right.

Object Shift is subject to phase-by phase shape conservation.

Note: Our investigation provides a new kind of evidence for the shape conservation hypothesis

- The inverted order received a low score overall: It is basically unacceptable (before as well as after Object Shift) and almost certainly never heard.
- Speakers were judging two constructions they had never heard: Theme-Goal inversion before and after Object Shift.
- Speaker by speaker they assigned (almost) the same score to the two constructions.
- This can be understood if inversion after Object Shift requires inversion within vP, prior to Object Shift.

Acknowledgements

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