A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF WELSH PASSIVES
AND THEIR POLISH EQUIVALENTS

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1. Introduction

The present paper has a modest aim in view: to outline first Welsh, then Polish passive structures, and finally to contrast them; with a prospective teacher or interpreter/translator in mind.

Since the passive structures are part of a wider cover term in linguistics, namely diathesis, I shall start with defining the term. The diathesis is a relationship between a set of arguments implied by a predicate and the way of arranging/expressing these arguments in the final surface (formal) structure of the sentence. Needless to say, the concept of diathesis may be applied to predicates taking at least two arguments, not to mono-argument predicates (Grzegorczykowa *et al.* 1984: 136).

There is a natural hierarchy of arguments, which is usually determined by the inherent semantic features of the predicate and its arguments. This hierarchy manifests itself in the tendency for certain (types of) arguments to occupy specific positions in the syntactic structure of the sentence. Therefore, it is possible to talk of the unmarked diathesis with an agentive NP in topic/subject position, as in the active voice, or of the marked diathesis with e.g. patient or beneficient NP in the topic/subject position, as in the passive voice.

The passive voice may be defined as a set of formal/categorial, i.e. morphological and/or syntactic means used in order to mark differences in the hierarchy of the arguments of a predicate (verb), when there is a non-agentive NP in the topic/subject position.

2. The passive voice in Welsh

The passive voice in Welsh has two major constructions: an analytic/periphrastic one and a synthetic one. The analytic construction consists of the passive auxiliary *cael* in an appropriate tense form, the possessive adjective congruent with the patient NP in the subject position, and the main (lexical) verb in its verb-noun form.

2.1. *Cael* passive

One should bear in mind that Welsh is a VSO language and that it makes an extensive use of word initial mutations, as a result of which the actual word order and the morphological shape of the words in a sentence may slightly deviate from the description given above (i.e. *cael* + subj.NP-POSS.ADJ.+VN).

Examples:

(1) Cafodd   y   ci   ei   ladd   ar   y   ffordd.
     get+past   the   dog   his   killing   on   the   road
     'The dog got/was killed on the road.'
     (*cael* 'get', *lladd* 'kill', *ei* 'his' soft-mutates *lladd*, *y ci* and *ei* agree in person, number and gender)

(2) Mae'r   parti'n   cael   ei   gynnal   heno.
     be-3sg-pres+the   party+in(prt)   get   his   hold(ing)   tonight
     'The party is (being) held tonight.'

One should emphasize two agreements in these examples, one is between the passive subject and the possessive adjective, the other obtains between the passive subject and the finite verb (*cafodd* in (1) and *mae* in (2)). (In Welsh, pronominal subjects agree with finite verbs in person and number; the noun subjects agree only in person, but not in number).

2.2. *Wyd* passive

The synthetic Passive Voice is obtained by inflectional means, namely by the separate suffixal conjugation of the lexical verb, with the patient NP in the subject position (some grammarians are inclined to claim that the patient is still the object of the sentence, e.g. Awbery 1976). There are four temporal/aspectual endings: *-ir* for the present/future, *-id* for the imperfect (past continuous), *-wyd* for the perfect (simple past), and *-asid* for the pluperfect (past perfect). These endings are the same for each person and number; in other words there is no person and number differentiation and subsequently no argument-predicate grammatical agreement. That is probably why the synthetic variant is known as the Impersonal Passive.

Examples

(3) Rhybuddiwyd   y   bachgen.
     warn- *wyd* (pass-perf)   the   boy
     'The boy was/got warned.'
(4) Rhybuddiwyd   fi.
     warn-*wyd*   I
     'I was/got warned.'

What is interesting about impersonal passives in Welsh is the lack of mutation of the patient argument. Patient NPs are soft-mutated in the active voice with the synthetic tense of the verb, as in (5) (if the initial sound of the noun is subject to the mutation), even if the subject NP is absent, as in (6):

(5) Dalais   i   gath.
     caught-1sg-past   I   cat
     'I caught a cat.'
(6) Dalais gath.
(7) Dalwyd   cath.
     catch-*wyd* (pass-perf)   cat
     'A cat was/got caught.'

Sometimes, one more type of the passive construction in Welsh is mentioned. These are periphrastic structures with the impersonal form of the primary auxiliary *bod* 'be' in Welsh. The paradigm is *ydys* – present, *byddir* – future, *oeddid* – imperfective past, *buwyd* – perfect, *byddid* – conditional. The verb phrase that these forms build, thus, includes an impersonal form of *bod* + *yn* (particle) + VN (verbnoun), as in (8):

(8) Buwyd   yn   lladd   moch yma.
     used-to-be   in   killing   pigs   here
     'Pigs used to be killed here.'

The most important difference between the three types of Welsh passives is that the first two types discussed, that is the *cael* (periphrastic passive) as well as the synthetic passive of the lexical verb, share the potential for taking an agentive prepositional phrase

(9) Buodd   moch yn cael   eu   lladd   yma gan   y   cigydd.
     was-perf-3sg pigs   in   get(ting)   their killing   here with   the   butcher
     'Pigs were/got killed here by the butcher.'

(10) Lladdwyd   moch   yma gan   y   cigydd.
      kill-pass-perf   pigs   here   with   the   butcher
      translation the same as in (9)

while the last, third type, formed with the impersonal passive of *bod* 'be' cannot take the agentive phrase (Thomas 1967: 162):

(11) *Buwyd   yn   lladd   moch   yma   gan   y   cigydd.
      be-pass-perf in   killing   pigs   here   with   the   butcher
      'Pigs were (being) killed/were getting killed here by the butcher.'

3. The passive voice in Polish

A Polish university grammar (Grzegorczykowa et al. 1984: 142) enumerates passive constructions which could be put into three major types: *być* 'be' + Passive Participle (hence *być* passives), *zostać* 'become' + Passive Participle (hence *zostać* passives), Active Main Verb + particle *się* 'self' (hence *się* passives).

3.1. *Być* passive

Taking into account aspectual distinctions, it is possible, following Grzegorczykowa et al. (1984) to distinguish the following passive voice constructions in the Polish language:

1a- *być*-synthetic + imperfective passive participle

(12) Referat jest przepisywany przez Piotra.
Paper is rewritten-imperf by Peter
'The paper is being rewritten by Peter.'

1b- *byæ*-synthetic + perfective passive participle

(13) Referat jest przepisany.
Paper is rewritten-perf.
'The paper has been rewritten.'
(Compare German *wird geschrieben* vs. *ist geschrieben*.)

1c- *bywa* (*być*-analytical) + imperfective passive participle

(14) Referat bywa przepisywany.
'The paper is sometimes/often being rewritten.'

1d- *bywa* (*być*-analytical) + perfective passive participle

(15) Referat bywa przepisany.
'The paper is sometimes/often rewritten.' or
'The paper happens to be rewritten now and again.'

3.2. *Zostać* passive

(16) Referat został przepisany.
paper became rewritten-perf.
'The paper was/got rewritten.'

2b- *zostaje* 'becomes' + perfective passive participle

(17) Referat zostaje przepisany.
'The paper becomes rewritten.'

3.3. *Się* passive

The active voice main verb 3rd person plus *się* 'self' this is an imperfective construction with the patient NP as the subject of the construction (i.e. in the nominative case – see (18a, b), not to be confused with the *się* active voice impersonal construction in (19) with the patient NP in the accusative)

(18a) Referat przepisuje się dobrze.
paper rewrites self well
'Rewriting the paper goes well.' or
'The paper rewrites well.'
(cf. The book sells well.)
(18b) Szkoła buduje się szybko.
school-nom. builds self fast
'The school builds fast.'
(19) *Szkołę* *buduje* *się* *szybko.*
school-acc. builds self fast
'(They/One) build(s) school fast.'
(This is an active voice sentence without subject NP.)

The seven subtypes of the Polish passive voice may be regrouped into two sets: the personal passives and the impersonal ones. The difference between the two new groups is marked by their co-occurrence possibilities with the agentive NPs. The six subtypes (i.e. the *być* passives and the *zostać* passives) may include the prepositional agentive phrase (although the result, in some cases, may seem to be clumsy):

(20) Referat jest przepisany przez Piotra.
'The paper is rewritten by Peter.'
(21) Referat został przepisany przez Piotra.
'The paper has been/was/got written by Peter.'

Therefore, these two types, the *być* passives and *zostać* passives can be called the personal passives, while the last type, i.e. the *się* passives cannot co-occur with the agentive phrases:

(22) *Szkoła* *buduje* *się* *szybko* *przez* *uczniów.*
school builds self fast by pupils

and because of that one could attach a conventional label to them of impersonal passives. (However, the Welsh impersonal passives and the Polish impersonal passives would then mean different things).

The whole issue of "Passiveness" is highly debatable. A very thorough and cognitively profound as well as informative study can be found in Stalmaszczyk (1992), who deals with the issue of Middle Voice constructions in English. I hope

that the present paper will further contribute to the cross-linguistic comparison of voice (see also Fox and Hopper 1994).

4. The Welsh and Polish passives juxtaposed

The preceding separate brief descriptions of respectively the Welsh and Polish Passive Voice suggest obvious similarities. However, before they are stated explicitly a few general remarks should be made.

The Welsh types of the passive are not equally common. The *cael* 'get' passives are in common use in all the dialects of the spoken language. The impersonal types (whether of lexical verbs or of the primary auxiliary *bod* 'be') are almost non-existent in the spoken language, they have been used, or perhaps even, were used, in the standard literary, written language.

The Polish passives, although used both in the spoken as well as the written language, are not all equally frequent.

When one wants to render the passive meaning of a passive construction of one language into another language, the syntactic structure need not be passive in the target language. There are transitive verbs with passive meaning (e.g. *receive*) which form an active voice sentence with a patient NP as its subject. These lexical passives are disregarded in this paper.

Here, one should mention alongside Stalmaszczyk's profound study also a cross-linguistic treatment of voice by Talmy Givón (volume II, 1990).

5. The Comparison – Conclusions

The Welsh language has three types of the passive: one analytic with *cael* 'get', the second synthetic with the main verb (-noun) passive inflexion, the third one is analytic with the auxiliary verb *bod* 'be' having impersonal passive inflexion.

Similarly in Polish – there are three main types of passive structures: one analytic with the auxiliary *być* 'be' the second with the auxiliary *zostać* 'become' also analytic, both types have aspectual subtypes; the third type is formed with the active voice lexical verb plus the particle *się* 'self' both constituting the predicator of the passive/patient subject.

The Welsh *cael* passives can be rendered in Polish by both the *być* passives as well as *zostać* passives

(23)   Mae   Siôn   wedi   cael   ei   guro   gan   ei   wraig o.
       is   John   after   get(ing)   his   beating   by   his   wife   he
       'John has been beaten (up) by his wife.'

(24)   Jaś   był/został/?jest   pobity   przez   żonę.
       John   was/got/is   beaten   by   wife

with or without the agentive phrase, depending on the source sentence. However, a certain preference may be indicated. Namely, where the resultative meaning (or per-

fective) comes to the fore, then the Welsh *cael* construction had better be translated by Polish *zostać* passive.

The Welsh synthetic impersonal passives are best translated with the Polish *być* passives, especially when they are not accompanied by the agentive NPs; although that solution may turn out to be my personal predilection. One will have to remember about the temporal/aspectual equivalencies between the two languages, of course (see, e.g. Skrzypiec, 1991). These may necessitate other Polish constructions, especially the impersonal active voice forms ending in *-no, -to*, which may be forms of choice on a par with *zostać* passives

(25)   Addysgwyd   Andreas   Yr   iaith   Wyddeleg.·
       teach-pass-perf.   Andrew   the   language   Irish
       'Andrew was taught the Irish language.'

(26)   Andrzej został nauczony/?był nauczony irlandzkiego

(27)   Andrzeja (na)uczono irlandzkiego

(where *został nauczony* means 'became taught (perfective)'; *był nauczony* 'was taught (perfective)'; *Andrzeja* is the accusative form of *Andrzej* 'Andrew'; *(na)uczono* is the active voice form (requires the accusative NP) with passive meaning and with/without perfective prefix *na-*).

The Welsh impersonal auxiliary *bod* 'be' passives, since they cannot co-occur with the agentive NPs, could be translated by the Polish *się* 'self' passives, although the agentless *być* and *zostać* passives are likely do the job equally well.

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