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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Gutnish *si*-passive

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**Abstract**

The Gutnish-specific *si*-passive combines BE or BECOME with a participle, directly followed by the element *si*. Unlike regular periphrastic passives, *si*-passives focus on the process rather than the result, opening up the construction for unergatives, which are unattested in the regular type. However, *si*-passives are quite limited when it comes to the subject. Internal arguments can only become subjects if they strand a preposition or a particle. Otherwise, the subject is expletive. I argue that *si* is part of the participle ending in Asp°, where its phi-features block agreement with the internal argument, trapping it *in situ* and depriving Asp° of a link to the result of the event. Originally a reflexive, *si* was reanalysed as a marker of the participle rather than the infinitive in contexts where conjugational changes had made them ambiguous. These changes never affected Fårö, where the *si*-passive is thus correctly predicted to be absent.

**Keywords:** Gutnish; impersonal passive; morphosyntactic change; periphrastic passive; participles; *si*-passive; subject promotion; Swedish; syntactic grammaticalization

## 1. Introduction

In the traditional dialect of the Swedish island of Gotland (Gutnish), there is a periphrastic passive construction involving a reflexive element, *si*, appearing directly to the right of the neuter form of the past participle, as shown in (1a–b). This *si*-passive, which appears to be unique for Gutnish, has never been seriously considered before, either within traditional dialectology or in more recent studies of the passive in Scandinavian. This article therefore aims to present a thorough description of the Gutnish *si*-passive, as well as an analysis of its semantic and structural properties, primarily in relation to the regular periphrastic passive.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) | a. | Kånne | gynnar | nå | kumm | upp | pa | säin | ställar |
| | | *barley.DEF* | *begin.PRS* | *now* | *come.INF* | *up* | *on* | *REFL.POSS* | *place.PL* |

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de sum jär *sat* *si* för en fjortn dagar sine
*it* *that* *be.PRS* *sow.PTCP.N* *SI* *for* *a* *fourteen* *day.PL* *since*
'Barley is now beginning to sprout in some places, that is, such barley that was sown a fortnight ago.'
(Karlsson 2012:334)

b. De bläir just int mik arbet *gärt* *si*
*EXPL* *become.PRS* *precisely* *not* *much* *work* *do.PTCP.N* *SI*
nå um dagen
*now* *about* *day.DEF*
'Not much work is being done during the day now.'
(Karlsson 2012:288)

As can be seen in (1), the *si*-passive may occur with two types of auxiliary: either with BE (as with *jär* 'is' in (1a)) or BECOME (cf. *bläir* 'becomes' in (1b)). The subject is most often the expletive *de* 'it' (1b), but in some cases it may correspond to the internal argument of the main verb, for instance in the form of a relativized subject (1a). The *si* element is homophonous with the reflexive pronoun *si* in examples like *ha kambar si* 'she combs her hair (lit. herself)'. Still, in (1), *si* clearly does not function as a reflexive. Instead, the combination of participle and *si* has more or less the same meaning as the simple participle in the regular periphrastic passive when it is used in similar contexts; see (2a–b).

(2) a. Ja, de sum jär jäslairå ellar jäsjård mår
*yes* *it* *that* *be.PRS* *ferment.mud* *or* *ferment.soil* *feel.PRS*
int bra av iss heldar, de sum jär *sat*
*not* *good* *of* *this* *either,* *it* *that* *be.PRS* *sow.PTCP.N*
me ryg ellar vaite
*with* *rye* *or* *wheat*
'Yes, land consisting of silt mud or silt soil does not prosper from this either, such land that is sown with rye or wheat.'
(Karlsson 2012:331)

b. därme så blai de int *gärt* någ
*there.with* *so* *become.PST* *EXPL* *not* *do.PTCP.N* *any*
mair den dagen
*more* *that* *day.DEF*
'Thereby, nothing more was done on that day.'
(Karlsson 2012:103)

However, there is a subtle difference in the aspectual implications of the *si*-passive in (1) on the one hand and the regular periphrastic passive in (2) on the other. Crucially, *si* highlights the process rather than the result. Thus, in (1a), the focus is on the actual sowing that took place a fortnight ago, whereas in (2a), the focus is instead on the present state of the land as a product of such sowing. As can be seen, this difference in focus is manifested in the reference of the subject: in (1a), the relativized subject corresponds to the seeds, but in (2a) to the land. Further, the *si*-passive with BECOME tends to favour habitual contexts (as in (1b)), where the processual nature of regular work is foregrounded. Purely resultative cases like (2b),

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where the end-point of doing chores is in focus, instead tend to be expressed with the regular BECOME passive.

There are also contexts where the *si*-construction lacks a regular counterpart. Consider (3a) below, where *si* combines with the participle of two unergative verbs. In cases such as these, there is no regular periphrastic counterpart. Instead, the only possible paraphrase is with the morphological passive, shown in (3b); the morphological passive is formed by a combination of an active verb form, in the case at hand *ringg-dä* 'ring-PST', and the suffix *-s*.

(3) a. att ´ä bläir int *kläpp* *si* u *ringg* *si*
*that* *EXPL* *become.PRS* *not* *toll.PTCP.N* *SI* *and* *ring.PTCP.N* *SI*
för den döde
*for* *the* *dead.DEF*
'that there will be no tolling and ringing for the deceased'
(Karlsson 2000:356)

b. en kväld när de *ringgdäs* aftringgningg
*one* *night* *when* *EXPL* *ring.PST.PASS* *evening.ringing*
'one night at the evening bell'
(Karlsson 2000:142)

I will argue that the *si*-passive involves a participle ending consisting of the original neuter participle ending merged with the *si* element. This structure is the result of reanalysis of the reflexive object *si* (in VP) as part of the participle morphology between VP and vP (in an AspP, following Fábregas & Putnam 2020). It accounts for the durative nature of the *si*-construction (compared to the regular periphrastic passive) as well as the restrictions on the subject. Historically, the *si*-passive is quite recent, and its emergence appears to be linked to changes in participle morphology taking place during the eighteenth century.[1]

This article is outlined as follows. Section 2 shows the geographic spread of the *si*-passive, based on attestations in dictionaries and archival records. Section 3 presents the Gutnish corpus, and Section 4 introduces Gutnish passives in general and participles in particular. Section 5 contains the empirical bulk of the article; here, I lay out the details in the usage of the *si*-passive in the Gutnish corpus. Section 6 presents the syntactic analysis of the *si*-construction, and Section 7 seeks its origin. Finally, Section 8 contains the conclusions.

## 2. Geographical distribution of the *si*-passive

Map 1 shows the location of Gotland in the Baltic Sea. Map 2 shows Gotland in more detail. Here, I indicate with map pins all parishes (represented by the position of the parish church) where the *si*-passive has been attested. Most attestations are drawn from the general dictionary of Gutnish (GO), but I have also used the dictionary of the dialect of the parish of Lau (OL) as well as two unpublished field reports kept at the ISOF archive in Uppsala (Wessén 1916, Carlsson 1918).[2] As can be seen, both the northernmost part of the area (including the island of Fårö) and the western parts of the main island (including the area around the main town of Visby) lack attestations. As for the western parts close to Visby, they are generally

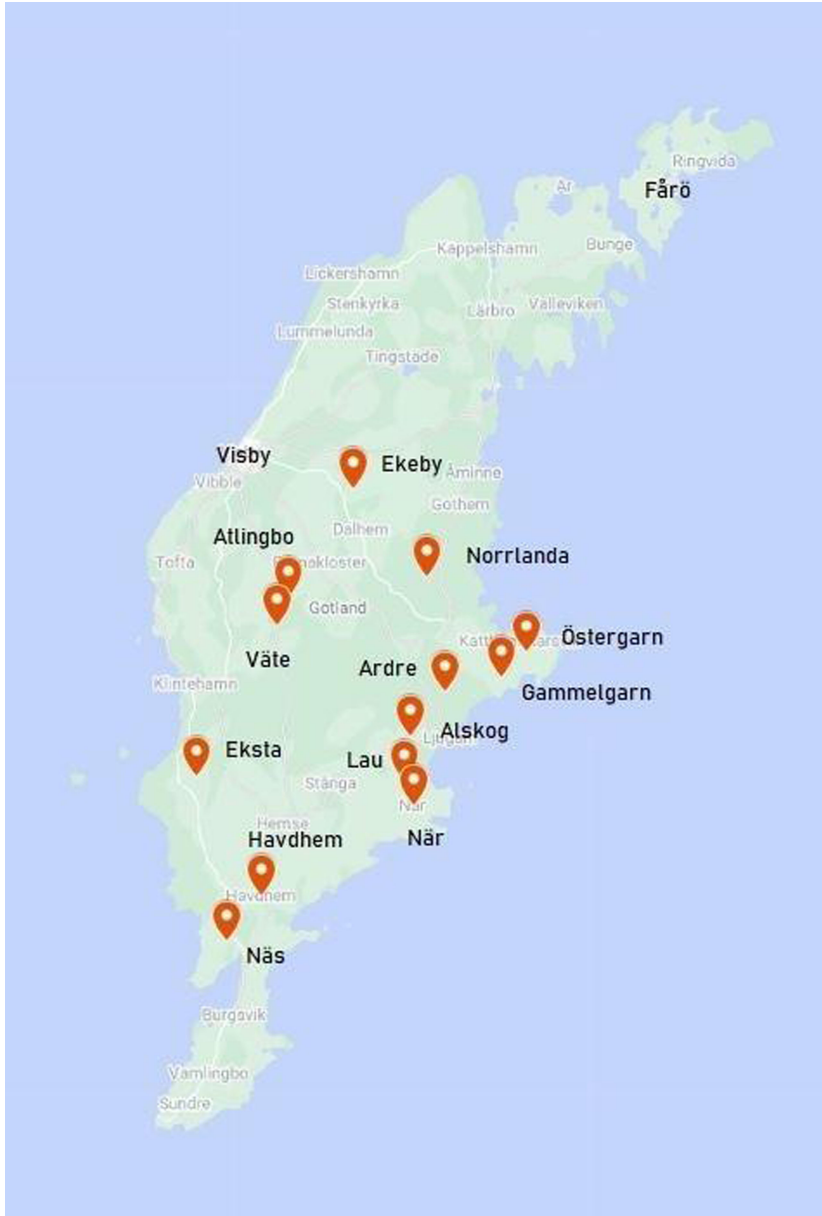
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**Map 1.** Gotland in the Baltic Sea.




**Map 2.** Gotlandic parishes where the *si*-passive has been attested.

more poorly documented than the more rural southeast. Thus, we cannot exclude that the *si*-passive existed here, although it has not been recorded. For this possibility speaks the fact that Carlsson, in passing, notes that the *si*-passive exists all over the main island (Carlsson 1918:3–4).

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As for Fårö, Carlsson refrains from making any claims: he simply states that Fårö is beyond his knowledge (Carlsson 1918:4). In GO, there are no *si*-passives from Fårö. Naturally, it is always difficult to draw certain conclusions from the absence of data. However, Fårö Gutnish, representing the most archaic of the Gutnish varieties, has received quite intense scholarly attention from the mid 1800s onwards, including a survey of verbal morphology by Säve & Lindström (1854). I therefore find it very unlikely that the Fårö variety has ever had the *si*-passive, since it would surely have been documented in that case. This presumed lack of *si*-passives in Fårö is also supported by the testimony of the most diligent student of the Fårö variety in recent years, Kristina Hagren (see e.g. Hagren 2002, 2007). Although being well aware of the *si*-passive, she maintains (p.c.) that she has never heard it in Fårö.

## 3. The Gutnish corpus: Jakob Karlsson's letters

To be able to study the usage of the *si*-passive, I have compiled a corpus consisting of letters written in Gutnish by Jakob Karlsson.[3] Karlsson was born in the parish of Lau in southeastern Gotland (see Map 2) in 1857, where he lived as a farmer all his life (he died in 1933). In 1889, he started writing letters in his Lau dialect to linguist Mattias Klintberg, whose efforts eventually led to a comprehensive dictionary of the Lau dialect (OL, mentioned in Section 2). Karlsson's letter writing continued until 1929. The original letters, 262 in total, are kept in the Visby branch of the Swedish National archives, and they amount to no less than 4263 folio pages and 35 smaller pages (Karlsson 2000:8, 21). The first 59 of Karlsson's letters have been transcribed and published in two volumes (Karlsson 2000, 2012). It is the contents of these two volumes that make up the corpus of Gutnish used in this article: the first 59 letters span from 1889 to 1895 and consist of approximately 530,000 words. In practice, to be able to perform searches in the text (see further Section 5.1), I have used an electronic version of the two volumes, which has been generously provided by Gutamålsgillet, a local non-profit organization promoting the Gutnish dialect (see http://www.gutamal.org/).

Compared to the original handwritten letters by Karlsson, the edited version is somewhat modified. For instance, intermediate headings have been added, the text has been divided into paragraphs, and orthographic measures have been taken to help readers, e.g. by adding punctuation and harmonizing the use of capital letters. However, and crucially, 'grammatical errors have . . . been left unaltered' (Karlsson 2000:10).[4] In other words, I have no reason to believe that the editorial efforts have affected the usefulness of the text for grammatical purposes.

The corpus of Karlsson's letters constitutes my primary source of Gutnish data throughout the article. More specifically, it is on the language use of this single informant that I base my analysis of the *si*-passive outlined in Section 6. I supplement my own excerpts with examples from Karlsson occurring in OL. As for more occasional examples of the *si*-passive that I have found in other sources (see Section 2), they all fall within the boundaries of the construction, as it is used by Karlsson; see the Appendix for quantitative data.

The more recent development of the *si*-passive lies beyond the scope of this article; I leave this task to future research.

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## 4. Passives and participles in Gutnish

### *4.1 Gutnish regular passives in a Scandinavian context*

Setting aside the *si*-construction, Gutnish passives are very similar to passives in standard Swedish. Like Mainland Scandinavian languages in general, Gutnish has a periphrastic passive, formed either with BECOME, giving an episodic reading (see (4a) below), or with BE, giving a stative reading (see (4b)). In addition, there is a morphological passive, formed with the suffix *-s*; see (4c). As can be seen in (4a–b), the participle agrees with the subject in number and, in the singular, also in gender: the *-e* in *laidsagne* in (4a) is thus triggered by the plural subject *vör*, and in (4b) *-ar* in *säldar* agrees with the masculine singular noun *stoln*. The more precise nature of the Gutnish agreement endings in participles is the topic of Section 4.2.

(4) a. den 4'd April *blai* vör av Sällmars fålk
*the 4th April become.PST we by S.POSS people*
*laidsagne* upp till en kalkkaften sum hait Grantjon
*guide.PTCP.PL up to a chalk.captain that was.called G*
'April 4, we were guided by S's people up to a lime-stone captain named G.'
(Karlsson 2012:217)

b. när pastår Kalstrum kåm u fikk säi
*when pastor K come.PST and get.PST see.INF*
att stoln *var* *säldar*
*that chair.DEF.M.SG be.PST sell.PTCP.M.SG*
'when pastor K came and saw that the chair was sold'
(Karlsson 2012:195)

c. Annas vanlie bandi *gärs* pa de väise
*A.POSS common.DEF. ribbon.PL.DEF make.PRS.PASS on that way.DEF*
'Anna's ordinary ribbons are made in that way.'
(Karlsson 2012:195)

As emphasized in the previous literature (e.g. Hulthén 1944:192–194, Laanemets 2012:28–32, Engdahl 2018, Faarlund 2019:174–176, Fábregas & Putnam 2020:67, 69; see also Larsson & Petzell 2021:27–29), Swedish stands out among the Mainland Scandinavian languages in favouring the *s*-passive in all tenses. More specifically, Swedish prefers *s*-passives even in the past tense and the tenses formed with auxiliary HAVE and the supine (i.e. perfects and pluperfects), where the morphological passive is highly marginal in Danish and Norwegian. Gutnish patterns with Swedish in this respect.

Consequently, there are plenty of Gutnish *s*-forms of the supine, one of which is given in (5a) below, as well as past tense *s*-forms as in (5b). Now, consider the Swedish and Norwegian equivalents to the examples in (5). In Swedish, the *s*-passive is the preferred strategy in both contexts, as shown in (6). In contrast, Norwegian has the periphrastic passive; see (7).

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(5) a. De har nå *fuskäts* ettar vass skuldi jär
*EXPL have.PRS now research.SUP.PASS after whose blame.DEF be.PRS*
'People have now looked into who is to blame.'
(Karlsson 2012:270)

b. när ja kåmm ör körku u äut pa körkvalln,
*when I come.PST out.of church.DEF and out on church.field.DEF*
u påstn *daildäs* äut,
*and mail.DEF deliver.PST.PASS out*
'when I came out of church and onto the field, and the mail was delivered'
(Karlsson 2000:300)

(6) a. det har nu *forskats* (Swedish)
*EXPL have.PRS now research.SUP.PASS*

b. posten *delades* ut
*mail.DEF deliver.PST.PASS out*

(7) a. det har nå *blitt* *forsket* (Norwegian)
*EXPL have.PRS now become.SUP research.SUP*

b. posten *ble* *delt* ut
*mail.DEF become.PST deliver.SUP out*

In sum, Gutnish employs all the passive strategies that are known to occur in Mainland Scandinavian, but the morphological strategy is clearly the unmarked one. Although Gutnish is thus on a par with standard Swedish (cf. (5) with (6)), it is not likely that the similarity is an effect of Gutnish having adapted to the standard language. Instead, the dominance of the *s*-passive falls neatly into the geographical pattern identified by Holm (1952:170–171), who concludes that eastern and especially southeastern Swedish dialects are particularly prone to resorting to morphological passives.

### *4.2 Weak and strong participles in Gutnish*

In (4a) above, the form of the participle ending deviates from what we find in most Scandinavian varieties (including standard Swedish). The form in question, *laidsag-n-e*, is the plural form of the passive participle, which can be compared with standard Swedish *ledaga-d-e*. Consider also the *s*-form of the supine *känn-ä-s* in (8) below, which differs from the corresponding standard Swedish supine *kän-t-s*.

(8) ja de har *kännäs* sum um brauste
*yes EXPL have.PST feel.SUP.PASS as if chest.DEF*
har vart hailt rat
*have.PRS be.SUP entirely raw*
'Yes, it has felt like my chest was wide open.'
(Karlsson 2012:382)

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What the forms *laidsagne* and *kännäs* reveal is that verbs of the weak conjugations (first and second in the cases at hand) do not form participles with a dental affix involving *d* and *t* (like standard Swedish), but instead the *n*-based suffix of the strong paradigms. As can be seen, it is clear that the *n*-suffix is present in *laidsag**n**e*, less so, however in *kännäs*; this form therefore deserves a comment. In standard Swedish, the *ä* of the ending corresponds to *-et*, which is the neuter version of the *n*-suffix: cf. the two standard Swedish examples in (9).

(9) a. fåret blev *riv-et* av vargen (Swedish)
*sheep.DEF.N.SG* *become.PST* *claw-PTCP.N.SG* *by* *wolf.DEF*

b. baggen blev *riv-en* av vargen
*ram.DEF.C.SG* *become.PST* *claw-PTCP.C.SG* *by* *wolf.DEF*

'The sheep/the ram was clawed by the wolf.'

By contrast, in Gutnish, word final *-t* (regardless of morphological status) is always deleted when it is preceded by an unstressed vowel (Gustavson 1948:207). The form *kännäs* is thus derived by deletion of final *-t* from an underlying *kännät*, to which the *s*-suffix is then added.

Now, we have concluded that the inflection pattern of strong participles appears to be spreading to the weak conjugations in Gutnish. However, if we consider the entire verbal paradigm, the diachronic distribution of weak and strong forms is less straightforward. For instance, weak forms even appear to be gaining ground over time in the past tense; see Jordan (2023) for details. In the following, I address the shifts in participle morphology only, focusing in particular on the neuter form since this is directly relevant to the *si*-passive.

In the corpus, both originally weak and new strong forms of participles occur. Besides new strong forms like *laidsagne* and *kännäs*, we thus find weak *gärt* (in e.g. (1b)) rather than *gärä*, and weak *säldar* (in (4b)) rather than *säln*. OL certainly maintains that the strong *n*-suffix has become the general participle ending in the Lau dialect (vol. IV:1839). Nevertheless, it is clear from the paradigms given in OL (vol. IV:1839–1844) that weak forms and new strong forms live side by side, often even varying within the same lexeme, e.g. *kokän*/*kåuktar* ('boiled') *naikän*/*naiktar* ('denied'), *saän*/*sadär* ('sown') (vol. IV:1845). Apparently, the strong participle endings have spread to weak verbs all over Gotland. In GO, it is thus stated that '[n]owadays [i.e. in 1945], in Gotland proper, the strong form has replaced the weak one: *friestn* frestad [i.e. "tempted"], *lastn* lastad [i.e. "loaded"], *hitn* hittad [i.e. "found"] etc.' (vol. II:LII; cf. however Jordan 2023 for a less categorical account). The wording 'Gotland proper', in Swedish *det egentliga Gotland*, is crucial. It refers to the main Gotlandic island, explicitly excluding Fårö. In other words, the spread of the strong forms never reached Fårö, where participles instead remained more similar to standard Swedish.

The Fårö dialect also patterns with standard Swedish in upholding a formal difference between neuter passive participles and non-agreeing active participles (supines) in the strong conjugation classes. By contrast, the other Gutnish varieties lack this distinction, as I show in (10) below with the originally strong verb 'drink', where the neuter participle and the supine coincide.[5] As we see here, the ending is

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identical in the infinitive (*-ä*) and in the neuter participle/supine (*-ä*), the original final *-t* in the latter case, as mentioned before, having been deleted for phonological reasons; the underlying form is given within parentheses. Still, the infinitive is distinct from the participle/supine, since in the originally strong paradigms, there is a difference between the present stem vowel, in the case at hand *i*, which is used in the infinitive, and the past stem vowel, here *u*, which is used in the participle.

(10) originally strong inflection
neutr. part./sup.: *drukk-ä* (<*drukk-ät*)
infinitive: *drikk-ä*

In the originally weak inflection classes, the difference between infinitives and participles/supines is encoded only in the ending: we have *-ä* in the former case and *-t* in the latter, as shown in (11a) with the verb for 'dig'. Here, the participle ending is not preceded by a vowel and is therefore intact. However, as the strong inflection takes over, neuter *-t* ends up in a position where it is indeed deleted, as shown in (11b). Given that stem vowel variation plays no role in the weak paradigms, the ambiguity is therefore expanded to including also the infinitive.

(11) a. weak inflection
neutr. part./sup.: *grav-t*
infinitive: *grav-ä*

b. new strong inflection
neutr. part./sup.: *grav-ä* (<*grav-ät*)
infinitive: *grav-ä*

So, in the end, the spread of the strong participle inflection into the weak paradigms creates forms that are triply ambiguous, between the neuter participle (*gravä*), the supine (*gravä*), and the infinitive (*gravä*) as in (11b). In Section 7, I propose that this relatively new (and increasing) ambiguity has led to the emergence of the *si*-passive, initially as a strategy to separate infinitives from neuter participles. Seeing that the Fårö dialect is unaffected by the development towards more ambiguity, the striking lack of *si*-passives from Fårö (see Section 2) gets a natural explanation.

## 5. Jakob Karlsson's use of the *si*-passive

In this section, I present my investigation of the *si*-passive in the Gutnish corpus. In Section 5.1, I outline the excerption method. The results are presented in detail in Section 5.2, and then summarized in Section 5.3.

### *5.1 Retrieving examples*

As stated in Section 3, I have used an electronic version of the two editions of letters written by Jakob Karlsson between 1889 and 1895. In the data file, I have tried to find all examples of the *si*-passive by performing various searches. To get a selection of examples to work with manually, I have searched for all possible neuter participle endings directly followed by *si*. Weakly inflected participles that end in a *-t* with no vowel before it (e.g. *gärt*) are easy to retrieve since the ending is always intact. By contrast, participles where the *-t* is preceded by a vowel and therefore

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deleted (e.g. *gravät*>*gravä*) are much harder to collect. This follows from the fact that the *ä*-ending is often deleted too when it precedes a word that begins with a consonant like *si*.[6] Consequently, a sequence like *gravä si* does not occur in the corpus but instead appears like this: *grav si*. Thus, to be able to find combinations of participles ending in a deleted *-ä*, as it were, I have had to search for words ending in any consonant directly followed by *si*. Since the searches returned many false positives, I went through all hits and identified the *si*-passives manually.

Although I have certainly aimed at finding all examples of *si*-passives in the corpus, I could of course have missed some examples when going through the search results. Therefore, I have also browsed through all instances of *si* in the corpus, not least to ensure that I have not missed any unexpected uses of the *si*-passive that the searches for combinations of participle endings preceding a *si* could not yield. However, I have found nothing that indicates that the construction is fundamentally different than previous documentations have indicated: passive *si* is indeed restricted to contexts where it appears to the right of the neuter form of the past participle.

As for other types of passive examples, my aim has not been to obtain a complete set of examples. Instead, the regular passives function as points of comparison in order to better understand the role that the *si*-passive plays in the passive system. I have collected my regular examples in different ways. To retrieve regular periphrastic passives, I have searched for various combinations of a passive auxiliary (i.e. BE or BECOME) and the neuter pronoun *de*, and to find *s*-passives, I have simply gone through lists of words ending in *-s*.

### 5.2 Results

The various searches in the corpus (see Section 5.1 for details) have yielded 58 examples of *si*-passives. Also, 21 additional examples from Jakob Karlsson occurring in OL have been included in the sample. Below, I address these in total 79 examples in detail. How common the *si*-passive is in relation to the regular periphrastic passive is hard to specify, since it depends on what selection one compares it with. Amongst periphrastic passives in general, the *si* version is of course quite marginal, since, due to subject limitations, it is more or less restricted to impersonal constructions.

The more precise nature of the subject limitation is the topic of Section 5.2.1, and in Section 5.2.2, I deal with the main verb and its non-subject arguments. When we consider impersonal periphrastic passives in general, it is quite clear that the version involving *si* and the regular type satisfy different needs. The *si*-passive describes processes, while in the regular construction, the result is instead in focus. I consider this contrast in Section 5.2.3. Further, in Section 5.2.4, I compare periphrastic passives in Gutnish and standard Swedish, concluding that the higher frequency in BE passives in Gutnish is directly related to the *si*-construction. Finally, Section 5.3 summarizes the results.

Sometimes, but not always, I refer to specific numbers when describing various uses of the *si*-passive. To access all numbers, the reader is referred to Tables A1–A4 in the Appendix, where the occasional examples of *si*-passives that occur in other sources (see Section 2) are included for comparison.

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*5.2.1 The subject in* si*-passives*

Out of the 79 examples of *si*-passives in my sample, 63 have an expletive subject as in (12).

(12) *de* järr *ådlä* *si* hail flankar sum har vart
*EXPL* *be.PRS* *cultivate.PTCP.N.* *SI* *whole* *flanks* *that* *have.PRS* *be.SUP*
äutmärktar grannar aikskog förr
*excellent* *grand* *oak.forest* *before*
'People are cultivating whole flanks that were fine oak forests in the past.'
(Karlsson 2012:127)

Although expletive subjects are clearly the dominant subject type, there are 16 *si*-examples that do not have an expletive subject. These exceptional cases fall into three subgroups. First, there are eight *si*-examples where the subject is a noun phrase, as in (13) below. In all these cases, the subject either corresponds to the complement of a preposition that is stranded in the VP (e.g. *me* 'with' in (13a)), or to the internal argument of a particle verb (as with *avdailt*, lit. 'off-sectioned', in (13b)).

(13) a. *Äutdäikninggi* *me* *Lausmöir* järr *gynt* *si* me
*dyking.DEF.F* *with* *Lau.marsh* *be.PRS* *begin.PTCP.N* *SI* *with*
nå i ladi
*now* *in* *spring*
'The dyking of Lau marsh has begun now in spring.'
(Karlsson 2012:336)

b. *Släku* järr nå *avdailt* *si*
*sea.weed.DEF.F* *be.PRS* *now* *off.section.PTCP.N* *SI*
'The partition of sea weed (i.e. as a fertilizer) has now taken place.'
(OL, vol. 4:1845)

Note that the form of the participle is the same here as in the examples where the subject is an expletive, that is, the neuter singular, either ending in *-ä* (cf. *ådlä* in (12)) or *-t* (cf. *gynt*, *avdailt* in (13)); see Section 4.2 for details. As shown in Section 4.1 above, in the regular periphrastic passive, participles in Gutnish agree with the subject of the clause. In the regular construction, feminine noun phrases such as *äutdikningg* and *släka* in (13) would not combine with the *t*-form. The usage of the neuter form in *si*-passives across-the-board could indicate either that the participle does not agree in *si*-passives or that there is agreement with the expletive, which is expected to trigger neuter agreement and which would then have to be elliptic in examples like (13). However, when we consider other contexts where we know there is neuter agreement, like the attributive use of a participle in a neuter noun phrase in (14a) below, there are never any *si*-participles; cf. (14b). The absence of examples like (14b) suggests that the no-agreement alternative is the correct one.

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(14) a. *råikt* kyt
*smoke.PTCP.N* *meat (N)*
'smoked meat'
(OL, entry *kött*, 4)

b. *råikt si kyt
*smoke.PTCP.N* *SI* *meat (N)*

Second, *si*-passives may occur in relative clauses, where the relativized subject can be interpreted as having non-specific reference. There are five examples of this sort in the sample, one of which is given in (15a) below. I have not found any *si*-passives in relative clauses where the relativized subject must be interpreted as having specific reference. At first, the example in (15b) may certainly look like precisely such a case: here the relativized subject refers to the specific piles of snow being introduced in the matrix clause. However, in (15b), the subject is the argument of a particle (i.e. *upp*), which means that it actually belongs in the first group, exemplified in (13).

(15) a. lairjårdar, sum järr haug, har blitt för tårre
*mud.earth.PL* *that* *be.PRS* *high* *have.PRS* *become.SUP* *too* *dry.PL*
bad ti plögä u för rygen u vaitn, u för kånne
*both* *to* *plough.INF* *and* *for* *rye.DEF* *and* *wheat.DEF* *and* *for* *barley.DEF*
u havan, sum järr sat si äi dum i ladi
*and* *oat.DEF* *that* *be.PRS* *sow.PTCP.N* *SI* *in* *them* *in* *spring*
'Muddy lands that lie high have become too dry both for ploughing and for the rye and the wheat, as well as for the barley and the oats, grains which were sown in them last spring.'
(Karlsson 2000:137)

b. u där var dräivår sum var n träi änar hauge,
*and* *there* *be.PST* *pile.PL* *that* *be.PST* *a* *three* *cubit.PL* *high.PL*
sum har vart *kåirt* *si* *upp* pa hail
*that* *have.PRS* *be.SUP* *drive.PTCP.N* *SI* *up* *on* *whole*
vintan när pa
*winter.DEF* *close* *on*
'There were piles that were about three cubits high, which have been shovelled up during almost the entire winter.'
(Karlsson 2012:255)

Most *si*-passives involve the auxiliaries BE or BECOME (on the distribution between them, see Section 5.2.3 and the Appendix). Only three *si*-passives occur in another context. Two of them are embedded under HAVE, as shown in (16a) below, and one under GET; see (16b). In *si*-examples of this sort, there is no expletive subject but instead a referential subject in the matrix clause. Contexts like (16a), where this matrix subject is the first person, clearly indicate that *si* is not a reflexive. If we consider the behaviour of reflexives in a corresponding construction in standard

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Swedish, where binding works as in Gutnish, we find that first person *vi* is incompatible with *sig*; cf. (17a–b).

(16) a. De sum vör har kårt haim jär snart släut,
*it that we have.PRS drive.SUP home be.PRS soon out*
män vör *har* mair *avrydd* *si*
*but we have.PRS more off.mow.PTCP.N SI*
'What we have transported home is soon finished, but we have more (wood) that has been mowed down.'
(OL, vol. 4:1846)

b. di *fikk* årkå *gärt* *si* så mik di vidd ha
*they get.PST chore.PL do.PTCP.N SI so much they want.PST have.INF*
'They got the chores done as much as they wanted.'
(Karlsson 2000:271)

(17) a. *Vi* fick nu sätta *oss* ner (Swedish)
*we get.PST now sit REFL.1PL down*
'We got to sit down now.'

b. **Vi* fick nu sätta *sig* ner
*we get.PST now sit REFL.3 down*

In Section 7 below, I argue that the GET context is where the *si*-passive has emerged in the first place.

### 5.2.2 The si-complex and its non-subject arguments

The vast majority of the *si*-examples in the sample (77/79) involve transitive verbs. The transitive examples often contain an explicit internal argument in the form of a noun phrase, like *regn* in (18a) below. But they may also lack such an argument, as in (18b).

(18) a. de har vart *spåt* *si* *regn* hail viku
*EXPL have.PRS be.SUP forecast.PTCP.N SI rain whole week.DEF*
'Rain has been forecast all week.'
(Karlsson 2000:277)

b. när de da bläir *uppkast* *si* pa säidår me
*when EXPL then become.PRS up.throw.PTCP.N SI on side.PL with*
'when people then shovel [snow] on the sides as well'
(Karlsson 2000:62)

The internal argument can also be a prepositional phrase (PP). As with noun phrases, the PPs sometimes remain in their base position in VP; see (19a) below. Unlike noun phrases governed directly by the main verb, noun phrases governed by P may indeed, as we have seen (in (13a) above), escape the VP to become the subject; another such example is given in (19b), where the preposition *pa* is stranded. Note that *de* is not an expletive in (19b) but the regular (referring) neuter pronoun.

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(19) a. så järr de da *stråit* *si* *me* *grän*
*so* *be.PRS* *EXPL* *then* *strew.PTCP.N* *SI* *with* *fir*
'Then, people strew with fir branches.'
(Karlsson 2000:360)

b. sum star där för all värdlie täidar när
*that* *stand.PRS* *there* *for* *all* *wordly* *time.PL* *when*
de bläir *tag* *si* varå *pa*
*it* *become.PRS* *take.PTCP.N* *SI* *PART* *on*
'which remains there for all times when it is cared for'
(Karlsson 2000:286)

Transitive verbs that are used without an internal argument, as in (18b), resemble unergatives. The verb in (18b), *uppkastä* 'shovel' (lit. 'toss up'), may certainly be construed with such an argument, typically *snåi* 'snow'. Nevertheless, the verb is on its own in this context. Prytz (2016) has proposed that Swedish transitives denoting activities (like 'shovel') are structurally intransitive when they are used without an explicit object. Consequently, on her account, (18b) and examples like it could be classified as unergative. However, and mainly for reasons of transparency, I have sorted them as transitives in Table A4 of the Appendix, and included them in the column for examples lacking an internal argument in Table A3.

True unergatives do occur in *si*-passives, but they are very rare: I have found only two unergative main verbs in a *si*-construction; see (20) below ( = (3a) above). The verbs in question, *ringgä* and *kläppä*, are unable to ever take a proper object, although there may be a PP present where the item used for the act of ringing is specified (as in *ringgä/kläppä i klokku*, lit. 'ring/toll in the bell').[7]

(20) att ´ä bläir int *kläpp* *si* u *ringg* *si*
*that* *EXPL* *become.PRS* *not* *toll.PTCP.N* *SI* *and* *ring.PTCP.N* *SI*
för den döde
*for* *the* *dead.DEF*
'that there will be no tolling and ringing for the deceased'
(Karlsson 2000:356)

Finally, a note on agentivity: common to all examples in the sample, transitives and unergatives alike, is that although there is always an agent implied, it is never explicitly expressed. The lack of explicit agents will be directly related (structurally) to the presence of *si* in Section 6.1.

### 5.2.3 *Impersonal passives with and without* si

As shown in Section 5.2.2, the main verb of a *si*-passive can be unergative. However, turning to the regular periphrastic passive, I have not come across any unergative examples in the corpus. To be more precise, regular passive participles in Gutnish always need to be tied to an internal argument, which often leads to a resultative meaning. *Si*-passives, on the other hand, typically focus on the process. I believe that this focus follows from the lack of a structural link between participle and internal argument (see Section 6.1 for details).

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Many of the main verbs occurring in the *si*-construction are indeed process verbs, as in (21) with 'transport'.

(21) De jär *kårt* *si* göisl där upp
*EXPL* *be.PRS* *transport.PTCP.N* *SI* *manure* *there* *up*
'Manure is being transported up there.'
(OL, vol. 4:1845)

However, punctual verbs may also occur if they are used iteratively or in habituals. Thus, in (22a) below, the act of handing out a book was performed over and over again, and in (22b), the act of leaving a pitchfork behind in the mud is described as a rare routine.

(22) a. de blai *äutdailt* *si* a exemplar i var gard
*EXPL* *become.PST* *out.part.PTCP.N* *SI* *one* *copy* *in* *each* *farm*
'One copy was given out in every farm.'
(Karlsson 2012:53)

b. Sälln bläir de *låimt* *si* någu
*seldom* *become.PRS* *EXPL* *leave.PCTP.N* *SI* *any*
släkgraip i döiän
*sea.weed.pitchfork* *in* *mud.DEF*
'Seldom is there any pitchfork left behind in the mud.'
(OL, entry *sig*, VI)

Again, iterative and habitual uses are expected given the processual nature of the periphrastic passive with *si*. By contrast, when a particular result (or lack thereof) is highlighted, the periphrastic passive tends to be *si*-less as in (23); cf. also (2b) above.

(23) men nå bläir de ingentingg *gärt* i den vägen
*but* *now* *become.PRS* *EXPL* *nothing* *do.PTCP.N* *in* *that* *way.DEF*
'But now, there will be nothing of the sort done.'
(Karlsson 2012:159)

Sometimes, the *si*-passive and the regular periphrastic passive are used in very similar contexts. Consider the example pair in (24) below, where 'decide' is used with *si* in (24a) and without it in (24b).

(24) a. u da blai de *bisläut* *si* för flair otli
*and* *then* *become.PST* *EXPL* *decide.PTCP.N* *SI* *for* *more* *countless*
ar tibakas (ja, kanhänd en 40–50 'ti ar sine)
*year.PL* *back* *yes* *perhaps* *a* *40–50* *ten* *year.PL* *since*
att 'e skudd säläs a stykk skog för kronus räkkningg
*that* *EXPL* *should* *sell.INF.PASS* *a* *piece* *forest* for *crown.DEF.POSS* *behalf*
'And then, it was decided many years back (perhaps 40–50 years ago) that part of the forestland would be put on the market on behalf of the crown.'
(Karlsson 2012:53)

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b. de blai *bisläut* i går ginum mangg
*EXPL* *become.PST* *decide.PTCP.N* *yesterday* *through* *many*
yvarläggninggar u risslsjonar att körku skudd
*deliberation.PL* *and* *resolution.PL* *that* *church.DEF* *should*
rippreräs invändut
*repair.INF.PASS* *inside*
'It was decided yesterday through many deliberations and resolutions that the church should be repaired inside.'
(Karlsson 2012:104)

In the regular periphrastic passive in (24b), although the decision was apparently preceded by negotiations, the decision itself is described as taking place at one particular point in time, i.e. 'yesterday'. The example with *si* in (24a) certainly contains a time frame as well, indicating that the decision was made many years back. However, from the context, it is quite clear that there was a rather complex decision process, involving several parties, putting a large estate on the market in portions over a long period of time. To reflect this complexity, Karlsson uses the *si*-passive rather than the regular periphrastic passive.

### *5.2.4 A comparative comment on impersonal passives*

As shown by Engdahl & Laanemets (2016), periphrastic impersonal passives are highly marked in standard Swedish, unlike in Norwegian and Danish. For instance, Swedish unergatives are strikingly bad with periphrasis (Engdahl & Laanemets 2016:133). As we have seen, Gutnish too avoids the regular periphrastic passive in such contexts. In fact, setting aside the *si*-passive, the use of the periphrastic impersonal passive is very similar in Gutnish and standard Swedish, which is in line with the general closeness in passive choices between the varieties concluded already in Section 4.1. In Swedish, the only context where periphrastic impersonal passives occur more regularly according to Engdahl & Laanemets (2016:139–140) is precisely the context exemplified in (23), involving a negated resultative. Presumably, this generalization is valid for Gutnish as well. Although I have not made any full scale investigation of the regular periphrastic passive in the corpus (as mentioned in Section 5.1), my impression is that examples such as these are very typical. Still, the periphrastic strategy is of course much more common in impersonal passives on the whole in Gutnish than in Swedish. However, this difference is due to the Gutnish-specific *si*-construction, which broadens the range of periphrastic passives.

The broadened range is particularly conspicuous when we consider the usage of the different passive auxiliaries BE and BECOME. As noted in Section 4.1, in the regular periphrastic passive, BECOME renders an episodic reading and BE a stative reading. With the processual *si*-participle, however, the stative reading under BE is, in fact, lost. Instead, we appear to get an almost progressive outcome when the *si*-complex is combined with BE. Consequently, it is often appropriate to translate these *si*-passives to English using an *ing*-form; cf. e.g. 'manure is being transported' in (21). In other words, the BE passive has spread to new contexts due to the processual semantics of the participle accompanied by *si*. In practice, impersonal passives with *si* involve auxiliary BE to a much larger extent than regular impersonal

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passives. Again, I have not excerpted all regular passives in the corpus. However, we can note that Engdahl & Laanemets (2016) only investigate cases with BECOME when they address periphrastic impersonal passives in standard Swedish. By contrast, in the Gutnish corpus, *si*-passives with BE are almost twice as frequent as *si*-passives with BECOME; this tendency is clear also in the other Gutnish sources (see the Appendix for exact numbers). In Section 6, I propose that structurally, the processual semantics of the *si*-passive follows from the fact that *si* occupies the same syntactic position as the participial agreement suffix. Unlike the participle ending, *si* is never linked to the internal argument, and this difference, I argue, leads to the aspectual difference at hand.

### *5.3 Summary*

The subject in *si*-passives is an explicit expletive in the vast majority of cases; there is also a handful of examples involving relative clauses where the relativized subject has non-specific reference. When, on occasion, there is a regular noun phrase subject, this demands a certain type of VP: there has to be either a particle involved, or a stranded preposition.

The form of the participle is always the same as neuter singular, although the *si*-complex as a whole is unable to agree with a neuter noun phrase (see (14)).

Most verbs in the *si*-construction are transitives (with and without internal arguments of various sorts), but usage with unergatives is also attested. What unites all main verbs in the *si*-construction is that they all presuppose a deliberate action. Although there are never any explicit agents present, there is always an agent implied.

The *si*-passive typically describes processes, unlike the regular periphrastic passive, which is instead resultative. Presumably, it is the processual nature of *si*-passives that makes them suitable for usage with unergative verbs, which do not occur in the regular construction.

The *si*-complex is most often combined with the auxiliaries BE or BECOME. Marginally, it may also be embedded under GET and HAVE.

## 6. *Si* in syntax

In the following, I present a formal account of the passive participle that accounts for the nature of the *si*-passive. In (25) below, I summarize the descriptive facts about the *si*-passive brought forth by the survey in Section 5.

(25) Descriptive facts about the *si*-passive
(I) The subject is almost always an expletive
The meaning is processual rather than resultative
The verbs involved are agentive but
not necessarily transitive
never involve an explicit agent

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(II) Internal arguments can become subjects only:
if they are the argument of a particle/preposition
if they are relativized and have non-specific reference

I address the facts in (I) in Section 6.1 as I present the mechanisms of the formal analysis. I consider the more exceptional cases in (II) in Section 6.2. Section 6.3 summarizes the syntactic analysis.

### *6.1 Outlining the formal analysis*

My idea is that *si* in the *si*-construction has evolved from a reflexive pronoun to an integral part of the participial ending, the result of which is a participial ending containing nominal features (φ). I show this development in (26a–b) below with a weak and a strong participle. I address the circumstances leading up to the reanalysis in more detail in Section 7. Here, I direct my attention solely to the result of the reanalysis, that is, the forms to the right of the arrow in (26). As can be seen, the *si*-complex is, in fact, not a participle + *si*, but instead a participle where the participial suffix ends in *-si*. In short: a *si*-participle.

(26) neuter participle plus reflexive pronoun *si* → *si*-participle

a. sa-t si → sa-tsi
*sow-PTCP.N* *REFL* *sow-PTCP*$_{i\varphi}$

b. tag(-ä) si → tag-(ä)si
*take-PTCP.N* *REFL* *take-PTCP*$_{i\varphi}$

Crucially, this reanalysis leads to a participle ending that is nominal rather than adjectival. Consequently, it does not agree with the internal argument. Instead, it fills the same syntactic slot as an external argument, which means that it blocks other external arguments from ever occurring, rendering an impersonal interpretation of *si*-passives. I have found that the analysis of Scandinavian passive participles argued for by Fábregas & Putnam (2020) is particularly accurate in predicting the morphosyntactic behaviour of *tsi/(ä)si*. In the following, I will therefore adopt their model and show how it can help us understand what structural correlate the limitations on the *si*-passive might have.[8] The model is designed to handle voice in general. However, it would lead us too far astray to engage in a more general discussion of voice here; readers with such an interest are therefore referred back to Fábregas & Putnam (2020:85–98) and the references cited.[9]

Fabregas & Putnam propose that the locus of passive participial morphology (*ptc*) is an aspectual head located between VP and vP, as shown in (27); the analysis of the participial affix as a realization of grammatical aspect goes back to Embick (2004:383).

(27) $[_{vP}\ [_{AspP}\ [_{Asp^o}\ ptc]\ [_{VP}]]]$

If we thus give participle morphology aspectual relevance by locating it in an Asp head between VP, where we have internal arguments, and vP, where external arguments typically holding an agentive role reside, the differences between

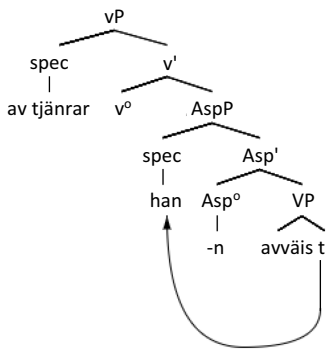
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*si*-participles and ordinary passive participles can be accounted for quite straightforwardly. Recall my proposal that the ending of the *si*-participle has a nominal rather than an adjectival character. Translated into more technical terms, the participial affix, corresponding to *tsi/(ä)si* in (26), does not involve uninterpretable phi-features (uφ) such as regular participle endings, but instead interpretable phi-features (iφ) such as nouns and pronouns. This has several consequences for how the derivation of the *si*-participle proceeds compared to regular passive participles. I will now illustrate these consequences by deriving the (participial structure of) the two examples from the corpus in (28) below,[10] using the model in (27); see (29). I should say that the analysis is somewhat simplified in order for the derivation to be relatable to the actual output. More specifically, I classify the individual morphemes as taking part in the syntactic derivation, although transference to phonological form is a later step.

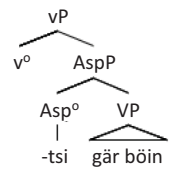
(28) a. hadd *'n* blitt *avväisn* *av* *tjänrar*
*have.PST* *he* *become.SUP* *reject.PTCP.M.SG* *by* *servant.PL*
'He had been rejected by servants.'
(Karlsson 2000:389)

b. de var *gärt* *si* *böin*
*EXPL* *be.PST* *do.PTCP.N* *SI* *prayer*
'There was praying.'
(Karlsson 2000:396)

(29) a.




b.




In the regular example in (29a), *-n* in Asp° hosts uninterpretable phi features, which need to be matched with an appropriate bundle of interpretable features: *-n* thus probes for iφ, finds it on the pronoun *han* in VP and matching takes place. As a result of the matching, the pronoun raises to the specifier of AspP from where it can, eventually, move on and become the subject of the clause.[11] By contrast, *-tsi* in (29b) hosts interpretable phi-features itself, and therefore there is never any probing into the VP; as a result, the internal argument *böin* is trapped in its base position and can never become the subject of the clause.[12] The contrast between agreeing *-n* and non-agreeing *-tsi* is thus directly responsibly (structurally) for the difference in subject limitation between *si*-passives and regular periphrastic passives.

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Moreover, the difference between agreeing and non-agreeing Asp° also has aspectual consequences. It is expected that the linking of an aspectual affix to an argument of V has an impact on the semantics of the event, crucially enabling a resultative interpretation. Since precisely this linking is absent in the *si*-participle, it lies close at hand to relate it to the processual nature of *si*-passives. In other words, the fact that *si*-passives often describe processes can be analysed as reflecting the lack of the resultative aspect otherwise characteristic of passive participles. On the other hand, *si*-passives may occur in iteratives and habituals (see (22) above), which suggests that the V-domain is more complex than the present analysis is able to reveal. A split V-domain of the Ramchandian type (see Ramchand 2008), where processual and resultative semantics are represented by separate heads, could probably help us understand the more subtle semantic details of the *si*-passive. However, I will leave this task for future research.[13]

Further, we have seen above that *si*-passives, unlike regular periphrastic passives, may occur with unergative verbs, that is, agentive verbs that lack an internal argument (see (20) above). Given that Asp° never probes for a VP internal goal in *si*-participles but always does so in agreeing participles, the unergative difference follows straightforwardly. Without any VP-internal bundle of interpretable phi-features, the derivation of the regular participle is bound to crash. In contrast, the presence of such a bundle in *si*-participles has no structural relevance.

Finally, the analysis in (29b) offers an explanation of the lack of explicit agents in *si*-passives. Since *-tsi*, unlike regular participle endings, has interpretable phi features, *-tsi* is a perfect goal for v°, probing for a nominal match. Consequently, there is no need to merge an external argument in spec-vP, as in the regular participle in (29a).[14] Nevertheless, we still have to assume that vP is indeed present in *si*-participles, since, as we have seen, *si*-passives are restricted to agentive verbs (and in the model adopted here, vP is where agents are introduced).[15]

So far, I have said nothing of the order between the verbal stem and the participle ending. Clearly, there is need for some displacement mechanism that puts the stem before the ending, so that the final output of the syntactic derivation matches the actual usage. However, I will not pursue the matter here, since nothing hinges on the exact formulation of such a mechanism. What is crucial is that my analysis treats regular participle endings and the *tsi*/*(ä)si*-elements as realizations of the same head (i.e. Asp°). Consequently, whatever rule derives the correct order between stem and ending in the regular case, e.g. *-n avväis* → *avväis-n* in (29a), will also derive correct *si*-participles, e.g. *-tsi gär* → *gär-tsi* in (29b).

### 6.2 Escaping the VP or remaining there in silence

As shown in Section 6.1, our formal analysis predicts that in *si*-passives, VP-internal arguments are never subjects, since the lack of a structural link between Asp° and the internal argument ('participle agreement') leads to the entrapment of the internal argument in its base position in VP. However, as shown in Section 5.2.1 above, the internal argument can indeed become the subject if it leaves a preposition or a particle behind in VP. I interpret this condition as an indication that both prepositions and particles are able to project a specifier position through which the internal argument can escape the VP; see the analysis of (13a–b) above in

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(30) below. This analysis is inspired by Fábregas & Putnam's analysis of pseudo-passives, where subject promotion is assumed to be structurally dependent on a stranded preposition having created a specifier for the subject to move through (Fábregas & Putnam 2020:136).

(30) a. $[_{TP}$ Äutdikninggi$_j$ … $[_{PP}$ $t_j$ $[_{P^o}$ me$]$ $t_j]]$

b. $[_{TP}$ Släku$_j$ … $[_{PartP}$ $t_j$ $[_{Part^o}$ av$]$ $t_j]]$

Some particles are incorporated in the verb. This is the case in (13b) involving ***av****dailt* 'partitioned'. However, I assume (with e.g. Zeller 1997) that incorporation is a late derivational step, and that *av* is still on its own at the stage shown in (30b).

I move on now to the relativized subjects in *si*-passives. As concluded above, they can all be interpreted as having non-specific reference, which is shown in (31a) below, reusing the relevant part of (15a) above.[16] This makes them semantically similar to many of the internal arguments of regular *si*-passives with explicit expletives as in (31b) below (= (28b) above); here, the naked noun phrase *böin* refers to praying in general rather than a specific prayer. There are no *si*-passives of this sort where the internal argument is instead a definite noun phrase pointing to a specific referent; examples as in (31c) are thus unattested. I believe that the ungrammaticality of (31c) and the demand for non-specific reference in relativized subjects of *si*-passives follow from the same mechanism. This mechanism is often referred to as the definiteness effect, the exact formulation of which need not concern us here (for an overview, see Fischer et al. 2016).

(31) a. [various grains] sum jär *sat* *si* äi dum i ladi
*that* *be.PRS* *sow.PTCP.N* *SI* *in* *them* *in* *spring*
'[various grains] which were sown in them last spring'

b. de var *gärt* *si* böin
*EXPL* *be.PST* *do.PTCP.N* *SI* *prayer*
'There was praying.'

c. *de var gärt si böini
*EXPL* *be.PST* *do.PTCP.N* *SI* *prayer.DEF*

The question, then, is how the internal argument of *sat si* in (31a) can become the subject, although there is no preposition/particle to create a way out of VP. The answer is, I think, that the internal argument in fact never leaves the VP. Instead it remains in its base position, but is never spelled out; see (32) below where this silent presence is represented by *e*. The semantic content of *e* comes from the operator subject, Op, mediating between *e* and the antecedents of the matrix clause (in the case at hand the various grains under consideration). Presumably, Op is base-generated in spec-TP (i.e. as a subject), from where it binds *e* in VP and then moves on to the C-domain, as shown in (32).

(32) $[_{CP}$ Op$_j$ … $[_{TP}$ $t_j$ … $[_{VP}$ $[_{V'}$ *e*$]]]]$

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Although the analysis in (32) is admittedly a bit speculative, it at least accounts for the lack of an overt expletive in these particular cases, as well as the linking between the internal argument position and the antecedents. An overt expletive would be untenable here, since it cannot move to spec-CP in a relative clause; also, it cannot bind *e* like an operator.[17]

### *6.3 Summary*

In my analysis of the *si*-passive, I treat *si* as part of the participle ending, located in Asp° between vP and VP. Crucially, *si* brings phi-features to Asp°, which means that there can be no agreement between Asp° and the internal argument as in regular passive participles. Instead, the contents of Asp° can satisfy the nominal needs of v°, ruling out the merger of an explicit agent.[18] The lack of agreement accounts for the process-oriented meaning of *si*-passives, given that resultativity is manifested (structurally) in the agreement link between Asp° and internal argument. The lack of agreement also leads to the entrapment of the internal argument and the subsequent need to insert an expletive subject. For the internal argument to be able to become the subject, it is required that VP contains an additional head, a preposition or a particle. This head projects a specifier working as an escape hatch for the internal argument on its way to TP. Alternatively, the internal argument can remain in silence in VP, where it is bound by a relative operator.

## 7. The birth of the *si*-passive

The geographical spread of the *si*-passive (see Section 2) largely coincides with the increasing use of strong participle endings (see Section 4.2). Both phenomena are found on the main island, but both are absent in Fårö. I find it hard to believe that the correspondence between strong participles and the *si*-passive is a mere coincidence. Instead, I will treat it as a sign that the *si*-passive is dependent on the changes in participle morphology. Although it is hard to exactly date the two phenomena, the clues we do have indicate that the participle changes predate the introduction of the *si*-passive. I have not come about any *si*-passives that are older than the 1830s.[19] The shifts in the Gutnish verbal system, which includes the strong participle ending spreading in the weak paradigms, appear to be somewhat earlier. According to Jordan (2023:38), these changes had come a long way already in the eighteenth century. In other words, chronologically, it would be possible for the participle changes to make way for the birth of the *si*-passive. In Section 7.1 below, I outline the details in such a series of events. I also address the theoretical implications of the suggestion, concluding that the development of the *si*-element represents a case of syntactic grammaticalization. Finally, Section 7.2 provides a summary.

### *7.1 Reanalysing* si *to get rid of ambiguity*

I propose that the spread of strong participle endings leads to the introduction of the *si*-passive. The reason that this development triggers the emergence of the *si*-passive is as follows: when the strong forms take over, this crucially creates new homonymy between the regular infinitive and the neuter participle (see Section 4.2 for details).

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Adding *si*, presumably, starts out as a strategy to separate such new doubles, by associating a passive meaning to *si* rather than a reflexive one, which is compatible with both the infinitive and the participle. What contexts would have been the starting point? Among the embedded *si*-examples, there is a context where both infinitives and participles occur, i.e. under GET. Such contexts are truly ambiguous when they involve verbs that are conjugated strongly, such as 'dig' in (33) below; note that (33) is not from the corpus but construed by me to illustrate the proposal.

(33) ha fikk *grav* a grop
*she get.PST dig.INF/PTCP.N a pit*
'she got to dig a pit' OR 'she got a pit dug'

Reflexive *si* can be added in this context to the infinitive and participle alike, as shown in (34) below. The addition of the reflexive introduces an explicit beneficiary of the digging which is coreferential with the subject, as indicated in the translation.

(34) ha fikk *grav si* a grop
'she got to dig a pit for herself' OR 'she got a pit dug for herself'

In standard Swedish, the addition of a reflexive object (i.e. *sig*) in a corresponding context does not add very much to the meaning: even without the reflexive, one would probably presuppose that the subject (if anyone) is the implicit beneficiary. Since the use of reflexives in general (i.e. modulo the *si* of *si*-passives) is very similar in Gutnish and standard Swedish, we have good reason to believe that the addition of *si* in examples like (34) would have a similar, i.e. only marginal, effect on the semantic outcome. This leaves the floor open for reanalysis. Given that *grav* is ambiguous, it would lie close at hand for speakers to associate the semantically quite empty *si* with one of the possible interpretations of the verb. I think that *si* therefore came to be reanalysed as a marker of the participle, but not the infinitive, that is, as a sort of passive marker instead of a reflexive object.

Such a reanalysis is predicted to lead to a spread of the *si* usage to other contexts where passive participles but not infinitives occur, and also to contexts where there is no third person referent to bind *si*, which should now be fine, given that *si* is no longer a reflexive. Both criteria are met in the authentic example in (35a) below, where the matrix subject is 'we' (unable to bind reflexive *si*), and the matrix verb HAVE, which does not combine with infinitives.[20] Similarly, GET examples with Arg-V order (as in (35b) = the beginning of (16b) above) would be secondary too, since such a word order is only compatible with a participle interpretation. Participles may either precede (as in (35a)) or follow (cf. (35b)) the internal argument in this context, whereas infinitives always come first, as shown in (36).

(35) a. *vör* har nå *upphugg* *si* i skogen
*we have.PRS now up.chop.PTCP.N SI in forest.DEF*
fem– sex kastar flovid
five six pile.PL fire.wood
'We now have five to six piles of firewood chopped up in the forest.'
(Karlsson 2000:287)

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b. di fikk årkå *gärt* *si*
*they* *get.PST* *chore.PL* *do.PTCP.N* *SI*
'They got chores done.'

(36) a. när en far säi någ sånt
*when* *one* *get.PRS* *see.INF* *some* *such*
'when one gets to see something like that' (Karlsson 2000:75)

b. *när en far någ sånt säi
*when* *one* *get.PRS* *some* *such* *see.INF*

How the *si*-complex also spread to non-embedded impersonal constructions is hard to say. The scarcity of examples makes any suggestion quite speculative. Still, we know that change in general starts with ambiguity, and the GET environment in (34) clearly offers that. A fair guess is that the expansions in (35), which are structurally quite similar to the presumed bridge construction in (34), precede the spread into other contexts for passive participles, i.e. combinations with BE and BECOME.

The proposed reanalysis of *si*, namely as encoding the passive component of the participle rather than being a reflexive, can be characterized as a case of syntactic grammaticalization in the sense of Roberts & Roussou (1999, 2003). *Si* starts out as a (reflexive) object within VP and then becomes part of the participial head higher up in the syntactic tree, Asp° in the analysis proposed here. In other words, it becomes more grammatical as it climbs up the syntactic spine. The categorical shift from phrase (i.e. the complement of V) to head (i.e. Asp°) is also expected given the so-called Head Preference Principle (van Gelderen 2004). Presumably, the *s* of the morphological passive comes from the reflexive too, although this development is much earlier and has occurred in all North Germanic (see further Öhlin 1918:11–14, Wessén 1956:160–163). In the model adopted here, the *s* of the *s*-passive has climbed even further than *si*, all the way up to VoiceP.

Typologically, it is not uncommon for reflexive pronouns to develop into affixes (Lehmann 2015:49). However, it might be that the direct transition from reflexive to passive that has (presumably) taken place in the case of *si* is a bit exceptional. A more expected scenario would perhaps be for the reflexive construction to first develop into, for example, an anticausative or a middle before becoming a true passive (see Haspelmath 1990:42–46 for examples).[21]

### *7.2 Summary*

Following changes in the Gutnish verb conjugations during the eighteenth century, infinitives and neuter participles became increasingly ambiguous. I have suggested that the *si*-passive emerged as a strategy to eliminate such ambiguity. In contexts where both infinitives and participles occur and where a reflexive adds very little semantic content, *si*, originally an object of the verb, came to be interpreted as a marker of the passive participle. Since the conjugation changes never affected Fårö, the absence of the *si*-passive in Fårö can be felicitously predicted.

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## 8. Conclusions

Like the other North Germanic languages, Gutnish has both a morphological passive, formed with the suffix *-s(t)*, and a periphrastic passive, formed with BE or BECOME combined with a passive participle. In addition, Gutnish has the *si*-passive. Like the periphrastic passive, it involves the auxiliaries BE or BECOME and a participle. Unlike the participle in the regular construction, the participle in the *si*-passive is non-agreeing: although the participle looks like a neuter participle, it cannot agree with a neuter noun. I have interpreted this non-agreement as a consequence of *si* in fact being part of the participle ending in Asp°, located between VP and vP. Originally a reflexive, *si* has nominal features and therefore keeps Asp° from being linked to the internal argument in VP.

Without an agreement link, the internal argument is trapped in VP and never available for T, probing for a subject. Most *si*-passives in my sample thus have an expletive subject. For the internal argument to be visible for T, it needs to make use of an escape hatch, a specifier position, created by either a preposition or a particle. Alternatively, the internal argument can remain silent in VP, bound by a subject operator. The lack of agreement in the *si*-participle can also account for the process focus that is typical for *si*-passives, given that the resultativity of regular participles follows precisely from the link between Asp° and VP that agreement establishes.

My primary source for the Gutnish *si*-passive is the language of Lau farmer Jakob Karlsson, preserved in letters he wrote from the late 1880s onwards. In addition, to be able to map the construction, I have collected occasional *si*-passives in dictionaries and archival records: the *si*-passive is attested all over the main island, but it does not occur in the northern island of Fårö. Fårö is also unaffected by changes in participle morphology that have occurred elsewhere, crucially creating new ambiguity between infinitives and neuter participles. I have proposed that in the GET construction, this ambiguity led to a reanalysis of the reflexive object *si* as part of the participle ending. Presumably, this crucial reanalysis took place sometime around 1800. Karlsson, born in the 1850s, thus represents the second or third generation of *si*-passive users. The details in the subsequent development of the *si*-passive during the twentieth century, as well as its present status among the few remaining speakers of traditional Gutnish, remains to be dealt with in future research.

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## Notes

**1** Apart from the *si*-passive, I know of only one other fairly recently introduced passive construction in North Germanic, i.e. the so-called Icelandic New Passive (INP), first described by Kjartansson (1991). At first glance, the INP may look like an ordinary impersonal passive with a secondary subject; see (i) (from Eythórsson 2008:34). However, since the internal argument in the INP is both definite and in the accusative

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case, it is more appropriate to classify it as an object than a secondary subject (see further Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir 2002, Eythórsson 2008).

(i) Það var barið litla strákinn. (Icelandic)
*it was beaten.N.SG little.DEF.ACC boy.DEF.ACC*
'The little boy was beaten.'

**2** The geographically specified attestations of *si*-passives are distributed across the sources as follows: Carlsson 1918 (Atlingbo, Väte, and Havdhem), GO (Alskog, Ardre, Lau, Näs, Ekeby, Gammelgarn, Östergarn, Norrlanda), OL (När, Lau), Wessén 1916 (Eksta).
**3** Thanks to Caspar Jordan for helping me build the corpus.
**4** My translation from Swedish here and in the following.
**5** The Fårö supine of this verb would be *drukki* (cf. standard Sw. *druckit*); see GO (vol. 2: L–LI) for more examples. In non-Fårö Gutnish, the supine is formally distinguishable only in the passive voice. To be more precise, if there is a passive *s*-ending, as with e.g. *fuskät-s* and *kännä-s* in (5a) and (8) above, the verb stem can only be interpreted as a supine, since passive participles cannot be passivized (cf. Petzell 2023, Section 3.3.2, for a similar account of standard Swedish supines).
**6** Deletion does not occur when *-ä* follows a consonant cluster (see (12)).
**7** Standard Swedish has a transitive *ringa* 'phone', which is of no relevance here.
**8** Naturally, this does not imply that the nature of the *si*-passive could not be accounted for in some other model.
**9** Fábregas & Putnam's (2020) derivational approach to voice, where VoiceP relates to the V-domain in different ways to create different voices, contrasts with a lexicalist approach, where the Voice head instead comes in different 'flavours' (as originally proposed by Kratzer 1996:123).
**10** As can be seen, I use the full pronoun *han* in (29a) for structural clarity, rather than the reduced and cliticized *n* appearing in the example.
**11** One reviewer raises the question why the DP *tjänrar* is not promoted to subject rather than *han*, seeing that *tjänrar* is structurally higher than *han*; the reviewer suggests that an adjunct analysis of the *by*-phrase hosting *tjänrar* can solve the problem. Another solution is put forth by Fábregas & Putnam (2020:112–119), who rule out *by*-phrase contained DPs in cases like (29a) as subjects, since they are too deeply embedded under P to be accessible for T, probing for a subject.
**12** This difference in accessibility between subject candidates *in situ* and subject candidates that have moved to spec-AspP presupposes that there is some mechanism at work, identical or similar to the Phase Impenetrability Condition of Chomsky (2001, 2008), that seals off complements but leaves specifiers available in the subsequent derivation. I will not go into the specifics of such a mechanism here; see note 17 for an example indicating that unlike T, C can indeed reach into the VP.
**13** When pursuing this task, one needs to keep in mind that the participle ending in *si*-participles is morphologically complex: it is made up of the original neuter ending *t*/(*ä*) and *si* (see (26)), possibly indicating that multiple syntactic heads are involved in the early stages of the derivation.
**14** I have nothing to say regarding the optional character of agents in the regular periphrastic passive. What is important here is that agents are possible, unlike in *si*-passives.
**15** *Si*-passives thus pattern with impersonal passives in general. As noted in the previous literature (see e.g. Siewierska 1984, Engdahl 2006, Maling 2006), impersonal passives tend to imply agents but they rarely express them explicitly. The lack of explicit agents in these cases can be accounted for by assuming that the expletive is base generated in spec-vP (as originally suggested by Richards & Biberauer 2005). In *si*-passives, as we have seen, spec-vP is instead blocked by *tsi*/(*ä*)*si*, and the expletive is presumably generated higher up in TP. However, the outcome (i.e. absence of explicit agents) is the same.
**16** It could seem that some of the relativized subjects could just as well be interpreted as having specific reference. However, I believe that the structure of the *si*-participle makes such an interpretation unavailable. The crucial descriptive generalization is that in *si*-passives involving a relativized subject but no stranded preposition or particle, a non-specific interpretation of the subject is always possible, whereas subjects with unambiguous specific reference are unattested.
**17** An overt expletive is only possible if the internal argument is fronted all the way to the C-domain, as in (ii). I will not investigate fronting *per se* here, but simply conclude that apparently, C can access VP-internal material more easily than T can, noting that this corresponds to the traditional distinction between A-bar and A movement.

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(ii) di blai nukk var $va_j$ de var *gärt* *si* $t_j$ äi balju
*they* *become.PST* *enough* *aware* *what* *EXPL* *be.PST* *do.PTCP.N* *SI* *in* *basin.DEF*
'Soon enough, they became aware of what had been produced in the basin.'
(Karlsson 2012:356)

**18** As pointed out by one of the reviewers, the way $Asp^{o}$ blocks external arguments in spec-vP without removing agentivity is reminiscent of the way the passive Voice head introduces an external theta-role without projecting a DP onto its specifier in the analysis of passivization proposed by Legate et al. (2020).
**19** To be more specific, there are no *si*-passives in GO that come from sources that predate the collections of the Säve brothers, who started documenting Gutnish in the early 1830s (GO, vol. I:XI).
**20** In the Standard Swedish GET construction, both passive participles and supines are possible, as first noted by Vikner & Sprouse (1988; see also Platzack 1989, and Teleman et al. 1999:3:274). Formally, we cannot exclude that in the Gutnish GET construction, *si* in fact combines with the supine rather than the neuter participle, since the two verb forms are always identical (see Section 4.2). However, from the distribution of *si* in the corpus, we can rule out the supine option. If *si* indeed started out as a supine marker under GET, we would expect *si* to have spread to other supine contexts such as perfects and pluperfects. But that does not happen.
**21** As pointed out by one of the reviewers, middles and passives have been treated as closely related in recent work on voice in Mainland Scandinavian (Fábregas & Putnam 2014, 2020:169ff.; Alexiadou & Schäfer 2020). To investigate how such an approach could possibly help us better understand the emergence of the *si*-passive lies beyond the scope of the present paper.
**22** GO is a general dictionary of Gutnish by Herbert Gustavson (1895–1986) based primarily on the descriptions of the Gutnish dialect by the Säve brothers, Pehr Arvid (1811–1887) and Carl Fredrik (1812–1876), who started documenting the dialect in 1831 and continued doing so more or less their entire lives (GO, I:XI). In addition, GO draws on two other types of sources. On the one hand, it considers documentations of Gutnish that predate the work of the Säve brothers, i.e. Spegel (1683), Neogard (1732), and Toftén (1748), and also Old Gutnish examples for comparison. On the other hand, it relies on more recent material that was collected by Gustavson himself or other scholars tied to the dialect archive in Uppsala during the first part of the twentieth century.
**23** OL describes the lexicon of the parish dialect of Lau in southeastern Gotland. Primarily, it is based on material collected in Lau from the mid 1870s by Mathias Klintberg (1847–1932). However, Klintberg himself did not transform his collections into a dictionary. Instead, OL is the work of Herbert Gustavson, the author of GO, who more or less directly after finishing GO (in 1945) started editing OL.

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## Appendix: Quantitative results

Tables A1, A2, A3, and A4 include all *si*-examples from my sample, that is, *si*-examples found in the Gutnish corpus as well as *si*-examples from Jakob Karlsson (JK) occurring in OL (see Section 3). In addition, the tables include all *si*-examples I have found in other sources.

**Table A1.** The subject in *si*-passives

| | Subject | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source | Expl. subj. | NP subj. with part. verb or stranded P | Relativized non-specific subject | Emb. under 'get'/'have' | Total |
| JK in corpus | 48 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 58 |
| JK in OL | 15 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 21 |
| JK total | 63 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 79 |
| Carlsson (1918) | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| GO | 11 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| OL (minus JK) | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Wessén (1916) | 7 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 9 |
| Total | 98 | 11 | 5 | 4 | 118 |

**Table A2.** The auxiliary in *si*-passives

| | Auxiliary | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source | 'have' | 'get' | 'be' | 'become' | Unclear | Total |
| JK in corpus | 1 | 1 | 31 | 24 | 1 | 58 |
| JK in OL | 1 | 0 | 16 | 4 | 0 | 21 |
| JK total | 2 | 1 | 47 | 28 | 1 | 79 |
| Carlsson (1918) | 0 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 10 |
| GO | 0 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 12 |
| OL (minus JK) | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Wessén (1916) | 1 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 9 |
| Total | 3 | 1 | 74 | 39 | 1 | 118 |

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**Table A3.** The internal argument in *si*-passives

| | Internal argument | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source | NP | Fronted NP | PP | *That*-clause | Neg. NP | Promoted to subject | No internal argument | Total |
| JK in corpus | 23 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 13 | 58 |
| JK in OL | 7 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 21 |
| JK total | 30 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 13 | 21 | 79 |
| Carlsson (1918) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 10 |
| GO | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 12 |
| OL (minus JK) | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| Wessén (1916) | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 9 |
| Total | 34 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 16 | 48 | 118 |

**Table A4.** The main verb in *si*-passives

| | Main verb | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Source | Transitive | Unergative | Total |
| JK in corpus | 56 | 2 | 58 |
| JK in OL | 21 | 0 | 21 |
| JK total | 77 | 2 | 79 |
| Carlsson (1918) | 10 | 0 | 10 |
| GO | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| OL (minus JK) | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| Wessén (1916) | 9 | 0 | 9 |
| Total | 116 | 2 | 118 |

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