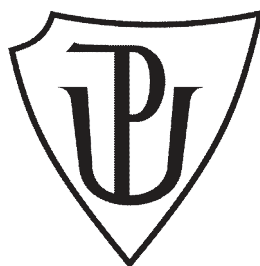


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**BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE**



**Trpný rod v češtině a angličtině**

**The Passive Voice in Czech and in English**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně s využitím uvedených pramenů a literatury a souhlasím s uveřejněním této práce.

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## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

QGLS	Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., Svartvik, J.
Cf.	compare
Ibid.	at the same place
et al.	and others
Aux	auxiliary verb
S	subject
O	object
VP	verb phrase
NP	noun phrase
PP	prepositional phrase/past participle
AP	adjectival passive
Pat	patient
Ag	agent

Note to examples: if there is not any other reference, examples used in this thesis are by author herself.

## **Abstract**

The theoretical part of this thesis focuses on the issue of the passive voice, both in Czech and in English, tries to compare passives in these two languages in terms of functional and stylistic aspects, deals with its structure and problems regarding to its usage. Since the passives are more frequent in English, it is necessary for English learners to pay attention to both appropriate form and correct usage of this grammatical structure either in writing or speaking. Without at least fundamental knowledge of this grammatical phenomenon, learner's failure to understand would lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

Practical part of the thesis concentrates on differences between Czech and English passives especially in written texts, points to different functions of the passive and various ways of translation from the original into Czech. The aim of this thesis is to clarify all the significant aspects regarding to the passive voice and explain its purpose.

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## 1. Introduction

*"We have not passed that subtle line between childhood and adulthood until we move from the passive voice to the active voice – that is, until we have stopped saying 'It got lost,' and say, 'I lost it.'"*

(Sidney J. Harris)

*"In general, the passive voice **should be avoided** unless there is good reason to use it, for example, in this sentence, which focuses on 'the passive voice.'"*

(MARTINICH A.P. Thomas Hobbes. *The Blackwell Guide to the Modern Philosophers*, ed. by Steven M. Emmanuel. Blackwell: 2001.)

As a matter of fact, the quotes stated above bear the essential information about the basic characteristics of the phenomenon of passive voice. They will be further developed in following chapters of the theoretical part, which focuses on the definition of grammatical voice, structure of passives in English and Czech, their functions within a sentence and other significant peculiarities referring to these constructions.

Practical part based on research benefits from the theoretical findings and its aim is to observe them in selected text, points to the differences between the original and translated text. For this purpose, classical novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen from early 19<sup>th</sup> century will serve us to demonstrate all assumptions described in the theoretical part of this thesis. The novel with its flowery language represents a perfect sample of English vocabulary and grammar, great for observing the phenomenon of passive voice.



## 2. Grammatical voice

According to Čermák (2007), the category of voice represents a means how to express diathesis, i.e. relations between particular semantic participants and corresponding constituent within a sentence. The term voice in grammar refers only to the category of transitive verbs<sup>1</sup>. This grammatical category denotes the relationship of the action which the verb expresses towards the subject of a sentence. In other words, it expresses syntactic-semantic relationship of participants of the action towards the action itself (Dušková, 1988). According to the role of a subject in a sentence, we can distinguish either active or passive voice of verbs. When the subject is the “doer”, performer or so called *agent* of the action, the verb is in the active voice, whereas we designate a verb form passive when the subject is in the position of the “undergoer”, recipient or the *patient*; cf. jeho spolupracovníci dokončili projekt *his co-workers completed the project* ~ *the project was completed by his co-workers* projekt dokončili jeho spolupracovníci, *we achieved the aim* dosáhli jsme cíle ~ *the aim was achieved* cíle bylo dosaženo.

The usage of passive or active voice depends on the aspect which we want to emphasize within an utterance. A verb phrase in passive voice (a passive verb) emphasizes the recipient of the action rather than the performer which is unknown or rather irrelevant from the speaker's point of view. This causes the fact that we tend to associate the passive voice in writing with more objective point of view than the active. Sinclair *et al.* (1990) notes some other reasons for using the passive, for example, when the agent has been already mentioned (*In the next session of the management, new instructions will be introduced.*) or when people in general are the agents (*The entire discography of the Queen can be borrowed from our department.*) The passive is also used when a speaker wants to distance from the action (*The painting has been destroyed.*) There is more impersonal reference in English texts than in

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<sup>1</sup> Transitive verbs require both subject and one or more objects.

Czech, besides frequent passive forms it is also due to the usage of indefinite pronouns, or e.g. the ‘anticipatory it’: *It seems to me that [...]*

The possibility of interpreting a sentence either in active or in passive voice allows greater flexibility within a sentence construction and enables a speaker to use different ways of ordering the elements within a clause. It offers an opportunity to express a thought precisely and accurately; that allows especially the usage of active voice more than the unknown agent of the passive and the lack of precision which is sometimes accompanied with it. Passive voice is frequently used as a common language feature of legal and academic texts, scientific and technical writing.

Based on my observation, there is a tendency to use the passive when:

- we do not know the agent of an action; e.g. *the model aircraft has been broken*,
- it is irrelevant or not important who the agent is; e.g. *the experiment was held in laboratory*,
- the agent has been already mentioned; e.g. *Peter and Tom decided to build a ship. Eventually, the ship was build in a day...*
- we want to distance ourselves from the action; e.g. *it got lost*,
- people in general are the agents; e.g. *learning a new language at an advanced age is said to be difficult*,
- there is a focus on the action, not on who or what makes it happen; e.g. *the complex of buildings was built last year*.

## 2.1. Voice constraints

Despite the general rule that active transitive verbs can easily become passive, there are some significant exceptions which this chapter focuses on in detail.

Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985) distinguish several kinds of ‘voice constraints’.

### 2.1.1. Verb constraints

- a) It is important to point out that not every transitive verb can be switched into passive; such verbs are called ‘middle verbs’ and as such can be in the active voice only (QGLS, 1985). For example:

*She has brown hair. ~ Her eyes are blue.*

*He lacks experience.*

*The room holds one hundred people.*

These verbs are known as stative, which designates a state of ‘being’ or ‘having’ but on the other hand, there are some stative verbs which represent ‘volition’ or ‘attitude’ and those can be easily seen in passive sentences<sup>2</sup>:

*The government of Uganda wants him. ~ He is wanted by the government of Uganda.*

As noted by Dušková (1988), passive cannot be formed out of the verbs whose meaning is close to the meaning of a linking verb or when the nature of an object is close to the adverbial (*she gave an impatient sigh netrpělivě vzdychla, they walked ten miles šli jsme dvacet mil* etc.<sup>3</sup>). She also defines other verbs which cannot form the passive: *cost stát (o ceně), measure měřit, weigh vážit, equal rovnat se, mean znamenat, resemble podobat se, hold obsahovat, lack postrádat, become stát se, suit hodit se, fall spadnout, escape uniknout* etc.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> QUIRK, R., GREENBAUM, S., LEECH, G., SVARTVIK, J. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*.

<sup>3</sup> DUŠKOVÁ, L. *Mluvnice současné angličtiny na pozadí češtiny*. p. 259

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258

- b) Besides being in the active voice only, there are also verb constructions which can occur only in passive constructions:

*He is said to be a good English learner.*

*William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon.*

*The pale man on the bank of the river was drowned.*

### 2.1.2. Object constraints

Any monotransitive verb is followed either (A) by noun phrase or (B) by clausal object (object expressed by a clause). Passivization of clausal objects is connected with some restraints:

(A) *Jude loved Lucy. ~ Lucy was loved (by Jude).*

(B) i) finite clause: *Jude thought that her girlfriend was beautiful. ~ \*That his girlfriend was beautiful was thought (by Jude).*

ii) non-finite clause:

infinitive: *Jude hoped to kiss her. ~ \*To kiss her was hoped (by Jude).*

participle: *Jude enjoyed meeting her. ~ \*Meeting her was enjoyed (by Jude).*

According to Quirk *et al.* (1985), an acceptable way how to form a passive when the object is expressed by a finite clause is to extrapose the clausal object and add the ‘anticipatory it’ in front of the sentence; for example:

*It was thought that his girlfriend was beautiful.*

*It was agreed that he has a beautiful girlfriend.*

These so called 'it' structures (Sinclair *et al.*, 1990) are often used within the clauses which presuppose the fact that it is evident and clear whose ideas or thoughts we are referring to.

It is possible as well to remove the subject from the object clause into the passive main clause:

*His girlfriend was thought to be beautiful.*

This structure never occurs with participle clauses which function as subject, but does seldom occur with infinitive clauses:

*It was told to come at three.*

In addition, the reflexive, reciprocal and possessive objects cannot become passive subject, for example:

*She excused herself.*

*They don't know each other.*

The same restrictions apply to clausal objects in gerund form:

*She admitted having disappeared abruptly.*

### 2.1.3. Agent constraints

In most of English passive sentences there is no agent expressed because it is either redundant, unknown or irrelevant from the speaker's point of view, or, as in the famous Ronald Reagan's 'non-apology apology' (1987), a speaker's is not willing to admit the fault and take responsibility for something:

*"Mistakes have been made." (instead of "we made mistakes")*

Semantic relationship of subject towards the action of a verb expresses that the subject is not the causative element of the action (Dušková, 1988). There are more relationships of the subject and action of the verb which can be identified in the active sentences; we define a subject either as an agent or it can be affected by the action.

Due to the fact that the agent is often left out, it is sometimes impossible or difficult to define who the agent would be in the corresponding active sentence:

*Changes have been made in the last few decades. ~ (The government?), (A company?), (Headquarters?) has made some changes in the last few decades.*

The agent of the passive can be of course expressed at the end of a sentence, which puts an emphasis on the performer:

*The door was opened by the girl standing behind.*

#### 2.1.4. Meaning constraints

The shift from active to passive can be accompanied with the change of meaning of modal auxiliaries. Whereas a modal *can* denotes ability in active voice, in passive it can be interpreted as the possibility as well. It might be argued that both meanings can be retained in passive, nevertheless Quirk *et al.* argue that the shift of meaning is evident:

*Mary can't be taught. ('It is impossible to teach her' OR 'Mary is unable to learn')*<sup>5</sup>

The shift in the meaning can be also applied to the perfective aspect:

*John Amos Comenius has once visited the English Parliament.* [1]

*The English Parliament has once been visited by John Amos Comenius.* [2]

---

<sup>5</sup> QUIRK, R., GREENBAUM, S., LEECH, G., SVARTVIK, J. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. p. 166

The example [1] could be appropriately used in the lifetime of John Amos Comenius, while sentence [2] in passive is more appropriately said now, after Comenius' death.

In fact, approaches towards this issue differ a lot among speakers.

#### 2.1.5. Frequency constraints

Besides the structural and semantic restrictions which apply to the changing from the active to the passive, we can also notice differences in the frequency of usage of both voices. The active voice is more common within speaker's expressions, no matter if they are spoken or written. The distinction does not come from the difference of spoken and written English but it is more related with the distinction between informative and imaginative materials. Whereas active verbs can be found mostly in imaginative texts such as poetry and prose; passive verb forms are commonly used in informative language – e.g. materials from scientific field, technical writing, legal texts, news reporting etc. in order to distance the writer or speaker from the information and retain objectivity. However, we usually prefer the usage of active if possible.

### 3. Formation of the Czech and English passive

The following chapter concentrates on the formal distinction of the English and Czech passives. English passive construction always consists of two parts; there is no such case in English as impersonal passive<sup>6</sup> (jednočlenné, bezpodmětové pasivum; e.g. žádosti bylo uposlechnuto *the request was obeyed*) which can be identified in Czech. Consequently, there is a number of differences to be observed in Czech and English – the subject in the passive sentence corresponds with different cases of the Czech equivalent; cf. šetří se penězi *money is being saved*, nedbalo se na omezení *restrictions were not followed*, vždy se jím opovrhovalo *he has always been despised*, cíle bylo dosaženo *the aim was achieved*, o tom problému se debatovalo *this issue was debated* etc.

#### 3.1. Forms of English passive

The principal method of the passive constructions in any tense works as follows: the passive adds the appropriate form of auxiliary verb BE, which is followed by the past participle (*-ed* participle) of the main (lexical) verb (QGLS, 1985).

Table 3.1.:

	ACTIVE	PASSIVE
present:	plays	is played
past:	played	was played
modal:	may play	may be played
perfective:	has played	has been played

<sup>6</sup> Dušková's terminology



progressive:	is playing	is being played
modal + perfective:	may have played	may have been played
modal + progressive:	may be playing	may be being played
perfective + progressive:	has been playing	has been being played
modal + perfective + progressive:	may have been playing	may have been being played

---

Passive constructions occur also in the future time; the formation functions in the same way:

- (a) simple: S + **will/shall** + aux *be* + PP (+ *by* + O)
- (b) continuous: S + **will/shall** + aux *be* + being + PP (+ *by* + O)
- (c) future perfect: S + **will/shall** + aux *have* + been + PP (+ *by* + O)

- (a) *The homework will be finished (by him) tomorrow.*
- (b) *The results will be being released by the teacher at 4 PM on Monday.*
- (c) *By the end of this semester, several tests will have been written.*

As argued in Dušková (1988), progressive (continuous) passives can be usually found in present and preterite, other progressive forms are very rare and they are not usually accepted by native speakers.

<i>a car is being fixed/cleaned</i>	auto se opravuje/umývá	[1]
<i>a car was being fixed/cleaned</i>	auto se opravovalo/umývalo	[2]
<i>*the book has been being written</i>	kniha se psala	[3]
<i>*the room will be being painted</i>	místnost se bude malovat	[4]

Sentences [1] and [2] are considered to be common in English, whereas sentences [3] and [4] are grammatically correct, but they are not used by English speakers.

### 3.2. Forms of Czech passive

According to Dušková's terminology, two types of Czech passive constructions can be distinguished – *periphrastic passive* (pasivum složené; *be* + passive participle) which is a formal equivalent of the English *be* + past participle form; and *reflexive passive* (pasivum zvrtné) which does not exist in English, but has its parallel in *mediopassive* (*the gate closed brána se zavřela*, see chapter 3.7.). The reflexive passive is formed by the reflexive form of the verb (verb + *se*; see the example above). There are also significant features based on different transitivity of English and Czech verbs and also on the existence of Czech impersonal passives mentioned above. In English, both active objects (direct and indirect) can become passive subjects; it is only possible for direct object in Czech. Therefore, the English passive is much more frequent than Czech.

We can see certain similarities between Czech and English passive within the monotransitive verbs<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, we may come across some differences in regimen (*rekce*), see in Dušková (1988): "*English monotransitive verb often corresponds to Czech verb in genitive, dative or instrumental construction or the prepositional case, cf. the aim has been reached – cíle bylo dosaženo, what is it called? – jak se tomu říká?*"<sup>8</sup>

### 3.3. Passive in non-finite verb forms

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) recognize four non-finite forms of verbs in English:

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<sup>7</sup> See chapter 5.1.

<sup>8</sup> DUŠKOVÁ, L. a kol. *Mluvnice současné angličtiny na pozadí češtiny*. pp. 250-251

- (a) *to-infinitive*:                    *Alice wants to have a baby.*
- (b) *bare infinitive*:                    *Alice might have a baby.*
- (c) *gerund-participle*:                    *Alice longs for having a baby.*
- (d) *past participle*:                    *Alice has had a baby.*

The infinitive has two possible forms; the ‘bare’ infinitive without the particle *to* (*know, run* etc.) occurring in complex verb forms (*slovesné tvary složené*), after modals and verbs of perception; and the infinitive with the particle *to* (*to be, to have*).

The infinitive forms may be either in present or in past form (see Table 3.3.):

Table 3.3.:

<b>infinitive</b>	<b>present</b>	<b>past</b>
simple active	to bring	to have brought
progressive active	to be bringing	to have been bringing
passive	to be brought	to have been brought

### 3.3.1. Passive infinitives

Sometimes infinitives are used in the passive voice. The active infinitive has broader practical application than the passive and, moreover, it sometimes takes the function of the passive, for instance *no one is to blame* není to ničí vina, *the house is to let* dům je k pronajmutí, *he is not a man to trifle with* není radno s ním žertovat (Dušková, 1988: 268).

The passive infinitive uses the infinitive *to be* (sometimes substituted by the auxiliary *have* or *get*) and *the past participle* of a verb, see examples:

*The dog needs to be fed.*

*She hates to get hurt.*

We can identify passive infinitives with verbs like *want*, *hope*, *need*, *like*, *hate*, *love* and some others.

### 3.3.2. Passive gerunds

English gerund (verb+ *-ing*) is similar to Czech verbal substantive<sup>9</sup> (*podstatné jméno slovesné*), viz. Table 3.3.2.:

Table 3.3.2.:

<b>gerund</b>	<b>present</b>	<b>past</b>
active	kissing	having kissed
passive	being kissed	having been kissed

There is a variety of English verbs which links with the gerund, such as *like*, *hate*, *enjoy*, *remember* and as such, they are followed by the form *being* (or *getting* in some cases) and the past participle of a verb:

*I don't like being told what to do.*

*Do you remember being respected?*

*He enjoyed getting paid.*

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<sup>9</sup> The term was translated from Czech by the author

It is possible to use the passive gerund at the beginning of a sentence as well, as illustrated in:

*Being betrayed by a friend is not pleasant.*

*Getting paid makes me feel secure.*

### 3.3.3. Past participle

The usage of past participle is crucial when creating a passive verb form; it is always the auxiliary which changes its form, but the past participle remains the same: e.g. *is found*, *have been found* and *being taught*, *having been taught* / *being written*, *having been written*. Past participle is sometimes called ed-participle, which is not appropriate since the irregular verbs do not end with *-ed*.

### 3.4. Passive with prepositional verbs

Passive constructions also occur within the transitive verbs connected with prepositions. This kind of verb works as any other one-word verb; the preposition remains at the same place, does not change its position:

*In the new edition, two chapters have been added to.*<sup>10</sup>

*You are not supposed to talk or be talked to.*<sup>11</sup>

*The issue will be worked with tomorrow.*

### 3.5. Passive with causative form

This type of sentence structure uses the following pattern: S + Have/Get/Make + O + PP: *My father had me wash his car.* ~ *My father had his car washed (by me).*

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<sup>10</sup> DUŠKOVÁ, L. a kol. *Morfologie současné angličtiny*. p. 49

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Let us illustrate this construction on examples:

- /Active/      *I enjoy swimming an hour after the breakfast. (gerund)*  
*I am accustomed to swim an hour after the breakfast.*  
*When I don't swim after the breakfast, my wife makes me do so.*  
(causative)
- /Passive/      *I am made to do so. (infinitive follows the passive causative verb)*  
*I am accustomed to being made to do so. (passive gerund)*

Notice the omission of *to* in the active sentence "*my wife makes me do so*" and the presence of *to* in "*I am made to do so*" indicating that we do not omit *to* in a passive finite verb.

### 3.6. Semi-passives (adjectival passives)

The sentences of semi-passive nature are characterized by both the adjectival and verbal features and as such cannot be denoted as passives in the strict sense.

A *by*-phrase is rather rare within the adjectival passives. Properties of adjectival passives involve the following possibilities (QGLS, 1985):

1. the verb *be* can be removed and replaced by copula verb such as *feel*, *seem* or *look*;
2. of modifying by adverbs *very*, *rather*, *more* etc.;
3. the option of coordinating the past participle with an adjective; see examples:

*I feel quite discouraged.*

*She was very surprised by the results.*

*They seem very interested in their jobs.*

### 3.7. Mediopassives

Mediopassives are grammatical constructions which use the active voice to express passive meaning; they are translated to Czech using the *reflexive passive* (pasivum zvrtné):

*This car brand sells easily.* Tato značka auta se prodává lehce.

*The chair sits on easily.* Na této židli se snadno sedí.

*The door locks.* Dveře se zamykají. X *The door was locked.* Dveře byly zamčeny.

Together with the verbs in examples above, Sinclair *et al.* (1990) states other active verbs like *clean*, *show* and *wash* which can take the passive meaning and points out that there is often a link with ‘ability’, as in *the material cleans easily*, which means that *it can be cleaned easily*. Note that mediopassives exist in other tenses as well: *the sculpture was sold for one hundred pounds/the sculpture sold for one hundred pounds*, *vacancies are already being refilling/vacancies are already refilling*.

### 3.8. The passive auxiliary *get*

In general, *be* works as the passive auxiliary, but we can identify a number of cases which use verb *get* as an auxiliary as well. It is considered to be informal to use *get* within a passive sentence, and speakers therefore avoid it: *the novel got translated into Czech*, *Phil got beaten at the party*. *Get* is much more common in fixed phrases, such as *get bored*, *get excited*, *get lost* etc. (Quirk *et al.*, 1985, p. 161).

### 3.9. Transitive verbs rarely used in the passive

Sinclair *et al.* (1990) lists a number of verbs which, even if they are transitive, are not frequently used in passive constructions. These include verbs *elude, get, like, suit, escape, have, race, survive, flee, let, resemble.*



#### 4. Transitivity

In linguistic field, transitivity represents a property of verbs which relates to whether a verb has the ability to take object(s). Transitivity of verbs varies in different languages; it causes the fact that the translators may encounter difficulties when translating a piece of work from Czech into English and vice versa.

##### 4.1. Transitive and intransitive complementation

There is a considerable distinction between (a) transitive verbs which permit at least one object, and (b) intransitive verbs which cannot take any object. In English, a transitive verb in the active voice becomes intransitive in the passive, as in:

*Joe kissed Rachel.*

In this example, *kissed* represents a transitive verb because it is followed by *Rachel* as its object. The sentence can be transformed into passive with the direct object *Rachel* as the passive subject:

*Rachel was kissed.*

In English, against the general rule, some intransitive verbs can be used in the passive voice when a prepositional phrase comes with the verb:

*The house was lived in by hundreds of people.*

## 5. Passive transformation

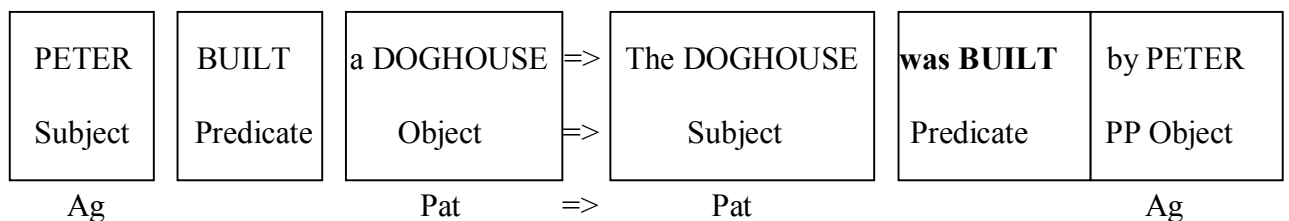
According to Čermák (2007), transformation represents a process within a syntactic change of word, phrase or sentence which ultimately transforms the syntactic tree. The essential principle of the transformation from the active to passive verb forms (the process is called ‘passivization’) works as follows: 1. the subject in the active (the active subject) becomes the passive agent; 2. the object in the active (the active object) becomes the passive subject; 3. the preposition *by* is inserted before the agent. The verb changes its form (see Table 1 in the previous chapter), the prepositional phrase *by+NP* of passive sentences is more or less optional (see in examples). As a result, the two utterances change their word-classes as well as semantic roles within a sentence. The active-passive correspondence can be illustratively shown like this:

NP1+ active VP + NP2 ~ NP2 + passive VP + (*by* NP1)

### 5.1. Monotransitive verbs

As might be expected, monotransitive verbs permit only direct object. The process of monotransitive passivization is illustrated in the Scheme 5.1.:

Scheme 5.1.



Although the structure appears to be entirely different, the meaning between the two corresponding structures remains nearly the same – this is called the ‘syntactic synonymy’:

*The man released the prisoners.* [1] ~ *The prisoners were released by the man*  
(optional Ag). [2]

*Chinese architect designed the flat.* [3] ~ *The flat was designed by Chinese*  
*architect.* [4]

In these examples, sentences [1] and [2] have the same value, as well as [3] and [4]. However, the following instance<sup>12</sup> proves that there are some cases which cannot be considered as examples of full synonymy. Contrast:

*Jim observed John willingly.*

*John was observed by Jim willingly.*

Two such sentences cannot be considered as synonymous, because the adverbial *willingly* is semantically connected to the passive subject (Sgall, 2000).

## 5.2. Ditransitive verbs

Ditransitive verbs are followed by indirect and direct object which can be either bare or also very complex. Dušková (1988) notes that ditransitive verbs dispose of double passive construction due to the fact that both indirect and direct object can become passive subject. Czech passive subject, however, is derived from the direct active object only. In Scheme 3.2., let us focus on the change of position of objects as well as their different case in corresponding English-Czech sentences:

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<sup>12</sup> SGALL, P. *Rudiments of English Linguistics: Syntax*. p. 238

Scheme 5.2.

S                      O indirect                      O direct  
We give an opportunity to every member of our department.

Dáváme příležitost každému členu našeho oddělení.

S                      O direct  
An opportunity is given to every member of our department.

Příležitost je dána každému členu našeho oddělení.

S                      O direct  
Every member of our department is given an opportunity.

Každému členu našeho oddělení je dána příležitost.

Generally, when the object is expressed by a clause or infinitive, it is usually possible for indirect object to become a passive subject – *they told us to come on time ~ we were told to arrive on time* (Dušková, 1988).

## 6. The research

The aim of the research is to demonstrate the theoretical observations on a sample of English text and its Czech translation and examine the Czech active forms corresponding with English passives. The study is based on examination of passive verb forms which can be found in the classical Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (and its Czech translation *Pýcha a předsudek*), first published in 1813, which disposes of fine formal language and I considered it to be a suitable material for the research.

The analysis deals with both finite and non-finite passive verb forms, simple and continuous; whereas only structures with all forms of *be* and a past participle were taken into consideration. The semi-passives, i.e. adjectival passives such as *she was surprised/amused/pleased* etc. and mediopassives (see chapter 3.7.) were excluded from this study, since these constructions cannot be denoted as 'proper' passives. I found it rather problematic to distinguish the adjectival forms of passives (also semi-passives, more in chapter 3.6.) from the 'proper' ones in some cases, see 6.2.

### 6.1. Translating the passive voice

*"Translation quality assessment proceeds according to the lordly, but completely unexplained, whimsy of 'It doesn't sound right.'"*

(Fawcett, 1981:142 in Baker, 1992)

When translating the passive voice of the original text to the different language, it should be a translator's responsibility to bear in mind certain differences in languages. He/she should capture the original intention of a sentence, obey language peculiarities and take the intended function of passive in a particular sentence into account. It is essential not to

translate texts automatically and not to resort to mechanic process of translation, but to be fully aware of both source and target language, which requires perfect knowledge of their language systems. In some languages, category of voice does not exist at all, which can pose some problems when translating such language into another, in which, on the other hand, category of voice represents common and significant structure. Thus, as Baker (1992) points out, verbs in such languages as Japanese, Vietnamese and Chinese, have no voice which could indicate the relationship between subject and predicate of a clause. As Nida (1975: 136) in Baker (1992: 106) notes, there are even some languages, where the passive voice is considerably more frequent than the active voice. In the result, Nilotic people of central Africa prefer to say "the town was gone to by him" rather than "he went to town".

Baker further refers to the differences within the formal correspondence in English and Slavonic languages as Russian or Czech, where the structure "*we invite you to...*" is more common than "*you are invited to...*" which is perceived as more natural in English.

It has to be mentioned that translating the passive is led by translator's motivation in the first place, which might result in different interpretations of the original text.

## 6.2. Adjectival forms

While analyzing English passives in selected text, certain obstructions with identifying them occur. There are instances where the form of past participle is close to an adjective or it is an adjective, and therefore we cannot identify them as passive in the strict sense. For these cases, there is a method to determine whether the construction belongs to the group of adjectival passives (which are not the subject of examination in this research) or the 'proper' passives. For this purpose, it is essential to prove that the subject of a passive sentence can operate as object in the active form (Dušková, 1972):

*he was caught by their (manners) easy playfulness => their easy playfulness caught him*

It is also recommended by Huddleston and Pullum (2002) to use modifiers such as *very, rather, too* etc. since this modification is possible only with adjectives, not verbs:

*Elizabeth was very little disposed.*

*\*It was very made from wood.*

### 6.3. Translating from English into Czech

As it has been already stated, the usage of passives in English is considerably higher than in Czech, which enables the translators to replace them by some other language means in the active in many instances. Following chapters discuss the differences in original and translated extracts as well as the language means used in translation.

#### 6.3.1. Preserving the passive forms in translation

Considering the instances where the passive voice is preserved in Czech, it is obvious that they come from English sentences with no definite agent expressed. Plecháčková (2007) also states another reason which can lead to preserving the passive in translations, i.e. stylistic factor, since there are sentences which need to be translated in the way that keeps all the significant nuances, as in formal style of writing.

Vanity and pride are different things,  
though the words **are** often **used**  
synonymously.

Je rozdíl mezi pýchou a hrdostí,  
ač **se** obě tato slova často **užívají**.

The reason for usage of passive voice in Czech corresponding sentence in this example is quite evident; an unexpressed agent in English resulted in the passive construction with Czech

reflexive form of passive, with an indefinite human agent:

... as **might be supposed**,...

... a servant **was dispatched**  
to Longbourn to acquaint the family...

... jak **se dalo čekat**,...

...do Longbournu **se vypravil** sluha,  
aby seznámil rodinu Bennetových  
se stavem věcí...

For instances like this, the periphrastic form can be also used without any change of meaning:

*Je rozdíl mezi pýchou a hrdostí, ač **jsou** obě tato slova často **užívána**.*

*Do Longbournu **byl vypraven** sluha, aby seznámil rodinu Bennetových se stavem věcí...*

In the latter clause, it might be even more appropriate to use periphrastic form in order to avoid ambiguity: *do Longbournu **se vypravil** sluha* may imply that *a servant dispatched to Longbourn* and does not include the external impulse. Štícha (1979) emphasized that we cannot use the reflexive passive when expressing definite agent.

The reflexive form of Czech passive voice is rather rare in the narrative parts; the periphrastic ones definitely prevail, which may contribute to the formal character of the novel – it has been stated by Štícha that using the periphrastic form is considered to be more literary and artistic in a piece of writing, whereas reflexive form is more connected with the spoken utterances.

Following instances illustrate the employment of periphrastic forms:

Her hopes **were answered**;  
Jane had not been gone  
long before it rained hard.

Její přání **bylo vyslyšeno**:  
sotva Jane odjela,  
začalo hustě pršet.

... at half-past six Elizabeth  
**was summoned** to dinner.

... v půl sedmé **byla** Elizabeth  
**pozvána** k večeři.



"... and if I **were determined** to get a rich husband, or any husband, I dare say I should adopt it. "

"... kdybych **byla odhodlána** za každou cenu ulovit bohatého ženicha, anebo vůbec ženicha, pak bych se jím zajisté řídila."

The visit **was** soon **returned** in due form.

Tato návštěva **byla** brzy patřičně **opětována**.

The advice **was followed** readily,...

Jeho rady **bylo** ihned **uposlechnuto**,...

... they **were** well **supplied** both with news and happiness by the recent arrival of a militia regiment in the neighbourhood;

...**měly postaráno** jak o novinky, tak o spokojenost, neboť do kraje nedávno přitáhl pluk vojenské domobrany,...

### 6.3.2. Replacing English passive with Czech active voice

The differences between these two languages result in, among other things, different distribution of the grammatical voice. With regard to its function in a sentence, it is sometimes not necessary or appropriate to follow the original and translate the passive voice literally, which would create grammatically or semantically defective sentence. In the following instances, let us focus on the different realisation of the agent in Czech active sentence:

**She was shown** into the breakfast-parlour,...

**Uvedli** ji do ranního salónku,...

"She **will be taken** good care of."

"**Budou** o ni obětavě **pečovat**."

Unlike Czech, in English there is an indefinite human agent implied, whereas the active sentence refers to 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural. The same applies to the following examples:

Elizabeth, easy and unaffected, **had been listened to** with much more pleasure,...

Přirozené a neafektované Elizabeth **naslouchali** posluchači s větším potěšením,...

... and though the mother **was found** to be intolerable, and the younger sisters not worth speaking to, a wish of being better acquainted with them **was expressed** towards the two eldest.

... a třebaže **usoudily**, že matka Bennetová je nesnesitelná a mladší dcery nestojí za to, aby s nimi člověk slovo ztratil, **vyjádřily** přání sblížit se s oběma staršími.

... who **were** usually **tempted** thither three or four times a week, to pay their duty to their aunt and to a milliner's shop just over the way.

... třikrát čtyřikrát za týden **zatoužily** vypravít se tam a složit poklonu paní tetince i modistce sídlící přes ulici.

A few examples with 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular:

"But if you have got them today," said Elizabeth, "my mother's purpose **will be answered.**"

"Budete-li je však potřebovat dnes, **zavděčíte se** matince," podotkla Elizabeth.

It **was** then **disclosed** in the following manner.

A pak jí to **sdělil** takto: Všiml si, že jeho druhorozená dcera pilně vylepšuje nějaký klobouk,...

Instances show that we can see the agent expressed in Czech sentence even if it does not occur in the English passive sentence – which is possible due to the context. Passive voice in Czech in these examples would not be suitable because of the stylistic inaccuracy.

#### 6.3.2.1. Non-finite passive forms

As has been already mentioned, non-finite verb forms are also used in the passive. In the Czech translation of the novel, the active voice is applied. Following list of instances of non-finite passive forms can be found:

## (1) Passive infinitive

The infinitive in the passive form (chapter 3.3.1.) employs the infinitive *to be* which can be sometimes substituted by the auxiliary *have* or *get* (but these instances are not the subjects of the analysis); and *the past participle* of a verb, see examples:

"It will be her turn soon **to be teased**,"  
said Miss Lucas.

"Hned budeme mít příležitost  
**poškádlit** na oplátku ji," řekla  
slečna Lucasová.

"You will not be fit **to be seen** when you get there."

"Jak **bys vypadala**, než bys tam  
došla?"

... but she considered with pleasure  
that it was **not likely to be discovered**  
by the world in general,...

... s radostí si však uvědomovala,  
že **okolní svět** to asi hned  
tak **nepostřehne**,...

Mr. Darcy, with grave propriety,  
requested **to be allowed** the honour of her hand,  
but in vain.

Pan Darcy ji s obřadnou vážností  
požádal, aby mu **prokázala** tu čest,  
avšak marně.

## (2) Passive gerund

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) also use the term *gerund-participle* for this type of non-finite form. Passive gerund was not occasional in the novel and thus, many examples can be shown.

For more on passive gerunds, see chapter 3.3.2.:

Every thing **being settled**  
between them, Mr. Darcy's next step  
was to make your uncle  
acquainted with it,...

Jakmile pan Darcy tedy všechno  
**dohodl** s ním, chtěl bezprodleně  
zasvětit strýčka, a poprvé k nám  
zašel ten večer, než jsem přijela.

... the greatest part of his life  
**having been spent** under

... většinu života **strávil** se svým  
otcem, negramotným, lakomým

the guidance of an illiterate and miserly father;...	uzurpátorem,...
... without <b>being heard</b> by either of them.	... a ani <b>nevnímaly</b> , že matka zatím rozvádí dál,...
He had entertained hopes of <b>being admitted</b> to a sight of the young ladies,...	Doufal, že <b>se</b> přitom <b>naskytne příležitost</b> k seznámení se slečnami, o jejichž půvabu už toho mnoho slyšel,...
Bingley was sure of <b>being liked</b> wherever he appeared,...	At' přišel Bingley kamkoli, všude ho <b>měli rádi</b> ,...
"... without <b>being informed</b> that she was very accomplished."	"... aby mi o některé <b>neřekli</b> hned napoprvé, že je velmi vzdělaná."

#### 6.4. Translating English active form into Czech passive

The passives which appear in Czech translation but does not occur in the original text are called 'added' passives (Plecháčková, 2007). As can be seen in examples, they often refer to an indefinite (human) agent:

My dear niece, I <b>have</b> just <b>received</b> your letter,...	Drahá neteři, právě mi <b>byl doručen</b> Tvůj list...
Elizabeth's astonishment <b>was beyond expression</b> .	Elizabeth <b>nebyla</b> úžasem <b>mocna</b> slova.
It was painful, exceedingly painful, to know that they <b>were under obligations</b> to a person who could never receive a return.	Trápilo ji, hluboce ji trápilo vědomí, že <b>jsou zavázáni</b> člověku, jemuž nemohou prokázat žádnou protislužbu.
If, in the explanation of them, which is due to myself,	<b>Budu-li</b> při tomto vysvětlení, které pokládám ve svém zájmu za

**I am under the necessity**  
of relating feelings...

nezbytné, **nucen vyjavit** názory,...

But, Lizzy, this **must go** no farther  
than yourself, or Jane at most.

Ale, Lízinko, tohle **je určeno** jen  
pro Tebe nebo nanejvýš pro Jane.

"Come, Mr. Wickham,  
**we are brother and sister**, you know."

"Ale jděte, pane Wickhame,  
víte přece, že **jsme spříznění**,...

Basically, 'added' passives are used to maintain certain level of formality, but in many cases, the translator had inclined to use passive voice, since there are some fixed phrases which prefer to be translated by using the passive: *být zavázán někomu, je určen pro něco, být spřízněn s někým* etc.

#### 6.5. Other language devices in translation

Generally speaking, translating often represents a tricky and complex discipline. The translator should dispose of perfect vocabulary of both the source and target language and not be afraid to explore various ways of translations of particular structures. This approach applies to the translating of the passive voice as well.

In the original, several instances employing passive verb form were transformed into Czech using non-verbal constructions, see examples:

"I find myself very unwell this morning,  
which, I suppose, **is to be imputed**  
**to** my getting wet through yesterday."

"Necítím se dnes ráno nijak  
ve své kůži - **asi v důsledku toho**,  
že jsem včera tak hrozně  
promokla."

The extract above shows the non-finite passive verb form which does not need any verbal equivalent, but contrary, it can be loosely translated into a non-verbal structure. In this case, the meaning of the sentence remains the same and does not suffer from any unsuitability.

The introduction **was followed up**  
on his side by a happy readiness of conversation,...

**Po představení** projevil lichotivou  
ochotu se bavit,...

When this information **was given**,...

**Po tomto sdělení** se všichni  
rozesadili...

The passive forms in English are in these cases replaced by the adverbials of time, which semantically correspond with sentences in the passive voice. The translator's aim was the employing the language economy which does not allow long and euphuistic sentences.

## 6. Conclusion

Although the category of voice in English and Czech is similar to a certain extent (it puts an emphasis on an action of a verb and does not specify the agent), this grammatical structure can be compared in terms of functional and stylistic aspect to point to the differences in treatment of passive structures in the two languages.

The analysis deals with the significant examples of English passive sentences in the original work of fiction, that should demonstrate the theoretical observations in practice, which is the main attempt of the research. For this purpose, each example taken from the novel is accompanied with the corresponding sentence in Czech translation. The research sample is very limited, so it would be problematic to make any general conclusions. Nevertheless, it contains significant examples which serve to our purpose.

The analysis explains the distribution of the reflexive and periphrastic forms of Czech passives. Whereas the periphrastic form of passive is the formal equivalent of English passive verb form, the reflexive one is uniquely Czech; though it has its counterpart in English mediopassive. Mediopassives, as well as semi-passive verb forms, were not analyzed, because it was only passives of any form of *be* + past participle which were taken into consideration.

The aim of other parts of the analysis was to examine the ways in which the original had been translated into Czech. We can observe the examples where passive voice in the original was preserved in Czech, mostly if there was no definite agent in English or where the maintaining of the passive was necessary due to the stylistic reasons.

Passive voice in the original was very often replaced by Czech active forms. They mostly refer to the indefinite agent or 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural as a general human agent.

On the basis of more extensive amount of examples, there could be suggested plenty of general conclusions, tendencies and presumptions about the translation of the grammatical voice from English to Czech and vice versa, but it always depends on the translator, which

structure he/she will prefers in particular cases. Since the beauty of every language lies in the numerous possibilities of interpretation of any formulation, the thesis also mentions the means of language used to express the meaning in the passive sentence without involving any verbal structure to demonstrate the fact that the translating should not be a mechanical process.



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## ANOTACE

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	Eliška Štrublíková
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<b>Název práce:</b>	Trpný rod v angličtině a češtině
<b>Název v angličtině:</b>	The Passive voice in Czech and in English
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Bakalářská práce se soustředí na problematiku trpného rodu v angličtině v porovnání s češtinou. Snaží se o srovnání pasiva těchto dvou jazyků z hlediska funkčního a stylistického, zabývá se jeho strukturou a problémy při jeho užívání.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Slovesný rod, trpný rod, pasivní slovesný tvar, transitivní slovesa, agens
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	The bachelor thesis focuses on the issue of the passive voice, both in Czech and in English, tries to compare passives in these two languages in terms of functional and stylistic aspects, deals with its structure and problems regarding to its usage.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b>	Grammatical voice, passive voice, passive verb form, transitive verbs, agent
<b>Přílohy vázané v práci:</b>	
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	42 normostran
<b>Jazyk práce:</b>	angličtina