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THE PASSE VOICE IN ENGLISH AND CZECH

Bakalářská práce

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

$O_d$	Direct object
$O_i$	Indirectobject
Per.	Periphrastic passive
Ref	Reflexive passive

Note concerning the examples: all the examples in theoretical part which lack reference are invented by author of the thesis. All the examples in research were excerpted from the three volumes of National Geographic which are referred to in bibliography.

## **Abstract**

The theoretical part compares the English and Czech passive voice. It defines the voice using its significant features and elaborates on the issue of verbs and objects used in passive. It classifies the structures of the passive voice which are either corresponding or specific for one of the languages and also provides basic information concerning the frequency and theory about translating the passive.

The research part focuses on the passive voice in its written form as it is based on 200 English passive excerpts from magazines and its translations in corresponding Czech editions. The main issues are the frequency of particular passive structures, expression of the agent, type of agent and the ways of translating the passive into Czech. The aim of the thesis is to compare the passive voice on theoretical field and to answer the question of the practical part and verify or displace claims from theoretical part.

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## 1 Introduction

Sydney J. Harris once stated: *“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.”* “(Sydney J. Harris, quotes.dictionary.com) But the quote can be twisted into: “We have not passed the subtle line between childhood and adulthood of the process of learning English, until we move from the active voice to the passive.

The topic of this bachelor thesis is a comparison of the grammatical voice in English and in Czech language.

It was chosen due to importance of mastering of the passive voice in the learning process of English, since it is used quite regularly in the spoken language and is a crucial part of scientific or other writings of impersonal and highly formal character.

The thesis is divided into theoretical part and research part. The theory focuses on defining the voice which is needed before making any comparison. It then proceeds to compare what the characteristic features of the passive, what verbs are suitable and what forms are used to create the passive in both languages. The theoretical part also gives general information about the frequency and concerns of translating the English passive voice.

The main concern of the practical part, based on corpus consisting of 200 excerpts, is to find the most common constructions of the English passive voice and quantify them accordingly to the theoretical findings of the first part. It also tries to confirm or displace three hypotheses. Two of these concern the agent of the passive voice and the third one questions, whether the passive voice is translated mainly by using the Czech passives. This part also attempts to quantify the ways of translation of the English passive and highlighting the most common and unusual ways of doing it. This should result in discovering the general tendencies of the Czech translators on the field of the passive voice. The results of the research part are depicted via tables, which present the numeral outcomes of the corpus analysis.



## 2 Verb category of voice

Aim of this chapter is to try to give a definition of passive voice for both languages and to find out whether they are corresponding or not.

The grammatical category of voice can be defined in various ways. For example, according to Cambridge Dictionaries Online, one can define the grammatical category of voice as “*the relationship between the subject of the verb and the action described by the verb, or the forms of a verb that show this relationship.*” (Cambridge Dictionaries online, n.d. ) This definition corresponds with the one of Havránek and Jedlička (1981) who describe voice as a relation of an action (verb) and subject, while adding that also the relation between subject and initiator of the action *agent* is highly important. (Havránek and Jedlička, 1981, p. 235)

These two given examples of voice definition imply what the most crucial parts are as far as voice is concerned – the verb-subject relation and subject-agent relation, which is mutual for both Czech and English languages.

## 3 Defining features of the passive voice

### 3.1 Verb-subject relation and subject-agent relation

The difference between the active and passive voice is best described by the relation between subject, agent and verb of a sentence.

Carter and McCarthy (2006) claim that the active voice is the most frequent form of giving information about a grammatical subject of a sentence. In addition, when active form is used the grammatical subject of a sentence is the agent at the same time. (Carter and McCarthy, 2006, p. 793) Similar definition is given by Havránek and Jedlička (1981) who state that active voice is the expression of an action initiated by subject, thus subject is an initiator of a verb-expressed action. (Havránek and Jedlička, 1981, p. 235)

“*Jane sold a book. / Jana prodal aknihu.*” would be a classical example of a sentence in active voice. In this case *Jane* is fulfilling the role of grammatical subject and agent at the same time compared to the same sentence in the passive “*The book was sold by Jane. / Knihabylaprodána.*”

The passive voice however, has different relation between subject and agent. Kopečný (1962) defines the passive voice as a case of agent being pushed from the position of a subject. (Kopečný, 1962, p. 119) This definition correlates with definition of Dušková *et al.* (1994) who states that the initiator of the action in the passive is not represented by subject. (Dušková *et al.*, 1994, p. 253)

The role of a subject within the sentence is different. Carter and McCarthy (2006) describe the passive voice as a case where the starting point of a message is a person or a thing that is the affected participant of the action. (Carter and McCarthy, 2006, p. 793) On top of that, “*subject of a passive construction is former object of an active sentence*”. (Dušková *et al.*, 1994, p. 250)

Overall, the relation between verb, subject and agent seems to be corresponding in the passive voice of both languages.

## 3.2 Expressing an agent

### 3.2.1 Means of expressing an agent

Both Swan (1996, p. 410) and Quirk *et al.* (1985, p. 164) state that approximately 80% of the English passive sentences do not express agent and according to Havránek and Jedlička (1981, p. 238) expressing agent in Czech is rare and is a result of one of the defining features of the passive – subduing of the agent.

According to Swan (1996) within an English passive clause a phrase beginning with *by* is used to express the agent *All the trouble was caused **by** your mother*. On top of that *with* can be used to express what instrument was used by an agent to perform an action. e.g.

*He was shot (by the policeman) **with a rifle**.* (Swan, 1996, p. 410)

Dušková (1994) claims, that the agent phrase can have different beginning, when the agent is inanimate. In such cases, the regimen of a given verb is the determining factor in choosing particular preposition.

*I am surprised **at** her attitude.*

*I am worried **about** it.*

*This fact wasn't known **to** me.*

*The need for...is reflected in...* (Dušková *et al.*, 1994, p. 262)

In Czech, there are three possibilities of passive agent expression. Both Havránek and Jedlička (1981, p. 238) and Dušková *et al.* (1994, p. 253) stated that the possibilities are either expressing agent by using instrumental. Or using **genitive** and preposition “od” *Byl potrestán od matky.* (Havránek and Jedlička, 1981, p. 238) The expression of the agent is also only possible in periphrastic form of the passive, which is using auxiliary verb “být” and when the agent is a person. (Havránek and Jedlička, 1981, p. 238)

The third option is mentioned by Grepl and Karlík (1989, p. 155). It can be observed within constructions formed by *be* + passive participle (*Národním výborem byly občanům přiděleny pozemky napěstování zeleniny*), *have* + passive participle (*Od národního výboru měli občané přiděleny pozemky...*) or *receive* + passive participle (*Od národního výboru dostali občané přiděleny pozemky...*) Authors consider all the options mentioned above as an explicit ways of expressing an agent in a different syntactical position. The most common is substantive in instrumental, but more possibilities are viable (*Národním výborem... / Od Národního výboru... / Ze strany Národního výboru...*).

### 3.2.2 Obligatorily expressed agent

According to Dušková *et al.* (1994) the expression of the agent in English is mostly facultative. However, cases when agent is obligatory also exist. (Dušková *et al.*, 1994, p. 253)

Quirk *et al.* (1985, p. 165) gives an example of such sentences and explains that (2) and (4) are not necessarily incorrect as far as grammatical or lexical rules are concerned, but suggests that the sentences are informationally vacuous because of the lack of the agent. On top of that, construction similar to (2) can be perfectly viable e.g. *We're being followed.*

- (1) The music was followed by a short interval.
- (2) The music was followed
- (3) The rebels were actuated by both religious and political motives.
- (4) The rebels were actuated

### 3.2.3 Unexpressed agent

Carter and McCarthy (2006, p. 798) point out that the agentless passives in English are used for several reasons:

- The entity responsible for the action:

a) Is obvious:

*There were twenty people arrested.*

b) Is not known:

*It was agreed that no action needed to be taken.*

c) Is not considered relevant:

*Swimming in the lake is prohibited.*

d) Might be inappropriate to be mentioned or embarrassed by being mentioned:

*I'm sorry. It seems that your forms got mislaid.* (Carter and McCarthy 2006; 798)

Quirk et al. (1985) also adds another reason concerning the agent

e) The agent is left out as redundant.

*Jack fought Michael last night, and Jack was beaten.* (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 165)

Carter and McCarthy (2006)

- The process is a focus of impersonal speaking and writing (e.g. academic and technical language)

*Heat was applied until the mixture came to the boil.* (Carter and McCarthy 2006, p. 799)

### 3.3 Verb usage in the passive

Not all available verbs can be transferred into a passive. Distinction between those will be the focus of this chapter. English verbs transferable into a passive will be the main concern, but Czech verbs will be given attention when the opportunity arises.

#### 3.3.1 Verbs forming the passive

Dušková et al. (1994) writes that the English passive can be formed from:

a) Monotransitive verbs:

In this case, the verb has only one subject and formation of the passive pretty much corresponds with Czech language, if the fact that Czech language also forms reflexive form of the passive is neglected. *This aspect is often neglected. – Toto hledisko se často zanedbává.* (Dušková et al. 1994, p. 250)

b) Ditransitive verbs:

The verbs with direct and indirect object e.g. *I gave a letter(O<sub>d</sub>) to him(O<sub>i</sub>)*. In similar cases, both objects can become a subject of a passive sentence *The letter was given to him/He was given a letter*. In contrary to this, in Czech only a direct object can become a subject of a passive sentence.

The indirect object is often preceded by *to* in the passive. However, there is also a possibility of omitting it with certain verbs. *A reward was given to him/given him*. (Dušková et al. 1994, p. 252)

The choice of a subject in these cases is also important. The object of an active sentence with lower informative value should become the subject of a passive one. This might be understood more easily in Swan (1996) who explains that most often sentences move from “known” to “new,” meaning from low to high information value, thus the subject is a person or thing that is already being talked about, has already been mentioned or is something that both speaker and hearer are familiar with. (Swan, 1996, p. 275)

However, if the direct object is in a form of an infinitive or a dependent clause, only the indirect object can become the subject of a passive sentence.

Infinitive: *They told us to come at three– We were told to come at three*

Dependent clause: *They promised her that her offer would remain open till her return – She was promised that her offer...* (Dušková et al., 1994, p. 252)

Another case where only the indirect object takes the position of passive subject are sentences similar to: *I was charged an exorbitant price*. (Dušková et al., 1994, p. 253)

c) Verbs with prepositional object (see 2.3.4.)

d) Verbs consisting of a verb with adverbial particle:

These verbs are defined, according to Dušková et al. (1994), as verbs where the adverbial particle is the second constituent, which might itself be only *adverbout*, adverb and a preposition *off*, or an adverb and other word class *back*.

The problem is that a verb with preposition and a verb with adverbial particle can have same appearance. Despite this fact, it is possible to distinguish between them:

Verb + adverbial particle:

*She couldn't get off her ring.*

- *Off* is stressed
- Postponing of the particle possible with following nominal subject *She couldn't get her ring of*

Verb + preposition:

*She got off her bicycle.*

- *Get* is stressed
- Postponing of the particle **not** possible with following nominal subject *She couldn't get her bike of* – possible only in meaning “send away (the bike)” (Dušková et al. 1988, p. 203-204)

The only restriction for forming the passive with these verbs is their transitivity. *Their business relations have been broken off.* (Dušková et al., 1994, p. 251)

e) Verbs consisting of a verb, adverbial particle and a preposition

Dušková et al. (1994) describes these verbs from d) connected with a preposition. The result is three-part verbal quasi-composite. There is also a need to distinguish between cases where the preposition is a part of the verb regimen *Put up with rudeness* or when it is just a complementation of the adverbial as in *When in town, I usually put up with my aunt* (Když...ubytuju se u tety) (Dušková et al. 1994, p. 205)

These verbs function as one-word verbs. *The machines are being made full use of.* (Dušková et al., 1994, p.252)

In Czech, the variety of verbs which are able to form the passive is not as variable as in English. However, some restrictions also exist.

Havránek and Jedlička (1981) state that mostly only objective verbs are able to express both the active and passive voice.

These authors further define objective verbs as verbs which need to be complemented by a dependent object and govern the object's case. The objective verbs in accusative are called transitive, but the issue is, that also all the objective verbs are often referred to as transitive. (Havránek and Jedlička 1981, p. 219-220)

The verbs able to form the passive are further specified as verbs which can be expected to have an agent. These verbs are action verbs.

Objective transitive verbs, which have object in accusative, the object of an active sentence becomes the subject of a passive one – personal passive e.g. *Mlátíobilí - obilí je vymláceno, obilí se mlátí.*

However, with objective intransitive verbs, which have object in other than accusative case, the object of an active sentence remains object in a passive one. The sentence in the passive is one element sentence with a verb which does not have a subject and is used impersonally e. g. *Dosáhlicíle – cílebylodosaženo.* (Havránek and jedlička 1981, p. 235-236)

Mathesius (1947) claims, that there is a strong tendency, especially in spoken language, to use the periphrastic passive with action verbs which are human-specific. He based his claim on an excerpt of a book which is written in “strongly conversational language.” All periphrastic passive constructions found were human-specific verbs like *odsouzen* etc. In cases where the verbs were of a more general nature e. g. *zavléct*, the context still implied that they were action of people. (Mathesius, 1947, p. 298-299)

### **3.3.2 Verbs usually found in the passive only**

Quirk et al. (1985) states, that the passive voice is the only option with some verbs and verb constructions.

-Verbs see, say, rumour and repute used in construction similar to *John was reputed to be a good teacher.* are used in the passive only.

-Verbs be born (with an irregular past participle) and be drowned (when no agent is implied) are also always in the passive.

*He was born in Tübingen. The wanted man fell into the water and was drowned.*  
(Quirk et al. 1985, p. 162, 163, 1203)

### 3.3.3 Verbs not forming the passive

Several cases when the verbs are not transferable into the passive exist and will be described below.

Intransitive verbs are the first case. According to Carter and McCarthy (2006) these are the verbs that complement themselves and thus do not require any other elements to make their meaning complete. e.g. *appear, drown* (Carter and McCarthy, 2006; 504) Quirk et al. (1985) claims, that these verbs cannot form the passive since they are lacking an object which would become a subject in the passive. (Quirk et al. 1985, p.162) However, Dušková et al. (1994) states that if intransitive verbs have transitive meanings too, they can then be transferred into the passive *It was meant as a compliment.* (Dušková et al., 1994; 258-259)

Second case of verbs that are unable to form the passive are so called copular verbs. Quirk et al. (1985) defines these verbs as those which are complemented by a subject complement or predication adjunct. At the same time these elements cannot be dropped without changing the meaning of the verb. Such verb in these clauses is equivalent in function to the principal copula, the verb *be*. (Quirk et al. 1985, p. 1171) Two types of copulas are distinguished between – current *The girl seemed very restless* and resulting *The girl became very restless.* (Quirk et al. 1985, p. 1171)

The third group of verbs not forming the passive is called “middle verbs” which, according to Quirk et al. (1985), can be considered transitive, but still do not form the passive. They are state verbs. e.g. *He lacks confidence.* This means that they are expressing state of “being” or “having.” Despite this fact, state verbs can still be transferred into the passive if they are expressing “volition” or “attitude.” e.g. *The police want him – He is wanted by the police.* (Quirk et al. 1985, p.162)

The issue of state verbs corresponds with Czech. Havránek and Jedlička (1981) claim that verbs which express possession or a state of mind e. g. *mít and chtít* etc. ,are not able to form both voices as they are state or express a change of state. They are only used in active voice and that is why they are often classified as *active verbs*. (Havránek and Jedlička 1981, p. 236)



The fourth case is, according to (Dušková et al., 1994), when a transitive verb meaning is closer to the meaning of a linking verb and the object's nature is closer to adverbial.

Verbs “get” and “have” also do not form the passive. “Get” does not form the passive because of its meaning. Its' subject has same role both in the active and passive sentence. *He got a watch = he was given a watch.* “Have” does not form the passive because it represents transitive linking verb and the possessive state can be often transferred into state where attribute is expressed. *She has blue eyes – Her eyes are blue.*

There are other verbs which do not form the passive in cases such as *cost, last, measure (the room measures twenty feet), weigh (it weighs two pounds)* and others. In similar cases, objects of these verbs are very close to adverbial. (Dušková et al., 1994, p. 258)

### 3.3.4 Verbs with prepositional object

This group of verbs was given a separate chapter as there is not a clear distinction in (not) using them.

Dušková et al. (1994) defines these verbs as connecting a verb with a preposition in an idiomatic way which means that they form a new semantic unit together. Cf. *look* and *look for* (Dušková et al 1994, p. 205)

Dušková et al. (1994) states that the passives of such verbs are formed in a same way that the passives from monotransitive ones and behave like one-word verbs. The subject is the object of the passive sentence and the preposition stays next to the verb. e.g. *Their help cannot be relied on.* On top of that, such formations are non-existent in Czech.

The regimen of the verb (how close the relation of a verb and preposition is) is the key in estimating whether it is possible to create a passive form. If the formed verb is not transitive or the used preposition just complements the verb – mainly in adverbial nature, the passive is not formed. e.g. *She was agreed with.* This can be also dependent on how abstract the meaning is. e.g. *They arrived at the railway* vs. *No decision was arrived at* (Dušková et al., 1994, p. 251)

Quirk et al. (1985) claims, that in certain contexts one can use these verbal expressions in the passive even when they are not used abstractly or idiomatically. e.g. *This private drawer of mine was gone into and rummaged so many times that...* Cf. *The problem was carefully gone into (vyšetřen) by engineers.* (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 163) No rule is given for cases such as the former example of this paragraph, but Dušková et al. (1994) suggests that these cases

are explained with a possibility to substitute the verb and preposition with a one-word transitive verb. e.g. *The bed was not slept in/occupied.* (Dušková et al., 1994, p. 251)

### 3.4 Object usage in the passive

Quirk et al. (1985) writes that: “*Transitive verbs can be followed either by phrasal or clausal objects. With clauses as objects, however, the passive transformation is to a greater or lesser degree restricted in use.*”

(a) Noun phrase as object:

John loved *Marry*. – *Mary* was loved (by John)

(b) Clause as object

a. Finite clause:

John thought (that) she was attractive.

– \*That she was attractive was thought (by John).

b. Non-finite clause:

i. Infinitive:

John hoped *to meet her*. – \**To meet her* was hoped (by John).

ii. Participle:

John enjoyed *seeing her*. – \**Seeing her* was enjoyed (by John).

There is a possibility of using the passive with clausal object, especially if the object is a finite clause and the clausal object is extraposed and replaced by anticipatory *it*.

*It* was thought *that she was attractive*.

? *It* was hoped *to meet her*.

The passive is also possible if the subject of the object clause is made the subject of a passive superordinate clause e. g. *She* was thought *to be attractive*.

The anticipatory *it* construction is not possible with participle clauses as subject and rarely acceptable with non-finite clauses:

*It* was desired *to have the report delivered here*.

Object and subject coreference is also blocking the possibility of forming a corresponding passive sentence. It occurs with (a) reflexive pronouns, (b) reciprocal pronouns and (c) possessive pronouns when coreferential to the subject.

(a) John could see Paul/*himself* in the mirror.

Paul/\**Himself* could be seen in the mirror

(b) We could hardly see *each other* in the fog.

\**Each other* could be hardly seen in the fog.

*Each* could hardly be seen by the *other*. This construction is acceptable as splitting of the reciprocal noun is possible.

(c) The woman shook my hand/*her head*.

My hand/\**Her head* was shaken by the woman.

The passive is also impossible for idioms in which the verb and the object form a close unit:

The ship set sails. – \*Sail was set.

We changed buses. – \*Buses were changed. (Quirk et al. 1985, p. 163-164)

#### 4 Types of passives

This chapter deals with forms of expressing the passive in English and Czech. Corresponding passive forms will be dealt with first, followed by the ways of forming the passive which differ in these two languages.

##### 4.1 Corresponding passives

Dušková (1999) states, that the only analogical device to express the passive voice in both languages is the periphrastic or participial form of the passive. (Dušková 1999, p. 149)

The word order concerns of passive forms were covered in 2.1. The periphrastic passive is formed by auxiliary verb *be* and a *past participle* of a verb. (Dušková et al. 1994, p. 249) Table 1. : Czech and English periphrastic passive

The picture is sold	Obraz je dokončen
The picture was finished	Obraz byl dokončen
The picture has been finished	Obraz byl dokončen
The picture had been finished	Obraz byl dokončen
The picture will be finished	Obraz bude dokončen
The picture will have been finished	Obraz bude dokončen

According to Dušková (1994), progressive passive forms mainly occur in present and preterite:

*The picture is being finished*      *Obraz se dokončuje*  
*The picture was being finished*      *Obraz se dokončoval*

Other forms might rarely occur but are not accepted by the majority of speakers:

*The house has been being built*      *Dům se stavěl*  
*The house will be being built*      *Dům se bude stavět.*

Negative sentences and questions in English are formed in a similar way as other sentences which use auxiliaries.

*The picture is **not** finished*      *Obraz není dokončen*  
*Was the picture finished?*      *Byl obraz dokončen?*  
*Hasn't the picture been finished?*      *Nebyl obraz dokončen?*

In spoken English, verb *get* is sometimes used to form the passive:

*Somehow everything got done in time*      *Nějak se všechno udělalo včas*  
(Dušková et al. 1994, p. 250)

According to Nordquist (n.d), the “get”-passive is strongly associated with situations where subject is negatively affected e.g. *get fired*, *get robbed* or receiving some kind of benefit e. g. *Get promoted*, *get paid*.(Nordquist, n. d.)

## **4.2 Non-corresponding passives**

This chapter deals with other ways of expressing the passive voice, but in ways which are not mutual for English and Czech Language.

### **4.2.1 English non-corresponding passives**

Quirk et al. (1985), talks about “passive gradient” in connection with a) and b) from following division. These groups of passives do not have a clear correspondence with an active verb phrase or active clause and are increasingly remote from the “ideal” be + past participle passive.

a) Semi-passives

Quirk et al. (1985) states: “Represent a “mixed” or semi-passive class whose members have both verbal and adjectival properties. They are verb-like in having active analogues:”

*Leonard was interested in linguistics – Linguistics interested Leonard*

Because of the adjectival properties of this class there are the possibilities of:

- 1) Coordinating the participle with an adjective
- 2) Modifying the participle with *quite, rather, very etc.*
- 3) Replacing *be* by a lexical copular such as *feel* or *seem*:

*Leonard **seemed** very interested in and keen on linguistics.*

What is more, these are rather stative than dynamic which does not exclude a passive analysis as there are stative passives as well e.g. *This conclusion is hardly justified by the results.* However, the adjectival analysis is favoured by the fact that all participial adjectives have a stative meaning, whereas corresponding verbs do not.

Having an agent-expressing *by*-phrase is rare in such adjectival use of past participle. Despite this fact, similar blends might occur:

*She seems extremely elated by her success.*

Even *ed*-adjectives which do not have a corresponding active infinitive or finite verb form may have *by*-phrase to express an agent:

*We are unimpressed by his attempts \*His attempts unimpressed us.*

*His attempts did not impress us.*

The ability to express an agent by *by*-phrase cannot be regarded as a way of marking such construction a passive one. (Quirk et al. 1985, p. 168-169)

Dušková et al. (1994) describes similar issue as “state passive” where the past participle borders with adjective and even becomes an adjective in some cases. It is when the subject of such construction cannot serve the role of subject of a passive sentence when we are dealing with *be* + adjective:

<i>His expression was surprised</i>	<i>Jeho výraz byl překvapený</i>
<i>His tone was annoyed</i>	<i>Jeho tón byl rozmrzelý</i>

Nevertheless, similar constructions may be a part of predication of subject which might become an object of the active. This may result in a sentence ambiguity:

<i>The changes are marked (adjective)</i>	<i>Změny jsou výrazné</i>
<i>The changes are marked (on the margin)</i>	<i>Změny jsou vyznačeny (na okraji)</i>

Dušková states that in the latter example, the participle creates a part of passive paradigm.

Furthermore, constructions such as *I am tired* or *He was annoyed* are not considered passive as the participle can be modified by *very, rather, more, ...I am very pleased, He felt rather flattered*. Nevertheless, in such cases, subject of the passive can function as an object of an active: *She was tired by the journey x The journey tired her*. ( Dušková et al. 1994, 262-263)

#### b) Pseudo passives

According Quirk et al. (1985): “*Pseudo passives have neither an active transform, nor a possibility of agent addition:*”

*The building is already demolished*

They mostly have a superficial form of verb + *-ed* participle which recommends them for a passive consideration.

In terms of denotation the meaning of the sentence given above is rather *(Someone) has already demolished the building* than *(Someone) already demolishes the building*.

*Is demolished* denotes a resultant state in a similar way as perfective does, rather than the act of demolition itself. Such construction is known as “statal passive.” The ambiguity might be best seen in the past tense:

*In 1972, the Democrats were defeated.*

On one hand, it can mean that “someone defeated the Democrats” if passive reading is used. On the other hand, it might mean “The Democrats were in a state of having been defeated” if the statal reading is used. (Quirk et al. 1985, p. 169-170)

c) Passive causative

According to Gramaring (n.d.) “*Causative sentences are similar to passive sentences in that the agent (the doer of the action) is not the grammatical subject of the sentence.*”

Have + object + past participle:

*I had my hair cut this morning. (by a hairdresser)*

Get + object + past participle:

*I got my hair cut this morning. (by a hairdresser)*

(Gramaring, n.d)

#### 4.2.2 Czech non-corresponding passives

In Czech there is only one way of expressing the passive apart from periphrastic form.

Reflexive passive

Dušková (1999) claims, that the reflexive form is a common way of denoting the passive.

*Vysílají se vertikálně rádiové impulsy dvou různých kmitočtů.*

*Radio-wave impulses of two different frequencies are emitted vertically.*

The form mentioned above can be also easily transferred into Czech periphrastic passive:

*Rádiové impulsy dvourůžných kmitočetů jsou vysílány vertikálně.*

The use of the reflexive form is virtually restricted to the third person, because if it is used in first or second person it only functions as a reflexive particle, unless it is a constant component of the verb, operates as the reflexive pronoun *hájím se* or has reciprocal meaning *známe se*.

Cases of ambiguous meaning might occur even in third person; especially with animate subjects *Tom se myje*. In this particular case, the meaning is dependent on the context as the sentence might mean that *Tom is washing (himself)* or *Tom is being washed*.

There is no clear line between passive and non-passive use. However, the reflexive form of a verb might be considered passive if it is transferable into a periphrastic form of the passive without any change in the semantic interpretation.

If such transfer into the periphrastic passive changes the initiator of the verbal action, the reflexive form is classified as a device indicating intransitivity:

*U každého stolu se zastaví*

*U každého stolu je zastavena*

(Dušková 1999, p.150-151)

## 5 Passive voice frequency

Quirk et al. (1985), talks about “Frequency constraints” in connection with the passive as there is a notable difference in the usage frequency of passive.

He states that the active voice is more common in general, but in certain types of texts, there is a considerable variation. The passive constructions may be used ten times as frequent in a certain text types than in another.

The defining factor of the passive frequency is dependent on whether the prose is rather informative or imaginative. The passive is notably more frequent in objective, impersonal style of scientific articles. The factor of the language being spoken or written is not important according to him. (Quirk et al. 1985, p. 166)

According to *Anglická gramatika* (n.d.) the passive voice is far more common in English than in Czech language. (*Anglická gramatika*, n.d.)



## 6 Passive voice translation in theory

As far as the translation of the English passive voice is concerned, Baker (1992) mentions several key areas regarding the passive voice translation. The most important area is the function of the voice in so called receptor language. (Baker 1992, p. 106-107)

The main aim of this category in English is to define the relationship between a verb and its subject. In the passive, the subject is the affected entity and the agent may or may not be given. (Baker 1992, 102)

Many languages also share the purpose of constructing agentless clauses and have their own devices of doing so. For example French and German uses a “dummy” subject in form – *on* and *man*: *On parle anglais, Man spricht Englisch*. These can be translated into English by using similar “dummy” subject as *They – They are speaking English*, or just by using the passive *English is spoken*. Both of the options leave the agent unspecified. (Baker 1992, p. 103)

Other languages use the passive in an entirely different way. Nida (1975, p. 136) was mentioned in Baker (1992), explaining that some of the Nilotic languages use the passive in a majority resulting in saying “The town was gone into by him” instead of “He went to town.” (Baker 1992, p.106) Japanese for example, use the passive in connection with unfortunate events and tend to say “I was rained on” in contrary to English “I got wet in the rain” or “It rained on me.” (Baker 1992, p.107)

This issue was already briefly mentioned in 3.2.1 and implies that the function of the passive is same for Czech Havránek and Jedlička (1981, p.238) stated that passive voice’s main function is subduing the agent .This means that both languages use the passive voice as a way of forming an agentless construction.

Considering all these facts, it is not suitable to use the passive every time when the passive is encountered, especially when the passive in receptor language serves an entirely different function. However, the question of translating the passive with use of it in receptor language when the languages share most of the purposes is in question as the purpose of the passive voice in English and Czech is mutual.

However, Baker (1992) also adds that the wide use of the passive in scientific field of written English has strongly influenced the same register of receptor languages because of the translation of such texts. In some cases, the receptor languages would not use the passive voice that frequently in these fields if not for the translations. (Baker 1992, p. 102)

## 7 The research

The research part of this thesis has several aims:

- To analyse the passive voice in terms of passive types used in English and provide their quantification. The classification of the theoretical part will be used.
- To verify or displace the claim of Swan and Quirk concerning the number of passives without an expressed agent which is claimed to be around 80%.
- To verify or displace whether the claim of Vilém Mathesius concerning the connection between periphrastic passive and human agent in Czech spoken passive can be applied the same way in the written form of English.
- To provide quantification of the grammatical devices used to translate the passive voice from English to Czech. To provide both typical and unusual examples of such devices
- To find out whether the English passive is translated mainly by the passive.

As far as the methodology is concerned, the research is based upon 200 excerpts of several articles of three National Geographic magazine volumes made by author of this thesis.

This magazine was chosen because of the wide variety of authors of the originals and the people responsible for the Czech translations which, more or less, prevents the results from being influenced by the style of one particular author or translator. Another factor is that popular science is combining features of fiction and non-fiction which also prevents monotonous use of language as it provides a combination of an exact, scientific text which tries to be objective on one hand and a text of fiction which tries to be amusing and appealing for the wider audience on the other.

The fact that the English texts are of American origin might be considered a hindrance, as majority of European educational systems teach the British model of English.

Nevertheless, executing the research on sample of American English is still a valid option as the American model of English is the one that is, based on personal experience, predominantly encountered outside the schools of Europe, especially among the younger generations.

In first phase of the research, each English excerpt was also matched with its Czech translation in a corresponding article of the Czech edition for the purposes of translation research and Czech passive structure frequency research. At first, the passives were divided according to volumes and the articles they were excerpted from and left in the same order as they were found in.

The initial division was kept while the passive types were summarised into tables along with quantifications concerning agents. This decision proved to be convenient as searching for the context in cases where it was needed was possible, despite being time consuming. Searching for a concrete excerpt context without knowing to what volume and article it belongs to would be hardly real objective. The most representative and interesting cases of passive were picked during the process to be discussed later along with anomalies.

Not all of the articles in the magazines were subject of the excerption as the content is not entirely identical, but the articles provided by three given volumes were sufficient. It also needs to be pointed out that the values for percentages in the tables might not result in 100 per cent if summarised because of the fact that they were rounded in certain tables.

## 7.1 Types of passives used

The aim of this chapter is to quantify the passive structures used in both languages. The Czech part of this concern will have fewer excerpts and will only concern the tendencies of using the Czech passive constructions in translation as the corpus is English-version-based and not all of the English passives were translated with the passive voice.

Table 2. : Quantification of the excerpted English passives

Type of the passive:	Count:	Per cent:
Periphrastic passive	185	92.5
Semi-passive	13	6.5
Passive causative	1	0.5
Pseudo passive	1	0.5
Total:	200	100

### 7.1.1 Periphrastic passive

Out of the 200 English excerpts of the passive voice constructions, 185 were sorted out as periphrastic, which accounts for 92.5 per cent of total, marking the periphrastic passive the most used way of forming the passive voice.

Out of the 94 Czech passives used in translation, 70 were periphrastic which equals 74.46 per cent.

Despite the claim of Dušková in chapter 3.3.3 which marks *get* as a verb not used for forming the passive, this phenomenon was encountered three times which is 1.5 per cent of total passive count. The three instances are these:

*...Donna launched a tireless campaign to **get** warning signs posted by the storm drains.*

This excerpt was acquired from a written interview with a surfer talking about his wife who shares his interest in keeping the beaches of New Orleans clean from drain pollution.

In this case the *get* passive can be interpreted as a passive causative formed with *get* as is mentioned in chapter 4.2.1 and it also uses the typical pattern for this construction: *Get + object + past participle*

*As soon as you **get** that filtered out, ...*

The passive construction in this case also resembles a causative form mentioned in 4.2.1 as it uses the previously mentioned pattern. However, the use of this construction in the given context is different.

In the given context, this excerpt only describes a part of a process of how to get rid of a particular kind of sea-weed which caused the decrease of the quality of the ocean water surrounding New Orleans coast which denies the causative interpretation of “having or getting” something done. The excerpt might be rather interpreted as: *When the sea-weed is filtered out.*

*It would be shame if it **got** highrised to death.*

This excerpt supports the claim of Nordquist from chapter 4.1 which mentions the strong association of the get passive with cases where the subject is negatively affected. If the wider context of the excerpt is given, the explanation is that certain area would be suffocated as a result of further development of a skyline in its vicinity.

To conclude, this chapter marked the periphrastic passive as the most common way of forming the passive both in English with 92.5 per cent and in Czech translation of the passive in general with 74.46 per cent. It also highlighted the fact that Dušková contradicts herself in case of the usage of the verb *get* in the passive as it was excluded from verbs that can be used in passive in chapter 3.3.3 and later mentioned as a possible way of forming passive in chapter 4.1.

### **7.1.2 Pseudo passive**

The figures for pseudo passive are simple as there was only one case present in the entire corpus, which means that pseudo passive was used in 0, 5 per cent of cases in English and in Czech it was not used at all. The only encountered form was:

*The skull and spine were aligned, bringing the head...*

In chapter four Quirk et. al (1985) defines this type of the passive as a one which has neither an active transform nor a possibility of agent addition, has the superficial form of verb + *ed* that recommends it for a passive consideration and it refers to a resultant state rather than action itself. (Quirk et. al 1985, 170-171)

All these principles can be applied to our single example since the context is known and supports the claims of Quirk's.

This excerpt is from an article which is concerned with a human bipedalism, which is the ability to walk on two feet. Among other physical changes in our body, our skull and spine were aligned as a result. This state of being aligned was presumably caused by evolutionary changes, which is a long and gradual process taking entire generations to happen rather than an instantaneous fix which happens in a humanoid entity. It also cannot be transferred into active since the active sentence would lack an object:(*somebody/something*) *has aligned the skull and spine.*

These were the reasons for assessing this case as an instance of a pseudo passive.

### **7.1.3 Semi-passive**

As far as semi-passive is concerned a total of 13 cases were encountered which equals 6.5 per cent of all the passive constructions used. For example:

*Citizens were impressed not just by extravagant equipment,...*

### **7.1.4 Passive causative**

During the entire research, there was only one case encountered, apart from the causative using get in 6.1.1, where the passive causative could have been considered:

*The devastated parents had the dance lesson booked the day after it happened.*

Without a context, this sentence would imply that the parents, who were struck by a devastating event, had someone book the dance lessons one day after the event.

However, the context of this excerpt suggests that the causative understanding is probably not suitable in this case as it describes the situation of a couple whose son was

shot when they had the booking done already and the dancing classes were scheduled to start a day after the murder.

The question is whether they had someone book the classes for them or they booked them themselves which would deny the causative interpretation.

This case was later decided to be discounted from the research also thanks to Czech equivalent of this excerpt: *Jeho rodiče měli na další den domluvenou hodinu tance*. Which also did not help to uncover the nature of the construction.

## 7.2 The Mathesius thesis of using the periphrastic passive

It has been already stated in 3.3.1 that Mathesius (1947) thinks that most cases of periphrastic passive usage are connected with actions which are predominantly specific for human beings or are still caused by humans if they are of more general nature. He also attributes this fact to spoken language. (Mathesius 1947, p. 298-299)

However, his claim, concerning spoken language, was based on the excerpts of a book he considered to be written in a colloquial language. What is more, the claim was supported by mere nine cases. (Mathesius 1947, p.298)

Table 3. : Quantification of the periphrastic passives executed by human

	Count	Per cent	Per cent of total (200)
Periphrastic passive	185	100	92.5
Periphrastic passive caused by human agent	153	82.7	76.5

This thesis utilized his concept for written English language and worked with much wider sample of periphrastic passives. The result is that 153 out of 185 periphrastic passives really pointed to a human agent responsibility for the denoted action in a more or less direct way which accounts for 82.7 per cent. The share of this phenomenon on the English part of the corpus is 76.5 per cent.

Despite the fact that several of the articles were predominantly concerned with various species of the animals, they did not provide any significant number of periphrastic passives which would have an animal agent. Interestingly enough, most of the agents which were not

human, were found in articles concerning human civilisations or customs and were of rather transcendental origin as they were represented by gods or nature phenomena.

Although confirmed by the research, the thesis of Mathesius still raises questions. The fact of most agents being of human nature might be just a plain result of writing and talking predominantly about humans. This option might easily evolve into a truth as there is a high probability that excerpts of a fable would probably result in a majority of characters of an animal nature.

### 7.3 The quantification of the expression of the agent

This chapter is a reaction to the claim of Swan and Greenbaum from chapter 3.2.1 which states that the passive does not give an agent in 80 per cent of the cases.

Table 4. : Quantification of the use of the agent

	Count (out of 200)	Per cent
Expressed agent	72	36
Unexpressed agent	128	64

In the particular research of this thesis, the agent was expressed in 72 cases and unexpressed in 128, which results in 36 per cent to 64 per cent ratio. The statement of the Swan and Greenbaum can be certainly considered valid in regards with the fact, that majority of the agents is unexpressed within English language.

However, the numeral value leaves room for discussion. The respect needs to be paid to the comparison of the source of the claim. This means that the figures of this thesis are relevant, but the figures provided by Swan and Greenbaum may be more accurate, assuming that they are based on wider range of excerpts with wider variety of texts. In conclusion, both values might be correct as Swan and Greenbaum's could be suitable for judging the expression of the agent in general and the value of this thesis might be more accurate as far as the field of American English or popular science is concerned.

Research in this area also resulted in a byproduct - in chapter 3.2.1 is a mention about a possibility of expressing what instrument was used by an agent to perform the action by using *with*. This was observed in 10 cases, which means that 5 per cent of the passives were complemented with the instrument of the action. These were for example:



*...its market was filled with Maya foodstuff.*

*The cistern was lined (by the builders) with red stucco and...*

*All (cave entrances) are blocked (by people) with huge steel gates that...*

However:

*...the animals that could be threatened (? by humans?) with extinction...*

The last example is different as it does not express the so called “instrument.” Red stucco, steel gates and foodstuff are all physical objects, whereas extinction is not. The sentences can be transferred into a sensible active sentence *...people blocked the entrances with huge steel gates...etc.* But if the same principle is applied to last example *...humans could threaten the animals with extinction...* the resulting sentence is not sensible. This fact leaves a question of whether *with extinction* implies the agent directly (meaning *threatened by extinction*) or the fact that the extinction threat is caused by humans or other influence which might result in the extinction of the animals.

#### 7.4 Passive voice translation analysis

The focus of this chapter is to quantify the ways of translating the English Passive voice into Czech. On one hand, it deals with general data and tries to draw general conclusions and tendencies and on the other it also analyses some individual cases of the translation.

Table 5. : Quantification of the translation of the English passive in General

Means of translation	Count (out of 200)	Per cent
Passive (per. ; ref.)	94 (70 ; 24)	47 (35 ; 12)
Other	103	51.5
Omitted	3	1.5

In the total of 200 cases, passive was preserved in 94 translations which is 47 per cent and other forms of translation were used in 103 cases which is 51.5 per cent and three translations were entirely omitted. This leads to a conclusion that not preserving the passive is slightly prevailing in translation of the passive in general.

From the 94 preserved passives, 70 were periphrastic and 24 reflexive. Czech Periphrastic passive was, in total, used in 35 per cent and Czech reflexive in 12 percent of the

translations. This marks the periphrastic passive more frequent option in translating the passive in general.

When the periphrastic passive was used in translation, the result was often almost a literal word-by-word translation:

*References to him have been identified in cities...*

*Odkazy na jeho osobu byly zjištěny ve městech...*

*... a geologic anomaly has been found—...*

*...byla objevena geologická anomálie:...*

*Bristol Bay still possesses what has been squandered elsewhere...*

*Bristolský záliv totiž dosud má to, co bylo jinde promarněno...*

However, there were also cases where the translation was not that literal, for example:

The negative tone of the sentence was changed into a positive:

*Particulars will not be revealed until 2012,...*

*Podrobnosti budou zveřejněny až v roce 2012,...*

The usual word order of the periphrastic passive in the translation was altered, probably in an attempt to induce an archaic feeling as it was supposed to be a translation of a Mayan writing:

*Mountains of skulls were piled up*

*Navršeny byly hory lebek...*

When the active constructions were used the translation tended to be less literal, yet appropriate:

The order of receiving information might be different:

*Such concepts were reinforced after...*

*Tuto koncepci loni podpořila...*

The sentence might even be divided into two:

*XY died in 795 and was succeeded by his son...*

*XY zemřel roku 795. Po něm nastoupil na trůn jeho syn...*

When the reflexive passive was employed, the translations were not signalling any significant features:

The translation was close to being literal in some cases:

*A miracle was performed...*

*Stal se zázrak...*

But in other, it even used completely different verb:

*...population was estimated to be...*

*...se zde v létě shromažďovalo asi...*

As far as the remaining translations marked as “omitted” are concerned, they really are missing (they are written in bold) in the text as can be seen from the extracts:

Three others are at very high risk, including the gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*), also endangered. **Great progress was made** within recent decades in restoring gray bat populations. "We've put enormous effort in this," says Merlin Tuttle, founder of Bat Conservation International. "It **could now be unraveled** in just a few years."

It's hard to foresee where *Geomyces destructans*...<sup>1</sup>

Tři další jsou ve velmi vysokém nebezpečí včetně také ohroženého netopýra hnědošedého (*Myotis grisescens*).

Těžko se dá předvídat, kde *Geomyces destructans*... (National Geographic, prosinec 2010, p. 135)

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<sup>1</sup>Direct links to first extract: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2010/12/bat-crash/quammen-text/2> and <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2010/12/bat-crash/quammen-text/3>

The killers wielded spears and axes, impaling or decapitating their victims. They laid the corpses in the palace's cistern. Roughly 30 feet (nine meters) long and 10 feet (three meters) deep, **it was lined with red stucco and fed by an underground spring**. The bodies, accompanied by ceremonial garments...<sup>2</sup>

Násilníci v rukou třímali oštěpy a kamenné sekery, kterými své oběti prokláli nebo jim setli hlavu.

Mrtvé uložili do palácové **vodní cisterny zásobované vodním pramenem**.

(National Geographic srpen 2007, p. 83-84)

Table 6. : Quantification of the translation of the English periphrastic passive

	Count (out of 185)	Per cent
Czech periphrastic passive	58	31,35
Czech reflexive passive	24	12,97
Other	99	54,51

As far as the translation of the English periphrastic passive is concerned, the most common way of translating it, is using other than a passive construction as this way of translation was used in 55.68 percent of the cases.

The second most common way of translating the English periphrastic passive was utilizing the periphrastic passive as it was used in 31.35 per cent of cases.

The least favourite way of the English periphrastic passive translation is the reflexive passive with 12.97 per cent.

However, there are three causes missing in order to reach 100 per cent, but the fact that three translation have been omitted, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, has to be taken into consideration. The three omitted cases represent the missing 1.62 per cent.

No examples will be given in this part as the examples given previously were also periphrastic passives.

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<sup>2</sup>Direct link to second extract: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/08/maya-rise-fall/gugliotta-text/6>

Table 7. : Quantification of the translation of the English semi-passives

The way of translation	Count (out of 13)	Per cent
Passive	7	53, 85
Active	6	46, 15

The way of translating the semi-passives is rather evenly spread between the passive and active equivalents, but the sample is rather small and thus should not be taken as a source of information that can serve for generalizing the tendencies.

Same applies to pseudo passive as there was only one case detected and it was translated by a reflexive passive.

## 8 Conclusion

It cannot be denied that the passive voice in English and Czech language is similar to a certain extent. It shares some of the features, mainly in terms of use the passive in general and the construction of the periphrastic passive is almost a literal copy.

The research part has presented both expected and interesting results and managed to answer almost all of the questions and also confirmed some of the statements made in the theory.

The question of whether the passive voice is translated by a passive in majority of cases was answered negatively, but it needs to be noted that the difference was only 4.5 per cent. However this fact might be the result of the sources used for excerption.

The application of the theory of Vilém Mathesius about periphrastic passive being mostly a result of a human action was clearly confirmed as overwhelming majority of 82. 7 per cent of the cases was supporting this claim, despite the fact that notable part of the articles had a topic connected with animals.

Quirk and Swan's claim, that 80 per cent of the agents are unexpressed while using the passive in English was neither confirmed, nor displaced. It was contrasted with a result of the thesis which was 64 per cent. The assumption has been made that the claim of Quirk and Swan might be more valid if it was corpus-based.

As far as the passive constructions used are concerned, the dominance of the periphrastic passive was presented by use in 92.5 per cent of the time. Semi-passive was second with 6.5

per cent, followed by passive causative and pseudo passive, which were both used in 0.5 per cent of cases.

The most interesting part of the research was concerned with the ways of translating the passive voice. The passive constructions were translated in other way than passive in 51.5 cases, while passive was preserved in 47 per cent of the translations. There were also three instances (1.5 per cent) where the translation was omitted without any clear reason. What is interesting is the fact, that the periphrastic passive is translated by periphrastic passive only in 31 per cent despite being almost entirely identical feature. This was caused mainly by reflexive passive which was used in 12.97 per cent of the translations of the English periphrastic passive.

In general, the research part of the thesis might be considered successful as it managed to answer majority of the research questions and provided additional information. However, the sample used for the research was rather specialized. On one hand, the results are unsuitable for generalisation on the scale of English language, but on the other, it proved to have high potential in estimating the tendencies of the chosen sample. This might be utilised in defining certain genres in terms of passive voice usage and for observing the tendencies regarding the passive voice translation in other texts.

## **Resumé**

Závěrečná práce se zabývá gramatickým jevem trpného rodu a snaží se o srovnání v anglickém a českém jazyce. Tento jev je popsán z hlediska funkce pasiva, způsobů jeho tvoření, užití a omezení v jeho užití. Praktická část se zabývá studiem paralelního korpusu, na jehož základě je určována četnost užitých forem anglického pasivu a způsobů jeho překladu.

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## Anotace

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	Tomáš Studeník
<b>Katedra nebo ústav:</b>	Katedra anglického jazyka
<b>Vedoucí práce:</b>	Mgr. Blanka Babická, Ph. D.
<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2015
<b>Název práce:</b>	Trpný rod v anglickém a českém jazyce
<b>Název v angličtině:</b>	The Passive Voice in English and Czech
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Bakalářská práce se zabývá trpným rodem v anglickém a českém jazyce. Teoretická část je především porovnáním trpného rodu v obou jazycích a to z hlediska kompozice a gramatiky. Cílem výzkumu je určit četnosturčitých pasivních konstrukcí a způsobů jejich překladu do češtiny na základě excerpceí anglických a českých verzí textů.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Trpný rod, angličtina, čeština, srovnání, gramatika, frekvence, překlad, excerpce
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	My bachelor thesis deals with the passive voice in English and Czech. The theoretical part is mainly a comparison of the passive voice in both languages in terms of form and grammar. The aim of the research is to estimate the frequency of certain forms of passive and the ways of its translation into Czech based on excerption of English and Czech versions of texts.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině</b>	Passive voice, English, Czech, comparison, grammar, frequency, translation, excerption
<b>Přílohy vázané v práci:</b>	
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	
<b>Jazyk práce:</b>	AJ