Helge Lødrup

Exceptions to the Norwegian passive: Unaccusativity, aspect and thematic roles

In this article I want to show that the problem of exceptions to the passive in Norwegian is both more complicated and more simple than is usually assumed in the literature. The existing literature ignores the fact that exceptions to the passive is not a unitary phenomenon in Norwegian. The Norwegian passive has two different realizations, the passive participle (for example spist 'eaten') and the morphological passive (for example spises 'is-eaten', where the -s-suffix is the passive marker). These realizations have different exceptions. I will show that the Norwegian situation follows from a couple of traditional assumptions, namely that exceptions to the passive are sensitive to thematic roles, and that the passive participle (but not the morphological passive) has some affinity to perfectivity. I will also argue that the unaccusative hypothesis is not satisfactory as a theory of exceptions to the passive.

---

1 I would like to thank colleagues and students for input and intuitions, especially Arnfinn M. Vonen, Pål Kristian Eriksen and Janne Bondi Johannessen. I would also like to thank Arne Martinus Lindstad and Tekslaboratoriet at the University of Oslo for invaluable help with the data. Thanks are also due to an anonymous reviewer.
Unaccusativity

It is well known that unaccusative verbs do not passivize. For some time, the current view of exceptions to the passive has been that they are explained by the unaccusative hypothesis. The traditional unaccusative hypothesis (Perlmutter 1978, Burzio 1986) says that the single argument of an unaccusative verb is an underlying object; this means that they have no external argument. This is a property they share with meteorological verbs and raising verbs, which cannot passivize either. The unaccusative hypothesis made it possible to formulate a very simple rule for exceptions to the passive - verbs that do not have an external argument do not passivize. This is an elegant and in a sense explanatory rule, since the distinction between unaccusative and unergative verbs was motivated by several different phenomena.

Åfarli (1992:101-33) gives an extensive discussion of exceptions to the passive in Norwegian, and claims that they are satisfactorily accounted for by the unaccusative hypothesis. He claims that for Norwegian verbs, there is a nearly perfect match between having an external argument and passivizing. To be more exact, Åfarli claims that no unaccusative verbs can passivize, while a very small group of unergative verbs cannot passivize.

There are, however, both theoretical and empirical arguments that the unaccusative hypothesis is not satisfactory as a theory of exceptions to the passive. Concerning the theoretical side of it, several researchers have argued that unaccusativity is not a syntactic phenomenon, and proposed that the phenomena accounted for by the unaccusative hypothesis should receive a semantic explanation instead of a syntactic one (for example Van Valin 1990, Dowty 1991, Zaenen 1993). And in monostratal syntactic theories like Lexical Functional Grammar or Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar, there can be no unaccusative hypothesis, in the sense that there cannot be an object in an underlying level that corresponds to a subject on a surface level.
A possible alternative is to go back to the traditional view that exceptions to the passive should be described in terms of thematic roles. (This was first proposed by Jackendoff 1972:43-46.) Since Perlmutter (1978), many researchers have agreed that there is a semantic basis for unaccusativity, and that unaccusative verbs are at least roughly the verbs that take a single argument with the thematic role theme. With the thematic account, unaccusative verbs will be verbs that have a theme subject. And it is an old insight that many languages cannot passivize verbs with theme subjects. (This was pointed out by J.M. Anderson 1977:211, S.R. Anderson 1977:374.)

There are also problems with the empirical part of the unaccusativity theory of exceptions to the passive. From the point of view of universal grammar, the theory is too strong. There are languages that allow passivization of unaccusative verbs, for example Lithuanian and Turkish and some Bantu languages (see Alsina 1993:19, Harford 1990, Demuth & Mmusi 1997). This indicates that parametrization must be allowed, but it is not clear how this can be done within the unaccusativity framework. In Lexical Mapping Theory, on the other hand, it has been proposed as a parameter of passivization whether or not the verb’s highest role must be higher than theme in the hierarchy of thematic roles (Bresnan & Kanerva 1989:27, note 36, attributed to Alex Alsina).

The unaccusativity theory of exceptions to the passive is also too weak, since it has nothing to say about transitive verbs that do not passivize. This is a central point in this article, and it is necessary to discuss briefly the relation between passivization of one-place verbs and passivization of other verbs.

It is often assumed that passivization of one-place verbs is fundamentally different from passivization of other verbs. This view was once predominant in the literature on the passive (see for example Bresnan 1982, Perlmutter & Postal 1983). In current theories of the passive, however, its central property is that the verb’s external (or highest) role
is not available for the subject position; it is "demoted". There seems to be no reason that this demotion should distinguish between one-place verbs and other verbs. The simplest assumption must be that passivization of one-place verbs is the same phenomenon as passivization of other verbs. (This could be reflected in different ways in different theories.)

A possible problem with this view is that passives of one-place verbs, both in Norwegian and other languages, have one property that make them different from other passives: They only allow a human argument to have the demoted role. (For example, Det ble pepet 'It was whistled' can only mean that some people were whistling, not that a machine was, see Siewierska (1984:100-101) and references there.) An explanation for this fact seems not to exist. However, it is only relevant for the interpretation of the passive clause, and it does not necessarily have consequences for the grammatical description of the passive. (This is also the view of Siewierska 1984:100-101.)

It has been claimed that the conditions for passivization of Norwegian one-place verbs are different than those for passivization of other verbs (see for example Hovdhaugen 1977 and Faarlund et al. 1997:840-41). Hovdhaugen (1977:24) claims that one-place verbs must be agentive and durative to passivize in Norwegian. The agentivity requirement can not be correct (given a standard interpretation of the term

---

2 A possible argument against this view is that a number of languages do not passivize one-place verbs. This might have an independent explanation, however. Ackema & Neeleman (1998) link the non-passivizability of one-place verbs in a language to a requirement for a (non-expletive) grammatical subject.

3 Hovdhaugen (1977:24) also points out that the agent phrase is often not natural in passives of one-place verbs. But this seems to be true of all passives with an expletive subject, cf. (i)-(iv).

(i) ??Det ble danset på taket av to barn 'It was danced on the-roof by two kids'
(ii) Taket ble danset på av to barn 'The-roof was danced on by two kids'
(iii) ??Det ble sett en bjørn av to barn 'It was seen a bear by two kids'
(iv) En bjørn ble sett av to barn 'A bear was seen by two kids'
agentive), since Norwegian has one-place experiencer verbs that passivize, like *angre* 'regret' or *sørge* 'mourn'. The durativity requirement is maybe not an independent requirement, since there are no uncontroversial cases of one-place agentive verbs that are not durative. A possible case is verbs like *banke* 'knock', *hoste* 'cough', which are sometimes called semelfactives. If this classification is accepted, they represent a counterexample to Hovdhaugen’s prediction, since they are agentive and can passivize. (On the other hand, there is a somewhat peripheral group of verbs that might give an argument for Hovdhaugen's rule. The verbs *kvekke*, *skvette*, *støkke*, which all mean 'give a start', are perfective experiencer verbs that do not passivize.)

The conclusion must be that there are no strong arguments that passivization of one-place verbs is not the same phenomenon as passivization of other verbs. This means that exceptions to the passive should also be treated as one and the same phenomenon, independently of the transitivity of the verb in question. Referring directly to the subject role has the advantage over the unaccusativity theory of passivization that it makes it possible to express the generalization that verbs with theme subjects do not passivize, independently of the verb's transitivity.

Siewierska (1984:189) mentions some groups of verbs that do not passivize "in the majority of languages". They are "measure verbs (e.g. *cost, last, number*), verbs of equality and comparison (e.g. *equal, mean, resemble*), verbs of suiting (e.g. *suit, become*) and verbs of possession (e.g. *have, belong, lack*)" (Siewierska 1984:189) Except for verbs like *have* and *lack*, these verbs take theme subjects.

Other transitive verbs with theme subjects that do not passivize in Norwegian are the ones in (1)^4.

---

^4 A problem with these verbs is their object role. When one says that they have a theme subject, it is not easy to determine their object role. This problem will not be discussed further here.
(1) forestille 'represent', innebære 'imply', inneholde 'contain', gjennomgå 'undergo', undergå 'undergo'

Two especially interesting groups of verbs that do not passivize in Norwegian are (2) and (3).

(2) interessere 'interest', forundre 'puzzle', behage 'please', oppta 'occupy'
(3) gavne 'benefit', gjelde 'concern', passe 'fit', kle 'suit', vedkomme 'concern', vedrøre 'concern', angå 'concern', rake 'concern', tilhøre 'belong (to)'

The psychological verbs in (2) take a theme subject and an experiencer object. (They differ from psychological verbs like overraske 'surprise', which can take agent subjects, and passivize.) But it is not clear whether they should be considered unaccusative or not; this problem has been discussed by for example Åfarli (1992:123-125), Pesetsky (1995:19-53). The verbs in (3) take a theme subject and a benefactive object. They are also problematic with respect to unaccusativity. Whether the verbs in (2) and (3) are unaccusative or not is not really important to my approach, however. They take a theme subject and they do not passivize.

**Stativity**

To save the unaccusativity theory of exceptions to the passive, one could look for other properties of non-passivizing transitive verbs that could explain their behavior. This property could be their stativity. Keenan (1985:249) points out that stative verbs can be difficult to passivize in the languages of the world.
Transitive verbs that cannot passivize are stative. One-place verbs that cannot passivize (unaccusative verbs) are for the most part non-stative. (For example one-place *brekke* 'break', *smelte* 'melt'.) Transitive verbs that can passivize are for the most part non-stative. But most stative transitive verbs with benefactive or experiencer subjects allow the morphological passive (for example *ha* 'have', *vite* 'know', to be discussed below). This means that Norwegian has both passivizing and non-passivizing stative verbs and passivizing and non-passivizing non-stative verbs. There can be no absolute restriction on passivization in terms of aspect. The impossibility of passivizing measure verbs, verbs of equality and comparison and verbs of suiting cannot be due to their stativity; it must be due to their having a theme subject. (Aspect will be discussed further below.)

**Passivization in Norwegian**

Norwegian has three kinds of passive sentences.

1) The morphological passive with the -s-suffix:

Kaken stekes i ovnen

The-cake bake-PASSIVE in the-oven

2) The periphrastic passive with the auxiliary *bli* 'become' and the passive participle:

Kaken blir stekt i ovnen

The-cake becomes baked in the-oven

---

5 There is a small number of stative unaccusative verbs, for example *eksistere* 'exist', *flyte* 'float', *vare* 'last', *påhvile* 'be incumbent on' (a two-place unaccusative verb).
3) The periphrastic passive with the auxiliary være 'be' and the passive participle:
Kaken er stekt i ovnen
The-cake is baked in the-oven

From a syntactic point of view, the passives are equivalent, in the sense that they share restrictions on possible subjects etc. (see Åfarli 1992:16-20). They differ, however, in meaning and use. The difference between the morphological passive and the periphrastic passive with bli 'become' is a classical problem in Norwegian and Scandinavian grammar (see the interesting discussion in Engdahl (1999)). The traditional theory is that there is an aspectual difference. Mikkelsen (1911:381) writes that the periphrastic passive is used of completed action, while the morphological passive is used of states, unfinished actions, repeated actions and what usually happens. Mikkelsen (1911) is a grammar of Danish, but the Norwegian facts are very similar, and Western (1921:159) gives essentially the same description of Norwegian. Even if this theory has its problems (Hovdhaugen 1977, Heltoft & Falster Jakobsen 1996), it seems to reflect a central part of the difference. Western (1921:161) uses it to explain the fact that the morphological passive is primarily used in the infinitive and the present tense.

The traditional theory of the difference between the morphological passive and the periphrastic passive fits in with what is known about the passive in other languages. Keenan (1985:267) says that in languages with more than one way to passivize, there is often an aspectual difference between the passives. He says that when a language has a strict morphological passive and a be type periphrastic passive, the periphrastic passive tends to be stative or perfective, while the strict morphological passive tends to be non-committal or imperfective. An interesting parallel to Norwegian is Russian, where the choice of passive is governed by aspect; imperfetive aspect requires the morphological
passive while perfective aspect requires the periphrastic passive. (See for example Siewierska 1988. Bulgarian is similar, see the discussion in Dimitrova-Vulchanova 1996.)

Exceptions to the morphological passive
Existing discussions of exceptions to the passive in Norwegian (for example Hovdhaugen 1977, Åfarli 1992:101-33, Faarlund et al. 1997:840-41) are unsatisfactory because they give no room for the fact that the different grammatical realizations of the passive do not have the same exceptions (even if this is mentioned in passing in Hovdhaugen 1977:20, Faarlund et al. 1997:514, 524).

In discussions of exceptions to the passive, there is sometimes no sharp distinction between passive forms that are impossible and passive sentences that sound strange or funny (see for example Siewierska 1984: ch. 6). From a grammatical point of view, however, the question is which verbs have passive forms and which verbs do not. This raises the classical problem of how to distinguish between different verbs - how many different lexical entries are needed for e.g. have or see? An appeal to meaning is not enough; there should also be formal distinctions between the different lexical entries, such as different valency. For example, the stative and the non-stative lukte 'smell' need two different lexical entries because the former takes an NP or a CP while the latter takes a PP with the preposition på 'on'. And kjenne, which means 'know (a person)' or 'feel' needs two different lexical entries, because it takes an NP when it means 'know (a person)', while it takes an NP or a CP when it means 'feel'.

The limits of the morphological passive can be described easily in terms of thematic roles. This passive is always possible with verbs that take an agentive subject, (almost) always possible with verbs that take a benefactive or an experiencer subject, and never possible with verbs that take a theme subject or a non-thematic subject. (The only
passivizable transitive verb with a theme subject in Norwegian is probably romme 'contain', from Hovdhaugen 1977.) This situation can easily be described with reference to the traditional hierarchy of thematic roles. I assume a thematic hierarchy as in (4).

(4) agent > benefactive > experiencer > theme > location

The morphological passive is possible with verbs that take a subject with a thematic role that is higher than theme\(^6\). The exceptions I know are few\(^7\), cf. (5).

(5) some auxiliary-like verbs: burde 'should, ought to', måtte 'have to, must', skulle 'should, would'

some one-place experiencer verbs: klø 'itch', kvekke 'give a start', skvette 'give a start', støkke 'give a start', svimle 'be dizzy', vansmekte 'pine'

other verbs, benefactive subject: mangle 'lack, be short of', skylde 'owe', slippe 'not have to (do)'

---

\(^6\) Passives of verbs with benefactive subjects are not without their peculiarities, however. They do not take an "agent phrase" in the passive, cf. Flere råd trenges ikke *av Per 'More advice need-PASSIVE not by Per'. This could threaten their status as genuine passives. But there is a possible explanation (see Dyvik 1980a:308, 1980b:96). A Norwegian "agent phrase" has the preposition av. The general meaning of this preposition could be described as 'source, origin'. An agent is a source or an origin of the event denoted by the verb, and an experiencer could be argued to be one. But a benefactive is definitely not a source or an origin.

There are at least a couple of verbs with benefactive subjects whose passives have idiosyncratic properties that might indicate that they are lexicalized. fås 'get-PASSIVE' can only have a potential meaning ('it is possible to get'). And trenges 'need-PASSIVE' is pronounced without the -e- in its suffix, at least in my (Oslo) dialect.

\(^7\) In making the lists of verbs in this article, I have tried not to reflect my own intuitions only. They are based upon lists originally provided by Arne Martinus Lindstad with assistance from Tekstlaboratoriet at the University of Oslo, and they have been expanded and shortened after written comments from colleagues and discussions in seminars, corridors and cafeterias. But I am of course responsible for them.
other verbs, experiencer subject: fikse 'bear, endure', gidde 'be willing to take the trouble (to)', kjenne 'know (a person)'

These verbs also lack passive participles. They give the impression of being scattered exceptions, and do not seem to represent more general patterns. There are auxiliary-like verbs that allow the morphological passive\(^8\) (at least in the infinitive, namely kunne 'know, be able to', ville 'will, want', tørre 'dare') and there are one-place experiencer verbs that allow the morphological passive (for example angre 'regret' or sørge 'mourn'). The majority of the exceptional verbs are stative (except kvkke, skvette, stokke 'give a start'), but most stative verbs allow the morphological passive.

**Exceptions to the periphrastic passive**

The periphrastic passive is possible with all agentive verbs, and impossible with all verbs with a theme subject or a non-thematic subject. The interesting verbs are those with benefactive and experiencer subjects. These verbs often lack a periphrastic passive. (This fact is never focused upon in descriptions of the Norwegian passive; sometimes a couple of these verbs are mentioned in passing.)

The restriction on periphrastic passives should be interpreted as a restriction on passive participles. The impossible passive participles are impossible both with the passive auxiliaries and in adjectival constructions without an auxiliary\(^9\). Cf. (6)-(7).

---

\(^8\) "Auxiliary-like" verbs are only relevant here in their use as root modals. I follow the tradition from Ross (1969) in analyzing root modals as two-place control verbs. (The homonymous epistemic modals are raising verbs, and do not passivize, see Lødrup (1996).)

\(^9\) Participles of verbs with experiencer objects can be different, for example interessert 'interested' can be an adjective, but not a passive participle. The same is true of kjent 'known'.
Norwegian verbs that lack a morphological passive also lack a passive participle.

Even if there are not many verbs with benefactive subjects, it is striking that only a couple of them have a passive participle. Some of the verbs in question are not common in colloquial speech, but even so, the intuitions on passives seem to be uniform and stable. The ones that lack a passive participle are the ones in (8).

(8) *behøve ‘need’, besitte ‘possess, own’, burde ‘should, ought to’, få ‘get’, ha ‘have’, inneha ‘hold’, mangle ‘lack, be short of’, måtte ‘have to, must’, oppbevare ‘receive, collect’, plikte ‘have to’, skulle ‘should, would’, skyldje ‘owe’, slippe ‘not have to (do)’, trenge ‘need’, unnvære ‘do without’

The ones that have a passive participle are arve ‘inherit’ and eie ‘own’.

The problematic verbs are those that take an experiencer subject. They often lack a passive participle, like the verbs in (9).

verbs of intention and ability: *akte* 'intend', *evne* 'be able to', *formå* 'be able to', *gidde* 'be willing to take the trouble (to)', *makte* 'manage, cope with', *orke* 'be capable of', *overkomme* 'manage', *tørre* 'dare', *våge* 'risk'
verbs of liking and disliking: *billige* 'approve of', *fikse* 'bear, endure', *fordra* 'bear, endure', *utstå* 'stand, bear'
verbs of perception: *kjenne* 'perceive, feel', *lukte* 'smell (something)', *smake* 'taste (something)', *skue* 'behold, see', *øyne* 'discern, see'
some one-place verbs: *klo* 'itch', *kvøkke* 'give a start', *skvette* 'give a start', *støkke* 'give a start', *svimle* 'be dizzy', *vansmekte* 'pine'

There are also verbs with experiencer subjects that have passive participles, for example the ones in (10), which will be discussed later:\(^{10}\)

(10) verbs of knowing, understanding and wondering: *anta* 'presume, suppose', *forstå* 'understand', *forvente* 'expect', *glemme* 'forget', *huske* 'remember', *mistenke* 'suspect', *tro* 'believe', *tvile (på)* 'doubt'
verbs of liking and disliking: *beundre* 'admire', *elske* 'love', *forakte* 'despise', *forgude* 'idolize', *hate* 'hate', *like* 'like', *savne* 'miss'
verbs of perception: *gjenkjenne* 'recognize', *høre* 'hear', *oppfatte* 'perceive', *se* 'see'
some one-place verbs: *angre* 'regret', *sørge* 'mourn'

When the possibility of passive participles is described with reference to the hierarchy of thematic roles, there is a problem. The situation seems to be as in (11).

\(^{10}\) Icelandic has a similar, but not identical split in verbs with experiencer subjects. For discussion see Ottósson (1989).
Verbs with experiencer subjects create a "possible/impossible" area between two "impossible" areas, which shows that thematic roles are not sufficient to describe exceptions to the passive in Norwegian. This is where aspect is needed. Aspect cannot be relevant to passivization in itself, as the morphological passive shows no sensitivity to aspect. It is the passive participle that brings in aspect, preferring a perfective interpretation. (This preference is even stronger in other languages. For example in Russian, the passive participle must be perfective.) This preference for a perfective interpretation is, as a main rule, not compatible with a stative verb. The benefactive verbs that lack passive participles are all stative, except få 'get', which is an achievement verb. The experiencer verbs that lack passive participles are also stative, except the verbs of giving a start, which also lack a morphological passive. (Many of the stative experiencer verbs can also be used as achievement verbs, for example kunne 'know, be able to', vite 'know'. But these readings usually require adverbials or other contextual support, so they should be regarded as derived, see Smith (1997:56-57).)

Some of the experiencer verbs that do not have passive participles are only used with a negation or in a question; they are negative polarity items. Cf. the examples in (12).

(12) begripe 'understand', evne 'be able to', fatte 'understand', fikse 'bear, endure', fordra 'bear, endure', formå 'be able to', gidde 'be willing to take the trouble (to)', makte 'manage, cope with', orke 'be capable of', utstå 'stand, bear'
The negative polarity of these verbs determines their aspect. Since they are always negated or questioned, they can never denote an achievement. There is an interesting parallel in negated imperatives in Russian, which are usually imperfective.

An interesting group of verbs are those that denote "the actual perception of some entity" (Levin 1993:186), like smake 'taste', lukte 'smell', føle 'feel', kjenne 'feel'. All these verbs can be stative, in sentences with an NP object like (13)-(14).

(13) Kelneren sa det er hvitløk i salaten, men jeg smaker/lukter ikke noe hvitløk
The waiter said there is garlic in the salad, but I taste/smell no garlic
(14) Kunden sa at det er en bulk her, men jeg kjenner/føler ikke noen bulk
The customer said that there is a dent here, but I feel/feel no dent

When these verbs denote achievements, as in (15), they take a PP with the preposition på 'on'.

(15) Per smakte/luktet på salaten
Per tasted/smelt on the salad

These achievement verbs have passive participles, which are used in sentences like (16).

(16) Salaten ble smakt/luktet på
The salad became tasted/smelt on

But it would be impossible to use a passive participle with the stative verbs, cf. (17)-(20).
(17) Hvitløken smakes/luktes ikke i det hele tatt
The garlic taste-PASSIVE/smell-PASSIVE not at all
(18) *Hvitløken blir ikke smakt/luktet i det hele tatt
The garlic becomes not tasted/smelt at all
(19) Bulken kjennes/føles ikke i det hele tatt
The dent feel-PASSIVE/feel-PASSIVE not at all
(20) *Bulken blir ikke kjent/følt i det hele tatt
The dent becomes not felt/felt at all

It is now necessary to discuss the experiencer verbs that have passive participles\textsuperscript{11}. (Cf. the examples in (10) above.) Some denote achievements, like glemme 'forget', oppdage 'discover', oppfatte 'perceive'. Some can denote achievements or states, like forstå 'understand', huske 'remember', tro 'believe'.

It is not obvious why the stative verbs in (10) have passive participles when the ones in (9) do not. But there is some evidence that at least some of these verbs can be perceived as more activity-like than the ones that do not have passive participles.

Verbs like se 'see', høre 'hear', tenke 'think' (which have passive participles) have an agentive interpretation in addition to the experiencer interpretation.

\textsuperscript{11} A striking fact about the passivizability of Norwegian experiencer verbs is the large number of experiencer verbs that do not passivize for morphological reasons; they lack both a morphological passive and a passive participle. These are verbs that end in an -s or are inherently reflexive. (With some verbs, the inherent reflexivity is derived, as with anticausatives like irritere seg 'be annoyed'.) Most of these verbs are stative, for example the ones below.

Verbs that end in an -s: blues 'be ashamed', gremmes 'be annoyed', skjemmes 'be ashamed', synes 'think' trives 'flourish', undres 'wonder'

Inherently reflexive verbs: engste seg 'worry', forundre seg 'marvel', fryde seg 'rejoice', gremme seg 'be annoyed', grue seg 'dread', hygge seg 'have a good time', innbille seg 'imagine, interessere seg 'be interested', irritere seg 'be annoyed', kjede seg 'be bored', kvie seg 'be reluctant', skamme seg 'be ashamed'
Verbs like forstå 'understand' and huske 'remember' (which have passive participles) seem to be more activity-like than the near synonyms skjønne 'understand' and erindre 'remember' (which do not have passive participles). The last two verbs seem to involve one's will or intellect to a lesser extent. For example, they are less naturally embedded under forsøke 'try' than their near synonyms. Cf. (21)-(22).

(21) Forsøk å forstå / ?skjønne dette!
Try to understand/understand this
(22) Forsøk å huske / ?erindre dette!
Try to remember/remember this

Verbs of liking and disliking, as in (23), are especially problematic. These verbs are stative, and they have passive participles.

(23) beundre 'admire', elske 'love', forakte 'despise', forgude 'idolize', hate 'hate', like 'like', savne 'miss'

The problem of combining perfectivity and stativity is not a peculiarity of the Norwegian passive participle; it is a more general problem in the languages of the world (Comrie 1976:50, Smith 1997:69-70). Languages differ concerning the possibility and interpretation of perfective statives (Smith 1997:69-70). Some languages do not allow it at all, like Russian, Chinese, Navajo. In other languages, the perfectivity "wins", or the stativity "wins". The main rule for the Norwegian passive participle is, as shown above, that the combination is not allowed. With the verbs of liking, however, the stativity of the verb wins over the perfectivity of the passive participle. This is also reflected in the interpretation of the passive auxiliary. Usually, passives with the
auxiliary *være* 'be' can be interpreted as perfects of passives with the auxiliary *bli* 'become', as in (24)-(25).

(24) Kaken blir stekt i ovnen
The-cake becomes baked in the-oven
'The cake is being baked in the oven'
(25) Kaken er stekt i ovnen
The-cake is baked in the-oven
'The cake has been baked in the oven'

With stative passive participles, however, there is hardly any difference in meaning between the auxiliaries (see for example Jespersen 1924:273). Cf. (26)-(27)

(26) Kongen blir elsket av alle
The-king becomes loved by everybody
'The king is loved by everybody'
(27) Kongen er elsket av alle
The-king is loved by everybody
'The king is loved by everybody'

And a stative passive participle can refer to a present state when it is used as an adjective, *en elsket mann* 'a loved man' is a man who is loved "now" (Jespersen 1924:273-4).
Conclusion

The main rule for passivization in Norwegian, as in many other languages, is that all verbs with a subject role that is higher than theme on the role hierarchy can passivize. Aspect is brought into the picture by the passive participle, not by passivization in itself\(^\text{12}\). Aspect is needed to explain the impossibility of passive participles with many benefactive and experiencer verbs. There is no evidence that the morphological passive is sensitive to aspect. This means that the impossibility of passivizing measure verbs, verbs of equality and comparison and verbs of suiting cannot be due to their stativity, it must be due to their having a theme subject.

Norwegian has more verbs without passive participles than for example English or German. From a functional point of view, one could point to the existence of morphological passives, which might be used instead. But they are not always satisfactory as a substitute. Morphological passives (almost) only have infinitive and present forms. Their aspectual properties make them slightly different from periphrastic passives. And some of them are somewhat marginal.

The morphological passive is clearly the marked passive form from the point of view of use and style. There can be no doubt that it is the least frequent form in colloquial style. It might seem strange that this form is the most productive one. But from a grammatical point of view it can be seen as the unmarked form, in the sense that the imperfective is usually considered to be the unmarked member of the opposition between the perfective and the imperfective. It might also be relevant that it is the more "economical" passive, in the sense that it is expressed with a suffix. (In the languages of the world, an affix seems to be the most common way to express the passive, see for example Haspelmath 1990.)

\(^{12}\) Cf. Tenny (1994:171): "The licensing of passivization by aspectual roles seems to be language-particular, or even construction-particular. The important fact is that passivization can be sensitive to aspectual structure."
The account of exceptions to the passive given here also has other consequences. Heltoft & Falster Jakobsen (1996) claim that the difference between the morphological passive and the periphrastic passive with bli 'become' is a difference in mood. In this article I have accepted the traditional analysis of the difference. It is difficult to see how the distribution of exceptions to the passive should be explained within Heltoft & Falster Jakobsen’s theory. On the other hand, it follows naturally from, and thus supports, the traditional assumption that there is some aspectual difference between the passives.

REFERENCES


Helge Lødrup
Department of Linguistics
University of Oslo
Pb. 1102, Blindern
N-0317 Oslo, Norway
helge.lodrup@ilf.uio.no