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Sentence Initial Elements and Subject in Upper Sorbian

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In Upper Sorbian, a West Slavonic language spoken in Eastern Germany, passive sentences are seldom used although the language has as many as three morphosyntactic devices to build the passive. Various strategies are found among ‘alternatives’ that have the same effect as the passive. The article-like usage of the demonstrative *tón* ‘this’ and the numeral *jedyn* ‘one’, the presence/absence of an explicit subject, and the form of the subject are some such strategies. The principles behind these strategies are (1) the order of sentence elements, (2) the language forms that are more likely used depending on whether the subject refers to the same entity as the subject of the preceding sentence (SS) or to a different one (DS), and (3) the scene just related *per se*. These factors are interlinked and give the sentence the power of the passive.

Key words: Upper Sorbian, Pear Story, subject, SS, DS

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1. Introduction

In Upper Sorbian,¹⁾ a West Slavonic language spoken in Germany, the passive sentence is generally used very rarely, especially in the spoken language; the grammar, however, has as many as three ways of forming a passive sentence. I will call the first strategy ‘*bu-* passive’; it comprises the auxiliary *bu-*²⁾ and the passive participle of a verb. The second strategy is the reflexive verb, which occurs frequently in the modern languages of Western Europe (e.g., German, French). The third is similar to the first, but with a different auxiliary, namely the ‘*wordować* passive’, with the auxiliary *wordować* ‘to become’, which is borrowed from German *werden* ‘to become’. The ‘*wordować* passive’ is used colloquially.

In this paper, we will look at the ways in which ‘alternatives’ to passive sentences are

used in Upper Sorbian. We begin with the assumption that there are other grammatical means that have the same effect as the passive sentence. We then consider which factors function as ‘alternatives’ in spite of the fact that the grammar has ways of building morphosyntactic passive sentences.

The data used here were collected by the author in August–September 2007 in the Upper Sorbian villages of Crostwitz (*Chrósćicy* in Upper Sorbian) and Räckelwitz (*Worklecy* in Upper Sorbian). The author screened a film for the consultants, *Pear Film* (cf., Chafe 1980) and then asked them to relate what happened in the film as if they were telling someone who had never seen it (the corpus will hereafter be referred to as the *Pear Stories*). The author collected data from nine Upper Sorbian native speakers who were between the ages of 47 and 71 at the time (see Table 1).

As is often pointed out, the functions of the passive sentence are to focus or topicalize the object of a corresponding active sentence (Togo 1994) or to de-topicalize the subject of a corresponding active sentence (Shibatani 1985). Others suggest that the passive sentence is used to hide the agent from the sentence or to coordinate two sentences (as is used in syntactic tests in some reference grammars) (Tasaku Tsunoda p.c.). These views may be correct at least at the level of the simple sentence. If, however, we look at this at a wider level, that is, at the text level, the passive sentence also has the function of addition: that is, maintaining a cohesive relationship between a sentence and its preceding sentence(s). Although we do not have the space to discuss the presence of this relationship, we will proceed with the current discussion on the assumption that this relationship exists.

Although, as mentioned above, the grammar of Upper Sorbian is equipped with strategies to create passive sentences, the frequency of passive sentences is, according to the author’s observations, extremely low as far as the spoken language is concerned. In the following sections, assuming that the scarcity of passive sentences is because of a relatively free word order, we observe word order at the text level from the *Pear Stories*. We then try to capture where the subject tends to appear and how it is expressed (nominally, pronominally, or by zero).

Table 1 List of consultants

Name of consultant	Sex	Year of birth	Place of birth	Number of sentences collected
BČ	male	1951	Rožant	25
CČ	female	1960	Hórka	22
JM	male	1947	Chrósćicy	54
JN	male	1947	Dobročicy	64
JR	male	1946	Chrósćicy	14
JŽ	male	1936	Łask	17
ŁK	male	1951	Chrósćicy	28
MJ	male	1954	Prawočicy	18
MK	female	1949	Chrósćicy	25
Total				267

Upper Sorbian is considered to be a so-called ‘pro-drop’ language, in which an explicit sentence subject does not need to be expressed.

2. Word order

In Upper Sorbian, there is no rigid word order determined by the grammar. Although some patterns are popular among its speakers, they are probably determined pragmatically; the basic word order is, in essence, free. Therefore, all six variations in (1), each of which means ‘Jan reads/is reading a/the book’, can be used.

- (1) a. *Jan knih-u čita.*
 Jan.NOM book-SG.ACC to.read.PRS.3SG
 b. *Jan čita knihu.*
 c. *Knihu Jan čita.*
 d. *Knihu čita Jan.*
 e. *Čita Jan knihu.*
 f. *Čita knihu Jan.*

The most natural order without specific context may be that in which the subject occurs sentence-initially, that is, the SOV order, as in (1a).

With regard to the word order in the Upper Sorbian *Pear Stories*, the number of cases in which the subject appears sentence-initially is relatively low. Of the 267 sentences collected, 97 (36.3%) of them place the subject at the beginning of the sentence. Within these 97 sentences, there are trends in terms of which type of sentence element appears sentence-initially and which position the subject occupies. This is summarized in (2) a, b.

- (2) a. $x_1(/S)-V(-x_2)(-S)(-x_3)$
 b. $x_1(/S)-Aux(-x_2)(-S)(-x_3)-V(-x_4)^3$

The S that appears twice in scheme (2) can appear in either one or the other position, but never twice in the same sentence. The S is shown in parentheses because there is no explicit subject in some cases (74 cases). x_1, x_2, \dots stand for other elements.

Furthermore, coordinative conjunctions such as *(h)a* ‘and’, *(h)ale* ‘but’, etc. can appear before the first element of (2); therefore, we assume that these conjunctions occupy the position Zero, that is, the position immediately before the sentence-initial position.

Some examples are provided below.

- (3) MK.013⁴⁾
- | | | | | | |
|------------|-------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>Wón</i> | <i>je</i> | <i>jě-ł</i> | <i>zaso</i> | <i>domoj</i> | <i>dale.</i> |
| 3M.SG.NOM | AUX.PRS.3SG | to.GO-PASTP.M.SG | again | homewards | further |
| S | AUX | V | X ₃ | X ₃ | X ₃ |
- ‘He walked homewards further again.’

(4) BČ.017

A *potom* *přiňdža-chu* *tř-i* *hólc-y.*
 and then to.come-PAST.3PL 3-PERS.PL.NOM boy-PL.NOM
 0 X₁ V S

‘And then three boys came.’

(5) JN.032

Najprjedy je *pohlada-t,* [*hač je so*
 at.first AUX.PRS.3SG to.look-PASTP.M.SG whether AUX.PRS.3SG REFL.ACC
 X₁ AUX V X₃

něhdže zrani-t].
 somewhere to.injure-PASTP.M.SG

‘At first, he looked at himself to check whether he was injured.’

(6) JN.023

To *rěka,* *wón* *je* *tež*
 it.N.SG.NOM to.be.called.PRS.3SG 3M.SG.NOM AUX.PRS.3SG also
 0 S AUX X₁

jě-t *po puć-u.*
 to.GO-PASTP.M.SG on road-SG.LOC
 V X₂

‘That is, he also went on the road.’

It is generally observed that x_1 , that is, the sentence-initial element, is often an adverbial phrase, as in (4)–(6).

When we consider sentences (1a–f) again, it is natural that the speaker expresses some pragmatic difference through word order, although the same event or situation is being related. If every element can theoretically take all positions, the word order would be more randomly patterned. However, the real distribution of the word order seems partially fixed. As mentioned earlier, in the *Pear Stories*, the element occupying the sentence-initial position is most frequently adverbial. The question that arises is where the subject appears, or tends to appear, in the sentence, and when, if it occurs explicitly, does it occupy the sentence-initial position.

In the following section, we investigate how known and unknown information is referred to.

3. How known and unknown information is referred to

In this section, we focus on entities that are already known and those that are yet unknown. It is easy to understand that languages that have definite and indefinite articles, such as German, use a definite article when the referent is known and the indefinite article when it is unknown. Upper Sorbian, however, lacks both definite and indefinite articles. There is no exclusive grammatical device that serves this distinction. According to the grammar of the standard language (Šewc-Schuster 1976, 1984 and Faßke 1980), the bare noun covers both the known

and the unknown. As we will see soon, however, the demonstrative *tón* ‘this’ and the numeral *jedyn* ‘one’ are frequently used and function as the definite and the indefinite article, respectively.

In the *Pear Stories*, when a speaker refers to an unknown entity for the first time, we notice a specific pattern. In the film, these are the following main figures: (a) a peasant, (b) a man with a goat, (c) a goat led by a peasant, (d) a boy on a bicycle stealing pears, (e) a girl riding a bicycle in the opposite direction from the boy, (f) three (other) boys. In the first 47 mentions of these figures in the text, the manner of expression appears to be patterned. In the first mention of a figure, it tends to be expressed as the subject and to appear sentence-finally or near the sentence-final position. Some examples are provided below.

(7) ŁK.018

A pon su tam by-li tř-i hólc-y.
and then AUX.PRS.3PL there COP-PASTP.PL three-PL.NOM boy-PL.NOM
‘And then, there were three boys.’

(8) MK.010

Na to, wot tamn-oho kónc-a přínđža-chu tř-i
on it.SG.ACC from that-M.SG.GEN end-SG.GEN to.come-PST.3PL three-PERS.PL.NOM
wosob-y, tři džěć-i, hólc-y, mlodostn-i.
person-PL.NOM three-PL.NOM child-PL.NOM boy-PL.NOM young.person-PERS.PL.NOM
‘At that (time), three persons, three children, boys, youths came from that end.’

(9) JR.011

Ale na zbož-o přínđ-u potom někotř-i,
but on luck-SG.ACC to.come-PRS.3PL then some.M.PERS-PL.NOM
jeho přěćelj-o snano, a k pomoc-y jemu pomha-ja,
his friend-PL.NOM perhaps and for help-SG.DAT 3M.SG.DAT to.help-PRS.3PL
zezběra-ja krušw-y.
to.collect-PRS.3PL pear-PL.ACC
‘But luckily, some, perhaps his friends come to help him collect the pears.’

Moreover, when these nouns are first mentioned, especially with reference to a person, they are frequently introduced by the numeral *jedyn* ‘one’ (28 out of 47 cases).

(10) JM.013

Potom přínđže jedn-a dalš-a wosob-a,
then to.come.PRS.3SG one-F.SG.NOM further-F.SG.NOM person-SG.NOM
so das wäre⁵⁾ něke, dalš-a wosob-a.
so it COP.SBJV.3SG now further-F.SG.NOM person-SG.NOM
‘Then, well, another person comes now, another person’.

In cases in which the first mention of the noun is uttered without *jedyn* ‘one’, it is

modified by an adjective such as *dalši* ‘further’ or *druhi* ‘other’, which usually express indefiniteness. In addition, five out of nine speakers expressed (f), that is the three boys who helped the boy take the basket away as *tři hólcy* (three boy-PL.NOM) ‘three boys’, in the first mention (see (7)–(9)). On the other hand, only 9 of 47 cases of first mention are not accompanied by either a numeral or an adjective.

In the second half of the *Pear Film*, the pear-picking farmer who appeared at the beginning re-enters the scene. Seven of nine consultants refer to his re-appearance; all seven refer to him using the demonstrative *tón* ‘this’.

(11) BČ.023

Zes tej krušiw-u su woni potom
 with this.F.SG.INST pear-SG.INST AUX.PRS.3PL 3M.PERS.PL.NOM then
š-li tam zas nimo, hdžež je tón
 to.GO-PASTP.PL there again past REL AUX.PRS.3SG this.M.SG.NOM
muž te krušiw-y šćipa-ť.
 man.SG.NOM this.PL.ACC pear-PL.ACC to.pick-PASTP.M.SG
 ‘With this pear, they went through the place where this man was picking these pears.’

(12) MK.015

A su pola toho muž-a nimo přiš-li,
 and AUX.PRS.3PL near this.M.SG.GEN man-SG.GEN past to.COME-PASTP.PL
kotryž je tam šćipa-ť.
 REL.M.SG.NOM AUX.PRS.3SG there to.pick-PASTP.M.SG
 ‘And they came through near this man who was picking there.’

In (11), the demonstrative *tón* ‘this’ is attached to both *muž* ‘man’ and *krušiw-y* ‘pear’. Other speakers often use similar examples as well. The use of the demonstrative seems to reinforce the reference to *that* person and *those* pears that have been absent for a while and that re-appear in the scene.

In sum, known information tends to be expressed with the demonstrative *tón* ‘this’ and to appear in early positions of the sentence. Unknown information is, in most cases, supported by the numeral *jedyn* ‘one’ and tends to occupy positions later in the sentence.

4. Explicit/non-explicit subject

In this section, we will see when the subject does and does not appear explicitly. First of all, if the referent of the subject is the same as that of the preceding sentence, a feature which will be referred to as SS (= same subject), (in other words, the subsequent sentence in the sentence chain has the same subject), then it is typically unexpressed.

(13)

BČ.007 [S = *jedyn hólc*_i]

A *hdyž bě tón nimo, přijědže jedyn*
 and when COP.PAST.3SG this.M.SG.NOM past to.come.PAST.3SG one.M.SG.NOM
hólc zes, z koles-om.
 boy.SG.NOM with with bicycle-SG.INST
 ‘[after a farmer came with a goat:] and when this person passed, a boy came riding a bicycle.’

BČ.008 [S = Ø_i]

A *je widža-ł te rjan-e krušiw-y.*
 and AUX.PRS.3SG to.see-PASTP.M.SG this.PL.ACC beautiful -PL.ACC pear-PL.ACC
 ‘And he saw the beautiful pears.’

BČ.009 [S = Ø_i]

Sej mysl-a, zastanje.
 REFL.DAT to.think-PRS.3SG to.stop.PRS.3SG
 ‘He thought, he stopped.’

BČ.010 [S = Ø_i]

A *sej mysl-i, ach, budže-š jedn-u wza-ć.*
 and REFL.DAT to.think.PRS.3SG INTJ AUX.FUT-2SG one-F.SG.ACC to.take-INF
 ‘And he thought, “*ach*, you can take a [pear].”’

If, however, the subject is SS but the situation is not seen as integrated with the preceding situation, the speaker tends to express the subject explicitly. In (14) below, the referent of the subject in the main clause is the same as that of the subject in the clause relativized by the relative pronoun *kiž*. The referent of the man who ‘lost his hat’ in the relative clause is expressed by the personal pronoun *wón* (3M.SG.NOM). This fact suggests that the speaker may treat the situation in the relative clause ‘he lost his hat’ as non-successive, that is, as different from the situation in the main clause ‘he forgot the hat’.

(14)

ŁK.020 ‘And then he pushed his bicycle and went further’.

ŁK.021

Je pak při tym pon na swój kłobuk,
 AUX.PRS.3SG however at this.N.SG.LOC then on one’S.M.SG.ACC hat.SG.ACC
 [*kiž wón tež při tym padnj-en-u tam*
 REL.ACC 3M.SG.NOM also at this.N.SG.LOC to.fall-GER-SG.LOC there
zhubi-ł,] zaby-ł najskerje.
 to.lose-PASTP.M.SG to.forget-PASTP.M.SG probably
 ‘However, he then forgot his hat probably, which he lost at that time of falling there’.

Therefore, the sentence subject tends to be unexpressed if the speaker assumes the two SS-situations to be successive ones or to be a single unit that can be decomposed into two situations. If the speaker, on the contrary, sees them as separate situations even though they are in an SS relationship, he is more likely to express the subject explicitly.

In almost all cases in which the subject is different from that in the preceding sentence (hereafter: DS = different subject), the subject is expressed explicitly.

(15)

JM.022

Přijedže jedn-a dalš-a wosob-a, jedn-a
 to.come.PRS.3SG one-F.SG.NOM further-F.SG.NOM person-SG.NOM one-F.SG.NOM
holčk-a, tohorunja z kole-som nimo, jemu
 girl-SG.NOM equally with bicycle-SG.INST past 3M.SG.DAT
napřečo poprawom.
 in.the.opposite.direction really
 ‘Another person, a girl, came past also riding a bicycle, but in the opposite direction from him.’

JM.023

A na samsn-ej wysokosc-i wona jemu, won
 and on same-F.SG.LOC height-SG.LOC 3F.SG.NOM 3M.SG.DAT 3M.SG.NOM
je kt..., ze jedn-ym sombrero abo klobuk-u,
 AUX.PRS.3SG * with one-M.SG.LOC sombrero or hat-SG.INST
a wona jo ton preč wza.
 and 3F.SG.NOM AUX.PRS.3SG this.M.SG.ACC away to.take.PRS.3SG
 ‘And she [is] as tall as he, he is... with a sombrero or hat, and she takes it away.’

JM.024

[P]řez to so hólč nje-mož-e
 through it.N.SG.ACC REFL.ACC boy.SG.NOM NEG-can-PRS.3SG
orientowa-ć prawje.
 to.orient-INF right
 ‘By that, the boy cannot be oriented correctly.’

Example (15) expresses the scene in which the boy on the bicycle with the basketful of pears rides past the girl, also on a bicycle, coming in the opposite direction. The subjects in this series of sentences alternate between the boy and the girl like a pendulum. In this case, the assumed subject is DS and the subject is expressed explicitly. From an opposing viewpoint, it can be said that the speaker resorts to the used of an explicit subject to signal positively that the subject is now DS.

Similar cases can be found. If the subject is DS as the result of a restatement, the subject is more likely to be made explicit.

(16)

JM.043

A *kaž woni,* *kaž so wón wotsali* *a*
 and as 3M.PERS.PL.NOM as REFL.ACC 3M.SG.NOM to.remove.PRS.3SG and
woni tež dale bež-a, [...]
 3M.PERS.PL.NOM also further to.run-PRS.3PL
 ‘And as **they**, as **he** leaves and they also walk further [...].’

There are cases in which the subject is unexpressed even when it is DS. In cases without the explicit subject, it appears that the speaker presumes that the listener can identify the intended subject with ease from the context.

(17)

CČ.006 [S = Ø_i]

A *je to wobkedźbowa-ŕ, tam te,*
 and AUX.PRS.3SG this.N.SG.ACC to.observe-PASTP.M.SG there this.PL.NOM
ka[k], te korb-y z tymi krušw-ami steja.
 how this.PL.NOM basket-PL.NOM with this.PL.INST pear-PL.INST to.stand.PRS.3PL
 [A boy on a bicycle rides to a pear tree:]
 ‘And this [boy] observed it there, that there are these baskets with these pears.’

CČ.007 [S = wón_i]

Ha da sej wón přemysli-ŕ, zo budže
 and at.that.time REFL.DAT 3M.SG.NOM to.consider-PASTP.M.SG that AUX.FUT.3SG
wón jedyn korb sobu wza-ć.
 3M.SG.NOM one.M.SG.ACC basket.SG.ACC together to.take-INF
 ‘And at that time he considered that he would take a basket away.’

CČ.008 [S = tón muž_i]

To, tón šćipa-t-y muž na
 this.N.SG.NOM this.M.SG.NOM to.pick-PRSP-M.SG.NOM man.SG.NOM on
te korb-y docyła sobu dósta-ŕ
 this.PL.ACC basket-PL.ACC totally together to.get-PASTP.M.SG
nje-jo, ha potom jemu z tym koles-om
 NEG-AUX.PRS.3SG and then 3M.SG.DAT with this.N.SG.INST bicycle-SG.INST
ha z tym korb-om wotjě-ŕ.
 and with this.M.SG.INST basket-SG.INST to.ride.away-PASTP.M.SG
 ‘This, this picking man did not notice the basket at all, and that then he with the bicycle rode away with the basket from him.’

CČ.009 [S = Ø_i]

A *je skedźbliwj-e na tón korb hlada-ŕ.*
 and AUX.PRS.3SG careful-ADVZR on this.M.SG.ACC basket.SG.ACC to.look-PASTP.M.SG
 ‘And he looked at this basket’.

In (17), the subject up to sentence CČ.007 is the boy with the bicycle. The subject of the next sentence, CČ.008, is the man picking pears. The referent of sentence CČ.009 then returns to the boy. However, the explicit subject does not appear in CČ.009. A possible reason for this is that the situation in CČ.007 and that in CČ.009 are in close relationship in the speaker's view and the speaker thus assumes that the listener can identify the referent of the subject without difficulty.

In a similar case, a sub-episode is embedded in a series of descriptions of a (main) episode. If, as in the sequence 'main episode A – sub-episode B – main episode A', another topic is mentioned and the previous topic is then referred to again, the explicit subject of the resumed main episode may remain unexpressed (see (18) JN.050-054).

(18)

JN.050 [S = *tón muž_i*]

Ha tón muž, kotryž je na štomj-e
 and this.M.SG.NOM man.SG.NOM REL.M.SG.NOM AUX.PRS.3SG on tree-SG.LOC
šćipa-ł, wón je zaso fal-u
 to.pick-PASTP.M.SG 3M.SG.NOM AUX.PRS.3SG again apron-SG.ACC
połn-u mě-ł a dele zalěz-ł z
 full-F.SG.ACC to.have-PASTP.M.SG and downwards to.enter-PASTP.M.SG from
toho štom-a.
 this.M.SG.GEN tree-SG.GEN

'And this man who was picking up in the tree, had filled his apron with pears again and came down from the tree.'

JN.051 [S = \emptyset_i]

Ha něke sej džiwa-ł.
 and now REFL.DAT to.wonder-PASTP.M.SG

'And he wondered now.'

JN.052 [S = *dwaj korbaj_i*]

Tam steja-chu jenož hišće dwaj korb-aj.
 there to.stand -PAST.3PL only yet two.M.SG.ACC basket-DU.NOM

'There were only two baskets'.

JN.053 [S = *jedyn korb_i*]

Ha jedyn bě prózdn-y.
 and one.M.SG.NOM COP.PAST.3SG empty-M.SG.NOM

'And one was empty.'

JN.054 [S = \emptyset_i]

Ha něk so džiwa-še.
 and now REFL.ACC to.wonder-PAST.3SG

'And he wondered now.'

} sub-episode

JN.055 [S = *tući tři hólc-y_k*]

Ha nadobo přińdža-chu po puć-u tući
 and suddenly to.come-PAST.3PL on way-SG.LOC this.M.PERS.PL.NOM
tř-i hólc-y, kotřiž su te
 three.PERS.PL.NOM boy-PL.NOM REL.M.PERS.PL.NOM AUX.PRS.3PL this.PL.ACC
krušw-y za to dósta-li, zo su tom[u]
 pear -PL.ACC for this.N.SG.ACC to.get-PASTP.PL that AUX.PRS.3PL M.SG.DAT
tamón, tón, tón klobuk wróci-li.
 that.SG.ACC this.M.SG.ACC this.M.SG.ACC hat.SG.ACC to.return-PASTP.PL
 ‘And suddenly these three boys came who got the pears for that they returned that,
 this, this hat.’

JN.056 [S = *wón_i*]

Ha něk je wón hlada-ł.
 and now AUX.PRS.3SG 3M.SG.NOM to.look-PASTP.M.SG
 ‘And he looked now.’

In (18), the episode of the three boys is mentioned (JN.055) and the narrative then returns to the description of the farmer picking the pears (JN.056), who was the sentence subject of JN.051 and JN.054. There is, however, a situational gap between JN.054 and JN.055 in terms of the episode description. In other words, (18) is constituted structurally as follows: main episode A–sub-episode B–main episode A–main episode C (see Table 2).

This episode structure may have affected the use of the explicit subject in JN.056 in spite of the fact that the sentence subject is once again the farmer, since it is the *first* mention of main episode C.

When the text involves a scene change, the explicit subject is more likely to appear, whether it is SS or DS; we can call this the (explicit) subject of scene change. Listed below are examples of DS (19) and SS (20) (see also the second half of (18) for SS).

(19)

JN.012 [S = *tón muž_i*]

Tón muž, kotryž je tam na
 this.M.SG.NOM man.SG.NOM REL.M.SG.NOM AUX.PRS.3SG there on
štomj-e by-ł a nětko dele zalěz-ł,
 tree-SG.LOC COP-PASTP.M.SG and now downwards to.enter-PASTP.M.SG
wusypa přenj-e krušw-y do korb-ow, kotrež
 to.pour.out.PAST.3SG first-PL.ACC pear-PL.ACC to basket-PL.GEN REL.PL.NOM
deleka na zemi steja-chu.
 below on land.SG.LOC to.stand-PAST.3PL

‘This man, who was there up the tree and had now come down, poured the first pears into the baskets that were on the ground.’

Table 2 Episode structure in (18)

JN.050	main episode A	subject =	the man _i
JN.051	main episode A		∅ _i
JN.052	sub-episode B		two baskets _j
JN.053	sub-episode B		one basket _j
JN.054	main episode A		∅ _i
JN.055	main episode C		three boys _k
JN.056	main episode C		he _i

JN.013 [S = ∅_i

A so znova na tón štom poda.
 and REFL.ACC anew on this.M.SG.ACC tree to.set.off.PAST.3SG
 ‘And he set off up the tree again.’

JN.014 [S = *jedyn hólčec*_j]

Za krótk-u chwilk-u přijedže jedyn
 for short-F.SG.ACC while-SG.ACC to.come.PST.3SG one.M.SG.NOM
hólčec zes koles-om.
 boy.SG.NOM with bicycle-SG.INST
 ‘After a short while, a boy came by on a bicycle.’

(20)

JM.002 [S = *jedyn plantažnik*_i]

To je jedyn plantažnik abo
 this.N.SG.NOM COP.PRS.3SG one.M.SG.NOM plantation.manager.SG.NOM or
bur, kiž ščipa krušw-y.
 farmer.SG.NOM REL.NOM to.pick.PRS.3SG pear-PL.ACC
 ‘It was a plantation manager, or a farmer, who was picking pears.’

JM.003 [S = *wón*_i]

A wón zalězy, nó, na krušw-y štom
 and 3M.SG.NOM to.enter.PAST.3SG well on pear-PL.ACC tree.SG.ACC
na rěbl-u.
 on ladder-SG.LOC
 ‘And he climbed up, well, the pear tree, on a ladder.’

JM.004 [S = ∅_i]

Potom ma wulk-u fal-u.
 then to.have.PRS.3SG big -F.SG.ACC apron-SG.ACC
 ‘Then he had a big apron.’

JM.005 [S = Ø_i]

A potom šćipa te krušw-y.
 and then to.pick.PRS.3SG this.PL.ACC pear-PL.ACC
 ‘And then he picked the pears.’

JM.006 [S = Ø_i]

Potoži je do swoj-eje bět-eje fal-e.
 to.put.PRS.3SG 3PL.ACC to one’s-F.SG.GEN white-F.SG.GEN apron-SG.GEN
 ‘He put them into his apron.’

JM.007 [S = wón_i]

A hdyž je někak połn-a, wón zaso zes
 and when COP.PRS.3SG somehow full-F.SG.NOM 3M.SG.NOM again from
rěbl-a dele zalězy.
 ladder-SG.GEN downward to.enter.PAST.3SG
 ‘And when it was full somehow, he came down off the ladder.’

In (20), JM.002 first sets the scene. It is followed by JM.003, which describes the man introduced in JM.002. From JM.003 to JM.006, a series of brief reports is made of the man. Then, in the next sentence, JM.007, a scene change occurs, which may be suggested by the description of the man’s next action.

As these examples indicate, we can predict the following pattern. When a scene change occurs in a series of narratives, an explicit subject tends to appear in the sentence. As long as the narrative remains in the same scene, even if another episode is referred to at that point, the sentence subject tends not to appear explicitly at the resumption of the narrative of the former scene.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented a brief overview of the alternatives to passive voice in Upper Sorbian. Accordingly, the use of these alternatives is determined by, among other things, whether or not the referent of the subject is already known. If the referent of the subject is already known, it is typically introduced by the demonstrative *tón* ‘this’ and usually occupies the initial position in the sentence. When the sentence subject referent is unknown, on the other hand, it is often introduced by the numeral *jedyn* ‘one’ and appears sentence-finally.

The presence of an explicit subject in a sentence is determined by whether or not the referent of the subject is the same as that of the preceding sentence. If the subject is SS and the speaker thinks of the situations referred to as successive or unifying, then the explicit subject remains unexpressed. Consequently, expressing the subject explicitly appears to be a positive way of signalling that the subject is DS.

The scene described may affect the appearance or non-appearance of an explicit subject. If it involves a scene change—whether SS or DS—an explicit subject is more likely to appear. In cases in which the sentence uttered does not contain any scene change, and in which a

different episode (sub-episode) may or may not be inserted, an explicit subject tends not to be expressed.

In sum, a passive sentence tends not to be used in Upper Sorbian under the following conditions, which are interlinked with each other: (a) the order of sentence elements and (b) the language forms that are more likely to be used depending on whether the subject refers to the same entity as the subject of the preceding sentence (SS) or to a different one (DS). Moreover, an extra-linguistic factor needs to be pointed out here—the scene of the sentence just uttered, that is, the scene change itself. Accordingly, these linguistic and extra-linguistic factors help maintain cohesion between sentences. In this way, the effect of a passive voice can be obtained by the speaker and the listener without the use of a passive form.

Abbreviations

3	3rd person	ACC	accusative	ADVZR	adverbializer
AUX	auxiliary	COP	copula	DAT	dative
DS	different subject	DU	dual	F	female
FUT	future	GEN	genitive	GER	gerund
INF	infinitive	INST	instrumental	INTJ	interjection
LOC	locative	M	male	N	neuter
NEG	negation	NOM	nominative	PAST	past
PASTP	past participle	PERS	person	PL	plural
PRS	present	PRSP	present participle	REFL	reflexive
REL	relativizer	S	subject	SBJV	subjunctive
SG	singular	SS	same subject		

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Notes

- 1) The transcription of Sorbian forms in this paper is based on Upper Sorbian orthography. Each character and its sound value is listed below:

consonants: *p, t, k, b, d, g, f, v, h* [h~fi], *ch* [k^h~x~ç], *l, r* [ʀ], *s, z, š = ř* [ʃ] ([tsj] in the combination *tř*), *ž* [ʒ], *m, n, ň* [ɲ], *c* [ts], *č = ć* [tʃʲ], *dž* [dʒ];

vowels: *a* [a], *e* [ɛ~ɛi], *ě* [ɛ], *i* [i], *o* [ɔ], *ó* [ɔ~ɔo], *u* [u], *y* [i];

semivowels: *j, l = w* [w].

The characters linked by the equal sign (=) refer to two characters that have the same phonological value.

- 2) *bu-* is a special form of the copula *być* ‘to be’.

- 3) This word order is reminiscent of German *Rahmenkonstruktion*. Upper Sorbian has many grammatical phenomena that seem to be influenced by German. The relationship, in terms of this word order, between the two languages, however, is not yet clear to the author.
- 4) Hereafter, the examples from the Pear Stories will be displayed with the reference number ‘Initials of the speaker + . + subsequent number’.
- 5) ‘*so das wäre*’ is a German sentence, the literal meaning of which is ‘well, it would be’. German words are shown in plain font in the text line, but italicized in the gloss line.

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