Swedish Impersonal Constructions from a Cross-linguistic Perspective
An Exploratory Corpus-based Study

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Abstract
This paper presents a corpus-based contrastive study of impersonals in Swedish based on extracts from five Swedish novels and their translations into German, English, French, and Finnish. As a first step in the analysis, impersonals were identified with simple formal criteria. All occurrences of non-referential det ‘it’ in the subject slot and all occurrences of the Swedish generalized pronoun man were extracted for further analysis. As a second step, this material was analysed from a functional point of view. It turned out that det appears as a formal subject (or placeholder) in agentless sentences or sentences with low agentivity, whereas man appears as an impersonal subject with general (‘all of mankind’) or vague reference. From a contrastive perspective, it turns out that Finnish in many respects represents a different type than the other languages included in the study, but even if German, English, and French in many cases have rather direct structural equivalents to the Swedish impersonal constructions, the usage patterns differ in a striking way even between these languages.

1. Introduction
1.1 Impersonal sentences in Swedish
As stated by Siewierska (2008a), impersonalization can be treated from a subject-centred vs. agent-centred perspective. The former perspective is structural and takes its starting point in the lack of a canonical subject, whereas the latter is functional and is concerned with agent defocusing. The present study is corpus-based and will be carried out in two steps. The first is concerned with the coding of all the relevant examples in a corpus, and in order to code examples as “impersonal” in a consistent way, it is convenient to base the coding on clear, formal criteria. Based on a subject-centred approach, two types of impersonal subjects will be identified, namely constructions with a formal det as subject and constructions with man as a subject referring in a general way to ‘anyone, all humans’. Passive constructions will also be discussed, though rather briefly, in the present study.

As a second step, all the examples with formal det or man as subject will be analysed from a functional perspective. It turns out that det and man do not always have an impersonal function, but nevertheless in most cases they can be analysed from an agent-centred perspective as various types of impersonal subjects. Semantically, a prototypical subject functions as an agent (semantic role function) and has specific reference (referential function). It also has certain grammatical properties: coding properties, such as the coding of case on nouns and NPs, and the coding of agreement on the verb; and behavioural properties, such as its role in deletions, movements, and control of cross-reference (see Keenan 1976). Semantically, an impersonal sentence has a subject which deviates from the prototype with respect to reference or agentivity and in many cases
such deviations are reflected in non-canonical coding properties and anomalous grammatical behaviour.

**Agentless impersonals** conceptually lack a human agent that controls the situation. In the extreme case, the verb does not have any argument except a formal subject, as is the case with many predicates referring to weather phenomena and natural forces in Swedish and English. There are also a number of cases where the subject has a non-prototypical agent (or a primary role) such as that of an Experiencer or a Receiver. Grammatically such arguments behave as canonical subjects in some languages, whereas they have a tendency to appear as non-canonical subjects (e.g. “dative subjects”) with respect to case-marking and other grammatical properties across a number of languages. Such arguments characteristically appear within certain semantic fields such as mental and modal verbs. In Swedish, several mental, and also some modal verbs take an impersonal *det* as subject.

**Non-specific agent impersonals** represent the other possibility (see Siewierska 2008b). Conceptually, there is an agent which, however, is nonspecific and has a general or vague reference. The major example of this type of impersonal in Swedish is the *man*-construction. The third person plural pronoun *de* (colloquial *dom*) can also be used with a vague reference, and a further type of non-specific agent impersonal in Swedish is the impersonal passive such as *det dansades* lit. ‘it was danced’ or *det spelades pingis* lit. ‘it was played ping pong’. Such passives refer to actions carried out by an agent who is non-specific.

A special type of impersonal constructions is represented by three constructions with an expletive *det* as subject in Swedish: Clefting, Presentation, and Extraposition of finite and non-finite clauses.

Since this is an exploratory study based on a specific corpus (see below), it is only possible to refer briefly to earlier studies on Swedish impersonals. Ljungren (1926) is a general treatment of impersonals in Swedish and relevant information can also be found in Sundman’s (1987) work on the subject in Swedish and in the Swedish reference grammar published by the Swedish Academy (Teleman et al., 1999, in particular “Expletivt subjekt” Vol. IV, p. 53–64).

1.2 The typological profile of Swedish
The typological profile of a language is an account of the distinctive character of its structure in relation to other languages based on work in general typology and contrastive studies. The two impersonal subjects *det* and *man* which form the topic of this study play a central role in a basic characteristic of Swedish referred to as the placeholder constraint by Hammarberg & Viberg (1977). The placeholder constraint refers to the obligatory use in Swedish of a number of semantically more or less empty grammatical words which to varying degrees tend to lack equivalents in other languages: the formal subject *det* ‘it’, the obligatory use of unstressed subject pronouns in general, the copula, and the use of *som* as a subject marker in indirect WH-questions. The placeholder constraint is functionally related to the use of word order in Swedish to signal syntactic role (subject/object), syntactic type (statement/question), and sentence hierarchy (main/subordinate clause). If, to pick a simple example, the dummy subject *det* ‘it’ were omitted from sentences...
with a weather verb, word order would no longer serve as a clue to the interpretation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Statement or Question?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Det regnar.</td>
<td>‘It is raining.’</td>
<td>Regnar det?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To various degrees, the placeholder constraint is characteristic of all the Germanic languages and of French but is most pronounced in Swedish and the other Mainland Scandinavian languages. Finnish is primarily a non-placeholder language, even if *sita*, the partitive form of *se* ‘it’, is used to a certain extent as a placeholder in varieties of spoken Finnish. One of its functions is to avoid verb-initial constructions, but Finnish *sita* is primarily a pragmatic marker, see Hakulinen (1975). Her article contains several interesting examples showing how *sita* can appear both in some cases where Swedish uses *det* and where Swedish uses *man*. Only a few relevant examples are found in the dialogues of the novels used for this study. (See example 33 below).

The placeholder constraint is a primarily syntactic phenomenon. A closer look at the functions of the two frequent placeholders *det* and *man* is likely to deepen our understanding of the typological profile and of the functional underpinnings for a cluster of language-specific characteristics of Swedish.

1.3 A corpus-based contrastive study of impersonals in Swedish

General typology with a world-wide scope provides the basic framework for the characterization of the typological profile of Swedish. The major focus of this study, however, will be a contrastive comparison of Swedish and a selection of genetically and/or areally relatively closely related languages based on corpus-data, making it possible to provide a relatively fine-grained semantic analysis. In particular, data will be obtained from a parallel corpus that is being compiled by the author and is referred to as the Multilingual Parallel Corpus (MPC). At present, it consists of extracts from 22 novels in Swedish with translations of all texts into English, German, French, and Finnish. For some texts, translations also are included into Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Icelandic, Danish, and Norwegian, but these translations will not be analysed in this paper. There is a total of around 600,000 words in the Swedish originals. In addition to this material, there are also some original texts in French and Finnish with translations into Swedish. For this exploratory study, five original texts in Swedish and their translations have been analysed. The Swedish originals contain around 110,000 words. When examples from the corpus are presented, the Swedish original will be followed by the initials of the author in capitals. A list of the texts that have been used in this study is given at the end of the section References with a key to the initials. In a few cases, reference will also be made to data from the English Swedish Parallel Corpus (ESPC) prepared by Altenberg & Aijmer (2000), which contains original texts in English and Swedish together with their translations. The texts are divided into two broad genres, Fiction and Non-fiction, with several subcategories. The original texts in each language contain around 700,000 words.
The comparison will be concerned with genetically and/or areally relatively closely related languages. German, English, and French like Swedish, are placeholder languages. Only Finnish belongs to a different structural type. As will become clear, there are interesting differences with respect to usage patterns even between the languages that belong to the same type. Finnish in many cases will stand out as a language of a different type (see Helasvu & Vilkuna 2008 for a systematic presentation of Finnish impersonals). The other languages analysed in the special issue in which this study is printed are other examples of non-placeholder languages and also in other respects are typologically, areally, and genetically more distant from Swedish.

The presentation of Swedish impersonals will start with a number of constructions with impersonal placeholder subjects: clefting, presentation, extraposition of finite and non-finite clauses, and the *man*-construction. After that follows a brief overview of the functions of the Swedish passive constructions and an account of the Swedish impersonal passive with *det* as subject. As will be evident already in the analysis of the impersonal constructions, the semantic characteristics of the verb (or other predicate) play a central role. For that reason, the final section of the paper looks at the interaction between impersonal subjects and the meaning of the verb and the distribution of impersonal verbs (and other predicates) across semantic fields.

2. Cleft sentences

Cleft sentences in Swedish have already been the topic of a corpus-based contrastive study by Mats Johansson (2001, 2002) who compared three types of clefts in English and Swedish based on data from the English Swedish Parallel Corpus.

(1) **It-cleft** Det är mer pengar vi behöver. It is more money we need.

**WH-cleft** Vad vi behöver är mer pengar. What we need is more money.

**Reversed** Mer pengar är vad vi behöver. More money is what we need.

**WH-cleft**

In spite of the close structural parallels between the two languages, there are striking differences with respect to frequency, distribution, and discourse function. Whereas it-clefts are more frequent in Swedish than in English, the opposite holds for both types of WH-clefts. This was reflected in many ways in the translational correspondences. For example, Swedish it-clefts had a tendency to correspond to reversed WH-clefts or to ordinary non-clefted sentences in English, whereas English reversed WH-clefts tended to be translated by it-clefts or fronted elements in Swedish. Johansson suggests that one important function of it-clefts in Swedish – similar to fronting – is to create cohesive links, which is reflected in the fact that anaphoric elements often appear in the clefted position in Swedish it-clefts. This is yet another case where it-clefts in English show the opposite tendency, whereas a similar pattern is followed by reversed WH-clefts indicating that interesting parallels also exist with respect to discourse function.

Gundel (2008) compared the clefts in 78 pages of the Norwegian novel *Sofies
verden (Garder) and its English translation and found 32 clefts in the Norwegian original text but only 11 in the English translation. A further study of Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone (Rowlands) and its translations into Spanish and Norwegian showed that out of 19 clefts in the English original only 5 were translated as clefts into Spanish but as many as 14 into Norwegian. The comparison of frequency differences in use of clefts thus indicated that “clefts are more frequently used in English than in Spanish, and much more frequently used in Norwegian than in the other two languages.” (Gundel 2008, 86) This observation is probably correct, but it is based on a rather small amount of data.

With the exception of Finnish, all of the MPC-languages have a structural equivalent of the Swedish it-cleft, as can be observed in (2). (In all versions except the English one, the possessive pronoun is in the third person: ‘It was her (1b: my) mother who told her...’)

(2) a Det var hennes mor som hade berättat för henne om Antonio. HM
   b It was my mother who told me about Antonio.
   c Es war ihre Mutter, die ihr von Antonio erzählte hatte.
   d C’était sa mère qui lui avait parlé d’Antonio.
   e Hänen äitinsä oli kertonut hänelle Antoniosta. [Her mother had told her about A.]

The structure of the cleft in all the four languages that have it consists of a formal subject (IT), a Copula, a clefted element (XP), and a relative clause introduced by a relative marker (REL), which in Swedish has the invariable form som. As in English, this marker can be omitted when another element than the subject has been relativized. Schematically, the structure can be rendered as in (3):

(3) IT + Copula + XP + Rel-S

Semantically, XP is focused (in some sense) and the proposition in the relative clause is presupposed (e.g. ‘someone told me about Antonio’ in 2b). In spite of the existence of a close structural parallel to the Swedish it-cleft in English, German, and French, the cleft construction is not used as a translation in several cases. Actually, there are striking differences in the usage patterns between these three languages, as can be observed in Table 1. There are 181 occurrences of it-clefts in the five Swedish texts in the MPC-corpus which have been coded so far.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Swedish</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Finnish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It-cleft</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other cleft</td>
<td>Not studied</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be observed in Table 1, it-clefts and other clefts (pseudoclefts) are equally frequent as translations in English. Together, these structures account for no more than 30% of the translations. For German, the proportion is even lower (20% including Other cleft). The highest correspondence is found in French with 43%, which is still rather low.
One reason for these differences can be structural, since there are differences between the languages with respect to the types of constituents that can be clefted. In English and Swedish, a wide range of constituents can be clefted. In German, clefting is more restricted in this respect, as shown by Ahlemeyer & Kohlhof (1999) in a corpus-based study of the translation of English it-clefts into German. It turned out that English sentences with clefted subjects and objects rather frequently were translated with German it-clefts, whereas clefted adverbials very seldom were translated with a congruent structure. However, in many cases a syntactically non-congruent structure is used even when an it-cleft is structurally permitted in the target language. Actually, a completely neutral sentence structure is not infrequent, as in the English, German, and Finnish translations in (4).

On the other hand, non-clefted sentences in the translations rather often contain some element that fulfils a function similar to the Swedish it-cleft as in (5).

English, in (5b), uses a reversed WH-cleft in accordance with what has been said above, whereas German uses a focus marker (or focus particle), nur ‘only’, in front of the focused element, and, in this example, a similar device is used in French (ne…que ‘only’). In Finnish, the focused element is fronted (lit. ‘But about birds he could write’ – ‘about’ is expressed with elative case: -sta). Fronting of the element that corresponds to the element that is clefted in Swedish is rather frequent both in German and Finnish, as in (6c) and (6e). This may be interpreted as a focusing device, but the situation is not always clear since in many cases the elements, such as temporal and spatial adverbials, have a general tendency to be fronted. Subjects, which are the most frequent type of clefted constituent, appear initially in the unmarked case.

One type of clefted element worthy of special attention is question words, which can be clefted in Swedish. This appears to be a characteristic of spoken language. In fic-

Orientalia Suecana LIX (2010)
tion, such structures are found primarily in the dialogue as in (7). Question words do not appear in clefted sentences in any of the translations.

(7)  
a  Vem är det som kanske har försvunnit? HM (lit. Who is it that …)  
b  Who might have disappeared?  
c  Wer ist vielleicht verschwunden?  
d  De qui s’agit-il?  
e  - Kuka siis on mahdollisesti kadonnut?

As observed by Johansson (2001), clefts are used to create cohesive links in Swedish. The most prominent example of that in the present material is the clefting of därför (‘therefore’, ‘because of that’), which appears 15 times in the texts analysed so far. A typical example is (8).

(8)  
a  [Var hon tokig? Galen? Helknäpp? Våldsam? Kristina verkade snarare som om hon levde i en egen värld, i en stor såpbubbla.] Det var därför hon sträckt fram handen så tväskamt. PCJ  
b  [Was she crazy? Insane? Nuts? Violent? Kristina looked more as if she lived in a world of her own, in a great soap bubble.] That was why she held out her hand so hesitantly.  
c  Deshalb hatte sie so zögernd die Hand ausgestreckt.  
d  C’était pour ça qu’elle tendait si doucement la main.  
e  Sen vuoksi hän ojensi kätensäkin niin varovasti.

English in most cases uses a reversed pseudo-cleft (that is/was why-S) as in (8b), whereas a fronted causative connective is the dominant type of translation in German (deshalb in 8c) and Finnish (sen vuoksi in 7e, siksi another connective, in most of the other examples). Only in French are it-clefts the dominant type of translation, as in (8d).

In this short space, it has only been possible to exemplify the great variety of structures that appear as translations of Swedish it-clefts. It will be possible to go into this in greater detail when the complete corpus has been analysed. What is clear is that cleft sentences are used less in English and German than in Swedish despite the fact that structural equivalents exist and in many cases are possible as translations. There is a continuum with respect to the extent to which clefts are used in the languages in which the structure is well established. This is summed up in Table 2.

Table 2. Differences in usage patterns of cleft constructions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clefts established and used to various degrees</th>
<th>Clefts not established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ English</td>
<td>→ German . → Finnish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the time being, whether Swedish or French should be first, is left open. As mentioned above, an it-cleft is used as a French translation in 43% of the cases,
which appears to be rather low but to be certain it is necessary to obtain information about the translations of French it-clefts into Swedish. That it-clefts are used less in English than in Swedish has already been established in Johansson’s studies (2001, 2002), and the study referred to above by Ahlemeyer & Kohlhof (1999) has shown that clefts are used less in German than in English. It is also clear that non-clefted translations can convey the same content by means of other focusing devices such as focus markers or word order (or a combination). This is an interesting area of study but such structures have only been exemplified in this study since a systematic study of such phenomena falls outside the scope of a study of impersonals.

The cleft is a rather special type of impersonal construction. Functionally, it is related to information structure as a kind of focusing device. Formally it stands in a derivational relationship to a base sentence with canonical structure. (I use the expression derivational relationship loosely to simplify the description without committing myself to a grammatical model in which sentences are actually derived in this way.) The cleft in itself is impersonal, as for example *it was Peter* in the cleft sentence *It was Peter who hit me*, but the subject of the corresponding non-cleft base sentence may both be agentive and have specific reference, as is the case in *Peter hit me*. This means that the translation in many cases is not impersonal when some other construction than a cleft is used in the target language.

3. Presentative (or existential) sentences

Swedish presentative constructions have been studied extensively by Wallin (1936) and Sundman (1980). There are also typologically oriented studies such as Clark (1978) and Hetzron (1975). A corpus-based contrastive study has been presented by Ebeling (2000) who compared Norwegian and English using the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus. Ebeling makes a distinction between three types of presentative constructions as demonstrated in (9) (based on Ebeling 2000, 1).

(9) a There’s a long trip ahead of us. Full presentative construction
b A long trip is ahead of us. Bare presentative construction
c We have a long trip ahead of us. Have-presentative construction

This study will only deal with full presentatives, in which a placeholder, such as English *there* or Swedish *det*, appears. As Ebeling shows, there are functional differences between the constructions that are interesting but that must be left out of consideration in this study which only includes examples with an impersonal *det*.

A typical example of the Swedish presentative with its translations is shown in (10). Swedish uses the impersonal *det* as a placeholder in the subject slot. The most frequently used verb in Swedish presentatives is *finnas*, the passive form of *finna* ‘find’ formed by the addition of an –*s*. The presented NP follows the verb, after which follows an indication of the location (Place). In this example, the presented NP appears in the slot where the inverted subject typically appears, after the first verb. When there is a sequence of verbs, however, the presented NP appears after
the last verb, which is the typical object slot (*det måste finnas citroner i kylskåpet* ‘there must be lemons in the fridge’).

(10) a Det finns citroner i kylskåpet. KE det + V + NP + Place
    b There are lemons in the fridge. there + V + NP + Place
    c Im Kühlschrank sind noch Zitronen. Place + V + NP
    d Il y a des citrons dans le frigo. Pro + there + has + NP + Place
    e Jääkaapissa on sitruunoita. Place + V + NP

In the German and Finnish translations, the Place appears in initial position. This is the dominant translation in Finnish and a frequent alternative in German to the use of the construction *es gibt* (see below). The primary discourse function of the presentative is to introduce a new referent and this is achieved by moving the presented NP out of the initial subject slot to a later position in the clause. In languages without formal subjects, preposing of Place is a frequently used strategy. The French translation contains the construction *il y a* in which *il* ‘he’ appears as a formal subject followed by an obligatory spatial element *y* ‘there’ and a form of the verb *avoir* ‘have’, which appears in various inflected forms. For simplicity, the construction will be referred to as *il y a* with the verb in the third person present form. The presented NP typically (there are some exceptions) refers to an unknown referent and typically appears in indefinite form in Swedish, English, and German, whereas the partitive form plays an important role in French and Finnish when the noun is a mass noun or plural (French *de* + definite article, Finnish partitive case). Verb agreement is another morphological feature which sometimes follows specific rules, but morphology will not be accounted for systematically in this short expository study.

In Swedish, other verbs than *finnas* appear relatively frequently in presentative constructions. Among them are the postural verbs *sitta* ‘sit’, *stå* ‘stand’, and *ligga* ‘lie’ as in (11). The use of alternative verbs is clearly less frequent in the other MPC languages except German. (11) is representative of this tendency

(11) a Det ligger en databutik precis intill. HM [it lies a computer shop]
    b There’s a computer shop right next door.
    c Gleich nebenan liegt ein Computerladen.
    d Il y a un magasin d’informatique juste à côté.
    e Ihana vieressä on tietokoneliike.

In English and French, there is a strong tendency to use the more or less grammaticalized phrases *there is* and *il y a* as translations in most cases. Another possibility is to use other types of translations than presentatives, as in (12), where the verb is *komm* ‘come’ in the Swedish original. English in this case uses the basic word order S + V with an ordinary subject in indefinite form.

(12) a Det hade kommit personal från Östersund. Rättsmedicinare också. KE Det + V + NP + Place
    b More police had come from Östersund. The forensic squad, too. S + V
    c Aus Östersund war Personal eingetroffen. Auch Rechtsmediziner. Place + V + NP
The various syntactical forms used as translations are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Major syntactical structures used as translations of the Swedish full presentative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Swedish</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Finnish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentative with formal subject</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place + V + NP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>76*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S + V</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial V</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructuring</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>255</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other cases/Unclear</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 20 of these are: da+ V

As can be observed, initialization of the Place is the major strategy in Finnish and is relatively frequent in German as well, even if the use of a formal subject is the most frequent strategy, similar to Swedish, English, and French where this is the dominant strategy. Actually, the two strategies can be combined but that happens only in a minority of the cases. (Examples with formal subject and preposed Place have been included only as the first category in the count which is a simplification.) According to Clark’s (1978) typological study, preposing of Place is the dominant strategy across languages. Interestingly, Clark counts the use of English *there* and French *il* as a special case of this strategy with pronominalized place. The use of a spatial prefix in the subject slot of many Bantu languages could be added to this observation. The use of Swedish *det*, German *es*, and French *il* does not play any role in Clark’s typology. As shown in Hammarberg & Viberg (1977), the use of such subject placeholders is an areally very restricted language-specific phenomenon. When used in preverbal position, such placeholders fulfil the same function as the preposing of Place, namely to move the presented NP from an initial position to a position later in the clause in order to avoid introducing new referents in initial position.

In presentatives, there is a general tendency to favour one verb but this tendency is stronger in some of the languages. In (13), the most favoured verb appears in all the MPC languages. In this example, the Place is implicit but has been mentioned in the preceding discourse (a cabin). In Finnish, a spatial element (*siinä ‘there’*) appears in initial position for structural reasons (Place + V + NP).

(13) a Det **fanns** bara ett fönster. KE
    b *There was* only one window.
    c *Es gab* nur ein Fenster.
    d *Il n’y avait* qu’une fenêtre.
    e Siinä **oli** vain yksi ikkuna.
The degree to which one verb dominates in the translations is demonstrated in Table 4 (line one is repeated from Table 3).

Table 4. The use of the most frequent verb in its characteristic syntactic construction in the translations of the Swedish full presentative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentative with formal subject</th>
<th>Swedish</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Finnish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>290</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of core presentatives</td>
<td>there is</td>
<td>es gibt</td>
<td>il y a</td>
<td>Place + olla &quot;be&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A complete list of all the verbs that appear in the five Swedish originals from the MPC corpus is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. The frequency of the verbs used in Swedish full presentatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>290</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finnas 'be found'</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vara 'be'</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bli 'become'</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>komma 'come'</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stå 'stand'</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ligga 'lie'</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hända 'happen'</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sitta 'sit'</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gå 'go'</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intråffa 'happen'</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>växa 'grow'</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Clark’s (1978) typological study, the major presentative verb tended to be identical to the copula. (There are a few examples, with ‘have’ in European languages, ‘be found’ in Arabic, and ‘stand’ in Gbye). Ebeling (2000), who compared the verbs in English and Norwegian full presentatives, found only 8 English verbs including be but 229 different Norwegian verbs. The dominance of one verb was also greatest in English where be accounted for 98.4%, although the core verbs of Norwegian full presentatives, være, finnes, and bli, reached 64.6%. (The cognate Swedish verbs together reach 76% in Table 5.)

Presentative sentences state that something is present or exists in a specific location and usually contain a reference to a specified Place (at least implicitly, see the comments to example 13). In English and French, this is reflected in the presence of the grammatical spatial markers there and y. A special type of presentatives, referred to as pure existentials, state that something exists in general. In Finnish, pure exist-
tentials typically require – as in (14e) – a general indication of place (olla olemassa ‘be in the being’; ole-ma-ssa ‘be’-Third infinitive-Inessive)

(14) a Sedan fanns det något som hette fallna änglar; PCJ
b Then there was something called fallen angels;
c Dann gab es auch noch gefallene Engel;
d Et puis il y avait ceux qu’on appelait les anges déchus.
e Sitten oli olemassa langenneitä enkeleitä,

One particular problem that will only be touched on here, but that deserves more detailed treatment is the presentation of abstract NPs, which have been treated together with concrete NPs above. The presentation of nominalized events, as in (15), can be translated with restructurings where the nominalized verb appears in passive form.

(Literally, the Swedish presentative reads: ‘it had been (a) burglary in the house’.)

(15) a - Fick du ett intryck av att det hade varit inbrott i huset? HM
b “Did you get the impression the house had been broken into?”
c “Hatten Sie den Eindruck, daß im Haus eingebrochen worden ist?”
d - Avez-vous eu le sentiment que la maison à été cambriolée?
e - Saitko sen vaikutelman, että taloon olisi murtauduttu?

The status of the Finnish passive construction – or constructions – has been much discussed (see Helasvuo 2006). In this particular example, the passive lacks a subject, since talo ‘house’ is in the illative case. German also uses an impersonal passive in this example.

To sum up, similar to the cleft construction, the presentative is a kind of focusing device. In its most basic function, it stands in a derivational relationship to a corresponding locative sentence (The book is on the table ☞ There is a book on the table. But this does not hold when the presented NP is abstract.) From a functional point of view it is often characterized as a device to introduce a new referent. This is a rather vague characterization since new referents are frequently introduced without using a presentative. Hetzron’s (1975) characterization is more precise when he talks about “the existence of a presentative function in language which means calling special attention to one element of the sentence for recall in the subsequent discourse or situation.” (op. cit. p. 374). According to Hetzron, the most important way to signal this across languages is to move the presented element to a clause-final or later-than-usual position. The presentative clause lacks a canonical subject. Even if the presented element is regarded as a kind of subject (which is questionable) it lacks (or is very low in) agentivity, but it often has specific reference, so the presentative could be regarded as a kind of agentless impersonal even though the major function of the presentative is related to information structure rather than agentivity. A prototypical subject is the topic of its sentence and presents old information, whereas the presented element is rhematic and presents new information. The fact that there is a strong tendency in many languages to use a single verb in presentative constructions can be regarded as emergent grammaticalization.
4. Extraposition

4.1 Introduction

Subjects realized as finite or non-finite clauses are often extraposed in Swedish and are placed after verbs and other predicates. In such constructions, *det* obligatorily appears in the ordinary subject slot. Extraposed constructions of this type exist in all the MPC languages as exemplified with the extraposed non-finite infinitive complements in (16). Finnish does not use any dummy ‘it’ or any infinitive marker in the form of a particle.

(16) a  
    *det var viktigt att* någon gång få i sig varm mat. PCJ

  b  *it was important to* get some hot food into you occasionally.

c  *es war wichtig, auch mal was Warmes zu essen.*

d  *c’était important de* manger chaud de temps en temps.

e  *olihän tärkeää* saada välillä lämmintäkin ruokaa. [was important get]

Even if extraposed constructions of this type exist in all the MPC languages, it is rather often the case that the translations are radically restructured, as in several of the translations in example (17) which shows a finite extraposed clause in Swedish. Only English uses a parallel structure in the translation, in spite of the fact that all of the languages have parallel constructions in principle (except that there is no dummy subject in Finnish). What structure is chosen depends very much on the individual predicate, and these predicates often also appear in other types of impersonal constructions. For that reason, extraposed finite clauses will be treated in connection with the study of impersonal predicates in section 7, in which the presentation is organized according to semantic fields.

(17) a  Det slog honom att hon visste allting om honom. KE [it struck him that-S]

  b  It struck him that she knew everything about him.

c  Ihm ging durch den Kopf, daß sie alles über ihn wußte.  
    [him-Dative went through the head that-S].

d  L’idée le frappa qu’elle savait tout de lui. Presque tout, en tout cas.  
    [the idea struck him that-S]

e  Johan tajusi että Gudrun tiesi hänestä kaiken. [Johan realized that-S]

The extraposition of non-finite clauses in the form of infinitives with an explicit infinitive marker *att* is primarily used in a restricted number of semantic fields. For that reason, it is meaningful to treat them together, as will be done in the rest of section 4.

4.2 Svårt ‘difficult’

In constructions with extraposed infinitive complements, the predicate very often is an adjective which appears in the neuter form ending in –*t*. One of the most frequent such adjectives is *svår* ‘difficult’ with the neuter form *svärt*. When used as a predicational adjective, *svär* expresses a judgment by the speaker concerning the degree of difficulty of carrying out a certain act. Several structural possibilities to express this judgment are shown in (18a) – (18d). The judgment can optionally be made with respect to a specific potential actor which is expressed in a PP with the preposi-
tion för, which primarily marks an Experiencer (or Interested party). In (18d), the Experiencer appears in the ordinary subject position.

(18) a Att öppna dörren var svårt (för Ann). To open the door was difficult (for Ann)
    b Det var svårt (för Ann) att öppna dörren. It was difficult (for Ann) to open the door.
    c Dörren var svår (för Ann) att öppna. The door was difficult (for Ann) to open.
    d Ann hade svårt att öppna dörren. Ann found it (lit. ‘had’) difficult to open the door.

In (18a), the infinitive phrase appears in the ordinary subject slot. (18b) is the extraposed construction with an impersonal det in the subject slot, and (18c) shows the structure called object-to-subject-raising in transformationally inspired terminology. In this construction, the adjective agrees with the subject. (dörr ‘door’ is common gender, and the adjective appears in its basic form svår without –t). All of these are in principle impersonal constructions in which the (potential) agent may remain vague or general unless it is specified in a for-Phrase. (18d) is a personal construction referring to a specific potential agent. There are several examples of each one of these structures in the five MPC texts except (18a) where the to-infinitive is in the ordinary subject slot. This option has a low frequency and appears primarily in non-fiction.

As can be observed in (19a–e) the extraposed structure has close equivalents in English and German, and also in Finnish, except that this language does not use a dummy ‘it’. In this regard French, as in most examples in the MPC corpus studied so far, prefers a personal construction, as in the Swedish example (18d). (The expression ‘have difficulty’ in the literal back translations to English correspond to avoir ‘have’ + du (the partitive article de + le) + mal ‘bad’.)

(19) a Det var svårt att veta hur djup brunn var. KE
    b It was difficult to know how deep the well was.
    c Es war schwer abzuschätzen, wie tief der Brunnen war. [it was difficult to]
    d Il avait du mal à juger de la profondeur du puits. [he had difficulty to judge]
    e Oli vaikea sanoa kuinka syvä kaivo oli. [was difficult say-1stInfinitive]

Even if only the extraposed structure with a dummy ‘it’ belongs to the impersonal constructions studied in this paper, it is essential to look at all alternatives since different alternatives may be favoured as translations, as in the French example (19d). French also prefers a personal construction when translating the Swedish object-to-subject-raised structure in (20). Swedish, English, and German use completely parallel structures in this example, and the same applies to Finnish, except that Finnish does not have any particle as infinitive marker.

(20) a Den vita fågeln är svår att se på avstånd, MA
    b The white bird is difficult to see from a distance,
    c Der weiße Vogel ist auf die Entfernung hin schwer auszumachen,
    d A cette distance, on a du mal à discerner l’oiseau blanc [one has difficulty to]
    e Valkeaa lintua on vaikea erottaa matkan päästä,
The personal construction is used also in Swedish and has a direct counterpart also in German in addition to French as can be observed in (21a-e).

(21) a  Hon **hade svårt att** uttala namnet KE  
    b  She **found it difficult to** pronounce the name  
    c  Sie **hatte Mühe**, den Namen auszusprechen,  
    d  Elle **eut du mal à** prononcer le nom  
    e  Hänen oli **väikeä** laussa nimeä  
      [He/she-GEN was difficult pronounce name-Partitive]

English has a personal construction but can not use *have + difficult*. Instead, *find it difficult* is used, as in (21b). Other alternatives, that all appear with some frequency in the English originals in the English-Swedish Parallel corpus are: *have difficulty/trouble/a hard time V-ing* (Example: I sometimes **have trouble believing** in it, MA Ibland har **svårt att** tro på det.)

4.3 General survey of predicates with extraposed infinitive clauses

The majority of the predicates that appear in the *det _att-VP* construction fall into a restricted number of semantic classes. These classes are rather similar to the ones found in English, which are well described in Biber et al. (1999, 720–721). According to that source, there are three major semantic classes of adjectival predicates that take extraposed to-clauses in English: (1) Necessity and importance, (2) Ease and difficulty, and (3) Evaluation. In particular, three adjectival predicates are relatively common in this construction and appear more than ten times per million words in the corpus on which the description is based. These are *(im)possible, difficult, and hard*. The classification of Swedish predicates in Table 6 includes both adjectives and verbs that take extraposed infinitive clauses. The classification of adjectival predicates differs from that of Biber et al. in some respects. Necessity is combined with Possibility to form the class Modal. Evaluation similar to that done by Biber et al. includes both more or less pure evaluative word such as *bra* ‘good’ and words with a more specific meaning of which evaluation is a prominent part. If the number of texts is extended it may be meaningful to introduce further semantic classes to cover distinctions among the latter type of adjectives. For the time being, even *viktigt* ‘important’ is included in Evaluation. The lists of adjectives and verbs are not complete even for the five texts studied so far.

Table 6. Predicates with extraposed infinitive clauses in Swedish in the five MPC texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Adjectives (selection)</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ease and Difficulty</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>svårt ‘difficult’, lätt ‘easy’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>bra ‘good’, trevligt ‘nice’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modal: Possibility &amp; Necessity</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>(o)möjligt ‘(im)possible nödvändigt ‘necessary’</td>
<td>gå ‘go’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal duration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>ta ‘take’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>116</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples with other predicates taking to-infinitive complements will be treated briefly here without going into translation patterns. Use of a modal adjective is shown in (22).

(22) a Var det överhuvudtaget nödvändigt att gifta sig? HM
   b Was it even necessary to be married?

Possibility can be expressed by the use of gå ‘go’ with a to-infinitive complement as in (23). This construction has a language-specific meaning and a complex set of translations which are described in some detail in Viberg (1999, forthc.).

(23) a Det gick att bända upp spikarna som höll det gängjärnslösa kammarfönstret på plats. KE [it went to ease out the nails]
   b It was possible to ease out the nails that held the hingeless bedroom window in place.

Another impersonal construction which has a relatively direct correspondent in English is the use of ta ‘take’ to express temporal duration as in (24). This construction is described in Viberg (2010).

(24) a Det tog över en timme för Vidart att mjölka. KE [it took ..an hour for Vidart to V]
   b It took Vidart an hour to do the milking.

To sum up, similar to clefting and presentation, extraposition can be related to information structure, since there is a derivational relationship between sentences such as *To open the door was difficult* ⇔ *It was difficult to open the door*. Extraposition can be regarded as a device that moves new and syntactically complex information out of the initial position and towards the end of the clause. On the other hand, the types of predicates that appear in clauses with extraposition usually do not contain a prototypical agent in their argument structure but rather an experiencer or other non-prototypical human proto-role if any. This means that similar to sentences containing impersonal verbs (and other predicates) of the types that will be discussed in section 7, agentivity is low in sentences with extraposition.

5. Non-specific agent impersonals in Swedish. The *man*-construction

5.1 Vague agents and agents with general reference in Swedish

As mentioned in the introduction, Swedish has a specific pronoun *man* (an uninflected form of the noun *man* ‘man, male human being’) which prototypically is used to refer to ‘people in general’ and is similar to German *man*, English *one* and French *on*. There is a continuum from generalized reference, which potentially includes any human being, to vague reference to certain groups of people who are not exactly identified. Such reference can be made with a variety of forms with partly overlapping functions, both within and between languages. Several of these possibilities are exemplified in (25).

(25) a Träkigt bara att de skulle sjunga och spela så mycket på en del teatrar, så att man inte hörde vad som sas. PCJ

Orientalia Suecana LIX (2010)
Starting with the English example (25b), the third person plural pronoun *they* is used with a vague reference to actors appearing in some theatres. Corresponding elements are used in Swedish (*de*) and French (*ils*), whereas German and Finnish use agentless passives. *You* in (1b) refers to anyone in the audience in theatres of the type being discussed. The ‘generalized pronoun’ is used in Swedish (*man*), German (*man*), and French (*on*). The reason *one* is not used in English is that *one* is rather formal (see below). In Finnish, the same function is fulfilled with the “Zero person”. The verb is used in the third person singular without any subject pronoun, which is obligatory in order to refer to a specific referent when the verb is in the third person singular. (First and second person pronouns are in principle optional.) Unlike the vague ‘they’, the *man*-construction involves the addressee and the speaker in the situation referred to. Potentially, or in the imagination, they are part of the audience but not of the acting troupe. A similar contrast is present in Finnish. According to Helasvuo & Vilkuna (2008, 228), the zero person typically refers to one of the speech act participants, whereas the passive can either include or exclude the speech act participants. In the last clause of (25b), *what was said*, the actors are understood as vague agents. In this case, an agentless passive is used in Swedish (*sas*), English, and Finnish (*sanottiin*), whereas third person plural pronouns are used in German (*sie*) and French (*ils*). Separate sections will be devoted below to *man* and to the passive. The use of third person plural pronouns with a vague reference will be treated only briefly in this paper.

5.2 Siewierska’s typology of non-specific agent impersonals

Siewierska (2008b) presents a typological survey of non-specific agent impersonals. Table 7 presents her taxonomy in graphic form.

Pronominal impersonals cover the third person plurals (3PL) appearing as free forms in the preceding section as well as bound agreement markers. A distinction is made between pronominal impersonals and verbal impersonals, such as agentless passives (see section 6), reflexive impersonals such as the Portuguese *se*-construction, and participle impersonals appearing in Polish. Siewierska focuses on the referential range of these impersonal constructions and her major contention is that 3PL pronominal impersonals are more referentially restricted than verbal impersonals.

5.3 The *man*-construction

From a typological perspective, person markers used to refer to people in general are briefly surveyed in Siewierska (2004, 210–213) and are referred to as impersonal
forms. When such forms are distinct from ordinary person forms, they are personal only in the sense that they refer to persons (i.e. humans). Siewierska focuses on the impersonal use of ordinary person forms and states that the third person plural is the form that crosslinguistically is most common in this use.

Giacalone Ramat & Sansò (2007) treat the *man*-construction from the point of view of an areal typology of European languages. The *man*-construction is defined as “an impersonal active construction in which the subject position is filled by (an element deriving etymologically from) a noun meaning ‘man’.” Three different meanings are distinguished which form a grammaticalization path (see Table 8) and range from “a species-generic interpretation (*man* meaning ‘mankind’ or ‘human race’) to a non-referential indefinite interpretation (*man* as an equivalent of ‘one’, ‘anyone’), and finally to a referential indefinite interpretation (*man* as an equivalent of ‘someone’).” In some languages, ‘man’ has developed further and can refer to first person singular (as in Swedish, see below) or first person plural (as French *on*).

Table 7. Non-specific agent impersonals according to Siewierska (2008b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-specific agent impersonals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronominal impersonals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal impersonals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agentless passives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive impersonals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person plural (3PL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bound forms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. The grammaticalization path of the *man*-construction (based on Giacalone-Ramat & Sansò 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a1) <em>man</em> as species-generic</th>
<th>(a2) <em>man</em> as human non-referential indefinite</th>
<th>(b) <em>man</em> as human referential indefinite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) 1st person singular/plural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From an areal point of view, the *man*-construction is regarded as a recessive areal
feature, since its distribution included more languages earlier, in particular some more Germanic and Romance languages than today. In English, the use of man as an indefinite pronoun disappeared in the 15th century. More recently, the construction has expanded into West and South Slavonic languages, whereas no clear case has been found in East Slavonic.

There are also corpus-based contrastive studies. The ‘generic’ person in English, German, and Norwegian is devoted a chapter in Johansson (2007) based on data from the Oslo multilingual corpus, and the ‘generic’ person in Swedish and English has been studied by Altenberg (2004/2005) based on data from the English-Swedish Parallel corpus. What these studies show is that there is a complex relationship, in particular between English and the other Germanic languages involved. Translations of man into English result not only in change of pronoun (one/you/they) but also in syntactic shifts and clause reduction. These studies will be further commented on in relation to the discussion of translations into English and German in the MPC-corpus.

5.4 Swedish man. Data from the MPC corpus

Similar to its cognates, Swedish man is used only as a subject. As an object, en ‘one’ is used as in (26) from Viberg et al. (1984 §5.3), and in certain regional variants of Swedish en is used instead of man also in subject position.

(26) a Ingen gillar en, om man skryter.
   b No one likes you, if you boast.

A typical example from the MPC corpus where man refers to people in general is (27). In this example, the most frequent correspondent is used as a translation in all the other languages (see below).

(27) a - Kan man köra dit? KE
   b ‘Can you take a car up there?’
   c “Kann man da hinfahren?”
   d -On peut y aller en voiture?
   e - Pääseekö sinne ajamaan? [Zero person]

Since in the prototypical case man refers to people in general, it often, as in (27), appears in modal contexts and refers to potential and other irrealis situations, and not to specific factual situations. This is reflected in its typical linguistic contexts of use. As can be observed in Table 9, man occurs together with a modal in 40% of the examples, and also frequently appears in a conditional or temporal clause.

| Table 9. Typical contexts of use of Swedish man in the MPC corpus |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                | Modal: Potential | Modal: Deontic | Modal: Other: Conditional clause | Temporal clause | Other Alternatives |
| N              | 61             | 34             | 9              | 26             | 20             | 108            | 258            |
| %              | 24%            | 13%            | 3%             | 10%            | 8%             | 42%            |

In (27), the most frequent equivalent in the other languages is used. The extent to
which the major correspondent is used varies greatly across the MPC languages as demonstrated in Table 10.

Table 10. Correspondents of the Swedish pronoun man in the MPC corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Swedish</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Finnish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correspondence is lowest in English. To begin with, the pronoun one, which appears to be the most direct equivalent, is used with very low frequency. The reason for this is that one is rather formal (see below). In the German translations, man is clearly dominant and covers 86% of the translations. French on covers 57% and the Finnish “Zero person” 51%.

It should be kept in mind that the comparison is based exclusively on translations from Swedish into the other languages, which influences the result. This also applies to other cases treated in this paper, but it will be discussed here, since there is a study which is relevant in this particular context. Altenberg (2004/2005), who based his study of Swedish man on the English-Swedish parallel corpus, compared originals and translations. One in the English originals was in general translated with man, which appears unproblematic. However, one was more frequent in English translated texts than in English originals, whereas the opposite pattern applied to man, which was less frequent in translated texts. This means that translated texts are influenced by the source language. In the material from MPC presented here, one can hardly be overrepresented since it appears only four times, but it is possible that you has a higher frequency in the translated English texts than it would have in similar original texts. In spite of this caveat, there is no reason to doubt that the differences shown in Table 10 represent the general trend. It would also be possible to complement the present study with data from originals in the other MPC languages to make the comparison more exact.

Translation often involves syntactic restructuring. This is also clearly demonstrated in the study by Altenberg (2004/2005) who compared fiction and non-fiction texts. In fiction, 68% of the translations of Swedish man were congruent in the sense that they contained a pronoun (you, one, they, we), whereas only 38% of the translations were congruent in non-fiction texts. Non-fiction contained a larger proportion of syntactic shifts and reduced clauses (53% vs. 26% for fiction). Even if the present study is only based on fiction texts, there are many examples of syntactic restructuring. Passivization is one possibility, as in (28). In this example, Swedish has a topicalized initial object. In English and French, the same element is topicalized as the subject of an agentless passive. In this example Finnish translates man with a personal pronoun hän ‘he/she’ derived from context in a way that involves a subtle shift of meaning.
Another type of restructuring involves reduction of a finite clause to a non-finite clause or a nominalization. In (29), infinitives are used in the English and German translations.

(29) a) Det var nästan så tjockt att man kunde blåsa ärtor med det. PCJ
   [that one could blow peas with it]
   b) It [the straw] was almost big enough to blow peas through.
   c) Er war fast dick genug, um Erbsen hindurchzublasen.
   d) Elle était si large qu’on aurait presque pu s’en servir comme sarbacane.
   e) Se oli niin paksu, että sillä saattoi miltei ampua hernoitää. [Zero person]

In (30), there is one more example of passivization in the English translation. In the French translation, an impersonal modal with a dummy subject is used, which is a relatively frequent French translation (primarily il faut ‘it is required’ but also other alternatives such as c’est possible ‘it is possible’).

(30) a) Just så skulle man skriva brev, PCJ
   b) That was just how letters should be written
   c) Genau so mußte man Briefe schreiben,
   d) Voilà comment il fallait écrire une lettre
   e) Juuri niin [Zero] pitäisi kirjoittaa,

A further possibility is to use an imperative, as in the English translation in (31b).

(31) a) Svaret var givet, man fick inte dra sig för att fråga. PCJ
   b) The answer was obvious; don’t hesitate to ask.

Swedish man can also be used in colloquial style to refer to first person singular, as in the example (32) taken from a dialogue in one of the novels.

(32) a) Har ni besök? Nån man känner? PCJ [Anyone one knows]
   b) Got company coming, have ya? Anyone I know?
   c) Habt ihr Besuch? Jemand, den man kennt?
   d) Vous avez de la visite? Je les connais peut-être?
   e) Tuleeko vieraita? Tunnemko minä ne? [-n 1SG, minä ‘I’]

According to Altenberg (2004/2005), the use of English one with reference to the speaker “is likely to sound pretentious and affected” and “is a (frequently satirized) feature of Royal and upper-class speech” (op. cit. pp. 94–95). This is not the effect the use of man with first person reference has in Swedish. It rather is used to signal solidarity (among people who use it with first person reference). It can also be used to decrease intrusiveness as when it is used to tone down a request as in (33).
5.5 Vague de ‘they’ in comparison to man

Vague de ‘they’ has not been systematically studied in the Swedish texts but it is obvious that a similar range of constructions are available as translations in this case as in the case of man. In (35), the English translation contains a zero-marked shift in transitivity (the English verb change can be used both as a transitive and an intransitive verb whereas ändra only can be used transitively and must be used with the passive form ändras in order to shift subject.) In the German and Finnish translations the verb is passivized. Only the French translation contains a vague third person pronoun as subject (ils).

(33) a “Kan man få ett glas likör till?” MA [Can one get…]
 b “Could I have another amaretto?” she asks.
 c “Kann ich noch ein Glas Likör haben?”
 d Je peux avoir un autre verre de liqueur?
 e “Saisiko sitä toisen lasin likööriä?”

In (33), English, German, and French translate using a personal construction as translation, whereas the Finnish translation gives an example of the colloquial use of sitä ‘it’ as an impersonal subject. According too Hakulinen (1975, 152) sitä can be used to express indirect statements about the speaker in sentences which basically have a generic meaning. Functionally, this is a close parallel to the uses of Swedish man. (The verb is in the zero-marked third person singular: sa(a)-isi-ko ‘get’+Conditional+Question.)

The difference between general and first person reference can often be subtle. Swedish man can be used with a general reference, when the speaker primarily refers to him/herself, as in example (34) where the speaker wants to communicate that anyone in his situation (including the listener) would experience the same thing. (A more literal translation of the first clause is: When you deliver oil as I do). The use of you with a general reference in the English translation places the listener and people in general in the speaker’s situation and in this way includes the listener in the reference despite the listener actually being excluded. (The listener does not deliver oil.)

(34) a - När man kör ut olja som jag lägger man märke till folks vanor, fortsatte Sven Tyrén. HM
 b “When you deliver oil,” Tyrén went on, “you tend to notice people’s routines”.

(35) a De hade inte ändrat tidtabellen på alla dessa år. KE [They had not changed the timetable in all these years]
 b Over all those years, the timetable had never changed.
 c Der Fahrplan war in all den Jahren nicht geändert worden.
 d Ils n’avaient pas changé les horaires en dix-huit ans.
 e Aikataulua ei näinä vuosina ollut muutettu.

The use of vague de ‘they’ excludes the speaker and listener from the reference. It should be noted that man can also be used when the speaker and listener are not included, as in (36).
In (36), the speaker and listener are not involved in the action, even in the imagination. On the other hand, this appears to be the case in (37). The use of man implies that the speaker imagines being part of the portrayed situation and invites the listener to experience the situation in the same way, whereas the use of de ‘they’ instead of man in this example would indicate a completely neutral report.

To sum up, the man-construction is the main way to express referential impersonality in Swedish. Basically it expresses a reference to people in general but can also be used with vague reference. In certain stylistically marked contexts, it can be used to refer to first person singular. The 3PL pronoun de (colloquial dom) can be used with vague reference but is not used when the speaker or hearer is included in the set of referents.

6. The impersonal passive in Swedish

Man can in principle appear as a subject of all types of verbs. The passive is an operation centred on the verb and is more sensitive to the meaning of the verb. The function of the passive can be regarded as successive steps of agent defocusing ending up in a construction without any overt agent and the introduction of a vague or generic agent at the semantic level similar to the man-construction. As could be observed in the previous section, various types of passives are frequently used as translations of Swedish man. This section will give a brief overview of passive constructions in Swedish with a special focus on impersonal passives with det as subject.

6.1 From passive to man-construction

Passives are not in general to be regarded as impersonal constructions but there is a continuum from passives with an explicit and fully referential agent to ones with an impersonal agent, as described by Sansò (2006) in the cline of agent defocusing shown in Table 11.

Swedish has two passives, one of which is a morphological passive formed with the suffix -s (historically a reduced form of the reflexive pronoun sig), which must be regarded as the most basic alternative in Swedish (see 38a). The other option is a
periphrastic passive formed with the verb *bli* ‘become’ in combination with the past participle of the main verb (see 38b).

(38) a Presidenten mörda. president-the murder-PAST-PASSIVE

b Presidenten blev mördat. became murder-PAST PARTICIPLE

The president was murdered.

Even when there is an explicit agent in a passive, which is often not the case, the event is presented from the point of view of the patient, as in the Swedish example (39), where the patient is topical.

(39) a Men anmälan finns här. Och den gjordes av Holger Eriksson. HM

b But the report is here. And it *was made by* Holger Eriksson.

The functions of the Swedish passives have been studied by Engdahl (2001), who compares Swedish with the other mainland Scandinavian languages. Interestingly, Danish and Norwegian have the same two forms of the passive, but despite the fact that similar forms are used in the three mainland Scandinavian languages, there are systematic differences in the choice of the passive, especially between Swedish on the one hand, and Danish and Norwegian on the other, the latter being more similar to one another. Engdahl (2001) presents a corpus-based study which shows that the
choice is influenced by a complex set of factors having to do with the context of situation, morphological and syntactic factors, semantic properties of the verb, as well as the idiosyncratic lexical characteristics of individual verbs. For example, in Danish and Norwegian, the s-passive is productive primarily in the present tense and the infinitive, whereas the bli-passive can be used in all tenses. In Swedish, there are no restrictions on either type of passive with respect to tense but there are lexical restrictions on the bli-passive, which is not used at all with certain verbs. In Danish and Norwegian, the s-passive is used primarily to express a general norm or similar generic meanings (Sansò: agentless generic event), which explains why it cannot be used in the Danish example (40a) which describes a specific event. A specific event requires a periphrastic passive as in (40b).

(40) a *Vi så vinduet åbnes.  
We saw the window open-PASSIVE
b Vi så vinduet blive åbnet.

In Swedish, the context determines the interpretation to a great extent. When used on a sign, the s-passive is interpreted as a rule, as in Dörren öppnas utåt ‘The door should be opened outwards’ (Sansò: agentless generic event), whereas it can also be interpreted as a specific event if the context is appropriate, as in Vi såg fönstret öppnas ‘We saw the window being opened’.

6.2 Non-specific agent impersonal passives with det in Swedish

Only impersonal passives with det ‘it’ will be looked at in any detail in this study. Such passives can be formed from both intransitive verbs (see below) and transitive verbs as in (41).

(41) a Rop och röster fortplantade sig genom luften; någonstans spelades badminton, någon annanstans sköts det krocketbollar mot sköra metallportar. MF
b Calls and voices spread through the air; somewhere badminton was being played, croquet balls were being hit against fragile metal hoops somewhere else.
c Stimmen und Rufe pflanzten sich durch die klare Luft fort, irgendwo wurde Badminton gespielt, woanders wurden Krocketkugeln gegen wacklige Metalltore geschossen.
d Les cris et les voix résonnaient dans l’air tiède ; une partie de badminton était en cours quelque part, ailleurs des boules de croquet heurtaient de fragiles arceaux en métal.
e Ilman halki kantautui huutoja ja ääniä; jossakin pelattiin sulkapalloa, jossakin muualla paukuteltiin krokettipalloja rautalankaportteja kohti.

From a functional perspective, (41) is a clear example of what Sansò refers to as a bare happening, which is characterized in the following way: ‘The label bare happening is taken to mean a conceptualisation of the event depicted by the verb as a naked fact, at the lowest level of elaboration. The arguments of a prototypical transitive clause represent distinct, clearly individuated participants that are sharply differentiated from one another and from other entities that could virtually participate in the event. When the event is conceptualised as a bare happening, none of the par-
The impersonal passive can also be used to refer to a vague agent as in (42). Even if the implied agent has a very general reference, this is not a generic agentless event in Sansò’s sense, since the event is realis and bound to a certain time and place. (Even if the boundaries are vague, the sentence does not apply to any time and place.) In examples of this type, the impersonal passive has more or less the same function as the *man* construction or the 3PL personal pronoun *de*, which could also have been used in the example.

(42) a Det *pratades* om Torsten och Vidart KE
   b There *would be much talk* about Torsten and Vidart
   c *Es wurde* über Torsten und Vidart *getratscht*. [it was spoken]
   d *On jasait* sur Torsten et Vidart [one talked]
   e Ihmiset *puhuivat* Torstenista ja Vidartista [people talked]

In principle, the impersonal passive is fully productive, but in terms of frequency a restricted number of more or less lexicalized impersonal passives dominate. Verbal communication verbs form a prominent group among these. In addition to (42), this is illustrated in (43), which contains the lexicalized impersonal passive *det ryktas* ‘it is rumoured’ (*rykta* does not exist as an active verb).

(43) a Det *ryktades* att hon i sin ungdom varit dansare CL
   b *It was rumoured* that in her youth she’d been a dancer,
   c *On disait* que dans sa jeunesse elle avait été danseuse [one said]
   d *Es ging das Gerücht*, daß sie in ihrer Jugend Tänzerin gewesen war
   e Huhujen *mukaan* hän oli tanssinut nuorena

The nuclear communication verb *säga* can also be used as an impersonal passive (*det sägs* ‘it is said’) and in this use it functions as a reportative evidential marker (see Viberg, in progress). The coinage of a new impersonal verb is exemplified in (44), which is formed from an expression like (*säga*) *god jul* *(say) Merry Christmas* *(‘it is Christmas’).* Various types of paraphrases are used as translations.

(44) a Ska *det börja godjulas* redan? LM
   b *Is this “Merry Christmassing” business starting already?*
   c *Geht es jetzt schon los mit den Weihnachtsgrusen?*
   d *Faut-il vraiment déjà commencer à se souhaiter un joyeux Noël ?*
   e *Joko hyvänjouluntoivotukset alkavat?*

Certain lexicalized impersonal passives represent an early stage of grammaticalization. The verb *kräva* ‘demand’ can be used in an impersonal passive form with a modal meaning (obligation) as in (45). In this case, there is no implied human agent. The same applies to the most frequent lexicalized passive *det finns* lit. it=found, ‘there is’ (see section 2 on presentatives above).

(45) a - *Ja, det *krävs* ett hot. LM
   b *‘Well, there has to be a threat."
   c ‘Ja, eine Bedrohung ist Voraussetzung.
   d - *Eh bien, il faut qu’il ait une menace.
   e - Siihen vaaditaan uhkaut.
As already mentioned, intransitive verbs can also be used in impersonal passives with \textit{det}. To be precise, only active intransitive verbs (with an agent in the argument structure, also called unergatives) can be passivized in this way, since a non-specific agent must be implied. Often, such impersonal passives are used for expressive purposes and introduce a strongly evaluative element as in (46), especially when a number of passive verbs are coordinated, as in this example, which is taken from a review of a theatrical performance. What takes place on the stage is presented as a bare happening with vague agents, despite the fact that the reader would have expected the artistic performance to be described as an action carried out by highly individuated artists. The reviewer in this way signals an ironic (not to say scornful) attitude.

\begin{quote}
A strong stylistic effect is achieved by the use of a series of coordinated impersonal passives in (47). In this example the impersonal passives describe an irrealis event (N.B. \textit{det ska fettsugas} lit.’it shall be lipo-sucked’ with reference to performing liposuction) and the function approaches that of an agentless generic event, even if the situation is more restricted than in a true generic event. (In time, it is restricted to a time span close to now.) Intuitively, it seems as if the impersonal passive in general is not used to refer to generic events, however, the number of examples is too restricted to test this claim on corpus data.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
(46) Det märkliga händer att jag mitt under föreställningen sitter och längtar efter rörelse. Det \textit{stegas} och \textit{springs} och \textit{swingas} och \textit{sträcks} i ett på scenen, så visst rör det sig, men det jag efterlyser är känslan av ett genuint språk. “Strangely enough in the middle of the performance I find myself longing for movement. There is an endless striding and running and swinging and stretching [lit. it is stridden and run etc.] on stage, so, sure, it moves, but what I am looking for is the feeling of a genuine language.” [My translation]
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
(47) \textbf{Lystring män – gå inte i skönhetsfällan!}
\textbf{Viktigt meddelande till alla män:}
Nu är det er tur att grooma, peela, dutta och feja. \textit{Det ska fettsugas, lyftas, botoxas och fyllas}. Lite syntetisk hyaluronsyra får vaderna att se mer imponerande ut på fotbollsplanen.
Attention men – Don’t fall into the beauty trap!
Important message for all men:
You are the growing beauty industry’s most desirable scalp. The wet dream of plastic surgeons. They want nothing more than to get their hands on your receding hairlines, smile lines, and budding beer bellies.
Now it’s your turn to groom, peel, dab, and scrub. You’ll be [lit. It shall be] lipo-sucked, lifted, botoxed, and filled. A little synthetic hyaluronic acid will make your calves look more impressive on the football pitch.
\end{quote}
Functionally, the impersonal passive in Swedish is concerned with referential impersonality. There is an implied agent, except in certain uses that represent an early stage of grammaticalization (such as det finns, det krävs, see above). When the impersonal passive is used to refer to bare happenings, agentivity is also low. What is normally conceived of as human action is portrayed more like a process. The passive is generally not restricted to referential impersonality but to defocusing of the agent. In many uses of the passive, the implicit agent has specific reference, and an explicit agent with specific reference can appear as an oblique constituent (corresponding to the by-phrase in English).

7. Impersonal verbs and the structure of verbal semantic fields
In Swedish, the term ‘impersonal verb’ refers to verbs which have an impersonal, non-referential det in the subject slot serving primarily as a placeholder. It has already been noted in several places above that various semantic classes of verbs characteristically appear in constructions such as presentatives and impersonal passives. However, there are many impersonal verbs that do not fit into the description of the constructions discussed so far. In this section, impersonal verbs will be regarded from a lexical perspective. In syntactically oriented studies of impersonals, semantic classes of verbs are often somewhat loosely defined. In order to give a deeper semantic characterization, it is fruitful to study the impersonal verbs from a broader perspective. Often a verb can appear both in personal and impersonal constructions, and it is necessary to look at all uses of a verb in order to describe its meaning. It is also necessary to see how the meaning of an individual verb fits into the general semantic structure of a language, which can be described in terms of semantic fields. (It would be more adequate to talk about semantic fields of predicates than of verbs, since other types of predicates, such as copula + Adjectives belonging to various semantic fields, should also be included.)

This section will provide a brief sketch of a semantic field approach to impersonal verbs (and other impersonal predicates). From this perspective, all impersonal verbs should be classified into semantic fields and described with respect to the role they play within the fields to which they belong. This inevitably leads to a certain overlap with the preceding sections, but this is due to the fact that many constructions are partly productive and partly strongly lexicalized (or grammaticalized). As was shown in the section on impersonal passives, there is a cluster of verbal communication verbs that are so frequently used in this construction that it is justified to state this as a lexical fact. On the other hand, the impersonal passive is productive and can be extended to newly coined verbs (see examples 44 and 47). Since only a limited part of the corpus has been analysed so far, there is no point in trying to provide a complete list of impersonal verbs of this type. Only some representative examples will be discussed.

7.1 Verbs which do not require any argument
There are verbs, like weather verbs, that do not have any obligatory semantic argument. In Swedish, such verbs require det as a subject placeholder, whereas other lan-
languages such as Finnish make do with a single verb (*sataa* ‘(it) rains’). In principle, verbs and other predicates with this characteristic refer to environmental phenomena of a general type such as weather, time of day (*It was early/late*), light conditions (*It was dark*), temperature (*It is warm/cold*). This is not a complete list, but since space is limited we will look in somewhat greater detail at a small selection of relatively complex examples.

7.2 Non-prototypical agents and non-canonical subject marking

Impersonal verbs with *det* in the subject slot may be regarded as a special type of non-canonical subjects and it is interesting to make a comparison with Onishi’s (2001) survey of research on non-canonically marked subjects and objects, which pays particular attention to case marking but also discusses verbal agreement. The description is based on the assumption (Dixon 1994) that there are two universal clause types: an intransitive clause with an intransitive predicate and a single core argument referred to as S, and a transitive clause with two core arguments referred to as A and O. With respect to the cases of these arguments, there are two types of canonical marking of A, S, and O. In ergative-absolutive languages, A has ergative marking, whereas S and O are treated alike and receive absolutive marking (often zero). In nominative-accusative languages, A and S are treated alike and receive nominative marking, whereas O receives accusative marking. Non-canonically marked A/S are typically marked by cases such as Accusative, Dative, and Genitive. Of special interest for this study is the semantic classification of predicates which tend to take non-canonically marked subjects shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Predicates which take non-canonically marked A/S (Onishi 2001)

- Class I: Affected A/S: ‘be sad’, ‘have a headache’
- Class II: Less agentive A/S: ‘see’, ‘know’, ‘like’
- Class III: Modal verbs: ‘want’, ‘need’, ‘can’
- Class IV: Verbs expressing ‘happenings’
- Class V: Verbs of possession, existence, lacking

Verbs taking an impersonal *det* as subject appear to a great extent in the same semantic fields, even if the fields are not necessarily structured in a corresponding way in all languages (see perception verbs, below). Most of the verbs in Class I and II belong to the verbs of emotion, pain, and bodily perception, and to verbs of perception and cognition. The structure of these fields in Swedish is treated from a crosslinguistic perspective in Viberg (1981), and verbs belonging to these fields are also treated in Leinonen’s (1985) comparison of impersonal sentences in Finnish and Russian. To Class I, with an affected S/A, belong verbs of emotion and verbs of pain and bodily perceptions. Only a couple of illustrative examples can be given here. Physical Pain typically involves a human Experiencer, a sensation of Pain, and a Body part to which the feeling is localized. In many cases, an impersonal expression is used to describe pain in Swedish as in (48), where *göra ont* ‘hurt’ (lit. ‘do/make
bad’) is used as predicate with *det* as a subject placeholder in combination with the specification of a body part: *i halsen* ‘in the throat’.

(48) a Han försökte skrika igen men *det gjorde ont* i halsen. KE
b He tried shouting again, but that only *hurt* his throat.
c Er wollte wieder schreien, doch *ihm tat der Hals weh*. 
d Il essaya de crier à nouveau mais sa gorge *était douloureuse*. 
e Hän yritti huutaa taas mutta kurkkuun *koski*.

All the translations are restructured with respect to the Swedish original. In the English translation a causal event appears as subject and the body part as object. In German, the Experiencer is topicalized and marked with dative case, whereas the body part is realized as subject (‘to him the throat did bad’). The body part is the subject in French, as well, where the predicate is realized as copula + Adjective (‘his throat was painful’). Finnish uses a subjectless clause (‘but throat-into touched/hurt’) with the body part in the preverbal position, which is a topic position. It should be noted that several alternative types of structure can be found in all the languages. In (49), Swedish and German have placeholder subjects, whereas the body part is grammatically realized as a subject in English and French. In Finnish, the body parts appear in the preverbal topic position with partitive case marking.

(49) a *Det stack* och *värkte* i benen och ryggen. KE
b His legs and back *ached* and *prickled*.
c *Es stach* und *schmerzte* in den Beinen und im Rücken. 
d *Ses jambes et son dos* *cuisaient* et l’*élançaient*. 
e *Jalkoja ja selkkää* *särki* ja *piisteli*.

Class II contains among other things a number of verbs belonging to the field of perception which will be treated separately below. Examples of modal verbs (class III) have already been mentioned (see comments to example (23) *det går* and to (43) *det krävs*). Verbs of existence and lacking (Class V) typically appear in presentative constructions. Verbs expressing happenings (Class IV) which are not controlled by an agent or are controlled by a completely defocused agent also take *det* as a subject. Example (50a) might be interpreted as a kind of presentation, since it is also possible to say *nånting kunde också ha hänt Dan* (lit. ‘something might also have happened Dan’).

(50) a *Det kunde också ha* *hänt* Dan nånting. KE
b *it could also have happened Dan something*]
c Außerdem konnte Dan *et was* passiert sein.
d *Et puis, quelque chose était peut-être* *arrivé* à Dan? 
e *Enfin* j’*os Danille ol* *sattunut* jotain.

In the five texts studied so far, the verb *hända* ‘happen’ occurs 10 times with *det* as subject. In total, there are 52 examples with a verb of happening. Included among
these are a number of examples with gå ‘go’ which describe the manner in which something happened as in (51a).

(51) a Ändå **gick det** fort. KE [yet it went quickly, with inversion]
   b Yet it **all happened** very quickly.
   c Trotzdem **ging es** schnell.
   d Ils allaient vite pourtant. ['They (sic!) went fast yet']
   e Silti **meniin** aika kyytiä.

7.3 The verbs of perception

Among the verbs of perception, a distinction can be made between Experiencer-perception verbs like **see** and **hear**, which take the Experiencer as subject (*Maria saw/heard Peter*), and Phenomenon-based perception verbs that take the perceived Phenomenon as subject: *Peter looked/sounded happy (to Maria)*. In Swedish, as in English, Experiencer-based verbs such as *see* and *hear*, which belong to Class II, take a canonically marked subject in spite of the fact that this subject has a non-pro-totypical, non-agentive semantic role. In several groups of languages, such arguments are realized as non-canonical subjects in the dative or another non-canonical case.

Phenomenon-based perception verbs appear in several types of constructions with a formal *det* as subject. In Viberg (1981, 2008), attention was drawn to the contrast in Swedish between phenomenon-based perception verbs taking a non-factive as-if-complement and another set of such verbs that take a factive sentential complement. A non-factive as-if-complement is shown in (52). (The complementizer can have the form *som om*, *som att*, or simply *som* in Swedish, and as *if*, *as though*, or *like* in English.)

(52) a Jag vet att **det låter som att** vi förnekar vad som hänt, CL
   b I know **it sounds as if** we’re denying what happened.

Complements of this type can be used in all the MPC languages (except that there is no placeholder subject in Finnish.). There is also a specific set of verbs expressing potential perception in Swedish such as *synas* ‘be visible’, *höras* ‘be audible’, and *kännas* ‘be possible to feel, perceive’. These verbs have a passive form. (*Synas* does not have a corresponding active form, whereas *höras* is derived from *höra* ‘hear’ and *kännas* from *känna* ‘feel’.) These verbs have rather direct correspondents in Finnish but require various types of restructuring in the translations to the other MPC languages. Example (53a) can be literally paraphrased (disregarding word order) as ‘Through the floorboards it was=heard that Per-Ola asked something’. In the English translation, as well as in the French translation, a subject with definite refer-ence is supplied from context. The German translation is based on a construction known as the potential (or passive) infinitive, which involves an implicit non-specific agent (or experiencer) and has a modal meaning that something can or should be done (‘through the floorboards was to hear that-S’). Finnish has a rather direct equivalent, except for the lack of a placeholder (*kuulua* ‘be audible’, derived from *kuulla* ‘hear’ with the so called reflexive suffix –ul-y).

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A special type of perception verbs which only require a formal subject and no other argument in Swedish are verbs of light emergence and sound emergence (referred to as *ljuskälleverb* and *ljudkälleverb* in Viberg 1981). Since there are only a few examples of verbs of light emergence, only one example will be given. The verbs of sound emergence will be discussed in somewhat greater detail. There are 18 different verbs of this type (see 55) in the five texts studied so far, and the total number of tokens is 25.

A typical example is the verb *knacka* ‘knock’ in (56), which can be used without any (core) argument except a placeholder *det* in the subject slot. In English, the sound is realized as a noun introduced in a presentative construction, whereas German has the same structure as Swedish, French uses the *man*-construction, and Finnish the passive.

Further types of translations are exemplified in (57) and (58).
In (57), Swedish *det slafsade kring stövlarna* lit. ‘it squelched around the boots’ is translated into English with a clause in which the sound source is the subject, *the boots squelched*. This kind of restructuring appears in 9 out of the 25 examples with sound source verbs. In 13 examples, the Swedish verb corresponds to a nominal form in the English translation, either in a presentative construction, as in (56), or some other type of nominal construction, as in (58). In the texts analysed so far, there is no example where English uses *it* in the subject slot of a sound source verb. German, on the other hand, uses the same construction as Swedish in 18 out of the 25 examples, as in all of the three examples above. The French and Finnish translations are more variable, which means that it is difficult to form any generalizations based on this limited material except that the languages use the ordinary means they have to construct impersonals. In (57), both languages use a verb without any core argument as in Swedish, except the obligatory placeholder (*ça*) in French. The translations in (58) are interesting because they introduce a verb of perception, which is personal in French (‘he heard a twittering’) and of the impersonal potential type in Finnish (‘from (the) table was-heard twittering’). Even if the sound source verbs strictly speaking do not have any implicit experiencer, they often appear in situations where an experiencer can easily be induced from the discourse context.

It should be noted, that the Swedish sound source verbs often can be constructed in several different ways. In (59), *knaka* ‘creak’ is constructed with a placeholder in the subject slot, whereas the sound source is realized as subject in (60).

(59) *Det knakade* igen i bron, ESPC: ARP [it creaked again in the bridge]
The bridge *creaked* again,

(60) *Sängen knakade* ovanför henne. KE
The bed above *creaked*.

There are a number of verbs that are primarily used as sound source verbs in Swedish. There are also verbs that have another basic meaning. Several verbs of physical contact such as *slå* ‘hit’, ‘strike’ and *knacka* ‘knock’ are also used as sound source verbs (see Viberg 1999b, 2004). Several verbs of motion can be extended to serve as sound source verbs in the construction *det* + (active) verb: *det går i trapporna* lit. ‘it walks in the stairs’ can be said when you hear footsteps on the stairs (usually without seeing anyone). An actual example from the Bank of Swedish is given in (61):

(61) *Nu ska vi väl gå*, sa han. Då hörde de hur *det sprang* på korkmattan och så stod Ingrid i dörren bakom dem. RomI
I guess we should go now, he said. Then they heard running steps (‘how it ran’) on the carpet, and then Ingrid was standing at the door behind them (my translation)
In (61), *det sprang* ‘it ran’, the sound is profiled and the event is conceptualized as agentless. It is interesting to compare this construction with the impersonal passive in (62) which also is taken from the Bank of Swedish. In (62), *det sprangs* ‘it was run’ profiles the motion and there is an implicit agent even if it is completely defocused.

(62)  I lördags *sprang* det nattorientering i Brastad. GP01
    Last Saturday, there was (lit. ‘it was run’) night orienteering in Brastad. (my translation)

A similar minimal pair can be presented for the verb *sjunga* ‘sing’. In (63), the impersonal passive *det sjungs* refers to an activity with a defocused agent, whereas the impersonal *det sjunger* in active present tense profiles the sound, with the telephone wires as Sound source in example (64).

(63)  Underhållningen pågår under hela kvällen, *det sjungs* och dansas till förrätt, varmrätt, dessert och till aveccen kommer huvudshowen. GP04
    The entertainment goes on all night, people are singing and dancing (lit. it is sung and is danced) to the starter, main dish, and dessert, and with the cognac came the main attraction. (my translation)

(64)  Men en dag cyklar jag. *Det sjunger* i Värmlands telefontrådar, RomI
    But one day I am (out) cycling. (lit.) ‘It sings’ in the telephone wires of Värmland. (my translation)

The impersonal passive has an implicit human agent even if it is vague and back-grounded, whereas the corresponding impersonal verb in active form lacks such an implicit agent. This is particularly clear with a verb such as *sjunga* ‘sing’ which normally has a human agent as subject. The expression *det sjunger* ‘it sings’ completely lacks an implicit agent.

Impersonal verbs of the type described in section 7 are used to express agentless impersonality. There is a continuum, in the sense that some verbs completely lack any argument at the semantic level, whereas there are verbs at the other end of the continuum that have a human argument that can be regarded as a non-prototypical agent (or proto-role) such as an Experiencer. In that case, both personal and impersonal alternatives may exist in one language, as in Swedish: *Det gör ont i huvudet* ‘My head hurts’ (lit. ‘it makes bad in the head’)– *Jag har ont i huvudet* (lit. ‘I have bad in the head’) or *Jag har huvudvärk* ‘I have a headache’.

8. Conclusion

The present study has provided an overview of the major types of impersonal constructions in Swedish and of the major types of constructions that can be used to translate such structures into English, German, French, and Finnish. Since the study is intended to be exploratory and is based on a limited part (less than 25%) of the multilingual parallel corpus that is being constructed, only the most general patterns will be summarized.

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From a functional point of view, it turns out that the *man*-construction is the major expression of referential impersonality in Swedish. The use of impersonal 3PL *de* ‘they’, which is treated only briefly, seems to be restricted to vague reference, whereas the *man*-construction can be used both with general and with vague reference, even if its primary function appears to be to signal general reference to all of mankind. In both cases, free forms of subject pronouns are used. The type of verb does not play any role except that it should allow a human subject. Constructions with impersonal *det* as a subject placeholder primarily appear in agentless clauses or clauses with low agentivity and is characteristic of phenomenon-based mental verb constructions. In the majority of cases, the low agentivity is closely related to the meaning of the verb (or other predicate). The only exception to this is the cleft construction, if the verb of the non-cleft counterpart is taken as a point of departure. (The copula is, of course, agentless.) At the same time, the referential function of *det* is so low that it can be regarded as a subject placeholder. In most languages, a subject placeholder is completely lacking or is used much more restrictively as in Finnish.

The Swedish passive, whose primary function is to defocus the agent to various degrees, is impersonal only in some of its functions. In examples with an explicit agent such as *Anmälan gjordes av Holger Eriksson* ‘The report was made by Holger Eriksson’, the agent has high levels of both referentiality and agentivity. Referentiality can be low as it is in generic sentences of the type *Dörren öppnas utåt* ‘The door should be opened outwards’. In general, however, an agent is implied even if it is vague, as in impersonal passives and in generic uses of the ordinary passive. Only in certain lexicalized passives, such as *det finns* ‘there is’, is no agent implied.

From a contrastive perspective, the study has shown that Finnish in many respects follows another pattern than Swedish, whereas German, English, and French have rather direct equivalents to most of the Swedish impersonal constructions. In spite of this general similarity, there are important differences in usage patterns between the languages that in principle share a certain structural pattern. With respect to clefting, for example, the most obvious contrast was that Finnish lacks such as structure, but at the same time it was shown that clefting was used to different extents in the languages where this construction is established.

It must be stressed that this study has primarily been focused on the typological profile of Swedish. With respect to methodology, a monodirectional corpus with originals only in Swedish is sufficient to demonstrate to what extent various constructions are language-specific. For a balanced contrastive study, a bidirectional (or multidirectional) corpus with originals in all contrasted languages would be a prerequisite. The present study can serve as the first step in such a full-blown contrastive comparison. There are a number of original texts in French and Finnish with Swedish translations in the MPC corpus which have not been used in this study but that could be used to complement the data presented above. For English, the English-Swedish parallel corpus can be used for the same purpose.
References


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Swedish source texts


Electronic sources

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