

## Lexical restrictions on the Danish passive

Sune Gregersen, University of Copenhagen

This presentation will discuss an example of a grammatical construction restricted by conjugation class, namely the Danish inflectional passive (often referred to as the ‘s-passive’). This construction alternates with a periphrastic construction with the auxiliary *blive* (lit. ‘become’), e.g. *skrives/blive skrevet* ‘to be written’. However, in the past tense the occurrence of the s-passive is restricted by the conjugation class of the verb. Whereas weak verbs like *høre* ‘hear’ may form a past-tense s-passive, the majority of strong verbs, such as *skrive* ‘write’, may not. Compare the acceptable weak s-passive *hørtes* ‘was heard’ in (1) with the unacceptable form *\*skreves* in (2):

- (1) *Skuddet { hørtes / blev hørt } over hele byen.*  
shot.DEF hear.PST.PASS PASS.AUX.PST hear.PTCP across whole town.DEF  
‘The shot was heard across the whole town.’
- (2) *Brevet { \*skreves / blev skrevet } af ministeren.*  
letter.DEF write.PST.PASS PASS.AUX.PST write.PTCP by minister.DEF  
‘The letter was written by the minister.’

In my presentation I will first present the synchronic facts concerning these restrictions themselves, along with brief overview of the explanations for them that have been proposed in the literature. I then attempt to reconstruct their historical development, suggesting that they may to some extent be an artifact of the development of a standard written language beginning in the Early Modern period.