

MERIMA OSMANKADIĆ
NERMINA ČORDALIJA
TAMARA BUTIGAN

BOSNIAN TRANSLATION EQUIVALENTS OF ENGLISH CONSTRUCTIONS WITH PERMISSIVE SUBJECTS

Abstract

Even though a verb can assign a variety of thematic roles to the subject, the most typical role for a subject is that of an agent or that of an experiencer for verbs of perception and mental inference. In this paper, we describe constructions where verbs that typically select agent or experiencer subjects occur with subjects expressing thematic roles typical of adverbials: instrument, time or place. We refer to those subjects as *permissive subjects*. On the other hand, it is argued that in South Slavic languages, non-agents (and non-experiencers) do not show such a strong tendency to occur in the subject position. We performed a translation task to answer the following research question: What range of structures occur in Bosnian translation equivalents of the following English constructions with permissive subjects: *Period sees, Money buys, Object seats number, Object sleeps number, Book/Album/Record sells copies?* The quantitative analysis showed that some of the most frequent translation strategies include the following: middle constructions, passive constructions and constructions where the English permissive subject becomes an adverbial in the Bosnian translation equivalent. Moreover, translation equivalents where the English permissive subject is translated as a Bosnian non-agentive/permissive subject are rather frequent too. Nevertheless, our qualitative analysis shows that the choice of a translation equivalent for the target construction depends on the English target construction itself. For example, in the case of some combinations, we show a correlation between the thematic meaning of a particular permissive subject in English and the choice of a translation equivalent.

Keywords: *permissive subjects, non-agentive subjects, thematic roles, middle constructions, passives, translation equivalents, English, Bosnian*

1 INTRODUCTION

Back in 1970, Chafe drew a parallel between a verb and the sun. He explained that whatever is semantically added to the verb affects the semantics of the entire sentence just like whatever happens to the sun affects every corner of the solar system. Indeed, a verb is the core element of a sentence. Its argument structure specifies arguments a verb requires to be projected in a sentence (Kroeger, 2005). Importantly, every argument is assigned a specific thematic role which expresses the semantic relationship that holds between that very argument and the verb (Carnie, 2012; for the original proposal of thematic roles/deep-structure case see Gruber, 1965; Fillmore, 1968; 1971; Jackendoff, 1972).

Notwithstanding the attempts to formulate a hierarchy of thematic roles that the subject can be mapped onto (e.g., Dik, 1978), a prototypical thematic role for a subject is that of an agent (Comrie, 1989; Quirk et al., 1985), a referent that instigates the verbal action (Carnie, 2007). Another extremely common thematic role the subjects of verbs of perception bear is that of an experiencer. In the current paper, we focus on transitive constructions where verbs that normally select animate, agentive or experiencer subjects occur with inanimate, non-agentive and non-experiencer subjects that following Dreschler (2019) we refer to as *permissive subjects*. More specifically, we describe a study that investigated how English constructions with permissive subjects are translated to Bosnian.

1.1 *Permissive subjects in English*

In English, a verb can assign a range of thematic roles to the subject as illustrated in examples (1)-(5): agent, experiencer, instrument, recipient, theme, and this is by no means an exhaustive list.¹

- (1) **A little girl with wiry braids** kicks a bottle cap at his shoes. [AGENT]
- (2) **Tactics** can win you these games (...). [INSTRUMENT]
- (3) **He** owns a house in Hartford (...). [RECIPIENT]

¹ For an overview see Biber et al., 1999 – a traditional descriptive approach; Carnie, 2007 – a genera-

(Biber et al., 1999, p. 124)

(4) **Lorenzo** saw the eclipse. [EXPERIENCER]

(Carnie, 2007, p. 221)

(5) **Three minutes** elapsed. [THEME](6) **John** is tall. [THEME]

(Sportiche et al., 2014, p.142)

The exact thematic role a subject is assigned to by a verb expresses the semantic relationship that holds between that subject and the verb. For example, transitive verbs such as *buy*, *seat*, *sleep* and *sell* normally assign their subjects the thematic role of an agent as (7) - (10) show. Similarly, the verb of perception/mental inference *see* typically occurs with experiencer subjects as in (11).

(7) Did you *buy* a remote?(8) *Seating* himself in a nearby chair he unzipped his briefcase.(9) What does she *sleep* there for?(10) Oh well, he would have to *sell* some stock.(11) (...) I want to *see* who wins (...)

(Biber et al., 1999, p. 21, 22, 108, 140, 832)

Nevertheless, Dreschler (2019) points out that even though it is not their most frequent use or their original use from a historical perspective, it is possible for verbs such as *see*, *buy*, *seat*, *sleep* and *sell* to select inanimate subjects that are, therefore, neither agents nor experiencers.

(12) **The year 1928** *saw* her first visit to western Asia.(13) **£34.99** *will buy* you an applique V neck in 100% cotton terry.(14) The old rule was to purchase 25% more than **your restaurant** *can seat*.(15) **Roomy lounge** *sleeps* two extra if required.(16) **Annie Besant's own The Law of Population**, published in 1877, *sold* 175,000 copies by 1891.

British National Corpus (BNC; Davies, 2004)

Examples (12) to (16) illustrate transitive sentences with verbs *see*, *buy*, *seat*, *sleep* and *sell* where subjects of those verbs, rather non-canonically, bear the following thematic roles. The subject of *see* in (12) expresses temporal meaning. The subject of *buy* in (13) is an instrument. The subject of *seat* in (14) and the subject of *sleep* in (15) convey location. Finally, the subject of *sell* in (16) is a theme, an entity that passively undergoes the verbal action of being sold in this case. Even though subjects can indeed carry such thematic roles, the role of theme is typical of direct objects and the meanings of space, time and instrument are normally expressed by adjuncts. Hence, we refer to subjects of *see*, *buy*, *seat*, *sleep* and *sell* illustrated in (12)- (16) as permissive subjects – subjects that permit a myriad of thematic roles other than the agent and the experiencer and yet occur with verbs which canonically select agent and experiencer subjects.

More broadly, Rohdenburg (1974) proposed over 20 classes of verbs that can occur with permissive subjects. Such classification is based on unique semantics that those verbs express so that some of them, for example, designate capacity (*The ingredients bake 4 cakes*) or express the semantics of winning or losing (*This loses us the best centre forward*). On a similar note, it has been proposed that constructions with permissive subjects are generally tied to specific genres such as advertising for permissive constructions with *buy*, *sleep* or *seat* for example (Dreschler, 2019). Furthermore, other permissive constructions may be used as impersonalisation strategies, for example, *The year 1928 saw...* (Dreschler, 2019). A similar assertion was made in Dreschler's 2019 corpus study where the results from The Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) revealed that permissive subjects seldom occur in non-fiction and news but are highly frequent in popular magazines.

Another important finding of Dreschler's 2019 corpus study is that permissive subjects are not an innovation in English. On the contrary, despite their timeline of occurrence being rather varied, permissive subjects with verbs such as *buy* and *see* already occur from around 1600 onwards and they are attested in Early English Books Online corpus that covers the time period 1470s-1690s. This finding begs the question if there is some

historical linguistic event that motivated the rise of permissive subjects.

Los and Dreschler (2012) propose that the declining use and eventually the disappearance of the verb-second system in English in the fifteenth century onwards changed the pragmatics of the clause-initial position. The pre-subject position could no longer perform the unmarked discourse-linking function as was the case prior to this major historical change. Consider the example in (17):

(17) In 1928, she visited western Asia for the first time.

The adverbial constituent expressing temporal location is the marked theme of the sentence.² The only way to package this temporal information as an unmarked theme is to make it the subject of the sentence as in (12). Los (2018) and Dreschler (2019) propose that it is this limitation on the theme – the subject being the only unmarked theme in English and the subject now performing the discourse-linking function– that inspired the promotion of a variety of arguments to the subject position including those arguments expressing temporal, spatial or instrumental meaning that normally do not occur in the subject position. This, hence, increased the functional load of the subject encouraging the rise of permissive subjects but also of other superficially similar constructions such as middles and alternating unaccusative constructions.

Middle and alternating unaccusative constructions in (18) and (19) also illustrate the use of non-agentive subjects with verbs that normally select agentive subjects.

(18) (...) **their work** *sells* well. [MIDDLE]

(19) **The window** *broke* because John threw a ball at it. [ALTERNATING
UNACCUSATIVE]

British National Corpus (BNC; Davies, 2004)

² See Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 97), who claim that the choice of an element functioning as typical theme in an English clause is contingent on the choice of mood, declarative clauses in English thus selecting subject as the unmarked theme. An adverbial group is the most usual form of marked theme in a declarative clause, but still marked (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p.98).

Nevertheless, they differ from constructions with permissive subjects on a number of important properties. Unlike constructions with permissive subjects, middle constructions entail a detransitivisation process – converting a transitive structure to an intransitive one. Moreover, middle constructions, unlike permissive constructions, imply the existence of an agent. Even though alternating unaccusative constructions do not imply existence of an agent, they too differ from constructions with permissive subjects as they also go through a process of detransitivisation³.

Even though middles, alternating unaccusative constructions and constructions with permissive subjects are attested in Bosnian, it has been claimed that Bosnian and related languages do not show a strong preference for non-agentive subjects (see Kučanda, 1998 and Buljan and Kučanda, 2005 for Croatian).

1.2 *Permissive subjects in Bosnian*⁴

In Bosnian, it is possible for subjects to bear a variety of thematic roles, similarly to what was claimed for English. Consider the agent, experiencer, instrument and theme subjects in (20)-(23):

³ It was as early as 1968 that Halliday noted that while transitivity and theme do indeed belong to two different components of lexicogrammar (transitivity relating to the experiential component of meaning and theme to the discoursal, or informational component), the two cannot be completely separated from one another in a description of the syntax of the clause (Halliday, 1968, p. 179). Halliday further elaborates on the interrelation of the two in that the discoursal component provides, through the encoding ergative structure, the means for distributing the experiential functions (participants, processes and circumstances) in every possible way over the functions *theme – rheme* and *given – new*. Any combination of participants and circumstances, including even the process, can be made into a theme by nominalisation (Halliday, 1968, p.2015). We can relate this to the emergence and use of permissive subjects in English whereby a non-agentive subject is assigned an unmarked thematic status in the clause, thus allowing for otherwise marked elements as themes to achieve thematic unmarkedness.

⁴ Bosnian and Croatian belong to a pluricentric South Slavic language with four national standards: Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian and Montenegrin. In this section, due to a lack of literature on subjects in Bosnian, we primarily rely on the literature that investigated subjects in Croatian. We assume that conclusions about the syntactic and semantic nature of Croatian subjects apply to Bosnian too as there is no valid linguistic reason to posit such a structural difference between the two standards that would result in a different behaviour of subjects.

- (20) **Oswald** je ubio Kennedyya. [AGENT]
*Oswald*_{NOM} *AUX*_{3SG.PRS} *killed*_{PPACT.MSG} *Kennedy*_{ACC}
 ‘Oswald killed Kennedy.’

- (21) **Marko** gleda utakmicu. [EXPERIENCER]
*Marko*_{NOM} *watch*_{3SG.PRS} *the game*_{ACC}
 ‘Marko is watching the game.’

(Glavaš, 2012, p. 144)

- (22) **Ovaj ključ** otvara sva vrata. [INSTRUMENT]
*This key*_{NOM} *opens*_{3SG.PRS} *every door*_{ACC}
 ‘This key can open any door.’

(Buljan and Kučanda, 2005, p. 96)

- (23) **Lopta** se otkotrljala niz brdo. [THEME]
*The ball*_{NOM} *PTC* *rolled*_{PPACT.FSG} *down the hill*_{ACC}
 ‘The ball rolled down the hill.’

(Malenica, 2021, p. 7, 9)

This is not out of the ordinary, however, as most prominent theories of thematic roles (e.g., Fillmore, 1968) predict that sentence elements such as a subject can be assigned diverse thematic roles provided that we assume a certain hierarchy of thematic roles available to particular sentence elements (see Dik, 1978). Nevertheless, cross-linguistic variation is present in language.

Los (2018), for example, compared German, Dutch and English and he argues that compared to other two languages, English subjects are much more permissive of thematic roles other than the agent. More specifically, the information conveyed by permissive subjects in English would be more likely to be expressed by adverbials in German and Dutch (however, see a study on English - Dutch translation: Doms, 2015). Similarly, Kučanda (1998) and Buljan and Kučanda (2005) argue for important differences between English and Croatian subjects. Kučanda (1998) explains that

English is a subject-prominent language unlike Croatian. Hence, English shows more diverse strategies for promotion of (non-agentive) elements to the subject position. Kučanda, therefore, concludes that in Croatian, there is a higher subject-agent correlation than in English. What this means is that Croatian subjects are less likely to carry other thematic roles such as instrument, place or time, when compared to English subjects. We argue that this generalization applies to Bosnian too as will be explained below.

Buljan and Kučanda (2005), however, explain that it is not thematic roles themselves that block the mapping of the subject on that very thematic role (such as instrument). They explain that metonymy plays a crucial role. Drawing on Taylor (1995), Buljan and Kučanda (2005) claim that the underlying relationship between a syntactic function and its accompanying thematic role can be analysed in terms of metonymy. Consider the following example.

(24) The axe cut the wood.

The subject-verb relationship in (24) rests on metonymy: The instrument can be used in the subject position due to the relation of metonymy between an agent and the instrument he uses. Buljan and Kučanda (2005) conclude that at the heart of the cross-linguistic variation is the type of metonymy a language tolerates. As (25) shows, the metonymy ‘a place for an institution’ is felicitous. On the other hand, the relation of metonymy which assumes that a container represents the content as in (26) is infelicitous in Croatian (and Bosnian). Similarly, the metonymy ‘a place instead of an authorized person’ is ungrammatical in both Croatian and Bosnian.

(25) Banski dvori još nisu izdali službeno priopćenje.
*Banski dvori*_{NOM} *yet haven't*_{3PL.PRS} *issued*_{PPACT.MPL} *official statement*_{ACC}
 ‘Banski dvori haven’t issued an official statement yet.’

(26) *Ovaj šator spava četvero.
*This tent*_{NOM} *sleeps*_{3SG.PRS} *four*_{ACC}
 ‘This tent sleeps four.’

(27) *Ovo jezero zabranjuje motorne čamce.

*This lake*_{NOM} *forbids*_{3SG.PRS} *motor boats*_{ACC}

‘This lake forbids motor boats.’

(Buljan and Kučanda, 2005, p. 97-98)

Note that examples *This tent sleeps four* and *This lake forbids motor boats* are perfectly acceptable in English. What is at the core of this difference between English and Bosnian/Croatian?

Buljan and Kučanda (2005) speculate that compared to Croatian, English is more tolerant of various types of metonymies that involve an inanimate entity standing for an animate agent. They speculate that the rationale behind such cross-linguistic variation might be due to a higher degree of unmarked theme-subject correlation in English than in Croatian. We argue that this applies to Bosnian too.

As claimed in Los (2018) and Dreschler (2019), the only unmarked theme in English is the subject which hence performs the discourse-linking function too. Jahić et al. (2000) assert that even though in Bosnian, the subject is typically the theme of the sentence, other elements can also be themes depending on their informational value. They point out that the main principle in unmarked information packaging is that the theme precedes the rheme.⁵ Hence, in Bosnian, an unmarked theme can be an element other than the subject. This is a crucial difference between English and Bosnian that actually stems from the ways these two languages encode grammatical functions.

Due to poor morphology, English relies on the word order to encode grammatical functions whilst Bosnian does so through inflections such as case resulting in a relatively free word order. In other words, English developed

⁵ While the Prague School treats information structure and thematic structure as conflating concepts, identifying *theme* with *given* and *rheme* with *new*, in Hallidayan model the two are seen as separate structures, despite the fact that it is usually the case that *theme* and *given* do coincide in an unmarked clause structure. Treating the two as separate structures however allows us to explain the fact that it is possible to put new information in theme position and given information in rheme position (e.g., Bloor and Bloor, 2004). Also, as Halliday (1968) claims, the two structures are realized differently - thematic structure by the sequence of elements, and the information structure by phonological prominence.

strategies of subjectivising the information typically expressed by adverbials (e.g., place, time, instrument) if that information is to be thematized as adverbials cannot be unmarked themes when fronted. Bosnian, on the other hand, can thematise such information without subjectivising it, as adverbials too can be unmarked themes. Consequently, adverbials perform the discourse-linking function in Bosnian whilst in English, subjects carry that load too. Consequently, English is more permissive of non-agentive subjects and various metonymical relations of inanimate entity representing an animate one due to a great functional load of the subject. On the other hand, a lower degree of correlation between the theme and the subject and the capacity of adverbials to perform unmarked discourse-linking when in the initial position led to a higher degree of correlation between agent thematic role and the function of subject in Bosnian.

1.3. Present study: Research question and hypotheses

We performed a study that comprised a translation task to answer the following research question:

What range of structures occur in Bosnian translation equivalents of English subject-verb combinations: *Period sees*, *Money buys*, *Object seats number*, *Object sleeps number*, *Book/record/Album sells copies*?

In previous sections, we argued for a fundamentally different nature of English and Bosnian subjects. We explained that compared to Bosnian, English developed more diverse strategies of promoting non-agentive arguments to the subject position due to its relatively fixed word order and a high degree of correlation between the subject and the theme. Based on those theoretical assumptions, we formulate the following hypotheses:

- 1) Non-agentive subjects will be the most infrequent option in Bosnian translation equivalents. Most frequently, a permissive subject from the English sentence will occur as an adverbial in the Bosnian counterpart.
- 2) Translation equivalents will include a range of structures:
 - a) passives with a possible change in the NP structure in the Bosnian

translation equivalent: The subject and the direct object from the English sentence become a single (postverbal) subject NP in the Bosnian counterpart: *The book sold 10,000 copies* (Hawkins, 1986).

Bosnian equivalent: Prodato je 10,000 primjeraka knjige.
*Sold*_{PP,PASS,NSG} *AUX*_{3SG,PRS} 10,000 *copies*_{MPL,GEN} *book*_{FSG,GEN}
 '10,000 copies of the book were sold.'

b) constructions with an elided *you*-agent, appropriate 2nd person verbal morphology, or with an implied agent, 3rd person singular verbal morphology and the particle *se* (middles): *\$5 will buy you a ticket* (Levin, 1993).

Bosnian equivalent: Za pet dolara možeš kupiti kartu OR može se kupiti karta.
*For five dollars can*_{2SG,PRS} *buy*_{INF} *ticket*_{FSG,ACC}/*can*_{3SG,PRS} *PTC* *buy*_{INF} *ticket*_{FSG,NOM}
 'You can buy a ticket/a ticket can be bought for five dollars.'

c) structures where the object from the English sentence is promoted to the (postverbal) subject position in the Bosnian counterpart and a VP that may occur with a modal: *Each room sleeps 5 people* (Levin, 1993).

Bosnian translation equivalent: U svakoj sobi može spavati pet ljudi.
*In each room. can*_{3SG,PRS} *sleep*_{INF} *five people*_{MPL,GEN}.
 'Five people can sleep in each room.'

d) structures where the critical verb from the English sentence is substituted with another lexeme in the Bosnian counterpart and elements from the object NP in the English sentence occur in the (postverbal) subject position in the Bosnian counterpart: *1492 saw the beginning of a new era* (Levin, 1993)

Bosnian translation equivalent: 1492. godine je počela nova era.
 1492 year *AUX*_{3SG,PRS} *begin*_{PP,ACT,FSG} *new era*_{FSG,NOM}
 A new era began in 1492.'

More generally, we predict within-combination type variation: Subject-verb types may favour a specific structure as a translation equivalent (e.g., *Money buys* – preference for constructions with an elided *you*-agent and 2nd person verbal morphology or middles). Similarly, we predict within-participant variation: Participants may use a particular strategy in translation: e.g., preference for passives.

2 METHODS

2.1 Participants

Participants in our study were eleven first- and second-year students enrolled in the Master's degree programme in Translation at the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Sarajevo. Participants were L1 speakers of Bosnian. They had normal or corrected-to-normal vision with no history of previous language or reading disorder. Participants were informed of the duration of the task and the procedure. After the task, all the data were anonymised by assigning a numerical code to each participant.

2.2 Materials and design

The translation task comprised five subject-verb combinations: *period sees*, *money buys*, *object seats number*, *object sleeps number*, and *book/album/record sells copies*. For every subject-verb combination, ten representative examples were selected from the British National Corpus (BNC; Davies, 2004). The selection criterion assumed that only examples that did not require knowledge of the broader context for interpretation were included in the study. The target stimuli, therefore, included 50 sentences. Examples (28)-(32) illustrate representative examples for each subject-verb combination type.

(28) The year 1900 saw the publication of The Interpretation of Dreams, and this was the first full piece of psychoanalytic work to be published. [PERIOD SEES]

(29) But you will also get something that money can rarely buy ... complete peace of mind. [MONEY BUYS]

- (30) Established for 26 years, the spacious restaurant can seat up to 112 people and serves delicious Italian food. [OBJECT SEATS NUMBER]
- (31) Plas y Brenin is a residential centre, based in what used to be a hotel — it sleeps 71 in two- or three-bedded rooms. [OBJECT SLEEPS NUMBER]
- (32) Ex-convict Charrière found himself a huge celebrity when the book sold a million copies in France, two-and-a-half million in America and ten million throughout the world. [BOOK/ALBUM/RECORD SELLS COPIES]

Non-target stimuli were also included in the study as distractors. Non-target stimuli comprised 30 sentences with transitive verbs (Agent/Experiencer subject + Theme object) as in (33) and (34) or sentences with linking verbs (Theme subject + Attribute as a subject complement) as in (35).

- (33) The Canadian government uses a parliamentary system of democracy.
- (34) Linguistics students like phonetics tutorials.
- (35) My favourite language is a language with simple morphology and complicated syntax.

Target and non-target sentences were pseudo-randomized so to avoid patterns in the participants' answers.

2.3 Procedure

Participants were seated in a classroom with experimenters. They performed a written translation task. More precisely, they were instructed to translate the sentences in the questionnaire to their L1. They were allowed to use a dictionary. The task consisted of one session that did not exceed two hours.

3 RESULTS

The procedure we used for the qualitative analysis consisted of eliciting translated target stimuli for each subject-verb combination, which resulted in 110 sentences for each combination.

In our analysis, we first provide an example of the target sentence in English, then we give one of the translated sentences representative of the structure used in translation, followed by our glosses of the translated sentence and backtranslation.

3.1 *Period sees*

Out of 110 translated sentences of the first subject-verb combination *Period sees*, in 65 sentences the English permissive subject is translated as either NP or PP place adjunct, with the English object being promoted to the postverbal subject position. Example (36) below illustrates this translation strategy:

(36) **This decade** also saw *the start* of organised inter-club sport activities with the first cricket matches between two deaf institutes taking place in 1882. (SVO)

| | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| U ovoj deceniji | desio se | i početak ... (AVS) |
| <i>In this decade</i> _{FSG.LOC} | <i>happen</i> _{P.PACT.MSG REFL} | <i>also start</i> _{MSG.NOM} |

‘In this decade the start (...) also happened.’

In 39 translated sentences of the combination *Period sees* participants used non-agentive subject to render the English permissive subject, out of which there were 36 permissive subjects in Bosnian in combination with the following verbs: *vidjeti* (14), *doživjeti* (11), *svjedočiti* (11) and *predvidjeti* (1). The two verbs used with non-agentive non-permissive subjects were *predstavljati* (1) and *pokazati* (1). These verbs do not exclusively occur with animate, agentive subjects, hence, their inanimate non-agentive subjects are not treated as permissive subjects. Example (37) illustrates the use of the permissive subject in Bosnian translation:

(37) Next year would see *the dawn of the 20th century*. (SVO)

Sljedeća godina će vidjeti zoru... (SVO)
*Next*_{ADJ.FSG.NOM} *year*_{FSG.NOM} *AUX*_{3SG.PRS} *see*_{INF} *dawn*_{FSG.ACC}
 ‘Next year will see the dawn...’

There were five translations that used nominalisation to render the target construction:

(38) What an academic gaffe — that was **the year that saw the publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, a book that was to shake the very foundations of Western thought!**⁶

... to je bila godina objave
 Charles Darwinove knjige...
 ...*that* *AUX*_{3SG.PRS} *be*_{PP.ACT.FSG.} *year*_{FSG.NOM} *publication*_{FSG.GEN}
 Charles Darwin_{MSG.GEN} *book*_{FSG.GEN}
 ‘That was the year of the publication of Charles Darwin’s book.’

Out of 110 translated examples there was one inaccurate translation, where the meaning of the target structure was completely changed. In Table 1, we present the results for the combination *Period sees*.

Table 1 *Period sees*

| Structure type in Bosnian translation | Number of examples | Percentage |
|--|--------------------|-------------|
| English permissive subject translated as NP/PP place adjunct; English object promoted to the postverbal subject position | 65 | 59.09% |
| English permissive subject translated as permissive/non-agentive subject | 39 | 35.4% |
| Nominalisation of the permissive construction | 5 | 4.5% |
| Inaccurate translation | 1 | 0.9% |
| Total | 110 | 100% |

⁶In this example we have a noun phrase in which the target construction is embedded as a relative clause, with the relative pronoun *that* referring to the noun *year*. This is why we put both elements in bold. The sentence pattern SVO indicated in brackets refers to the relative clause in the example. The sentence pattern of which this NP is part is SVC.

3.2 Money buys

The second subject-verb combination *Money buys* rendered 79 translated sentences in which the English permissive subject was translated as the Bosnian permissive subject, with the verb *kupiti* being used, as in example (39):

(39) But you will also get something *that money can rarely buy...* (SVO)

Ali dobit ćeš i nešto što novac ne može
kupiti... (SVO)

But get_{INF} AUX_{2SG.PRS} also something that money_{MSG.NOM} NEG can_{3SG.PRS}
buy_{INF}

‘But you will also get something that money can’t buy...’

There were 19 translated sentences in which the target construction was translated by using the Bosnian middle construction, with the English permissive subject either being rendered as the Bosnian means adjunct (instrumental) (15 examples) or being omitted altogether (4 examples):

(40) Money and *the knowledge money can buy...*(SVO)⁷

Novac i znanje koje se može
kupiti novcem...

*Money*_{MSG.NOM} and *knowledge*_{NSG.NOM} that_{NSG.NOM} PTC can_{3SG.PRS}
buy_{INF} money_{MSG.INS}

‘Money and knowledge that can be bought with money..’

There were nine examples in which the target construction was not translated, and for two target examples there was no translation provided at all. There was one example in which the English permissive subject was translated as the Bosnian means adjunct (instrumental), with the implied generic active second person plural subject *vi* (‘you’) being introduced in the translated example. The construction differs from the middle construction in being active, but it remains impersonal nevertheless because of the generic nature of the subject in Bosnian:

⁷ See footnote 1.

(41) Or, from Viz's phoney letters column, a reader from Dagenham writes:

'It's true that **money** can't buy you *happiness*.' (SVOO)⁸

... novcem ne možete kupiti sreću. (AVO)

*money*_{MSG.INS} *NEG can*_{2PL.PRS} *buy*_{INF} *happiness*_{FSG.ACC}

'You can't buy happiness with money.'

In Table 2 we present the results for the subject-verb combination *Money buys*.

Table 2 *Money buys*

| Structure type in Bosnian translation | Number of examples | Percentage |
|--|--------------------|-------------|
| English permissive subject translated as permissive subject | 79 | 71.8% |
| English target construction translated as middle construction | 19 | 17.2% |
| Translation of the English target construction not provided | 9 | 8.1% |
| No translation provided | 2 | 1.8% |
| English permissive subject translated as means adjunct in impersonal active construction | 1 | 0.9% |
| Total | 110 | 100% |

3.3 *Object seats number*

Target subject-verbs combination *Object seats number* yielded 81 sentences in which the English permissive subject was translated as a Bosnian non-agentive subject, with one permissive subject. The verbs used in Bosnian translation were *primiti* ('admit') (43), *smjestiti* ('accommodate') (32), *okupiti* ('gather') (1), *ugostiti* ('host') (1). Example (42) illustrates the most frequent combination in Bosnian translation *Objekt prima*:

⁸ The sentence pattern SVOO refers to the subordinate nominal *that*-clause in which the target construction is found.

(42) (...) **the building can seat almost 40.000 people.** (SVO)

(...) **zgrada može primiti skoro 40,000 ljudi.** (SVO)

*building*_{FSG.NOM} *can*_{3SG.PRS} *admit*_{INF} *almost 40.000 people*_{PL.GEN} (SVO)

‘The building can admit almost 40.000 people.’

In this category we also include four examples in which the English permissive subject is retained as subject in combination with the verb *imati* (‘have’). Out of these three, in two sentences the verb *imati* is in combination with the object *sjedala* (‘seats’), as in e.g., *zgrada ima 40,000 sjedala* (‘the building has 40.000 seats’), and other two are existential *have*-constructions realised as a collocation *imati mjesta* (‘have room’). One could argue that the combination *Objekt ima broj sjedala* (‘Object has number seats’) is also an existential construction (‘U objektu se nalazi broj sjedala’, ‘There are number seats in the object’), but we will treat this *imati* in the sense of possession for the sake of simplicity. Example (43) illustrates an existential-*have* construction, with the English subject retained in the Bosnian translation:

(43) And unlike many coupes which have, at best, room only for children in the rear, **the Calibra will seat two adults** comfortably in the back. (SVO)

(...) Calibra ima mjesta za dvoje odraslih...

*Calibra*_{FSG.NOM} *have*_{3SG.PRS} *room*_{NSG.GEN} *for two*_{PL.ACC} *adult*_{PL.ACC}

‘Calibra has room for two adults.’

In 25 cases the English permissive subject in becomes AdvP or PP place adjunct, with the English object being promoted to the postverbal subject position in Bosnian, as in the following example:

(44) (...) a back seat **that can seat three...** (SVO)

(...) stražnje sjedalo **na koje može sjesti troje...** (AVS)

*back*_{ADJ.NSG.NOM} *seat*_{NSG.NOM} *on which*_{NSG.ACC} *can*_{3SG.PRS} *sit*_{INF} *three*_{N.NUM.NOM}

‘a back seat in which three can sit...’

There was one sentence in which a Bosnian existential-*have* construction was used, and we classify it into a separate category because the English permissive subject is translated as PP adjunct in Bosnian:

- (45) And unlike many coupes which have, at best, room only for children in the rear, **the Calibra will seat two adults** comfortably in the back. (SVO)
 (...) u Kalibri ima komforno mjesta za dvoje odraslih...
 in Calibra_{FSG.LOC} have_{3SG.PRS} comfortably room_{NSG.GEN} for two_{PL.ACC} adult_{PL.ACC}
 'In Calibra there is plenty of room for two adults...'

In one translated sentence the English permissive subject was omitted altogether, one sentence contained nominalisation of the English permissive construction, and in one a collocation *imati kapacitet* ('have a seating capacity') was used. In Table 3 we present the results for the subject-verb combination *Object seats number*.

Table 3 *Object seats number*

| Structure type in Bosnian translation | Number of examples | Percentage |
|--|--------------------|------------|
| English permissive subject translated as permissive/non-agentive subject | 81 | 73.6% |
| English permissive subject translated as AdvP/PP place adjunct; English object promoted to the postverbal subject position | 25 | 22.7% |
| Bosnian existential <i>have</i> -construction | 1 | 0.9% |
| English permissive subject omitted | 1 | 0.9% |
| Nominalisation of the permissive construction | 1 | 0.9% |
| English permissive construction translated with Bosnian collocation <i>imati kapacitet</i> ('have a capacity') | 1 | 0.9% |

3.4 *Object sleeps number*

The English permissive subject in subject-verb combination *Object sleeps number* was translated as a Bosnian non-agentive subject in 59 cases. The verbs used in these examples include *primiti* ('admit') (40), *smjestiti* ('accommodate') (10), *imati* ('have') (5), *odmarati* ('rest') (1), *odspavati* ('sleep') (1), *ugostiti* ('host') (1) and *uključivati* ('include') (1). We must however reject the two examples with the verbs *odmarati* and *odspavati* as

ungrammatical since these two verbs are intransitive in Bosnian and they were used transitively in these translations. The following example illustrates how a non-agentive subject was used as a Bosnian equivalent of the English permissive subject:

(46) Each apartment sleeps 2-3... (SVO)

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Svaki | apartman | prima | 2-3 osobe... (SVO) |
| <i>each</i> _{ADJ.MSG.NOM} | <i>suite</i> _{MSG.NOM} | <i>admit</i> _{M3SG.PRS} | <i>2-3 person</i> _{3PL.GE} |

‘Each suite admits 2-3 persons’

In 29 cases the English permissive subject was translated as AdvP or PP place adjunct, with the English object being promoted to the pre- or postverbal subject position in Bosnian, as in the following example:

(47) (...) it sleeps 71... (SVO)

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (...) u njemu | spava | 71 osoba (AVS) |
| <i>in it</i> _{M3SG.LOC} | <i>sleep</i> _{3SG.PRS} | <i>71 person</i> _{3PL.GEN} |

‘71 persons sleep in it’

15 translated sentences contain examples of the English permissive subject being omitted altogether, and the English object being promoted to pre- or postverbal position:

(48) It sleeps *ten with a permanent staff of three.* (SVO)

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Može | spavati | deset | osoba... (VS) |
| <i>can</i> _{3SG.PRS} | <i>sleep</i> _{INF} | <i>ten</i> | <i>person</i> _{3PL.GEN} |

‘Ten persons can sleep.’

There were three examples of nominalisation of the English subject-verb combination, as in *objekat za 25 osoba* (‘Buidling for 25 people’) for *...sleeps twenty five in twin bedded rooms*. Two translated sentences contained a Bosnian existential-*have* construction, in one example the English subject-verb combination was translated as a PP, and there was one inaccurate translation. In Table 4 we present the results for the subject-verb combination *Object sleeps number*.

Table 4 *Object sleeps number*

| Structure type in Bosnian translation | Number of examples | Percentage |
|--|--------------------|---------------|
| English permissive subject translated as permissive/non-agentive subject | 57 | 51.8% |
| English permissive subject translated as AdvP/PP place adjunct; English object promoted to pre- or postverbal subject position | 29 | 26.3% |
| English permissive subject omitted; English object promoted to pre- or postverbal subject position | 15 | 13.6% |
| Nominalisation of the permissive construction | 3 | 2.7% |
| Bosnian existential <i>have</i> -construction | 2 | 1.8% |
| Ungrammatical construction | 2 | 1.8% |
| English permissive construction translated as PP | 1 | 0.9% |
| Inaccurate translation | 1 | 0.9% |
| Total | 110 | 100.0% |

3.5 *Book/album/record sells copies*

This combination yielded 67 examples translated by using the Bosnian middle construction, as in the following example:

(49) **The album** sold *18.000 copies...* (SVO)

Album se prodao *u 18,000 kopija...*
*Album*_{MSG.NOM} *PTC* *sell*_{PPACT.MSG} *in 18.000 copy*_{FPL.GEN}
 ‘The album sold 18.000 copies’

There were 27 examples in which the passive voice was used:

(50) **The album** sold *18.000 copies...* (SVO)

Album je prodat *u 18,000 primjeraka...* (SVA)
*Album*_{MSG.NOM} *AUX*_{3SG.PRS} *sell*_{PPPASS.MSG} *in 18.000 copy*_{MPL.GE}
 ‘The album was sold in 18.000 copies’

In 12 examples the English permissive subject was translated as the Bosnian permissive subject, with the verb *prodati* ('sell') being used throughout:

(51) **The album sold 18.000 copies...** (SVO)

Album je prodao 18000 kopija... (SVO)

*Album*_{MSG.NOM} *AUX*_{3SG.PRS} *sell*_{PPACT.MSG} 18.000 *copy*_{FPL.GEN}

'The album sold 18.000 copies.'

There were four sentences in which the English permissive subject was omitted, and the agentive subject from the preceding clause was used instead, as in:

(52) I learnt, many years later, that they paid over £30 to have a book of poems printed, and that **it sold two copies.** (SVO)

(...) i da su Δ prodali dva primjerka. (SVO)⁹

and that *AUX*_{3SG.PRS} *sell*_{PPACT.MPL} two *copy*_{MPL.GEN}

'And that they sold two copies.'

The results for the combination *Book/album/record sells copies* are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 *Book/album/record sells copies*_w

| Structure type in Bosnian translation | Number of examples | Percentage |
|---|--------------------|---------------|
| English target construction translated as middle construction | 67 | 60.9% |
| English target construction translated as passive construction | 27 | 24.5% |
| English permissive subject translated as permissive/non-agentive subject | 12 | 10.9% |
| English permissive subject omitted, agentive subject from the preceding clause used | 4 | 3.6% |
| Total | 110 | 100.0% |

⁹ We use Δ to indicate ellipsis.

4 DISCUSSION

In accordance with the argument that English and Bosnian differ fundamentally regarding the nature of subjects, English developing more diverse strategies of promoting non-agentive arguments to the subject position due to its relatively fixed word order and a high degree of correlation between the subject and the theme in an unmarked structure, we hypothesised that non-agentive subjects will be the most infrequent option in Bosnian translation equivalents. Most frequently, permissive subject from the English sentence will occur as an adverbial in the Bosnian counterpart. We, moreover predicted, that a range of other constructions such as passives and middles would occur in translation equivalents.

However, quite unexpectedly, the first part of our major hypothesis, that non-agentive subjects will be the most infrequent option in Bosnian translation equivalents, has not been borne out by the results of our quantitative analysis. On the contrary, the choice of a non-agentive subject in the Bosnian translation was the most frequent one for the combinations *Money buys* (71.8%), *Object seats number* (73.6%) and *Object sleeps number* (51.8%), and the second most frequent for the combination *Period sees* (35.4%). The second part of the major hypotheses, that a permissive subject from the English sentence will most frequently occur as an adverbial in the Bosnian counterpart, has been confirmed only for the combination *Period sees* (59.09%). In the combinations *Object seats number* and *Object sleeps number*, this was the second most frequent option, 22.7% and 26.3% respectively. This option was used just once for the combination *Money buys* (0.9%), and the combination *Book/album/record sells* did not yield any examples using this strategy.

However, if we look at the results more closely, following our qualitative analysis, we see that in the cases of *Object seats number* and *Object sleeps number* the two most frequently used verbs in combination with the non-agentive subject are *primiti/primati* ('admit') and *smjestiti* ('accommodate'), as in *Objekat prima/smješta broj* ('Object admits/accommodates number'). This collocation is quite usual in Bosnian, very often with the modal verb *moći* ('can'), especially so in the genres of advertising and tourism. This

finding is in accordance with Dreschler (2019), who argues that these permissive constructions are genre specific in English (e.g., *Object seats number* and *Object sleeps number* are typical for advertising language because of their economy of expression).

As for the combination *Money buys*, which was also most frequently translated with a non-agentive subject, and exclusively in combination with the verb *kupiti* ('buy'), we find no other explanation but that of negative language transfer and the influence of pop culture on the language of younger generations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, both explanations are anecdotal and need further investigating.

In previous sections, we argued that permissive subjects in English may be assigned different thematic roles – from temporal and spatial meaning (in *Period sees*, *Object seats number* and *Object sleeps number*), via instrumental meaning (*Money buys*) to that of a patient (*Book/album/record sells*). Our qualitative analysis has shown that this may be the explanation why the combination *Book/album/record sells* did not yield any examples in which the permissive subject was translated as an adverbial. This was, however, the most frequently used strategy for the combination *Period sees* (59.09%), whereby the permissive subject was translated either as PP or NP adjunct of time.

Our second hypothesis was confirmed, and all the structures described in section 1.3 were used in translation to varying degrees, depending on the combination. The passive construction in the Bosnian translation has been attested only for the combination *Book/album/record sells* (24.5%), which can be explained by the fact the English construction is passive in meaning, since the permissive subject in this combination is assigned the thematic role of a patient ('Book/album/record was sold'). However, out of 27 examples using this construction, only in eight the subject and direct object from the English sentence become a single (postverbal) subject NP in the Bosnian counterpart (29.6%), whereas in the rest the English permissive active subject is translated as the Bosnian passive subject, with the English object being translated as a PP adjunct.

As for the middle construction and the construction with an elided *you*-agent, only the middle construction was attested in the combinations *Money buys* (17.2%) and *Book/album/record sells*, where it was the most frequent translation equivalent (60.9%). In the middle construction used as a translation equivalent for *Money buys*, the permissive subject *money* either becomes an NP adjunct in the instrumental case or is elided, while in *Book/album/record sells*, it remains a subject.

Our third prediction in the second hypothesis, that the object from the English sentence is promoted to the (postverbal) subject position in the Bosnian counterpart, has been attested for the combinations *Period sees*, *Object seats number* and *Object sleeps number*, and is strongly tied to the strategy of translating the English permissive subject as an adverbial.

The fourth prediction, that the English verb from the critical construction is substituted with another verb in Bosnian, has also been confirmed for the three combinations *Period sees*, *Object seats number* and *Object sleeps number*, especially so with *Period sees*, where we have found verbs such as *desiti se* ('happen'), *(po)javiti se* ('emerge'), *početi* ('begin', 'start'), *doći do* ('happen'), *objavljen* ('published' as in *Period sees the publication of*), *viđen* ('seen'). This particular strategy comes in combination with the translation strategy of promoting the English direct object to the postverbal subject position in Bosnian, as predicted.

Our two general predictions of within-combination type variation and within-participant variation have also been confirmed. Our results reveal that the combination *Period sees* favours the strategy of translating the English permissive subject as a PP or NP adjunct, with the English object being promoted to the postverbal subject position and with a different verb being used as a translation equivalent for the verb *see*. The combination *Money buys* favours the Bosnian permissive subject as a translation equivalent, with the verb *kupiti* as the only choice. The combinations *Object seats number* and *Object sleeps number* also favour the Bosnian non-agentive subject as a translation equivalent, albeit with a range of different verbs being used, predominantly the verbs *primiti/primati* and *smjestiti*. The combination *Book/album/record sells* favours the Bosnian middle construction.

As for the within-participant variation, preferences have been observed, but there is a high degree of correlation between a translation strategy preference and a type of combination in English, which is reflected in our final results.

As our results reveal, there have been quite a few literal and ungrammatical translations in our study, which we attempt to explain in the following paragraphs. First, the study was designed to ensure ecological validity, replicating the trainee translators' familiar environment and conditions – it was a 2-hour long, pen and paper translation task. Participants' willingness to expend cognitive effort as time lapses decreases; however, we could not rely on participant fatigue as an explanation of literal or incorrect translations since there was no way of tracking which sentences were translated near the end of the study when fatigue could be reasonably expected.

Another potential explanation is processing economy. According to Beavers et al. (2010, as cited in Spring, 2019, p. 24) “when conflating events, speakers will tend to use the framing patterns available in their language that are the easiest to process.” While we cannot draw this conclusion without processing data, we can hypothesize that trainee translators may have chosen literal translations to reduce their processing burden.

Given that the participant group was comprised entirely of trainee translators, it is possible that risk averseness also played a role in their translations. While risk taking is positively correlated with the quality of translation (Gile, 2021), trainee translators are less likely to take risks than professional translators.

Other potential causes of literal translations, which the study could not control for, are different cognitive abilities across participants, different levels of competence, and the effects of media exposure to negative transfer and literal translation in daily life (Peng, 2010).

5 CONCLUSION

This article has investigated Bosnian translation equivalents of five permissive constructions in English by utilizing a translation task as a method of investigation with eleven first- and second-year students enrolled in the Master's degree programme in Translation at the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Sarajevo whose L1 is Bosnian. Our aim was to establish what range of structures occur in Bosnian translation equivalents of English subject-verb combinations: *Period sees*, *Money buys*, *Object seats number*, *Object sleeps number*, *Book/record/album sells copies*. We employed both qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

The results of our quantitative analysis show that the structures most frequently used as translation equivalents are the following:

- the English permissive subject is translated as a Bosnian non-agentive/ permissive subject;
- the English permissive subject is translated as a PP or NP adjunct, with the English object being promoted to the subject position in Bosnian, most frequently post-verbal subject position;
- the English permissive construction is translated as a middle construction in Bosnian;
- and the English permissive construction is translated as a passive construction in Bosnian.

However, our closer qualitative analysis shows that the choice of a translation equivalent for the target constructions depends on the English target construction itself. Previous research revealed that the permissive subjects in these five constructions are in fact assigned different thematic roles – time and place for *Period sees*, *Object seats number* and *Object sleeps number*, instrument for *Money buys*, and patient for *Book/album/record sells*. The results of the qualitative analysis show a correlation between the thematic meaning of a particular permissive subject in English and the choice of a translation equivalent in the case of two combinations:

Period sees and *Book/album/record sells*. The permissive subject *period* in *Period sees* is assigned a thematic meaning of time, and the most frequent translation equivalent used for this combination is the one in which the English permissive subject is translated as a PP or NP adjunct, which is a typical function expressing temporal meanings. The permissive subject *book/album/record* in *Book/album/record sells* is assigned a thematic role of a patient, and the most frequent translation equivalent for this construction is the middle construction in Bosnian together with the passive construction. The results for the combinations *Money buys*, *Object seats number* and *Object sleeps number* show, to our surprise, that the most frequent translation equivalent is the one in which the English permissive subject is translated as a Bosnian permissive subject, as in the case of *Money buys*, or a Bosnian non-agentive subject, as in the case of the latter two.

We offered several explanations for the results for *Money buys*, where the most frequent translation equivalent was *Novac (ne) može kupiti* ('Money can(not) buy'):

- participants' willingness to expend cognitive effort as time lapses decreases;
- trainee translators may have chosen literal translations to reduce their processing burden;
- trainee translators are less likely to take risks than professional translators;
- negative language transfer and the influence of pop culture and media.

While the first two explanations had to be rejected due to a lack of evidence, such as tracking which sentences were translated towards the end of the study and processing data, the latter two can be taken to be plausible.

For the two similar combinations, *Object seats number* and *Object sleeps number*, we tentatively proposed an explanation that the construction *Objekat prima/smješta* ('Object admits/accommodates'), which was the most frequent translation equivalent in this case, is a collocation in Bosnian tied to the genres of advertising and tourism. However, since we do not

have any evidence provided by an objective corpus study to prove that this is really so, we offer this explanation only as anecdotal evidence.

In conclusion, we may argue that the majority of our hypotheses was confirmed, with the two translation equivalents, *Novac (ne)može kupiti* and *Objekat prima/smješta*, for the three English combinations requiring further study.

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BOSANSKI PRIJEVODNI EKVIVALENTI ENGLESKIH KONSTRUKCIJA S PERMISIVNIM SUBJEKTIMA

Sažetak

Iako glagol kao centralni dio klauze subjektu može dodjeljivati različite tematske uloge, tipična uloga subjekta je uloga agensa ili doživljača uz glagole percepcije i mišljenja. U ovome radu dajemo opis engleskih konstrukcija u kojima se glagoli koji tipično biraju subjekt u ulozi agensa ili doživljača pojavljuju sa subjektima koji nose tematske uloge tipične za adverbijale: uloge instrumenta, vremena ili mjesta. Takve subjekte nazivamo *permisivnim subjektima*. S druge strane, smatra se da u južnoslavenskim jezicima ne postoji jaka povezanost subjekta općenito, pa tako ni subjekta koji nema značenje agensa ili doživljača, sa subjekatskom pozicijom u klauzi kao što je to slučaj u engleskom jeziku. Upravo je ta razlika između dva jezika bila ono što nas je motiviralo za ovaj rad. Naš je cilj bio odgovoriti na sljedeće istraživačko pitanje, koristeći prevodilački zadatak kao mjerni instrument: koje se strukture u bosanskom jeziku upotrebljavaju kao prijevodni ekvivalenti engleskih konstrukcija s permisivnim subjektima: *Period sees, Money buys, Object seats number, Object sleeps number, Book/Album/Record sells copies?* Kvantitativna analiza rezultata dobivenih analizom prijevoda pokazala je da su najčešće korištene prijevodne strategije sljedeće: bezlični pasiv, pasivna konstrukcija i konstrukcija u kojoj engleski permisivni subjekt postaje adverbijal u bosanskom. Analiza rezultata je također pokazala da se kao prijevodni ekvivalent engleske konstrukcije često upotrebljava i neagentivni/permisivni subjekt. Međutim, kvalitativna analiza podataka pokazala je da izbor prijevodnog ekvivalenta ciljne konstrukcije zavisi od same ciljne konstrukcije u engleskom jeziku, odnosno da postoji korelacija između tematskog značenja određenog permisivnog subjekta u engleskom jeziku i izbora prijevodnog ekvivalenta.

Ključne riječi: *permisivni subjekti, agentivnost subjekta, tematske uloge, bezlični pasiv, pasiv, prijevodni ekvivalenti, engleski, bosanski*