

HAVE and BE + participle of an unaccusative verb

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1. Introduction

Among the present-day Scandinavian languages, only Danish and possibly Faroese have a split auxiliary system where unaccusative verbs form perfects with BE, while transitive and unergative verbs form perfects with HAVE (see e.g. Vikner & Sprouse 1988, Platzack 1988, Larsson 2009, 2013); see the Danish examples in (1).¹ Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish have the auxiliary HAVE in both contexts, just like English.

- (1) a. Han er/*har kommet. (Da.)

he be.PRES/have.PRES come.PASTPART

‘He has come.’

- b. Han *er/har sovet længe.

he be.PRES/have.PRES sleep.PASTPART long

‘He has slept for a long time’

(Larsson 2009:144)

However, all of the Scandinavian languages can sometimes have active participles in the complement of BE, to a varying extent (see Jónsson 1992, Thráinsson 2007:12, Larsson 2009, 2013). In Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish, the construction with BE is similar to a stative passive, and it is generally restricted to a resultative reading (i.e. a reading where the result of a telic event holds at the time specified by BE). Unlike Danish perfects with BE and perfects with HAVE, BE is generally not accepted in iterative contexts; cf. the Icelandic examples in (2).

- (2) a. Jón er farinn til Boston. (Ice.)

Jón.M.SG.NOM be.PRES go.PASTPART.M.SG.NOM to Boston

‘Jón is gone to Boston.’

- b. *Jón er oft farinn til Boston
Jón.M.SG.NOM be.PRES often go.PASTPART.M.SG.NOM to Boston
 'Jón has often gone to Boston.'
 (cf. Jónsson 1992:143)

The construction with BE does furthermore not allow a past tense reading in counterfactual contexts (unless embedded in a perfect); cf. (3a-b) with the perfect in (3c) (Larsson 2009:160). Based on Iatridou's (2000) account of counterfactuals, McFadden & Alexiadou argue that this is because BE is not a temporal auxiliary, but simply a copula that takes a stative and tenseless participle as its complement. The perfect participle in (3c) can, on the other hand, be assumed to express a non-finite past tense (see Larsson 2009 and [2014a](#)).

- (3) a. *Ef hann væri kominn í gær, þá... (Ice.)
if he.M.SG.NOM be.PAST.SUBJ come.PASTPART.M.SG.NOM yesterday then
- b. Ef hann væri kominn núna, þá...
if he.M.SG.NOM be.PAST.SUBJ come.PASTPART.M.SG.NOM now then
 'If he had come now, then...'
- c. Ef hann hefði komið í gær, þá...
if he.M.SG.NOM be.PAST.SUBJ come.PASTPART.M.SG.NOM yesterday then
 'If he had come now, then...'

In Icelandic, Faroese and Swedish, the participle shows agreement with the subject in the construction with BE (cf. [Larsson 2014b](#)). In perfects, the participle is invariantly in the neuter singular form, except in Swedish and some Norwegian dialects, which have a specific form for the participle (the so-called *supine*; see Larsson 2009 and references cited there); Swedish examples are given in (4). In Swedish, particles are generally prefixed to agreeing participles (4a), but not to the supine form (4b) (cf. the chapter on particle placement in passives, [Lundquist 2014](#)).

- (4) a. Hon är hemkommen från Stockholm. (Swe.)
she be.PRES home.come.PASTPART.C.SG. from Stockholm
- b. Hon har kommit hem från Stockholm.

she has come.SUP home from Stockholm
 'She has come home from Stockholm.'

Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish differ with respect to which verbs are possible in the construction with BE (see further below): in Swedish BE is possible with a subset of the verbs that are possible in Norwegian and Icelandic; Icelandic is the most liberal. In some varieties (and depending on the verb), the perfect with HAVE is preferred to the construction with BE in a resultative context where both would be possible. This is typically the case in Present-Day Swedish. In Icelandic, on the other hand, perfects with HAVE are sometimes degraded in resultative contexts (see e.g. Jónsson 1992, Yamaguchi & Pétursson 2003).

The possibility of HAVE and BE + active participle was investigated in the Faroese, Norwegian, and Swedish surveys. Results from the Nordic Syntax Database (Lindstad et al. 2009) and the Nordic Dialect Corpus (Johannessen et al. 2009) are presented below.

2. Results

2.1 Nordic Syntax Database

In the Faroese, Norwegian and Swedish surveys, one sentence (#979) tested the possibility of HAVE in an iterative context:

(5) Hun har kommet hit hver dag. (#979) (No.)
she have.PRES come.PASTPART here every day
 'She has come here every day.'

This sentence is accepted across Norway, Sweden and Finland; see Map 1. It gets a low score only in one location (Tromsø in Northern Norway).



Map 1: HAVE + participle of komme/komma 'come' in iterative context in Norway, Sweden and Finland.

(#979: *Hun har kommet hit hver dag.* 'She has come here every day.')

(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).

On the Faroe Islands, the corresponding sentence (which has the verb *fara* 'go') is rejected in all locations but one, where it gets a medium score; see Map 2. The results suggest that with unaccusative verbs like *fara* 'go' Faroese (like Danish) has BE as the perfect auxiliary, and uses it also in iterative contexts.



Map 2: HAVE + participle of fara 'go' in iterative context on the Faroe Islands.

(#979: *Hun har kommet hit hver dag.* 'She has come here every day.')

(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).

Sentence (#978) tested the possibility of BE in a resultative context:

(6) a. Hun er kommet hjem. (#978) (No.)

she is come.PASTPART home
'She has come home.'

b. Hon är kommen till Stockholm nu. (#978) (Swe.)

she is come.PASTPART.C.SG to Stockholm now
'We must turn here (or we'll go too far).'

c. Súkklan hjá Boga er illa rustað. (#978) (Far.)

bike.F.SG.NOM.DEF at Boga is badly rust.PASTPART.F.SG.NOM

Hann er farin illa við henni i nógv ár.

he is go.PASTPART.N.SG.NOM badly by it.F.SG.DAT for many years

'Bogi's bike is very rusty. He has treated it badly for several years.'

Note that the Norwegian and Swedish versions of sentence (#978) are slightly different: the Norwegian sentence involves a particle (*hjem* 'home') whereas the Swedish sentence has a prepositional phrase (*till Stockholm* 'to Stockholm'). We return to this difference in section 3 below. The Faroese version is different yet; it involves a different verb and a context is provided (with a stative passive with BE).

The resultative sentence with BE + *komme/komma* 'come' (#978) is accepted in most parts of Norway; see Map 3. Southwestern and Southern Sweden pattern with Norwegian. The sentence is otherwise rejected in many locations in Sweden and Finland, and in some locations in Eastern Norway.



Map 3: BE + partiple of *komme/komma* 'come' in resultative context in Norway, Sweden and Finland. (#978: *Hun er kommet hjem*. 'She has come home.')

(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).

The Faroese sentence is accepted on all locations where it was tested; see Map 4.



Map 4: BE + participle of *komme/komma* ‘come’ in resultative context on the Faroe Islands.

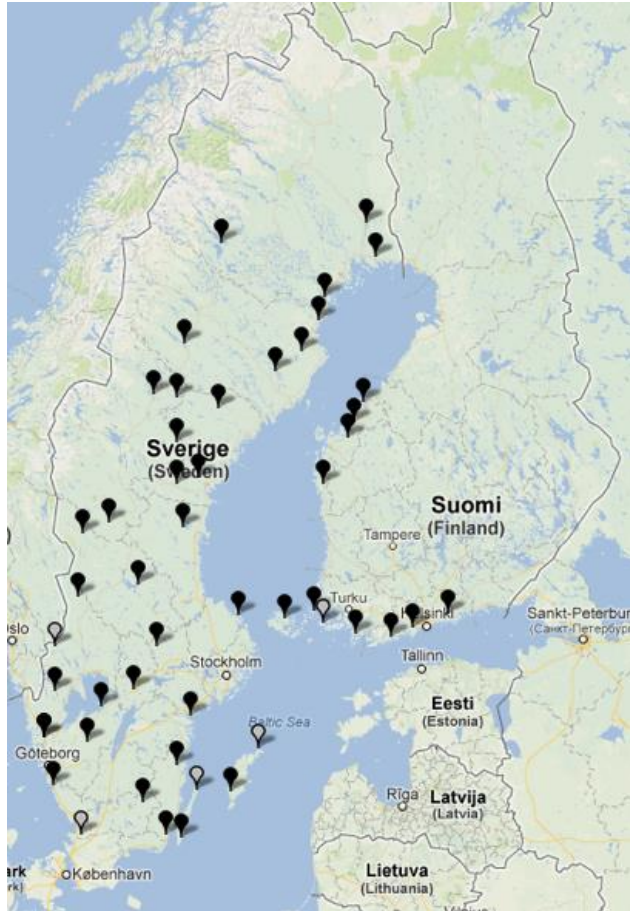
(#978: *Súkklan hjá Boga er illa rustað. Hann er farin illa við henni í nógv ár.* ‘Bogi’s bike is very rusty. He has treated it badly for several years.’)

(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).

In the Swedish survey, three additional sentences with BE were included. One sentence (#1408) has BE + ‘come’ in an iterative context and a free (i.e. not prefixed) participle, and two sentences involve a participle of the non-agentive verb *ramla* ‘fall’ with either a free or a prefixed participle:

- (7) a. Hon är kommen hit varje dag. (#1408) (Swe.)
she be.PRES come.PAST.PART here every day
 ‘She has come here every day.’
- b. Den stora tavlan är ramlad ner (#1409)
the big painting.C.SG.DEF be.PRES fall.PASTPART.C.SG down
 ‘The big painting has fallen down.’
- c. Den stora tavlan är nedramlad. (#1410)
the big painting.C.SG.DEF be.PRES down.fall.PASTPART.C.SG
 ‘The big painting has fallen down.’

BE + *komma* ‘come’ (#1408) does not receive a high score in any locations; see Map 5.

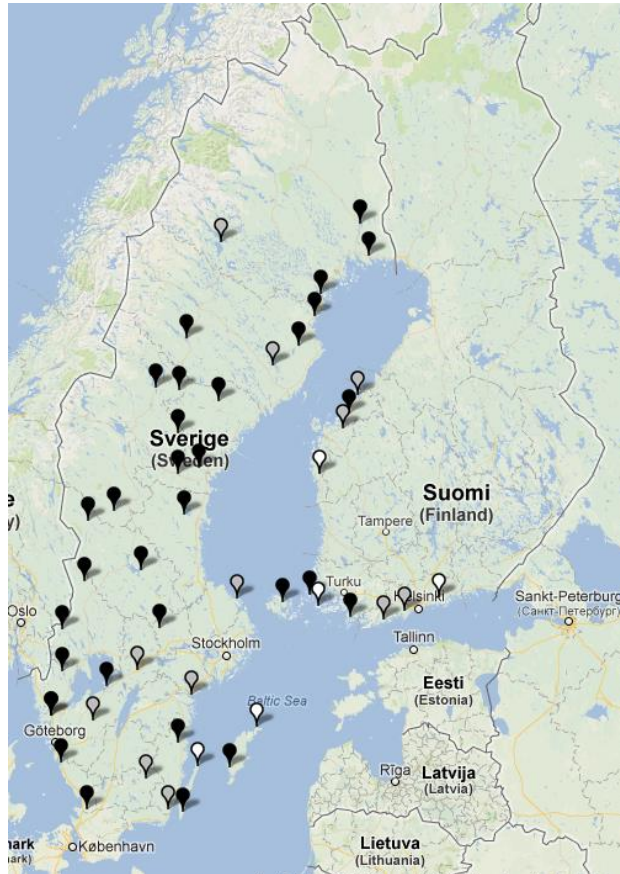


Map 5: BE + participle of *komme/komma* 'come' in iterative context.

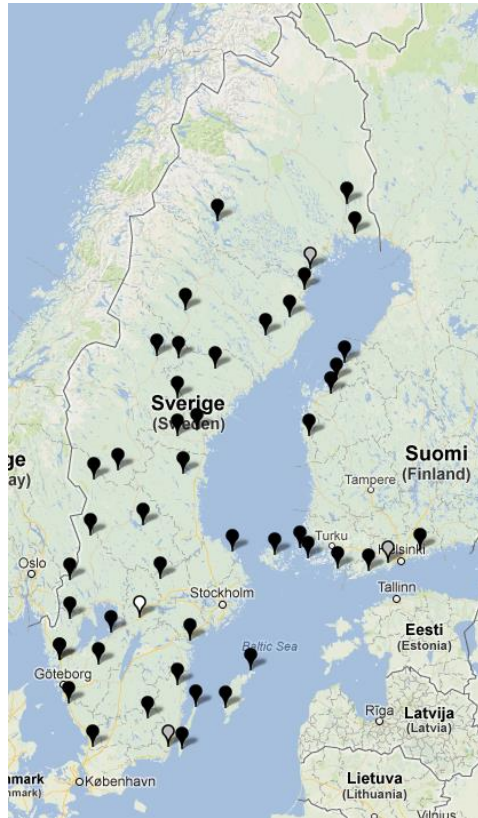
(#1408: *Hon är kommen hit värje dag.* 'She has come here every day.')

(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).

The sentences with BE + *ramla* 'fall' is only accepted in a few locations in Sweden and Finland, regardless of whether the particle is prefixed (#1410) or not (#1409); see Map 6 and 7. With an prefixed particle, the sentence is accepted in a couple of locations in Finland and on Öland and Gotland (Götaland); see Map 6. It also gets an intermediate score in a few locations in northern and southwestern Sweden and in Nyland (Finland). The sentence with a postposed particle is only accepted in one location in Götaland, and it gets an intermediate score in only a few locations (Map 7).



Map 6: *BE + participle of ramla ned 'fall down' with prefixed particle in Sweden and Finland.*
 (#1410: *Den store tavlan är nedramlad. 'The big painting has fallen down.'*)
 (White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).



Map 7: BE + participle of *ramla ned* 'fall down' with postposed particle in Sweden and Finland.

(#1409: *Den stora tavlan är ramlad ner.* 'The big painting has fallen down.')

(White = high score, grey = medium score, black = low score).

2.2 Nordic Dialect Corpus

Searches in the Nordic Dialect Corpus show that the verbs *fara* 'go' and *koma* 'come' are considerably more common with BE than with HAVE in Faroese. However, examples with HAVE can be attested; see (8).

- (8) a. so eg hevði ikki farið út um havnina (Far.)
so I have.PAST not go.PASTPART.N.SG out of harbor.DEF
 'so I had not gone out from the harbour' (torshavn_t34)
- b. ið vit høvðu komið til # teilands
that we have.PAST come to Thailand
 'that we had come to Thailand' (klaksvik_k3)

In the Swedish part of the corpus, on the other hand, perfects with HAVE + unaccusatives are frequent, while examples with BE are less common. However, examples with *komma* 'come' + a free particle can be attested; see (9) below. These examples come from Southern or Southwestern Sweden, i.e. from places where the resultative sentence with BE + *komma* was accepted (cf. Map 3 above).

- (9) a. ja i alla fall så han var kommen hem (Swe.)
yes anyway so he was come.PASTPART.C.SG home
 'yes, anyway, so he had come home' (vaxtorp_om3; Halland)
- b. så vi var komna upp
so we were come.PASTPART.C.SG up
 'so we had come up' (bara_om4; Skåne)
- c. det var ingen teknik kommen hit då
there was no technology come.PASTPART.C.SG here then
 'no technology had come here then' (frillesas_om3; Halland)

If we instead consider examples with a participle of a change of location verb with a prefixed particle, BE is more widespread in Sweden, although the frequency is still lower than in the other Scandinavian languages. A couple of examples e.g. with the verbs *flytta* 'move' and *flyga* 'fly' can be found in the Nordic Dialect Corpus; see (10).

- (10) a. folk som är inflyttade från Dalarna (Swe.)
people that are in.move.PASTPART.PL from Dalarna
 'people that have moved here from Dalarna' (arsunda_ow1; Gästrikland)
- b. några var utflugna
some were out.fly.PASTPART.PL
 'några var utflugna' (torsas_ow3; Småland)

In a larger corpus of written Swedish, most examples with BE + *komma* (without a particle) either have a temporal expression as the subject (i.e. "time is come" or 'spring is come'); see (11a). A few examples like (11b) can also be found.

(11) a. Vardagen är kommen Jocke har börjat jobba (Swe.)
workday.C.SG.DEF is come.PASTPART.C.SG Jocke has start.SUP work.INF
 'Every day life is here. Jocke has started working' (Bloggmix, January 2012)

b. Hon var kommen från ön Caphtor (Swe.)
she was come.PASTPART.C.SG from island.DEF Caphtor
 'She had come from the island Caphtor' (Bonniersromaner 1980-81)

Again, examples involving a participle with a prefixed particle are more widespread; in Bloggmix (collected in January 2012) there are 9 examples of past tense BE + hemkommen 'come home' (with no intervening words). The examples are produced by writers from different parts of Sweden (e.g. in Helsingborg in Skåne, Linköping in Östergötland and Gävle in Gästrikland). One example is given in (12).

(12) Sandra som nästan nyligen var hemkommen från Australien. (Swe.)
Sandra who almost recently was home.come.PASTPART.C.SG from Australia
 'Sandra who almost recently had come home from Australia' (Bloggmix, January 2012)

3. Discussion

The results from the survey lend support to the standard view that the perfect tense in Norwegian and Swedish requires the auxiliary HAVE. HAVE is the only option in iterative contexts for almost all informants, and the construction with BE + active participle is restricted to resultative contexts. In Faroese, on the other hand, HAVE is not always accepted in the iterative context, and at least in some cases, and with some unaccusative verbs, perfects seem to be formed with the BE (but cf. Thráinsson et al. 2004:232 who take the construction with BE to be stative in Faroese, as in Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish). In the Nordic Dialect Corpus, there are some Faroese examples of HAVE + a participle of an unaccusative verb like *fara* 'go' or *koma* 'come'.

The construction with BE is more restricted in Swedish than in Norwegian, and many Swedish dialects disallow all the tested sentences with BE. In Swedish, BE is a bit more widespread with the verb *komma* 'come' than with *ramla* 'fall'. This result is expected given the history of BE in Swedish. Larsson (2009) shows that the frequency of the construction with BE drops in the 17th century, particularly in texts that reflect the spoken language around Stockholm and Uppsala (i.e. in a variety on which the standard language is based). The loss starts with so-called variable behavior verbs (like *travel* or *run*) with a PP that expresses a goal, and non-agentive verbs like *ramla* 'fall' and *bli* 'become' are lost slightly

later. The possibility of BE is preserved the longest with change of location verbs that express a result, or incorporate a particle (cf. Sorace 2000). The verb *komma* 'come' can possibly be included in this latter group, at least when it incorporates a particle.

It should, however, be noted that the sentence with *ramla* + prefixed particle is accepted in a few locations where the resultative sentence with BE + *komma* is judged ungrammatical. Based on the historical data, it is highly likely that the sentence with BE + *komma* 'come' would have been more widely accepted in Swedish, if it had involved a particle like *hem* 'home' rather than a PP, in other words, if it had been like the Norwegian sentence. The possibility of BE does clearly not only depend on the type of participial verb, but also on particles or adverbial modification. It is also well known that there can be variation between individual verbs (which otherwise seem to belong to the same class) with respect to the possibility of BE. In Swedish (and to some extent also in Norwegian and Icelandic), HAVE is generally possible whenever BE is, and the choice is in some cases stylistic.

The results from the survey suggests that BE is more generally accepted in Southwestern Sweden than in other parts of the Swedish-speaking area. This is at least partly in line with other dialect studies. According to Ivarsson (1931), the construction with BE is sometimes preferred to HAVE in Västergötland. Bergman (1942) states that the construction with BE is used in the southernmost parts of Sweden, and is particularly common in Skåne (cf. also Hulthén 1944:209 ff.). Also the corpus data suggests that BE is more generally available (and less marked) in southernmost and Southwestern Sweden, but at the same time it is clear that (certain) examples with BE + a change of location verb with a prefixed particle occur in most parts of Sweden. The results corroborate the claim by Teleman et al. (1999/2:606), that the construction with BE is most common in Southern Sweden (Skåne, Blekinge), where the participle also sometimes can take a free particle, but that examples involving a directional particle prefixed to the participle are part of Standard Swedish.

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Web sites

Bloggmix: <http://spraakbanken.gu.se/korp>

Bonniersromaner 1980-81: <http://spraakbanken.gu.se/korp>

Nordic Atlas of Language Structures (NALS) Journal: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nals>

Nordic Dialect Corpus: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/index.html>

Nordic Syntax Database: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/index.html>

¹ Capitalized BE and HAVE are used to cover forms *vara* and *ha* in Swedish and the correspondences in the other Scandinavian languages.