When Swedish *Bli* Becomes Emotional:
Analyzing *Bli*-constructions in their Italian Translations

Key words: Translation studies; Morphosyntax; Swedish-Italian corpus-based analysis; Comparative linguistics; Swedish *bli*-constructions

The Swedish verb *bli* ('become', 'get') is highly polysemic (Skrzypek, 2020), functioning in diverse contexts: it can denote a punctual event or process, serve as a passive auxiliary (Engdahl, 2006), express future time without implying change (Dahl, 2000), and, to a limited extent, indicate durativity or the onset of a durative action. Even though *bli* is one of the ten most common verbs of the Swedish language (Viberg, 2006), and despite the fact that the passive use of *bli* has been the subject of several studies (Skrzypek, 2020; Engdahl, 2006), there is to our knowledge no study of the verb *bli* as a whole.

Moreover, the comparison of Swedish and Italian languages has been the subject of study from an acquisitional and second/third language learning perspective, such as Wiberg (1996) and Vallerossa (2023). However, no specific comparative studies between the Swedish *bli*-construction and its Italian translations have been done yet.

To shed light on this topic, we conducted a preliminary corpus-based analysis using two Swedish narrative texts translated into Italian by different translators (Läckberg, 2004; Larsson, 2008). Notably, *bli*-constructions expressing emotions or states of mind and those involving gradable adjectives with inanimate subjects were often translated with Italian *si*-constructions, the latter known to be a complex and debated domain (Pescarini, 2015; Cennamo, Jezek 2011; Bentley, 2004; Monachesi, 1993, among others). In some cases, the Italian translations exhibited a different morphosyntactic coding of arguments compared to the Swedish original, reflecting alternations, i.e. displaying a different valency pattern (see Example iii).

Our analysis of *bli*-constructions into Italian translation focuses on *bli* followed by an adjective (*bli*+ADJ) and by a past participle (*bli*+PP), excluding occurrences with *bli* followed by a noun, adverb, or preposition, as not directly consistent with our domain of analysis.

Observing Italian translations of *bli*+PP and *bli*+ADJ, we noticed recurring patterns, as shown in Table 1: i) the reflexive pronoun *si*+verb (*si*-construction); ii) passive; iii) structures with *divenire/diventare* 'become'+ADJ/PP; iv) structures with *essere/stare* 'be' + ADJ/PP. Moreover, other constructions involve the use of idiomatic expressions, among others.

In order to verify the results from our preliminary analysis regarding emotions/states of mind on the one hand, and gradable adjectives with an inanimate subject on the other hand, we aim to enlarge the corpus of translated texts, by including other narrative texts from different authors and translators. Furthermore, by selecting texts of different authors, we aim to investigate whether it is possible to generalize a mapping, i.e. a trend in the choice of constructions, between *bli*-construction and the Italian translations.

Table 1: Frequency of Italian translations of *bli* + ADJ/PP in Läckberg (2004) and Larsson (2008).

	si-construction	passive	*diventare/divenire* 'become'	*essere/stare* 'be'	alternation	other construction
Läckberg	12%	19%	8,8%	11,6%	8,8%	39,8%
Larsson	26,8%	15,3%	10,5%	11%	7,2%	29,2%

Average	18,7%	17,4%	9,6%	11,3%	8%	35%

Examples:

i) Sw. *bli* + emotion/state of mind ADJ/PP > It. *si*-construction

Sw.	***Först***	***bli-r***	***hon***	***rädd.***
	first	become-PRS	she	afraid.SG
	'At first she is afraid.'			

It.	***In***	***un***	***primo***	***momento***	***si***	***spavent-a.***
	in	a	first	moment	REFL.3	scare-PRS.3SG
	'At first she is afraid.'					

ii) Sw. *bli* + gradable ADJ > It. *si*-construction

Sw.	***Det* [hålet]**	***bli-r***	***större.***
	it [= hole]	become-PRS	bigger
	'It becomes bigger.'		

It.	***Il***	***foro***	***si***	***allarg-a.***
	the	hole	REFL.3	widen-PRS.3SG
	'The hole widens.'			

iii) alternation:

Sw.	***Jag***	***bli-r***	***så***	***jävla***	***nedstämd.***
	I	become-PRS	so	damn	depressed.SG
	'I become/get so damn depressed.'				

It.	***Mi***	***butt-a***	***così***	***giù.***
	1SG.DAT	throw-PRS.3SG	so	down
	'It gets me so down.'			

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