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“We come up all this way to visit”

A case study of null instantiation in English with the
verbs *visit* and *destroy*

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1. Introduction

A predicate's valency pattern regulates how many and what kinds of clause elements must follow (Fillmore, 1986, p. 95; Biber, Conrad, & Leech, 2002, pp. 119-121), and, fundamentally, verbs that do not require object arguments are said to be intransitive, whereas those that must be followed by at least one object are transitive (Huddleston & Pullum, 2008, p. 53). In general, English is a language in which all of a predicate's arguments must be conveyed (Goldberg, 2006, p. 196), however, it does occur that transitive verbs are used without expressed objects. In traditional grammatical terms this is referred to as a kind of ellipsis (Huddleston & Pullum, 2008, pp. 1527-1529), and in Construction Grammar it is commonly recognized as *null instantiation* (e.g. Lambrecht & Lemoine, 2005, p. 19; Prytz, 2009, p. 1; Bäckström, 2013, p. 3). Null instantiation is only possible with certain verbs and grammatical constructions in English (Fried & Östman, 2004a; Fillmore, 1986), and what Fillmore (1986, pp. 95-96) claims to be the most acknowledged occurrence of the phenomenon is when one and the same verb can be used both transitively and intransitively, such as the verb *eat*.

- (1) a. She **eats** an apple. (trans.)
 b. I have already **eaten** {Ø}. (intrans.)¹

What differentiates the usage of the verb *eat* in (1b) from typical intransitive verbs, such as *sit* and *sink* in (2) and (3), is that it involves an implicit object, that is an object which is not syntactically expressed, denoting what or that something is eaten (Fillmore, 1986, pp. 95-96), whereas intransitive verbs involve no such implied complements:

- (2) Chris stood up and Mark **sat**.
 (3) The boat **sank**.

Null instantiation has been accounted for from several different aspects within the Construction grammatical framework (e.g. Fillmore, 1986; Goldberg, 1995; Lambrecht & Lemoine, 2005; Prytz, 2009; Bäckström, 2013), and what is commonly agreed upon is that whether or not it is possible to leave out this type of required objects essentially has to do with the predicate's lexical properties. This is particularly advocated by Fillmore (1986), who observes in his study that the phenomenon is possible with several different verbs and types of complements. It has been further noted by both Prytz (2009) and Bäckström (2013) that certain types of components such as adverbials, infinitive phrases, and auxiliary verbs occur frequently in cases where direct

¹ The symbol Ø indicates that an object is missing syntactically.

objects are omitted after transitive verbs, and may thus also play an important role in the licensing of null instantiation. Consider the following examples:

(4) [My translation]: 'She didn't really like **to read** Ø' (Prytz, 2009, p. 27)

(5) [My translation]: 'he **killed** Ø **premeditatedly**' (Prytz, 2009, p. 26)

According to Prytz (2009, pp. 39-40), however, further research focusing specifically on the co-occurrence of these kinds of components and omitted objects is required and, to my knowledge, no such endeavour has been made within the English language.

The present study will therefore investigate the occurrence of null instantiation with the transitive verbs *destroy* and *visit*, with the overall aim of observing what components of the types found in Prytz (2009) tend to occur in instances where the object is omitted after these predicates. The main reason for studying these particular verbs is that they allow the omitting of their direct objects (Prytz, 2009, p. 29; Rice, 1988, p. 207), and the number of senses they denote are adequately restricted considering the scope of the investigation. As a high frequency of certain components was concluded to indicate that the components in question facilitate null instantiation in Prytz (2009, p. 43), it would be of particular interest to determine the frequency of those found with *destroy* and *visit*. This in order to observe if her hypothesis seems to be relevant also in the English language, and at the same time further decide if such grammatical constructions seem to facilitate the phenomenon. In contrast to the research conducted by Prytz (2009) and Bäckström (2013) the present study will also pay attention to the possible co-occurrence of several components in single sets of examples.

In this way the study aspires to provide further foundations for whether it is possible that certain grammatical constructions are of importance in the licensing of null instantiation, and in order to investigate this the following research questions will be addressed in the essay:

- With which components of the types found in Prytz (2009) does null instantiation with the transitive verbs *destroy* and *visit* occur in English?
- Which of these components tend to occur most frequently when the object is omitted after each of the verbs investigated? Which components are most frequent with both verbs?
- What combinations of these components are common with the verbs in instances where the objects are null instantiated?

The essay is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a general introduction to Construction Grammar and a more detailed description of null instantiation. Moreover, it accounts for the

different factors which have been discussed to favour the phenomenon, followed by a summary of the previous endeavours that have been carried out on the subject. In section 3 the method and data used in the study are presented, including the similarities to and differences from the research which the investigation is based upon. Subsequently, the results of the analysis are accounted for and exemplified in section 4, and then further discussed in section 5. Finally, the findings of the study are summarised in a conclusion in section 6.

2. An overview of null instantiation

This section is divided into four main sub-sections: The first two introduce the general definitions of Construction Grammar and null instantiation, the third accounts for the different factors that have been discussed to license or facilitate the phenomenon, and the fourth summarises the main findings of previous studies on the co-occurrence of null instantiation and the components that are to be investigated. Before accounting for the phenomenon in any further detail, a general introduction to Construction Grammar will be provided as null instantiation has frequently been defined and investigated within this theoretical approach (e.g. Fillmore 1986; Goldberg 1995, 2006; Prytz, 2009; Bäckström, 2013; Lambrecht & Lemoine, 2005).

2.1 Construction Grammar

In grammar books such as the *Collins COBUILD English Grammar* (Collins COBUILD, 2007) and *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Huddleston & Pullum, 2008), the phenomenon of omitting object arguments of transitive verbs is commonly defined as a type of ellipsis. However, any further descriptions of the underlying causes and what types of verbs it applies to are, if existing, only briefly accounted for. As previously mentioned, null instantiation has also been discussed within the Construction grammatical approach (e.g. Fillmore, 1986; Goldberg, 1995, 2006; Lambrecht & Lemoine, 2005; Prytz, 2009; Bäckström, 2013), which tends to provide a more in-depth explanation of the phenomenon, and has proved to be a suitable framework for investigating it (Bäckström, 2013, pp. 48-49; Prytz, 2009, p. 5).

Construction Grammar emerged in the 1980s based on Charles Fillmore's theories (Fried & Östman, 2004b), and, fundamentally, the approach holds the opinion that the linguistic notions of form, function, and also meaning (Prytz, 2009, pp. 5-6) are conjoined. This, for example, in contrast to the traditional theories of Generative Grammar, where syntax, morphology, semantics and pragmatics tend to be separated from one another, and where lexical elements, such as nouns, adjectives and verbs, are combined according to certain syntactic rules that are applied at different levels (Prytz, 2009, p. 5; Fried & Östman, 2004b, p. 6; Fried & Östman, 2004a, p. 25). The Construction Grammar framework employs no such regulating of how individual constituents must be combined (Fried & Östman, 2004a, pp. 12, 25), which enables a linguistic analysis where "all information" is accounted for at a single level. This is argued to allow that all units are considered equally important when analysing a language, and thereby more uncommon formulations are not overlooked (Goldberg, 2006, pp. 5-6).

Accordingly, the *grammatical construction* is viewed as the principal element when analysing a language (Fried & Östman, 2004a, p. 12), and what defines it is that “its meaning and/or its form is not compositionally derived from other constructions existing in the language” (Goldberg, 2006, p. 4). In Construction Grammar the term *construction* is thus used to refer to a broad spectrum of different linguistic entities and structures, including morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, idioms, conditionals, passives and even whole sentences (Fried & Östman, 2004b, p. 1; Goldberg, 1995, p. 4; Goldberg, 2006, pp. 4-5, 24; Prytz, 2009, pp. 5-6). A single sentence or phrase may, in other words, consist of several constructions simultaneously. However, in the present study the term will be somewhat limited, foremost to syntactic properties in agreement with Prytz (2009). A more detailed definition of what particular kinds of constructions are to be investigated is presented in sections 2.4 and 3.

As regards valency, Construction Grammar shares the general idea that predicates take different types and numbers of complements, and accordingly have different roles and positions in phrases and sentences (Fried & Östman, 2004a, pp. 40-41). However, some structures are believed to not be fully explainable by the verb’s valency pattern (Goldberg, 2006, pp. 6-7), bearing in mind expressions such as the one exemplified in (6).

(6) He **scolded his way to the podium**.

Consequently, and in contrast to traditional grammatical notions, the argument structure is commonly believed to be affected not only by the predicate’s valency pattern but also by other lexical factors, as well as discourse factors and grammatical constructions (Prytz, 2009, pp. 1, 6), which will be further accounted for with reference to null instantiation in the following subsections.

An additional lexical property that predicates are believed to have according to the Construction grammatical approach is that they are linked to a number of so-called frame elements, which constitute all related words that provide the relevant information one needs in order to know the meaning of a specific predicate (Fried & Östman, 2004a, p. 43). An example provided by Fried & Östman (2004a, p. 42) is the verb *steal* which include the frame elements *thief*, *stolen thing*, *owner* and *value* et cetera. Frame semantics, which is a framework that concentrates specifically on this idea and is closely related to that of Construction Grammar (Bäckström, 2013), has been discussed in previous research on null instantiation (e.g. Bäckström, 2013, pp. 24-25) where it has been suggested that some types of adverbial constructions facilitate the omitting of the object due to their being linked to frame elements (Bäckström, 2013, p. 34). One such example in Swedish is “*när mamma hämtar Ø på dagis*”

(‘when mum picks up \emptyset from the day nursery’) (Bäckström, 2013, p. 34) where Bäckström (2013, p. 34) claims that the adverbial *på dagis* (‘from the day nursery’) is linked to the frame element *child(ren)*, and thereby the object is implied and needs not to be expressed. The present study, however, will be confined to noting visible components, such as adverbials, and not go into further details as regards possible frame elements with which they may be associated.

2.2 Indefinite null complements and definite null complements

Examining the matter of null instantiation more closely, Fillmore (1986, p. 96) recognizes two types of complement omission, namely that of *indefinite null complements* (INC) and *definite null complements* (DNC), also referred to as *indefinite null instantiation* (INI) respectively *definite null instantiation* (DNI) (e.g. Prytz, 2009; Bäckström, 2013; Lambrecht & Lemoine, 2005). The former type signifies that the missing object is either unknown or irrelevant in the context, as exemplified in (7), whereas the latter involves objects that have to be identified from the occurring pragmatic or linguistic context, as seen in (8) (Fillmore, 1986, p. 96; Prytz, 2009, p. 8).

(7) I spent the afternoon **baking** $\{\emptyset\}$. (Fillmore, 1986, p. 97)

(8) - Why did you marry her?
- Because mother **insisted** $\{\emptyset\}$. (Fillmore, 1986, p. 98)

Indefinite null instantiation depends on the lexical properties of the verb, which is referred to as *lexical licensing*, whereas definite null instantiation depends on both lexical licensing and the grammatical construction of the predicate and the complement, that is, broadly speaking, the form and meaning of the constituents (Fillmore, 1986, p. 97; Prytz, 2009, p. 10; Lambrecht & Lemoine, 2005, p. 20). So-called *constructional licensing* is further explained and exemplified in section 2.3.3.

In cases where the omitted complement is indefinite, the focus is placed on the action which the predicate denotes (Fillmore, 1986, p. 96), and some other verbs that allow this type of null instantiation include *clean*, *drink*, *embroider*, *hunt*, *iron*, *read*, *sing*, *study*, *teach* and *write* (Levin, 1993, p. 33). It should be stressed that compared to typical intransitive verbs, such as those mentioned in the introduction section, there is always an implied object involved, which could be interpreted as representing either the word “*stuff*” or “*something*” as exemplified in (9) (Fillmore, 1986, p. 95), or a more specific concept which is generally conceived and linked with the verb, such as *dinner* in (10).

(9) He’s too stressed out to be able to **eat** $\{stuff\}$.

(10) I came home from work just before they started to **eat** {*dinner*}.

What is worth noting as well is that there are verbs which allow both INI and DNI, for example *contribute* (Fillmore, 1986, p. 97).

2.3 Factors that facilitate null instantiation

Prior studies on null instantiation have sought to explain the phenomenon from various different aspects (e.g. Fillmore, 1986; Goldberg, 1995; Lambrecht & Lemoine, 2005; Prytz, 2009; Bäckström, 2013), of which the most frequently discussed include lexical, constructional, semantic, and pragmatic factors. Although one particular factor tends to be emphasised in preference to the others (e.g. Fillmore, 1986; Goldberg, 1995; Lambrecht & Lemoine, 2005), these determinants seem, in fact, to cooperate (Bäckström, 2013, p. 27) and will accordingly be accounted for in this sub-section.

2.3.1 Lexical licensing

According to Fillmore (1986, p. 98) the lexical properties of the predicate are essential in the licensing of null instantiation, which implies, in broad terms, that some transitive predicates can allow their objects to be left out whereas other cannot. This is generally conceived as the fundamental factor also in other studies on the subject (e.g. Goldberg, 1995; Lambrecht & Lemoine, 2005; Prytz, 2009; Bäckström, 2013). Fillmore (1986, p. 98) further claims that this kind of lexical description is more consistent than a semantic one, as some verbs allow null instantiation whereas predicates with synonymous meanings may require their complements to be expressed. For example, the verbs *protest* and *find out* can be used without objects, whereas *oppose* and *discover* cannot, even though the verbs are “semantically related” (Fillmore, 1986, p. 98). Further examples include:

(11) She promised.

*She pledged.

(Fillmore, 1986, p. 99)

(12) I tried.

*I attempted.

(Fillmore, 1986, p. 99)

Moreover, it is argued that neither is a pragmatic description sufficient as some verbs, such as *lock*, do not allow object omission, even in cases where the particular complement that the predicate refers to is pragmatically apparent in the situation (Fillmore, 1986, p. 98), as exemplified in (13).

(13) Did you lock the door?

*Yes, I locked Ø.

(Fillmore, 1986, p. 98)

However, determining that a certain verb allows or does not allow null instantiation appears to be an insufficient method in many cases. A single predicate may denote several senses and Fillmore (1986, p. 99) emphasises that with polysemous transitive verbs, in other words verbs with several different senses, it is rather certain types of the senses and not the predicates per se that permit leaving out the object. Likewise, it appears that only particular kinds of complements allow being omitted in some cases. For example, a left out object of the verb *lose* (Fillmore, 1986, p. 100) can only refer to a certain kind of competition or election, but not to an item which one has forgotten or mislaid. It therefore appears that null instantiation cannot be fully accounted for from lexical factors only. Further illustrations of how crucial a role the verb's senses and the meaning of the complements may play is provided in (14-16).

(14) a. I **applied for the job**.

I applied.

b. They **applied the bandage**.

*They applied.

(Fillmore, 1986, p. 101)

(15) a. They accepted **my offer**.

They accepted.

b. They accepted **my gift**.

*They accepted.

(Fillmore, 1986, p. 101)

(16) a. They **know** that he resigned.

They know.

b. They **know** Ben.

*They know.

(Fillmore, 1986, p. 102)

2.3.2 Pragmatic and semantic licensing

In contrast to Fillmore (1986), Goldberg (2006, p. 196) claims that pragmatic factors are essential for whether or not it is possible to omit an obligatory argument. What she suggests, more specifically, is that certain means of accentuation permit leaving out the object in cases where the predicate is a verb. These include, for example, “repeated action” (*Pat gave and gave but Chris just took and took*), “strong affective stance” (*He murdered!*), and “contrastive focus” (*She could steal but she could not rob.*) (Goldberg, 2006, pp. 196-197). The idea is that as the focus is put on the action of the verb the omitted objects are of low discourse prominence, and thus not necessary to express. In other words, this would allow the complement to be omitted

in situations where the referent is generic or when a certain habit is expressed (Bäckström, 2013, pp. 11-12; Prytz, 2009, p. 13).

As regards semantic factors, Fillmore (1986, pp. 98, 104) has, as mentioned beforehand, rejected the idea that null instantiation can be adequately explained from this aspect. However, Bäckström (2013) has found that null instantiation in Swedish seems to be further favoured by certain semantic roles, in other words, the relation which the predicate has to its arguments (Johansson & Manninen, 2012, p. 83). What was concluded in Bäckström (2013, pp. 15, 44), more specifically, was that in cases where a direct object is left out the subject tends to take an agent or cause role, of which the former implies that the action is carried out intentionally by the subject and the latter unintentionally.

2.3.3 Constructional licensing

As previously mentioned, definite null instantiation is licensed not only by the predicate's lexical properties but also by the grammatical construction in which it is found (Fillmore, 1986, p. 97; Lambrecht & Lemoine, 2005, p. 20). This kind of licensing is, for example, evident in imperative constructions (Prytz, 2009, pp. 11-12) which are common in recipes or manuals.

(17) Transfer Ø to a warmed dish.

(18) Shake Ø before using.

(Fillmore, 1986, p. 95)

The verbs *transfer* and *shake* in (17) and (18) would typically not allow null instantiation when occurring in other types of grammatical constructions.

As has been further observed by Fillmore (1986, pp. 100-103), not all types of objects may allow being omitted, although it is the very same sense of a verb that is being used. For example, with the verb *notice* he claims that it is possible to omit the direct object when it is constructed as a *that*-clause but not as a noun phrase:

(19) a. I noticed **that he was deaf**.

I noticed.

b. I noticed **the snake**.

*I noticed.

(Fillmore, 1986, p. 102)

Fillmore (1986, p. 103) further recognizes several complement constructions that may be omitted as definite null complements, including *lexical noun phrase direct objects*, *indicative that-clause direct objects*, *subjunctive that-clause direct objects*, and *prepositional phrase complements of transitive verbs*, to name a few.

With this in mind, Prytz (2009, pp. 3, 12-13) argues that other types of grammatical

constructions could also facilitate null instantiation, in cooperation with the discourse factors mentioned in section 2.3.2. In fact, research conducted by both her and Bäckström (2013) has indicated that especially certain syntactic forms, such as adverbials, infinitive phrases and auxiliary verbs, but also semantic forms such as the presence of an inanimate subject, seem to facilitate the phenomenon in Swedish. As this is what the present study is to further investigate within the English language a more detailed report of their findings will be presented subsequently.

2.4 Previous work on grammatical constructions and null instantiation

2.4.1 Prytz (2009)

Prytz (2009) investigated the occurrence of null instantiation in Swedish focusing on determining what types of grammatical components occurred most frequently when the object was omitted after the two transitive verbs *läsa* ('read') and *döda* ('kill'). The investigation was based on her hypothesis that grammatical constructions could possibly favour the licensing of leaving out objects (Prytz, 2009, p. 3). She also determined what type of complement omission, namely INI or DNI, was most common with the verbs investigated and the constructions that were found.

As previously discussed, the term construction is a broad definition that is employed to refer to "all entities" within a language (Prytz, 2009, p. 21). The constructions found in Prytz's (2009, pp. 21, 25-32) study mainly consisted of certain clause elements and phrases such as adverbials, auxiliary verbs, and verb-coordinations, but in some instances the term was also used to refer to the occurrence of inanimate subjects. In other words, for example *adverbial construction* and *infinitive construction* (Prytz, 2009, pp. 26-27) designated adverbials respectively infinitives co-occurring with null instantiation in the excerpts of data. Examples of these two types of constructions are demonstrated in (20) and (21).

(20) Adverbial construction:

[V Ø Adv]

'Han **läste** Ø **medan han talade**'

[My translation]: 'He **read** Ø **while speaking**'

(Prytz, 2009, p. 26)

(21) Infinitive construction:

[to V_{Inf} Ø]

'Hon tyckte egentligen inte om **att läsa** Ø'

[My translation]: 'She didn't really like **to read** Ø'

(Prytz, 2009, p. 27)

Prytz's (2009) research was carried out by analysing corpus-based material and the most frequent components found were adverbials, infinitives, auxiliary verbs, and different types of verb-coordinations. Other constructions that she observed to be quite common included, amongst others, relative clauses, temporal subordinate clauses and such where the subject was inanimate (Prytz, 2009, pp. 26-28, 31-32). Prytz (2009, p. 19) further recognized that it was common that more than one type of component occurred simultaneously with null instantiation, however, in her analysis she only determined what she conceived to be the most essential one in allowing leaving out the object in each example of data (Prytz, 2009, p. 25).

Based on the high frequency of particular components of those found, the conclusion was that grammatical constructions, and especially that of adverbials, infinitives, verb-coordinations and auxiliary verbs, clearly seem to facilitate null instantiation (Prytz, 2009, pp. 2, 43, 45). She further pointed out that also the less common components that were found could favour the phenomenon (2009, p. 43), but as her conclusion was based on frequency this was naturally more difficult to determine.

Prytz's (2009, p. 43) reflection on why the constructions found in her study could facilitate the phenomenon was partly linked to Goldberg's theory (2006, pp. 196-197) on low discourse prominence. What Prytz (2009, pp. 43, 45) suggested more specifically was that many of the components in question put emphasis on the action of the verb and thus lessen the importance of the object argument. Besides relating the usage of the constructions to discourse prominence, she further noted that in many of the examples the relevant verbs were expressed generically or as a habit.

However, Prytz (2009, p. 43) also pointed out that in order to ascertain that particular constructions facilitate null instantiation it would require further research focusing on the co-occurrence of these types of components with omitted objects.

2.4.2 Bäckström (2013)

Bäckström (2013) examined null instantiation from lexical, syntactic, semantic as well as contextual aspects in Swedish, by investigating factors that seemed to favour the phenomenon with the four transitive verbs *hämta* ('collect'), *bygga* ('build'), *övertaska* ('surprise'), and *sakna* ('miss') (Bäckström, 2013, pp. 2, 30, 41). As indicated by Prytz (2009), it was claimed that prior studies have mainly focused on determining what lexical and syntactic factors are of importance, and therefore the possible significance of semantic factors as well as grammatical constructions has been overlooked.

By examining corpus-based material one of the main findings was that certain semantic

factors, especially agentive actions, seem to favour the phenomenon (Bäckström, 2013, p. 44). Moreover, and what is of main importance to the present study, Bäckström (2013, pp. 33) found that all types of constructions identified in Prytz (2009) occurred also in her material, in other words, in examples where the object was omitted after the verbs investigated. One of the most common constructions found was that of adverbials (2013, pp. 33-34, 39), which also belonged to the most frequent types found in Prytz (2009), as previously mentioned. Similar to the prior study, Bäckström (2013, pp. 44-45) further emphasised the occurrence of verb-coordinations and auxiliary verb constructions. Likewise to Prytz (2009), however, it was pointed out that further research on null instantiation would be necessary in this respect (Bäckström, 2013, p. 48).

The hypothesis that grammatical constructions such as those found in Prytz (2009) and Bäckström (2013) are significant in the licensing of the phenomenon thus seems highly probable. However, it is evident that further research on this particular aspect is required, not least in a language other than that of Swedish. Therefore, the present study aspires to further investigate the occurrence of these components in relation to null instantiation in English, on the one hand by analysing the frequency of each construction separately, and on the other hand by analysing the occurrence of possible combinations of these constructions. In this way, it enables one to observe if Prytz's (2009) hypothesis seems to be applicable also in the English language, which is an endeavour that, to my knowledge, has not been carried out previously.

3. Method

3.1 Material and limitation

The transitive verbs *destroy* and *visit* were selected for the study as they have been indicated to allow null instantiation in previous works (Prytz, 2009, p. 29; Rice, 1988, p. 207), but not further investigated as regards grammatical constructions that co-occur with null instantiation. As English and Swedish are both Germanic languages with much resemblance in grammar, it was considered convenient to study verbs other than those examined in Prytz (2009) and Bäckström (2013). Moreover, *destroy* and *visit* were both recognised to have sufficiently restricted meanings which would facilitate the collecting of data in the corpus and the analysis of the material acquired. The verb *destroy* is listed as only transitive in the Oxford English Dictionary (Destroy, n.d.), and *visit* is listed as transitive with exception from the sense that corresponds to *talking, chatting* or *exchanging conversation* (Visit, n.d.). Thus it is transitive in

the meaning of seeing somebody, either in a “friendly or sociable manner” or in order to “comfort or assist” someone who is sick or in distress, which is the sense focused on in the study. What ought to be further noted apropos of *visit* is that the predicate can take adverbial complements, such as *there* and *here*, which could render it difficult to ascertain whether the missing constituents of the verb in the data are actual direct objects.

(22)a. You’d be able to visit **here**

b. It had that quality of making you feel like an old friend who had visited **there** many times before

However, on closer examination it appears that only a limited category of adverbials seem to be compatible with the verb, and the characteristics of these complements are very similar to that of objects. For example, *here* and *there* are both noun phrases, and, as exemplified in (23), it would not be possible to insert a prepositional phrase functioning as an adverbial without expressing a direct object referent.

(23)a. Jake also had a share in **a larger, sea-going vessel, which** we used to visit **in the harbour**

b. *We visited **in the harbour**

Another point worth bearing in mind is that it is also possible to passivate *visit*, which is characteristic of transitive verbs (Biber et al., 2002, p. 166), and thus a further indication that the predicate is apt to take object arguments.

(24) Earlier this year **the club was visited by Ken Moss**, the Mayor of Havant

Thereby, it was assumed that the missing complements of the verb *visit* in the data consisted of direct objects rather than adverbials. If the results should turn out to be very different in terms of frequency of the constructions between the two verbs the matter will be further discussed, if not, however, the fact that *visit* may take adverbial complements can be considered as being of minor importance for the investigation.

In order to restrict the data, the 65 first relevant examples where the object was left out were collected with the verb *visit*. However, with the verb *destroy* only 43 examples without an object out of a total of 6002 hits were found. In other words, the material consisted of a total of 108 examples, which was considered sufficient to identify recurring constructions. The data was retrieved from the British National Corpus (BNCweb CQP-Edition), without being restricted to specific sub-corpora. This in order to obtain as varying expressions as possible, not by any chance biased by certain genres. The search strings that were used consisted of a lemma-search of each verb, which implies that all different inflections of the verbs, with the possible exception of words of other word classes being tagged incorrectly, were obtained.

Consequently, a vast number of hits were retrieved for each predicate of which the greater part included object arguments. The reason for employing such a general search-string, as compared to one where only certain predetermined constituents and structures are retrieved, is that it allows all kinds of components where the object is omitted to be generated, and thus the risk of missing such that might be of importance was avoided. As the selection of the data depended on the interpretation of the material, cases that might in fact have proved to involve null instantiation, for instance, examples where other types of complements, such as adverbials, were analysed as objects, may have been disregarded. However, it was considered more important that the data analysed in the study consisted of actual cases of the phenomenon, and the context provided for each example was carefully scrutinized in order to assure this. Moreover, as has been observed by Bäckström (2013, pp. 9-10) a direct object that seems to be omitted may in fact be placed elsewhere in the sentence, and as this is not regarded as an instance of null instantiation I did not include such examples. In other words, the criterion for the selected data was that the object was completely missing from the sentence, with the exception of cases where the referent itself was present but an “anaphoric pronoun” (Prytz, 2009, pp. 15-16) functioning as the direct object could be viewed as being left unexpressed, as exemplified in (25).

(25) a. Han hittade en bräda och sågade itu Ø. (Prytz, 2009, p. 15)

[My translation]: He found a board and sawed {Ø} in two pieces.

b. Han hittade en bräda och sågade {den} itu. (Prytz, 2009, p. 16)

[My translation]: He found a board and sawed {it} in two pieces.

3.2 Procedures

The analysis of the data consisted of two steps. The first and the most prominent part of the investigation was to identify the constructions that were found in Prytz (2009) and determine the most frequent of those occurring with each respectively both of the verb(s) in the data, as high frequency has been considered to be an indication of favouring null instantiation in the prior studies (Prytz, 2009; Bäckström, 2013). The second part of the procedure consisted of noting the co-occurrence of two or more of these components in single excerpts. This part of the analysis was conducted in order to determine if certain combinations of the components seem to co-occur, as Prytz (2009, p. 25) has pointed out that the fact that more than one construction occur in cases where the object is omitted could be a further facilitating factor. A further idea was that this could also help allocating what constructions tend to occur as the single such in instances in which they are found.

By investigating the types of components found in Prytz (2009), and further emphasised in Bäckström (2013), the present study would not only be consistent with the research it is based upon, which would facilitate a direct comparison to the prior work as in accordance with its purpose, but also provided with a margin to work within. Consequently, this could lead to a conclusion for whether or not Prytz's (2009) hypothesis seems to be valid also for other verbs, and at the same time if it seems equally applicable in English as it has proven to be in Swedish.

The most common constructions found in Prytz (2009) include:

i) Adverbial constructions:

[V Ø Adv]

- a. 'Han **läste** Ø **medan han talade**'

[My translation]: 'He **read** Ø **while speaking**'

- b. 'En tredjedel **läser** Ø **i Sundsvall**'

[My translation]: 'A third **reads** [studies] Ø **in Sundsvall**'

- c. 'han **dödade** Ø **genomtänkt**'

[My translation]: 'he **killed** Ø **premeditatedly**' (Prytz, 2009, p. 26)

ii) Infinitive constructions:

[to V_{Inf} Ø]

- a. 'Hon tyckte egentligen inte om **att läsa** Ø'

[My translation]: 'She didn't really like **to read** Ø'

- b. 'Efter den skickliga hjärntvätten blir valet oftast **att döda** Ø'

[My translation]: 'After the efficient brainwashing the choice is most often **to kill** Ø'

[X to V_{Inf} Ø]

'hur hon skulle göra för att locka fram **hans lust att läsa** Ø'

[My translation]: 'what she would do to bring out **his inclination to read** Ø'

(Prytz, 2009, p. 27)

iii) Auxiliary verb constructions:

[V_{Aux} V Ø]

- a. 'barn som precis **börjat läsa** Ø'

[My translation]: 'children who have just **started to read** Ø'

- b. '[...] **måste** de också **lära sig att döda** Ø'

[My translation]: '[...] they also **must learn to kill** Ø' (Prytz, 2009, p. 28)

iv) Verb-coordinations:

[V X *and* V Ø]

- a. '**Läs** Ø **och Res**'

[My translation]: '**Read** Ø **and Travel**'

- b. 'narkotikahandlare och andra som **förstör och dödar** Ø'

[My translation]: 'drug dealers and others who **destroy and kill** Ø'

(Prytz, 2009, pp. 28-29)

[V X_i and V_i Ø]²

- 'Boel **tog en pärm på måfå och började läsa** Ø'

[My translation]: 'Boel **picked up a file at random and started to read** Ø'

[V and V Ø]_{Pseudo-coordination}

- a. 'En kväll när jag **satt och läste** Ø flög tankarna iväg'

[My translation]: 'One night when I **sat and read** Ø my thoughts drifted away'

- b. 'Erik **låg på sängen och läste** Ø'

[My translation]: 'Erik **lay on the bed and read** Ø'

(Prytz, 2009, p. 29)

Other constructions that occurred at least once in Prytz (2009) include:

- v) Relative constructions:

[*who*_{Rel} V Ø]

- a. 'den där typen **som läste** Ø'

[My translation]: 'that type **who read** Ø'

- b. 'soldater **som dödat** Ø i krig'

[My translation]: 'soldiers **who have killed** Ø in war'

(Prytz, 2009, pp. 29-30)

- vi) Resultative constructions:

[V Ø Pred_{PP}]

- 'gossen **läste** Ø **till präst**'

[My translation]: 'the boy **studied** Ø **to [become] a priest**'

(Prytz, 2009, p. 30)

[V Ø Refl Pred_{PP}]

- '**läsa** Ø **sig till sömns**'

[My translation]: '**read** Ø **oneself to sleep**'

(Prytz, 2009, p. 31)

- vii) Temporal subordinate clauses:

[*when* X V Ø]

- '**när de som skrivit själva läser** Ø'

[My translation]: '**when those who have written themselves read** Ø'

(Prytz, 2009, p. 31)

² The verb has the same referent *i* as the phrase X (Prytz, 2009, p. 29)

viii) Constructions where the subject is inanimate:

[S_{inanimate} V Ø]

a. 'farten dödar Ø'

[My translation]: **the speed kills Ø**'

b. 'rökning dödar Ø'

[My translation]: **smoking kills Ø**'

(Prytz, 2009. p. 32)

ix) Remaining constructions that each occurred only once in Prytz (2009):

[either V Ø or V]

'Eftersom jag **varken dödat Ø eller blivit dödad**'

[My translation]: 'Since I have **either killed Ø or been killed**'

[the X V Ø the X]

'**Ju mer han läste Ø, ju mer förstod han**'

[My translation]: '**The more he read Ø, the more he understood**'

[V_{Imperative} Ø]

'**Läs Ø stod det!**'

[My translation]: '**Read Ø it said!**'

(Prytz, 2009, pp. 32-33)

The syntactic representations within square brackets are directly translated from Prytz (2009, pp. 26-33), and it is important to be aware of the fact that they are used to provide a general conception of how the constructions are employed with null instantiation, and that the order of the clause elements may vary from example to example, as is also pointed out by Prytz (2009, p. 26). Moreover, the word order could in some cases differ slightly in English from that in Swedish (Sager & Svartvik, 1977, p. 390). Other differences between the two languages that could be observable in the analysis or the results are presented in the following sub-section.

As has been discussed beforehand, and as noticeable in some of the excerpts above, it often occurs that several of the components co-exist (Prytz, 2009, pp. 25-26). For example, '*drug dealers and others who destroy and kill Ø*' in (iv) involves both a relative clause and a verb-coordination, however, in this case Prytz (2009, pp. 28-29) drew the conclusion that it was the [*v and v*]-construction that was most relevant in facilitating leaving out the missing object. Similarly, '*soldiers who have killed Ø in war*' in (v) was registered as an example of a relative construction, despite the fact that the verb is followed by an adverbial (Prytz, 2009, pp. 29-30). Prytz's (2009, pp. 25-26) objection to accounting for multiple constructions co-occurring with null instantiation in one and the same example was that it could imply difficulties in determining the importance of each individual component. On the other hand, however, it could be

considered equally challenging to determine which one specific component is most essential in allowing the phenomenon in some cases. For example, the following excerpt involves not only a relative clause but also a verb-coordination, and stating that a particular construction is more important than the other in facilitating the left out object would be an assumption rather than an actual fact.

(26) Greek fire,' he adds, 'the kind that burns and destroys Ø'

Consequently, the analysis was in this respect conducted slightly differently from that of Prytz (2009). In cases where several of the above listed components co-occurred in relation to the unexpressed objects, I noted all of them instead of evaluating and classifying each instance of the data as only one type of construction, in other words, instead of seeking to determine the 'most influential' one. Returning to the example in (26), this implies that the relative clause and the verb-coordination were both accounted for in the results. This procedure could, of course, imply that components that do not, in fact, facilitate null instantiation were given prominence to, as pointed out by Prytz (2009, pp. 25-26). However, it was believed that a distinctive frequency of certain constructions would yet be noticeable as in accordance with the aim of the analysis.

3.3 Differences between English and Swedish

As regards the category of infinitive constructions it should be stressed that infinite *ing*-clauses in English, as in '*Studying a language is fun*', correspond to the infinitive marker *att* ('to') in Swedish (= *att studera ett språk* 'to study a language') (Sager & Svartvik, 1977, p. 326), and it was consequently considered that they ought to be included in the overall category of infinitive constructions to be in accordance with Prytz (2009, p. 27). Therefore, these forms were also noted and presented in the results section, represented as [*V_{ing-participle} Ø*].

With respect to auxiliary verbs, Prytz (2009, p. 28) included "non-typical auxiliaries" in this category, such as *learn* in '*learn to read*' in (iii). However, in order to avoid any misinterpretation or confusion I only registered verbs that are traditionally regarded as such, for example modal auxiliaries such as *will*, *can*, *should*, and the semi-modal *used to* (Biber et al., 2002, pp. 28, 198). I also included *be able to* as this can be used as a rephrasing of *can/could* in the perfect aspect and future tense (Sager & Svartvik, 1977, p. 28). Moreover, Prytz (2009, p. 28) determined that auxiliary verbs employed to denote tense, such as *be* and *have* (Biber et al., 2002, p. 28), did not seem relevant and, accordingly, these types were excluded in the analysis.

There is also a difference in the usage of verb-coordinations between the two languages that ought to be addressed. Some pseudo-coordinations in Swedish, such as *gå och fiska* ('go and fish'), tend to be expressed in the *ing*-form rather than as coordinations in English (i.e. 'go fishing') (Sager & Svartvik, 1977, p. 317), and since this is not an instance of pseudo-coordination in English such examples were not registered as this type of construction. They are, however, accounted for separately in the results section.

The possibility that other types of constructions or variants of those listed above would occur in the data was in other words considered too, and if recurring in the material, or otherwise regarded to be of possible importance, such components were noted and listed separately in the results section. It should be stressed, however, that the constructions found in Prytz (2009) were used as the main groundwork for the analysis. Another point worth emphasising is that the usage of the Construction grammatical framework pertained to the terminology, and did not affect the actual entities which were analysed.

4. Results

The data consisting of corpus-retrieved examples of null instantiation with the verbs *destroy* and *visit* have been analysed by observing the occurrence of the components found in Prytz (2009). In sections 4.1 and 4.2 the frequency of the constructions is presented, starting with those that are most common. Section 4.3 presents specific combinations of the components that have been observed to recur in the material, and, at last, section 4.4 accounts for other types or variants of the constructions discussed in Prytz (2009) that have been found.

For each verb a table is used to provide an overview of the occurrence of each construction found. It should be noted that as 65 examples were examined with the verb *visit* and 43 with *destroy* the numbers in the two tables are not directly comparable as such, and therefore the percentage rate of each construction is also provided. The constructions are then further presented and exemplified according to their frequency.

Table 1 Destroy

Type of construction	Number of occurrence
[to V _{Inf} Ø]	17 (25,0%)
[X to V _{Inf} Ø]	9 (13,2%)
[V _{ing-participle} Ø]	-
[V X and V Ø]	18 (26,5%)
[V X _i and V _i Ø]	-
[V and V Ø] _{Pseudo-coordination}	-
[V _{Aux} V Ø]	8 (11,8%)
[V Ø Advl]	6 (8,8%)
[who/that/which _{Rel} V Ø]	4 (5,9%)
[S _{Inanimate} V Ø]	4 (5,9%)
[V _{Imperative} Ø]	2 (2,9%)
[V Ø Pred _{pp}]	-
[V Ø Refl Pred _{pp}]	-
[when X V Ø]	-
[either V Ø or V]	-
[the X V Ø the X]	-
Total:	68 (100,0%)

Table 2 Visit

Type of construction	Number of occurrence
[V Ø Advl]	35 (38,5%)
[to V _{Inf} Ø]	18 (19,8%)
[X to V _{Inf} Ø]	2 (2,2%)
[V _{ing-participle} Ø]	2 (2,2%)
[V _{Aux} V Ø]	11 (12,1%)
[who/that/which _{Rel} V Ø]	9 (9,9%)
[when X V Ø]	8 (8,8%)
[V X and V Ø]	3 (3,3%)
[V X _i and V _i Ø]	-
[V and V Ø] _{Pseudo-coordination}	3 (3,3%)
[V Ø Pred _{pp}]	-
[V Ø Refl Pred _{pp}]	-
[S _{Inanimate} V Ø]	-
[V _{Imperative} Ø]	-
[either V Ø or V]	-
[the X V Ø the X]	-
Total:	91 (100,0%)

As demonstrated in table 1 and 2, the analysis shows that the majority of the types of constructions that occurred in Prytz (2009) are found also with the English verbs *destroy* and *visit* in instances where their direct objects are left unexpressed. The types of constructions that were not detected include: *[either V Ø or V]-*, *[the X V Ø the X]-*, and resultative constructions with both verbs; temporal subordinate clauses with *destroy*, and inanimate subject constructions and imperatives with *visit*. As for the components that were found in the data the frequency varies slightly between two verbs as can be seen in the tables.

4.1 Most frequent constructions

The most frequent types of components that occur with both of the verbs *destroy* and *visit* are infinitive and adverbial constructions, verb-coordinations, and also auxiliary verb constructions. The former of these is the one most frequent component with *destroy*, whereas adverbial constructions make out the distinctly predominant type with *visit*.

Of the two types of infinitive constructions investigated the plain *[to V_{Inf} Ø]*-construction (27) is more common than that which specifically functions as a noun complement clause (28),

however, the latter type is yet found with both verbs. As for *visit* there are also two instances of infinitive constructions in the form of the *ing*-participle of the verb as exemplified in (29).

Infinitive constructions:

(27) [*to V_{Inf} Ø*]

- a. 'I am coming **to destroy!**'
- b. We come up all this way **to visit**.

(28) [*X to V_{Inf} Ø*]

- a. Iago wants **the power to destroy**.
- b. This being the case, summer weekends are not **the best time to visit**.

(29) [*V_{ing-participle} Ø*]

- a. Guests are interested in **visiting** in spring and autumn, but not in winter

Adverbial construction:

(30) [*V Ø Adv*]

- a. Mummy **visits from Norwich**.
- b. Winnie Bailey, the soul of tact, **frequently visited**
- c. And 'ozone-friendly' often designates soft CFC gases which, though less destructive than others, **still destroy**.

Auxiliary verb construction:

(31) [*V_{Aux} V Ø*]

- a. 'He **will destroy!**' yelled Rafiq.
- b. She'd **visit** and the guys'd say how beautiful she was.

Verb-coordinations of the type represented as [*VX and V Ø*] make out the second most frequent construction that occurs with *destroy*. This construction is not as common with *visit*, however, by contrast this verb is on the other hand used in pseudo-coordinations as exemplified in (33).

Verb+verb-coordination constructions:

(32) [*V X and V Ø*]

- a. But, like Buff, they wanted to **kill and destroy**.
- b. With other illustrators, I work at a distance — we **visit and phone**, but there is a point at which I can't pester them any more

(33) [*V and V Ø*]_{Pseudo-coordination}

- I do what I do to the best of my ability and hope that people will hear about it and **come and visit**.

4.2 Remaining constructions

As for the remaining types of constructions identified, relative clauses are rather common with both verbs. However, as can be seen in (34) this type of construction tends to co-occur with one or multiple of the other components investigated, which will be further discussed subsequently.

Relative construction:

(34) [*that/who/which*_{Rel} V Ø]

- a. Greek fire,' he adds, 'the kind **that burns and destroys**'
- b. Shrieks of alarm from Maha, a divorcee from Qatar **who often visited** in those days.

Constructions with inanimate subjects and imperative clauses only occur with the verb *destroy* in the data, and equivalently, temporal subordinate clauses beginning with *when* are exclusively found in the examples of null instantiation with the verb *visit*.

Inanimate subject construction:

(35) [*S*_{Inanimate} V Ø]

But **riots only destroy**.

Imperative construction:

(36) [*V*_{Imperative} Ø]

- a. I believe lots of things people want destroyed survive because they will say 'burn' dramatically, instead of '**destroy**'.
- b. Intruder in room B, floor sixty-five. **Seek and destroy**.

Temporal subordinate clauses:

(37) [*when* X V Ø]

It is a sad decision, but it no longer makes any sense keeping the place and having to stay in the local pub **when we visit**.

The imperative construction in (36b) appears to refer to the compound noun “*search and destroy*” (Search and destroy, n.d.) which is a term denoting a U.S. military strategy. Considering this, the phrase could be viewed as a type of collocation which consequently could be a facilitating factor in itself. This reference was yet analysed as an instance of null instantiation and it recurs in two other excerpts in the material.

4.3 Combined constructions

As was also noted but not further investigated by Prytz (2009, p. 19), several of the components investigated tend to co-occur with null instantiation. With *destroy* only 16 instances were analysed as containing a single construction, and with *visit* combined constructions were found

in close to half the number of examples. On closer examination it appears that certain of these combinations recur with both verbs. The most apparent cases are that of relative constructions and constructions where the subject is inanimate, of which all examples of data are found to be combined with one or several of the other components, the most common of these including adverbials, auxiliary verbs, and verb-coordinations. With *destroy* two instances of relative constructions are also used with *to*-infinitives. The syntactic representations within square brackets are provided to further elucidate which types of constructions have been analysed as combined in each example, and should not be interpreted verbatim.

Relative constructions:

(38) [*who/that/which*_{Rel} V Ø] + [V Ø Adv]

- a. at first they make a brief stay; then they are like guests, **who visit often**
- b. And ‘ozone-friendly’ often designates soft CFC gases **which**, though less destructive than others, **still destroy**.

(39) [*who/that/which*_{Rel} V Ø] + [V_{Aux} V Ø]

- a. She had been different from her brother and from his friends **who used to visit**
- b. there is always the chance of an encounter with one sick spirit who has found a role for you **that could hurt or destroy** ³

(40) [*that/who/which*_{Rel} V Ø] + [V *and* V Ø]_{Pseudo-coordination} or [V X *and* V Ø]

- a. Especially when I've got a friend **who might come up and visit**. ⁴
- b. men and women **who use violence and kill and destroy**

Constructions with an inanimate subject:

(41) [S_{Inanimate} V Ø] + [V_{Aux} V Ø] + [V X *and* V Ø]

- a. To deny this power is dangerous, for, suppressed, it will find another outlet and may erupt uncontrollably. However, it should not be allowed complete freedom to rule, since **it can overwhelm and destroy**.
- b. if you want to get picky **guitars should purr, destroy and rejuvenate**

As regards adverbials, infinitives, auxiliary verbs, and verb-coordinations, these components tend to occur simultaneously with one or several of the other types too. However, in contrast to relative constructions and such where the subject is inanimate, there is at least one example with each of these types of components in the data where they exist by themselves, which can for example be seen in the previous examples in (27), (30), (31) and (32b) in section 4.1. The

³ In (39b) there is also a verb-coordination with the coordinator *or*.

⁴ In (40a) there is also a co-occurring auxiliary verb

remaining types of constructions, in other words imperatives and temporal subordinate clauses, were analysed as the single occurring constructions in all but one instance of the latter type.

4.4 Other constructions found

Constructions that were not observed by Prytz (2009), or variants of those that were found in her study, that have been recognised to occur with *destroy* and *visit* and considered worth paying attention to are briefly presented and exemplified in this sub-section.

As previously mentioned, verb-coordinations with the coordinator *or*, which are found to occur in five examples with the verb *destroy*, could be seen as a variant of the instances with the coordinator *and*.

(42) a. Morgoth went to them as soon as they were created, to ‘**corrupt or destroy**’.

b. They may invite one child at a time to come to **visit or stay**

The other types of constructions that should be noted consist of *if*-clauses that function as adverbial conditional clauses (Biber et al., 2002, pp. 326-327), and the specific phrase *come visiting* which could be paraphrased by the pseudo-coordination *come and visit*. These two types of constructions occur in three respectively two instances with the verb *visit*, and are exemplified in (43) and (44).

(43) **If you visit again**, there will always be something new to see.

(44) Life drifted aimlessly, until a friend **came visiting** with her Labrador Retriever.

It should further be stressed that all three instances of *if*-clauses occurring in the material co-occur with adverbials, as seen in (43) above and as further exemplified below.

(45) [*if* X S V Ø] + [V Ø Adv]

a. And we shall see more birds **if we visit again in winter** when ‘The field fare chatters in the whistling thorn ...’

b. The Accommodation Office can usually fix you up with somewhere to stay (especially if you **visit during the University summer vacation**) and it will be much cheaper than a hotel!

5. Discussion

5.1 High frequency constructions

Based on her results Prytz (2009, pp. 43, 45) drew the conclusion that a high frequency of the grammatical constructions found could indicate that they facilitate null instantiation of object

arguments. It is evident from the analysis of the verbs *destroy* and *visit* in the present study that not only do certain of the components investigated occur significantly more frequently than others, but these constructions are also the very same types that were most common with the Swedish verbs *läsa* ('read') and *döda* ('kill') in Prytz (2009, p. 34), namely infinitive and adverbial constructions, verb-coordinations and also auxiliary verbs.

The fact that several constructions were often registered in single excerpts of data, in contrast to the analysis conducted by Prytz (2009) where only one type of component was selected in each instance, has naturally enhanced the total number of constructions presented in the results section. Accordingly, this might imply that components that are less influential have been registered. However, by not making an assumption that a certain type of component is more important than others the study provides a wider range of results and thereby avoids the risk of disregarding components that could be important.

The reason why infinitives, adverbials, verb-coordinations and auxiliary verbs may facilitate leaving out obligatory objects seems to be explained mainly from their ability to highlight the verb (Prytz, 2009; Bäckström, 2013). Infinitive constructions have previously been pointed out by Bäckström (2013, p. 36) to emphasise the action of the predicate, and by Prytz (2009, p. 37) to denote a "generic or habitual" action, which could further be linked to Goldberg's theory (2006, pp. 196-197) on low discourse prominence (Prytz, 2009, p. 43), which is discussed in section 2.3.2. Likewise, it has been argued by Prytz (2009, p. 28) that the usage of auxiliary verbs, as demonstrated in (31) in the results section, stresses the ability of carrying out the activity of the main verb and thus lessens the importance of the complement. What is also of interest is that although the category of auxiliary verbs was more restricted in the present analysis than it was in Prytz (2009, p. 28) in terms of what was analysed as an auxiliary, it yet belongs to one of the most frequent constructions in the material.

As for adverbials Prytz (2009, p. 26) further suggests that this type of component is frequently employed in cases where the object is omitted as it may function as a type of supplement that compensates for the missing complement. This could, for example, be the case with many of the adverbial constructions used with *visit*, such as *frequently* and *regularly*, where the usage of the adverbials thus could diminish the inclination to express the objects.

Moreover, verb-coordinations of the type represented as *[V X and V Ø]* tend to be generic, whereas pseudo-coordinations usually denote a "durative and imperfective process" (Prytz, 2009, p. 29), which could explain why the verb *destroy* was not found with this type of verb-coordination.

5.2 Variation in occurrence

On closer examination of the results, it appears that adverbial constructions are significantly more common with *visit* as compared to *destroy*. This could probably be due to the characteristics of the two predicates and the meanings they convey. For example, *visit* denotes an action which is in general more conventional than that of *destroy* and naturally, as seen in the examples of the data, it tends to be used with time-related adverbials, such as *frequently* and *often*, which denote a habit. By contrast, the action of destroying is less customary and tends to be expressed as generic or as an ability rather than a routine. Moreover, a parallel can be drawn in this respect to Prytz's results (2009, pp. 36, 38) which show that *läsa* ('read') is considerably more common with adverbials than *döda* ('kill') is, and this difference could, in other words, be compared to that between *visit* and *destroy*. Another possible reason is that it is partly due to chance as not all hits that were retrieved in the corpus search were examined with the verb *visit*, and therefore it is likely that not all instances of null instantiation with this verb were investigated. However, as the construction is so clearly predominant with the verb it seems safe to assume that it would still be very frequent if all instances of left out object arguments with *visit* had been retrieved from the corpus.

As for the other differences between the two verbs it would be expectable, for example, that *visit* was not found to occur with any inanimate subjects considering the fact that the action of visiting is carried out intentionally, which thus requires an animate subject. It would also seem more natural to use *destroy* in the imperative form than it would be using *visit*. Moreover, the variation of occurring constructions with the verbs can also in this case be related to Prytz's findings (2009, pp. 36, 38), where the verb *döda* ('kill') occurred only with seven of the constructions found, whereas *läsa* ('read') occurred with twelve types of constructions.

5.3 Analysis of combined constructions

Furthermore, it appears that the components investigated tend to co-occur rather than exist by themselves in the material, which could be linked to Prytz's (2009, pp. 25-26) speculation that the more of these components are involved in the relevant phrase the more it could facilitate leaving out the object in question. In fact, the analysis of co-occurring constructions shows that certain combinations evidently recur with both verbs, more precisely, combinations of relative constructions with adverbials, auxiliary verbs or a verb-coordinations, and in two cases also *to*-infinitives. This could further imply on the one hand that Prytz's theory on combined constructions is valid, and on the other hand that these specific compositions are especially

productive in allowing null instantiation.

Another possible hypothesis that arises is that constructions that tend to occur solely in the examples in which they are found permit the phenomenon more efficiently than those that tend to be combined with other constructions. What the results could point towards accordingly is that imperative constructions and temporal subordinate clauses beginning with *when* are productive too in facilitating leaving out an object, despite occurring with only one of the verbs respectively and not belonging to the overall most frequent types of constructions in the material. This as these components were observed to occur solely in all but one example with a temporal subordinate clause. As imperative constructions have been previously emphasised as a type of construction that allows null instantiation (e.g. Prytz, 2009; Fillmore, 1986) this would seem a plausible theory. In this way the analysis of combined constructions also further supports the idea that adverbial-, verb-coordination- and auxiliary verb constructions, and to some extent also infinitive constructions, facilitate null instantiation particularly easily, as these types are found to either exist by themselves or occur commonly with the constructions that are always combined, namely relatives and inanimate subjects. What this would also imply, in other words, is that relative constructions and constructions where the subject is inanimate facilitate omitting an object complement to a lesser degree. This would, however, require further investigation.

5.4 Analysis of the other constructions found

The occurrence of verb-coordinations with the coordinator *or* has not been discussed in either Prytz (2009) or Bäckström (2013), however, as it is a variant of the type of coordination debated in the previous studies this could indicate that the overall category of this type of verb-coordinations facilitates the phenomenon.

Another kind of construction that was found and has not been previously discussed is that of *if*-clauses functioning as adverbial conditional clauses. The fact that it has not been mentioned in Prytz (2009) or Bäckström (2013), and that it only occurs in three examples in the material renders it difficult to determine whether or not it actually facilitates the phenomenon. Moreover, it co-occurs with adverbials in all instances, which could be the actual facilitating factor. However, this type of *if*-clauses is yet considered to be a construction that ought to be further examined in relation to null instantiation.

Similarly, it is possible that *ing*-form constructions such as *come visiting*, which could be viewed as a paraphrase to *come and visit*, could have the same ability of facilitating leaving out objects as that of actual pseudo-coordinations.

As previously mentioned, Construction Grammar is a framework which not only provides a thorough account of null instantiation, but has also proven to be convenient for investigating the phenomenon (Fillmore 1986; Goldberg, 1995, 2006; Prytz, 2009; Bäckström, 2013; Lambrecht & Lemoine, 2005). In the present study the framework has been utilized chiefly in terms of terminology in order to be in accordance with the greater number of works which have been referred to, especially that of Prytz (2009). In other words, the usage of Construction Grammar has not affected the results per se, as regards the types of entities that have been analysed.

In summary, the results are in agreement with Prytz's (2009) findings in that infinitive-, adverbial-, verb-coordination- and auxiliary verb constructions are most frequent in the examples of null instantiation with the verbs *visit* and *destroy*. Accordingly, this strengthens her hypothesis that these types of components seem especially inclined to facilitate the phenomenon, and at the same time indicates that it is relevant also within the English language.

Due to the scope of the present study it was limited to analysing two verbs. What could therefore be of interest for future research is to further examine the occurrence of these constructions with a larger amount of English verbs, and with such that take other types of direct objects than that of noun phrases. Moreover, as has also been indicated by Prytz (2009, p. 43), it would additionally be necessary to conduct a similar analysis of data with expressed objects and compare the results with those of the instances with left out objects. This in order to ascertain whether or not the constructions investigated, and the specific combinations of those that were found, seem to occur more commonly, or even exclusively, with unexpressed objects, and thereby further decide if they facilitate null instantiation of object arguments. As regards the less frequent constructions in the material, Prytz (2009, p. 45) has pointed out that although they may not be common they could yet facilitate null instantiation, and such an analysis could further help determining whether or not these types of constructions may also be of importance. Hopefully, the results of the present investigation can be used as a basis for any such future endeavours.

6. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to investigate if the types of components found in Prytz (2009) seem to co-occur with null instantiation also in the English language, and with other verbs than those analysed in Prytz (2009) and Bäckström (2013). This in order to provide further evidence for

whether or not particular grammatical constructions seem to facilitate the phenomenon. Moreover, it sought to examine possible occurring combinations of the constructions investigated as this has been suggested by Prytz (2009) as a further potential factor to license the omitting of obligatory objects. In order to investigate this a total of 108 instances of the English transitive verbs *destroy* and *visit* with left out direct objects were analysed.

The results of the analysis show that the majority of the types of constructions found in Prytz (2009) occur also with one or both of the verbs *destroy* and *visit* in instances where the objects are null instantiated. Moreover, the most frequent components in Prytz (2009), namely infinitive constructions, auxiliary verbs, adverbial constructions, and verb-coordinations, proved to be most frequent also in the present study, which thus supports her hypothesis that these types of components could be especially productive in licensing null instantiation. This does not rule out the possibility, however, that also the remaining types of components found facilitate the phenomenon. Relative constructions and temporal subordinate clauses were rather common too in the material, and although imperative constructions were rare these have previously been emphasised as favouring the omitting of object arguments (Fillmore, 1986, p. 95). Moreover, it is evident that not all of the constructions investigated, for example those consisting of inanimate subjects, are compatible with all types of verbs and it is therefore likely that the semantic and lexical properties of the predicates have affected the frequency of some of the constructions in this respect.

The analysis of combined constructions points towards two conclusions. One is that as co-occurring constructions, and often particular combinations of such, are frequent in the material it is likely that the more components are involved in the relevant clause or phrase, the easier it is to omit an object, as previously proposed by Prytz (2009, p. 19). However, the analysis may also be interpreted to indicate that, besides infinitives, auxiliary verbs, adverbials and verb-coordinations, also imperatives and temporal subordinate clauses are components that easily permit leaving out an object, as these types are typically found to occur as the only constructions in several instances. In such case, this would also imply that relative constructions and constructions where the subject is inanimate are to a lesser degree capable of leaving out an object, as these always co-occur with other constructions in the material.

To conclude, the investigation supports Prytz's hypothesis (2009), and thereby indicates that it is relevant also within the English language. However, in order to draw any further conclusions on the matter it would require further research on other types of English verbs, including a similar analysis of data where direct objects are expressed which can be compared to instances that involve null instantiation of object complements. Such an observation would

further elucidate the grammatical constructions, and combinations of such, that seem to facilitate the phenomenon of null instantiation.

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