

## Flavors of Voice: Passives vs. Impersonals in Lithuanian

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**Background:** This study provides evidence for microvariations in VoiceP (Legate 2014) by contrasting two Lithuanian constructions, the passive-like *-ma/-ta* construction with an accusative theme grammatical object (1a) and the canonical passives with a nominative theme grammatical subject (1b). The *-ma/-ta* construction (1a) is cognate with the Polish and Ukrainian *-no/-to* construction. The Polish constructions are impersonal actives, whereas Ukrainian constructions are passives with an accusative object (Lavine 2005, 2013; Legate 2014). We argue that although the Lithuanian construction patterns with the Ukrainian one in allowing an auxiliary, it patterns with the Polish in exhibiting an implicit subject in SpecVoiceP, demonstrating that these two properties are dissociable (contra Lavine 2005). We contrast long theme movement over matrix impersonals (2a) with long theme movement over matrix passives (2b) and show that the theme movement in (2b) patterns as movement to subject position, whereas the theme movement in (2a) patterns as topic movement. The analysis provides additional evidence for the separation of *v*-cause from Voice (Pylkkänen 2008, Harley 2013, Legate 2014), and the presence of *v*P in restructuring (Legate 2014, Wurmbrand 2014).

(1) a. (Yra) skaitoma laiška \*tėvo. **Impersonal + DP(acc) object**

Be.PRS.3 read.NEUT letter.ACC \*father.GEN ‘One is reading a letter.’

b. Laiškas buvo skaitoma tėvo.

**Short Passive**

Letter.NOM be.PST.3 read.NEUT father.GEN ‘The letter was read by the father.’

(2)a. Rožės/Rožės (yra) bandoma/norima (Petro??) [iš-aug-in-ti t<sub>i</sub>].

Roses.ACC/NOM (be.PRS) try.NEUT /want.NEUT (Petro.GEN??) PERF-grow-CAUSE-to  
‘People want/try to grow roses.’

**Impersonal + to-infinitive**

b. Rožės buvo bandytos/\*norėtos Petro [iš-aug-in-ti t<sub>i</sub>].

Roses.NOM.F.PL be.PST try PRT.F.PL /\*want.PRT.F.PL Petras.GEN PERF-grow-CAUSE-to

Lit. ‘Roses were tried/\*wanted to grow by Peter.’

**Long Agreeing Passives**

**Passives versus Impersonals:** The Lithuanian *-ma/-ta* impersonal differs from the passive, in that the passive lacks a thematic subject in SpecVoiceP (contra Collins 2005), whereas the impersonal has an implicit subject. **I)** the impersonal does not allow a passive “by”-phrase (1a-2a), realized as an optional DP(gen) in Lithuanian, while the passive does (1b-2b); **II)** the theme argument of the impersonal patterns as a grammatical object in taking genitive case in negated sentences (3a), while the passive theme does not (3b); **III)** impersonals are possible with non-passivizable verbs like “die” (4a); **IV)** non-agreeing gerunds refer only to the agent in impersonals (5a), but to the theme or agent in passives (5b); **V)** long impersonals and long passives show that impersonals, unlike passives (6b), have a matrix implicit subject binding an anaphor *savo* (6a).

(3)a. Ne-buvo skaitoma laiško.

**Negation**

NOT-be.PST read.NEUT letter.GEN “One was not reading a letter.”

b. Laiškas/\*laiško ne-buvo skaitoma tėvo.

Letter.NOM/\*GEN NOT-be.PRS read.NEUT father.GEN

‘The letter was not read by the father.’

(4) a. Nuo gripo yra mištama kiekvienais metais.

**Non-passivizable verbs**

From flu be.PRS die.NEUT every year “People die from flu every year.”

b. \*Yra mištama žmonių kiekvienais metais

be.PRS.3 die.NEUT people.GEN every year Lit. “It is died by people every year.”

- (5) a. Jona<sub>i</sub> buvo užpulta išgėrus. **Non-Agreeing Gerunds**  
 Jonas.ACC be.PST attack.NEUT drunk  
 “One attacked Jonas while drunk.” (the person who attacked Jonas was drunk)  
 b. Jonas buvo užpulta tėvo išgėrus.  
 Jonas.NOM be.PST.3 attack.NEUT father.GEN drunk.  
 “Jonas was attacked drunk by the father” (either Jonas was drunk or the father)
- (6) a. Šį projektą buvo bandoma<sub>i</sub> priskirti sau<sub>i</sub> neteisėtai. **Binding**  
 This project.ACC be.PST.3 try.NEUT assign-TO self illegally  
 ‘People assign this project to themselves illegally.’  
 b.\* Šis projektas<sub>i</sub> buvo bandomas tėvo<sub>ii</sub> priskirti sau<sub>i-ii</sub> neteisėtai  
 This project. NOM be.PST.3 try.PRT.M.SG father.GEN assign-TO self illegally  
 ‘This project was assigned to oneself/father illegally.’

**Infinitival Complements & Restructuring:** The embedded theme appears clause-initially in long impersonals (2a) and in long passives (2b), but it is a topicalized grammatical object in impersonals versus a matrix grammatical subject in passives. Passives (2b) require restructuring with no embedded VoiceP, while impersonals (2a) have an embedded CP complement. **I**) infinitives embedded under impersonals (7a) combine with time adverbials like “tomorrow”, and thereby have an independent TP; infinitives embedded under passives do not, (7b); **II**) infinitives embedded under impersonals allow NegP, infinitives under passives do not (8a-b); **III**) while both constructions can embed a verb like *iš-aug-in-ti* ‘PERF-grow-CAUSE-to’, (2), we show that the perfective aspect prefix *iš-* does not head an AspP above VoiceP, and so is compatible with our claim that the passive selects for a projection smaller than VoiceP. Instead, the perfective prefix belongs to inner aspect and originates inside *v*P (Svenonius 2004). Indeed, the highest projection embedded under the passive is *v*-causeP, (2a). However, *v*-cause is not related to Voice: it neither hosts an external argument nor assigns an accusative in the complement of passives (2a) (Harley 2013). Finally, we argue that in the case alternations between nominative and accusative embedded themes in long impersonals (2a) the accusative is assigned by the embedded VoiceP, whereas the nominative is a default.

- (7) a. Galutinį sprendimą buvo planuota priimti rytoj. **[+FUT]**  
 Final decision.ACC be.PST.3 plan.NEUT take-TO tomorrow.  
 ‘People planned to take the final decision tomorrow.’  
 b.??Namas buvo planuotas pastatyti rytoj. **[-FUT]**  
 House.NOM.M.SG be.PST.3 plan.PRT.M.SG build-TO tomorrow.  
 Lit. ‘The house was planned to build tomorrow.’
- (8) a. To vaiko buvo norėta ne-pripažinti. “One did not want to accept that child.”  
 That child.GEN be.PST.3 want.NEUT NOT-accept-TO  
 b.\*Tas vaikas buvo bandytas tėvo ne-pripažinti. **Negation**  
 That child.NOM be.PST.3 try. PRT.M.SG father.GEN NOT-accept-TO  
 Lit. “That child was tried not to accept by the father.”

**Conclusion:** This study argues for two functional projections VoiceP and *v*P which are independent of each other: the former introduces an external argument and accusative case, the latter causative semantics. Even though impersonals share the same morphology with passives, they pattern like transitive constructions with an implicit subject. **Reference**(selected): **Harley**(2013). External arguments and the Mirror Principle. On the independence of Voice and *v*. **Lavine**(2005). "The morphosyntax of Polish and Ukrainian -no/-to." *Journal of Slavic Linguistics* 13(1); (2013) "Passives and near-passives in Balto-Slavic." **Legate**(2014) Voice and *v*: Lessons from Acehnese. **Svenonius**(2004). Slavic Prefixes Inside and Outside VP.